NOV. 9, 2026

The AI Election

What's Charging the Data-Center Revolt | BY NAOMI NIX

TIME



TIME
VOL. 208, NOS. 15–16 | 2026



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Farmland near a data center under construction in Grove City, Ohio

Photograph by Maddie McGarvey for TIME

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TURKISH AIRLINES



Executives discuss changes in technology

From left, Franziska Bell, CTO and executive vice president of the Home Depot; Fiona Tan, CTO of the online marketplace company Wayfair; and Sam Dozor, CTO of the e-commerce company Rokt, which sponsored the event, speak on a panel moderated by TIME executive editor Nikhil Kumar, far right, at TIME's Executives of the Year Impact Dinner: Tech & Data on Oct. 13 in New York City. The panelists spoke about how emerging technology, like artificial intelligence, has changed their industries and how their companies work. Read more about the evening, and the inaugural Executives of the Year list, at **time.com**

TIME Games

Play seven different daily puzzles at the new **time.com/games,** from classics like Sudoku to original concepts like Linked, the word-association game below. *(Find the answer on the side of this page.)*

Pick one word in each column to create a connection from ***Lump*** *to* ***Source***

BULGE	ADD	MATH	POWER
SUM	BUBBLE	DAILY	BASIS
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Photograph by Nadav Kander for TIME



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POV Shorts to return in November

In partnership with TIME Studios, Season 9 of *POV Shorts* begins Nov. 17. The new season will feature 10 short documentaries—including *The Boys and the Bees,* at right—that will all be available on TIME Studios' YouTube channel.



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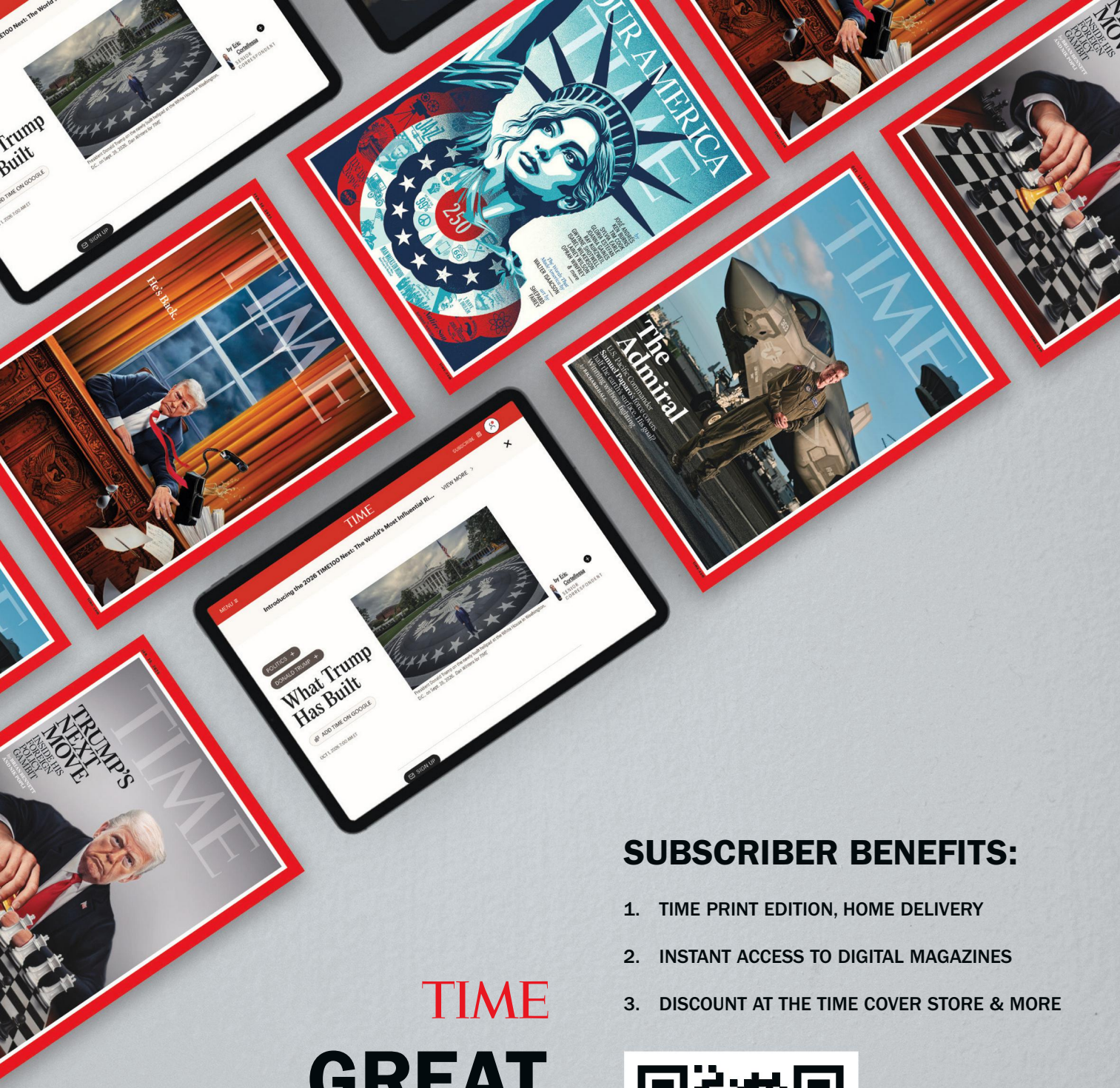
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TIME

