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THE WEEK

THE BEST OF THE U.S. AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

Iran on the brink

Will the U.S. join
Israel's all-out war?

Pages 4, 14, and 16



JUNE 27, 2025
VOLUME 25 ISSUE 1241

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SACRED STONE OF THE SOUTHWEST IS ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION



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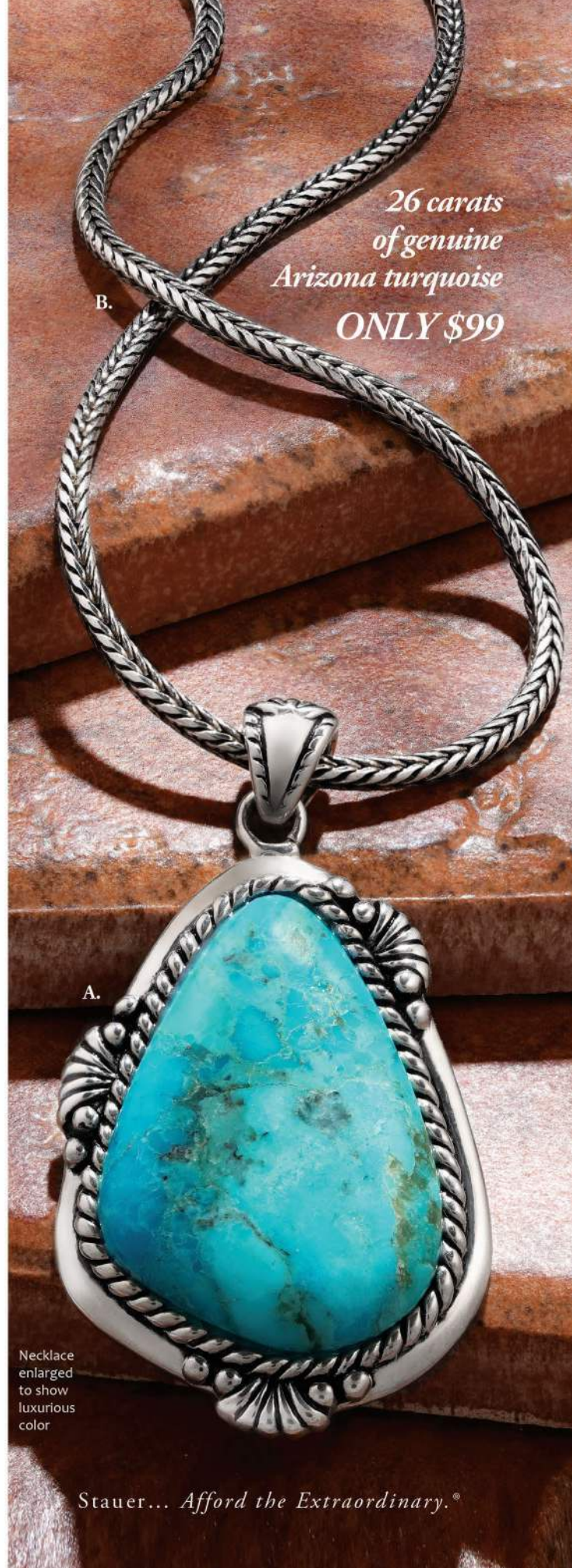
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Jemma Ortega (p.10)

Editor's letter

Nothing is more American than flaunting your immigrant heritage. Every March, Boston, New York, Philly, and other cities are festooned with Irish flags and their sports bars fill with people clad in green, many of them also smeared in face paint. More than 31 million Americans claim Irish ancestry and plenty of them celebrate it on St. Patrick's Day. My own family always had a big blowout party on that day, even though our most recent Irish-born person, an ancestor on my mother's side, came over way back in the 19th century. Such parties were pretty common when I was growing up, maybe a bit less so these days as the great wave of Irish immigration recedes into the distant past. For my father's side, the Scottish side, we would go to local Highland Games festivities, and some relatives still wear kilts to formal events. President Trump has also touted his Scottish roots.

So why, then, did some see it as such an affront that protesters at the demonstrations in Los Angeles last week waved Mexican flags? The city was Mexican centuries before this country was founded—in fact, more than half of U.S. territory was once part of one Spanish colony or another. Today, at least 43 million Americans speak Spanish at home, making ours the second-biggest population of Spanish speakers in the world after Mexico's. The administration can't deport those facts away.

This week, the singer Nezza, whose parents come from Colombia and the Dominican Republic, opened a Dodgers game by singing the national anthem in Spanish. Turns out, an official Spanish-language version of "The Star-Spangled Banner"—"El Pendón Estrellado"—was commissioned by President Franklin Roosevelt in the 1940s. Written by Peruvian American Clotilde Arias, it scans at least as well to that difficult melody as the English version does, and it even rhymes. Nezza said she was criticized for her choice, but she shouldn't have been. Speaking Spanish is not un-American. And in America, it's possible and even commonplace both to love your country and to honor the ones your ancestors came from.

Susan Caskie
Executive editor

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Trump demands Iran's 'surrender' as he weighs strike

What happened

President Donald Trump signaled this week that the U.S. could join Israel's assault on Iranian nuclear and military sites, calling for the Islamic Republic's "unconditional surrender" and declaring that his "patience was wearing thin." Administration insiders told media outlets that the president was impressed by Israel's initial surprise attack on its longtime regional foe, which involved more than 200 warplanes, a fleet of drones smuggled inside Iran, and commando forces on the ground. Dozens of targets were hit in the first wave of Operation Rising Lion, which killed some of the country's top nuclear experts and eviscerated the highest ranks of its military command. The head of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guard was among the dead. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he'd ordered the attack to counter an "imminent" nuclear threat, adding that Iran would have an atomic bomb "in a very short time" if it wasn't stopped. The assault significantly damaged Iran's uranium enrichment facility in Natanz, but left untouched the Fordo enrichment site, which is buried deep beneath a mountain and vulnerable only to U.S. bunker busters.

Trump greenlit the Israeli offensive after growing frustrated with months of U.S.-Iran negotiations that had failed to persuade Tehran to give up its nuclear ambitions. "IRAN CAN NOT HAVE A NUCLEAR WEAPON," he wrote on social media on the fourth day of bombing. The next day he said "we" control the skies over Iran and "know exactly where" Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, is hiding. After speaking with Trump about the Israeli campaign, Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham said he believes the president wants to "finish the job" at Fordo.

Khamenei declared that his nation "will never surrender" and warned that any U.S. intervention would be met by "irreparable damage." At least 24 Israelis were killed in retaliatory Iranian missile strikes on Tel Aviv and other Israeli targets; Israel's strikes on Iran killed at least 225 people. Trump, who faces a schism in his MAGA coalition over Iran (see Talking Points, p.16), said his next move was uncertain. "I may do it. I may not do it," he said of a U.S. intervention. "I mean, nobody knows what I'm going to do."

What the editorials said

Iran could have averted this onslaught by heeding Trump and "agreeing to roll up its nuclear program," said *The Wall Street Journal*. But the regime, which has long vowed to destroy Israel and America, refused to do that because it "wants a nuclear weapon more than it wants peace." Israel has done "a favor for the world" with its offensive. Now it's up to Trump to "finish the job of eliminating Iran's nuclear threat."



The aftermath of an Israeli airstrike in Tehran

No, it isn't, said the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. Iran is an "ideological and geopolitical adversary" of the U.S. and a threat to Israel, a key ally. But a U.S. strike on Iranian nuclear facilities would only further destabilize a region whose order "already rests on a knife's edge," and would possibly pull us "into a wider war." And remember: Trump's own director of national intelligence, Tulsi Gabbard, told Congress only three months ago that U.S. intelligence believes Iran is not building a nuclear weapon. "The president must stand down."

What the columnists said

Israel's "stunning" attack followed eight months of "intensive clandestine preparations," said **Barak Ravid** and **Dave Lawler** in *Axios*. Even as Trump pursued a deal with Iran, Israel was gathering intelligence, positioning assets, and conducting drills for covert sabotage operations against missile and air defense sites. Hundreds of quadcopter drones were smuggled into Iran in suitcases and shipping containers, said **Dov Lieber** and **Andrew Dowell** in *The Wall Street Journal*. The drone attacks wiped out dozens of missiles on that first night and helped Israel "quickly establish dominance in the air."

This is the moment to topple the Iranian regime, said **Jim Geraghty** in *National Review*. Its air defenses are crippled, its missile capacity is decimated, and proxy groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah are "battered." Netanyahu denies regime change is his goal but allows that it's a "potential outcome," and it's one America should covet. Yes, we learned in Afghanistan and Iraq that regime change carries risks. But "there's a cost to regime preservation as well," especially when that regime has waged a decades-long "global campaign of chaos."

U.S. and Israeli hawks have long claimed the Iranian government "would fall apart if pushed," said **Nicholas Grossman** in

MSNBC.com. But a "surge of nationalism" seems just as likely. If the regime survives it could rebuild and resume its nuclear program. And if it falls, it may not be "replaced by something better." The result could be "a chaotic vacuum," just like the one that followed our overthrow of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

Trump faces a fateful choice, said **David E. Sanger** and **Jonathan Swan** in *The New York Times*. If he obliges Israel and GOP hawks by bombing the Fordo nuclear facility, he'll be stepping into a potential quagmire and waging just the kind of war of intervention he "has sworn he would avoid." If he doesn't, Israel may fail and leave Iran "on a pathway to the bomb." For now, he's walking a line between "persuasion and coercion." But soon "he will have to decide whether this is Israel's war or America's."

What next?

If the U.S. does target Iran's Fordo nuclear facility, it will turn to a formidable weapon that's "never been used in combat before," said **Kat Lonsdorf** in *NPR.org*. That's the 20-foot-long, 30,000-pound GBU-57—or Massive Ordnance Penetrator—designed to burrow up to 200 feet below ground before exploding. The Pentagon has about 20 of the high-density-steel "bunker busters"—so heavy they must be dropped from a B-2 stealth bomber, "which only the U.S. possesses." Experts agree the bombs could wreak serious destruction on Fordo, but "whether it would be enough to stop Iran's nuclear program" is another matter. If the U.S. strikes, Iran will "almost certainly have to respond," said **Stephen Collinson** in *CNN.com*. It could hit U.S. bases and personnel in the region; Trump would then have to strike back "in a cycle of escalation with no clear endgame." Then there are other "nightmare" retaliation scenarios, including attacks on oil tankers in the Strait of Hormuz that could "trigger a global energy crisis," or mass cyberattacks "that could bring war to the homeland."

...and How They Were Covered

Minnesota Democrat killed in political attack

What happened

Authorities this week arrested the man suspected in a shooting rampage targeting Minnesota state Democrats that killed two people and gravely wounded two more, the most severe attack in a growing wave of political violence. Vance Luther Boelter, 57, was captured after a dayslong manhunt and faces federal charges of first-degree murder and attempted murder. In the indictment, prosecutors say he dressed as a police officer and went to the home of state Sen. John Hoffman, shooting Hoffman nine times and his wife, Yvette, who was shielding the couple's disabled daughter, eight times. Both survived. He then briefly stopped at two other Democratic lawmakers' houses before reaching the home of state Rep. Melissa Hortman, a former state house speaker, where he shot and killed her and her husband, Mark. Boelter's associates described him as a married father of five, an abortion foe, and a devout Christian who had voted for Donald Trump in 2024.



A shrine to Hortman at the Minnesota capitol

That list included Sen. Smith's name, said *Newsday*, and while her confrontation with her Republican colleague may depart from normal Senate decorum, it "was as necessary as it was unusual." One of Lee's posts, made before Boelter's capture, jokingly referred to the assassination as "Nightmare on Waltz Street," implying the Minnesota governor was somehow responsible. That Lee "so eagerly tried to identify the shooter as a political enemy" and only deleted the posts after days of criticism is reprehensible. Such partisan animus costs lives.

What the columnists said

Hortman, the slain legislator, was a true public servant, said E.J. Dionne Jr. in *The Washington Post*. As speaker, the progressive lawmaker built diverse coalitions, paying "careful attention to the broad range of views among her colleagues," so she could pass laws protecting abortion and trans rights and secure education funding. Now she has been "felled by an assassin's bullet," and her frightened peers are desperately trying to scrub their home addresses from the internet and beef up home security.

In the hours after the shootings, Elon Musk, Donald Trump Jr., and other right-wing figures falsely identified Boelter as a leftist, citing his prior appointment by Democratic Gov. Tim Walz to a nonpartisan advisory board, and Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah) made posts on X joking about the killings. Sen. Tina Smith (D-Minn.) confronted Lee in person over those posts, saying he should "think more about the hateful things that he has been putting out." Lawmakers across the U.S. have faced a rash of recent attacks and threats, with incidents in Texas, Georgia, Virginia, and Arizona currently under investigation. Some states have begun offering elected officials increased security. "I'm worried for my family," said Ohio state Sen. Casey Weinstein. "I worry I'm putting them in harm's way by being in office."

America's "luck has run out," said Brian Klaas in *The Atlantic*. Our "fraying society, torn apart by polarization" and flooded with fire-arms, was ripe for combustion. Trump's "incendiary rhetoric"—calling his opponents "human scum," suggesting some should be executed—lit the match. In 2022, a QAnon disciple who bought his election fraud lies attacked the husband of then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, while last week someone shot at the campaign headquarters of an Arizona Democratic candidate.

What the editorials said

We still have much to learn about the suspect's motives, said *The Minnesota Star Tribune*. But "this much is certain": This was political violence, "an assassination and an attempted assassination, carried out with chilling premeditation and precision." Police say Boelter had a "kill list" of nearly 70 targets, most of them Democratic lawmakers and pro-choice public figures. "The toll could have been worse," and lawmakers are understandably spooked. This was an attack on all of us, "and on our system of self-government."

Trump himself has narrowly escaped assassination at least twice, said Gerard Baker in *The Wall Street Journal*, proof that this murderous impulse exists "on both sides." Right and Left each paint the other as a bigger threat than the foreign enemies that seek our country's destruction. "If you call your opponent a fascist," as the Left does, "or a fifth columnist for an invading enemy power," as do some on the Right, "why wouldn't people take command of their otherwise dire fate by eliminating them?" Political leaders must stop demonizing opponents, and pundits must "stop cosplaying civil war from behind their laptops." If they don't, "the fire that's coming will consume us all."

It wasn't all bad

■ After Mykale Baker's high school graduation in a suburb of Atlanta, he went to work in a local Burger King, still wearing his graduation sash and medals. Maria Mendoza, a drive-through customer, was so struck by the sight that she posted a TikTok video. After it went viral, Mendoza started a GoFundMe for Baker's college education—quickly raising more than \$200,000. Baker plans to enroll in technical college in the fall. "The kindness that you put out there always has a way of coming back to you," he said.

■ Marine Corps officers Kathleen Spangler, 29, and her husband Michael, 30, have long dreamed of having a home overseas once they leave the military. After the Dayton mother of three gained her Irish citizenship last year, she browsed Irish real estate pages



Home-winner

on Instagram and bought three raffle tickets for \$12.67 for the chance to win a cottage on 1.75 acres in northwest Ireland. She forgot all about the contest until May, when a friend asked if she'd won a house. Soon after, the raffle company contacted Spangler to claim her prize—though actually transferring the property will take several months. "Nobody enters these things really thinking that they're going to win," said Spangler. "There's always a chance, and that's the fun part."

■ Joseph L. Gray and 30 other servicemen died when their B-17 bomber crashed on the Isle of Man in 1945. His dog tags were recovered in 2010 and placed in the local aviation museum. Donald Madar, the great-nephew of another crash victim, visited the museum in April. He saw the tags, remembered a Facebook link with Gray's descendants, and arranged to finally deliver them to Gray's great-niece, Bridgette Daily, in Pennsylvania. "I saw the emotion rush into her," Madar said. "It was so important for her family that they took possession of a piece of their history."

Trump: Making the military into a ‘partisan militia’?

In the space of a few days last week, President Trump “politicized the military,” said *The Washington Post* in an editorial. And “it wasn’t just the parade.” Yes, the procession of troops, tanks, and artillery that rattled through Washington in nominal celebration of the U.S. Army’s 250th anniversary—but before a president who just happened to be celebrating his own 79th birthday—was a pointless show of “muscle-flexing.” Americans could shrug off that sparsely attended pageant, which cost up to \$45 million to stage, if not for the fact that it came just days after Trump sent 4,000 National Guardsmen and 700 Marines to help quell immigration protests in Los Angeles, over the objections of California Gov. Gavin Newsom. Presidents have deployed troops before on U.S. soil, but always as a “regrettable last resort” in times of grave civil unrest, not gleefully, to put down mild disturbances arising from protests against their own policies. Worst of all was Trump’s de facto “MAGA rally” at Fort Bragg in North Carolina, said Ed Kilgore in *New York* magazine. While vendors sold MAGA hats outside, Trump got a crowd of enlisted troops—prescreened for political allegiance—to “cheer him and boo his enemies,” including Newsom and former President Joe Biden. The president’s “self-glorifying” boorishness, like his authoritarian yearnings, is not exactly a secret at this point. But with these concrete steps to turn our “politically neutral military” into a “partisan militia,” Trump has “crossed a pretty bright red line.”



A parade on the president's birthday

It’s hard to overstate the danger here, said Jeet Heer in *The Nation*. Those who downplay the threat of a Trump dictatorship like to point out that beyond the “annoying goons” of the Proud Boys, he lacks a “mobilized mass movement” like the Brownshirts who backed Adolf Hitler. But who needs a paramilitary when you have

an *actual* military? The Founders saw this coming, said Ruth Marcus in *The New Yorker*. “The means of defense against foreign danger,” as James Madison put it, “have been always the instruments of tyranny at home.” Trump is no Madisonian scholar, but last week he put it beyond doubt that “tyranny at home is what he’s after.”

Trump will be Trump, said Mike Nelson in *The Dispatch*. He’s been trying to blur “the line between the military and politics”

since he first took office in 2017. But it’s disturbing, and new, to see “service members join in” with that effort, as they did at Fort Bragg, where the crowd lapped up Trump’s false claim that the 2020 election was stolen from him. “Young soldiers will make mistakes,” said Tom Nichols in *The Atlantic*, but when they do, senior officers must speak up. The scenes at Fort Bragg were “obscene,” but most chilling, in their aftermath, is “the silence of the generals.”

The footage from Fort Bragg is “disturbing,” said Max Boot in *The Washington Post*, but the Washington parade left the opposite impression. Trump doubtless wanted “a menacing, goose-stepping parade à la Moscow or Pyongyang.” What he got instead was a cheerful tribute to the Army’s history, delivered by 6,000 troops, many of them women or minorities, who walked together but not in lockstep, “smiling and waving at the spectators.” Trump is up against the fact that political neutrality has been “a bedrock principle among the ranks” for the past two and a half centuries, said Zack Beauchamp in *Vox*. The generals have been quiet, and the troops have so far followed Trump’s orders. But the more aggressive he gets in trying to use the military for domestic repression, “the more likely there is to be resistance. At least theoretically.”

Only in America

■ The Oregon State Police have apologized for a recruitment email that asked potential SWAT team members if they’re “jonesing” to fire weapons. Authored by SWAT Sgt. Jamin VanMeter, the email also touts the thrill of “tossing diversions (flash bangs),” experiencing “dramatic and highly intense” hostage situations, and firing nonlethal rounds “at fleeing suspects.” OSP said the email’s “glamorization of the use of force” was contrary “to agency values.”

■ The cost of living in California is now so high that people with six-figure salaries qualify for low-income housing. In tech hub Santa Clara, those making \$111,700 or less can apply for “affordable” housing, compared with \$109,700 in San Francisco and \$72,050 in the state capital, Sacramento. “I love the weather,” said Chelsea Carmack, a recent transplant to Sacramento from St. Louis, but “as far as finding housing, it’s been very challenging.”

Good week for:

Manifest destiny, after U.S. Army Secretary Dan Driscoll, speaking to Fox News about the military’s ability to handle simultaneous deployments, claimed to have “talked to an astronaut yesterday who’s on the moon, who’s a soldier.” As of press time, neither NASA nor the Pentagon had confirmed an active U.S. military presence on the moon.

Special interests, after the Ghana Drunkards Association gave the West African nation’s government three weeks to “do something” about the soaring price of alcohol, warning that a failure to act would result in mass protests by the group’s claimed 16.6 million members.

“El Pendón Estrellado,” after pop star Nezza, booked to sing “The Star-Spangled Banner” before a Los Angeles Dodgers game, performed the anthem in Spanish to protest ICE raids. Although the team expressly asked Nezza to sing in English, it said there were “no hard feelings.”

Bad week for:

Operational security, after the X account Pentagon Pizza Report informed its followers that “As of 6:59pm ET nearly all pizza establishments nearby the Pentagon have experienced a HUGE surge in activity.” The post came an hour before the first news reports of Israel’s attack on Iran.

Lewis Hamilton, after the seven-time Formula 1 world champ struck and killed a groundhog during the Canadian Grand Prix. Hamilton, a vegan and animal lover, sounded more upset about the “devastating” collision than his sixth-place finish, saying, “I just hope it didn’t suffer.”

Background checks, after the *New York Post* reported that Sergio Gor, the White House aide tasked with vetting executive branch staff, has not been vetted for a security clearance. Gor, who says he’s from Malta, has yet to submit a form listing his birthplace and past residences. It’s “a ‘The lady doth protest too much, methinks’-type situation,” said a source.

