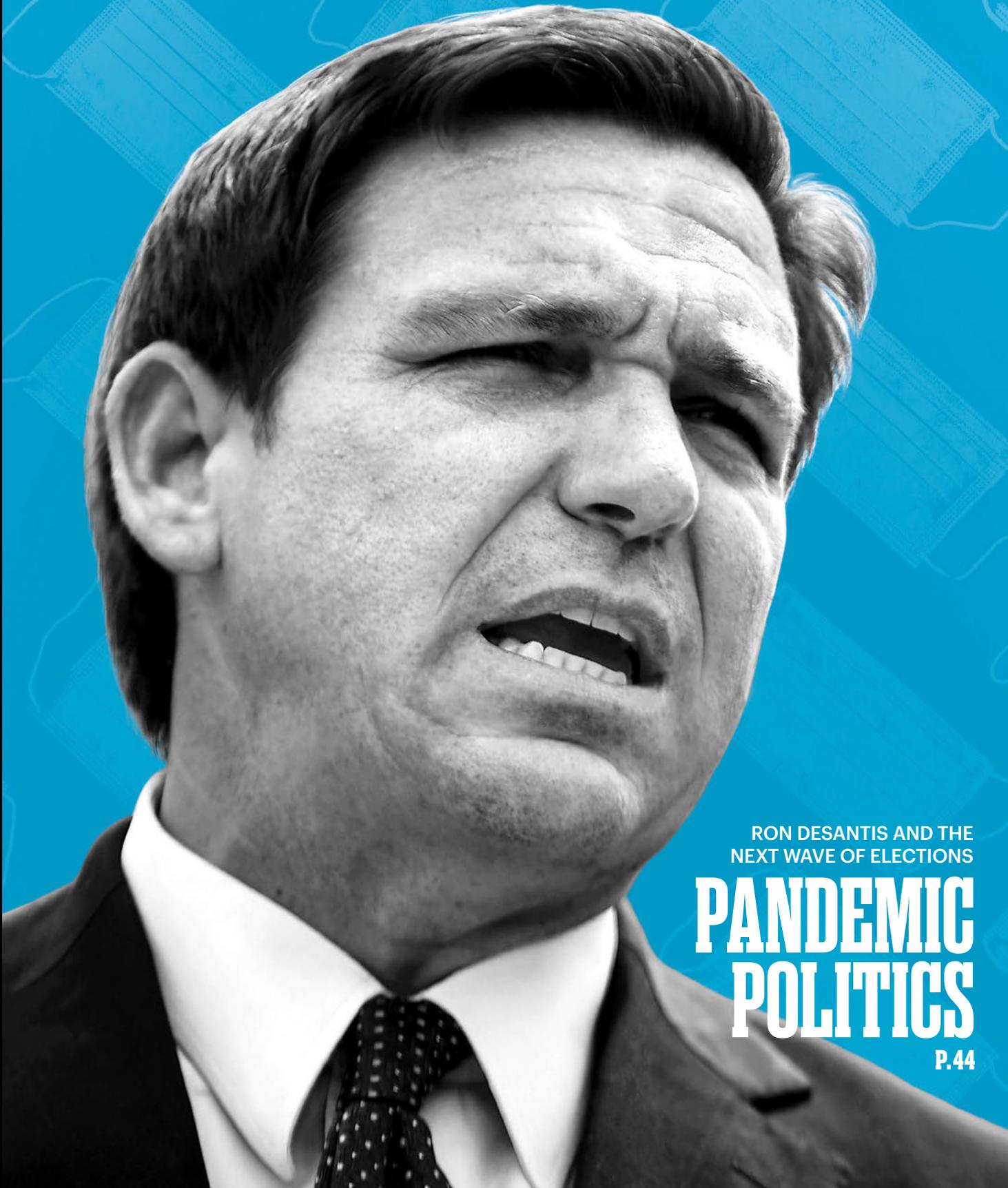


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09.25.21 VOLUME 36 NUMBER 18

WORLD

"PEOPLE LIVE BY ROBBING PEOPLE, KILLING PEOPLE. THIS IS HOW LIFE GETS WHEN PEOPLE LIKE [THE] TALIBAN COME." —P. 38



RON DESANTIS AND THE
NEXT WAVE OF ELECTIONS

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A **Biblical** solution to **health care**

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Kyle and Colleen, members since 2011

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ON THE COVER: illustration by Rachel Beatty (photo of DeSantis by Paul Hennessy/SOPA Images/Sipa via AP)

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DID ANYTHING SURPRISE YOU IN YOUR REPORTING ON TEXAS’ NEW HEARTBEAT LAW?

“Hanah Wranosky wanted to tell me about undergoing abortion pill reversal treatment even though she took the abortion pill mere days ago. Many women take years to open up about these experiences, but she was eager for others to know about the treatment helping her save her baby.”
—WORLD reporter Leah Savas, whose story appears on p. 11

SERMONS TO GO

AUG. 14, P. 38—BOB FRANCIS/WAKEFIELD, MASS.

The only plagiarism that should take place in the writing and preaching of a sermon is of the Bible. God has already given us unfettered use of it.

SUSAN MACKENZIE/SAN JOSE, CALIF.

Who cares who plagiarizes whom? If the preacher is led by the Holy Spirit, there will be a message from the Lord.

DICK STRIFERT/EXETER, N.H.

I remember attending a worship service at a church in Vermont in the early 2000s. The guest pastor was a well-respected leader. His message repeated word-for-word a radio sermon I had heard earlier in the week. I was dumbfounded.

DON WILKINSON/EAST BERLIN, PA.

No one, to my knowledge, has ever “borrowed” the content of a sermon I preached, but I would be delighted to have them do so if God would use the message to accomplish His purpose.

QUESTIONS ABOUT IQ

AUG. 14, P. 26—BRUCE P. MCKECHNIE/FRAZER, PA.

Marvin Olasky’s sharp observation that “those who can flop over a lower bar with minimal effort do not develop the muscle they need to keep up during the next stage of competition” reminds me of President George W. Bush’s speech to the NAACP, where he noted “the soft bigotry of low expectations.”

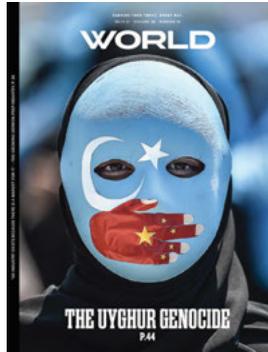
CRISIS AND OPPORTUNITY

AUG. 14, P. 36—REBECCA HILL/MOSCOW, IDAHO

Thank you for Mindy Belz’s excellent column and its concern for “the least of these,” whom our Lord has commanded us to remember (Matthew 25:40–45).

DAVID MOSES/FORT WORTH, TEXAS

A renewed focus and willingness to welcome refugees and asylum-seekers was one of the few things I looked forward to regarding the new adminis-

**ERASING THE UYGHURS**

June Cheng’s article reminded me how truly awful the Chinese Communist government can be.

AUG. 14, P. 44—DOUG OLSON/CHATTAROY, WASH.

LETTERS AND COMMENTS

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BREVITY AND CLARITY.

tration. Why is there such a reluctance to move on this?

BALTIC BEAUTY

AUG. 14, P. 34—CHARLES ROBBINS/WINSTON-SALEM, N.C.

I doubt I will ever be able to listen to the *Latvian Radio Archive*, but reading this article makes me feel as if I were lifted to heaven to listen to the angels sing.

AGAINST THE ODDS IN AN OLYMPIC POOL

AUG. 14, P. 65—BEN COOK/MONON, IND.

I watched Bowe Becker’s exciting race live on TV. I had no idea about his condition. Thank you for a great story.

OLD LETTERS

AUG. 14, P. 70—MICHELLE ULE/SONOMA COUNTY, CALIF.

I’ve been returning old letters to friends, and they appreciate rereading about their lives.

STEVE THOMPSON/OAK HARBOR, WASH.

I’ve kept so many letters. I’ve got bins full. I’m scanning all the letters my faithful weekly letter-writing mom wrote to me during my first year in college and sending the particularly noteworthy original ones back to her and my dad. I plan to send weekly letters to my son for his first college semester this year.

CORRECTIONS

China’s one-child policy began in 1979, 10 years before the Tiananmen Square massacre (“Communists of the Caribbean,” Aug. 14, p. 11).

Allyson Reneau worked from the United States to help coordinate the evacuation of 10 Afghan schoolgirls (Human Race: “Saved,” Sept. 11, p. 16).

J.R. Richard died at age 71 (“An All-Star’s hard life,” Sept. 11, p. 68).

READ MORE LETTERS AT WNG.ORG/MAILBAG

Notes from the CEO KEVIN MARTIN



Introducing WORLD Opinions

Al Mohler and Andrew Walker lead
a daily opinion product that'll add value
to your WORLD membership

GOOD NEWS, BAD NEWS.

Bad news first: In the last issue, I gave outdated information about WORLD's new podcast, *Lawless*. After that 9/11 issue went to press, we decided to delay the launch of *Lawless* until the spring of 2022.

Come to think of it, as bad news goes, it isn't really bad. Now the good news. Instead of launching a new podcast this fall, we're launching an entirely new platform of content for WORLD members on Oct. 1: WORLD Opinions.

WORLD Opinions, which will reside primarily in our WORLD Digital space, is led by editor Albert Mohler and managing editor Andrew Walker, working with WORLD Digital executive editor Timothy Lamer. Mohler and Walker have put together a team of wise Christian contributors who will frame Biblical positions on issues we all deal with every day.

You already read excellent opinion here in the magazine in each issue and also online at wng.org, but we plan to supplement this. The events of the past few years, even of the past few days, have left us feeling the need for more help thinking about the things that matter to us and identifying the things that *should* matter to us. We hope WORLD Opinions will serve our members by providing that additional help.

**THE EVENTS OF
THE PAST FEW
YEARS HAVE LEFT
US FEELING THE
NEED FOR MORE
HELP THINKING
ABOUT THE THINGS
THAT MATTER.**

WORLD Opinions is for WORLD members only—added value to your current subscription. Because of the nature of this new product and the need for speed, we're delivering it online. We'll send you a daily email link so you can easily access it.

This new platform represents an enormous commitment to produce a whole lot of new content. Our magazine and online staffs will continue to emphasize street-level reporting in print, and we plan to expand both our domestic and our international news coverage. Our mission with WORLD Opinions, as with all our content, is to provide Biblically objective journalism that informs, educates, and inspires. It is our prayer that the new content will be truly helpful to you. ■

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ever read. I was a believer previously but if I
was wavering on the validity of the Christian
faith, I no longer am. So again, thank you for
this book. God bless."

—JOHN WALCZAK

"I work closely with college students across
America. The kinds of questions that Richard
Simmons asks in this book are the ones that
young people need to be asking. As a follower
of Christ, I seek truth. This is a book for fellow truth
seekers, especially if they don't know the author
of truth personally just yet."

—CHARLIE KIRK,
Turning Point USA Founder
and Host of *The Charlie Kirk Show*

Voices **JOEL BELZ**



Big Tech censors

What happens when corporations cancel speech?

WHEN YOU LAST WORRIED—if, indeed, you are such a worrier—about the loss of basic freedoms in our nation and culture, were you concerned most about outside forces bringing that about (China, Russia, radical Islam, etc.) or forces within (socialism in government or public schools, leftism in the media, etc.)?

There is a third possibility. More and more dominant in the news in recent years has been the bullying role of “corporate America.” Some of that perhaps predictably involves the strong-arm actions of giant corporate newcomers like Amazon, Facebook, or Apple. More ominously, it includes historic companies like Coca-Cola, Bank of America, and Delta Airlines.

The irony in all this, of course, is that these huge corporate entities—both old and new—owe their birth, their growth, and their robust history to our core freedoms. Our Bill of Rights has liberated the entrepreneurial spirit throughout our history and throughout the nation.

But that same Bill of Rights is now being gnawed away by the leaders and executives of many of the megacorporations that have benefited from its freedoms. By censoring their opponents’ products and boycotting their rivals’ services, they “cancel” their enemies where marketplace competition used to prevail.

Just a theory? Some observers say so. They charge that those who have been “canceled” are simply paranoid.

But Carl Trueman, Ryan Anderson, and Joshua Holdenried are all serious scholars who have firsthand experience with what some folks are calling professional “snuffing.” Under the sponsorship of the Ethics and

Public Policy Center, the three got together in late August to discuss and document their thoughts.

Starting with Trueman, a faculty member at Grove City College in Pennsylvania, here are some extracts of their conversations:

“Early this month I was lecturing on the topic of my book, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, over at a conference in California, hosted by a Baptist church. During, I think it was, the first session, the livestream by YouTube was pulled—because of ‘copyright violation.’ ... The organizers had been playing some music in the background that violated copyright. So the organizers sorted that issue out and started the livestream again.”

But then, he said, “the livestream was canceled the second time, this time for ‘content violation.’” And Trueman sees little chance the twin interruption was coincidence. Such skepticism comes in part from his experience in an incident this past May when he was giving the very same set of lectures at a Christian high school in the South. Prior to his visit, the lectures had enjoyed good publicity on the school’s Instagram account. Then, though, that Instagram account was totally suspended, with a requirement that all references to Trueman and his lecture be dropped before the account could be reinstated.

There’s no ambiguity, however, in the case of Ryan Anderson, who since February of this year has been president of the host EPPC. He gained national publicity this past spring when Amazon suddenly removed his book, *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment*, from its list of available titles.

After weighing several possible motivations on Amazon’s part, Anderson told the EPPC group that “even in the way they did this, they’re supposed to contact the author and the publisher first to notify them, to try to work it out. They didn’t follow any of their own procedures. This strikes me much more like an abuse of market dominance to try to control public speech, in particular, on a matter of huge public import.”

Finally, for this brief report, Joshua Holdenried came to the discussion from his role as vice president of the Napa Legal organization in California. Napa’s special role just now is to help faith-based nonprofits navigate the “public square”—with special emphasis on the “public square” as a “digital square.”

“We started to notice as early as last fall that several faith-based voices, faith-based organizations, were being censored, de-platformed,” he said. “So we started to take notice, and we started doing some preliminary research. ... We actually found that for several months Big Tech companies have actually been silencing, de-platforming, or censoring faith-based organizations or faith-based voices at a rate of at least once a week.”

If you want to hear more, a full transcript of the EPPC discussion is available from wng.org/BigTechCensorship.

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DISPATCHES

News Analysis By the Numbers Human Race Quotables Quick Takes



Panic and celebration in Texas

Abortion groups bemoan a new heartbeat law while pro-lifers help moms and babies

by Leah Savas

ON A BUSY TUESDAY at the Fifth Ward Pregnancy Help Center in Houston, a young woman burst into the full lobby holding a picture of the abortion pill on her phone. “I want this! Give me this!” she screamed as tears streamed down her face.

In a conference room, the center’s executive director, Shayla Gaitor, asked her what was wrong. The woman slammed her hands on the table: “Just give me the abortion! I want the abortion!”

The woman had heard about Texas’ new “heartbeat” law, which would go into effect that night, making it illegal to obtain an abortion after the baby has a detectable →

Planned
Parenthood
in Houston

heartbeat. Thinking she was pregnant, the woman rushed to the pro-life center where she had received help while pregnant with her now 1-year-old son.

A pregnancy test came back negative. She eventually calmed down. The staff prayed with her and sent her away with diapers and wipes for her 1-year-old.

But Gaitor said that experience—and a busier waiting room in the days leading up to the new law—were a wake-up call. Abortion groups continue spreading fears about the law’s consequences after the Supreme Court refused an emergency challenge to the law on Sept. 1. But pregnancy centers like Gaitor’s have long prepared to help the babies and mothers the law will help save.

“Undoubtedly the abortion industry filed this emergency petition in the Supreme Court in order to posture to the court about *Roe* and abortion rights,” said Steven Aden with Americans United for Life. The abortion groups want to warn the Supreme Court about overturning the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision in the upcoming *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health* case regarding a Mississippi law protecting unborn babies after 15 weeks. Aden thinks the posturing is unlikely to spook the court. But the public sees it.

ABC News reported one Whole Woman’s Health facility in Fort Worth completed 67 surgical abortions and around 50 follow-up appointments for chemical abortions the day before the law took effect, performing the last procedure at 11:56 p.m. A normal day sees closer to 15 and 20, respectively.

Hanah Wranosky, 21, felt pushed to take the abortion pill during her second visit to the Alamo Women’s Reproductive Services a week before the law took effect. After one consultation, she returned the next day to take the first part of the abortion pill cocktail. She was surprised when the facility staff ushered her into a room with about 15 or 20 other women and gave them the abortion pills at once, telling them to take it in front of the staff. (An online review of the facility from about a year ago shows that the staff followed a similar routine in the past.)

None of the women made eye contact or spoke to others, but Wranosky watched the others and swallowed hers quickly so she could leave. “They take your payment before you even take the pill, and it’s like \$600,” she said.

Wranosky cried during the three-hour drive home. The next day, she contacted a local pregnancy center and

found out about abortion pill reversal treatment. By the end of the day, she had started a twice-daily regimen of progesterone pills to halt the effects of the first abortion pill. A week later, her unborn baby still had a heartbeat.

The pregnancy center that helped Wranosky is one of four locations for the Pregnancy Center of the Coastal Bend. Executive Director Jana Pinson said that particular location saw a nearly 100 percent increase in services the week the law took effect compared with the same time last year.

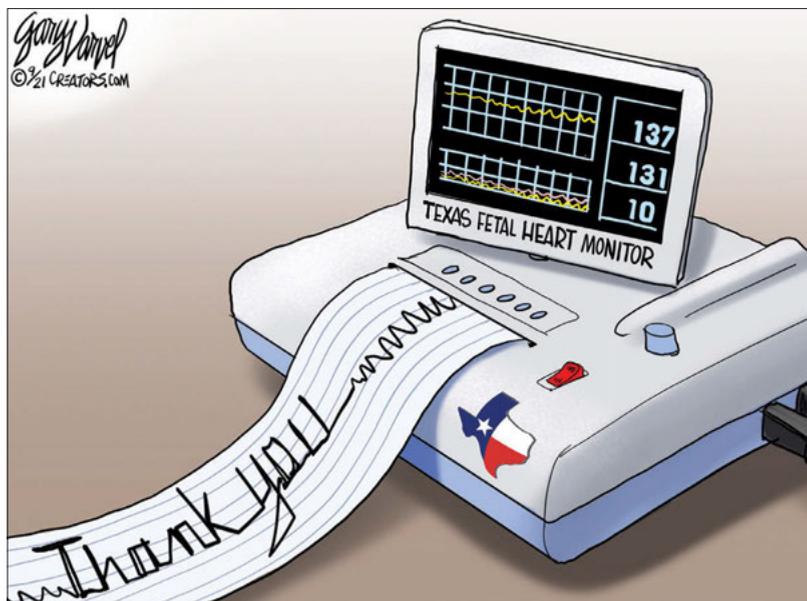
At the Downtown Houston Pregnancy Help Center and its sister center in Houston’s Fifth Ward, where Shayla Gaitor calmed her frantic client, call volume to the center started increasing on Aug. 30. The two centers performed a total of 96 ultrasounds between Monday and Saturday—twice as many as normal, according to Sylvia Johnson-Matthews, the CEO of the Houston centers.