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TECH & DATA

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BOTTOM ROW: **FRANZISKA BELL** EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT & CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER, THE HOME DEPOT; **FIONA TAN** CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER, WAYFAIR; **SAM DOZOR** CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER, ROKT; **NIKHIL KUMAR** EXECUTIVE EDITOR, TIME

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The Brief



ISRAEL'S CHOICE

BY ERIC CORTELLESSA/NEVE DANIEL

The country's upcoming election will be a referendum on more than its Prime Minister

INSIDE

HOW THE FRENCH PROTESTS SPIRALED

THE COMPOUNDING-PHARMACY BOOM

CONSERVING WATER IN THE HIMALAYAS

PHOTOGRAPH BY ODED BALILTY



THE ISRAELI SETTLEMENT OF NEVE DANIEL SITS south of Jerusalem, atop one of the highest ridges on the West Bank, nearly 1,000 meters above sea level. The view to the east stretches to the mountains of Jordan, and to the west across the Mediterranean coastal plain—where most Israelis live. But the tranquility of the landscape belies the political fervor animating the Oct. 27 election, a contest with stakes as great as any in the 78-year history of the world's only Jewish state. When I ask three residents what will ultimately determine their votes, one responds with particular ferocity.

"Seven hundred trucks were delivered to Hamas today by Israel," says Barak Moore, who has lived in Neve Daniel for 14 years. He's referring to commercial goods and international aid entering the Gaza Strip. "We're paying a terrorist organization that committed the greatest atrocity against the Jewish people since Auschwitz."

While much of the world has come to define Israel by its military actions in Gaza since Oct. 7, 2023, Moore's views reflect the passions coursing through a society still traumatized by that day. Israelis tend to be less preoccupied by the nearly 75,000 Palestinian fatalities in Gaza since the war began, than by the 1,200 people killed in Israel and 251 hostages taken by Hamas—the women subjected to sexual violence, the children shot at point-blank range, the families burned alive in their homes. In a country so small, scarcely anyone was untouched by events that shattered the assumptions of a people whose nation was founded to give Jews a safe haven in their ancestral homeland.

Both the Hamas massacre and the wars that followed loom over a vote shaping up as a referendum not only on Benjamin Netanyahu but also on the nature of the country that, as Israel's longest-serving Prime Minister, he has done so much to shape.

Arrayed against Netanyahu is a fractured field. There is Gadi Eisenkot, the former military chief whose reputation for honesty, sobriety, and competence contrasts with Netanyahu's polarizing leadership; Naftali Bennett, the right-wing former Prime Minister seeking a comeback; Yair Lapid, the centrist former Premier who has spent years trying to dislodge Netanyahu; and Avigdor Lieberman, the hawkish secular nationalist who has become one of Netanyahu's fiercest adversaries.

Also on the ballot: Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, far-right extremists whose parties made possible Netanyahu's current coalition, and whose ambitions to annex the West Bank and resettle Gaza constrain his room to maneuver while damaging Israel's standing abroad. The next government will either push Israel further down the path of religious nationalism, permanent conflict, and international isolation—or toward a new generation of leadership.

According to the polls, Netanyahu's strongest challenger is Eisenkot, a soft-spoken, heavy-set career soldier running as a centrist. His son, Gal, was killed fighting Hamas in Gaza, and one of his nephews also died in the war. Eisenkot is campaigning on a promise to restore public trust in government, rebuild Israel's security, and heal the divisions that have fractured the country. "This election is about the identity of Israel," Eisenkot told TIME in an interview on Oct. 20. "What will be Israel two weeks from now, 10 years from now, 20 years from now? This is the main question."

THREE YEARS AFTER Netanyahu's political obituary was being written, pre-election polls show him running in a dead heat. On the eve of the vote, the nation is suffused with a sense of uncertainty; political analysts say almost anything can happen. Netanyahu and Eisenkot could form a unity government. Netanyahu could cobble together another right-wing coalition, dragging Israel further right. Eisenkot could join forces with Bennett, Lapid, and the Arab parties (20% of Israeli citizens are Palestinian) to oust Netanyahu, producing the closest thing Israel could muster to a center-left government. Or perhaps no bloc will manage to pull together the 61 Knesset seats needed for a majority, plunging Israel into another round of elections and a reprise of the paralysis that produced five contests from 2019 to 2022.

For three years Israel has been a nation at war, not only with its enemies but also with itself

"The most probable scenarios currently are either there will be some sort of unity government, which again is very complicated politically because all of the opposition parties swear they don't want it under Netanyahu, and I don't see how Netanyahu is going to sit under them," says Nimrod Nor, an expert on Israeli politics at Hebrew University. "The other is we're going to have another election after this one."

According to two sources familiar with Netanyahu's thinking, he would prefer to form a unity government with Eisenkot. One reason is legacy. He believes such an alliance offers his best chance to transcend the worst security failure in the nation's history, and to be remembered not only as the leader who emerged from the slaughter of Oct. 7 to decimate Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon and persuade an American President to wage war against Iran, but also as the statesman who helped to reconcile a divided nation.