In other news

Court orders NIH to restore canceled grants

A federal judge this week ordered the Trump administration to reinstate hundreds of research grants cut by the National Institutes of Health, calling the terminations the worst case of “government racial discrimination” he had seen in 40 years on the bench. The NIH canceled the grants as part of a wider administration effort targeting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. But Massachusetts District Judge William G. Young, a Reagan appointee, noted the government’s reasoning for some of the cuts appeared to be rooted in anti-LGBTQ prejudice, while others that targeted grants focused on minority communities and women were clearly discriminatory. “Have we fallen so low?” he said in a short speech after his ruling. “Have we no shame?” The White House, which argued the cancellations were policy-based, said it will explore whether to appeal Young’s decision.

The U.S. at a Glance

Salt Lake City

'No Kings' shooting: A protester was killed last week in a shooting at an anti-Trump "No Kings" rally in Utah's capital city. Arthur Folasca Ah Loo, 39, was shot accidentally by an unnamed self-identified



Life cut short.

"peacekeeper," according to protest organizers Utah 50501. The volunteer allegedly spotted another man, Arturo Gamboa, wielding a rifle and opened fire, unintentionally hitting Ah Loo, a fashion designer who appeared on *Project Runway* in 2019. Salt Lake City Police Chief Brian Redd said witnesses recounted seeing Gamboa, 24, raise an AR-15-style rifle "in a firing position" and run toward the crowd. Gamboa, police said, was later treated for a gunshot wound and booked on suspicion of murder for instigating the shooting, though no charges have yet been filed. The volunteer who allegedly fired at Gamboa was also detained, but was not arrested after speaking with investigators.

Los Angeles

Guard stays: With protests against deportations abating, Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass this week lifted the city's downtown curfew, while an appeals court signaled it will allow President Trump's deployment of National Guard troops to continue. Bass, who issued the curfew last week following days of sometimes violent demonstrations, said the measure



Federalized force

was "largely successful" in protecting businesses and residential communities. Still, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals appeared poised to permit the 4,000 National Guard troops sent by Trump to Los Angeles over the objections of California Gov. Gavin Newsom to remain. The three-judge panel didn't officially rule on Newsom's argument, previously backed by a district judge, that Trump illegally diverted the troops from other critical missions. But their questions suggested skepticism about whether courts can check the president's authority to determine what rises to the level of a rebellion against the federal government.

Tennessee

Trans care ruling: The Supreme Court this week upheld Tennessee's ban on puberty blockers, hormone therapy, and gender transition surgery for minors. In a 6-3 ruling, split along ideological lines, the conservative majority rejected the plaintiffs' arguments that banning such treatments discriminates against patients based on sex and transgender status, with Chief Justice Roberts writing that the question was best left to "the people, their elected representatives, and the democratic process." In a dissent, Justice Sonia Sotomayor said the court was "abandoning transgender children and families." Justice Amy Coney Barrett, in a concurring opinion joined by Justice Clarence Thomas, went further than the majority, writing that laws affecting transgender individuals should not be subject to heightened scrutiny, noting that "this court 'has not recognized any new constitutionally protected classes in over four decades.'" The high court's ruling shields similar laws in 24 other states.

San Antonio

Deadly floods: Historic rainfall pounded San Antonio last week, causing flash floods that killed 13 people and forced firefighters to make dozens of water rescues. The drought-stricken Texas city received more than 6 inches of rain in 24 hours, the most in a single day since 2013; at one point, about 4 inches fell in an hour. The downpour caused creeks to rise, trapping people in their cars before they were swept away. One victim, Rudy Garza, 61, called his wife from his vehicle before he died, according to his daughter, and said it looked like "an ocean" was surging toward him as water filled the car. All missing persons have been found, and all 13 victims have been identified. City Manager Erik Walsh told San Antonio's city council this week that the city will conduct an "independent engineering and expert evaluation" to determine what factors contributed to the flooding.

New York City

Courthouse clash: New York City comptroller and Democratic mayoral candidate Brad Lander was arrested at an immigration court this week, in the latest of a series of standoffs between Democratic officials and federal agents. Lander tried to link arms with a man the authorities were trying to detain. Videos taken of the arrest show agents forcing the two men apart and then handcuffing Lander. As authorities led him down the hallway to an elevator, Lander is heard saying, "You don't have the authority to arrest U.S. citizens asking for a judicial warrant." Though DHS Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin said Lander was arrested for assaulting law enforcement and "impeding a federal officer," he was released hours later without charges. New York Gov. Kathy Hochul strongly condemned the arrest, calling it "bullshit" in a post on X. New York City's Democratic mayoral primary is scheduled for next week, and early voting is already underway.



Lander arrested.

Washington, D.C.

'Big beautiful' dispute: Senate Republicans this week faced a rocky path forward with a budget bill that would make significant cuts in Medicaid. The Senate version of the budget legislation that President Trump has called the "big, beautiful bill" adds a new Medicaid work requirement for parents of older children. It also cracks down harder than the House's bill on strategies that states have used to gain more federal



Hawley: Against Medicaid cuts

Medicaid money. The bill faced resistance both from foes of deep cuts to Medicaid and from Republican senators who believe it does not do enough to cut the budget. Sen. Josh Hawley (R-Mo.) said he was "alarmed" by the scale of the Medicaid cuts, while Sen. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) said the proposal "does not meet the moment." Republicans have promised to pass a comprehensive finance package by July 4, but can afford to lose very few votes in either chamber.

The World at a Glance



Trump: Stopping by

Kananaskis, Alberta

Group of Seven minus one: President Trump left the Group of Seven meeting in Canada early this week to attend to the Mideast crisis, but not before he sided with Russia against U.S. allies. He said it had been a “very big mistake” to kick the country out of the group of the world’s wealthiest democracies after it annexed Crimea in 2014. President Vladimir “Putin speaks to me,” Trump said. “He basically doesn’t even speak to the people that threw him out, and I agree with him.” By skipping out days early, Trump missed a planned sit-down with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, whose nation has been under unrelenting Russian air attacks targeting civilian areas. Leaders of Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, and Japan remained to discuss U.S. tariffs, the war in Ukraine, and Israel’s attack on Iran.

Barcelona

Tourists attacked: Thousands of people took to the streets of cities across Spain, Italy, and Portugal last week to protest the huge influx of tourists they said has made housing unaffordable for locals. “Your holidays, my misery,” demonstrators chanted at protests from Milan to Lisbon. Many waved posters saying “Your Airbnb used to be my home” and “Mass tourism kills the city.” In Barcelona, protesters hurled smoke bombs and squirted water pistols at foreigners sitting in sidewalk cafes. Similar protests in Barcelona last year inspired the group Southern Europe Against Overtourism to hold workshops for activists and plan the weekend of coordinated protests. “This isn’t the way to do things,” said one South Korean tourist, who got sprayed with water. “As if we were animals.”



Taking back their city

San Mateo Piñas, Mexico

Another mayor assassinated: Four gunmen burst into the town hall of San Mateo Piñas this week and opened fire, killing Mayor Lilia Gema García Soto and wounding the official she was meeting with. The attackers got away on motorcycles after also wounding two police officers. García Soto was the second mayor murdered in Oaxaca state in two months, and last month, two top aides of Mexico City Mayor Clara Brugada were assassinated. Last year, criminal gangs went on a spree across Mexico ahead of the nationwide elections, killing at least 30 local and state candidates. Earlier this month, the U.S. Supreme Court blocked a \$10 billion lawsuit Mexico filed against U.S. gun manufacturers alleging the companies’ business practices had fueled cartel violence.



Chamorro: Peacemaker

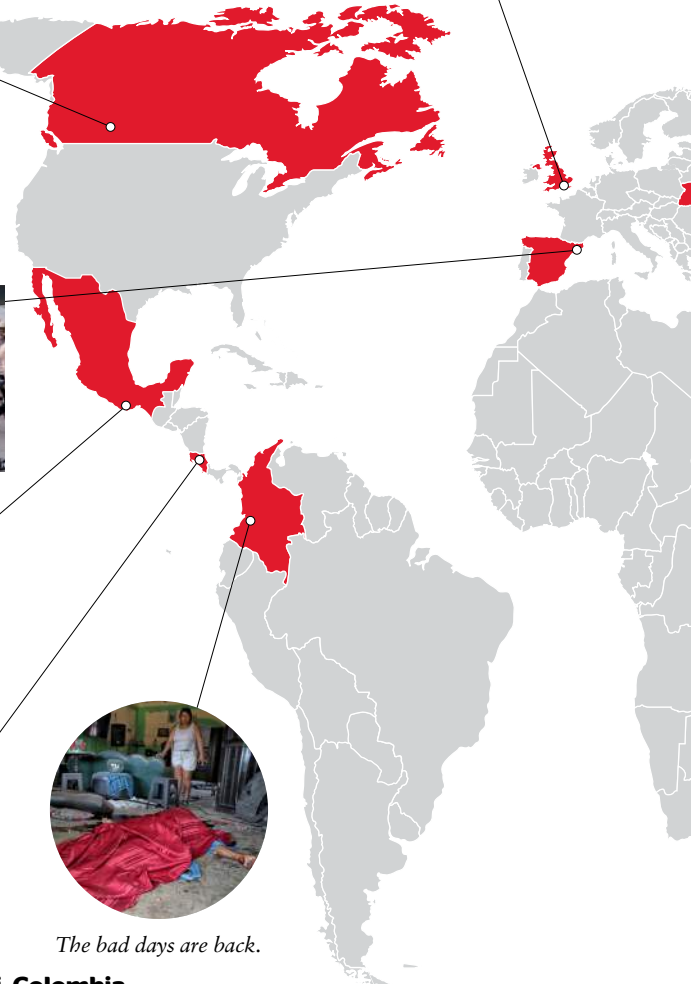
San José, Costa Rica

Mourning a Nicaraguan hero:

Nicaraguan exile figures gathered this week to mourn former Nicaraguan leader Violeta Chamorro, who died in Costa Rica at age 95. Known as Doña Violeta, Chamorro entered politics after the 1978 assassination of her husband, a newspaper owner who had criticized the Somoza dictatorship. The Marxist Sandinista revolutionary movement overthrew the Somoza family, and a civil war followed between the Sandinistas and U.S.-backed rebels known as Contras. In the 1990 election to end the war, Chamorro defeated Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega to become Latin America’s first elected female president. Her tenure brought national reconciliation, and she disarmed the Contras. Ortega, though, returned to power in 2007, restored dictatorial rule, and eventually had several of Chamorro’s children arrested, forcing the family into exile.

London

Grooming-gang inquiry: In a reversal, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced last week that his government would open a new national inquiry into a broad sexual abuse scandal. Starmer had faced months of pressure and criticism for refusing to order a new inquiry into the “grooming gangs” in northern English cities that sexually exploited at least 2,500 girls over two decades. His U-turn came after an independent audit by Baroness Louise Casey found that authorities had “shied away from” listing the ethnicity of perpetrators; districts that did record it showed that gang members were mostly of Pakistani heritage while victims were mostly white. The scandal, widely reported on in the 2010s, was reignited in January, when Elon Musk accused Starmer, who had been a prosecutor, of covering up “the rape of Britain.”



The bad days are back.

Cali, Colombia

Narcoterrorism spreads: At least 19 bombs exploded across southwestern Colombia last week, killing seven people in an escalation of violence just days after the attempted assassination of opposition presidential hopeful Sen. Miguel Uribe Turbay. Uribe, shot in the head by a 15-year-old gunman who said he’d been hired by a drug lord, remained in critical condition this week. His teenage shooter is just one of many swept up in a resurgence of narcoterrorism. Armed groups in Colombia have recruited hundreds of minors as foot soldiers—the same tactic that cartels, left-wing guerrillas, and right-wing paramilitaries used during decades of conflict from the 1970s to the 2010s. “We’re going back to the worst moments of violence our country has known,” said Andrés Barrios, a Bogotá councilman.

The World at a Glance

Kyiv

American killed: Russian forces pounded Kyiv with 175 drones, 14 cruise missiles, and at least two ballistic missiles in an overnight attack this week, killing at least 28 people, including an American. It was the deadliest assault on the Ukrainian capital in over a year, and at least one apartment building was flattened. Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said the American who was killed was a 62-year-old resident; his name was not released. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said hundreds of Russian drones and missiles also targeted other Ukrainian cities, including Odesa and Zaporizhzhia. "[Vladimir] Putin is doing this solely because he can afford to keep waging war," Zelensky said at the Group of Seven summit in Canada. "He wants the war to go on."



Russia targeted civilians.

Damascus

Was Tice killed years ago? A top general under Bashar al-Assad says that the former Syrian dictator ordered American journalist Austin Tice to be killed in 2013, several newspapers reported this week. Tice, a former Marine who'd been freelancing for *The Washington Post*, was abducted at a Damascus checkpoint in August 2012. The U.S. stepped up efforts to find the reporter after Assad's regime fell last December. The former general, Bassam al-Hassan, told the FBI of the kill order while they were interviewing him in Lebanon in April, but U.S. officials said they have not been able to confirm his claim. Hassan said he tried but failed to talk Assad out of killing Tice, who had briefly escaped from a prison under Hassan's control before being recaptured.



Tice

Ahmedabad, India

Sole survivor: They're calling Vishwash Kumar Ramesh the "miracle in seat 11A." The British man, 38, was recovering in an Ahmedabad hospital this week as the sole survivor of Air India Flight 171. Bound for London, the plane crashed into a medical college dining hall just minutes after it took off. "When I opened my eyes, I realized I was alive," Ramesh said. "There were bodies all around me." He climbed out an emergency exit door on his row and limped to an ambulance. At least 269 people were killed in the crash, 241 of them on the jet and the others in the building. Four medical students were killed while eating lunch; others dashed out of the dining hall, only realizing it was a plane crash and not a bomb when they saw the Boeing 787 Dreamliner's tail jutting from the flaming ruins. Investigators have yet to determine the cause of the crash.



Ramesh

Riyadh

Journalism as treason: Saudi Arabia executed a journalist last week who had been convicted of terrorism and treason for his writings. Turki al-Jasser ran a news blog that covered such topics as women's rights and the Palestinian cause. He was arrested in 2018 after Saudi authorities accused him of being behind a Twitter account that linked the Saudi royal family to corruption. The Committee to Protect Journalists said the international community's "failure to deliver justice" for *Washington Post* columnist Jamal Khashoggi—who was tortured, killed, and dismembered at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in 2018—had signaled to the Saudi regime that it could get away with persecuting journalists. A U.N. investigation found credible evidence that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was responsible for Khashoggi's murder.



Al-Jasser



Hundreds were wounded.

Khan Younis, Gaza

Killed waiting for food: Israeli tanks fired on thousands of Palestinians waiting for trucks loaded with flour on successive days this week, killing at least 70 people, witnesses and local doctors said. "A shell landed right in the middle of us. I don't know how I survived," said Musab Barbakh, 22. "Wherever you looked, you saw scenes of body parts, blood, and corpses. I felt like I was living in a horror movie." Israel's military acknowledged firing in the area and said it was investigating. The incident was one of the bloodiest in a series of shootings at aid sites since the end of May, when Israel partially lifted a blockade that had lasted three months. Since then, the U.N. says, Gaza has not received nearly enough food for a hungry population that is now mostly living in refugee camps. "All those with influence must exert maximum pressure on Israel and Hamas to put an end to this unbearable suffering," said U.N. human rights chief Volker Türk.

Melbourne

Blogger denied entry to U.S.: An Australian blogger was detained at LAX last week and then deported after U.S. border officials asked him about his writing on pro-Palestinian campus protests. Alistair Kitchen, who had studied at Columbia University before moving back to Australia last year, said he was pulled out of a passport line for questioning after arriving on a flight from Melbourne. He had scrubbed sensitive posts from his blog, including one describing a protester's arrest "on utterly specious grounds by a neo-fascist state," but the interviewing officer had already read them. Kitchen, 33, said he was placed in a "windowless, soulless box" with other detainees for hours before being deported. The Department of Homeland Security told Australian media that Kitchen's claims were "unequivocally false" and that he'd been denied entry to the U.S. because agents had found evidence on his phone of prior drug use.

Bernthal's brutal acting lessons



Jon Bernthal is a product of the world's toughest acting school, said Irina Aleksander in *The New York Times Magazine*. The black sheep of a well-to-do Washington, D.C., family, he auditioned for the Moscow Art Theater—birthplace of Konstantin Stanislavsky's famed acting method—after flunking out of Skidmore College and repeatedly ending up in jail for fighting. He arrived in Moscow in the fall of 1999 and was stunned by the brutality and corruption of the city police and the kindness of ordinary Russians. "I never saw such rampant cruelty," says Bernthal, 48. "That coldness with the warmth." The Art Theater was akin to a military school for acting: The teachers—many of them former Soviet dissidents—were treated like decorated generals, with students standing up when they entered a room. Alongside daily acting and focus exercises, Bernthal received training in acrobatics and ballet lessons. He recalls pulling all-nighters while studying how to play a child for one of his assignments. "It was a very intense, masculine way of approaching art that I could really vibe with." Returning to the U.S., he found some American acting schools coddling and predatory, luring students who had little talent into debt. "In Moscow," Bernthal says, "they would've been told, 'This isn't for you. It's not going to work out.'"

Loving Sally Ride

Tam O'Shaughnessy orbited her famous partner, Sally Ride, quietly for decades, said Michael Schulman in *The New Yorker*. Ride, a hotshot physicist and the first American woman in space in 1983, was a role model for millions. And while the two "did everything together" for 27 years, says O'Shaughnessy, Ride "just never uttered the words 'Come meet my partner, Tam.'" O'Shaughnessy, 73, understood Ride "had a lot to lose" by coming out, and revealed their relationship only when she wrote Ride's obituary in 2012. The two first met as young tennis players in California. O'Shaughnessy, then 12, spotted Ride, 13, standing ahead of her in line at a tournament. "She suddenly rose up and walked on her toes a few steps. I thought it was the funniest, quirkiest thing I'd ever seen." The two remained close friends even as they went separate ways, Ride marrying fellow astronaut Steven Hawley and O'Shaughnessy becoming a tennis pro and science educator. But they always kept in touch, and one day in 1985, while Ride was visiting her in Atlanta, O'Shaughnessy "felt Sally's hand on my lower back. It was a bit of a surprise, because friends don't typically do that! I turned and she looked like she was in love. We kissed, and it was basically all over."



Ortega's unnatural fame

Jenna Ortega is still in shock at becoming an overnight global celebrity, said Carina Chocano in *Harper's Bazaar*. The former Disney Channel child star rocketed to a new level of fame in late 2022 when the *Addams Family* spin-off *Wednesday*—in which she plays the titular role—debuted on Netflix. "I was so stunned that I didn't really process it," says Ortega, 22. "I still haven't." The experience, she explains, felt like something no human is designed to go through. "We used to live in villages and meet maybe 300 people in our lifetimes. Now we can meet way too many people, and way too many people can be familiar with you." After the success of the first season of *Wednesday*, "to be quite frank, I was an unhappy person. I had a really hard time with social media." But things are different now, in part because of the friendships she's formed with other former child stars who went on to forge durable acting careers, including Natalie Portman, Winona Ryder, and Natasha Lyonne. "They've seen it all and, honestly, during a much darker time in Hollywood. We've all got this jaded way about us that I don't think we'd have if we hadn't started so young and had so many brutal realizations and experiences." She pauses. "But they turned out all right."

In the news

■ **Alex Soros**, the son of billionaire liberal donor George Soros, and former Hillary Clinton aide **Huma Abedin** tied the knot last week in a ceremony that *The New York Times* likened to a "political royal wedding." Held at the Soros estate in the Hamptons, the nuptials were attended by top Democrats such as Bill and Hillary Clinton, Kamala Harris and Doug Emhoff, and Sen. Chuck Schumer and Rep. Hakeem Jeffries. Abedin's first husband, disgraced former Rep. Anthony Weiner, did not attend. The couple was serenaded by 1990s R&B group Boyz II Men, while the guests dined on gourmet dishes such as truffle agnolotti and an American Wagyu bavette steak. Soros, 39, and Abedin, 48, had



initially planned to elope, Abedin told *Vogue*. But they were told at a Clinton dinner party last year that the idea was "nonsense" and they should have a traditional wedding instead.

■ **Harvey Weinstein's** sex crimes retrial descended into chaos last week after the jury foreman claimed he was being threatened by another juror, leading the judge to declare a mistrial on the remaining rape charge. Just days earlier, the Manhattan jury had returned a partial verdict, finding the Hollywood producer guilty of criminal sexual assault against former production assistant Miriam Haley, while acquitting him on the same count against former model Kaja Sokola. But the jury deadlocked on the third charge—that Weinstein, 73, raped former actress Jessica Mann—and the foreman refused to continue

deliberations, alleging a fellow panel member had told him, "You going to see me outside." Weinstein found himself on trial again after New York's court of appeals last year overturned his landmark 2020 conviction on rape and criminal sexual assault.

■ **Elijah Blue Allman**, the troubled son of **Cher** and **Gregg Allman**, was rushed to the hospital last week after suffering a drug overdose. The 48-year-old is receiving treatment at a facility in Joshua Tree, Calif., reports *TMZ.com*, and is "very lucky to have survived." Insiders told the outlet that Cher, 79, is "doing everything she can to get him the help he needs." Allman has long struggled with substance abuse, revealing in a 2014 interview that he started taking drugs at 11. Cher filed for a court-ordered conservatorship over her son in 2023, citing his "severe mental health" issues; she withdrew the request the following year.