“This is what I’ve practiced for 36 years for,” Johnson-Matthews said.

Aden with Americans United for Life thinks Texas courts won’t enforce the law, so it won’t last long. “But for now it’s having a really beneficial teaching effect ... and in this case [the heartbeat law] is teaching all that the state values life.”



ONE FACILITY COMPLETED 67 SURGICAL ABORTIONS THE DAY BEFORE THE LAW TOOK EFFECT.



\$47,130

Median annual income for U.S. tractor-trailer drivers in 2020.

48

Average age of a truck driver in the United States, according to a 2021 Department of Transportation report.

90%

The share of new long-haul truckers who quit the industry within the first year on the job, according to NPR.

72.5%

The share of freight in the United States hauled by trucks, according to the American Trucking Associations.

A BIG DIP FOR BIG RIGS



430K

THE NUMBER OF TRUCK DRIVERS delivering general freight in the United States, according to the American Trucking Associations, down from 465,000 at the beginning of 2020. The drop is causing renewed concerns

about a truck driver shortage. An executive with a Virginia-based fuel distributor reported his company's gas station clients had run dry 1,200 times since June due to driver shortages. "The young people don't want to do this job anymore," Brad Zeilinger, a three-decade veteran trucker, told NPR. "My generation is on the way out the door."



People are evacuated from floodwaters in the aftermath of Hurricane Ida in LaPlace, La.

BATTERED

Hurricane Ida kills dozens

The Category 4 storm hit the Gulf region, then barreled into the Northeast

AT LEAST 50 PEOPLE in the Northeast United States died after the remnants of Hurricane Ida swept up the Eastern Seaboard on Sept. 1 and 2, making it the deadliest hurricane in four years. Floods trapped people in cars and kept firefighters from getting to multiple fires, likely caused by gas leaks from the flooding, according to authorities. In Louisiana, where Ida made landfall as a Category 4 hurricane on Aug. 29, crews had restored power to nearly 70 percent of the New Orleans area a week after the storm. But outside of large cities, efforts to restore electricity will likely last almost all of September. “I was six weeks without power and water after Katrina, using the neighbor’s hose for a bath,” remembered Debra McLean, a Tangipahoa, La., resident. “This may be worse.” At least two utility workers were electrocuted to death while trying to restore electricity in Alabama.

DIED

Decorated and versatile actor Ed Asner died on Aug. 29 at age 91. Asner was born in Kansas City, Mo., and moved to New York after serving in the U.S. Army’s Signal Corps during the Korean War. He eventually claimed 390 film credits, including as Santa Claus in the movie *Elf*. His liberal politics often flavored the characters he played. With his portrayal of Lou Grant in the *Mary Tyler Moore Show* and its spinoff *Lou Grant*, he became the only actor to win Emmys for both comedy and drama playing the same role. Asner married and divorced twice. He is survived by two sons, two daughters, and 10 grandchildren.

SUED

Seven U.S. Capitol Police officers sued former President Donald Trump, accusing him of intentionally sending a violent mob to the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 to disrupt the congressional vote certifying Joe Biden’s election as president. The lawsuit, filed on Aug. 26 in federal court in Washington, also names as defendants Trump ally Roger Stone, the Trump campaign, and members of two far-right groups, the Proud Boys and Oath Keepers. The officers allege the former president and his allies conspired to commit acts of domestic terrorism in an attempt to stop Biden from taking power. The lawsuit seeks compensatory and punitive damages for physical and emotional injuries the officers received during the riot. Democratic lawmakers have filed two other similar cases in recent months.

DIED

Willard Scott, the goofy *Today Show* weatherman who gave shout-outs to people celebrating their 100th birthdays, died at age 87 on Sept. 4. He joined *Today* in 1980 and retired in 2015. He never had training in meteorology or in any sciences. A Baptist who often said if he hadn’t become an entertainer he would have been a preacher, he loved people: “I’m like a dog. You just open the door and I go, ‘rrrr, rrrr,’ and then I lick everybody’s face.” Early in his career, he portrayed titular character Bozo the Clown on local, syndicated versions of the show and Ronald McDonald for local McDonald’s franchises.

“I don’t think it’s patronizing to say that women are resilient, no.”

Pro-life British doctor CALUM MILLER, in an interview about the Texas heartbeat law, responding to hostile questioning from a BBC host who had called him patronizing for suggesting women have “remarkable resilience” and are typically glad once they carry an unwanted pregnancy to term.

“He says, ‘When I find you, I will kill you all.’”

ZALA ZAZAI, an Afghan woman who served as a police second lieutenant in the Afghanistan government before the Taliban takeover, telling *The Wall Street Journal* her father had joined the Taliban and now made threats against his family. Zazai fled to Tajikistan before the takeover, but her mother and sister remain in Kabul, she said.

“We are in disbelief that this man would be recommended for release.”

SIX CHILDREN of Robert F. Kennedy, in a statement responding to an Aug. 27 parole board vote recommending parole for Sirhan Sirhan, who is serving a life sentence for Kennedy’s 1968 assassination. Sirhan, 77, has said he was drinking at the time of the murder and does not remember shooting Kennedy. Some of Kennedy’s other children support parole for Sirhan.

“They talked about killing me, cutting off my head. ... It’s all disheartening because I know I was doing my job.”

Lt. MICHAEL BYRD, a Capitol Police officer, revealing his identity as the officer who shot Ashli Babbitt during the Jan. 6 Capitol riot and describing subsequent online threats against him. In an interview with *NBC Nightly News*, Byrd said he was protecting lawmakers and staffers in the nearby House chamber from rioters who were breaching a set of doors. Babbitt, 36, died of her injury.

“We wanted to do it before we were dead.”

ABBA singer-songwriter BENNY ANDERSSON, 74, on the band’s production of an elaborate virtual concert planned for 2022 to mark 50 years since the Swedish pop group’s founding.



1

IN WET PURSUIT

POLICE IN CANADA resorted to the use of a paddleboard, a canoe, and a pedal boat to capture a robbery suspect who fled to Little Albro Lake near Halifax, Nova Scotia, on Aug. 27. According to authorities, two men entered Hugo's Bar & Grill at midday in Dartmouth, produced a weapon, and demanded employees turn over cash. Halifax police say the two men then fled the scene on a motorcycle. With police now in pursuit, the suspects crashed the bike and split on foot. Police wrangled one suspect on dry land, but the other managed to swim into the weed-infested Little Albro Lake. With no better options available, four officers commandeered what was available to them on the bank to continue the low-speed pursuit: Two officers gave chase in a slow-moving pedal boat, another secured a canoe, and a fourth officer mounted a paddleboard, windmilling his arms to provide thrust. Eventually officers caught the swimming suspect and placed him under arrest.

2 SWINGING SENSATION After 36 hours of swinging, a towheaded 12-year-old now has major bragging rights. Sean Lewis of East Rochester, N.Y., swung his way into the Guinness World Records on Aug. 27 by parking himself on the family swing set and refusing to quit swinging for a day and a half. Sean made his marathon swinging world record attempt in front of friends, family, and neighbors who stopped by to cheer him on. Allowed to take a 20-minute break every four hours, the boy padded his seat and kept snacks nearby to endure the marathon. "When I put the rope swings up years ago, he just fell in love with them," father Matt Lewis told WSYR. "I think one day he was just thinking maybe, there might be a record associated with it and he looked it up and thought he could do it. So it's just a love of swinging."

3 ARTLESS DODGERS A pair of armed robbers nearly made off with a landscape painting by famed French impressionist painter Claude Monet from a Dutch museum in August. According to police in the Netherlands, the would-be thieves made their attempt during business hours of the Zaans Museum just north of Amsterdam. Bystanders and museum staff both intervened, causing the two men to drop the painting and flee, leaving the scene on a black scooter. Police say gunshots were fired but reported no injuries. Museum staffers say they're checking the artwork, *The Voorzaan and the Westerhem*, for damage. The museum purchased the painting for nearly \$1.4 million in 2015.

4 WEAPONS OF THE FUTURE The high-energy lasers and force fields from science fiction may be closer than we thought. Department of Defense officials tasked a squad of experts to envision the nature of military combat in the year 2060 and published the panel's findings this summer: According to the Directed Energy Futures 2060 report, futuristic fighting will likely include laser weapons as well as electromagnetic devices meant to damage electrical systems. Scientists also studied theoretical particle beam weapons but indicated they might be most efficient aboard sat-

ellites in order to avoid interference from the atmosphere. Most of the world's largest militaries already employ some kind of directed-energy weapon, typically as part of a system to shoot down missiles.

5 FOR COWS ONLY A small herd of wild cattle refuses to relinquish a Corsican beach the animals took over during the time of pandemic restrictions. Local authorities say about 30 head of cattle seem determined not to share a sandy stretch of the Mare e Sol beach on the French Mediterranean island of Corsica. Roaming cows are nothing new for Corsica. The large island has some 15,000 free-roaming cattle—some wild, some owned—that typically share the landscape with locals and tourists. But the prolonged absence of humans caused by stay-at-home orders in Corsica has turned some of the beasts ornery. People have reported several incidents across the island involving aggressive cattle, including a recent goring at the Mare e Sol beach. Local authorities have posted signs warning humans to give the normally docile creatures a wide berth until they reacclimatize to the presence of humans.

6 COMPETING CARRIERS Elon Musk has conquered electric cars and space flight. But it appears his satellite internet service is at the mercy of pigeons. Customers of Starlink, the internet-providing side project of SpaceX, are reporting spotty service and some are blaming it on pigeons attracted to rooftop Starlink dishes. To date, Starlink has shipped more than 100,000 Starlink terminals providing high-speed internet beamed from a constellation of satellites placed into orbit by Musk's SpaceX. While testing the platform, University of Surrey professor Alan Woodward of the United Kingdom said he experienced several outages due to pigeons climbing on the rooftop dish. Woodward speculated the birds might confuse the gray dish for a birdbath.

7 NEVER TOO OLD A New Jersey octogenarian became the oldest man to win a harness race in New Jersey after guiding his horse, Stick That Lip Out, to

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WHEN I PUT
THE ROPE
SWINGS UP
YEARS AGO,
HE JUST FELL
IN LOVE
WITH THEM.

”

a two-length victory Aug. 27. Tony Dandeo, 86, earned his win at the Freehold Raceway. In harness racing the horse pulls a two-wheeled cart and is restricted to a fast trot or pace. The win marked Dandeo's 234th in his decades-long horse racing career. His previous win, with a horse named Mickey Blu, came in April 2016.

8 TIRE RIGHTS A Michigan woman notched a victory over city hall when the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled Aug. 25 that a city's use of tire chalk constituted a violation of her Fourth Amendment protection against unreasonable searches and seizures. Alison Taylor earned 14 parking tickets in Saginaw, Mich., before taking to federal court with a novel argument. According to Taylor's lawyers, marking the tires of parked cars amounts to a search without probable cause. "For nearly as long as automobiles have parked along city streets, municipalities have found ways to enforce parking regulations without implicating the Fourth Amendment," Judge Richard Griffin wrote in the court's 3-0 opinion in favor of Taylor. The appeals court, which sets precedent in Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee, sent the case back to a federal district court for final disposition.





Making our gardens grow

You'll find wisdom in the soil

A VOICE FROM MY PAST called me the other night. I've never met him personally, only talked on the phone in connection with his occupation. He was a human cannonball. Fifteen years ago, his country home not far from mine was the base of operations for his career as a circus attraction. After reading about him in the local paper, I wrote a human-cannonball character into my most successful children's novel.

Fast-forward to last week: He was going through some old papers, found a letter from me, and gave me a call.

Now pushing 80, he's fully retired and settled on a few quiet acres out West. The blast and the roar and the applause will always echo in his ears, I suppose, but what floats his boat now is the simple pleasure of gardening: "Who would have thought, after the life I've had, I'd get such a kick out of watching things grow?"

Though my own career lacks that degree of sparkle, I've had a similar epiphany. Serious gardening was never a long-term plan, but when circumstances made it impractical to sell our five acres in the country, I decided to enhance what we had. That meant clearing the neglected garden space my husband fenced 10 years ago, buying an old pickup, hauling dirt and compost, laying out rows, and watching the weather.

The truck marked a point of no return, especially after sinking too much money into it. Two loads of compost and one of horse manure got us off to a promising start, but an overabundance of rain this spring rotted the tomatoes and hindered the first row of corn. Now the problem is too little rain, along with some

GARDENING IS MORE THAN SWEET RESIGNATION. IT'S THE CREATION MANDATE AT GROUND LEVEL.

minor regrets. I could have made better placement decisions. I could have forgone the bush beans in mid-July and poured all my energy into the pole beans. I could have been more on top of pest control instead of fighting rear-guard actions. Gardening always holds its share of disappointments—and sometimes, in a cursed season, heartbreak.

And yet. To cut into a beautifully ripe watermelon I planted only two months earlier was a celebration. The cantaloupes were not uniformly sweet, but some were perfect. I had enough green beans to can and extra corn for the freezer. Cost-effective it was not, especially considering the massages to soothe achy joints and muscles. But there were, and are, other rewards.

One is acting out the goodness of God. He planted the first garden but gave Adam the responsibility for it, along with the ability to conceive and develop ways to feed the whole earth and its eventual billions. God packs life into the seed, but we get to nurture its growth—just as we get to cultivate the life He gives to our children, our churches, and our own faith.

Another reward, though it might not seem rewarding, is practical perseverance and humility. Soaring hope at the first batch of tender green beans sinks when leafhoppers nibble the plants to sieves. Neglecting the strawberry rows for a week reinforces the text about thorns and thistles, sweat and struggle. The dirt on my hands reminds me of where I came from and where I'll return. (If our elites were required to dig before they were allowed to lead, they might be more realistic, not to mention competent.)

Gardening sometimes represents retrenchment after failure. In the musical version of Voltaire's satirical novel *Candide*, the title character rejects naïve idealism by going back to basics:

We're neither pure, nor wise, nor good; / We'll do the best we know.

We'll build our house and chop our wood / and make our garden grow.

Jeremiah's letter to the Babylonian captives (Jeremiah 29) reflects a similar idea. Gardening is more than sweet resignation, though. It's the creation mandate at ground level while rejoicing in (and struggling with) sun, soil, wind, and rain. It's the wonder of a tiny, mighty seed and being front-row witnesses to our God's prodigious abundance. ■

THE BATON IS IN **YOUR** HANDS.



Jesus initiated the race 2,000 years ago when he said, "Go make disciples of all nations." The baton of missions was passed from Jesus to his disciples, and now down through the generations it has come to us.

We stand on the shoulders of our forefathers and the blood, sweat, and tears they poured into reaching the unreached world. Because of them, there are now churches and disciples

all over the world that can reach their own countries for Christ.

Past generations' tireless efforts have made it possible for you and me to help reach the world for Christ by supporting local leaders. There are local ministries all over the world that can make disciples and plant churches at a much higher ROI than ever before.

To learn more, check out these ministries:

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CULTURE

Movies & TV Books Children's Books Q&A Music



TRANSCENDING GENRES

Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings packs more than the typical Marvel punch

by Collin Garbarino

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HANG-CHI AND THE LEGEND OF THE TEN RINGS is yet another installment in the ever-expanding Marvel Cinematic Universe. But don't expect a typical superhero flick: *Shang-Chi* takes its place among the best superhero films by transcending both its genre and its source material.

The comics, which debuted in the 1970s, traded in cringeworthy Asian stereotypes. But *Shang-Chi*, with its predominantly Asian cast and creative team, takes audiences on a fast-paced, funny, yet heartfelt journey that at times makes you forget you're watching a superhero movie. →

Shang-Chi (Simu Liu) lives a somewhat underwhelming life in San Francisco and spends his days palling around with best friend Katy (Awkwafina). Katy disappoints her family, who wishes she'd do something constructive with her honors degree, and Shang-Chi too has disappointed his family. He isn't just another 20-something slacker. He's hiding from his father, Xu Wenwu, the immortal leader of a criminal organization known as the Ten Rings. When Wenwu's henchmen find Shang-Chi, he and Katy get swept into an adventure in which Shang-Chi must save the world while coming to terms with his complicated parentage.

Liu gives a credible kung-fu performance, but he also imbues Shang-Chi with a lovable aimlessness, reflecting the energy of his electrifying co-stars. Awkwafina began her career as a rapper and comedian, but her role in 2019's *The Farewell* established her dramatic chops. Now she can add action heroine to her resumé because she's as much the star of this film as Liu is. Meanwhile, Hong Kong cinema icon Tony Leung turns Wenwu into possibly the most interesting villain of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, and we're also treated to stellar performances by veteran Michelle Yeoh and newcomer Meng'er Zhang.

Shang-Chi feels refreshingly un-Marvel. It has the obligatory ties to the franchise's past and future, but it works as a self-contained story. Viewers can enjoy *Shang-Chi* without worrying about the 50 hours of continuity that came before or feeling compelled to show up for the next installment in a couple of months.

Rated PG-13 for martial arts violence and language (and playing now in theaters), it does suffer when, in true Marvel fashion, the third act culminates in an over-the-top action set piece. I should probably be thankful we were spared from watching another supersized spaceship/aircraft/city crash to earth, but the excessively long CGI extravaganza detracts from the more personal and exciting hand-to-hand fight scenes.

It's hard not to compare *Shang-Chi* with Disney's *Mulan* that came out last year. *Mulan*'s actors had excellent kung-fu resúmes, but poor direction and editing disappointed. *Shang-Chi* stays closer to its spiritual forebears and includes some of the best fight sequences to come out of American cinema. Many scenes pay homage to Jackie Chan classics, which shouldn't surprise since the choreography team previously worked

with Chan. *Shang-Chi*'s fight scenes have appropriately long takes, allowing viewers to appreciate performers' skills as well as the choreography's beauty. Kung-fu scenes are more akin to ballet than superhero slugfest, and writer-director Destin Daniel Cretton deserves credit for getting it right here.

But Cretton, who grew up in a large Christian homeschooling family, gets so many other things right besides the martial arts.

The film catches the spirit of the Asian diaspora. Shang-Chi and Katy consider themselves Americans prizing individualism, but they wrestle with a heritage that binds them to their fami-



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**SHANG-CHI
 TAKES ITS PLACE
 AMONG THE BEST
 SUPERHERO
 FILMS.**
 ”

lies. The young people must grapple with traditional bias against girls, but Shang-Chi and Katy form a beautiful partnership in which they complement each other's gifts. We see the older generation in the film participate in traditional religious customs, while the younger generation merely looks on, remembering their ancestors but not worshipping them.

Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings is a Chinese-American story, but it offers universally applicable themes: We're all born into damaged families, and there's always the possibility of repentance, forgiveness, and restoration. ■



Sassy Cinderella

by Juliana Chan Erikson

Amazon’s modernized *Cinderella* musical is a drag. And that’s even if you overlook a gender-bending fairy godmother and a happy ending that rejects marriage.

No longer soft-spoken and humble, our 2021 Cinderella (Camila Cabello) is a sassy, singing Latina boss girl with half-baked dressmaking dreams. She tries to be everything—funny, glamorous, self-reliant—but when Cabello’s jokes fall flat, her sass sounds borderline petulant.

After Cinderella angers the king by sitting on a statue of his father, she retorts, “Might I suggest you put some bleachers in the back? Give us short peasants a chance?”

That’s how Prince Robert (Nicholas Galitzine) catches a glimpse of the smart-talking beauty. He impulsively buys the only dress she’s ever made and invites her to the royal ball. Cinderella says no, until she realizes the ball is exactly the place for an up-and-coming designer.

When gay actor Billy Porter takes his turn as a gender-fluid “fabulous godmother”—complete with a flashy orange dress and glitter—the wheels fall off this PG-rated fairy tale.

Progressive plot points and flimsy jokes aside, the movie knows how to drop a beat. It’s rollicking fun watching townspeople pound their shovels to Janet Jackson’s “Rhythm Nation” and evil stepsisters hang laundry to Madonna’s “Material Girl.”

But when hip-hop numbers and joke-riffing rats are the best parts of a fairy tale romance, that’s something not even a fairy godmother can fix.

“WE DON’T MAKE MISTAKES. WE JUST HAVE HAPPY ACCIDENTS.” —Painter Bob Ross (1942-1995), describing how he dealt with goof-ups in his artworks.



THE BOB ROSS BUSINESS

Netflix documentary doesn’t show the real man

by Marty VanDriel

YOU MAY RECOGNIZE his distinctly coiffed hair or have watched him paint a perfect scene in less than 30 minutes, but do you really know Bob Ross? The Netflix film *Bob Ross: Happy Accidents, Betrayal, and Greed* fills gaps in viewers’ knowledge but falls short of giving real insight into the late artist.

Ross, a retired Air Force technician, became a TV star by teaching painting to millions on *The Joy of Painting*, which originally ran on PBS from 1983 to 1994. His love for painting, encouragement to amateurs, and ability to quickly complete a canvas brought Ross tremendous popularity. It also brought business partners Walt and Annette Kowalski, who with Ross co-founded Bob Ross Inc., which began selling paint supplies, art prints, and art instruction.

When Ross died of cancer at age 52, he left little personal material for biographers to work with, perhaps explaining why this film focuses on his business relationship with the Kowalskis. Ross’ son Steve bitterly recalls unsuccessful lawsuits against Bob Ross Inc., an entity that still profits from the artist’s likeness and output. But claims of Kowalski wrongdoing don’t really help us understand Ross. As detours, the documentary highlights his female fans’ adulation and hints at adultery between Ross and business partners.

While Ross frequently referred to God and creation in his shows, this film gives little insight into his personal beliefs. Viewers might be better off watching episodes of *The Joy of Painting* to get to know Bob Ross a little better.

FIVE CINDERELLA ADAPTATIONS



- 1 Cinderella (1950):** Ilene Woods; rated G
- 2 Cinderella (1957):** Julie Andrews; NR
- 3 Cinderella (1997):** Brandy Norwood; G
- 4 Ever After: A Cinderella Story (1998):** Drew Barrymore; PG-13
- 5 Cinderella (2015)** Lily James; PG

DRAMATIZING 9/11

In historical drama *Worth*, a focus on the trivial and the creation of fictional characters detract from honoring real victims

by Bob Brown



HOW LONG BEFORE HOLLYWOOD tries to make a big-budget fictionalized romance about the 9/11 terrorist attacks like it did with *Titanic*? If Netflix's new film *Worth* is any indication, that day may be coming soon.

While director Sara Colangelo certainly intends a serious, respectful film about the attacks that took place 20 years ago, *Worth* takes a step in the direction of giving 9/11 the Hollywood treatment: It dramatizes the insignificant, while not honoring true heroes and victims.

The story centers on Kenneth Feinberg (Michael Keaton), the government-appointed special master of the September 11th Victims Compensation Fund. Feinberg's in a tough spot: The airlines whose planes were hijacked fear victims' lawsuits could bankrupt their companies, which in turn could "grind the whole economy to a halt," one politician says. And many victims' families are balking at Feinberg's compensation "formula" that values one dishwasher's life at \$350,000 and a CFO's at \$14.2 million.

"Their lives ended the same way," a grieving mother

sobs during Feinberg's first meeting with families.

"Their mortgages did differ," Feinberg retorts.

Feinberg's lack of people skills may be his biggest obstacle to getting 80 percent of potential claimants to sign on to the government's no-lawsuits agreement by December 2003. The film counts down—"23 months to deadline," "17 months to deadline," "3 weeks to deadline." In light of the loss of life, viewers might not find this legal accomplishment significant enough to join in on the icky on-screen applause when Feinberg does succeed.

The misguided beat-the-clock tease isn't the only thing that may put viewers off. The film (rated PG-13 for a few instances of strong language) builds the story around a puzzling pick of victims, particularly the fictional firefighter Nicholas Donato of Ladder Co. 179. As it turns out, besides his own family, he has two children by a mistress. So, one philandering fireman represents all 9/11 first responders? Then there's the film's *cause célèbre*, a gay man whose partner died at the Pentagon. Their home state of Virginia doesn't recognize their domestic arrangement. Can Feinberg work around state laws to get him some money?

Another questionable call: Early in the film, a bulletin board plastered with flyers shows faces and names of missing people. The scene's a poignant reminder of many families' gut-wrenching wait for news of their loved ones. Yet the names on the board aren't of real 9/11 victims. For example, "Mary Beth Minton, last seen on Floor 73" is actually a production manager for *Worth*. And missing person Pepe Avila del Pino? The film's cinematographer.

On the upside, Feinberg may be Keaton's best Gotham role. With a convincing Bronx accent, Keaton keenly plays a socially awkward number-crunching lawyer who begins to learn empathy. Also, viewers will agonize with families who struggle between commanding dignity for their lost loved ones and receiving financial help for a lifetime of lost wages.

Still, as Hollywood cinematizes tragedies, it would do well to remember that *time* isn't the ultimate healer and instead often makes one heedless of others' wounds.

OSCAR INTERESTS Michael Keaton was nominated for a best actor Oscar for *Birdman* but has never won a golden statuette.

BOX OFFICE TOP 10

WEEKEND OF SEPT. 3-5, ACCORDING TO BOX OFFICE MOJO. QUANTITY OF **SEXUAL (S)**, **VIOLENT (V)**, AND **FOUL-LANGUAGE (L)** CONTENT ON A 0-10 SCALE, WITH 10 HIGH. FROM KIDS-IN-MIND.COM

S V L

- 1 **Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*** PG-13 not rated
- 2 **Candyman R** 3 9 8
- 3 **Free Guy*** PG-13not rated
- 4 **Jungle Cruise*** PG-13 . . 1 6 1
- 5 **PAW Patrol: The Movie*** G 0 2 0
- 6 **Don't Breathe 2 R** . . .not rated
- 7 **Respect*** PG-13 5 5 5
- 8 **The Suicide Squad*** R 5 9 10
- 9 **Black Widow*** PG-13 . . 1 6 4
- 10 **The Night House R** . .not rated

*REVIEWED BY WORLD



TOP 10 FOCUS

Respect, a biopic featuring singer Jennifer Hudson in the role of Aretha Franklin, brings to life the Queen of Soul, although it falls short in portraying her personal motivations. The film shows the obstacles Franklin overcame to achieve her dreams, her turn to alcohol, and her eventual return to her gospel-music roots. —from **WORLD's full review**



A TOWN CALLED GANDER

Broadway-based film *Come From Away* tells the little-known story of a Canadian town that welcomed stranded air travelers on 9/11

by Sharon Dierberger

COME FROM AWAY, streaming from Apple TV, is a filmed version of the Tony-winning musical that tells the remarkable true story of a 9/11 emergency operation in Gander, Newfoundland. Twenty years ago, the people of Gander welcomed to their town 38 diverted planes and nearly 7,000 passengers and crew. Lying between Europe and the United States, Gander International Airport is an emergency landing location and became part of Canada's Operation Yellow Ribbon on Sept. 11, 2001.

It's strange to imagine singing in a 9/11 story—until you see it actually works. Lyrics are clear, even with the purpose-

fully strong Canadian accents and phrases like “come from aways”—what Newfies call people not from the island. The fast-paced tale is full of mostly endearing characters who bend over backward to help, opening hearts and homes to stranded air travelers for five days following the terror attacks.

Stage scenes change rapidly, drawing the audience into the frenzy: We feel the stress of passengers, some of whom sat in planes on a runway for 30 hours, unsure of what had happened on American soil. The townspeople offer quick-thinking solutions, opening homes, churches, gyms, and hotel rooms to shelter passengers. Residents donate diapers, medicine, clothes, and toiletries and cook up a storm of casseroles.

Viewers get caught up in the personal stories—like Hannah who's longing to hear from her firefighter son in New York City, and the nervous foreigners who speak no English but understand when a Newfie points to Philippians 4:6, “Be anxious for nothing.” We wonder if the relationship between the London executive and Texas divorcée, seated next to each other on a plane, will blossom.

We smile when one man, worried a stranger would steal his wallet in Gander, learns to trust. In answer to his dad's question of whether he was OK in Newfoundland, he thinks aloud, “How do I tell him I wasn't just OK, I was better?”

The film, rated TV-14, does have some drawbacks. One subplot follows a gay couple and the way the town affirms their lifestyle. The story also includes salty language that makes it unsuitable for younger viewers.

It's a shame, because *Come From Away* can help us remember both the horror and grace of that heart-wrenching day. It's emotional watching stranded passengers try to reach loved ones by phone. It's hard to hear suspicions over whether any passengers disembarking in Gander might be security risks. And ever-looming are the deaths of almost 3,000 Americans by terrorists.

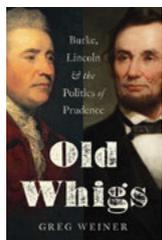
But *Come From Away* ultimately reminds us even the darkest days can provide reasons to sing.

Old Whigs, new wineskins

The choice between
greater and lesser evils

by Marvin Olasky

GREG WEINER'S *Old Whigs: Burke, Lincoln & the Politics of Prudence*



shows how both great thinkers understood that leadership in government means not pursuing the highest good but the best available to fallen humans. Edmund Burke and Abraham Lincoln both had to choose not between good and bad but between greater and lesser evils: In Lincoln's case, between the death of the United States and the deaths of many brave men.

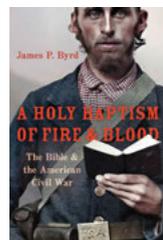
Weiner shows well how Burke and Lincoln told the complex truth and sometimes alienated their followers. Lincoln did not expect his Second Inaugural Address to be well received by its immediate hearers: "Men are not flattered by being shown that there is a difference of purpose between the Almighty and them. To deny it, however, in this case, is to deny that there is a God governing the world."

Both recommended proceeding care-

fully while avoiding what Burke called "a false, reptile prudence, the result, not of caution, but of fear." Lincoln in 1858 objected to inflaming issues through "noisy demonstrations—importing speakers from a distance and the like. They excite prejudice and close the avenues to sober reason." In his 1860 Cooper Union speech Lincoln asked Republicans to "do nothing through passion and ill temper. Even though the southern people will not so much as listen to us, let us calmly consider their demands."

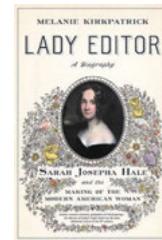
I tend to apply Lincoln's thinking about slavery to today's abortion battles. He told a Lewistown, Ill., audience in 1858 that the Declaration of Independence reflected the Founders' belief that "nothing stamped with the Divine image and likeness was sent into the world to be trodden on." What Lincoln jotted down in his 1862 "Meditation on the Divine Will" concerning the Civil War also pertains to our current abortion war: "I am almost ready to say this is probably true—that God wills this contest, and wills that it shall not end yet."

Weiner includes French playwright and wit Nicolas Chamfort's apt summary of the revolutionary credo: "Be my brother, or I will kill you." James Byrd's *A Holy Baptism of Fire & Blood: The Bible & the American Civil War* (Oxford University Press, 2021) takes us to the killing fields and the Book both sides read. British statesmen had found that conflict over slavery was repressible, if the anti-slavery side was willing to pay off slaveholders, as Lincoln had proposed—but Byrd shows how "compromise was not a strength of many evangelicals during this period."



Sadly, too many Americans on both sides in 1861 agreed with Virginia Gov. Henry A. Wise: "I rejoice in this war. ... It is a war of purification. You want war, fire, blood to purify you, and the Lord of Hosts has demanded that you should walk through fire and blood." Christianity, though, declares that Christ's blood has already purified us in God's eyes. Wise's words belie his last name.

Bookmarks



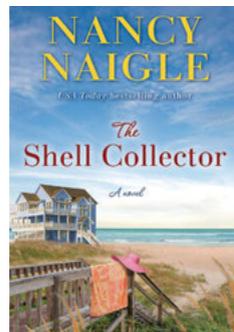
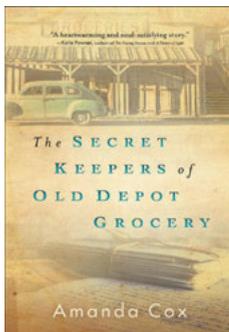
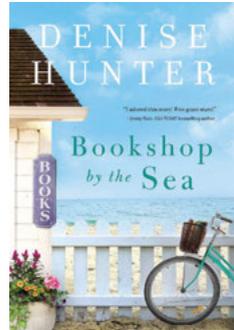
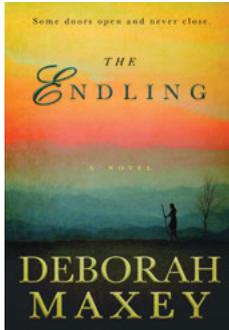
Melanie Kirkpatrick's *Lady Editor* (Encounter, 2021) tells of Sarah Josepha Hale, who edited a popular 19th-century magazine, *Godey's Lady's Book*. Hale fought the overwriting endemic at the time. She demanded "short, racy, spirited essays." She said "no" to one aspiring author and told him he would one day thank her for sparing him the embarrassment that would come his way if she published his submission. She told poor writers that they should write as they pleased because they were incapable of pleasing others.

Hale was also unsentimental about poverty. She wrote with admiration of Jews who demanded that their sons learn a trade and their daughters learn to sew. Hale founded in the 1830s the Seaman's Aid Society, not to give alms but to "empower individual women to break out of the cycle of poverty in which sailors' wives were usually trapped." She trained those wives to be seamstresses capable of making seamen's garments with strong seams so the clothing "will not be blown apart in the first gale." —M.O.

From the mountains to the sea

Four books from Christian publishers

by Sandy Barwick



***The Endling* by Deborah Maxey:** After completing an internship in New York City, Emerson Coffee, a 22-year-old Native American, returns to her remote cabin on ancestral land in the Blue Ridge Mountains. When a mob hitman puts a target on her back, U.S. marshals offer to place her in witness protection. Reluctant to leave her home, Emerson decides to stay put, using the survival skills her grandfather, Edward Two Eagles, taught her. But when she realizes she's putting the friends and family around her in danger too, she goes on offense, returning to New York to confront the mob on her terms. *The Endling* features a plucky protagonist—who, as a Christian, recognizes God's sovereignty while respecting all His creation—colorful secondary characters, and plenty of page-turning suspenseful moments.

***Bookshop by the Sea* by Denise Hunter:** As a teenager, Sophie Lawson became a mother figure to her siblings when their mom fell

ill and their father left. Seven years later, after her mother's death, Sophie is set to open the oceanside bookshop she's always dreamed of owning in North Carolina. But at her sister's wedding, Sophie encounters Aiden Maddox, her high-school sweetheart, the guy who shattered her heart when he left to pursue his own dreams. A hurricane postpones Aiden's trip home and as the two hunker down against the storm, they rehash the past. Old feelings resurface, but despite the mutual attraction, they fear too much hurt between them prevents a second chance. *Bookshop by the Sea* is the quintessential beach read about two imperfect people learning to communicate and forgive.

***The Secret Keepers of Old Depot Grocery* by Amanda Cox:** Sarah Ashby returns home to rural Brighton, Tenn., hoping to rejoin the family business at the Old Depot Grocery. Her grandmother, Glory Ann, who has co-owned the store since her marriage at age 19 to Clarence Clearwater, thinks it's a great idea. However, Sarah's mother, Rosemary, believes it's time to concede to progress and the new big box store in town by selling out to investors. The dual-timeline story spans decades from 1965 to the present and slowly reveals heavy secrets each woman carries. When long-buried lies resurface, each must decide how to move forward. This beautiful novel explores complex family relationships and illustrates the damage secrets can cause and, conversely, the healing that can come with truth-telling.

***The Shell Collector* by Nancy Naigle:** After her U.S. Marine husband's death, Amanda Whittier moves with her two young children to a beach cottage on fictional Whelk's Island, N.C. She befriends her neighbor Maeve Lindsay, an older widow native to the island, who spends her days combing the shore for shells. They form an instant bond. Meanwhile, newcomer Paul Grant has decided he'll never find love after losing his one opportunity many years earlier. He's concentrating on a new business venture, designing dog parks and rehabilitating retired military dogs. This sweet story about loss, hope, and friendship—and featuring mysterious seashells containing inspirational messages—unfolds easily and reminds readers of God's perfect timing in all things. Keep a tissue handy.