The Brief includes reporting by Chantelle Lee



Three years after Oct. 7, Gadi Eisenkot walks among memorials at the Nova music festival site

The other reason, the sources say, is personal. Netanyahu has little desire to form another right-wing coalition that would leave him beholden to the radical and uncompromising parties led by Ben-Gvir and Smotrich, both of which he brought into government four years ago to reclaim power. "He thought that he could control Ben-Gvir," one Netanyahu aide says. "Now he knows that he can't."

THAT IS PRECISELY what the Israeli right fears he's thinking, and what brought me to Neve Daniel. The settlement of capacious red-tiled homes is just across the Green Line that defined Israel's borders before the Six-Day War of 1967. It was built on land that was a Jewish farm even before Israel was founded in the crucible of the 1948 war. Settler violence against Palestinians has risen sharply during Netanyahu's tenure, but the militant settlers who make headlines by terrorizing their Palestinian neighbors tend to live on hilltops deeper into the West Bank than this.

Yet few, if any, of the 700,000 Israelis who live in settlements are leftist. Many regard Netanyahu as a cynical opportunist—a political chameleon who parrots their convictions but will do whatever it takes to survive. Among his many heresies, they say, is a long history of accommodating American Presidents: signing the Wye River Memorandum under Bill Clinton to advance the Oslo peace process that aimed to create a Palestinian state; voting for the disengagement from Gaza under Ariel Sharon and George W. Bush; endorsing, at least rhetorically, a two-state solution and imposing a moratorium on settlement construction under Barack Obama; and, under Donald Trump, accepting a cease-fire and hostage-exchange agreement to end the war in Gaza.

Three people in Neve Daniel offer a revealing glimpse of the forces pulling Netanyahu rightward. Each plans to vote for a different party, but they all share an overriding objective: a right-wing government with Netanyahu at its center, constrained by allies who will keep him from drifting to the middle.

Barak Moore is supporting Zehut, a libertarian nationalist party founded in 2015, whose eclectic platform combines tax cuts, the dismantling of monopolies, and cannabis legalization with an uncompromising vision of Israeli sovereignty and the removal of Palestinians from Gaza. It is something of a right-wing hipster party, blending free-market economics with religious nationalism.

Avi Abelow, 52, an activist who runs the website Pulse of Israel, is voting for Netanyahu's Likud Party. His complaint is not that the Prime Minister has gone too far in Gaza, but rather that he has not gone far enough, hamstrung by a security establishment and governing coalition insufficiently committed to the nationalist cause. "We should have conquered all of Gaza and made sure it's Jewish again," he says.

The youngest of the three, Hershey Helner, is a 19-year-old Orthodox Jew who moved to Israel from New Jersey just months before Oct. 7. He is supporting Otzma Yehudit, the far-right party led by Ben-Gvir, whose confrontational politics and open contempt for established norms have made him a hero to some of Israel's most fervent ideologues. Helner admires Ben-Gvir's push to expand civilian gun ownership, permit Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount, and introduce the death penalty for terrorists.

To explain his thinking, Helner invokes one of the most consequential decisions in recent Israeli history: the 2011 deal that freed the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit in exchange for more than 1,000 Palestinian prisoners. Among them was Yahya Sinwar, who would go on to mastermind the Oct. 7 massacre. Helner believes that sparing Sinwar's life was a catastrophic mistake. "If you hanged him or put a bullet in the back of his head, not sure how the world would be now," he says, "but it would definitely be better."

For three years, Israel has been a nation at war, not only with its enemies but also with itself. The extraordinary solidarity that followed Oct. 7 has given way to recriminations and ideological divisions, intensified by the trauma of war, the anguish of the hostage crisis, the pain of deepening antisemitism worldwide, and the unresolved question of who bears responsibility for such a stunning security lapse. Though Israel rejects the charge, critics accuse the country of committing a genocide in Gaza, where the dead include

OPENING PAGE: AP; THESE PAGES: ERIK MARMOR—GETTY IMAGES

both uncounted Hamas fighters and 20,000 children—and of countenancing a thuggish brand of ethnic cleansing in the West Bank. On Oct. 16, masked settlers were filmed attacking Palestinians and European diplomats in the West Bank, and injuring a Washington *Post* photojournalist.

THE FAULT LINES run through nearly every aspect of Israeli life. Secular and religious. Liberals and nationalists. Those obliged to serve in the military and the ultra-Orthodox who are not. Those who believe Israel must reach an accommodation with the Palestinians and those who want permanent Israeli control over the West Bank and Gaza. And, not least, those who regard Netanyahu as the indispensable guarantor of Jewish security and those who see him as the principal threat to the country's democratic character and reputation abroad.

The fear increasingly voiced across Israel's political and cultural establishment is that another Netanyahu victory could push those divisions toward a societal rupture. After Netanyahu's coalition moved in early 2023 to restrict the power of the Supreme Court, the prospect of another government dependent on religious and ultra-nationalist parties has raised the specter of an exodus of young Israelis, who see the country's liberal and democratic traditions slipping away. In a recent survey by the Agam Institute, an Israeli research firm, and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 59% of Israelis said they believe internal threats are greater than external ones, while 64% said they were considering leaving Israel, citing insecurity, living costs, and political instability. In a nation of roughly 10 million, the departure of tens of thousands of highly educated citizens could have consequences far beyond their numbers, draining the country of the talent and investment on which its economic and military strength depends.