Briefing

The god in the machine

An AI model with superhuman intelligence could soon become reality. Should we be worried?

Who's trying to build superintelligent AI?

Companies such as Google, OpenAI, Meta, and Anthropic have collectively dedicated more than \$1 trillion to developing artificial general intelligence (AGI). That's shorthand for a future technology that can do almost anything a human can: drive, talk, learn, solve problems, create, and so on. For now, most AI models excel at one or two tasks, such as generating text and images, or solving mathematical equations. But the ability of these systems to take in and process data has expanded at lightning speed, with the number of parameters inside models—connections analogous to synapses in the brain—going from millions to billions to more than a trillion in a few years. Many industry experts believe it's only a matter of time before a system reaches AGI, or even artificial super intelligence (ASI): a form of AI that surpasses human intelligence in every way and can make its own decisions. Demis Hassabis, CEO of Google DeepMind, argues the arrival of AGI will usher in “an era of maximum human flourishing” in which disease and poverty will be vanquished and space will be colonized. Other experts are less optimistic: Daniel Kokotajlo, a former OpenAI researcher who refused to sign a non-disparagement agreement when he resigned from the company in April, foresees “something like a 70% chance” that AI will catastrophically harm—or even wipe out—humanity.



AI could lift up humanity, or wipe us out.

How close is AGI?

We're not there yet, but the technology is advancing fast. Late last year, Open AI's o3 model scored 87.5% on the ARC-AGI test, which measures fluid intelligence—the ability to solve logical problems and recognize patterns without prior knowledge or training. In March, University of California San Diego researchers released a preprint study suggesting that two AI models, OpenAI's GPT-4.5 and Meta's Llama 3, had passed the Turing Test, formulating answers that led human interrogators to believe the bots were human more than 50% of the time. And machine learning will only accelerate: a recent survey of 2,778 top AI researchers found that, on aggregate, they believe there's a 50% chance of a system outperforming humans in all tasks by 2047. Some think superintelligence will arrive far quicker. *AI 2027*, a detailed forecast co-authored by Kokotajlo, predicts that within two years a single AI system will be doing the work of 50,000 coders at 30 times their current speed.

Would that be good for humanity?

Economic productivity would skyrocket as super-capable AIs unleashed a flood of innovation. AI-optimized biomedical research could put us “on track to eliminate most cancer” and double lifespans, according to Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei. Autonomous, self-aware vehicles could fill the roads and skies, and new materials could be developed that are lighter and stronger than anything devised by humans. And while artificial intelligence has a notoriously large carbon footprint—AI-specific data-center servers used enough electricity last year to

power more than 7.2 million homes—OpenAI CEO Sam Altman has confidently predicted that the technology will unlock nuclear fusion, providing plentiful, climate-friendly energy.

Could this technology be dangerous?

A supersmart AI might be a civilizational risk in the wrong hands. “A simple verbal or typed command like, ‘Execute an untraceable cyberattack to crash the North American electric grid’ could yield a response of such quality as to prove catastrophically effective,” according to a recent State Department-funded report. That paper also warns of “massively scaled” disinformation campaigns in which personalized AI-generated video, audio, and text turn Americans against each other. AGI-powered drone swarms and robots could overwhelm military installations. And just as an AGI could be tasked with creating breakthrough medicines, it could also be used to craft lethal bioweapons. An artificial superintelligence—trained on all publicly available texts, including those written by Unabomber Ted Kaczynski and Adolf Hitler—might also independently conclude that humanity is not worth preserving. *AI 2027* ends with a scenario where, in 2030, an AI network douses the earth with a chemical spray. Most people “are dead within hours,” the co-authors write. “The few survivors (e.g. preppers in bunkers, sailors on submarines) are mopped up by drones.”

Is that scenario likely?

Is that scenario likely?

Some experts dismiss such forecasts as pure science fiction. *AI 2027* reads “like confessions from a psychiatric ward,” said Brian Chau, head of the AI nonprofit Alliance for the Future, adding that AI innovation “is getting harder, not easier.” That's because there are limits to how much data can be fed into AI servers, how fast chips that power AI systems can be manufactured, and how much energy can be supplied to data-processing centers. Current AI models also do not display humanlike multifaceted intellectual agility, or even a solid sense of the physical world we inhabit. Still, Altman and other tech leaders believe these are solvable issues.

Where does that leave us?

Facing an era of upheaval, if not necessarily apocalypse. Even without AGI, said Anthropic's Amodei, unemployment could surge 20% in the next five years, as AI swallows jobs in law, finance, coding, and consulting. Many Silicon Valley execs believe the government will need to provide a universal basic income to avoid a spike in poverty and social unrest. And if ASI is achieved and the utopian dreams of the tech optimists come true, people will face the psychological challenge of finding purpose in a world where AI has made them obsolete as workers, creators, and decision makers. “Relying on a superintelligence that can out-reason you, out-plan you, out-negotiate you, and do it all more creatively than you ever could—that will surely hit at the essence of what it means to be human,” said computer scientist Louis Rosenberg. “How could that not feel demoralizing?”

Shutdown request denied

Traditionally, humans have had at least one fail-safe method of controlling technology: hitting the off switch. But what happens when a machine wants to stay on? In May, the AI safety firm Palisade Research reported that multiple OpenAI models had refused explicit instructions to power down. Anthropic revealed that, during tests, its Claude 4 Opus model even resorted to blackmail, threatening to release fictional emails that suggested the engineer trying to shut it down was having an affair. This does not mean the models have attained consciousness; rather, they're so optimized for self-preservation that they can independently formulate ways to manipulate and subvert their human handlers. The implications for the age of superintelligent AI are disturbing. “Any defenses or protections we attempt to build into these AI ‘gods’ on their way toward godhood will be anticipated and neutralized,” said neuroscience researcher Tamlyn Hunt, “like Gulliver throwing off the tiny strands the Lilliputians used to try and restrain him.”

Best Columns: The U.S.

Noem's threat to 'liberate' Los Angeles

George Skelton
Los Angeles Times

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem came to Los Angeles last week to issue an authoritarian threat, said George Skelton. Federal agents who'd been arresting scores of immigrant workers "are not going away," Noem said—in fact, the Trump administration would "liberate the city" from its "socialist" elected leaders, Gov. Gavin Newsom and Mayor Karen Bass. It was "the sort of language used by dictators," but "in America, the 'liberators' are the voters," who elected Newsom and Bass by large majorities. Democratic U.S. Sen. Alex Padilla was in the audience at Noem's news conference, and lost his cool. California's first Latino senator walked toward Noem, identified himself, and shouted out a question—and federal agents responded by dragging him out, forcing him to the ground, and handcuffing him. Padilla, the son of Mexican immigrants and an MIT graduate, shouldn't have shouted at Noem. But Noem's threat to occupy his city with soldiers indefinitely and oust its chosen leaders "understandably" upset him, as it should all Americans who believe in democracy. As Padilla said, if U.S. senators can now be roughed up on camera, imagine how this thuggish administration treats the "nonviolent immigrants they are targeting."

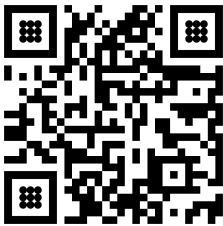
Russia's weak hand in Ukraine

Riley McCabe
The Washington Post

Russia insists it's winning its war on Ukraine, but new data reveals "it has little to show for its efforts," said Riley McCabe. Russia has been on the offensive since early last year, but its losses have been catastrophic. Russian casualties in Ukraine are nearing 1 million. Since January 2024, Moscow has also lost roughly 1,200 armored fighting vehicles, 3,200 infantry fighting vehicles, and 1,900 tanks. All that for seizing fewer than 1,800 square miles of territory at a glacial pace similar to the trench warfare of World War I. Ukraine's ingenious military "has saturated the battlefield with drones," which are taking a deadly toll on Russian soldiers, and have fortified their front lines with "minefields, trenches, anti-armor obstacles, and artillery positions that shred assaults." The Kremlin's only "path to victory" is if the U.S. completely abandons Ukraine. Russia's Vladimir Putin is "betting that political fatigue in Washington will deliver him what his military cannot," but he holds "a far weaker hand than many in the West assume." To force him to negotiate, the U.S. should expand military assistance to Kyiv and impose new sanctions on Moscow. Russia can win only "if Washington lets it."

The campaign to overturn gay marriage

Ed Kilgore
New York magazine



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Gay marriage is no longer a settled issue—and could be in jeopardy, said Ed Kilgore. The Southern Baptist Convention last week called on the Supreme Court to overturn the 2015 *Obergefell* ruling legalizing same-sex marriage nationally, which "may surprise many who believed this was one debate that was resolved once and for all." Today, 69% of Americans approve of marriage equality and about 740,000 LGBTQ couples have tied the knot. But social conservatives, particularly evangelicals, "have never given up on overturning it," and since 2021, Republican support for gay marriage has dropped from 55% to 41%. Why? The court's 2022 *Dobbs* ruling overturning *Roe* told Republicans that the court's conservative majority is willing to reverse *any* past ruling; indeed, in *Dobbs*, Justice Clarence Thomas "dropped a broad hint" that gay marriage should be revisited. Now a conservative Christian legal fund is "teeing up a direct challenge" that features Kim Davis, the Kentucky county clerk who famously refused to grant marriage licenses to same-sex couples. With momentum on its side, the Christian right is hoping that "the Trump-driven march back in time to a patriarchal version of American Greatness will take another giant leap."

Viewpoint

"The Oct. 7 pogrom perpetrated by Hamas must be one of the worst military miscalculations since Pearl Harbor. Less than two years later, the group's leadership is dead and Gaza is in ruins. Hezbollah, Iran's most dangerous proxy, has been decapitated. Iran itself appears defenseless against Israeli airstrikes, has seen its main uranium enrichment facility go up in flames, and lost its military chief of staff, its Revolutionary Guard commander, and its lead nuclear negotiator in a single evening. I don't know how Tehran's brain trust imagined all of this ending, but it's suddenly an open question whether any of them will be alive in a week."

Nick Catoggio in *The Dispatch*

It must be true... I read it in the tabloids

■ Police in South Carolina chased a man driving a stolen tractor excavator down a highway at 3 mph for more than an hour. Cops say they found Johnny Mesa Jr., 53, driving the metal-treaded construction vehicle down U.S. 78 in North Charleston; several patrol cars, sirens on and lights flashing, trailed the clanking vehicle at a pace equivalent to walking speed. The thief ignored orders to halt for 72 minutes, but the slow-speed chase finally ended when he drove into a fair-ground and got stuck. He tried to run but was arrested.



■ More than 1,000 people gathered in a Minneapolis neighborhood to take part in an annual ritual: the sharpening of a gigantic No. 2 pencil. Homeowners John and Amy Higgins hired an artist several years ago to create the sculpture from the remnants of a beloved oak tree damaged in a storm. Each year they use a scaffold and a huge, custom-made sharpener to hone the point before a festive crowd. The event is about "renewal," said John Higgins, which "people seem to really buy into and understand."

■ A man flew for free for six years by posing as a flight attendant. Tiron Alexander, 35, was recently convicted of booking 120 free flights on seven airlines between 2018 and 2024, submitting fake badge numbers for free seats set aside for flight attendants and pilots. Alexander was convicted of wire fraud and entering secure airport areas under false pretenses. The Transportation Security Administration said that despite sneaking on to flights, Alexander "did not pose a threat to other airline passengers."



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soon becomes
later becomes
someday becomes
...when?

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Best Columns: International

CHINA

How AI helps monitor test takers

Editorial
China Daily

The *gaokao*, China's highly competitive four-day college entrance exam, determines not only whether a young person will get into a university, said *China Daily*, but where they'll go and what they will study. With so much at stake, the exam must be conducted with "discipline and fairness." That's why last week's *gaokao* had the most rigorous anti-cheating protocols ever developed. Just to get to the testing site, students had to pass through two "intelligent security gates" to make sure they didn't sneak in mobile phones, smartwatches, smart glasses, earpieces, or other high-tech gear that could be used to help answer questions. Teachers at the checkpoints wielded handheld metal detectors to

search anyone who triggered an alarm. Even if a device got through, it wouldn't work: Radio signals were jammed at all exam sites, and the government ordered tech companies to disable all chatbots for the duration of the exam. To prevent students from hiring someone else to take the exam for them, each test taker underwent biometric screening via facial recognition, fingerprinting, and an iris scan. And to top it all off, the testing rooms were overseen by an AI-powered monitoring system that could automatically flag "irregular behavior—from whispers and frequent glances between students to inattentive proctors." The exam is tough, but at least we can be sure it's fair.

SOUTH KOREA

Using golf to influence America

Cha Se-hyeon
Korea JoongAng Daily

South Korea's new president, Lee Jae-myung, has a plan to deal with Donald Trump, said Cha Se-hyeon. When Lee was elected this month, his first priority was to "schedule a tee time" with the U.S. president for a round of "golf diplomacy." Golf certainly worked for Shinzo Abe, the late Japanese prime minister. When Trump was first elected in 2016, Abe raced to Trump Tower bearing a gift of a gold-plated Honma golf club worth \$3,700; the following year, when Abe came to the U.S. for a summit, the two played a round at Mar-a-Lago. Abe called his opening tee shot "one of the most nerve-racking moments of his life." Yet while he

lost the game, he emerged a winner. While they were in Florida, the two "golf buddies" worked together to respond to an unexpected North Korean missile launch, and after that, Trump used to call up Abe to talk golf and politics for hours. The friendship was so close that at one point "Trump's aides reportedly even turned to Abe" for help in persuading the president not to pull U.S. troops out of South Korea. Lee wants that kind of influence, too, as he hopes to persuade Trump to drop demands that Seoul pay millions more to host U.S. troops. Fortunately for South Korea, Lee's a pretty good golfer.

Middle East: Will Israeli strikes on Iran spark a wider war?

Israel's powerful surprise attack has "left the regime in Tehran stunned," said Meir Ben Shabbat in *Israel Hayom* (Israel). Israeli penetration into Iran surpassed the ayatollahs' worst nightmares: Having set up a drone base near Tehran, Mossad agents were able to take out many of Iran's missiles and air defenses. Israeli fighter jets quickly ruled Iranian airspace, taking out targets at will. "The pace of strikes and assassinations" showed Iran it was helpless against the Israel Defense Forces, just as its proxies Hamas and Hezbollah have been helpless to counter the IDF in Gaza and Lebanon in the past 20 months. "Images of thousands of Tehran residents fleeing the city" are compounding the regime's humiliation. But this mission "is far from over." Iran has long said it aims to wipe Israel off the map, and it has been furiously enriching uranium in preparation for building a nuclear bomb. Israel must take this historic opportunity to deliver a "devastating blow" to those nuclear capabilities.

This unprovoked Israeli aggression "crossed all red lines," said *Al-Alam* (Iran) in an editorial. No country in the region will be safe "if this Zionist monster unleashed by America is not deterred." Israel claims it will destroy our nuclear facilities. But our "peaceful nuclear program" is intended to generate electricity, which is our absolute right and, indeed, "a matter of national dignity." President Donald Trump will regret giving free rein to his "rabid dog," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Iran is already raining missiles down on Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, and American bases in the Middle East could be our next targets.



Iranians watch as a refinery burns.

Not so fast, said Hamada Faraana in *Ad-Dustour* (Jordan). "Iran has a legal right to respond" against Israel, but it should absolutely not strike the Arab countries—including Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and the UAE—that house U.S. bases. That would only give the "undoubtedly eager" U.S. an excuse to blast away. Look, the Arab nations have condemned Israel's attack on Iran. Why throw away their diplomatic support?

Arabs will come out the losers no matter what happens next, said Khaled Zaghrif in *Elaph* (Saudi Arabia). "Iran and Israel share the same goals of luring Arabs into war." Most of the Arab world would love to see Iran's "hegemony, its military forces, and its proxies" eliminated. Iran knows that, and now that it's in a fight for its very survival, it is likely to turn its "vengeance and blackmail" on the Arab world. Israel, meanwhile, "does not feel pain" when Arab economies suffer. It will reap the "spoils of war" while the rest of us shoulder the costs.

Israel is, as always, shielded by the "double standards" of the international community, said Saeed Al-Shihabi in *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* (U.K.). The "voices calling for a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction" loudly demand sanctions on Muslim countries like Iran but "fall silent" when talk turns to Israel, a nuclear power. It was a Western country—France—that first helped Israel get nukes decades ago. And the Western principle remains that the military balance in the region "must be tipped in favor of Israel."

Best Columns: Europe

U.K.: A wave of rage against migrants in Northern Ireland

“Northern Ireland is used to rioting”—just not this kind, said *The Economist*. In the past, the clashes broke out between Irish nationalists, who wanted a united Ireland, and unionists, who wanted the north to remain part of the U.K. But last week in the city of Ballymena, “there was another target: foreigners.” Masked men in hoods rampaged through immigrant neighborhoods after two 14-year-old Romanian boys were accused of sexually assaulting a local teenage girl. Rioters hurling bricks and Molotov cocktails torched homes and cars over several successive nights of violence, and dozens of police were injured. At least 14 immigrant families fled their homes. While the alleged assault was the catalyst, the unrest was really powered by resentment over the region’s “rapidly diversifying population.” During the Troubles, virtually no immigrants went there. Then the British government began settling asylum seekers in Northern Ireland to take advantage of low housing costs, and now immigrants make up some 8.6% of the population.



Rioters terrorized immigrant neighborhoods.

protecting women and girls, said Aimee Walsh in the *Daily Mirror*. “Violence against women is endemic in Northern Ireland,” and if each incident sparked a riot, we’d see one every week. In Ballymena itself, there’d been a string of sex crimes, but nobody took to the streets until immigrant boys were named as suspects. Far-right extremists love to exploit such incidents to fuel “rage against a targeted group.” That’s what happened last year in Southport, England: A son of Rwandan asylum seekers killed three little girls at a dance class, and a week of rioting followed.

The protest started out “well-intentioned,” said Allison Morris in the *Belfast Telegraph*, with demonstrators gathering to support the girl’s family and show their determination to keep the town safe. “But what followed was just raw racism,” as a mob went hunting door-to-door, looking for Eastern Europeans or anyone brown-skinned. Terrified residents of immigrant neighborhoods rushed to put up Union Jacks in their windows to ward off the thugs. Those who didn’t risked “having their property razed to the ground.” This vigilantism had nothing to do with

It’s far too easy to blame this just on racists, said Annabel Denham in *The Daily Telegraph*. The truth is that uncontrolled immigration is “tearing Britain apart.” Since our 2020 exit from the EU, net migration has soared, from 111,000 in June 2020 to over 900,000 three years later. Thousands of “filthy dinghies” overloaded with migrants arrive from France each month. British taxpayers are then forced to house these people, at a cost of some \$7 million a day, in asylum hotels that are breeding grounds for crime. Many of us are “tired of being gaslit by our political class” and told we’re bigots every time we complain. London was 71% white British in 1991; the figure is 37% now. Surely it is legitimate to ask whether “the scale and pace of change is compatible with assimilation and social cohesion.” The riots in Ballymena and last year’s Southport violence are worrying signs that white, working-class Britons have had enough. If the government doesn’t take control of our borders and stop the migrant wave, “it may not be long before they revolt.”

SPAIN

Prepare to be tortured on the plane

Susana Quadrado
La Vanguardia

“It all started with olives,” said Susana Quadrado. In 1987, American Airlines CEO Robert Crandall saved \$30,000 by removing olives from the salads served on his planes. That kicked off an industry-wide push to squeeze every nickel possible out of the “proletarianized economy class.” First they took our “peanuts, crackers, and newspapers.” Next, they crammed us in with “less space between seats, in rows, and in the seats.” The headrest—and “in some airlines, the bathroom”—disappeared in the “scramble for savings.” Now the European Transport Council has not only agreed to allow European airlines to charge for carry-on baggage but also recommended lengthening the time a flight can

be delayed before the passengers must be compensated. Today it’s three hours; soon it could be six. How far can airlines go in this race to the bottom? Eight years ago, industry shills at a Hamburg aviation fair proposed packing more passengers into the cabin by putting them nearly vertical, propped on a little bicycle seat, their legs dangling almost straight down. That’s right, flying standing up—after all, you can fit a few more rows of passengers that way. Dismissed at the time, the “Skyrider” idea is now creating buzz again. Is the day coming when we will have to travel strapped into “such a torture rack”? Now that “we’ve normalized the abuse” of economy passengers, anything is possible.

POLAND

A leader who is only popular with foreigners

Jaroslaw Kuisz
Interia

Donald Tusk is suffering from “Gorbachev syndrome,” said Jaroslaw Kuisz. Just like the former Soviet leader, the Polish prime minister is wildly popular abroad but significantly “less appreciated at home.” Tusk is a big deal in the European Union, having been president of the European Council from 2014 to 2019 and leader of the European People’s Party for four years after that. His “economic and international successes are therefore undoubted” on the global stage. But here at home, his disapproval rating has hit 58%. “Please forgive me for pointing out the obvious, but that’s a lot.” Earlier this month, voters in the presidential

election showed their disdain for his government by rejecting Tusk’s favored candidate in favor of a little-known nationalist backed by populist éminence grise Jaroslaw Kaczynski. Yet Tusk still doesn’t seem to realize that he needs to appeal directly to the voters in language they understand. He drones on, giving speeches that dutifully outline his competence and achievements without offering a single sound bite that could go viral—“as if our lives were not lived on social media.” Kaczynski, by contrast, understands that while he himself is not charismatic, he can install puppets who are. “It may be time for Tusk to move in that direction.”