Flights and plights

Books for preschoolers to middle graders

by Kristin Chapman



Mel Fell by **Corey R. Tabor**: This delightful picture book opens with Mel, a young kingfisher, preparing for her first flight from the nest. Her sister wonders if she is scared. Mel says yes, “But I won’t let that stop me.” And with that she spreads her wings and ... falls. As she falls, Mel passes other tree-dwelling creatures who try in vain to rescue her. Preschoolers will enjoy the book’s unusual format, which requires readers to

turn the book as they follow Mel’s descent and then ascent. Note: One word bubble says “Blast.” (Ages 3-7)

Fly High, Fly Low by **Don Freeman**: In 2004, Viking rereleased Freeman’s 1957 book *Fly High, Fly Low*. A 1958 Caldecott Honoree, it is the story of Sid the pigeon and Midge the dove, who make their home in the letter B of a lighted sign towering over San Francisco. One morning while Sid is collecting his breakfast, workmen dismantle the sign and cart it away along with Midge and their nest of eggs. Sid frantically searches for his family until a friend discovers his plight and helps him reunite with Midge and their nest. Freeman’s vintage-style illustrations add charm to the story. (Ages 3-7)



Ways To Grow Love by **Renée Watson**: In this follow-up to *Ways To Make Sunshine*, Ryan Hart faces a big adjustment as her parents prepare for a new baby. She is also headed to church camp for the first time and is excited to spend time with her friends until she learns a mean girl from her past will also be there. Grandma gives sage advice through relatable analogies—“You never know what can grow between the two of you if you plant little seeds of kindness, of love”—and Ryan learns the art of navigating difficult relationships with grace. (Ages 7-10)

A Place To Hang the Moon by **Kate Albus**: William, Edmund, and Anna’s grandmother has died, leaving the three orphans without a guardian. The family solicitor concocts a plan to send the children to the English countryside as part of London’s evacuation during World War II, in hopes the children will find a suitable new family. That proves to be a tall order as the trio bounces from one unwelcoming billet to another. Their one comfort comes from weekly visits to the town library, where a lonely librarian befriends them and helps them finally find a place to call home. (Ages 8-12)



Afterword



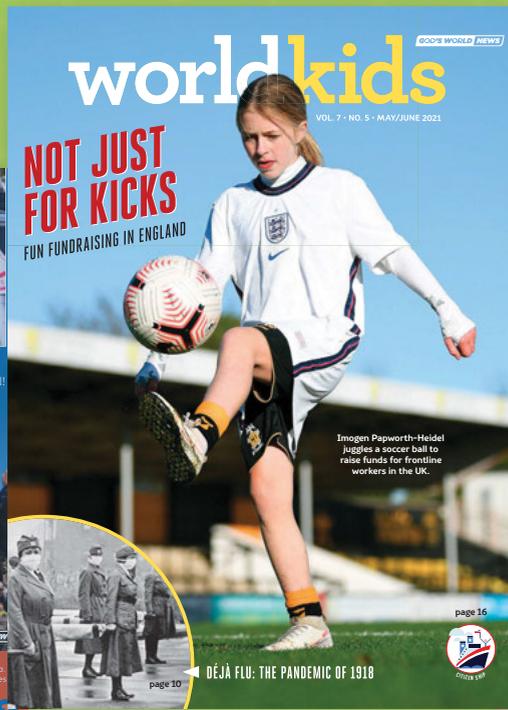
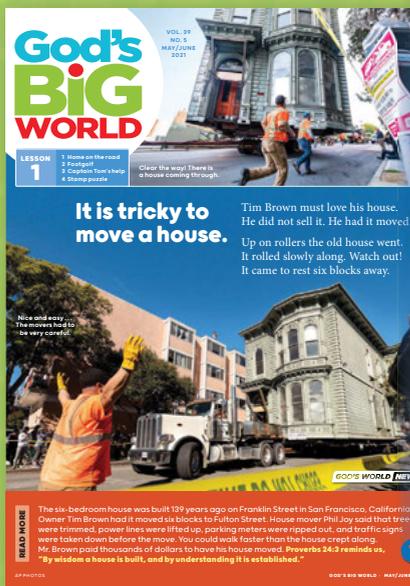
Hello, Rain! by **Kyo Maclear** and **Chris Turnham** (Chronicle, 2021) is an ode to rainy day fun. Bright illustrations and lyrical writing show the wonder of a rain-storm—from the pleasure of puddle-jumping to the coziness of dreary days indoors—while also exploring the benefit rain provides to flora and fauna.

Gideon Sterer’s wordless picture book **The Midnight Fair** (Candlewick, 2021) imagines animals sneaking into a carnival after all the people have left for the night. Mariachiara Di Giorgio’s watercolor and colored pencil illustrations beautifully capture the animals’ antics as they enjoy the games and rides until dawn.

Line and Scribble by **Debora Vogrig** (Chronicle, 2021) contrasts the differences between predictably straight Line and wandering Scribble. The plot crescendos to a showdown with each trying to outdo the other, which Pia Valentinis illustrates with crayon and fountain pen. The book ends, though, without affirming the beauty that comes from joining our strengths and differences together. —K.C.

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AN INTERVIEW WITH A FOUNDER

The effect of one man's faith and foibles
on the beginnings of America



**MARVIN
OLASKY
INTERVIEWS
ALEXANDER
HAMILTON**

CONSTITUTION DAY on Sept. 17 commemorates the signing of the U.S. Constitution by 39 Founders in 1787. Alexander Hamilton became the primary defender of the new document, writing 51 of the 85 newspaper columns—now known as *The Federalist Papers*—that proved crucial in winning New York support.

The success of *Hamilton*, the Broadway musical and movie, has led to a stream of new books about him. The most unusual is probably Andrew Porwancher's *The Jewish World of Alexander Hamilton* (Princeton University Press, 2021), which over-promises

on the title but reveals some little-known but now scholar-verified insights into Hamilton's early background. His mother Rachel married Johan Levine, a Jewish plantation owner on a Caribbean island, and probably converted to Judaism. They had one son, but the marriage broke down after five years and Levine had her jailed for adultery.

When Rachel got out, she fled to a neighboring island, abandoning Levine and their young son. There she became involved with an immigrant from Scotland, James Hamilton. According to Porwancher, Alexander was born out of

wedlock in 1754 and as a child attended a Jewish school, where he learned to say the Ten Commandments in Hebrew. His mother died in 1768, his father disappeared from his life, and a cousin who had temporary custody of him committed suicide. His half-brother also committed suicide. From such tragedies Hamilton emerged with toughness but also recklessness.

Those two qualities helped Hamilton fight in the Revolutionary War, fight his political opponents, and fight duels. Hamilton had a Christian renewal late in life, following his adultery. Shot by Aaron Burr, he died in 1804, well before I had the opportunity to interview him. So, here's what I would have asked—and here's how, judging from Hamilton's writings and the evidence biographer Porwancher provides, he might have responded.

After your parents were gone, how did you live? I had a good friend, Ned. His father Thomas Stevens, a wealthy merchant, took me in. I worked at an import-export firm and learned about accounting, pricing, inventory, and exchange rates.

In 1771 you were asked about your religious beliefs. What did you say? Anglican church, Reformed understanding.

Did you like being a clerk? I learned a great deal, but my rich friend Ned had gone to New York to study, and I confessed to him my weakness: "My ambition is so prevalent that I condemn the groveling conditions of a clerk and would willingly risk my life, though not my character, to exalt my station. I wish there was a war."

In 1772, while you were a teenager on the Caribbean island of St. Croix, how did reporting on a hurricane change your life? I wrote a sensational story about "a total dissolution of nature ... the roaring of the sea and wind, fiery meteors flying about it in the air, the prodigious glare of almost perpetual lightning, the crash of falling houses, and the ear-piercing shrieks of the distressed." Readers thought I had talent and funded my move to New York.



HOW OFTEN THE GREAT INTERESTS OF SOCIETY ARE SACRIFICED TO THE VANITY, TO THE CONCEIT, AND TO THE OBSTINACY OF INDIVIDUALS.



You concluded your article with a theological twist: "Where now, oh vile worm, is all thy boasted fortitude and resolution? What is become of thy arrogance and self-sufficiency?" Why that ending? It reflected what I had learned from a Presbyterian minister, Hugh Knox.

But didn't you in the new United States brag about your self-sufficiency and gain a reputation for arrogance? Guilty as charged. I was proud of defending the new Constitution and becoming the first secretary of the treasury, but that was God's providence—and I didn't give Him credit.

Your analysis relied on the historical evidence you summarized in Federalist No.

70: how rulers for centuries have "abused the confidence they possessed; and assuming the pretext of some public motive, have not scrupled to sacrifice the national tranquility to personal advantage or personal gratification." True. Whether you look at ancient Greece and Carthage, or Venice, or England's Cardinal Wolsey, corruption and hypocrisy are universal.

What do you think of those who think America has been and can be an exception? You should remember what I wrote in Federalist No. 70: "Have we not already seen enough of the fallacy and extravagance of those idle theories which have amused us with promises of an exemption from the imperfections, the weaknesses, and the evils incident to society in every shape?"

Even when you did not profess faith in Christ, you seemed to back up your historical evidence with an understanding of original sin. True. I wrote, "Men are ambitious, vindictive, and rapacious. ... Are not popular assemblies frequently subject to the impulses of rage, resentment, jealousy, avarice? ... How often the great interests of society are sacrificed to the vanity, to the conceit, and to the obstinacy of individuals."

But you didn't confess to much of that in yourself? Not when I was young. In everyone else I saw "detestable vice."

What did you rely upon when a study of history and human nature didn't give you adequate guidance? Human reason. Here's an example: In Philadelphia we debated a proposal to have two "consuls" instead of one president—imitating ancient Rome. I acknowledged that ancient history didn't give us clear guidance on that, but the dictates of reason and good sense gave us good cause to reject the proposal.

That seems different from the approach of your Federalist Papers co-author, James Madison. He followed the Enlightenment tendency to start with reason, but you seemed to use history first, a Biblical understanding of human nature second, and your own reason third. →

Looks like some of your early religious training stuck with you? Yes, and maybe the experience of growing up in a broken family and coming to maturity in a broken country fed my skepticism regarding reason, pure and impure. I did see the need for some measuring device outside our fallen brains.

When others at the Constitutional Convention wanted each session to open with prayer, why did you say delegates did not need to call in “foreign aid”? Couldn’t resist uttering a witticism. When I returned to New York and my old friend, Dr. John Rogers of the Wall Street Presbyterian Church, asked me why the Constitution did not expressly recognize God, I gibed, “We forgot.”

But you saw religion as useful, particularly when the French Revolution turned atheistic. In 1798, when the United States almost went to war with France, why did you ask Americans to “trust in Heaven, and nobly defy the enemies both of God and man”? I’m sorry to say I was using Christianity for political purposes. I told one of my allies, William L. Smith, that “it may be proper by some religious solemnity to impress seriously the minds of the people.” I wanted “active competition with the atheistical tenets of their enemies. This is an advantage which we shall be very unskilled if we do not use to the utmost. ... A day of humiliation and prayer, besides being very proper, would be extremely useful.”

You seemed to see God not in a distant deistic sense, but as engaged in the world? I believed the blessing of Providence staved off national bankruptcy in the 1780s. When John Adams acted feebly, I wrote to the great Washington, “My trust in Providence, which has so often interposed in our favor, is my only consolation.”

But your ability to recite the Ten Commandments in Hebrew did not keep you from committing adultery? Sadly no, even though Eliza was the best of wives

and the best of women. I hated it when she wouldn’t even talk to me, but I deserved it.

Then in 1801 your eldest son, 19-year-old Philip, had a duel with George Eacker, who had attacked your policies. My fault. I ignored my pessimism about human nature and advised Philip to do the honorable thing—refuse to shoot. I thought Eacker would act honorably as well. He did not. He shot and killed Philip. Killed also my sense of self-sufficiency.

What did you learn from studying the Bible, and William Paley’s Evidences of Christianity? I carefully examined the evidence and told people I could prove the truth of Christianity “as clearly as any proposition ever submitted to the mind of man.” I proposed that we create in every large city Christian schools to help the poor, and charitable organizations to help immigrants.

You liked the Louisiana Purchase even though your political opponent Thomas Jefferson got the credit? It was the kind interposition of an over-ruling Providence.

Your opposition to Aaron Burr helped Jefferson become president in 1801.

What did you think about the presidential candidates in 1804? I didn’t think about them. My father-in-law Philip Schuyler asked me political questions. I replied, “I am too much disgusted to give myself any future concern about them.”

You responded differently than you had before to complaints about life’s twists and turns? I advised one man, “Arraign not the dispensations of Providence, they must be founded in wisdom and goodness; and when they do not suit us, it must be because there is some fault in us which deserves chastisement; or because there is a kind intent to correct in us some vice or failing, of which, perhaps, we may not be conscious. ... In this situation, it is our duty to cultivate resignation, and even humility.”

How did you prepare for your July 1804 duel with Burr? The evening before, I recited the Lord’s Prayer with our 12-year-old son, John.

The next morning Burr fatally shot you, but you lingered for a few hours. What were your last words? “I have a tender reliance on the mercy of the Almighty, through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am a sinner. I look to Him for mercy; pray for me.” ■



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Back to Earth with a box set

Manfred Mann's Earth Band release omits what made the group special

by Arsenio Orteza



IN 2011, MANFRED MANN'S EARTH BAND marked its 40th anniversary with a 20-disc box titled *40th Anniversary* that contained every Earth Band LP ever released and then some. It's almost as if the then-70-year-old keyboard wizard after whom the band was named figured he might not be around for his group's semicentennial.

But around he is, hence the appearance this summer of *Mannthology: 50 Years of Manfred Mann's Earth Band 1971-2021* (Creature). The U.S. version contains three CDs, the U.K.'s four plus DVDs containing a 2017 live show (viewable for free on YouTube) and a story-of documentary.

Yet if the ruby-anniversary box was too much of an only intermittently good thing (consistency has never been Mann's middle name due to his revolving-door band-membership policy and chameleonlike stylistic shifts), the diamond-anniversary box is not enough.

The problem isn't the amount of music (50 tracks in the U.S., 66 in the U.K.) or its quality. Most of the tracks

were singles, and several were hits in one country or another. The problem is that almost every song appears in its radio edit, eliminating the flights of prog-rock fancy that often made Mann's rearrangements of other people's music fascinating.



Still, for those who know nothing of the Earth Band but its biggest U.S. hit—a stunning version of Bruce Springsteen's "Blinded by the Light" in which Mann scrapped everything but the lyrics and rebuilt the song from scratch—*Mannthology's* abundance contains pleasant surprises.

Besides "Blinded by the Light," they'll encounter the fresh life that Mann gave to Springsteen's "Spirits in the Night" and "For You." They'll also discover that "The Mighty Quinn," which Mann's eponymous first ensemble took into the Top 10 in 1968 and which the Earth Band recorded more than once, was only the tip of the iceberg in working wonders with Bob Dylan songs.

Not necessarily with "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue" or "Father of Day, Father of Night," the latter of which still feels like a failed experiment. But "Please, Mrs. Henry" and "Get Your Rocks Off" rock hard. And no one, not even Roger McGuinn and his Rickenbacker guitar in 1965, ever did for a Dylan tune what Mann and his synthesizer did for "You Angel You" in 1979.

Why neither that nor 1978's Mann-made versions of Robbie Robertson's "Davy's on the Road Again" and Sue Vickers' lovely "California" embedded themselves in the American charts is a rock 'n' roll cold case worth reopening.

Mann eventually moved on from Springsteen and Dylan but with mixed results. His takes on songs made famous by the Jam ("Going Underground"), Bob Marley ("Redemption Song"), the Lovin' Spoonful ("Summer in the City"), and Cyndi Lauper ("All Through the Night") amounted to little more than curiosities.

Nevertheless, Mann's curiosity about such a broad pop range is the very definition of thinking outside the box—and the reason perhaps that so far no box has done that curiosity justice. ■

NAME CHANGE Manfred Mann was born Manfred Lubowitz in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Playful, fun, and deep

Noteworthy new or
recent releases

by Arsenio Orteza

The Montreux Years by Marianne Faithfull:

Culled from Marianne Faithfull's appearances at the Montreux Jazz Festival from 1995 to 2009, this compilation should cement her reputation as rock's archetypal tragic heroine and its rangiest interpretive chanteuse. Among



the highlights: Leonard Cohen's "Tower of Song," Duke Ellington's "Solitude" (by way of Billie Holiday), her

Angelo Badalamenti-co-written torch song "She," the Jackie DeShannon-penned "Come and Stay With Me" (revisited for the first time in 34 years). Faithfull inhabits these vignettes with authoritative sensitivity. The lowlights: the scabrous "Why D'Ya Do It?," in which the lady doth protest too much (and too profanely), and "Song for Nico," in which she doesn't protest nearly enough.

Treasure of Love by the Flatlanders:

You'll know that you've listened to this album enough when you reach the stage at which you can consistently identify whether it's Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Joe Ely, or Butch Hancock singing lead. Of course, by the time you master that challenge, you'll also know that you can't listen to this album enough. What you're hearing is part illusion (demos brought to fruition by producer Lloyd Maines' seamless addition



of Austin-style country). None of the dozen covers out-define the originals (fat chance with the likes of George Jones, Bob Dylan, and Johnny Cash for competition). But the playfulness keeps what's clearly a labor of love from sounding like something requiring a love of labor.

Jump for Joy by Gary Louris: "I am just a simple man in a complicated world," sings the Jayhawks' frontman in the seeker's confession "Living in



Between," right after he sings "Licking wounds that never heal, / losing touch with what I feel." And if those lyrics sound like something that

John Lennon might have dreamed up watching the wheels go 'round, the tune and arrangement are George Harrison at 33⅓. Yet there's nothing derivative about the mesh, or about the subtle experiments that enliven every song except for the John Updike tribute. A synthesizer here, a bent guitar solo there, hand claps where you'd least expect them, melodies, melodies everywhere—it's enough to keep you from despairing for the future of folk-rock.

Where's the Money Honey? by various

artists: These Truman-Eisenhower-era blues and jump-blues numbers inhabit the Scriptural terrain between "It is better to dwell in the corner of the house-top than with a brawling woman and in a wide house" and "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Not that any of the mostly male performers would've described this *Compendium of Blues Songs Celebrating Money or the Lack Of!* (the subtitle) in terms so pious—keeping the wolf and gold diggers from the door is the axis on which the blues world turns. But listen between the lines and you'll be hard pressed to reach any other conclusion. And speaking of subtexts, Varetta Dillard's "Send Me Some Money" might just as well be called "The Prodigal Wife."



Encore



Released last April, the mesmerizing spoken-word **She Walks in Beauty** is the culmination of a love for Romantic poetry in its top-billed performer, Marianne Faithfull. Nearly 60 years ago her "great, great English teacher, Mrs. Simpson," engendered that love. And were Mrs. Simpson still alive, she'd undoubtedly love the way that Faithfull uses what's left of her septuagenarian voice to bring out the pathos in Shelley's "Ozymandias," Hood's "The Bridge of Sighs," Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott" (the sole Victorian entry), and other classics worn smooth by over-anthologization.

Mrs. Simpson would also love the music supplied by second-billed performer, the multi-instrumentalist Warren Ellis, atop which Faithfull recites. Unobtrusively simple yet eerily appropriate, it consummates the marriage of sense and sensibility. If Faithfull never makes another record again, it's **She Walks in Beauty**, and not the just-released **The Montreux Years**, that her fans should treasure as her swan song. —A.O.



A sure word

Applying Scripture to our hearts,
not just our politics

ONE OF THE MORE INTERESTING MOMENTS in a recent Texas State Senate hearing on voting laws came when a leader of a watchdog group quoted from 2 Peter to underscore the importance of election security: “Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.”

“I love that Scripture,” the woman told the Senate panel, “because this is what our [election] watchers do.” The next speaker politely noted: “I do believe Saint Peter was talking about the election of the saints, not the election of Texas state senators.”