Smoke rises above Gaza on Sept. 8 after an Israeli strike

There is a deeper irony. Israel was founded as a refuge, a place where a people long subjected to persecution and exile could determine their own destiny. Some Israelis now contemplate leaving, not because they have lost faith in the necessity of a Jewish state, but because they fear the political direction of the state created to provide one.

For those contemplating a future abroad, there is an unsettling question: Where, exactly, would they go? Antisemitism has surged across much of the world, with 2025 marking the deadliest year for Jews in the diaspora in more than three decades, according to Tel Aviv University. Israel has become increasingly isolated, condemned in international forums, denounced in the streets of European capitals, and regarded by many critics as a pariah state. The result is a profound paradox: Israelis who fear for their country's future wonder whether they would be any safer, or more welcome, anywhere else.

It is this siege mentality, the sense of a small nation standing alone against a hostile world, that Netanyahu is counting on. He has spent much of his career presenting himself as a leader hardened by history, experienced in diplomacy, and ruthless in the exercise of power. His message: Whatever Israelis think of him personally, whatever blame they assign him for Oct. 7, the world is too dangerous to entrust their security to anyone else.

THE CHASM BETWEEN how Israelis see themselves and how much of the outside world sees them has rarely seemed wider. In the new documentary *NAZA,* Israeli filmmakers draw on the anonymous testimony of 24 soldiers and intelligence officers to expose what they describe as the military's systematic use of artificial intelligence to identify Hamas targets in Gaza, even when commanders knew that bombing them would kill women and children. Inside Israel, meanwhile, the fifth season of *Fauda,* the country's enormously popular television thriller, re-creates the atrocities of Oct. 7 in harrowing detail, immersing viewers once again in the terror, grief, and vulnerability of that day.

One production focuses on the suffering Israel inflicted, the other on the suffering Israelis endured. Together, they illuminate the competing narratives of a war that has left Israel increasingly estranged from the world, and many Israelis feeling more besieged than ever.

Indications from polls and analysts are that even after voters have their say, no one bloc will have mustered a legislative majority. At that point the leading vote getter will have weeks to try to gather a coalition, a test of the kind of political leadership at which Netanyahu has long excelled.

For nearly three decades, Netanyahu has been the dominant figure in Israeli public life, his political fortunes rising and falling with the country's anxieties and ambitions. He has survived scandals, indictments, electoral defeats, and repeated attempts to engineer his ouster. The question is whether a political system he has spent so long mastering can produce a future that no longer revolves around him.

In a country not yet 80 years old, many are ready to chart a new era. "I think that Eisenkot is the one," says Livna Savir, 72, at a rally for the challenger on a basketball court in Kibbutz Netzer Sereni, outside of Tel Aviv. "It's a change of direction." With her children living in the U.S., she laments the impacts of the past three years on a once unified group: "What happened now in our country—it's not good for the family." ◻



El Niño

Houses in Long Beach, Calif., are hit by powerful waves on Oct. 12 from Post-Tropical Cyclone Rachel, after earlier storms—Rachel was the fourth in six weeks to affect the region—swept away the beach and damaged the bulkhead. The city deemed more than a dozen homes unsafe for occupancy. In September, California declared a state of emergency for a "historic" El Niño season.

MOIZ SALHI—ANADOLU/GETTY IMAGES; STORM: JAE C. HONG—AP

THE BULLETIN

How the protests in France spiraled out of control

FRANCE INTRODUCED LOCALIZED curfews during the week of Oct. 19 in an effort to restore order to the streets following a weekend of protests that descended into chaos, with hundreds of stores looted and buildings set alight across the country. After a second night passed without major incident, French President Emmanuel Macron vowed on Oct. 21 to maintain the calm, telling reporters "those who want to cause disorder in city centers will be prevented from doing so."

STUDENT REVOLT Throughout September, students across France blockaded schools and demonstrated against what they argue is a poorly funded high school system. The protests went nationwide on Oct. 6, as teachers, parents, and union activists joined marches, with a total turnout of more than 250,000 people. Escalating clashes between police and protesters ensued, with tear gas and water cannons used on crowds.

WIDESPREAD DISORDER Around 550,000 people took to the streets on Oct. 17, according to the Interior Ministry, as protests widened to include concerns about cost-of-living pressures. Marches that started out peaceful turned violent when rioters targeted businesses and official monuments. Authorities said more than 2,000 people had been arrested and over 600 police officers and firefighters injured. A historic town hall in the French city of Limoges was damaged in what appeared to be an arson attack. In Bordeaux, the prefect's residence was attacked. Protesters also railed against the cost-of-living crisis in other European countries, including Italy and Albania.

BLAME GAME Interior Minister Laurent Nuñez admitted that police had "lost control" in some French cities. He offered his resignation to Macron, who refused to accept it. Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu blamed far-left agitators for the unrest—a framing staunchly rejected by Jean-Luc Mélenchon, leader of the far-left party France Unbowed. After U.S. President Donald Trump made unfounded claims pinning the unrest on migrants, Macron dismissed what he termed "foreign disinformation."