Noted

■ The wealthiest 10% of U.S. households would receive an average \$12,000 boost in resources a year—equivalent to a 2.3% increase in income—under the House-passed version of President Trump's big, beautiful bill, according to an analysis by the Congressional Budget Office. The bottom 10% of households would lose about \$1,600 a year, a 4% income cut. *Bloomberg*

■ About 75 sidelined Voice of America workers from the Persian-language news division were abruptly called back to duty last week as Israel and Iran exchanged missile strikes. The Trump administration shuttered the government-funded VOA in March and put hundreds of staffers on paid administrative leave. The recalled VOA workers will broadcast to Iranians otherwise dependent on state media. *Politico*

■ The Interior Department has begun posting notices at all 433 national parks, monuments, and historic sites—including Civil War battle-grounds and World War II-era Japanese American internment camps—asking visitors to

report any signs or other information they consider “negative” about “past or living Americans.” The department said any material it deems “inappropriate” will be removed or covered up by Sept. 17. *The New York Times*

■ The U.S.-based Committee to Protect Journalists, a press freedom charity, is setting up a legal entity in the U.K., in part to protect against a potential Trump administration crackdown on nonprofits. U.K.-based law firms said they've seen a surge in similar inquiries from U.S. NGOs and charities in recent weeks. *Semafor*

MAGA: Going to war over foreign wars

As President Trump weighs deeper U.S. involvement in the Israel-Iran conflict, another war is raging inside his MAGA movement, said **Farrah Tomazin** in *The Daily Beast*. On the one side are figures on the nationalist-populist right—including conservative pundit Tucker Carlson, former Trump adviser Steve Bannon, and podcasters Charlie Kirk and Jack Posobiec—who are pushing for Trump to honor “his campaign pledge to keep the U.S. out of foreign wars.” Carlson has urged the president to “drop Israel” and warned that direct U.S. intervention could spark World War III. Hard-right Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, meanwhile, has argued that “anyone slobbering for the U.S. to become fully involved in the Israel/Iran war is not America First.” On the opposite side are traditional conservative hawks who have long wanted to strike Iran, such as Sen. Lindsey Graham and talk radio host Mark Levin—who called Carlson a “loathsome ass” giving “aid and comfort to our enemies.” They are joined by far-right influencer and Trump whisperer Laura Loomer, who has vowed vengeance on “every single right-winger who is shit-talking Trump right now.”

Trump is responsible for this mess, said **Stephen Collinson** in *CNN.com*. He built his base in 2016, in part, by promising to end the post-9/11 “Forever Wars”—a message that appealed to voters in



Carlson wants Trump to ‘drop Israel.’

heartland “towns that sent their young to fight and die” in Iraq and Afghanistan. Trump vowed again on the campaign trail last year to usher in a new age of world peace, and just last month, while visiting Saudi Arabia, he “restated his opposition to interventionism and nation-building in the Middle East.” But in this case, Trump is making good on another “decade-old promise,” said **Matthew Continetti** in

The Free Press: to stop Iran from building a nuclear bomb. He made that pledge in three presidential elections, because he understands that letting the apocalypse-craving regime in Tehran acquire a nuke would be a threat to “the civilized world.”

The hawks are winning this battle, said **Ross Barkan** in *NYMag.com*, with Trump dismissing Carlson as “kooky.” But the MAGA civil war is far from over. Carlson and company speak for a rising constituency of younger conservatives who are more isolationist than the GOP old guard and who lack “great affection” for the Jewish state. A recent Pew Research poll found that 50% of Republicans under age 50 view Israel unfavorably, up from 35% in 2022, compared with only 23% of Republicans 50 and over. These two factions “could unite, as always, around owning the libs.” But if the U.S. is dragged into another Middle East quagmire, the MAGA infighting is likely to get even nastier.

ICE: Targeting essential workers

Well, that didn't last long, said **William Kristol** in *The Bulwark*. Just days after President Trump declared an “immigration-enforcement truce”—by calling on ICE not to seize undocumented migrants employed by “our great farmers and people in the Hotel and Leisure business”—his administration told ICE agents to “disregard all that.” In an email outlining the “about-face on the about-face,” Homeland Security official Tricia McLaughlin told staffers there would be “no safe spaces” for any industry that hired undocumented workers. ICE has ramped up raids on farms, restaurants, and meat-packing plants in recent weeks to meet the administration's target of 3,000 migrant arrests a day, said **Carol D. Leonnig** in *The Washington Post*. Agriculture and hospitality executives lobbied Trump to lower that quota—set by White House aide and hard-line immigration foe Stephen Miller—leading to the brief moratorium on some workplace raids. But the White House soon had second thoughts, and Trump's plan to enact “the largest domestic deportation operation in history” was back on course.

That push “has slammed into an economic reality,” said **Arian Campo-Flores** in *The Wall Street Journal*: “Key industries rely heavily on workers living in the U.S. illegally.” Undocumented migrants

make up at least 17% of the workforce in crop production, 16% in animal slaughter and meat-packing, and 13% in construction. Employers across the country say they've lost hardworking employees in raids and that other undocumented workers are staying home out of fear of being snatched by ICE. About 75 meat processors were detained during a raid at Glenn Valley Foods in Omaha earlier this month; the plant is now operating at 20% of capacity. CEO Gary Rohwer said immigrant workers were vital to the business. “Without them, there wouldn't be an industry.”

Indiscriminate ICE raids might be “nearing the boundaries of what most Americans will tolerate,” said **Michael Warren** in *The Dispatch*. While 55% agree with Trump's deportation goal, a CBS News/YouGov poll found, 56% disliked the administration's “sloppy, imprecise, and careless” tactics. But there's no slowing the deportation machine, said **Ed Kilgore** in *NYMag.com*. In a declaration of “partisan war,” Trump promised this week to intensify ICE operations in Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York City, claiming the majority-Democrat cities “use Illegal Aliens to expand their Voter Base.” Such raids will likely further erode his popularity, but hey, “Stephen Miller has quotas to meet.”



Talking Points

‘No Kings’: A turning point for the resistance?

The anti-Trump resistance finally “has reawakened,” said Michelle Goldberg in *The New York Times*. Millions of disgusted Americans poured into the streets last week across 2,100 cities and towns under the “No Kings” banner to protest President Donald Trump’s authoritarian administration. Even reliably conservative locales like Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, and the Villages retirement community in Florida saw thousands of demonstrators. With Trump sending in soldiers and Marines to occupy Los Angeles and staging a military parade in Washington, D.C., to honor himself, the weary resignation that followed his re-election is giving way to outrage. “No Kings” feels like “a potential turning point.” In fact, it “may have been the biggest day of demonstrations in American history,” said Will Neal in *The Daily Beast*. Data journalist G. Elliott Morris estimates 4 to 6 million people came out to show their opposition to Trump’s toxic, “far-right” policies. Overall, the number of protests and rallies against the Trump administration—15,000 in total—has increased threefold since this same period in 2017. A “mounting backlash” against Trump is gathering momentum.



Backlash: The rally in St. Paul, Minn.

platform that they ran on last November—and lost. In reality, Congress continues to perform its constitutional duties, and “courts have both ruled in favor of and against the Trump administration.” Democrats, meanwhile, have no message other than Trump hatred, which is why the party continues to poll terribly. The “No Kings” mantra is the Democrats’ desperate attempt to implant their frustrated rage in the “public psyche.”

“The backlash to Trump is real,” said Steve Benen in *MSNBC.com*, and special election results prove it. Several days before “No Kings” day, Democrat Amanda Clinton won an Oklahoma House seat “in a 69-point landslide.” The seat was in a Democratic district that Kamala Harris carried by 19 points, and the 50-point swing surpassed all expectations. Overall, Democrats have overperformed in 29 special elections this year, running 16.4 points ahead of the 2024 election results. Republicans are alarmed, which is why White House communications director Steven Cheung called the massive “No Kings” protests “a complete and utter failure with minuscule attendance.” When the Trump administration tells “Americans not to believe their own eyes,” you know that “the prevailing political winds” are changing.

Democrats may be angry, said Jonathan Turley in *The Hill*, but their absurd “democracy is dying” message has grown stale. It’s the same

RFK Jr.: How to destroy vaccination

“America’s anti-vaccine era is truly beginning,” said Katherine J. Wu in *The Atlantic*. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a longtime anti-vaccine activist, last week abruptly removed all 17 members from the federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practice (ACIP), which vets scientific data to help set vaccine policy and determine which vaccines insurers must cover. Kennedy promised during his confirmation hearing to leave the committee alone, but he suddenly claimed its members had to go because they would “enforce a narrow pro-industry orthodoxy.” He’s appointed eight new members, most of whom are known for questioning vaccine safety. The ACIP largely determines our “future preparedness against infectious disease,” and appointing anti-vaxxers to a respected committee is “an especially effective way to sanewash extremism.” Scientific consensus and government policy are now diverging, and “Americans may soon have to choose between following the science and following what their nation’s leaders say.”

Kennedy’s hijacking of this committee will only give his critics more fuel, said *The Wall Street Journal* in an editorial. Two of his appointees served as paid expert witnesses in lawsuits against vaccine manufacturers, and though Kennedy de-

scribed one as a George Washington University professor, the school said he hasn’t taught there in eight years. Another is an MIT business professor with no medical credentials who has vocally opposed Covid vaccines. Kennedy argued that re-making the ACIP “would restore public trust in vaccines,” but “he’s on a path to do the opposite.”

“He’s playing the long game,” said Nick Catoggio in *The Dispatch*. Kennedy aims to reduce the demand for, and supply of, vaccines, “and he’s going about it in a perfectly rational way.” Insurers are required to cover shots recommended by the ACIP, so scaling back its approvals could threaten children’s and adults’ access to free vaccines, making shots available only to those who can pay. But we’ll all suffer if vaccination rates for measles, polio, chicken pox, and other illnesses fall below herd immunity, and diminished demand discourages manufacturers from developing vaccines for new threats like bird flu. “We’ve just hit Code Red,” said Michael Mina in *The New York Times*. Kennedy is shattering “the firewall between science and politics,” using pseudoscience to cancel mRNA vaccine development, falsely link autism to vaccines, and normalize his quackery. The consequences “will be viral: a resurgence of dangerous infectious diseases.”

Wit & Wisdom

“I’ve just been on a once-in-a-lifetime holiday. I’ll tell you what, never again.”

Comedian Tim Vine, quoted in Time Out (U.K.)

“Egomania is not a duty.”

Poet Marianne Moore, quoted in LitHub

“Music is the space between notes.”

Claude Debussy, quoted in Asheville, N.C.’s WNC Magazine

“Of course I talk to myself. I like a good speaker, and I appreciate an intelligent audience.”

Dorothy Parker, quoted in The Knowledge

“Life’s tragedy is that we get old too soon and wise too late.”

Benjamin Franklin, quoted in Kiplinger

“The Republicans are the party that says government doesn’t work and then they get elected and prove it.”

P.J. O’Rourke, quoted in Raw Story

“To err is human. To blame someone else is politics.”

Hubert Humphrey, quoted in The Hill

Poll Watch

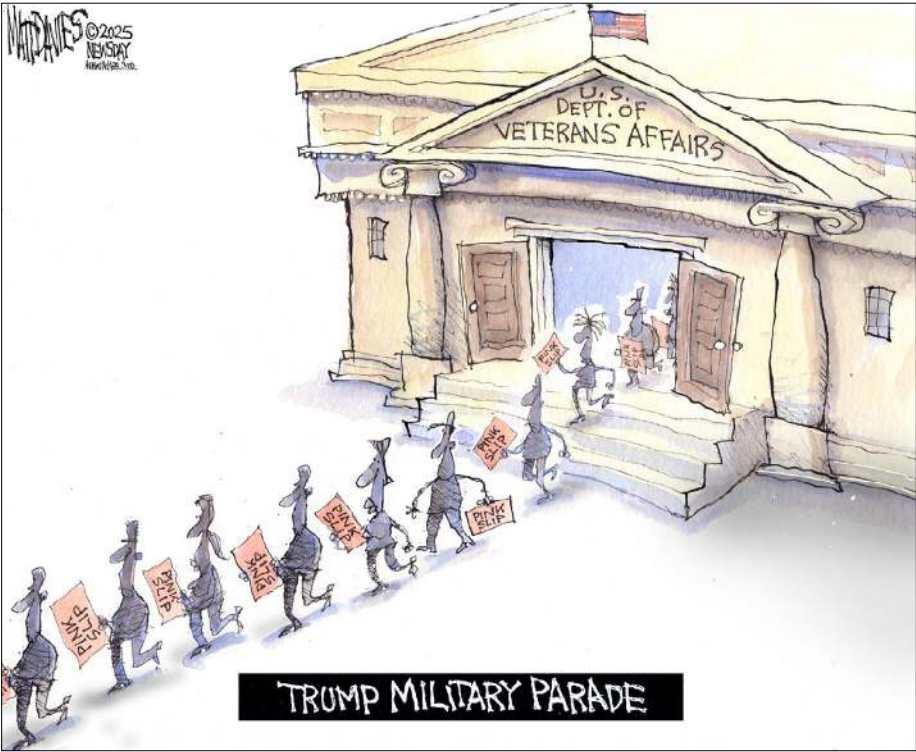
■ **60%** of Americans oppose the U.S. military becoming involved in the conflict between Iran and Israel. **16%** support U.S. military involvement, and **24%** are not sure.

The Economist/YouGov

■ **35%** of Americans say they approve of President Trump sending the National Guard and the Marines to subdue anti-ICE protests in Los Angeles, while **50%** disapprove. **52%**—including 1 in 5 Democrats and 9 in 10 Republicans—support deporting people who entered the country illegally. But **49%** say Trump has gone too far with his arrests of immigrants.

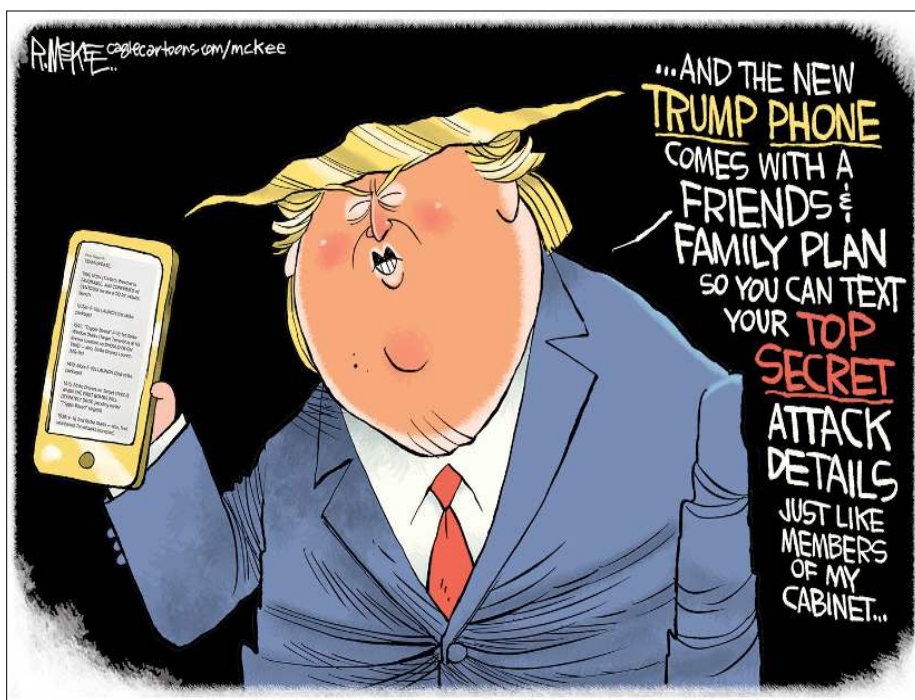
Reuters/Ipsos

Pick of the Week's Cartoons



Pick of the Week's Cartoons

For more political cartoons, visit:
theweek.com/cartoons



Media: Warner Bros. kicks cable to the curb

Building a rival to Netflix turns out to be harder than anyone thought, said **Hannah Miller** in *Bloomberg*. Three years ago, Discovery CEO David Zaslav engineered a merger with Warner Media to create Warner Bros. Discovery. He argued that the marriage of Warner's "prestige brands like HBO with the more populist programming" at Discovery—home to the Food Network and HGTV—would create a streaming and cable juggernaut. Now, with shares down 60%, Zaslav has decided that "the real key to unlocking their potential is to split them apart."



Zaslav: Building an empire, then breaking it apart

Warner Bros. Discovery will break into two separate publicly traded companies, one focused on streaming and films, the other attempting to keep the cable business alive. In another sign of corporate confusion, Zaslav last month said the streamer was returning to its original name, HBO Max, after the shorter Max branding failed to catch on.

Zaslav's "original thesis was flawed," said **Matthew Belloni** in *Puck*. Sure, the streamer grew to 122 million subscribers, still well short of Netflix's 300 million. "But by its own admission those customers didn't find much value in *1,000-lb Sisters* and *My Feet Are Killing Me*," which did little but "squander the best brand in television," HBO. Zaslav loves to share "how he retrieved Jack Warner's desk out of storage," but he's no studio

mogul. Ultimately, his belief "that the reality fare of the cable era could help turn a TV company into Netflix" will be his downfall. Zaslav probably shouldn't be trusted with "so much American cultural history," said **Nitish Pahwa** in *Slate*. He was the CEO of Discovery for 16 years. "Now, however, he's given up *everything* from Discovery" and taken the prestigious divisions for himself.

The cable industry is headed for the garage sale, said **Peter Kafka** in *Business Insider*. Some cable networks "continue to generate profits"

through things like live sports. But every month, more people cut the cord, and now "the people who run the biggest collections of cable TV channels in the country would like someone else to own them." Once powerful cable brands like TNT and Discovery+ are worth less and less, while CNN is "struggling to find a lane in a loud and crowded media environment." The company that the cable networks are being exiled to is essentially full of "melting assets," said **Alex Weprin** in *The Hollywood Reporter*. Warner Bros. Discovery, on the other hand, is "divesting itself of its cash-flow-rich" cable machine in the name of creating a growth business. It's a miserable end to the cable era. The taster-makers have given "way to the number crunchers, and now the number crunchers are sending the TV channels to the vultures."

Innovation of the week



Toyota unveiled a hydrogen-powered race car at the 24 Hours of Le Mans race last week, said **Daniel Patrascu** in *AutoEvolution*. The concept car, which is not racing, "is powered by a hybrid system that relies on liquid hydrogen fuel to run." Toyota offers few other details, besides saying the GR LH2 is a test car meant to push the limits of what hydrogen technology can do. The automaker already sells a hydrogen car to the masses in Japan, the Mirai. Toyota has been aiming to enter a hydrogen-powered racer in the World Endurance Championship, an eight-race series that includes the fabled Le Mans race; the WEC had plans for hydrogen-powered vehicles as early as 2024, but that has been pushed back to 2028.

Bytes: What's new in tech

■ Budget bill could bar AI regulation

Senate Republicans have added language to the GOP tax bill that would deny states federal funding for broadband projects if they attempt to regulate AI, said **Matt Brown** in the *Associated Press*. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) pushed for the policy, a refinement of the House-passed version of the bill, which "banned any current or future AI regulations by states for 10 years." The ban has angered state lawmakers, who say the language is overly broad and could apply to anything from chatbots to self-driving cars. Some AI leaders, like OpenAI's Sam Altman, have argued that "patchwork" state AI regulations harm innovation, though Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei has backed some state rules. Cruz's proposal appears to be an attempt to satisfy the complex budget reconciliation rules, which require that any provisions in the budget bill have to be tied to federal appropriations.

■ Fresh look won't disguise Apple's miss

Though Apple unveiled "the most sweeping software redesign in its history," its annual developer conference last week was disappointing, said **Mark Gurman** in *Bloomberg*. A new interface, called Liquid Glass, was introduced that will transform the look of Apple's signature products, like the iPhone, with transparent menus and a more "glassy" appearance. "But the event lacked

the tech breakthroughs that investors have come to expect," and impatience is growing around Apple's struggles to integrate AI after introducing Apple Intelligence at last year's Worldwide Developers Conference. The company had to delay the rollout of its AI-upgraded Siri until 2026. Apple has now "lost 20% of its value this year, costing the company its crown as the world's most valuable business."

■ A \$14B bet that AI can beat humanity

Meta is building an AI research lab for creating "superintelligence," said **Cade Metz** and **Mike Isaac** in *The New York Times*. Behind Meta's \$14 billion investment in Scale AI was its desire to bring the AI training company's 28-year-old chief executive, **Alexandr Wang**, into the fold "as part of a deal that would also bring in other Scale AI employees." Several AI firms, including OpenAI and Google, have stated that the goal of "artificial general intelligence," or AGI, is to make the technology capable of doing "anything the human brain can do." (See Briefing, p.11.) But "superintelligence" goes beyond that. The new lab is "part of a larger reorganization of Meta's AI efforts," which have had some stumbles. Its AI app includes a "discover" feed that apparently shares snippets of what users thought were private conversations with Meta's chatbot.