A few weeks later, after former President Donald Trump urged an audience in Alabama to get a COVID-19 vaccine, a rally-goer told CNN she doesn’t trust the government or the media: “I think it is a time when God is separating the sheep from the goats.” She added, “I’m a goat, because I ain’t a sheep. I’m not doing what they tell me to do.”

Misunderstanding or misusing Scripture to make a point isn’t new, and it’s not relegated to one side of the political spectrum.

When President Joe Biden defended his administration’s chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan in August, he commended the sacrificial service of the U.S. military by quoting from the book of Isaiah, where the Lord says, “Whom shall I send? Who shall go for us?” Biden added: “The American military’s been answering for a long time, ‘Here I am, Lord, send me.’”

It’s true that U.S. service members and military groups have quoted the same verse for comfort and inspiration. But Paul Miller, a research fellow with the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (and a U.S. veteran who served in Afghanistan), wrote about the problem with Biden’s

THE MORE INTENSE THE ENVIRONMENT, THE GREATER THE OPPORTUNITY TO FOLLOW CHRIST.

analogy: “It says U.S. troops are like Isaiah, and their mission is akin to preaching God’s truth.”

Miller noted he’s not against an appropriate use of Scripture in public speech, “But Biden’s use of Isaiah was wildly out of context and did violence to what the text actually meant. It just came off as an attempt to borrow the gravitas and moral authority of religious-sounding rhetoric for political purposes.”

If borrowing religious rhetoric for political purposes is a common temptation, perhaps it’s less common to do what’s more difficult: apply Scripture first to ourselves. Here’s a helpful place to start: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”

That’s not a checklist for the timid but a framework for the godly. While we rightly wrestle with how to apply the Bible to confusing conundrums, and though Christians sometimes disagree, the Scriptures provide a clear guide for how we ought to conduct ourselves in the process.

The more intense the environment—political or otherwise—the greater the opportunity to follow Christ, who perfectly embodied the fruit of the Spirit in a corrupt and sinful world. Jesus didn’t hold back righteous indignation, but He also didn’t withhold kindness from sinners, including His closest friends.

In some cases, the Bible is abundantly clear about issues often considered political. When the U.S. Supreme Court recently upheld Texas’ pro-life “heartbeat” law, many Christians rejoiced because they understand Scripture’s clear command: “Thou shalt not kill.”

Abortion advocates and some media outlets decried the court decision with painfully strained arguments. NPR quoted a San Francisco physician as saying the term “fetal heartbeat” is misleading at six weeks’ gestation: “What we’re really detecting is a grouping of cells that are initiating some electrical activity.”

King David had a higher view in Psalm 139: “For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. ... My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret. ... Your eyes saw my unformed substance.”

That’s a Scripture every man, woman, and child should apply to themselves too, along with the clear prayer David offers at the end, even in perplexing times: “Search me, O God, and know my heart! ... And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!”



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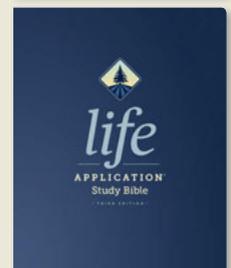
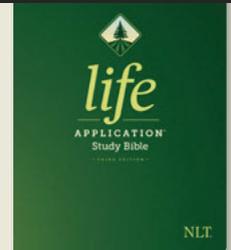
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A photograph showing a person sitting on the ground, partially obscured by large white and brown bags. The person is wearing a blue garment. A baby's feet are visible in the foreground. The background is a rough, stone or concrete wall. The overall scene suggests a displacement or refugee camp setting.

HOPE AND REGRETS FOR AFGHANISTAN

American veterans, aid workers, and others who worked or fought in Afghanistan are trying to dodge despair and brace for the country's future under Taliban rule

BY EMILY BELZ



A family displaced by fighting between Afghan government forces and the Taliban waits in Kabul in early August.

SAYED KHODAIBERDI SADAT/ANADOLU AGENCY VIA GETTY IMAGES



ARMY MAJOR BRAD LOVIN oversaw defense operations at Camp Clark in eastern Afghanistan in 2010 and 2011. During his deployment, coming a decade into the long U.S. campaign to defeat Islamist terrorism there and build a democratic nation, he remembers asking senior Afghan army soldiers what they thought the nation would be like when Americans left. ¶ The old soldiers told him the United States would never leave. ¶ “I said, ‘No, we’re gonna leave one day,’” Lovin recalled. “And they say, ‘Well, if you’re leaving, we’re leaving, because the Taliban are coming back.’” ¶ Another decade later, the United States left, and the Taliban came back. ¶ After the events of August 2021—the collapse of the Afghan government and the bloody and bumbled U.S. exit—many American aid workers and veterans like Lovin say they are immensely discouraged by the situation in Afghanistan. Some spent years attempting to bring peace, democracy, and social progress to the country, only to see their efforts crumble under a Taliban takeover. ¶ “It’s lost opportunities,” said Dr. Dilip Joseph, the medical director of Morning Star Development, an American community development organization working in Afghanistan since 1997. Joseph said Morning Star’s work in the country is on “pause,” with the group unable to pay staffers as wire services and banks were no longer functioning, although wire services were working to resume by early September.



Taliban fighters on patrol at the Kabul airport

As James was taking his brother-in-law Ali, a U.S. citizen, to the Kabul airport, the capital city began falling to a Taliban invasion. With their flight now canceled, Ali's family returned home and saw on the way that the Taliban was already establishing checkpoints.

Driving past a prison abandoned by guards, James saw thousands of prisoners streaming out. One tried to steal a long-range cannon from outside the prison, James said, while others had jumped in stolen Humvees and were hauling rocket-propelled grenades and M4 rifles.

"Everyone was shooting, saying, 'Get away from the road,'" James recalled. "They didn't know how to drive. Some of them hit cars, some of them hit shops. You can't imagine the scene."

His family and others had experienced Taliban rule before and feared the group's brutality. James said his brother was among the Afghan soldiers who surrendered to the Taliban's advance. His brother, James said, had wanted to fight, but his commanders told the soldiers they had orders to stand down. They gathered their weapons and gave them to the Taliban. In return, the Taliban gave the soldiers a paper promising their safety.

After the last American evacuation flight left on Aug. 30 just before midnight, James and his family listened as loud celebratory gunfire erupted around them.

James thought 20 years was "enough" for the American mission in Afghanistan—"You can't get killed for somebody else forever"—but its objective failed. The Americans "wanted to clean out al-Qaeda, but they didn't clean it," said James. "Taliban and al-Qaeda, they came back stronger."

In his village, James said, Taliban loyalists had revealed themselves, and now 18- and 19-year-olds are the village district governors and commanders. No one knows what the future holds. Afghans told me they expect to be blacklisted from travel. People have money from their last paychecks, but what will happen when they—and the new rulers—run out?

"We have done a lot in the last 20 years. And everything is gone in one week," said Ali, who eventually made it

on an evacuation flight with his family. "All the jobs are gone. People live by robbing people, killing people. This is how life gets when people like Taliban come."

JOSEPH, THE MORNING STAR medical director, calls the new regime "Taliban 2.0." He experienced the harshness of Taliban 1.0.

In 2010, the Taliban ambushed and killed 10 Christian medical workers, including a friend of Joseph's, Cheryl Beckett. Later, in 2012, Joseph and two of his Afghan co-workers were leaving a rural medical clinic when Taliban soldiers surrounded their vehicle and took them hostage, forcing them to hike for hours through mountains and across cliffs as they changed bases regularly.

The Taliban said they would kill the hostages unless Morning Star paid a ransom of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Joseph explained to them his organization was small and had little money. Morning Star's negotiators eventually offered \$9,000 for the trio's ransom.

Negotiations continued. The Taliban didn't harm Joseph, aside from a blow from a rifle butt and incessant threats of execution. Given the paltry offer for his ransom, Joseph prayed for a quick death.

The Taliban eventually released Joseph's Afghan co-workers, including Muhammad Rafiq, a doctor. Shortly after, a Navy SEAL team rescued Joseph, killing his captors. One SEAL died in the operation. Joseph returned to his work at Morning Star, although he was unable to return to Afghanistan in person for visa and security reasons.

Then in 2019, Dr. Rafiq was killed in what Morning Star reported was an assassination, although no one could conclusively establish who was responsible.

As Afghanistan fell this summer, Joseph thought about American talking points blaming Afghans for not fighting for their own country—and he thought about Rafiq.

"He had a great vision for the nation; he wanted to be one of the leaders," Joseph said. "There were folks who were not given that option to lead this country."

Although Morning Star's development work is paused, many of its programs were Afghan-run, and Joseph is hopeful some programs could restart under Taliban 2.0. The Afghan Ministry

Joseph and other aid workers predict a harsh winter ahead for Afghans needing basic services as the Taliban struggles to organize a stable government and functioning society. Veterans criticize the manner of the U.S. pullout and the abandonment of Afghan allies who did not make it out. And all are trying to imagine Afghanistan's new future under Taliban rule. Those who have already experienced past Taliban persecution see sorrow ahead—but also work to do.

ON AUG. 15, James, an Afghan and a longtime translator for the U.S. military, knew something was wrong when he saw people in Kabul had changed out of government uniforms and into traditional Afghan outfits. (WORLD has given the translator a pseudonym for security reasons.)

of Health had already taken over most of Morning Star's medical work, so the future of such operations is unclear. But Morning Star did still have some private medical work through Kabul University that Joseph hopes can restart in some form.

Joseph urged Christians to remain attentive to the situation. After the Taliban took over the country in 1996, he recalled, Afghans endured a hard winter and many children died. He expects this winter to be hard as well and noted internally displaced people will need help from aid groups.

Another aid worker, Travis Yates, spent two years in Afghanistan with Samaritan's Purse until 2008, then worked there again from 2010 to 2012 with Medair, a Christian nonprofit based in Switzerland.

Yates primarily worries about the safety of Afghan staff members who worked for Christian organizations. He's also worried about the effect of nonprofit work coming to a halt: "People are likely going to die." Afghanistan has a history of severe malnutrition among children during its cycles of conflicts, and the COVID-19 pandemic has further disrupted supply chains of medicines and other essentials.

"It's going to be really hard for a long time," Yates said.

Logistics and security were already difficult in Afghanistan, making it expensive for foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to operate there, Yates said. Without funding from the U.S. government or other governments, it will be hard to find private funding.

Meanwhile, no Afghan systems for air travel, let alone visas, existed for foreign aid workers as of early September.

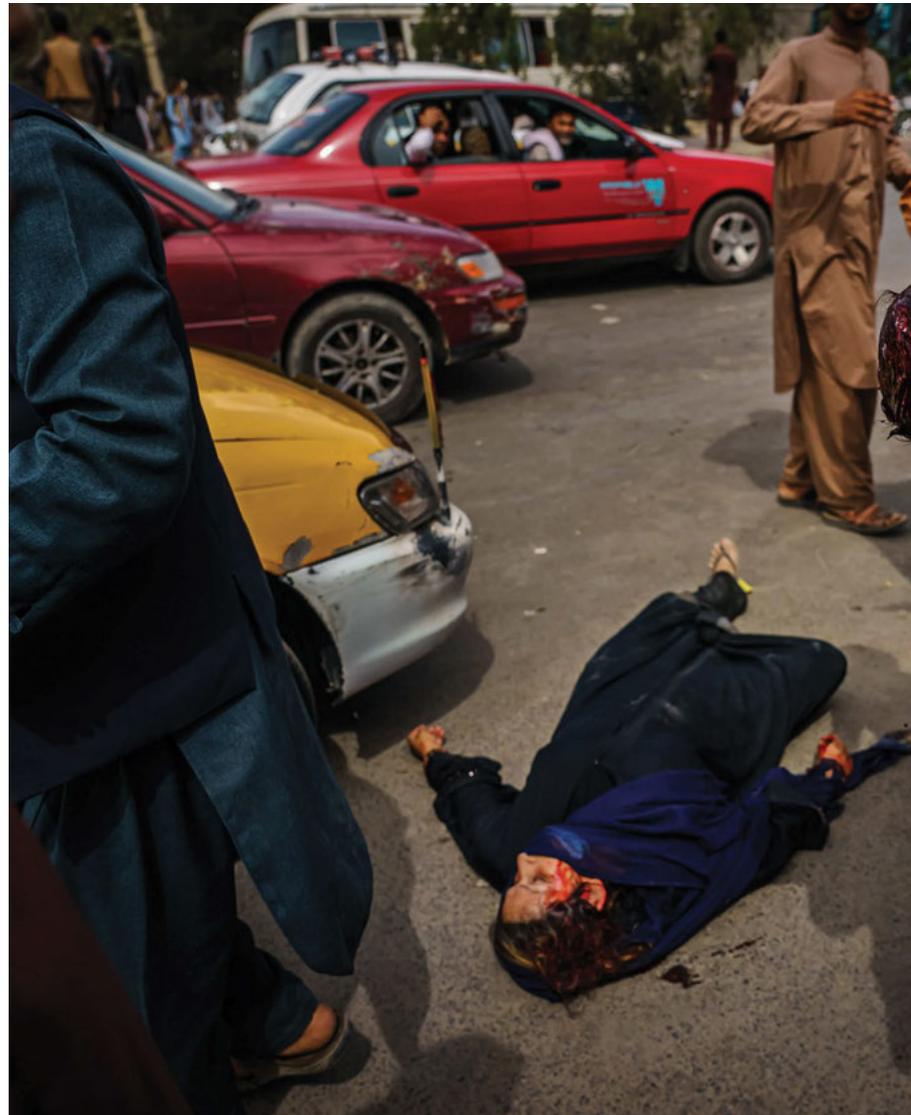
"There's going to have to be a lot of dust settling in Afghanistan before any NGO of any size goes back in there," said Col. Hobie Smith, a retired Marine who has served in Afghanistan and also now works as a security contractor for groups like Samaritan's Purse.

From a security standpoint, which affects the ability of NGOs to operate, many veterans of the war in Afghanistan are livid about the manner in which the United States exited the country, even if they think leaving was the right decision.

The lack of preparation for the Aug. 15 scenario clearly created a nightmare for Afghans.

In 2008 Smith served on a team that developed an emergency evacuation plan for American troops in Iraq in case the U.S. military needed to make a sudden exit from the country. By comparison, he called the evacuation plan he saw unfold in Afghanistan—with Afghan civilians clinging to departing planes and the Taliban controlling access to the airport—"downright buffoonery."

"Where are all these really smart people within the State Department, who went to Yale and Harvard and West Point and the Naval Academy?" he said. "With the greatest military of the world, the





A burqa-clad woman walks by vandalized posters on beauty salon windows on a street in Kabul (left); a man carries a bloodied child as a woman lies wounded on the street after Taliban fighters used gunfire, whips, sticks, and sharp objects to maintain crowd control over thousands of Afghans waiting outside the Kabul airport on Aug. 17.



greatest planners, and this is our best effort?”

Smith thinks the American soldiers on the ground did their best at great sacrifice, and he called it a “good deployment” to rescue Americans and Afghan allies in need, even though he thought the airport in Kabul was a terrible defensive position.

Retired Air Force Lt. Col. Fred Hixson deployed to Afghanistan in 2013-2014 and commanded a squadron at the Kabul airport. He recalled how difficult the airport was to defend due to its layout, with gates right alongside major roads.

Meanwhile, Bagram Airfield, a large base several miles north of Kabul, would require a large number of troops to defend, but it seemed to Hixson like the one place the Americans should have held on to for an evacuation.

Department of Defense officials plan for noncombatant evacuation operations “in their sleep,” he said. “I’m just left with questions about this whole thing. It doesn’t align with any of our capabilities that we know we have.”

SMITH, WHO HAS A SON in the Marine Corps, is glad that “in all likelihood” his son won’t be deployed to Afghanistan in the future.

Smith deployed to Afghanistan for a year in 2002, and again later as a defense

contractor. When he greeted his wife after getting off the plane in San Diego, Calif., in 2003, he told her the United States needed to get out of the country. The government graft he saw was horrible, and the attempt to impose a centralized government on a “tribal, family-centric culture” was futile, he thought.

“At the end of the day, it’s just sad,” Smith said.

Joseph, the American doctor, believes Afghanistan’s future hinges on the Taliban. Only three countries recognized the last Taliban regime, and Joseph hopes this Taliban government might try to gain wider recognition and bring on workers from the previous government.

Differences from Taliban 1.0 that he noted were that Kabul has “advanced leaps and bounds” as a city, creating a class of urbanites. And he also said “the spiritual atmosphere is very different” today, with the number of Christians growing from hundreds to perhaps tens of thousands.

He is hopeful that the Taliban can change—and that therefore the country can change. During his captivity, he had multiple conversations with his Taliban captors, and he found among them a despair over their lives of violence.

When one of his captors appeared sullen and vacant, Joseph found out his commanders had assigned him to perform a suicide bombing the following week using the stolen car from Morning Star. Joseph remembered a 19-year-old Taliban soldier telling him, “There has to be more to life than this.” Those Taliban captors were killed in the SEAL raid.

“Ever since I had that encounter with them, I’ve felt very comfortable praying for them,” Joseph said. “They need to come to some sort of revelation ... that there’s more to life than this way of instilling fear for the sake of righteousness.”

Still, the rapid fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban made this normally placid doctor angry. “How do I even pray about this situation, let alone have some hope?” he asked.

Then he answered his own question. “Even that made me realize that I need to actually pray for exactly that—for hope.” ■

GOING

**FLORIDA GOV. RON DESANTIS DRAWS
PRAISE AND SCORN FOR HIS APPROACH
TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC—AND HE OFFERS
A GLIMPSE OF WHAT THE NEXT WAVE OF
NATIONAL ELECTIONS MIGHT HOLD**

by Jamie Dean

VIRAL



Ron DeSantis at an event in Jupiter, Fla.

DOUG MILLS/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX



A FEW WEEKS INTO THE COVID-19 pandemic, a Florida attorney strolled along the state's coastline in a hooded robe and a black face mask, toting a plastic scythe. Daniel Uhlfelder declared the beaches unsafe for tourists, and he filed a lawsuit against Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, seeking to force the Republican to shutter the shores.

Beachgoers glanced up from umbrellas and koozies, unfazed by the sight of the Grim Reaper on a lifeguard stand.

DeSantis and his supporters seemed unfazed too. More than a year later, a political action committee backing the governor sells koozies emblazoned with DeSantis' name and a slogan: "Don't Fauci my Florida."

The jab at Anthony Fauci—the president's chief medical adviser—touts the governor's pushback against Fauci's plea

for other states to reopen with more caution than Florida. It also stokes DeSantis' national profile. In June, the governor topped the Western Conservative Summit's straw poll for GOP nominee for president in 2024. He narrowly edged out a fellow Floridian: former President Donald Trump.