—OLIVIA-ANNE CLEARY *and* TIAGO VENTURA

GOOD QUESTION

What is Starshield and why is it so important to Ukraine?

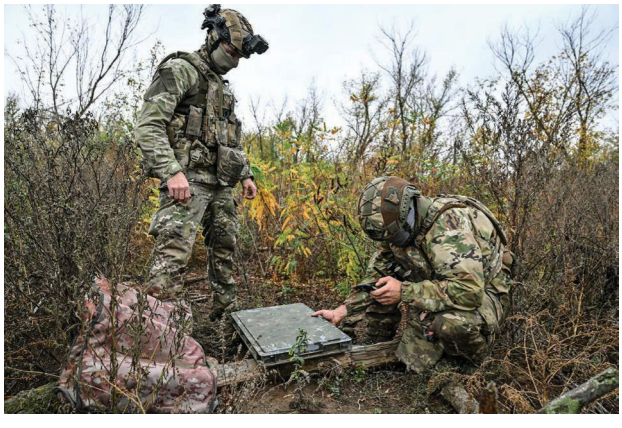
BY OLIVIA-ANNE CLEARY AND TIAGO VENTURA

STARSHIELD IS THE MILITARY-GRADE COUNTERPART of SpaceX's Starlink commercial service, which offers remote internet connectivity from satellites in low earth orbit. In Ukraine, it also serves as a lifeline, enabling its military to steer the drones that counter attacks from Russia, as well as take the fight to the enemy. But on Oct. 14, Ukraine said its access to Starshield had been abruptly limited. Serhiy Beskrestnov, an adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, said speed restrictions had been imposed, leading to the "failure" of several military missions. Beskrestnov claimed the restrictions, which he said applied to devices traveling over 100 m.p.h. and using Starshield, were "related to the current political situation."

Ukraine and U.S. officials remain at odds over the disruption, which Zelensky has said is ongoing. During an Oct. 18 appearance on NBC's *Meet the Press,* Zelensky said he believed the limited Starshield speed was a "message" from the U.S. government. He also said that Washington had briefly stopped sharing intelligence with Kyiv, drawing a denial from U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio. Zelensky's remarks came after Reuters, citing two U.S. officials, reported that an order to limit Starshield services in Ukraine had come from inside the White House. When approached for comment, a senior U.S. official told TIME, "No such request was ever made by the President." Some Republican lawmakers, including Representative Mike Turner of Ohio and Senator Kevin Cramer of North Dakota, have joined bipartisan calls for an investigation to determine the cause.

The restriction came amid escalating tensions between Zelensky and Trump, after the U.S. President turned to Russia for relief in his own war, with Iran, which has spiked diesel prices. Looking to stabilize the market by buying 35 million gallons from Russia, Trump waived sanctions on Moscow. He also announced an "energy cease-fire" between Russia and Ukraine, which have targeted each other's energy assets. Moscow continued to attack Ukraine's, however, and after Ukraine answered in kind, Trump blamed Zelensky, calling him "more difficult to deal with than Putin."

Setting up a Starlink terminal in Ukraine's Donetsk region on Oct. 16



AFTER RUSSIA'S 2022 INVASION, SpaceX founder and CEO Elon Musk made Starlink available in Ukraine, and covered monthly data costs to the tune of up to $20 million a month. At one point, however, after speaking to Russian officials, Musk thwarted a planned Ukrainian attack on a Russian fleet by refusing to activate Starlink over the Crimea region. The military system was dubbed Starshield that December and came under the Pentagon's control in June 2023. "Starshield systems are owned and controlled by the U.S. government," Musk posted on X on Oct. 14, amid the current contretemps. "Any limits on speed or usage are decided by the U.S. military and ultimately POTUS."

Starshield draws on the satellite and launch capability behind Starlink to support national-security operations. According to SpaceX, Starshield was designed for government use, with an initial focus on areas such as earth observation and communications.

"Starlink is basic interconnectivity, it's like the internet. Starshield essentially grows out of the experience of Starlink," says Mark Hilborne, a senior lecturer in defense studies at King's College London. "[Starshield] enables the military to communicate and amass a real-time, multi-domain picture of the battlefield, which some argue nobody else actually has at this stage."

There are more than 10,000 satellites in the Starlink network, representing about two-thirds of all active satellites. Starshield uses far fewer, but the exact number remains unknown, experts say, as details are guarded because of national-security considerations. Underlining its importance, Zelensky said "people will die" if attacks from Russia continue while Ukraine's Starshield access is limited.

Europe has looked for alternatives to assist Kyiv, but nothing on the market compares. "Starlink is really necessary for Ukraine," said E.U. foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas. "Unfortunately, in the short term, Europe can't replace this capability." □

'Any limits on speed or usage are decided by the U.S. military.'