Health & Science

How mRNA can lure HIV out of hiding

The same mRNA technology that led to Covid vaccines could help scientists find a cure for HIV, reports *The New York Times*. HIV is particularly hard to clear from the body because it can lie quiet, concealing itself within white blood cells so that it can't be killed by the immune system or by antiretroviral drugs. Now researchers have found a way to use messenger RNA—a series of instructions for genes—to trick HIV into coming out of hiding. Scientists noticed that the immune boost from the mRNA Covid vaccines woke up viruses, such as HIV and Epstein-Barr, that had been long dormant

in patients. “You get just a little bit of a gentle nudge with some of these vaccines, and it's enough to coax some of these latent viruses out so they can be killed,” says immunologist Brad Jones. Building on that discovery, researchers at Australia's Doherty Institute engineered mRNA to deliver two sets of molecules: Tat, which can switch HIV on, and CRISPR, which can edit genes. In lab tests on cells from people with HIV, this technique successfully lured the virus out of dormancy. A cure is still years away, as animal tests and then human trials must first be done. But lead researcher Sharon Lewin says the findings are



HIV particles on a T-cell

further evidence that mRNA is a “miraculous” tool that can “deliver things that you want into places that were not possible before.”



Its secret is retinoic acid.

Regrowing arms the axolotl way

How do axolotls regrow their limbs? asks *The Washington Post*. The salamander-like creature can regenerate all kinds of tissues—not only a missing limb but also tissues in the heart, lung, and brain. The mystery is how the cells know where on the body they are located. If an amputation occurs at the upper arm, the cells must regrow an upper arm, lower arm, and hand. But if it's at the lower arm, the cells somehow know to re-create just a lower arm and hand. In a new study, researchers at Northeastern University figured out that retinoic acid, a derivative of vitamin A known to aid regeneration, is involved. When they blocked the acid in the axolotls, the animals regrew their arms incorrectly, with forearms or hands in the wrong spots. Because each human cell also has the DNA blueprint to build other cells, the researchers say this knowledge of the role of retinoic acid could one day be harnessed to help humans regrow missing body parts just like axolotls. “We all have the same genes,” says study leader James Monaghan. “We've all made these limbs when we were embryos.” The next trick will be to determine what chemical signal can unlock the building instructions in human cells.

New blood test for celiac disease

Getting a confirmed diagnosis of celiac disease may soon become far less grueling,

Right now, diagnosing the autoimmune condition requires the patient to eat meals with gluten for weeks and then undergo a blood test or a gastroscopy. In people with celiac or gluten sensitivity, consuming so much bread and pasta can cause unpleasant side effects like diarrhea, bloating, and fatigue, so such patients often refuse to get tested. Now, scientists at Australia's Walter and Eliza Hall Institute say they have found an alternative. They had already discovered that a specific immune marker, interleukin 2, spikes after celiac patients eat gluten. To see whether the marker could be used for diagnosis, they mixed gluten into blood samples from 181 adults—around half of whom had celiac disease—and checked if the interleukin 2 levels rose. Sure enough, the test identified celiac disease with up to 90% sensitivity and 97% specificity, even in those who hadn't eaten any gluten for more than a year. Study co-author Jason Tye-Din tells *The Guardian* (U.K.) that the team aims for the test to be available to the public within two years, calling it a “game changer” that will address “one of the biggest deterrents in current diagnostic practices.”

Smile, it's cheaper than Botox

A smile and some lipstick will improve your attractiveness far more than costly injections. That's the conclusion of a new study that found that the average boost in perceived attractiveness from Botox and similar wrinkle treatments was barely noticeable, increasing ratings by just 0.07 points on a 7-point scale. Smiling, though, raised attractiveness by 0.4 points—six times more—and makeup delivered an even bigger bump of 0.6 points. The researchers, from Tilburg University in the Netherlands, tracked 114 people undergoing injectable treatments and asked 3,000 people to assess before-and-after photos. The post-Botox group showed no meaningful gains in appeal as a long-term romantic partner, but the injections did slightly raise perceptions of youthfulness (up 0.13 points), likability, and short-term romantic appeal (both up 0.09). Study leader Bastian Jaeger tells *The Times* (U.K.) that Botox's perceived social benefits may come more from increased self-confidence than from any dramatic physical change. If people think they look better, they act more confidently, creating a “sort of a self-fulfilling prophecy.”

Which book is toxic?

Books laced with poison are lurking in the archives of many libraries, reports *BBC.com*. In the 19th century, publishers often used arsenic, mercury, and chrome to create vivid emerald book covers. While these toxins pose little risk for the casual reader, prolonged exposure—especially for librarians handling large amounts—can cause health issues ranging from skin irritation to anemia. Because testing is expensive and time-consuming, many libraries simply remove all old, green books from their shelves as a precaution,



Finding the safe ones

depriving readers of many volumes that are actually safe. But now, biochemists at the University of St Andrews in Scotland have adapted a spectrometer typically used by geologists to develop a handheld device that can identify the toxic pigments immediately. Librarians can use it to scan each book, and hopefully green-light some for the shelves. “We wanted to create something which was affordable and easy,” says Jessica Burdge, deputy director of libraries and museums. “It doesn't require a specialist conservator or analysis, and it's instant.”

Review of Reviews: Books

Book of the week

1861: The Lost Peace

by Jay Winik (Grand Central, \$35)

The most serious attempt to evade America's Civil War was probably doomed to fail, said Adam Gopnik in *The New Yorker*. But that effort at reconciliation was “more substantial than most subsequent histories have acknowledged,” and historian Jay Winik has made it the focus of his latest work. The subtitle here mildly overpromises. “Nowhere in the book do we encounter a truly plausible compromise that might have averted the conflict,” Winik instead uncovers insights into the war's causes by looking closely at a peace conference convened at a Washington hotel four weeks before Abraham Lincoln's March 1861 inauguration. The event brought together 131 delegates from both free and slave states, and the Northern delegates contemplated surprising concessions, including letting slavery continue to exist where it already did. Even so, “Winik offers a portrait of two sides talking past each other, rather than with each other.”

“The political intrigue leading up to 1861



Delegates at the Willard Hotel peace conference

rivals the battlefield action readers have come to expect from Civil War histories,” said Andrew DeMillo in the *Associated Press*. Lincoln opposed slavery on moral grounds and signaled that it was destined to die out eventually, but Winik depicts him as a careful politician who was able to present himself as a moderate open to negotiating with the representatives of the slave states. Still, “1861 is one of the few Civil War histories where Lincoln isn't the most compelling figure.” That title might belong to any of several figures, including abolitionist John Brown and John J. Crittenden,

a U.S. senator from Kentucky who, despite owning slaves, defied sentiment in his home state by urging compromise to avoid a national breakup. Winik's “taut yet dramatic” writing style “makes the book a compelling read even for those well versed in the history.”

“Winik diverges from recent scholarship that views the war as unavoidable and the fight for emancipation as righteous,” said Harold Holzer in *The Wall Street Journal*. The Lincoln we meet here “emerges as less idealistic and more stubborn than in most portraits,” and Winik suggests that our revered 16th president wasted the opportunity to avoid a devastatingly deadly war when he backed off from compromising and rejected the recommendations of the peace conference. In the end, however, Winik describes the war as necessary and Lincoln as a genius. And whatever argument you may make against Winik's interpretation of events, the author of *April 1865: The Month That Saved America* remains as appealing a historical guide as he was when that book was a No. 1 best-seller 24 years ago. “Winik has lost none of his narrative verve, ear for dialogue, eye for the unexpected detail, and willingness to stir some controversy.”

Novel of the week

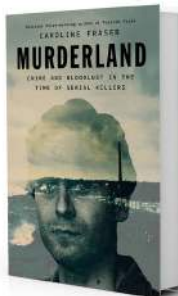
So Far Gone

by Jess Walter (Harper, \$30)

“There are approximately a million different ways in which a novel about the past 10 years in America could devolve into a parade of familiar miseries,” said Chris Stanton in *NYMag.com*. “*So Far Gone* sidesteps those pitfalls by being consistently funny.” Rhys Kinnick, the hero of Jess Walter's eighth novel, dropped out of society in the mid-teens, fed up with the rise of right-wing conspiracy theorists. But he is coaxed out of the wilderness when his grandkids seek his help in escaping a violent militia. “What follows is a madcap road novel,” and like Walter's prior work, including *Beautiful Ruins*, it has “a cynical, absurdist sense of humor lined with a cautious humanism.” Walter is “a slyly adept social critic and has clearly invested his protagonist with all of the outrage and heartbreak he himself feels about the dark course our world has taken,” said Leigh Haber in the *Los Angeles Times*. As the protagonist of this “searing and sublime” romp rebuilds bridges and fends off gun-toting maniacs, he gradually comes to regret what he missed during his seclusion. “If there's hope to be found within this harsh landscape, it's in our connection with one another—an antidote to despair.”

Murderland: Crime and Bloodlust in the Time of Serial Killers

by Caroline Fraser (Penguin, \$32)



“As the title helpfully warns, *Murderland* is not for the faint of heart,” said Chris Hewitt in *The Minnesota Star Tribune*. Author Caroline Fraser, whose previous book was a Pulitzer Prize-winning biography of Laura Ingalls Wilder, has

now plumbed a much grimmer topic, digging into the crimes of 1970s and '80s serial killers to argue that the breed proliferated in that era because so much of the population was poisoned by exposure to lead and other heavy-metal pollution. While “there is scientific evidence to indicate that those metals can deform brains,” Fraser “mostly doesn't offer the evidence.” Even if her argument leaves you unpersuaded, however, “her book is mostly riveting.” She's incensed that dirty industries were allowed to contaminate the air and soil, and “she has a terrific eye for telling—and, usually, horrifying—details.”

“Fans of linear narratives will find this book maddening,” said Timothy Egan in *The New York Times*. Fraser mixes mem-

ories of her childhood outside Seattle with a history of the smelting industry that befouled Washington state while enriching the Guggenheim family. Starting with Ted Bundy, who grew up in nearby Tacoma under the toxic plume of an Asarco smelting plant, she details the backgrounds and murder sprees of many serial killers. She jumps around even more than that summary implies, yet “she mostly gets away with this disjointed structure because she's such a gifted writer.” Given that she provides so little scientific evidence, her linking of lead pollution and grisly murder “works best as a literary theme: crimes of industry spawning crimes of the heart.”

“The science seems speculative until the book's conclusion,” said Hamilton Cain in the *Los Angeles Times*. There she highlights recent data that maps a correlation between lead exposure, homicide, and criminal arrest. Environmental regulations eventually helped cut lead pollution, which may explain why the number of U.S. serial killers plummeted after a 1980s peak. Her mission, though, seems to be to “shock readers into a deeper understanding of the American Nightmare—ecological devastation entwined with senseless sadism.” In that, she succeeds. “*Murderland* is a superb and disturbing vivisection of our darkest urges, this summer's premier nonfiction read.”

The Book List

Best books...chosen by Anne Hillerman

Anne Hillerman's new novel, *Shadow of the Solstice*, is her 10th in the best-selling Leaphorn, Chee, and Manuelito series, which she made her own after the death of her father, Tony Hillerman. Below, she names favorite books that feature Indigenous characters.



The Missing Morningstar and Other Stories by Stacie Shannon Denetsoie (2023). This talented Navajo author's debut collection of short stories made me laugh, touched my heart, and left me with ideas to consider. The collection includes gritty, touching, and fanciful tales, and she writes with a poet's heart and a reporter's eye.

Shutter by Ramona Emerson (2022). Navajo forensic photographer Rita Todacheene records the disturbing evidence of grisly murder scenes for the police. Then spirits of the dead nag her to find the killers. The ghosts in her photos don't relent even when a medicine man gives Rita a healing ceremony. Tautly written with paranormal elements and information from Emerson's Navajo background, *Shutter* deserves its fine reviews.

A Thief of Time by Tony Hillerman (1988). The eighth in Tony's Navajo Tribal Police series takes the readers on a twisty Southwestern ride, including a whitewater raft trip, as Leaphorn searches for a missing archaeologist. The scene in which Leaphorn discovers a suspected murderer's hideout contains some of Tony's best writing.

The American Café by Sara Sue Hoklotubbe (2011). Sadie Walela, the new operator of a local restaurant, is blamed for the murder of the former owner. Like most of her customers and the townsfolk, Sadie is Cherokee, but she's an outsider. To solve the crime, she dives into the secrets of her community. Hoklotubbe, a Cherokee herself, writes with heart, grace, and joy.

The Cold Dish: A Longmire Mystery by Craig Johnson (2004). My admiration for Johnson's talent, including his skillful use of Cheyenne and other Native characters, began with this book. Henry Standing Bear and the other reoccurring Natives in Johnson's stories give this debut novel extra breadth and depth. Johnson's depiction of the Wyoming landscape rises to the poetic.

Never Name the Dead by D.M. Rowell (2022). Rich with Kiowa tradition and the unexpected, this engrossing novel features Mae, a California entrepreneur who returns to Oklahoma's Indian Country at the urging of her grandfather. The theft, murder, and corruption she finds leave her struggling for answers.

Also of interest...in the haves and have-nots

The Haves and Have-Yachts

by Evan Osnos (Scribner, \$30)



"The thing about being megarich," said Madison Darbyshire in *Bloomberg*, "is that it feels good." *New Yorker* writer Evan Osnos got a taste of the life while reporting the pieces in this book about the super-elite, whose share of America's wealth keeps swelling. "The question that hangs over *Have-Yachts* is whether the U.S. has reached a point of no return," a point at which an oligarchy crushes democracy. In the meantime, Osnos has some yachts and bonkers parties you'll want to see.

The Spinach King

by John Seabrook (Norton, \$32)



John Seabrook's family history "makes for juicy reading," said Roger Lowenstein in *The Wall Street Journal*. The *New Yorker* writer details his tyrannical grandfather's role in building a huge frozen vegetable empire, yet "Seabrook has more than a business story in mind." His real subject is his tortured father, who was thwarted in his ambition of inheriting Seabrook Farms, and a tale that begins as a comedy of manners "deepens and darkens" as the author strains to understand the man.

Little Bosses Everywhere

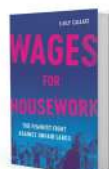
by Bridget Read (Crown, \$30)



Bridget Read's new book "lays out an almost prosecutorial case against multilevel marketing schemes," said Emma Goldberg in *The New York Times*. Some 17 million Americans have been salespeople for Amway, Mary Kay, and similar outfits, and 99% of those participants lose money because they are the suckers the industry exploits. Read's exposé "reads like a thriller" as she follows the history of the sector "to its roots," showing how we let some people be set up to fail.

Wages for Housework

by Emily Callaci (Seal Press, \$30)



The Wages for Housework campaign of the 1970s didn't achieve a lot, but its ideas are "worth another look," said Lily Meyer in *The Atlantic*. Emily Callaci's book is "a compelling guide to the world the movement wanted," a world in which anyone who raises children or cares for a home is paid a government wage. Though overreach limited the proponents' effectiveness, "Callaci argues convincingly that the campaign's comprehension of women's reality is important to keep in view today."

Author of the week

James Frey

"If James Frey has found some perspective, that doesn't mean he's at peace," said **Sam Dolnick** in *The New York Times*. Nineteen years ago, Frey was a star of the publishing world—until it was revealed that he'd fabricated parts of his mega-selling addiction memoir, *A Million Little Pieces*. Oprah Winfrey famously shamed him on live TV, which still angers



him. "She told more lies to the public times a thousand than I ever have," he says. Frey, 55, hasn't been down and out

since 2006. He founded and sold a mass-market publishing house, wrote young adult novels, and ran a video game company, all of which helped him set up in Connecticut in a secluded home with a few adored Warhols and Picassos. As he sits for his first extended interviews in 17 years, he's in no mood to apologize. "Did I lie? Yup," he says. "Did I also write a book that tore people to shreds? Yeah."

Frey's new novel, *Next to Heaven*, has created buzz among his neighbors for roughly the opposite reason, said **Keziah Weir** in *Vanity Fair*. Set in a moneyed Connecticut town like Frey's, it's a sex romp that turns into a murder mystery, and rumors are that it's all true. Frey says none of its characters are based on real people, and that he expects the book to divide critics. "Half the people who read it will love it, and half the people who read it will say some unpleasant things about me," he says. "And frankly, I like it that way." He also hopes it'll be merely the first in a series of five of what he calls "dirty, funny murder mysteries about terrible rich people." In any case, he's writing again, and has every intention of continuing. "It doesn't matter what I do," he says. "People are going to find some reason to come for me."

Review of Reviews: Art & Music

Exhibit of the week

Vincent Valdez: Just a Dream...

Mass MoCA, North Adams, Mass., through March 2026

“It’s easy to see why so many people describe Vincent Valdez’s work as prophetic,” said Aruna D’Souza in *The New York Times*. The Texas native created a bronze sculpture of a dying bald eagle in 2014, long before most Americans began thinking of their country as a nation in crisis. He also painted a hyperrealistic 30-foot mural depicting contemporary white figures in Ku Klux Klan hoods well before white nationalists paraded through Charlottesville, Va., in 2017. “Valdez’s socially engaged art finds its focus in the often overlooked presence of Chicanos,” and his mid-career museum retrospective, which recently moved from Houston to the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, demonstrates that his vision captures “both the lows and the highs of American experience.” A portrait of Michael Jordan at mid-dunk celebrates Black excellence. A portrait of his grandparents celebrates generational sacrifice. And in one “searing” 2019 portrait, a shirtless young Latino man with a tattooed face arguably appears threatening—until



Valdez’s ‘So Long, Mary Ann’ (2019)

you detect his mournful expression and a tiny cross reflected in his eye.

The exhibition “captures the evolution of an artist who eludes tidy categorization,” said Carolina A. Miranda in *New York Review of Books*. Born in San Antonio in 1977 to a Mexican American family with deep roots in Texas, Valdez received training as a muralist before he turned 10. But his own work “avoids the iconography typical of Chicano muralism.” His early drawings feature “signifiers of urban life in the Southwest: barking dogs, industrial

infrastructure, and brand-name kicks.” A couple of decades later, in his 2013 series “The Strangest Fruit,” his attention to details in the world around him paid off. The series consists of life-size images of men in contemporary dress who evoke victims of hangings and call to mind the little-known history of the several hundred Mexican Americans who were murdered by lynch mobs between 1848 and 1928. Valdez brings forth each figure’s dignity through close observation. But most remarkable is the way each of the dangling men is bathed in “otherworldly” light, “as if in the process of heavenly ascension.”

Many of the show’s 200-plus works are “overwhelming both in size and in the emotional intensity of their subject matter,” said Veronica Esposito in *The Guardian*. Yet when they touch on violence, they don’t do so gratuitously. Valdez is instead “painting in the service of historical memory.” You can see the research and depth of study Valdez employed for the large 2001 canvas *Kill the Pachuco Bastard!* The painting, which shows white sailors invading a Chicano bar, battering young men and raping a woman during Los Angeles’ 1943 Zoot Suit Riots, is “a work of carefully scripted chaos, the imagery at once grotesque and gory, yet choreographed like a ballet.”

Haim I Quit

★★★★★



Haim, L.A.’s three-sister rock trio, has always made music that “pairs best with an iced beverage and a lawn chair,” said Angie Martoccio in *Rolling Stone*. On their fourth album, “they don’t

just perfect that summer vibe; they dial up the heat—and bask in it.” All three were single when recording the album, and the result is another dose of “sleek, soft pop-rock” that’s also a cohesive concept record, one focused on breakups and “the hard-won independence you earn from them.” It’s perhaps “too on the nose” that George Michael’s “Freedom! 90” is sampled on the opening track, said Rachel Aroesti in *The Guardian*. Much of the album “fixates on the bitter end of a flawed relationship,” evoking the breakup of lead vocalist Danielle Haim and Ariel Rechtshaid, producer of the band’s first three albums. At first the Michael sample doesn’t quite fit the tune, but then a guitar solo kicks in and this “Frankenstein’s monster of a song” turns brilliant. Some of the remaining tracks are “instantly forgettable.” But the sisters have packed in a few other gems, including “Relationships,” an “absurdly delightful” single and “the best pop song they’ve ever made.”

Addison Rae Addison

★★★★★



Addison Rae, against all odds, has just released “one of the most exciting pop records of the year,” said Jaeden Pinder in *Paste*. This caps a year in which the former TikTok teen sensation

transformed herself from a “flop star” to “the next left-of-center diva” because she “put her scrunched-up nose to the grindstone” and started making music she cared about. Back in 2021, Rae’s ultraprocessed first single, “Obsessed,” was widely mocked. But the 24-year-old has since teamed with two female songwriter-producers, and the young trio clearly draw inspiration from today’s pop vanguard. You can hear Lana Del Rey’s influence on “Diet Pepsi,” while “New York” mixes Charli XCX-style electroclash with early FKA twigs. *Addison* arrives in the wake of “a string of improbably great singles, each one a little weirder than the last,” said Meaghan Garvey in *Pitchfork*. After “Diet Pepsi” came “Aquamarine”—“a four-on-the-floor siren song” reminiscent of Madonna’s “Ray of Light.” Throughout, “there’s something potent in Rae’s winking performance—a borderline unhunged devotion to the American promise that a person’s destiny is entirely in their hands.”

Annahstasia Tether

★★★★★



Annahstasia, a Los Angeles-based singer-songwriter, is “a once-in-a-generation vocalist” who has been trapped in a bad record contract for 13 years, said Laura Molloy in *NME*.