The political action committee selling DeSantis merchandise also reported a massive fundraising haul in the first seven months of the year: \$40.4 million. More than \$4 million came in July alone.

Less than a year into President Joe Biden's administration, it's still early to speculate on the presidential nominee for either party in 2024, especially with next year's midterm elections set to grab attention within the next few months.

But it's not too early for planning, and DeSantis is at least getting practice in a state that serves as a kind of microcosm of the nation: Florida is nearly evenly

split between Republicans and Democrats and regularly offers nail-biter elections decided on razor-thin margins.

Sound familiar?

For DeSantis, any road to the White House runs first through the pandemic: On that front, he's banked on a reopening strategy even some of his critics admitted worked during an earlier wave of the virus. But a similar strategy has met rough roadblocks from the delta variant pounding through Florida this summer—and from some local officials who say DeSantis has concentrated too much power on the state level, despite his conservative creds.

Though most Republicans in the state back the governor, one dissenting GOP mayor has called DeSantis "a dictator" during the pandemic. DeSantis dismisses such labels with an equally dramatic analogy: "We are, effectively, America's West Berlin."

Whether that message lands depends largely on the trajectory of the pandemic, and as DeSantis appears poised to announce a reelection bid for the state's gubernatorial race next year, he also faces questions about his prospects for 2024: Could a candidate eyeing two contests at one time win both with the same game plan?

DESANTIS HAD a game plan from an early age. Flash back to 30 years ago this summer, and a 12-year-old DeSantis is winding up on the pitcher's mound at the Little League World Series in Williamsport, Pa. The Dunedin Little League All Stars of 1991 were the first team from Pinellas County, Fla., to make it to the top tournament since 1948. (The team won only a single game, but DeSantis struck out 11 batters in five innings to help clinch the win.)

The future governor grew up in a working-class family in Dunedin, Fla., and ended up at bat for Yale University. DeSantis was the baseball team's Rookie of the Year in 1998 and then the team captain before heading to Harvard Law School and a commission as a U.S. Navy JAG officer, with a tour of duty in Iraq.

He rode a tea party wave to Congress in 2012, then mounted a brief Senate run until Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., dropped a presidential bid and decided to run for reelection to the Senate. In 2018, DeSantis made another pitch, this time asking voters to elect him as governor of Florida.

DeSantis had amassed a conservative voting record in Congress but a sometimes-cautious approach to President Donald Trump during his first White House run. (As a congressman, DeSantis didn't endorse Trump until after Trump had nearly secured the GOP nomination in 2016, despite Trump winning Florida two months earlier.)

But by the fall of 2018, DeSantis was running a campaign ad that showed him helping his young daughter "build the wall" with toy blocks and reading Trump's book *The Art of the Deal* to his infant son. Trump appeared with DeSantis at a Florida rally, with a nod that may have nudged DeSantis over the edge: He won a razor-thin race against Democrat

Andrew Gillum by 0.4 percent, triggering an automatic recount and making DeSantis the youngest Florida governor in a century.

If voters expected a mini-Trump in the new governor, DeSantis' inauguration speech may have surprised them: The governor spoke about curbing illegal immigration and lowering taxes, but he also talked about the importance of clean water and a healthy environment to the state's economic climate. (He later appointed a chief resilience officer to prepare the state for the effects of sea level rise.)

His first veto as governor was surprising too.

In 2019, the GOP state Legislature passed a bill that would have prevented local governments from banning single-use plastic straws. Major business groups including the Florida Retail Federation backed the bill, but DeSantis swatted it down. He said local governments should have control over such decisions.

"If they're doing things that infringe on people's constitutional freedoms or frustrate state policy, then that becomes something that can be ripe for state intervention," the governor said at the time. "Unless I see it violating some other principle, I usually just let people do as they see fit."

Less than a year later, that notion met a test that neither DeSantis nor anyone else could have anticipated as health officials started warning about a mysterious virus that had shown up on American shores.

WHEN COVID-19 made its dramatic appearance in the United States in March 2020, spring break was breaking out in Florida, and DeSantis was loathe to shut down quickly.

But the governor did make an exception: That same month, he announced a ban on most visits to Florida nursing homes. Health workers scrambled to adjust to the new conditions, but the move likely saved the lives of many residents most vulnerable to the virus.

The state also closed schools, but in the fall of 2020, DeSantis bucked the trend of many other states by announcing

People demonstrate with placards outside an emergency meeting of the Brevard County School Board in Viera, Fla.

Parents pick up their children from Riverglades Elementary School as Public schools open in Broward County, Fla.



schools would fully reopen to in-person learning. Many critics decried the move and warned of a deadly surge of the virus. By spring, even some of DeSantis' critics said they thought he made the right move, as schools didn't appear to be major sources of spread.

In March of this year, Nikki Fried, the state's agricultural commissioner—and now a Democratic candidate for governor in 2022—responded with a single word when *Politico* asked if DeSantis had done anything right during the pandemic: “Schools.” John Morgan, an Orlando attorney and megadonor to both political parties, added in the March report, “On the pandemic—as of this writing—DeSantis won.”

Indeed, DeSantis was taking a spring victory lap, even as the article noted the pandemic wasn't over: “Ominous variants lurk.”

The delta variant lurked through the spring, then lunged at Florida and states across the country over the summer. DeSantis insisted on staying the course without mask mandates or closures, even as cases surged. He encouraged vaccination, and he also set up sites across the state to offer federally funded treatments of monoclonal antibodies to patients with a positive test.

By early August, cases still surged as school was about to start: Though Florida accounts for about 6 percent of the U.S. population, it represented some 18 percent of the seven-day average of cases nationwide, according to a Heritage Foundation analysis.

The same analysis noted Florida deaths related to COVID-19 remained below the levels reached last summer and during January, though the numbers were trending higher by the end of August.

The statistics roiled all sides of the pandemic debate, as DeSantis came down hard on at least one thing he wasn't willing to allow local governments to do as they see fit: issue mask mandates. The controversy came to a boiling point with a handful of large school districts that pushed back against the governor's attempt to ban local school officials from mandating masks for students.

DeSantis signed an executive order in July called “Ensuring Parents' Freedom To Choose,” in part to prevent mask

“THE REPUBLICAN PARTY IS SUPPOSED TO BE THE PARTY OF LOCAL CONTROL AND SMALL GOVERNMENT, SO WHEN YOU DON'T ALLOW LOCALLY ELECTED OFFICIALS TO MAKE THEIR OWN DECISIONS, THEN YOU CAN'T BASE IT ON THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY.”

mandates in schools, and he directed school officials to allow parents to decide whether their children wear masks. Some parents balked, arguing all students should wear masks for the safety of others. Four families brought a lawsuit against the governor.

Damaris Allen, one of the parents named in the suit, told a local news station the debate was also an issue of governance: “The Republican Party is supposed to be the party of local control and small government, so when you don't allow locally elected officials to make their own decisions, then you can't base it on the needs of the community.”

It's an argument a handful of local mayors have made as well, saying the governor has made it difficult for them to make decisions about COVID-19 precautions on a local level. In May, the governor signed a bill prohibiting government entities or businesses from requiring proof of vaccination for services. He also signed an executive order invalidating any remaining local emergency orders related to COVID-19.

Hialeah Mayor Carlos Hernández, a Republican, branded DeSantis “a dictator.” Francis Suarez, the GOP mayor of Miami, has said DeSantis should let local officials decide on the measures best for their communities, calling local control a Republican principle.

DeSantis and his administration push back against those arguments when it comes to the pandemic, saying when local officials infringe on individual rights, the state should step in. The governor says that's also true for businesses that want to require proof of vaccination from customers. DeSantis has sought to ban so-called COVID-19 passports, but a U.S. appeals court upheld Norwegian Cruise Line's policy of requiring such proof.

Walter Olson, a senior fellow at the libertarian CATO Institute, thinks private businesses should have the legal right to set the parameters they think serve their customers best. He points out that cruise ships were vectors for COVID-19 at the beginning of the pandemic, and the industry likely wants to avoid more outbreaks and another round of potentially crippling economic consequences: “It's just remarkable to me that the state of



Students wearing face masks wait to be picked up by their parents at Pershing School in Orlando.

Florida is going to substitute its own judgment for the judgment of businesses.”

A Florida judge also ruled against the governor’s attempt to ban mask mandates in schools, saying he lacked the legal authority to enforce it. DeSantis’ office said it would appeal the ruling, and officials with the Florida Board of Education said they would follow through with a plan to withhold the salaries of board members in counties still instituting face masks—a decision likely to keep the heat turned up in Florida as fall approaches, and as the delta variant proves far more contagious.

It’s the kind of heat that makes it impossible to gauge what the political fallout or windfall might be for DeSantis in next year’s gubernatorial race or potentially in a presidential race down the road.

Hans Hassell, the director of the Institute of Politics at Florida State University, thinks DeSantis’ insistence on banning

mask mandates and similar moves will resonate more with conservatives than concerns about taking too much control from local governments: “I think their counter-argument would be what the government is really doing here is protecting civil rights or liberties by preventing the local governments from taking away individual freedoms.”

He also says much of DeSantis’ election prospects depends more on what’s happening a year from now than what’s happening today: “We’re a long way off, and voters tend to have relatively short-term memories.”

DESANTIS’ PROSPECTS in three years are even harder to predict, but they also likely depend at least in part on another factor close at hand: former President Trump. From his home base in Palm Beach, Fla., Trump continues to endorse candidates and raise speculations about whether he’ll run for the GOP nomination in 2024.

Every Republican hopeful likely factors Trump into calculations about a

potential bid, but it may be a particularly thin tightrope for DeSantis in a state that backed Trump in 2020. How Trump responds to DeSantis’ rising popularity may shape how other candidates—including DeSantis—decide whether to run or hit pause.

Trump and DeSantis seem friendly so far, but DeSantis has shown a willingness to peel away in key moments: In late June, after a condo tower collapsed in Surfside, Fla., and killed 98 people, DeSantis skipped a Trump rally in Sarasota while the search for survivors continued. Two days before Trump’s event, DeSantis appeared in Surfside—with President Joe Biden.

It wasn’t a truce—DeSantis and Biden have sparred sharply over the pandemic—but DeSantis’ willingness to respond to a sudden tragedy without a politicized lens may resonate with voters somewhere in the middle. Daniella Levine Cava, mayor of Miami-Dade County, has also clashed with DeSantis, but the Democrat publicly praised his response in Surfside: “Hats off to the governor.”



Current and former members of Early Rain church in Chengdu, China, have experienced raids and arrests for practicing their faith, but the work of the church continues, even as some still draw attention to its plight from abroad

by *JUNE CHENG*

illustrations by Blaze Bratcher

struck down, but not destroyed



Artistic rendering of a photo
of Early Rain Covenant
Church attendees at a
2018 prayer meeting



Twenty-five-year-old Ren Ruiting remembers how Dec. 9, 2018, started out like any other Sunday. She took the elevator up to the sixth floor of an office building to worship at Early Rain Covenant Church, a well-known unregistered Presbyterian church in Chengdu, China. Afterward, she attended a rehearsal for an upcoming Christmas event.

But while out for dinner, her phone started lighting up with messages: Police were arresting her church's leaders and members from their homes.

At first, Ren wasn't overly anxious. Earlier that year, on the May 12 anniversary of the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, police had raided an Early Rain prayer meeting and detained Pastor Wang Yi and 200 other church members but released them within 24 hours. She assumed this crackdown, too, would be temporary.

Then the volume of messages ballooned.

"It was so terrifying because people would be updating you on their situation, but then partway through they would stop responding," Ren said. "It's like they vanished." Police had a list of names of people associated with the church, and Ren knew they would come for her too.

That day launched a series of events that would lead Ren and her family to seek their escape from China. The family became the first Early Rain church members to come to the United States seeking political asylum.

China's crackdown on Early Rain proved to be long-lasting—with special retribution reserved for Wang, a former legal scholar who became an outspoken pastor. (In one sermon he called President Xi Jinping a sinner in need of repentance.) The Chinese government ultimately sentenced Wang to nine years in prison for subversion of state power and illegal business operations.

In Chengdu, Early Rain today continues to meet online and in small groups as church leaders regularly face detention and monitoring. Although the government has imprisoned its pastor and confiscated its building, the church is growing and raising leaders for smaller gatherings of its congregants. The seminary, school, and college connected to the church have also continued despite government harassment.

Meanwhile, Ren's story shows the persecution some of Early Rain's Christian congregants have endured.

The night of the 2018 raid Ren didn't go home. When the police started calling her, she removed the SIM card from her phone and stayed with friends for the next few nights. She learned that among church members police targeted young people and sent those who were not originally from Chengdu back to their hometowns. Ren, who had studied at the church's seminary, realized she couldn't keep hiding.

So she finally responded to their call and went to the police station. There, police urged her to sign a paper saying she would stop attend-

ing Early Rain worship services, stop engaging in a cult, and agree to participate in the government's correction work, which she believed referred to teaching reeducation classes. Ren felt she could agree to the first two: The church was already shut down, and she didn't believe her faith was a cult. But she refused on the third count: She feared one day the government could take her away to a reeducation camp if she agreed to this.

The people at the station finally allowed her to leave, provided she added them to her account on WeChat, a social media app popular in China, so they could track her location. After she

"It's like they vanished."

returned home to the apartment she shared with her husband and her father (the rest of the family returned to their hometown), more than a dozen men sat outside their door to monitor them. For more than two weeks they surveilled and followed them as they went out.

Altogether, police had detained more than 100 people affiliated with Early Rain.

With Early Rain's building closed, its services continued in a new format: Sunday worship took place online as some of the church members gathered in small

groups, meeting in apartments, teashops, or private rooms in restaurants. New preachers from the seminary stepped in while most of the leaders were still in detention, and small group leaders also took on increased shepherding responsibilities. By mid-2019, all of the church leaders—except for Wang and elder Qin Defu—had been released. Over time, Bible studies, prayer meetings, and Sunday school classes restarted either online or in small in-person gatherings.

Yet the persecution continued. Police broke up small group gatherings on Sunday mornings, at times bringing all the attendees, including children, to the station. Some members faced evictions as the government pressured landlords to kick them out. Authorities forced some parents to send their children back to state-run schools rather than attend the church's unregistered Christian school.

Weddings and funerals of church members became one of the few times the larger church body could gather, yet police would place the church leaders under house arrest on those days, forcing congregants to find a pastor from another church to officiate. Church leader Titus Wu (WORLD has changed his name for security reasons) noted that even with this complication—and COVID-19 restrictions keeping the number of attendees small—weddings have been joyful celebrations and reunions.

Police stopped guarding Ren's apartment after a few weeks, yet they continued monitoring her family digitally and randomly asked them to report to the station for questioning. Ren had to inform authorities about her whereabouts: When she wanted to get a visa to the United States, she lied to the police, saying she was returning to her hometown. She then secretly visited the U.S. Consulate in Chengdu. (Her visa application was eventually rejected.)

The family's main concern was Ren's 3-year-old adopted brother, Jiawen. The boy suffered from a cancerous tumor in his right arm. Ren's father, Liao Qiang, told ChinaAid the Sichuan provincial police threatened to "save" Jiawen from being raised in a "cult family." Ren's family feared Jiawen would be sent back to a state orphanage and wouldn't receive the medical care he needed.

They began looking for ways to escape China. In May, Ren and her husband flew to Thailand, where she contacted Bob Fu of the Texas-based ChinaAid, who has helped other Chinese dissidents leave China. Fu told them they weren't safe in Beijing-friendly Thailand, and instead told them to go to Taiwan. They returned to China, packed their bags, and arrived in Taipei in July 2019 on 15-day medical tourism visas.

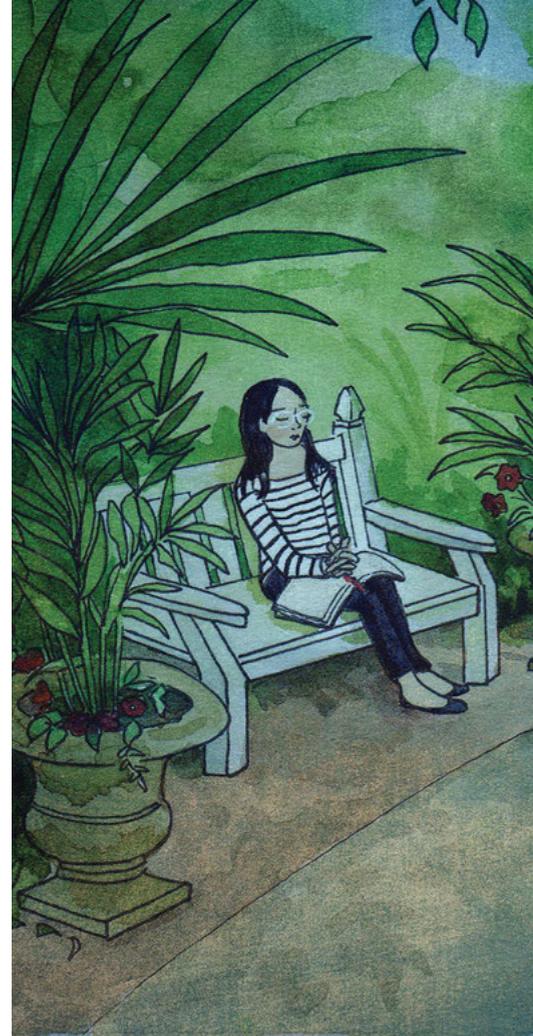
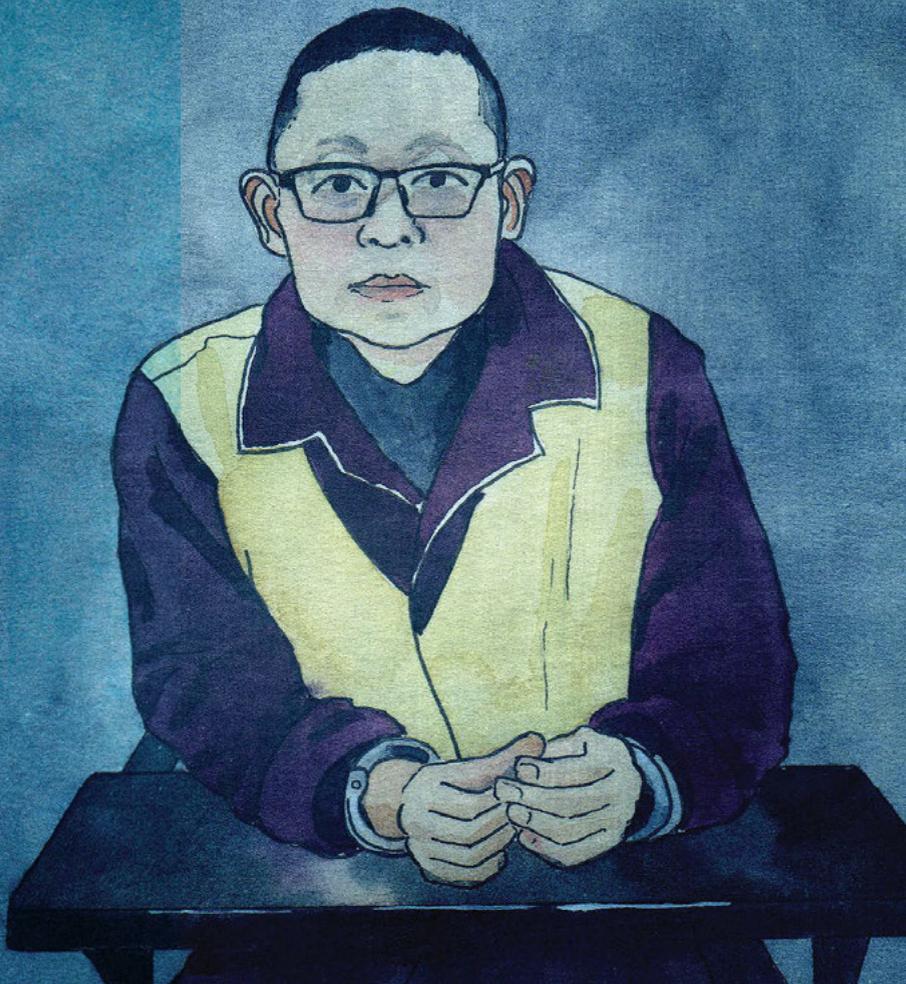
Ren thought that once in Taiwan, she could apply for asylum there and her journey would be over. But because of Taiwan's precarious international status, it doesn't have a refugee law. Due to Early Rain's high profile, Taiwanese officials allowed the family members to extend their visas as Fu and the Taiwan Association for Human Rights worked to help them get humanitarian parole to the United States, where they could then apply for asylum.