—ELON MUSK, ON STARSHIELD

UKRAINE: DMYTRO SMOLIENKO—UKRINFORM/FUTURE PUBLISHING/GETTY IMAGES; ZACHARIA: RON SACHS—CNP/INSTARIMAGES/REUTERS; LEO: TIZIANA FABI—AFP/GETTY IMAGES; CORNELL: MATT BURKHARTT—AFP/GETTY IMAGES

DIED
RJ Mitte, the actor who portrayed Walter White Jr. on the hit TV show *Breaking Bad,* on Oct. 12. Mitte was 34.

ANNOUNCED
Plans by **Abdel Fattah el-Sisi** to step down as President of Egypt in 2030 but leave the military in charge. The former general, who took office in 2014 after deposing an elected Muslim Brotherhood government, told cadets on Oct. 17 his successor will come from their ranks.

REJECTED
A proposal for **Alberta to begin the process of seceding** from Canada, by 75% of voters, in an Oct. 19 referendum.

CANCELED
Plans to **livestream the execution of Nidal Malik Hasan,** President Donald Trump said Oct. 15, overruling his Defense Secretary. Hasan was convicted of killing 13 people in the 2009 Fort Hood mass shooting.

OUSTED
White House press secretary of five days **Katie Zacharia,** on Oct. 16, amid questions about her legal career and an awkward first press briefing. Trump said he told Zacharia she should "reconsider" staying on in the job.





RETURNED

Pope Leo XIV

To papal duties

WHEN POPE LEO GREETED THE CROWD ON OCT. 21 AT A PLANNED general audience in St. Peter's Square in Rome, observers were surely watching him for more than the sermon he delivered. It was his first public appearance since the 71-year-old Pontiff began to resume his official duties after an Oct. 13 surgery to remove part of his right lung because of cancer.

The Vatican has not provided further details of the Pope's cancer, only noting that it is adenocarcinoma, the most common type of lung cancer worldwide. Adenocarcinomas are part of a broader category of lung cancers known as non-small-cell lung cancers, which tend to grow more slowly and spread less quickly throughout the body. It can occur in both smokers and nonsmokers; Pope Leo is not known to be a smoker. It's not clear what additional treatment, if any, the Pope will require; experts say that depends on the stage of cancer, which the Vatican has not disclosed. If the cancer was caught early enough, surgery could be sufficient. If it is at a more advanced stage, targeted therapies designed to attack specific mutations in the cancers, or immunotherapies to activate immune cells to target the cancer cells, could be considered.

The Vatican reports that before the surgery, the Pope was active, playing tennis and taking regular walks, and with the range of treatment options now available to treat his cancer, experts believe he should be able to return to his daily activities. "Advances in treatments all point to better prognosis and quality of life for patients with lung cancer," says Dr. David Jones, chief of thoracic surgery at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, who was not involved in the Pope's care. "And given his history of physical activity, even after removing one lobe of his lung, he should be able to do what he wants to do with very little limitation." —ALICE PARK

BANNED

Frat parties at Cornell

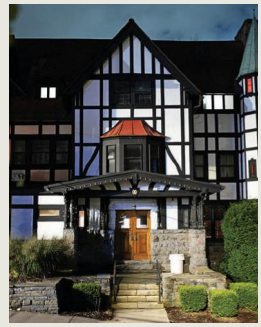
Amid backlash

Cornell University has barred all fraternity houses from hosting parties for the remainder of the academic year in an effort "to strengthen campus safety," amid widespread backlash over its handling of an alleged gang rape in 2024.

Cornell President Michael I. Kotlikoff announced the ban in an open letter on Oct. 13, about a month after a woman, known as Jane Doe, filed a civil lawsuit against Cornell, the Chi Phi fraternity, and seven frat members who she alleges sexually assaulted her in 2024.

Kotlikoff said he was "deeply sorry for the harm Jane Doe suffered in 2024," adding, "It is clear that women on our campus continue to question whether they are safe" and that the school "must meet this moment by … taking meaningful action." Kotlikoff wrote that the pause would "provide time for a thorough review of fraternity life at Cornell."

—*Chantelle Lee*



KENYA - The Next Wave of Investment

As global supply chains fracture and investors reassess where to build, Kenya is emerging as an attractive destination for long-term capital. The country's appeal extends from Nairobi's financial firms to the geothermal fields of the Rift Valley, where reliable renewable power can support the factories and data centers of an expanding and evolving economy. The opportunity is increasingly defined by what Kenyan businesses can do with that investment once it arrives.