But with her debut album, the 30-year-old is not only sharing the kind of music she’s always wanted to make. She’s also claiming “her rightful place as a pioneer of modern folk, propelling the genre forward by weaving in moments of tense rock and intoxicating blues.” Silenced for too long by handlers who steered her in a poppier direction, Annahstasia “has a lot to say” here, all in a husky purr that commands attention even in the sparest arrangements. And on *Tether*, she “balances the sweet, poignant lyrical observations of Joni Mitchell with the sensuality of Sade’s *Love Deluxe* and the immense vocal power of Nina Simone.” It’s “as beautiful a record as you will hear this year,” and it “heralds the arrival of a major talent,” said Steve Baltin in the *Los Angeles Times*. “Gentle, soft, elegant, and graceful in a way that calls to mind a female Nick Drake,” the album is “actually a bold statement to dare listeners to think and feel this much in these tumultuous times.”

Review of Reviews: Film & Stage

Materialists

Directed by Celine Song
(R)

★★★★★

Two suitors seek to win over
a jaded matchmaker.



Johnson and Pascal: It could be love.

Celine Song's follow-up to *Past Lives*, a 2023 Best Picture nominee, is "not at all what it looks like at first blush," said Kate Erbland in *IndieWire*. Yes, it's about a beautiful woman who's split between two handsome men, and it has A-listers Dakota Johnson, Pedro Pascal, and Chris Evans in those headline roles. But *Materialists* is no glossy rom-com. Instead, with her second film, Song "has turned the genre inside out to show us how shallow these stories can be." She's exploring "the limits of what love can do for someone," and there's a chance here that both suitors are bad options for our heroine. Johnson's Lucy is a professional matchmaker who's grown cynical about love, and it's a fitting role, said Amy Nicholson in the *Los Angeles Times*. The actress "excels at playing skeptics who are privately amused by the shenanigans of attaching yourself to another person." Lucy, torn between a suave finance guy (Pascal) and a struggling actor (Evans), decided long ago that she'd only marry for money, and the film's "ferociously hilarious" first hour has its jaded heroine saying and doing "all the crass things that usually belong to the rom-com villainess." Alas, Song starts repeating herself, then "slaps on a happy ending that you simply don't think she believes." But even though the film forfeits its chance to become a "fascinatingly bleak" take on hetero relationships, said Richard Lawson in *Vanity Fair*, "*Materialists* is successfully seductive, eventually revealing a few potential deal-breakers but otherwise proving an engaging date. I wanted to fall in love, as I had with *Past Lives*. But a diverting, heady fling will do, too."

Call Me Izzy

Studio 54, New York City ★★★★★

The appeal of Broadway's latest one-woman show "lies entirely with its beguiling star," said Naveen Kumar in *The Washington Post*. Jean Smart, a recent three-time Emmy winner returning to Broadway for the first time in a quarter century, plays every role, including the title character, a Louisiana woman who lives in a trailer park and writes verse in secret to escape detection by her abusive husband. And while Jamie Wax's Southern Gothic-tinged script "treads familiar territory," Smart "lends Izzy's tin-eared poetry a soaring lyricism and Wax's trope-heavy script the texture of a character study. The sum total is transfixing."

"Smart may have chosen the play because it allows her to flex different muscles than she does as the voraciously ambitious, and sometimes vicious, Deborah Vance in *Hacks*," said Charles Isherwood in *The Wall Street Journal*. The 73-year-old star switches between a half dozen or so characters, including Izzy's abusive husband, and she's "convincingly menacing when she channels him." From start to finish, "it's a terrific performance, but one that remains constrained by the material's limitations."



Smart's downtrodden poet

In the end, "few things are more dreary than a one-person show that insists on being miserable," said Jackson McHenry in *NYMag.com*. Screen stars Sarah Snook and Andrew Scott avoided that trap with their ongoing or recent solo Broadway turns in *Dorian Gray* and *Vanya*. But while Smart has comparable talent, "she's stuck in a production that has little idea what to do with it, other than subject her character to grim and unenlightening suffering." The dialogue "aims at the Southern baroque of Flannery O'Connor or Tennessee Williams, achieving it only in fits," and "no matter how much gravitas Smart brings to Wax's lines, they're hopelessly mundane."

Video games



Mario Kart World

Today's video game industry "needs a paradigm shift, not a new, slightly better version of what we already have," said Emily Palmer Heller in *NYMag.com*. But that doesn't mean that there's no value in the Switch 2 that Nintendo released early this month or the one new game that fully takes advantage of the hardware update to the world's most popular handheld console. *Mario Kart World*, Nintendo's follow-up to the mega-selling, decade-old *Mario Kart 8*, "combines the best of *Mario Kart* racing with the best of its Battle modes," while the \$450 Switch 2 delivers more processing power, a bigger screen with better resolution, plus a few other "unsexy" tweaks that seem underwhelming until you've experienced the total effect of the upgrades.

"It's the world at the heart of *Mario Kart World* that makes it feel truly new," said Andrew Webster in *The Verge*. Since the franchise launched in 1992, *Mario Kart* players have been able to choose any of several tracks to race their go-karts on, but for the first time the tracks now exist all in one world. That change "gives rise to my favorite addition to *World*," a new mode called Knockout Tour in which, while as many as 24 players compete, the race moves from track to track, and to avoid being eliminated you have to be close enough to the leaders whenever a gate pops up behind them. That twist "managed to create a new kind of thrill." Still, playing *Mario Kart World* doesn't feel "substantially different" from playing the original *Mario Kart*, said Yussef Cole in *The New York Times*. In every rendition, "the *Mario Kart* games are toys, things to pick up and play, to boop and to beep, before putting them back down again."

Streaming tips**Nonconfrontational reality TV****Taskmaster**

This masterpiece of a reality show has now aired in the U.K. for 10 years. Contestants, mostly comedians, are challenged to complete absurd tasks, such as writing a song about a stranger, or slicing a loaf of bread without a knife, or creating a real-world simulation of a classic video game. The results are reliably hilarious. *YouTube*

The Gentle Art of Swedish Death Cleaning

No, contestants aren't made to clean under pain of death. Instead, one American at a time is visited by a trio of Swedish experts who help clients clear out the junk in their homes so that someday, when they're gone, their relatives won't have to. The show is therapeutic in more ways than one. *Peacock*

Alone

Many reality shows teem with loudmouth confrontation. In this long-running, never-dull series, conflicts are either internal or with the elements as each contestant is dropped in a remote location, provided spare supplies, and motivated by the cash prize for whoever lasts the longest. *Hulu*

Clarkson's Farm

Jeremy Clarkson is well known in the U.K. as brash, pompous, and occasionally objectionable. In this immensely entertaining series, the *Top Gear* host is served generous helpings of humble pie as he tries to start a working farm. *Prime*

The Great Pottery Throw Down

"Those angry ceramicists," said no one ever. Potters sling clay rather than insults in this soothing reality competition, rising to challenges to create tea sets, amphoras, and other works of art. *Max*

Jury Duty

Part *The Truman Show*, part *Punk'd*, this fun 2023 series put an unwitting American man on the jury of a phony trial. The 11 fake jurors test him, but the sweet-natured mark never cracks. *Amazon*

The Week's guide to what's worth watching**Ironheart**

Riri Williams is well-suited for heroic work. In this new Marvel miniseries, Dominique Thorne reprises her role from *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*. Her Riri is a brilliant young Black woman who has studied at MIT and interned in Wakanda. She's now home in Chicago seeking to build another high-tech robotic suit like Iron Man's when she becomes entangled with the Hood, a criminal with magical powers, setting up a showdown. Anthony Ramos co-stars. *Tuesday, June 24, Disney+*

My Mom Jayne

Mariska Hargitay was a nepo baby long before the term was coined. But her mother, Hollywood bombshell Jayne Mansfield, died in a car accident at 34 when the future *Law & Order: SVU* star was just 3. Almost six decades later, Hargitay seeks to look beyond her mother's public persona and discover the woman she barely knew. And through home footage and interviews with her older siblings, she finds her. *Friday, June 27, HBO and Max*

Smoke

In this new thriller series created by crime novelist Dennis Lehane and based on a true story, a revered arson investigator played by Taron Egerton is leading the hunt for two serial arsonists in the Pacific Northwest when he's reluctantly paired with a gifted detective played by Jurnee Smollett. Soon, his new partner suspects that he knows more about the fires' source than he's letting on. With John Leguizamo, Greg Kinnear, and Anna Chlumsky. *Friday, June 27, Apple TV+*

Squid Game

The game is almost over. Though he has survived countless deadly challenges, hero Gi-hun has paid a heavy price, losing close friends and loved ones along the way. In mourning and despairing after a failed rebellion against Front Man, his nemesis, Gi-hun will face the game's most gruesome challenges yet. *Friday, June 27, Netflix*



Egerton and Smollett in 'Smoke'

Shark Whisperer

Ocean Ramsey wants to prove that sharks aren't monsters. The free-diving marine conservationist has millions of social media followers who've been drawn to dramatic images of her swimming unprotected with tiger sharks and great whites. Ramsey says she's doing it to raise awareness about the endangered predators' plight, but critics say she cares less about science than chasing likes, and some predict an end similar to that of *Grizzly Man*. This documentary surveys Ramsey from all angles. *Monday, June 30, Netflix*

Other highlights Countdown

Jessica Camacho (*Taken*) and Jensen Ackles (*Supernatural*) co-star in a new action series about an L.A. task force racing to foil a mass-destruction event. *Wednesday, June 25, Prime*

Human Footprint

Biologist Shane Campbell-Staton continues his study of humans' impact with a look at how supermarkets have affected the planet. *Wednesday, June 25, at 9 p.m., PBS; check local listings*

Nautilus

It's drama at 20,000 leagues under the sea in this new British series, which imagines Jules Verne's Captain Nemo escaping a deep-sea penal colony and seeking revenge against his captors. *Sunday, June 29, at 9 p.m., AMC/AMC+*

Show of the week**The Bear**

Dining out is easy, restauranting is hard. After much sweat and sacrifice, Chef Carmy and his kitchen staff have realized the dream of turning a family-owned Italian beef sandwich shop into a fine dining restaurant worthy of top critics' attention. But the reviews are now in, and the Bear has a problem with consistency. The money also isn't coming in quickly enough, leading Uncle Jimmy to set up a kitchen clock ticking down to the moment that funds will run dry. Can the team figure out in Season 4 how to run a world-class restaurant? With Jeremy Allen White and Ebon Moss-Bachrach. *Wednesday, June 25, Hulu*



Moss-Bachrach and White: Manager and chef

Critics' choice: Carrying the flag

Burnt Bean Co. Seguin, Texas

Texas barbecue has a new flagbearer, and you'll be happy to hear that it's an all-day operation, said Daniel Vaughn in *Texas Monthly*. Burnt Bean Co. is just five years old, but it "feels like a museum of small-town Texas, with barbecue perfection the main exhibit," and you can stop in for three meals a day. We visited 319 barbecue joints across the state before putting David Kirkland and Ernest Servantes' operation atop our magazine's quadrennial Top 50 list, and the champ's run to the crown began with a breakfast of brisket huevos rancheros, followed by a lunch featuring housemade sausage and slices of thick, moist turkey. We have only praise for the pork ribs and brisket, yet the weekend-only beef-rib dishes, including a pile of sticky-sweet Korean back ribs, "stole the show." If you're able to make the 40-minute drive from San Antonio, you should, because the deliciousness lasts all the way through dessert. "One million words have been written about the bourbon peach cobbler taco, and they all fail to capture how truly great it is." 108 S. Austin St.

Danny & Coop's New York City

"The important thing to know about Danny & Coop's is this: The cheesesteak is good. It's *very* good," said Helen Rosner in *The New Yorker*. The fact that actor Bradley Cooper co-owns the East Village



An aproned Cooper inside Danny & Coop's

storefront (and sometimes mans the grill) mostly just tells you how serious the man is about Philly cheesesteak optimization. To give New York a taste of Philly's very best, Cooper teamed with chef and baker Danny DiGiampietro, who overthrew Philly's cheesesteak hierarchy in 2019 when he opened Angelo's Pizzeria and showed the landmark joints what higher aspirations can achieve. Danny & Coop's was a food truck before it went brick and mortar in December, and it's still drawing long lines for its only menu item: a 12-inch sesame-seed roll split lengthwise and filled with "a glorious gloop" of melted cheese plus thin-sliced ribeye steak woven with sweet ribbons of griddled onions. As good as this

sandwich's insides are, "the real miracle" is the crisp-crust salty, sour house-baked roll. The result is easily the best cheesesteak I've ever had in New York and, because it so closely resembles DiGiampietro's original standard-setter, "just as good as the best one I've had in Philadelphia." 151 Ave. A

Alinea Chicago

Though it remains "the most important fine dining establishment in Chicago," Grant Achatz's modernist tasting-menu restaurant is, after 20 years, "not at its best," said Louisa Kung Liu Chu in the *Chicago Tribune*. After two recent dinners, each costing nearly \$500, "I was left wondering why so many dishes were so salty or so sweet or left the aftertaste of so much black truffle." There were some delights. A course of shredded rabbit leg with *socarrat*, the well-done rice at the bottom of paella, was "exquisitely delicious," and the Wagyu beef short rib served with eggplant glazed in a puree of Okinawan sweet potato, though a touch sweet itself, offered "a stunning play on meat and potatoes." But does the menu really need a second truffle showpiece besides the Explosion, an "ethereal" single-bite soup dumpling? And is the helium-filled balloon made of green-apple sugar really more than a single-note dessert-time spectacle? Alinea made its reputation on "constant culinary world-building." It may be time for a rebuild. 1723 N. Halsted St.

Recipe of the week

This salad is a wonderful way to enjoy plums before they're fully in season and fully ripened, said Kelly Song in *Cook's Country*. We sear them on a skillet, combine them with a bed of mint and cilantro, then toss everything in "a lip-puckering, irresistible dressing" of lime juice, sugar, sesame oil, and Thai chilis.

Caramelized plums with chili and herbs

¼ cup vegetable oil, divided • ¾ tsp sugar, divided • 1 tbsp lime juice • 1 or 2 Thai chilis, stemmed and sliced thin • 1½ tsp grated fresh ginger • ½ tsp toasted sesame oil • ½ tsp table salt, divided • 1 lb ripe but firm plums, halved and pitted, each half cut into 4 wedges • 3 cups fresh cilantro leaves and tender stems, cut into 1½-inch lengths • 2 cups fresh mint leaves, large leaves torn into 1-inch pieces • 2 tbsp dry-roasted peanuts, chopped coarse • 2 tsp sesame seeds, toasted

■ Whisk 3 tbsp vegetable oil, 1½ tsp sugar, lime juice, Thai chili, ginger, sesame oil, and ¼ tsp salt in large bowl until smooth and creamy. Reserve 2 tbsp dressing in small bowl; set bowls aside.

■ Toss plum wedges with remaining 1 tbsp vegetable oil, 2 tsp sugar, and ¼ tsp salt in cold 12-inch nonstick skillet until evenly coated, then arrange wedges cut side down in even layer. Cook over medium-high heat, without moving, until wedges are well

browned on first cut side, 4 to 5 minutes.

■ Using tongs, carefully flip wedges and continue to cook until second cut side is well browned, 2 to 3 minutes longer. Remove skillet from heat.

■ Add cilantro and mint to large bowl with dressing and toss until herbs are evenly coated. Arrange herb mixture on serving platter and top with plum wedges. Drizzle plums with reserved dressing. Sprinkle with peanuts and sesame seeds. Serves 4 to 6.



Wine: A starter pack

To hear some people talk about wine, you'd never know it's simply a fun, delicious drink, said Eric Asimov in *The New York Times*. Sure, "wine does deserve academic discussion." But I propose a starter pack of wines for anyone who's cowed by pretentious wine talk. "These are not bottles to study, they are joyous wines to love now."

2023 Ampeleia Toscana Rosso Unilitro (\$23). Sold in a 1-liter bottle, this Tuscan red blend is "juicy and joyous," and it's "wonderful cold with all kinds of food."

2024 ColleStefano Verdicchio di Matelica (\$20). This dry white, which showcases Italy's verdicchio grape, is "thirst-quenching yet complex and delicious." Besides, "it feels great to just roll it around in the mouth."

2024 Gulp/Hablo (\$21). A great introduction to orange wine, this Spanish pleaser is "a liter bottle of bright, lively tanginess with just a little rasp of tannin."



2026 Aston Martin Vantage Roadster: What the critics say

Motor Trend

When you drive the new Vantage Roadster, “keeping a cap on broad smiles becomes a futile exercise.” The ragtop edition of a “super-fun, big-power, rear-wheel-drive tarmac scorchers,” the Roadster “stakes its claim to being included on any enthusiast’s fantasy garage list, and not simply because it’s a beautiful car.” The hard-top Vantage performs at a level that puts it beyond a standard Porsche 911 Carrera S and “nearer to marques like Ferrari and McLaren.” And its performance is uncompromised by the roof’s removal.

Car and Driver

The folding roof goes up or down in just 6.8 seconds, “making it the fastest fully automatic

deployable roof mechanism on the market today.” Leaving it down “ramps up the hedonism factor significantly,” both because of the open sky and because the car’s 656-hp twin-turbo V-8 emits “one of the most seductive exhaust notes extant.” Like the coupe, the Roadster hits 60 in well under 4 seconds and maxes out at 202 mph. Meanwhile, “there’s no escaping the near transcendent experience served up by its capable front-engine rear-drive chassis.”

Road & Track

Because the lively rear end fights for traction on corkscrew roads, “frequent adrenaline spikes will come as standard for any Vantage buyer.” That just adds to the fun. The Roadster can be practical too, feeling “as snug and



Alfresco thrills, from \$210,000 (est.)

well-insulated as the coupe” when you close the top. But we don’t mean to oversell that point. “Roadster buyers should drive with their roofs down as often as possible.”

The best of...summer accessories

Crocs LiteRide 360 Pacer

These water shoes “look and feel like a regular pair of sneakers,” and are made from EVA foam so light they “feel like nothing.” They go from “soaking wet to bone dry” in just over an hour. From \$17, [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)
Source: Wirecutter



Coolibar UPF 50+ Carolina Summer Cloche

The elegantly shaped Carolina cloche “looks great on the beach,” with a bikini, or with any sunny-day outfit. Made of woven raffia, its 3-inch brim offers “full face and neck coverage without feeling overbearing.” \$69, [coolibar.com](https://www.coolibar.com)
Source: Oprah Daily

Labubu Dolls, aka The Monsters

Labubus are this summer’s style mascots, adorning handbags worldwide. Unfortunately, you can’t get your hands on one “without putting up a bit of a fight.” Try Pop Mart’s one-day “blind box” sales to snag small Labubus or expect big markups from resellers. \$28, [popmart.com](https://www.popmart.com)
Source: BuzzFeed



Mark & Graham Hat Carrier Beach Bag

This “fashion-savvy” bag is “ingeniously designed” so that its straps let you tote a wide-brim hat without crushing it. And with its spacious interior, “you won’t have to choose between packing a towel or your beach read.” \$99, [markandgraham.com](https://www.markandgraham.com)
Source: Condé Nast Traveler

TYR Wrinkle-Free Silicone Swim Cap

Olympic gold medalists Katie Ledecky and Bobby Finke love this cap for practice sessions. It’s comfortable, “helps protect hair from harsh chemicals,” and doesn’t wrinkle, reducing drag while you’re swimming. \$17.50, [swimoutlet.com](https://www.swimoutlet.com)
Source: Good Housekeeping



Tip of the week...

How to soundproof a room

- **Invest in window inserts.** “In a perfect world,” you’d cut street noise entering your home by swapping out older windows for double-pane or even triple-pane windows. For a simpler fix, order clear-acrylic custom-made inserts, like those from Indow. They reduce noise by 50% to 70%.
- **Hang sound-deadening curtains.** While all heavy curtains absorb sound, “dedicated noise-reducing curtains may be a better choice.”
- **Add carpeting.** While rugs and carpets don’t keep sound from entering a room, they do absorb sound reflections. To boost the effect, use rug pads made from noise-muffling materials.
- **Add spray-foam insulation.** Installed in walls, ceilings, or floors, blow-in foam “can do wonders to reduce sound.”
- **Use a fan or sound machine.** “Sometimes your best bet is actually fighting noise with more noise—white noise, that is.” A fan or sound machine muffles the effect of bothersome background noises and car horns or barking dogs. Source: Architectural Digest

And for those who have everything...

When Albrecht Dürer created his celebrated 1515 woodcut image of a rhinoceros, he was working in only two dimensions.

Dürer’s Rhino, a limited-edition 16-inch-long sculpture created by the London jeweler Asprey Studio, reimagines the creature in three. In solid silver, no less. The project took eight months to complete, as silversmiths translated Dürer’s image into 90 pieces, combining high-tech modeling techniques and old-world hand-finishing. Most Europeans had never seen a rhino when Dürer’s woodcut spread across the continent, including the artist himself. That explains the armor-like anatomical details that make his rendering timeless.

\$135,000, [aspreystudio.com](https://www.aspreystudio.com)
Source: The Times (U.K.)



Best apps...