In the end, the family spent nearly two years in Taiwan. They couldn't officially work, but the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan provided them dorms to live in, sent the boys to local school, and helped arrange Jiawen's medical treatments. Radio Taiwan International paid Ren as a freelancer to write on human rights topics, while some Taiwanese locals encouraged the family to sell homemade dumplings and wontons out of their home, allowing them to bring in some income.

"A pastor agreed to be our guarantor even though they had never met us before," Ren said of her time in Taiwan. "It was unbelievable, because in Chinese society you can't trust anybody."

Police raid the Tashui Small Group of the Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu on Aug. 22, 2021.





Pastor Wang Yi (left) is sentenced to nine years in prison; Ren (right) now lives in Orlando, Fla.

While Ren initially wanted to keep her escape low-key, Fu encouraged her to share her story with media in hopes that international pressure over the Early Rain crackdown would help Wang’s case. Ren felt conflicted, worrying the government would retaliate against fellow church members back in China. After much prayer, she decided it was important to speak out and began accepting media interviews.

Afterward, police did increase pressure on church members back in Chengdu, in some cases confiscating passports to prevent them from fleeing. Ren felt apologetic for that but isn’t sure she was the primary cause: “Maybe what I did impacted them, but perhaps it has more to do with the overall environment.”

Esther Dai, an Early Rain member, said the response to Ren and her family’s escape was mixed. Some members are grateful the family was able to leave and bear witness to the church’s situation to the international community. Others, like Dai (WORLD changed her name for security reasons), are more skeptical. She is glad they are safe but feels that by going public they have brought more difficulties on those who stayed behind.

The publicity surrounding Early Rain and Wang Yi helped Ren’s family’s case, Fu said. In 2019 Sam Brownback, the U.S. ambassador at large for international religious freedom at the time, publicly advocated for Wang’s release during a visit to Hong Kong then met with Ren and her family in Taiwan. He told the Taiwanese government

“When you are in pain or grief, when you feel like you can’t do it, you hold more tightly on to God.”



this was a case of concern to the United States government, Fu said.

After the United States accepted the family's case, the global pandemic delayed their flight to the United States by more than half a year as ChinaAid struggled to raise enough money for their resettlement. Only this year, on June 29, Ren, her husband, her parents, and her two young brothers finally stepped off a plane from Taiwan onto U.S. soil at the San Francisco International Airport.

Ren remembers feeling nervous while waiting to go through customs, but once the customs agent handed back her passport, her fear was replaced with excitement. She and her family settled in Orlando, Fla. Ren marveled at how clean the Orlando air felt compared to smoggy Chengdu.

After her experience with the crackdown, Ren said, she's had more trouble trusting people. Even in the safety of

Taiwan, she feared someone would jump from the shadows to grab her and send her back to China. In the United States, she fears Chinese spies might lurk in Chinese immigrant churches and doesn't know whom she can trust. "It's tiring," Ren said. "Maybe they are genuine Christians, but I am still suspicious. ... It may take time before I will slowly be able to trust again."

In the future, Ren hopes to work for a human rights group like ChinaAid so she can help other persecuted Christians in China. Meanwhile, she speaks out about her church so that the world doesn't forget about Wang in prison. The pastor's wife, Jiang Rong, and 14-year-old son, Shuya, haven't been able to see Wang in person and are only allowed short phone calls with him that are monitored by the police: Any mention of God and the phone connection is cut.

Amid the trials and difficulties the Early Rain congregants face, many have seen God working. According to church leader Wu, the church has grown since the 2018 crackdown with new converts, baptisms, and members. He declined to publicize the number over fears the government would use it against them, but described the increase as "tremendous."

After focusing on restoring church leaders who had spent months in prison, caring for the church's scattered members, and riding out the COVID-19 pandemic, Early Rain is starting to look forward. This year, the church began a training course for small group leaders, preachers, and leaders on church planting in preparation to break the church into several smaller gatherings. Wu said this would make it easier to pastor church members who meet in separate groups, prevent people from falling through the cracks, and allow more flexibility for their numbers to multiply.

Leaders visit different small groups to administer communion. Some of these gatherings are broken up by police: Dai said that in June, after not taking communion for more than a year, she eagerly attended a gathering at a fellow church member's house. Yet the apartment building's guards noticed that people were gathering and called the police. Dai and other congregants hid in a bedroom as police detained three leaders of the group. Afterward they all left, reconvening later in the afternoon at a teahouse to take the Lord's Supper.

The church's Christian school continues, with each grade meeting in a different family's home. Police have visited some, forcing them to change locations. A new Chinese law regulating private education—with Communist committees ensuring schools teach core socialist values and eschew foreign curricula—could give officials a tool to shut down unregistered schools like Early Rain's.

"There is nothing the school can do," said Dai, who is a teacher there. She recalls the administrators telling her, "We will keep having class, but if you are detained for attending the school, we can't help you. We can't protect teachers or students. If parents are worried, they can take their kids out of the school."

Dai said that since the crackdown, she's missed having fellowship with her brothers and sisters in the church. At times, she feels spiritually weak. Her small group meets too far away for her to attend consistently.

Still, she's found the difficulties of the past few years have brought her closer to God. "It's made me more mature in my faith. I've experienced the mystery of God that hardship causes you to trust God more deeply," said Dai. "When you are in pain or grief, when you feel like you can't do it, you hold more tightly on to God." ■



FINDING THE ROAD BACK TO WORK

AMID A PANDEMIC LABOR SHORTAGE,
MORE COMPANIES ARE WILLING TO
HIRE WORKERS NEEDING SECOND
CHANCES. BUT SOME ENTREPRENEURS
MAKE THAT THEIR MISSION

BY LAURA SINGLETON IN TAMPA, FLA.

Illustrations by Krieg Barrie

PART 3 OF A SERIES



“IN THREE YEARS I LOST EVERYTHING.”

Michelle Hill had rebounded from drug addiction and a felony conviction in her 20s to what she terms a “soccer mom” lifestyle in her 40s, building a satisfying career for more than 20 years in payroll processing. Then she took a fateful turn back to drugs to cope with the “empty nest” when her son left home: “Within three months I had a felony [and] lost my job. It took another two, three years to lose my house.”

But after months in jail, Hill, now 52, moved in July into Hillsborough House of Hope, a transitional shelter for women in Tampa, Fla. Residents must stay clean and attend church, addiction recovery meetings, and house Bible studies. If unemployed, they must actively seek jobs.

Now employed at a call center, Hill was “scared to death” when her company processed her background check to confirm her job offer. She can reel off a list of firms that, after seeing her criminal record, rejected her for jobs that she says were “perfect fits” with her payroll processing experience: “I did those jobs as a felon [before] and ... I could do them today. I just need someone to believe in me and give me another chance.”

Earlier this summer, *WORLD* editor in chief Marvin Olasky reported on the trouble blue-collar workers were having finding new jobs after COVID-19 layoffs. Weeks later, he and several World Journalism Institute students profiled a Texas ministry helping train the long-term unemployed (and some with prison records) to reenter the workforce. Now, months into the much-publicized shortage of workers in the wake of COVID-19 lockdowns, some employers are more open to giving opportunities to workers like Hill. Though more employers are willing to take chances on workers with blips in their backgrounds,



mission-minded entrepreneurs are purposely hiring—and mentoring—workers who need a second chance.

“I’M ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR people in town,” says Michael Jalazo. He runs the Tampa-area Pinellas Ex-offender Re-entry Coalition and says he’s never seen anything like the current job market in his prior 20 years of leadership at PERC: “I’ve never had employers who were so desperate for workers.”

But hiring workers with prior convictions is still something most employers hesitate to speak about openly (see sidebar). Jalazo demurred when I asked him for examples of companies now looking to hire ex-convicts: “Some of our best employers don’t advertise.”

House of Hope Program Director Linda Walker tells residents about employers she knows to be “background-friendly”—open to hiring workers with problematic pasts.

The Wawa convenience-store chain, actively expanding in the Tampa Bay area, is on Walker’s list. “I’ve got six girls



*“I just need
someone to believe
in me and give me
another chance.”*

Valerie Lloyd, owner of Clean Sweep Tampa Bay

working at Wawa,” she says. Ja’taylor Mcneal, 27, a former House of Hope resident, is one of them. She got a job with Wawa in the spring, but before that a couple of other locations in the chain turned her down. She doesn’t know why things went differently with her current manager, but her extroverted personality has helped her get off to a good start: Four months into the job, she had already learned to work multiple sections of the store, from checkout to deli, and was in line for a new opportunity. “I love customer service. I’m the hyper one,” says Mcneal.

Temporary employment options are also available, regardless of worker backgrounds. Both Hill and Lisa Parker, 49, another House of Hope resident, described a variety of jobs they had worked in the past through PeopleReady, a temporary employment agency. Applicants answer a short series of basic questions, then can download an app that

lists daily job possibilities, most of which don’t require a background check. They pick up opportunities when they want and get paid for the days they work. “As long as you’re willing to work ... you’re going to get to work,” says Parker. She had a steady temp assignment at a local oil products manufacturer but was only making \$10 an hour.

Now Parker is happy to be starting a permanent job with Aramark, the food service vendor at the University of South Florida, with starting pay of at least \$12 an hour. She interviewed with Aramark at a job fair she learned about over email, and managers raised no issues after her background check.

WHILE WORKERS are having some success through word of mouth, others begin working for employers who are intentional about hiring and mentoring people getting back on their feet. Valerie Lloyd founded Clean Sweep, a Tampa cleaning business, to help workers needing a fresh start move from entry-level jobs to greater self-sufficiency. Lloyd, now in her mid-30s, had been working in credit card processing sales but was looking for something more fulfilling: “I had been praying about how God could use me.”

The name “Clean Sweep” referred both to Lloyd’s career change and the break from the past that her initial business partner (who’s no longer with the firm) was making as a recovering alcoholic. Clean Sweep’s early employees were often individuals her business partner met at 12-step groups, but Lloyd has found that referrals from structured programs like House of Hope or Created—a Tampa ministry to women emerging from the sex industry—are more likely to be successful.

All Clean Sweep workers start out at \$12 per hour, acting as helpers to experienced cleaners. Lloyd also trains them to set themselves up as independent cleaning contractors. Those who prove themselves over a period of three to six months can take the next steps toward becoming contractors, potentially doubling their pay. Lloyd continues to provide and schedule cleaning jobs for them, and they’re eligible to get helpers of their own.

Lloyd uses the metaphor of a bus to explain the opportunity to prospective

employees: “I tell them, not everybody’s going to want to stay on the bus, but the bus is going to keep moving for whoever wants to ride.” Like a bus driver, she’s willing to pick up someone who got off but wants back on later. But she’s also willing to teach them how to drive.

Lloyd also offers a weekly enrichment call on Zoom, leading discussion sessions on motivational books she buys for the group, and sends out inspiring messages, like a current series on prayer. Workers are free to hold any faith or none, but “everybody knows going in that this is a faith-based company,” says Lloyd.

Over three years, only one worker thus far has made it to independent contractor status, though a handful of others are advancing on the path after their own setbacks. “Relapse is a part of recovery for these women,” says Lloyd. A few haven’t even been able to make it through their first week. She acknowledges the time and attention workers can demand is draining, but every success is rewarding. Recently a couple of women were able to purchase their own cars, a crucial step toward working independently. “Just to see these two women have cars, that’s a victory,” says Lloyd.

Clean Sweep has doubled in size each of the past two years and now handles 50 to 60 weekly cleaning jobs, Lloyd estimates. In 2020 she was able to maintain clients and picked up some cleaners who lost work with other firms. Growth didn’t come without costs, though. “There’s many days I had success with hands covering my face, and on my knees,” says Lloyd. At times she has wanted to stop before the initial five-year commitment she thought God called her to, but “God will not let me.” For Lloyd, “Keeping them going is what keeps me going.”

MIRAKLE SOLUTION, a janitorial services business based in Lakeland, Fla., and operated by Jenelle and O’ron Harris, also emphasizes hiring workers from troubled backgrounds. “We do understand the need to help those who aren’t given a second chance,” says O’ron, who was in prison himself when his wife got the business started. Thanks to her foresight, O’ron had opportunities upon his 2015 release that many don’t. But memories of those he left behind bars drove him for-

“When you have something to lose, you have something to gain.”



ward: “I was laser-focused. I wasn’t going to forget any of them,” says Harris. He promised them, “I’m going to hire guys like us.”

Beyond providing for their family, MiraKle Solution is “primarily ... about hiring ex-cons as well as the homeless,” says O’ron. Applicants often find the firm through social media, but Harris also keeps his eyes open for potential workers anywhere. Recently, having just won a new cleaning contract, he approached a group of homeless individuals in a nearby park and asked if anyone was interested in an opportunity. One man captured Harris’ attention with his enthusiasm: “He was serious, he was intense. ... For me, it’s all about the passion, the ambition.”

Harris makes sure the man has a safe place to shower and is teaching him a restaurant cleaning job: “I want to see people grow and I want to see people win.”

Like Lloyd, Harris acknowledges not all individuals are ready for success. He once bragged to others about one woman’s progress only to have to let her go after a setback.



Another time he hired workers based on a friend's recommendation then lost a \$5,000 contract in three days because of their irresponsibility. He learned that taking another's word isn't enough: "I have to evaluate the people myself."

Harris runs background checks, but only on individuals who don't come through referrals from a program like House of Hope. If the worker claimed to have a clean background but something pops up, it's still "not a deal-breaker," Harris says, since he's "been through it." He follows up with a candid conversation. The motivation to prove themselves trustworthy will typically be a positive attribute, Harris believes: "Ex-convicts have more to lose than the normal person, so they're going to go harder. When you have something to lose, you have something to gain."

MICHELLE HILL, the former payroll clerk, says much the same. She's determined to prove herself to employers: "You're not going to be sorry you hired me."

Hill is grateful for her current job, but she hopes for an opportunity to work again in payroll processing, a job she enjoyed and found meaningful. While filling out applications, she's trusting God's sovereignty: "He can restore my life. ... It may not ever look like it did, but I know He has a good plan for me." ■

SILENCE ABOUT SECOND CHANCES

Hiring workers with criminal backgrounds still isn't something most businesses are comfortable discussing. Those like Clean Sweep and MiraKle Solution, whose owners embrace a social mission, are the exception. I was unable to get any larger enterprises, even those considered "background friendly," to respond to requests to discuss their experiences in giving second chances to such employees. Several, however, have automated "Chat" functions on their website for job seekers, so to mirror the experience of a potential

applicant with background-related concerns, I asked a few questions.

The responses were relatively non-committal and repetitive, and it's easy to see how they would leave such an applicant feeling discouraged and uncertain. Here, for example, was my exchange with the automated job seeker chat function for Aramark, a food service firm that recently hired a House of Hope resident:

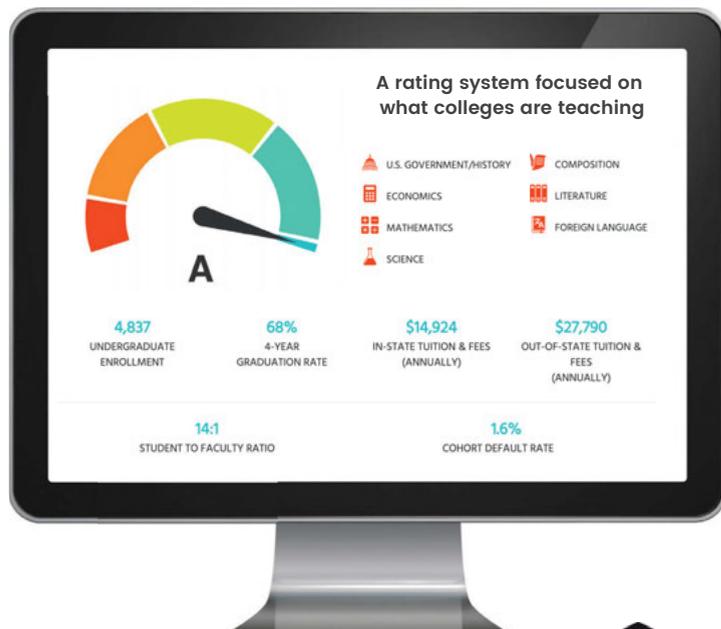
Does Aramark do background checks on workers? "Aramark is committed to the safety and security of its associates,

clients and customers. Consistent with this commitment, Aramark conducts employment-related background checks."

What if a job applicant has a criminal record? "Aramark is an equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment."

Does it matter what the conviction is for? "Aramark is committed to the safety and security of its associates, clients and customers. Consistent with this commitment, Aramark conducts employment-related background checks." —L.S.

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NOTEBOOK

Immigration Lifestyle Sports



SEEKING THEIR ROOTS

Exploring a link to ancestral identity, some Westerners of African descent are moving their families to Ghana and other African countries

by Onize Ohikere

IN 2019, AMERICAN Tony Jones joined a crowd walking down Victoria Road toward Cape Coast Castle, a towering white slave fort built by European slave traders in Ghana. He was one of more than 1,000 locals and foreigners taking part in the nighttime procession, dressed in white and holding flickering candles that provided the only source of light →

**Tony, Luke, Ayo, and Leo Jones
in Tema, Ghana**

along the road. Outside the castle, people listened and teared up as speakers shared stories of how slavery impacted them.