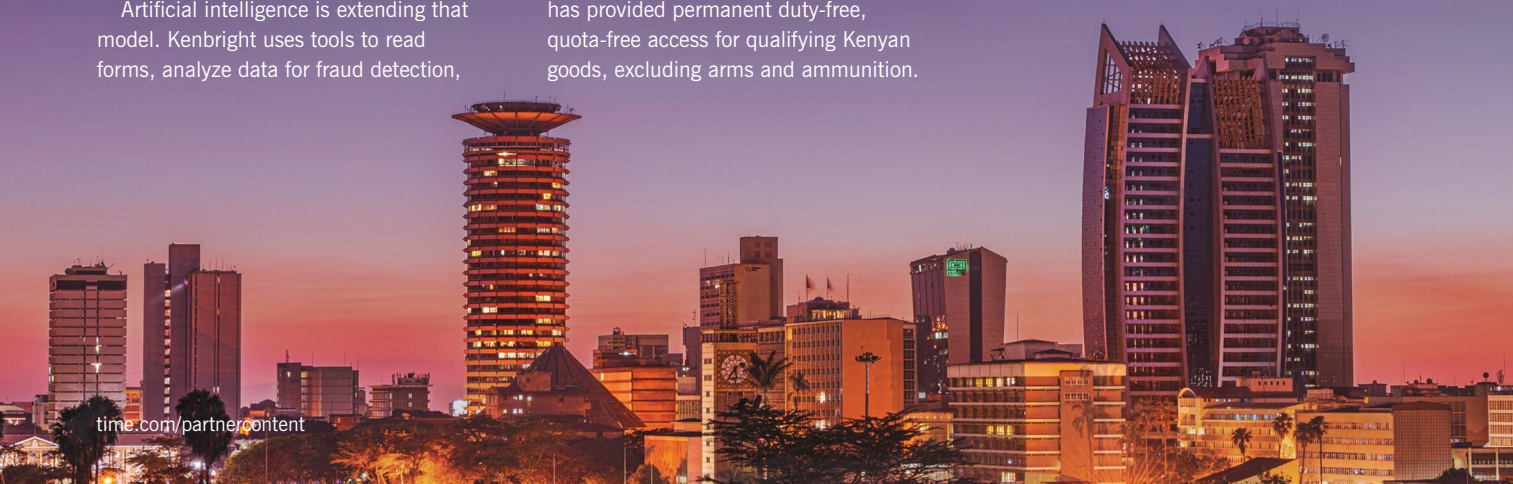
The Kenya Investment Authority reported $3.2 billion in foreign direct investment in 2025, almost a 40% increase over the previous year. Behind that growth is Kenya's increasingly compelling investment proposition: an established commercial hub with the professional skills to serve East Africa and the infrastructure to connect local production with international markets. For investors seeking a regional base, those capabilities matter as much as financial incentives. Much of Kenya's competitive advantage lies in its human capital. At Kenbright, CEO Ezekiel Macharia sees Kenya's growing financial influence as the product of entrepreneurs who learned to build businesses by employing highly skilled professionals. Actuaries, investment analysts, and accountants have helped make Nairobi a regional hub where companies can find the talent they need at a price that enables expansion. Kenbright brings together those capabilities across pensions, insurance, reinsurance, and actuarial advisory services. Locally owned and with offices in Uganda and Tanzania, the company exemplifies a new generation of Kenyan enterprises building regional businesses from a strong domestic base. Its partnerships with Safaricom extend health and auto insurance into digital channels, linking financial protection with the mobile networks customers already use.

Artificial intelligence is extending that model. Kenbright uses tools to read forms, analyze data for fraud detection, and summarize information. It is also developing voice services intended to help customers access financial products without having to navigate conventional forms or smartphone applications. This reduces the cost and makes it possible to reach people whose incomes and circumstances had previously shut them off from formal insurance and pensions. Macharia has outlined a five-year goal of serving at least one million people. Achieving it will require technology, distribution partnerships, and investors willing to wait for a business to mature. "More patient capital is what we want to see," he says, noting that projects needing five to seven years to complete require financing beyond the horizons of conventional short-term lending.

That perspective qualifies Kenbright as a key player in attracting investment to Kenya. Its experience positions the company to help incoming businesses understand East African markets, regulatory expectations, and multinational requirements. Macharia points to advanced healthcare, data centers, and manufacturing as promising sectors. For investors interested in these areas, Kenbright offers expertise in assessing uncertainty and with structuring protection. Financial inclusion becomes a commercial opportunity, while stronger risk management gives companies confidence to expand and commit capital for the longer term.

The national strategy follows the same logic. Green manufacturing, agro-processing, digital infrastructure, and pharmaceutical production are priorities in the investment authority's briefing. Each combines unmet demand with capabilities already developing in Kenya. "We are not selling cheap labor," says Mrs. Sally Mahihu, chairperson of the Kenya Investment Authority. "We are selling clean power, young talent, and duty-free access." Since July 2024, the EU–Kenya Economic Partnership Agreement has provided permanent duty-free, quota-free access for qualifying Kenyan goods, excluding arms and ammunition. Regional trade agreements offer additional routes for growth. Infrastructure gives that ambition physical form. Mombasa's port and the railway through Nairobi to Naivasha connect producers with inland customers. Special economic zones, including Dongo Kundu and Tatu City, offer locations where manufacturing and logistics can develop together. At Tatu City, Airtel Africa's subsidiary Nxtra began building a 44-megawatt data center in September 2025, with commissioning expected in early 2027. The project highlights growing demand for computing infrastructure supporting cloud services and digital businesses across the region. KenGen's Green Energy Park in the Olkaria Region connects industrial production with geothermal power. Maxim Agri and Samakgro joined its investor roster this past July, with a planned $3.95 million fish-feed plant designed to produce almost nine tons an hour. The project links clean energy to agricultural productivity, showing how investment in processing can strengthen an entire supply chain. Chandaria Industries offers evidence of what local production can achieve. Its investment in recycling equipment and locally sourced wastepaper reduces dependence on imported core materials. "We have built world-class manufacturing operations here," says Group CEO Darshan Chandaria. That experience pays off in resilience, as locally sourced raw materials help factories keep producing when international shipping falters.