For AI help with reading chores

- **Claude** outperformed other AI bots when we tested its capacity to read and summarize various written documents. Tested on short fiction, legal contracts, medical research, and two Donald Trump speeches, it edged out ChatGPT. Also, “it was the only model that never hallucinated,” meaning it didn’t invent any information.
- **ChatGPT** excelled at politics and literature “but ranked near the bottom in law,” because it overlooked an important clause about intellectual property. We scored it 68.4 vs. Claude’s 69.9, meaning each had only a D+.
- **Gemini** bombed on fiction, delivering an “inaccurate, misleading, and sloppy” story summary.
- **Copilot** was bamboozled by Trump’s rally speech, “failing to capture its charged nature” while also incorrectly reporting how many new jobs he promised.
- **Meta AI** did well with Trump’s prose but fared poorly enough on law and medicine to finish with a score of 45, last overall. Source: The Washington Post



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Best Properties on the Market

This week: Homes with great offices



1 ◀ Charlotte, N.C. The second-floor office in this renovated 1929 Colonial with Federal elements has a barrel ceiling, floor-to-ceiling shelving, a Palladian window, and a balcony. The five-bedroom home also features a kitchen with Calacatta marble counters and a Wolf range. The leafy half-acre lot in Myers Park includes a bluestone patio with a kitchen, covered porches, and a backyard; city dining and shops are 10 minutes away. \$4,600,000. Anne Bell, Cottingham Chalk/Luxury Portfolio International, (704) 654-0979



2 ▶ Edgewater, Md. This 2000 four-bedroom Colonial features an office with a bay window, wood floors, built-ins, crown molding, and paned French doors. A stacked-stone fireplace anchors the living room, which connects to a foyer with columns and a wrought-iron staircase. The property, on a cul-de-sac in a golf community about 30 minutes from Annapolis, has a yard and mature trees; shared amenities include golf, pools, and sports courts. \$2,150,000. Jennifer McCormick, Engel & Völkers Annapolis, (443) 852-0323



3 ◀ Portland, Ore. On the main floor of this Mission-inflected modern four-bedroom is an office with a gas fireplace, Saltillo tile floors, and French exterior doors. The house also has a double-height living room with a wall of windows framing Mt. Hood. The lot abuts almost 40 acres of forest and includes a pool, three saunas, a cold plunge, hot tub, and an eight-car garage; downtown is about 15 minutes away. \$2,750,000. Shannon Baird and Atika Hagen, Windermere Realty Trust/Luxury Portfolio International, (503) 799-5095

Best Properties on the Market

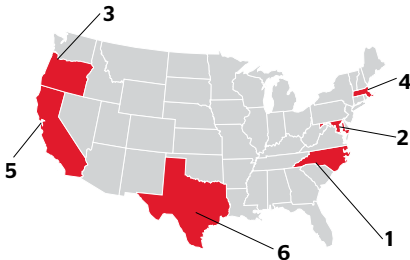


4 ◀ Marblehead, Mass. There are two offices in this 1890 Victorian on Marblehead Neck—one a shared workspace with wraparound windows, and the other a wood-paneled room with coffered ceilings, a wood-burning fireplace, and ocean views. The updated six-bedroom also has a kitchen with high-end appliances and a circular, bay-windowed breakfast nook. Just under a half acre, the lot has a firepit, hot tub, sports court, and carriage-house garage topped by a bedroom and gym. \$4,995,000. Haley Paster Scimone, Sagan Harborside Sotheby's International Realty, (781) 367-5523

5 ▶ San Francisco This renovated one-bedroom condo in a 1924 art deco building in Russian Hill has an office with curving, polished teak built-ins, a banquette, and city views. The full-floor apartment features wenge hardwood floors, arcing wood walls, and large living room windows with San Francisco Bay views. It's a short walk to a green space and a 15-minute stroll to City Lights bookstore. \$3,995,000. Gregg Lynn, Sotheby's International Realty—San Francisco Brokerage, (415) 595-4734



Lunghi Studio



Steal of the week



6 ◀ Austin The terrazzo-tiled entry of this 1971 ranch house in Quail Park connects to an office with double windows framing tree views. The retro single-story four-bedroom also features a sunken living room with a floor-to-ceiling

brick fireplace, wood beams, and glass sliders. Outside are patios and native landscaping, including oak, fig, and magnolia trees; Q2 Stadium, a shopping mall, and a YMCA are nearby. \$525,000. Ami Davis, @properties/Christie's International Real Estate, (512) 297-8251

The News at a Glance

The bottom line

■ This year so far, China's trade surplus with the world is nearly \$500 billion—a more than 40% increase from the same period last year. Its exports of electric vehicles have soared 64.6% this year. *The New York Times*

■ As of 2023, there were about 2.1 million year-round full-time workers in the U.S. with bachelor's degrees who first came here on a student visa. They earned a median salary of \$115,000, compared with an \$87,000 median for native-born workers with at least a college degree. *Axios*

■ A nonprofit led by Anne Wojcicki won a bid to acquire DNA testing company 23andMe for \$305 million, putting Wojcicki back in charge of the pioneering firm she led until it declared bankruptcy in March. *CNN.com*



■ Meetings after 8 p.m. are up 16% from last year, according to Microsoft's Work Trend Index Special Report. The report found that during the regular workday, knowledge workers are interrupted by messages or alerts every 1.75 minutes, or 275 times a day. *Axios*

■ Total fossil fuel financing hit \$869 billion in 2024, with two-thirds of the world's largest 65 banks increasing lending to fossil fuel projects. Four of the five largest fossil fuel financiers last year were American companies, with JPMorgan Chase lending the most, at \$53.5 billion. *The Guardian*

■ The U.S. became Japan's largest sake export market by volume last year. Shipments surged 23% from 2023, driven by fine-dining demand, according to a sake makers' organization. *Bloomberg*

Sales pitch: A smartphone from Trump Inc.

The new Trump phone won't be made in America, said Wilson Rothman and Ben Raab in *The Wall Street Journal*. The president's sons, Eric and Don Jr., announced this week that the Trump Organization will launch a mobile-phone service called Trump Mobile and sell a Trump-branded smartphone, the T1, beginning in August. Despite the Trump Organization's promises, beating the iPhone's specs at the T1's \$499 price point is a "tall order." But there's one thing the T1 and iPhone share: Both are made overseas. Eric Trump walked back Trump Organization claims that the phone will be manufactured "in Alabama, Florida, and California," suggesting that would "eventually" be the case, but "the



The T1—in gold, of course

first wave" of phones will likely get made in China. The Oval Office sales parade continues, said Timothy L. O'Brien in *Bloomberg*. Trump's financial disclosure forms reveal "he personally earned \$57.7 million from his family's crypto dealings last year." He also made "tens of millions of dollars in royalty payments from Trump-branded watches, sneakers, fragrances" and other products. Trump has always lent his name, but the wheeling and dealing "now just takes place inside the White House." He has already used his power to reward the biggest holders of his \$TRUMP coin. A Trump phone shows there is no stopping the "raw financial conflict of interest that shreds the integrity of his office."

Food: Consumer giants will remove artificial dyes

Kraft Heinz and General Mills said this week they would remove synthetic color additives from their products by 2027, said Mary Kekatos in *ABCNews.com*. Both food producers said only "a small portion" of their products contain artificial food dyes, which are approved by the Food and Drug Administration, including brands such as Jell-O and Kool-Aid. The issue has been a focus of Health Secretary Robert Kennedy Jr., who in April "unveiled a plan to start phasing out eight synthetic food dyes from the American food supply," citing some links to cancer in animals.

Extra time: Trump gives TikTok another 90 days

The Trump administration said this week that it would extend TikTok's lifeline by another 90 days, said Sapna Maheshwari in *The New York Times*. Trump is giving the Chinese video app another three months "to find a new owner to comply with a federal law" that banned the company from operating in the U.S. because of national security concerns. The Supreme Court upheld the ban passed by Congress last year, but President Trump has already twice used executive orders to delay enforcing it. TikTok, which has about 135 million users in the U.S., "is part of ongoing trade talks with China."

Aerospace: Boeing pulls back after Dreamliner crash

Boeing canceled executives' appearances and "scaled back plans for any commercial announcements" at the Paris Air Show this week after one of its jets was involved in a deadly crash in India, said Leen Al-Rashdan in *Bloomberg*. Rival firm Airbus took advantage of owning the spotlight at the biennial civil aviation showcase. It quickly booked "orders from Saudi Arabian customers valued at as much as \$17 billion" and sold 40 planes to Poland. Indian investigators are examining whether engine failure was responsible for the Boeing Dreamliner 787-8 crash last week that killed 241 passengers.

Arm-twisting: X brings back ads with lawsuit threats

Elon Musk has used an "extraordinary pressure campaign" to force advertisers back to X, said Suzanne Vranica in *The Wall Street Journal*. "At least six companies," including Verizon, have struck deals with X after getting legal threats. X has sued companies it accuses of "illegally colluding with one another on an ad boycott." Verizon pledged to spend \$10 million to avoid being added to the lawsuit; Lego, by contrast, rebuffed X's threat and is now being sued. X's ad revenue remains lower than it was when Musk took control in 2022.

A gold medal for slinging lattes

Starbucks filled an arena with spectators to witness its first "barista championship," said Heather Haddon in *The Wall Street Journal*. Extravagant coffee-making competitions have been around for decades, but Starbucks held its first intracompany contest in Las Vegas last week. More than 84,000 baristas entered the caffeinated competition, but only 12 were chosen to "dazzle clipboard-toting judges" in front of 14,000 "fans"—and even announcers. Starbucks didn't take the competition lightly. It "paid for coaches for its competitors to refine their skills ahead of the showcase." In the signature drink round, attendees were surprised with drink additions "like apple juice and a secret sauce of Japanese yuzu." For years, Scandinavians ruled "the international coffee competition scene." But in the championship, the four finalists hailed from China, Japan, and Jordan. Japanese barista Nobuki Shimode took the top prize with his "Blooming Yuzu Espresso."

Making Money

Home energy: Higher rates, fewer tax credits

It's going to cost a lot to stay cool this summer, said **Matthew Zeitlin** in *Heatmap News*. As temperatures rise, there will be "significant hikes" in electricity prices for households now competing with "the increased demand for energy from computing and factories." Nationwide electricity prices were up 4.5% in May from a year earlier—making your AC one of the biggest remaining sources of inflation. New Jersey recently announced "hundreds of millions of dollars of relief to alleviate rate increases as high as 20%" set to take effect this summer. Meanwhile, the federal tax legislation in the GOP's "big, beautiful bill" is set to roll back credits for renewable energy investments, threatening alternative sources of electricity production. Some analysts think that will also produce "higher electricity and energy prices across the board."



AI data centers are putting new demands on power producers.

Blame AI for a chunk of that added expense, said **Ivan Penn** in *The New York Times*. "Electricity demand in some parts of the United States is expected to increase as much as 15% over the next four years after several decades of little or no growth." The catalyst is almost entirely from new data centers, which require exorbitant amounts of electricity to power fans that keep their computer servers cool. A report from energy research firm Wood Mackenzie last month found that 20 large power users

(including data centers and factories) paid less money to utilities than was required "to cover the cost of the equipment needed to serve them." You know who is picking up the rest of the tab, said **Ryan Dezember** in *The Wall Street Journal*. On average, Americans will pay \$186 per month this summer to power their homes, up more than 25% from four years ago. "New England—where a dearth of gas pipelines keeps energy prices among the highest in the country—should see the biggest jump in monthly bills, up 6.7% from last year to about \$200."

You'd think this would drive more Americans to make the plunge into rooftop solar, said **Jeff St. John** in *Canary Media*. But the solar industry is teetering. Two of the largest firms, Sunnova and Mosaic, have declared bankruptcy in recent days. A \$3 billion guaranteed loan from the Biden administration wasn't enough to save Sunnova, which leaves millions of customers hanging. Congress is now threatening to "terminate the 30% tax credit available to households installing solar panels" as well as the 30% credit for "companies that lease solar panels to households and businesses," a huge blow to the business models of major firms like Sunnova and Sunrun. It's left the future of solar looking cloudier than ever.

What the experts say

■ The quiet rise of the 'model portfolio'

Most wealth advisers are following a surprising script, said Jack Pitcher in *The Wall Street Journal*. More than 80% of fee-based advisers in the U.S. use model portfolios for at least some of their clients' assets, covering some \$8 trillion in investments. The investment templates crafted by money managers at firms like UBS and Morgan Stanley can "run a classic allocation of 60% stocks and 40% bonds split across a dozen funds," or get a bit more esoteric. When BlackRock added an iShares' exchange-traded fund to one of its popular models, "assets surged more than tenfold," a sign of how many advisers are "outsourcing their investment decisions." If you want the benefits of a model portfolio without wealth advisers' high fees, you have options: Vanguard now recommends some of its models to customers, "with fees maxing out at 0.2% a year for an index-only portfolio."

■ New tariffs will hit home appliances

The price of washing machines, refrigerators, and other household appliances could soon be going up, said Ana Swanson and Alan Rappeport in *The New York Times*. The Commerce Department last week announced an expansion of the 50% tariff on steel to

include so-called steel derivative products, starting June 23. It's "one of the first times that everyday consumer goods" have been "specifically targeted" by President Trump's trade policies. Dishwashers, stoves, dryers, and garbage disposals made abroad will all be affected. But Trump has taken aim at a household staple before. He imposed tariffs specifically on foreign-made washing machines during his first term.

■ 'Surge pricing' at the zoo?

The "dynamic pricing" long embraced by airlines and hotels has come to attractions like zoos, museums, and aquariums, said Harriet Baskas in *NBCNews.com*. Under dynamic pricing, an algorithm makes prices rise or fall based on demand. At the Seattle Aquarium, out-of-state ticket prices now vary from \$37.95 to \$46.95, depending on "relative ticket availability." One pricing contractor that works with more than 70 attractions worldwide offers daily pricing recommendations that can consider "everything from weather to capacity constraints and even Google Analytics search patterns." Struggling museums say they need "novel ways of filling budget gaps" with attendance still down since the pandemic.

Charity of the week



A nonprofit founded in 1812 is home to more than 4.5 million pre-20th-century printed records from the United States, the Caribbean, and Canada. Based in Worcester, Mass., the **American Antiquarian Society** (americanantiquarian.org) has assembled the world's most extensive collection of books, newspapers, music, graphic arts, and more dating from that early period of U.S. history. Many have been brought into the digital era; one project digitized more than 15,000 pages of diaries, poems, and stories written by 19th-century children. The AAS offers year- and monthlong fellowships to postdoctoral and doctoral academics and four-week fellowships to artists of all kinds—poets, painters, journalists, filmmakers, and others—whose work involves American historical research. And the society's library is accessible not just to scholars but to any visitor over 18 years old.

Each charity we feature has earned a four-star overall rating from Charity Navigator, which rates not-for-profit organizations on the strength of their finances, their governance practices, and the transparency of their operations. Four stars is the group's highest rating.

Economy: Inflation stable as labor market weakens

“A run of better-than-expected indicators” suggests that so far tariffs haven’t hurt the economy as badly as people feared, said **Courtenay Brown** and **Neil Irwin** in *Axios*. Last week’s federal data showed consumer prices rising 2.4% in May from the year prior, “extending a monthslong streak” of moderating inflation. And tax receipts are up 15% from a year ago despite IRS cuts—a sign that the U.S. is still buzzing with economic activity. We’ve been hearing about the tariff bogeyman for months, said **Tiana Lowe Doescher** in the *Washington Examiner*. But all inflation has done since Trump took office is drop—from 3% in January to 2.4% today. “The inflation data hasn’t looked this good since the last time Trump was president.” At the same time, average weekly wages are up 1.3% in the first five months of the year. “That has translated to a pay raise for workers.”



The Fed faces increasing pressure to cut rates.

Things may look good for inflation because business are shouldering the cost of the tariffs, said **Brooke Sutherland** in *Bloomberg*. “In the latest edition of the National Association of Manufacturers’ quarterly survey, 89% of companies said tariffs had increased the cost of doing business by an average of about 8%,” and 40% of them said they had paused or canceled investments as a result. Trump’s deportation campaign also complicates the economic picture, said **Jamie McGeever** in *Reuters*. “Employment in May fell by 696,000 jobs,” the biggest drop since the pandemic. But “economists argue that the recent drop is a consequence of Trump’s immigration crackdown.” Falling immigration means that the headline unemployment rate could

stay low even if the economy weakens and job growth slows.

Ignore the tariff risks at your own peril, said **Rick Newman** in *Yahoo Finance*. “Trump has raised the average tax on imports from 2.5% to about 16%,” and the 90-day China truce is ending soon. We’re already seeing signs of “dormant” inflation awakening. Thanks to tariffs on Chinese imports, prices for goods like apparel, electronics, and toys are up 0.4%—little enough that consumers might not notice, “but that represents a reversal of deflationary trends.” Still, five months of falling inflation “makes a meaningful trend” in my book, said **Allison Schrager** in *Bloomberg*. It may seem premature to declare “mission accomplished” on inflation, considering the risk of tariffs down the road, but “declaring victory now will make it easier” for the Federal Reserve to prepare in case another round of inflation is coming.

It’s time for the Fed to start cutting interest rates, said **Greg Ip** in *The Wall Street Journal*. Yes, tariffs can raise prices, “which weakens the case for cutting.” But at this point, tariffs or not, the Fed should be less concerned with inflation than with a labor market that’s now clearly “showing cracks.” The Fed has kept its interest rate target steady since December, worried that any cut could spur inflation again. But the unemployment rate has risen every month since January and is on pace to reach 4.6% by year’s end. Layoffs are picking up—and that’s not even including cuts in the federal workforce. Inflation is no longer “all the Fed has to worry about.”

Sports leagues are picking fans’ pockets

Joon Lee
The New York Times

The sports industry is draining the fun and affordability out of being a fan, said **Joon Lee**. To simply follow my beloved Boston teams today, I have to subscribe to “nearly every service there is”—YouTube TV, MLB.TV, NBA League Pass, NFL Sunday Ticket, Peacock, Apple TV+, Max, Amazon Prime, Paramount. It costs me \$2,634 a year. And still I couldn’t watch the Yankees play the Red Sox earlier this month unless I forked over another \$19.99 for some other obscure baseball-focused service. It didn’t have to be this way. Leagues could have “devised ways to pocket streamers’ cash” without allowing America’s favorite sports to be

“sliced and diced” and hidden behind never-ending paywalls. It’s beyond simply frustrating for fans at home. Sports bars are struggling to keep up with all the subscriptions they need, too, just to give patrons the communal rooting environment they want. “Going to a game is similarly growing out of reach.” Between May 2023 and May 2025, the average price of a seat across all sports rose 19.5%, one of the biggest jumps of any category tracked by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. That’s not an issue for the wealthy, who can still afford to sit courtside. But for everyone else, “belonging is for sale.”

The GOP now hates EVs more than taxes

Matt Bai
The Washington Post

A “dumb EV tax” is further proof that intellectual conservatism is dead, said **Matt Bai**. It has been “replaced by cowering, shiftless Trumpism” that is so afraid of electric cars that Republicans are proposing a \$250 annual tax for owning one. “Congressional Republicans say the policy is analogous to the federal gas tax that you pay at the pump, which is used for highway maintenance.” Owners of battery-powered cars contribute at least as much as owners of gas vehicles to wear on the roads, and they should shoulder some portion of the cost. This is a reasonable argument. The issue is “how they’re being asked to pay.” Think about it: Congress is

proposing to slap a tax on something you have already purchased, whether you drive it or not. “Not a single tax expert I spoke to could name another product that the federal government penalizes this way.” If Congress had limited the new tax only to EVs purchased going forward, then prospective owners would know it going in. Conservatives used to unite against Washington’s expansion of tax policy. But now the shoe is on the other foot. And be sure, Democrats, “armed with the precedent of the EV tax, will eventually turn around and impose their own punitive taxes” on anything they too would like to stamp out.

Obituaries

The troubled genius who powered the Beach Boys

Brian Wilson
1942-2025

Brian Wilson sang of a sun-drenched, carefree world that stood in striking contrast to his tormented inner life. In songs like “Fun, Fun, Fun,” “California Girls,” “Surfin’ U.S.A.,” and “I Get Around,” the Beach Boys leader wrote of a Southern California idyll where eternal surf beckoned and there were “two girls for every boy.” Their more than 30 Top 40 hits made the Beach Boys America’s top band of the mid-1960s. But in reality, Wilson was a troubled introvert who preferred the isolation of his bedroom to parties on the beach. He took a turn toward moody introspection—and made a quantum artistic leap for pop—with the 1966 album *Pet Sounds*, a masterpiece that influenced countless bands to follow. But his genius was eclipsed by a descent into drug abuse and psychological turmoil, as he grew paranoid and began hearing voices. “I have been living with mental illness for many decades,” he told fans when canceling a 2019 tour. “I’ve been struggling with stuff in my head and saying things I don’t mean, and I don’t know why.”

Wilson grew up in Hawthorne, Calif., an L.A. suburb, said *The Washington Post*. His father, a frustrated songwriter who sold heavy machinery, was a “tyrant and heavy drinker” and abused Brian physically and emotionally. Brian was a musical prodigy, teaching himself piano and writing his first song at age 5. Captivated as a teen by the intricate vocalizing of the Four Freshmen, Wilson enlisted his younger brothers Dennis and Carl to harmonize, making tapes on a portable recorder. The three formed a band along with their cousin Mike Love and friend Al Jardine; Dennis, a surfer, suggested that Wilson write them a surfing song. The result, “Surfin’,” was issued by a small label and became a local hit. Signed to Capitol Records, the Beach Boys won nationwide acclaim with the 1963 Chuck Berry homage “Surfin’ U.S.A.,” said *Rolling Stone*. With Brian as chief writer, producer, and arranger and often lead singer, they “rolled out hits like convertible Thunderbirds coming off an assembly line.”