Jones flew more than 5,000 miles from Texas to the West African nation with his wife, Ayo, and two of their children to attend the “Year of Return.” The yearlong event included a flurry of activities commemorating the 400th anniversary of the first recorded African slaves landing in the United States. In August 1619, the English ship *White Lion* brought “20 and odd” enslaved Angolans to what is now Fort Monroe in Hampton, Va.

Jones also took a guided tour of the Assin Manso Ancestral Slave River Park, one of the largest slave markets, where slaves took their last baths before being taken to the forts. The experience left him with a “chilling effect.”

“That was really emotional, standing on the water our ancestors left from,” Jones said.

The experience caused the Joneses to strengthen their connections to Ghana over the next year, as Ayo has Ghanaian and Nigerian roots. In September 2020—after months of delays due to pandemic border closures—the family moved to Ghana and settled in Taifa, a 20-minute drive from the capital of Accra.

They are now part of about 3,000 African Americans and a growing number of other African descendants who have partaken in a reverse migration trend: Moving from the West back to Ghana and other African countries to connect with their roots.

In September 2018, Ghanaian President Nana Akufo-Addo spoke at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., encouraging African Americans to visit his country during its yearlong celebration of African resiliency. Activities included healing ceremonies, investment forums, and heritage site visits. The celebrations also drew celebrities and politicians, including U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and comedian Steve Harvey.

Ghana has a record of opening its doors to African descendants: In 1957, President Kwame Nkrumah welcomed Martin Luther King Jr. as the country marked its independence from Britain. In 2001, Ghana passed the Right of Abode law, allowing people of African descent to stay indefinitely. English is the official language in the country.

Tony Jones first felt the pull toward Ghana during a 2016 visit with his wife. By the time they returned in 2019 and took part in the anniversary events, the couple started discussing where they could live and how they would get around if they moved to Ghana. Ayo’s

father, a Nigerian Ghanaian, retired in Ghana in 2000.

The Joneses started to save money for the move, which came to fruition in September 2020. In Ghana, they welcomed the slower pace and credit-free lifestyle. They also observed changes in their 12-year-old son, such as when he noticed international reports on last year’s protests and shootings in the United States on television.

“He’s gotten to the point now where he says he doesn’t want to go back,” Ayo said. “And I think that has got to do with him just kind of seeing how his value as a black man is different in the U.S. versus in Ghana.”

But their new life has its challenges. When the city started to revamp its water system, the Joneses had to go nearly two



Elmina Castle in Ghana



**SELF-CONFIDENCE
... HAS BEEN
INSTILLED IN EVERY
ONE OF US.**



weeks without water. The family filled barrels with water ahead of the shut-down. “The day that the water came back on, the power went [out] for like a whole day,” Tony said.

But they’ve embraced such inconveniences as part of living “the Ghana life,” which they plan to do for the foreseeable future.

The Year of Return had a notable impact. Ghana welcomed 45 percent more visitors that year and generated \$1.9 billion in tourism revenue. The Ghanaian government also granted citizenship to 126 people.

Before the Joneses left the United

States, several friends and family members worried for their safety. So the family started a YouTube channel chronicling their daily lives. It quickly garnered thousands of followers, some asking for more information on their move. They also started a website, Expat Life Ghana, connecting other new arrivals with tours, airport pickup, and other services.

Anna Acheampong and her husband, Kevin, also started video blogs to keep friends and family members updated on their experiences after relocating to Ghana from Amsterdam in 2019. The couple both had Ghanaian fathers and Dutch mothers and grew up with their mothers in single-parent homes.

After Anna had difficulties with the birth of their second child in 2016, she started to miss the family-centered lifestyle she experienced visiting Ghana: “You used to live together, your neighbor will help you cook if you’re not good or help take care of your kids,” she said.

When Ghana announced the Year of Return, the family jumped on the chance to move there for one year. They explored family roots. They also celebrated little wins, like their children learning English as a first language and enjoying the steady sun instead of vitamin D supplements.

The family also had to learn how to navigate cultural changes, including discipline in Ghana’s school system. In one instance, Anna’s 9-year-old daughter refused to point and yell “shame” at a classmate told to stand on her desk for failing a math problem. As a punishment, the teacher told her to stand on her desk as well. Afterward, Anna moved her two children to a private school.

The pandemic caused them to extend their stay until mid-August. They later spoke on their YouTube channel of the challenges of finding a comfortable home with proper maintenance and a suitable school for their children and their struggle with mounting expenses after staying longer than they originally planned.

But Anna said their stay had a lasting impact on the family.

“I think that the knowledge and the self-confidence that has been instilled in every one of us in my family is something that regardless what happens, we’re going to take that back to wherever we go,” she said. ■



McClendon

A WOODWORKING RETIREMENT

Retiree Stuart McClendon uses his carpentry skills to help others and tell them about Jesus

by Julie Spencer

STUART MCCLENDON DEMONSTRATES an “assisted rocker” he designed for a nursing home—the rockers are flat at the front to prevent tipping the occupant onto the floor when exiting the chair. McClendon rocks forward, presses his hands down on the arms of the chair, and lifts his entire body out of the seat. He smiles as his feet hang suspended for a moment, then carefully stands. At nearly 86 years of age, his legs give him a little trouble, but his arms remain strong.

A retired lawyer and self-taught carpenter, McClendon spends his days building furniture and leading Bible studies at the Bar-J Ranch in Calion, Ark. McClendon’s retirement is far from the textbook definition of “ceasing to work.” A table near the front of the shop serves as a landing place for whatever project is in process—one day it’s →

a chair without legs, another day a bookshelf without varnish. He leads Bible study on the ranch in the mornings and teaches in other churches in the evenings.

Growing up in New Orleans, he viewed attending church as a weekly social engagement and respected Scripture, though he did not own a Bible. But when friends invited him and his wife, Lillian, to visit a church “where they taught the Bible,” he wasn’t sure what to expect. When the pastor presented the gospel that day, it was the first time he’d heard that he was a sinner in need of a Savior. Tears ran down his face. He was 26 years old—a young husband and father, a lawyer with a brief failed political career—and it was the best day of his life. “There was no struggle, no fighting.”

Over the next five decades, McClendon and his wife hosted Bible studies and retreats at their 30-acre home and property near Covington, La. After building a shop on his land, he took up furniture-making: “I needed to use the shop for something!” What began as a hobby became a successful furniture business. Mostly he crafted swings and chairs made from sunken cypress logs removed from Louisiana waterways. He named the business Honey Rock, a reference to Psalm 81:16—“With honey from the rock I would satisfy you.”

Retirement age came and went for McClendon, and still he practiced law, led Bible studies in his home and in corporate settings, and made furniture. When a friend in South Arkansas invited him and Lillian (then in their early 70s) to build a shop and home on his property, a working ranch with an addiction recovery program, Stuart believed it was “definitely the Lord [saying,] ‘I’ve got a place for you ... where you can finish strong.’”

“And that’s what I want to do ... finish strong.”

While moving their belongings from south Louisiana to the Bar-J Ranch, McClendon’s wife suffered a debilitating stroke and died. After this blow, the log cabin they were building across from the shop was set on fire by an individual in the ranch’s recovery program. McClen-



**THAT’S
WHAT I WANT
TO DO ... FINISH
STRONG.**



don sat on the front porch of his shop, under the alpha and omega characters worked into the decorative trim overhead, and drank coffee while the cabin burned to the ground.

Even after these events, McClendon said, he’s never regretted coming to the ranch. “These things that have happened—they’re just things. God un-messes the mess.” This is the message he shares with individuals in Bar-J’s 13-month recovery program and with his furniture customers.

He credits the Lord for bringing him order after order for furniture, but he says his ultimate purpose is to make not furniture but disciples. At the front of his shop is a small seating area with an ever-changing collection of chairs for sale. A sign hangs overhead—SITTING IS BELIEVING. It’s a motto for his furniture business, but also true for those who stop, visit with McClendon, and hear the good news that Jesus came to save sinners. ■

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CASHING IN ON COLLEGE SPORTS

Thanks to a new NCAA policy, college athletes are beginning to make money from endorsement deals

by Ray Hacke



Alabama's Bryce Young (No. 9) passes for a touchdown during a Sept. 4 game against the Miami Hurricanes.

FOR DECADES, NCAA RULES barred athletes from profiting off their names, images, and likenesses while still in college. That meant a Heisman Trophy candidate could not appear in a TV ad for a local car dealership. An athlete could get suspended for hawking autographed memorabilia online, as former University of Georgia football player Todd Gurley did in 2014.

But that all changed in July, when the NCAA lifted the ban in response to a court ruling. For the first time, college athletes can now earn money from endorsements and other ventures, as long as they follow a new set of NCAA rules,

along with state laws. Some athletes have already signed lucrative deals with companies that hope their endorsements will score sales.

The NCAA was previously dead set against granting college athletes name, image, and likeness (NIL) rights, claiming it would blur the distinction between amateur and professional sports. Yet the

organization changed its tune after years of legal battles.

The tide began turning in 2014 when former UCLA basketball star Ed O'Bannon filed a federal class-action lawsuit after seeing his likeness used in an NCAA-licensed video game well after his college days had ended. O'Bannon challenged NCAA rules allowing the organization to make money off him in perpetuity without giving him a dime.

Other college athletes, past and present, later filed their own lawsuits challenging the NCAA's stance on athletes receiving pay to compete for their universities. Northern California's federal district court combined those cases with O'Bannon's, with former West Virginia University football player Shawne Alston's name headlining the combined case.

Ultimately, the NCAA lost in two courts: the court of public opinion as well as the U.S. Supreme Court.

Sports commentators railed against a system that allowed the NCAA and its member schools to rake in billions of dollars while preventing the athletes who generated that revenue—athletes of color in particular—from receiving a slice of the pie.

Days before the NCAA issued its new NIL policy, the Supreme Court ruled 9-0 against the sports association in the Alston case. As Justice Brett Kavanaugh wrote in his concurring opinion, "Nowhere else in America can businesses get away with not paying a fair market rate on the theory that their product is defined by not paying their workers a fair market rate. And under ordinary principles of antitrust law, it is not evident why college sports should be any different."

The NCAA has placed some limitations on NIL agreements. For starters, they cannot be vehicles for companies to funnel money to athletes under the table: If a business hires an athlete to appear and sign autographs at its grand opening, the athlete had better do just that.

Companies also cannot use the lure of an NIL contract to persuade an athlete to sign with a particular school. The University of Oregon best exemplifies why this is important: Alumnus and Nike founder Phil Knight heavily bankrolls the school's athletic department. Without

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NOWHERE ELSE IN AMERICA CAN BUSINESSES GET AWAY WITH NOT PAYING A FAIR MARKET RATE.

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a limitation on promises of NIL deals, the school's ties to the athletic shoe and apparel giant would arguably give the Ducks an unfair advantage when landing top prospects.

In addition, athletes must follow the laws of the states where their schools are located. Some states have moral clauses restricting what athletes can endorse: Tennessee, Texas, and New Jersey prohibit endorsements of alcohol, gambling, tobacco, and adult entertainment. (New

Jersey's law also includes firearms and other weapons.) In Arkansas, an athlete can't enter an NIL agreement until he or she enrolls in school.

College athletes have already begun cashing in on NIL deals. Bryce Young, the new starting quarterback at the University of Alabama, signed deals with Cash App and memorabilia and trading card companies worth more than \$800,000, according to ESPN. Lesser-known names also benefit: Built Brands, a Utah-based maker of protein bars, has agreed to pay the tuition of nonscholarship football players at Brigham Young University—and the school's athletic department helped broker the deal.

The NCAA's NIL policy is temporary until either Congress enacts legislation regulating college sports nationwide or the NCAA adopts more permanent rules. And athletes' ability to sign their own NIL deals may create hiccups for the universities they represent: For instance, can an athlete represent Under Armour while competing for a school whose teams are outfitted by Nike?

Still, there's no denying that a seismic shift has occurred in college athletics: The NCAA and its member schools will still have massive paydays, but now the athletes can, too. ■





Judge not

Missing the red in our own eye

AMERICAN MODERNIST COMPOSER Charles Ives was not appreciated in his time. Childhood musical influences included the Danbury, Conn., parades where he was fascinated by the sound of one marching band fading into the distance as another approached and overlapped, to be overtaken in turn by the next band coming down the road.

Something similar happens when pushing a stroller through Prospect Park in Brooklyn, when I am overtaken by one pair of joggers and then another, leaving me to overhear mere snippets of conversation in passing. These conversations, were I to classify them, seem mostly about work and personal relationships and are mostly in the nature of complaints and accusations, with the fellow jogger a captive and agreeable audience.

Been there done that.

Just imagine the aggregate of words of this kind in a single day's traverse of the 585-acre rectangular urban preserve stretching from Prospect Heights to Flatbush. Then zoom out to the five New York boroughs, then to the whole 50 states and then the world. Imagine the cosmic crescendo of cacophonous corrosive calumny unleashed into the ether—the ether that we are told is the devil's domain (Ephesians 2:2).

"All through the day / I, me, mine, I, me, mine, I, me, mine. / All through the night / I, me, mine, I, me, mine, I, me, mine. / Now they're frightened of leaving it / Everyone's weaving it / Coming on strong all the time. / All through the day / I, me, mine."

We don't think it hurts anything, really; it's just talk. But if we saw as God sees, those clucking tongues are releasing with each cluck droplets of destructive poison "all through the day, all through the night." Poison will have its effect. Mary Ann Cotton (1832-1873) murdered

CHRISTIANS ARE TO LIVE A DIFFERENT WAY, AS BELIEVING ALL THINGS AND HOPING ALL THINGS.

her stepson and three of her four husbands with traces of arsenic in their suppers: It took time but a little here and there will do the job.

"All through the day / I, me, mine, I, me, mine, I, me, mine. / All through the night / I, me, mine, I, me, mine, I, me, mine. / No one's frightened of playing it / Everyone's saying it / Flowing more freely than wine. / All through the day / I, me, mine."

"Judge not, that you be not judged," says the Lord (Matthew 7:1).

What is a judge? "A public official vested with the authority to hear, determine, and preside over legal matters brought in court" (Merriam-Webster). Think of it: Do any of us mortals have sufficient information about any other mortal to pronounce a *final* sentence? To put him in a box and shut the lid and say, "Case closed!?"

Backbiting is judging.

In great annoyance with certain of my father's habits, I was telling myself that I know him better than any living person knows him and certainly more than the ignorant rabble who have a different opinion of him. Then the verse came to mind, "If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know" (1 Corinthians 8:2).

Don't you love it when the Spirit suddenly illumines a portion of Scripture that hitherto meant nothing to you? I was convicted of my error. I realized all the things that I don't know about my father: anything at all before 1951; anything at all about his formative relationships with father, mother, and four siblings; any of his disappointments and traumas, the ways his young heart responded to what was inflicted on it. Come to think of it, do I even know my father *at all*?

Christians are to live a different way, not as judge and jury of our neighbors, but as believing all things and hoping all things (1 Corinthians 13:7) regarding their potential to change and grow. For the Lord is not finished with my neighbor, or father, any more than He is with me.

"Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters" (Luke 11:23), says the Lord, the only qualified Judge. Good thing to keep in mind when jogging with a friend in Prospect Park. ■



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Supreme Court v. Nation of Vigilantes?

Learning slavery's lessons

PRO-LIFE NATION is still rightly abuzz about the big news Leah Savas reports on page 11: The Supreme Court on Sept. 1 did not give a knee-jerk “No” to the new Texas law that protects 6-week-old unborn children.

As one Texas pregnancy center director, Heather Jones, told Leah, “For now, for this season, the fact that abortion is illegal after a heartbeat is detected is something I don’t know that I ever thought I’d see in my lifetime and it’s just—it’s beautiful.”

Will this change last? Three liberal justices voted to stifle the Texas initiative. So did Chief Justice John Roberts. I hope he (and others) will keep in mind one word: *slavery*.

Famous Virginians more than two centuries ago opposed slavery in theory. Washington: “There is not a man living who wishes more sincerely than I do to see a plan adopted for the abolition of slavery.” Jefferson: “There is nothing I would not sacrifice to a practicable plan of abolishing every vestige of this moral and political depravity.” Madison: “The mere distinction of colour [is] ground for the most oppressive domination ever exercised by man over man.”

In practice, though, they were *stare decisis*, let it stand. Washington said freeing slaves would produce “inconvenience and mischief.” (He hoped it could happen bit by bit.) Jefferson said, “We have the wolf by the ear, and we can neither hold him nor safely let him go.” Madison noted “the magnitude of this evil” and spoke of “devising a satisfactory remedy,” eventually.

That’s where Roberts may be on abortion: He’s not for it, but *Roe v. Wade* is “the settled law of the land.”

THE NEW LAW EXISTS ONLY BECAUSE THE U.S. SUPREME COURT HAS NOT ALLOWED OTHER OPTIONS.

Except it’s not, and many state legislatures have made that clear. The Texas law pushes the envelope furthest: It creates protection for unborn children and allows individuals to bring civil suits against abortionists and their accomplices.

The headline of a *New York Times* column on Sept. 4 complained, “We Are Becoming a Nation of Vigilantes.” Law school professors Jon Michaels and David Noll said the Texas law invites “guerrilla investigative tactics.” That’s true and it’s potentially a problem, but the new law exists only because the U.S. Supreme Court has not allowed other options. If the court lets stand the Mississippi 15-week protection law it will soon consider, that will be a first step toward avoiding guerrilla war.

And if the court keeps slamming the door? Another Virginian slaveowner, George Mason, described slavery as “a slow Poison ... contaminating the Minds & Morals of People.” Slavery obviously harmed blacks but also made whites “Practiced in Acts of Despotism & Cruelty ... callous to the Dictates of Humanity.” Mason wrote that when we learn “to regard a part of our own Species in the most abject & contemptible Degree below us, we lose that Idea of the Dignity of Man” and become “Habituated from our Infancy to trample upon the Rights of Human Nature.”

That describes the effects of abortion. Its primary victims are unborn children and their mothers. Its primary beneficiaries are men empowered in irresponsibility and organizations not inconvenienced by employees giving birth, taking time off, and maybe leaving the workforce. But all who have received the gift of being born, then pick on those who haven’t, shrink our understanding of human dignity and human rights.

Mason was one of only three delegates to the Constitutional Convention who refused to sign the document: He thought it needed a Bill of Rights and an immediate end to the importation of slaves. It took 78 years and a civil war for slavery to end. The Supreme Court’s *Plessy v. Ferguson* “separate but equal” decision lasted for 58 years until *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) weakened it, and subsequent decisions and laws ended it.

It’s 48 years since *Roe v. Wade*, which has polarized and poisoned American politics. The Supreme Court over the next year will decide whether we begin to heal or become that nation of vigilantes. ■



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