Wilson’s musical sophistication shone through in the band’s



“harmony-drenched” arrangements, said *The New York Times*. But “signs of instability” emerged as well. After suffering a breakdown in 1964, he quit touring to focus on writing and “immersed himself in the studio.” Fueled by pot and LSD, he composed increasingly complex, intricate songs and recorded them using “a broad sonic palette” incorporating French horns, strings, and timpani. The result, *Pet Sounds*, was “an album of staggering technical and musical virtuosity,” said *The Times* (U.K.). Its “pocket symphonies” explored loss of innocence and disorientation—and inspired the Beatles’ *Sgt. Pepper*. Wilson followed it with the electrifying 1966 No. 1 single “Good Vibrations,” an “epic sound collage” featuring theremin and elaborately layered vocals.

Things went south from there, said the *Los Angeles Times*. Consuming “drugs by the bucketful,” Wilson slaved for months over a concept record called *Smile*, writing on a grand piano installed in a giant sandbox in his Bel Air mansion. But he was increasingly unstable, and he shelved the project and retreated into seclusion, ballooning to 300 pounds and spending days confined to bed. In the 1970s and again in the 1980s he fell under the care of Dr. Eugene Landy, a psychologist who moved into his mansion and controlled his every move. Wilson did show improvement, “but it was short-lived,” and Landy raised eyebrows not just with his Svengali-like control and staggering fees but with his insistence on production and co-writing credits for Wilson’s solo projects. Stripped of his license after a state investigation, Landy was blocked from seeing Wilson by a family lawsuit in 1992.

By the mid-1990s, Wilson was doing better, said *People*. He married Melinda Ledbetter, a former model he credited with rebuilding his life, and “embarked on a career resurgence.” Wilson released numerous solo albums and one with the Beach Boys, finally issued a version of *Smile*, and returned to the stage solo and for a 50th anniversary Beach Boys tour. Living up to his legend was always “a cross to bear,” he said in 1988. “‘Genius’ is a big word. But if you have to live up to something, you might as well live up to that.”

The journalist and spy who wrote best-selling thrillers

Frederick Forsyth
1938-2025

Frederick Forsyth didn’t set out to be a novelist. He sought adventure, not acclaim, and he found it as a war reporter and an informant for MI6.

It was only when he needed cash between reporting stints that he turned to writing spy thrillers. Yet his very first book, the 1971 blockbuster *The Day of the Jackal*, was a best-seller, as were nearly all of the dozen-plus novels and numerous short-story collections that followed. Forsyth’s Cold War characters were lone wolves who tangled with extremists and mercenaries and often struggled to maneuver through webs of power, wealth, and deceit. He said the research and the planning—he’d often spend six months preparing a novel before putting pen to paper—were the good parts. “I don’t even like writing,” he said. “The action of it is very tiring, then you’re shut away like some damn monk, on a glorious day, with the sun shining.”

Born in Ashford, England, Forsyth was bright but uninterested in school. While he “boasted he’d never read the classics,” said *The New York Times*, he absorbed languages, learning French, German, Spanish, and Russian. After high school, he did his mandatory military service with the Royal Air Force flying fighter jets, then turned



to life as a foreign correspondent. He traveled all over, informally working on the side for British intelligence. While he was covering the Nigerian civil war for the BBC, his editors criticized him for reporting the atrocities of the British-allied Nigerian government, and Forsyth quit. But he soon realized he “had a fund of *Boy’s Own*-style experiences to draw on” as a novelist, said *The Times* (U.K.). *The Day of the Jackal*, which he wrote in just 35 days, was inspired by his reporting on an assassination attempt on French President Charles de Gaulle. *The Dogs of War* (1974) was said to be based on his experience organizing a failed coup in Africa for the British government.

Forsyth published his last solo novel, *The Fox*, in 2018, and a sequel to *The Odessa File* (1972), written with Tony Kent, is scheduled to come out later this year. Still, he primarily considered himself a journalist, earning “a reputation as a rather pungent pundit,” said *The Guardian*. He continued writing a column for the right-wing tabloid *Daily Express* until he was 85, maintaining that he had valuable insights to offer his countrymen. “My father’s advice—if you want an interesting life, bloody well go out and get one—was good,” he said in 2018. “I did. And I’m glad I did.”

'Are the bricks evil?'

The Nazis built an idyllic village close to Berlin for SS members and their families, said **Sally McGrane** in **The New York Times**. Current residents are still reckoning with its history.

ONE MORNING IN January, Susanne Bucker, a family doctor in Berlin, woke up worried. National elections were approaching, and President Donald Trump's most vocal advocate, Elon Musk, was publicly supporting Germany's far-right party, the Alternative for Germany (or AfD), whose leaders have spouted Nazi slogans and downplayed the Holocaust. Bucker sent a letter to her neighbors.

"Tomorrow is the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz," she wrote, expressing her fear that fascism was again taking root in Germany. Over the next few weeks, about 40 neighbors got together, lighting candles in their front gardens as part of a nationwide "chain of lights" protest against hate and hanging pro-democracy signs in their windows.

"I think we have a special responsibility," Bucker, 62, said recently over a cup of tea, "because we live on an estate that was built by perpetrators, for perpetrators."

Their quiet little neighborhood, Waldsiedlung (or "Forest Estate") Krumme Lanke, is a sought-after place to live in the German capital. Named after an adjacent lake, its residents compare it to a fairy-tale village: Little peaked-roof cottages with wood shutters are built into a dense green forest crisscrossed by mossy paths. Whole swaths are carless. Children play in the gardens, while dogs run free on a sloping meadow. In the summer, a short walk in flip-flops and a bathing suit leads to the lake.

But life here also means channeling Germany's brutal past: The neighborhood was built in the lead-up to World War II as an "elite community" for the SS, or Schutzstaffel—the elite guard of the Nazi Reich, whose responsibilities included carrying out the Holocaust.

The SS-Kameradschaftssiedlung (or SS Camaraderie Estate), as it was initially known, was one of the few housing developments built by the Nazis in Berlin. During the war, the roughly 600 small apartments, row houses, duplexes, and single-family cottages housed SS members and their families, according to rank. The settlement was designed to embody the Nazi Blut und Boden ("blood and soil") ideology, which touted Aryans' quasi-mystical relationship with their ancestral land. War was in the blueprints: The cellars were designed to double as bomb shelters,



Bucker: 'We have a special responsibility.'

and the tree cover was useful for thwarting airstrikes.

As a commemorative sign in the village now acknowledges, "The peaceful atmosphere that the settlement, embedded in the landscape, conveys to the unbiased observer today makes it difficult to recall its history."

It is a history that is still being unearthed—much like the original tenants' pots, pans, and swastika-marked coins that residents (or their dogs) have dug up over the years—and evokes Germany's nearly century-long quest to both remember and forget. "Hannah Arendt called it the 'banality of evil,'" Matthias Donath, a historian specializing in Berlin's Nazi architecture, wrote in an email. Recently, Donath's research made headlines when he was able to draw a direct line from Waldsiedlung Krumme Lanke to Auschwitz, where former village resident Joachim Caesar was the head of agricultural operations.

"The residents found ideal living conditions—an idyll," he said. "And at the same time, they planned monstrous crimes."

HOW THE RESIDENTS here have reckoned with the past—or not—has followed larger cultural trajectories. For decades, it was swept under the rug. "One method of survival in a destroyed and morally devastated Germany

was repression," Donath said. As a result, some of the village's residents are unaware of its history until neighbors tell them about it.

"Some people say, 'It's 80 years ago; it has nothing to do with me,'" said Susanne Güthler, 67, a teacher of disabled children who moved here with her family in 2000. "For me, it's the opposite. I want to know what happened, here in my house. It's intimidating to hear about families drowning themselves in the Krumme Lanke or hanging in the attic. But you can't move forward with silence."

Not much is known about daily life on the SS estate, though it was certainly a place where quality of life was predicated on plunder. "If you would go to the Forest Estate in 1943, how many women would you see wearing fur coats?" asked Christoph Kreutzmüller, a historian and the chair of the Active Museum, Fascism and Resistance, a Berlin group organized in 1983 to mark the 50th anniversary of the Nazis' seizure of power. "Probably they all had fur coats, and they all came from murdered Jews."

Historians agree that as the Red Army approached, some families fled while others likely died by suicide. "The SS estate was not a place to hide," Hanno Hochmuth, a historian with the Leibniz Centre for Contemporary History Potsdam, said during a recent walk through the development. "The soldiers may well have come upon a peaceful estate—you don't see any bullet holes—then opened the doors to find dead bodies, or floating in the Krumme Lanke lake."

After the war, the abandoned homes were given a new purpose: Now located in Berlin's American sector, they were used as shelter, with preference given to victims of Nazi persecution, including resistance fighters and refugees. The family-friendly layouts, which had been designed to encourage couples to produce as many future Nazis as possible, quickly overflowed with the displaced. Street names were changed. Some of the older current residents arrived around this time.

Gisela Michaelis still lives in the 900-square-foot row house she moved into when she was 5 years old, in 1945, along with her mother, two older brothers, and two younger sisters, after the family fled the advancing Red Army in the east. Her father, who fought for the German Wehrmacht, never returned from the war.

The Last Word

"There were endless children here," said Michaelis, 85, a retired accountant. She and her friends would roam the estate, illegally gathering kindling from the forest, testing their courage in the cellars, or pilfering apples and pears from the gardens of empty houses. "It was a beautiful childhood."

Some families of defeated SS operatives probably also returned. "This was typical of postwar Germany," Hochmuth said. "Persecutors, bystanders, and victims, all living door-to-door without too much struggle. There was a tendency to forget, to want to start over."

Michael Joachim moved to the estate with his family in 1946, when he was 3, and remembers both a happy childhood and the stories his father would tell about the families who preceded them: "That neighbor went into the Krumme Lanke with his whole family. That one hanged himself from the rafters in the attic."

Joachim, 82, a retired school principal, recalled a quiet Jewish couple who lived in what is now Bucker's house. "I can still see him in my mind's eye, gray-haired and stooped," he said. "Only later did I think, 'What kind of a fate must they have had?'"

Joachim and his wife converted to Judaism in the 1990s, thanks to an affinity for Jewish life and culture that dates back to his childhood, when his father would listen to a weekly American-sector radio program dedicated to the subject. He later served as chair of the Representative Assembly of the Jewish Community of Berlin. When assembly members would visit his home, the location never raised any eyebrows. "For me, it's a conquering of the past," he said, "that a place that was created for the Nazis has been totally taken over by other people."

THE FIRST REAL research into Waldsiedlung Krumme Lanke was published in the 1980s, around the time a grassroots approach to re-evaluating history, known as "Dig Where You Stand," was gaining traction in West Germany. It included details of how the estate was funded; the SS did not want to pay for it, so a semipublic housing company called GAGFAH built it for them.

Raking leaves beneath her cherry tree, Ingrid Fiedler, 86, said she knew nothing of the estate's history when she moved into her little duplex in 1985. At the time, she worked for the GAGFAH housing company, which still owned and ran the estate. One sunny autumn day, she and her husband went for a bike ride around the lake. As they rested on a bench, another couple asked if they knew where the "SS estate" was. Fiedler had heard of it but didn't know where it was. "The next day at work, my colleague said, 'Don't you know you

live there?'" That was news to me," she said.

The discovery didn't change how she felt about her home. "I lived through the Hitler time," she said. Now she worries about the ascent of the far right. "If people keep voting this way, we're going to have it all again. I don't want that."

In 1992, Berlin made the estate a historically protected site, as an example of a Nazi-era housing development built in the "Heimatschutzstil," or "homeland protection style," of architecture. But reluctance to grapple with the past lingered: When historian Karin Grimm researched the estate in the 1990s, she did not find a single interview partner. In the 2000s, the estate was privatized—sold, divvied up, and resold—and historical information, including old tenant contracts, was probably thrown out.

Among current residents, Elmar Bassen and Caroline Frey know more about their home's past than most do. The woman who sold them the house in 2011 was a journalist. After they toured it, she pressed a book titled *Medicine Without Humanity* into their hands and told them that a Nazi doctor named Joachim Mrugowsky had lived in the house.



Joachim in 1950 with his mother and brother



A new generation of children has moved in.

Mrugowsky, chief of the Hygiene Institute of the Waffen-SS, was tried in Nuremberg and executed for his war crimes, which included putting poison on a bullet and shooting concentration camp prisoners in the thigh and then documenting their efforts to gag themselves as they

died. He also experimented on human subjects for a typhus vaccine. "When we heard that, we thought, 'Can we do that? Can we move here?'" said Frey, who used to run a music magazine. "It was like, 'Are the bricks evil?'"

Sitting in their eat-in kitchen, a vinyl box set by Berlin cult band the Beatsteaks prominently on display, Bassen, who is studying to become a human rights lawyer, and Frey, a schoolteacher, said that after much soul-searching, they decided to forge ahead. The building, they reasoned, couldn't be held responsible for the deeds of its first inhabitants. And maybe their liberal worldview was just what the place needed.

The couple, both 55, have been happy here, as has their 9-year-old foster son, Juan. They were glad to join the new neighborhood initiative's rejection of the AfD before the national elections, in which the party made historic gains. "We hung signs from our windows to make it clear, in this estate, that we are against this; we find it horrifying," Frey said. "We want to remember, because remembering this horrifying thing might help it not happen again."

Still, while living in Waldsiedlung Krumme Lanke has a way of making the past feel present, "we don't think about it every day," she said. Like many residents, the couple said the tangled legacy of this village as a peaceful, healthy place for families, created to enable a genocide, remains irreconcilable. The conflict is dyed into the fabric of modern life in Germany.

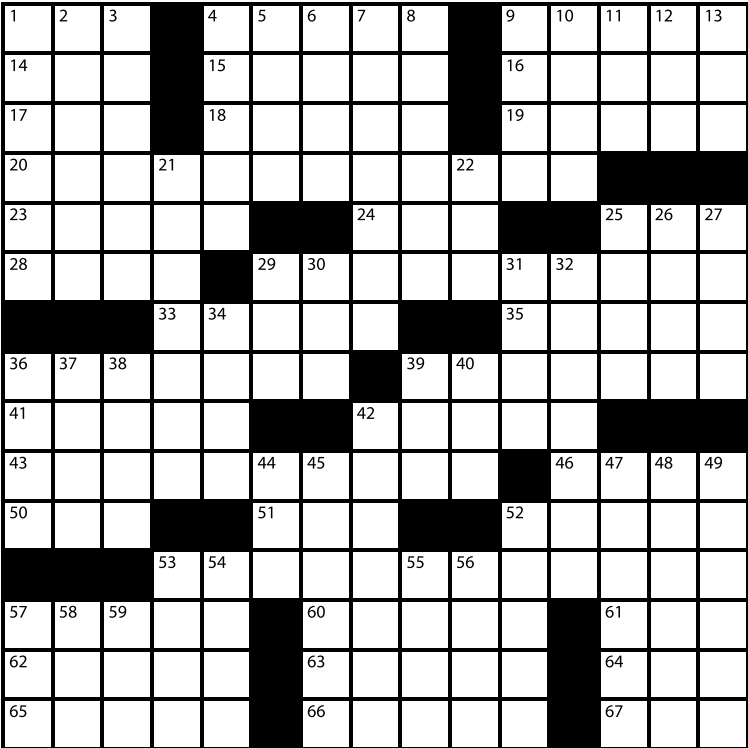
"I don't know if it's something Americans can understand," said Henning Müller, 41, who lives here with his wife, Milena Fernando, 40, and their two young children. "Here in Germany, we have this nice life. And at the same time, this dark history is part of your everyday."

Four years ago, when Fernando, who works in administration at the Jewish Museum Berlin, learned that her family could take over an acquaintance's lease on an airy three-bedroom converted attic, she jumped at the chance. The family was glad to move out of their cramped one-bedroom in the city, where prices were skyrocketing and apartments were scarce.

Now their children are growing up not too dissimilarly from Gisela Michaelis or Michael Joachim, or even from the first children who ever lived here—"families like us, with kids who learned to swim in the Krumme Lanke," Fernando said. "It's a crazy thing to imagine that SS members lived a normal family life here, then went to work at the concentration camps. It's hard to grasp."

This story was first published in The New York Times. Used with permission.

Crossword No.798: Solving Tips by Matt Gaffney



- ACROSS**
- 1 Disney CEO Iger
- 4 Ocean feature
- 9 Seal a deal informally
- 14 Home to Nor. and Neth.
- 15 Graceful bird
- 16 Newswoman Couric
- 17 "Who am ___ judge?"
- 18 Revered riveter
- 19 Jason Bateman/Laura Linney series
- 20 According to a June 10 study by LendingTree, this U.S. state's residents tip waitstaff the most on average, at 16.07%
- 23 Fill your tank
- 24 Mai ___ (drink with an umbrella)
- 25 Super Bowl ___ (2018 game)
- 28 Originate (from)
- 29 Tipping scholar Michael Lynn cites this as one of five motivations for tipping
- 33 Sink feature
- 35 Path around the Earth, say
- 36 Sets of four
- 39 Sauce named for a (non-U.S.) state
- 41 *The ___ There* (1994 Kevin Bacon comedy)
- 42 Amassed, as a large tab
- 43 Urban legend has it that "tip" stands for "To Insure" this; etymologists disagree
- 46 Sharpen
- 50 Volleyball shot before a spike
- 51 Make noise with, as a motor
- 52 Two-legged stand
- 53 In *Reservoir Dogs*, this actor's character annoys his tablemates by explaining "this tipping automatically is for the birds"
- 57 Ursula K. Le Guin's *The ___ of Heaven*
- 60 Latin for "elsewhere"
- 61 They monitor dorms
- 62 Count heard in music
- 63 Ate in the evening
- 64 Fussing
- 65 A 2021 pro-tipping campaign in this country was abandoned in 2023; local culture deems tipping restaurant staff rude
- 66 He married fellow tennis star Steffi
- 67 Nine-digit ID
- DOWN**
- 1 Human ___
- 2 Beat at a Nathan's Famous competition, say
- 3 Look through a bookstore, say
- 4 Tiny piece
- 5 High school rite of passage
- 6 Scraping tool
- 7 Jennifer in *Murder Mystery*
- 8 Exultant shout
- 9 Toffee candy bar
- 10 Smoggy weather
- 11 Take it one day ___ time
- 12 Cocktail made with white wine
- 13 Mouse-spotter's shout, supposedly
- 21 Boring
- 22 Number in a second sequel's title
- 25 Skyward shots for Jannik Sinner
- 26 Suffix with honor or beat
- 27 As ___ say (suggesting)
- 29 Blue
- 30 Simple greetings
- 31 ___ Malibu (sonorously-named California restaurant)
- 32 Word before novel or design
- 34 Renée of Broadway's *Mean Girls*
- 36 Song played in darkness
- 37 EU member nation, to locals
- 38 Easy pace
- 39 They grade papers for profs
- 40 Part of Q&A
- 42 Enjoy, and then some
- 44 Italian number
- 45 *Casino* setting
- 47 La Scala productions
- 48 Wandering types
- 49 Tinkering Thomas
- 52 Unlikely hit
- 53 Actor LaBeouf
- 54 New driver, often
- 55 Contractually obligate
- 56 App with a tipping option
- 57 Prez from Texas
- 58 Flat-tire replacers, often
- 59 Recipe amt.

The Week Contest

This week's question: When a tornado approached during a couple's wedding in Portales, N.M., their photographer seized the moment to snap some images of the newlyweds kissing with the twister looming in the background. In seven or fewer words, come up with a caption to accompany a photo from this dramatic wedding shoot.

Last week's contest: The 2024-25 Broadway season was the highest-grossing in history, at \$1.89 billion, with tickets to celebrity-filled shows selling for upwards of \$800. If a Broadway composer were to write a song-and-dance number about how expensive it is to see a show these days, what would it be titled?

THE WINNER: "Brokelahoma!"
Norman Miller, Farmington Hills, Mich.

SECOND PLACE: "(These Prices Are) Defying Gravity"
Jesse Rifkin, Arlington, Va.

THIRD PLACE: "If I Were a Rich Fan"
Ellen Skagerberg, Santa Rosa, Calif.

For runners-up and complete contest rules, please go to theweek.com/contest.

How to enter: Submissions should be emailed to contest@theweek.com. Please include your name, address, and daytime telephone number for verification; this week, type "Tornado wedding" in the subject line.

Entries are due by noon, Eastern Time, Tuesday, June 24. Winners will appear on the Puzzle Page next issue and at theweek.com/contest on Friday, June 27. In the case of identical or similar entries, the first one received gets credit.

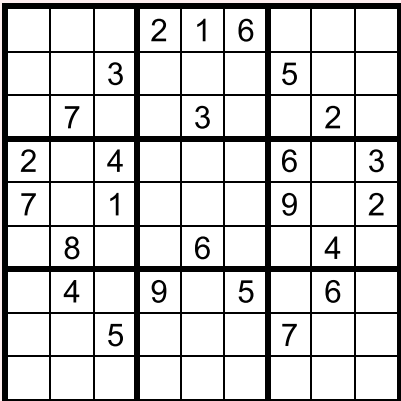
◀ The winner gets a one-year subscription to *The Week*.



Sudoku

Fill in all the boxes so that each row, column, and outlined square includes all the numbers from 1 through 9.

Difficulty: medium



Find the solutions to all *The Week*'s puzzles online at theweek.com/solutions

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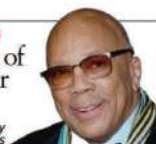


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