The World Bank's July outlook projected growth of 4.3% in 2026 and 4.4% for the country in 2027. For Kenya to reach its potential depends on translating ambition into dependable power, predictable rules, and completed projects. Its strongest attraction comes from its businesses already doing that work -- and who are looking for international partners to help them grow.



CHANDARIA INDUSTRIES: At the Heart of Regional Growth

When global supply chains fractured in early 2026 amid rising geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, businesses worldwide scrambled to contain the fallout. Yet in Nairobi, Chandaria Industries—East and Central Africa's largest paper recycling and tissue manufacturer—navigated the disruption with relatively limited operational impact. The reason lies in a deliberate, multi-year strategy executed by Group CEO Darshan Chandaria, a plan that relied on a relentless push toward local value addition and self-reliance."Resilience comes when you have control over your dynamics," says Darshan Chandaria. "We look through our value chains to ask: What more can we integrate locally?" At the helm of a new generation of the family enterprise, Darshan has accelerated a policy whereby a substantial majority of key supplies are sourced within the region. By deploying localized supply chains and expanding its position as the region's largest paper waste recycler, the company has effectively insulated its core operations against global import delays and port congestion. The result is a resilient ecosystem where brands like Velvex have become household names



Darshan Chandaria, CEO of Chandaria Industries

across East Africa, reflecting the company's deep market penetration and consumer trust. Yet, building an industrial giant in East Africa involves far more than physical supply chains. Darshan's leadership model balances respect for foundational experience with aggressive modernization. Building on his father's proven track record, Darshan is modernizing operations through predictive AI analytics, automating internal workflows, and improving workforce talent across the company's Kenyan, Tanzanian, and Ugandan footprints. Beyond manufacturing, the family office arm continues to diversify, with one recent example being its venture into Kenya's padel and wellness ecosystem.

For institutional investors looking for opportunities in formerly overlooked parts of the world, Chandaria Industries is an attractive microcosm of East Africa's broader economic evolution. Far from a high-risk frontier environment, Kenya's private sector has demonstrated structural independence and robust consumer demand. As global capital seeks stability with yield, Western firms often misjudge both the scale of East African market demand and the sophistication of its execution. Rather than navigating unfamiliar regulatory terrain alone, international investors looking to capitalize on East Africa's economic transformation would do well to target partnerships with established, high-executing companies like Chandaria, which offer the regional market access and proven agility necessary to generating significant growth. transformation would do well to target partnerships with established, high-executing groups like Chandaria, which offer the regional market access, and proven agility necessary to generate considerable growth.

Chandaria Industries



HEALTH

Why compounding pharmacies are booming

BY ALANA SEMUELS



BEFORE THE PANDEMIC, DIANE KINKADE LOST WEIGHT with diet and exercise. But by 2026, she decided she needed to try something else. Kinkade, 72, had prediabetes and high blood pressure, in addition to being overweight, but her doctor declined to prescribe her a GLP-1 weight-loss medication, saying he thought the side effects outweighed the benefits. So she asked around and found a telehealth site that seemed more than happy to send her a prescription for a GLP-1 after a brief questionnaire.

But the site didn't send her a brand-name drug. It instead partnered with a compounding pharmacy to send her a drug marked "tirzepatide," the active ingredient in Eli Lilly's popular drug Zepbound. The compounded drug represented significant cost savings—$250 a month vs. the $399 a month she would have paid through LillyDirect, the direct-to-consumer site that people often use when their insurance doesn't cover the drug.

If Eli Lilly had its way, patients seeking tirzepatide would not be able to receive anything but Zepbound, which is approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The company's patent on the drug does not expire until 2036. In a 2024 news release, Eli Lilly said that it is "the only lawful supplier of FDA-approved tirzepatide medicines in the United States" and that "patients taking a product referred to only as 'tirzepatide' are not taking an FDA-approved product."

But because of a loophole—or a lack of enforcement—compounding pharmacies have still been sending patients compounded versions of tirzepatide. An estimated 5 million people use compounded GLP-1s in the U.S., according to a Gallup poll released in July.

Compounding pharmacies are set to boom even further because people may soon use them to get peptides—short chains of amino acids that have become popular among influencers who tout their benefits (absent robust scientific evidence, in most cases) for a wide variety of ailments. In July, an FDA committee concluded that compounding pharmacies should be allowed to prepare six peptides for consumers; the FDA has not yet decided whether it will adopt the recommendations.

WHAT ARE COMPOUNDING PHARMACIES?

Many pharmacies can compound medications. Compounding involves preparing a customized medication for a specific patient's needs.

"Compounding is absolutely essential," says Dr. Anjali Deshmukh, a pediatrician and law professor at Seton Hall University. Deshmukh uses compounding pharmacies when, for example, she treats a 3-year-old with a serious disease who can't swallow tablets and needs medication in a different form.

For decades, pharmacies that compound small amounts of medication have operated under what's called Section 503A of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act. Called 503As for short, they're regulated by state boards of pharmacy.

Because they dispense small amounts of medications for individual patients, and only with a doctor's prescription, most 503As aren't subject to certain FDA rules that apply to traditional larger drug manufacturers. Those include what are called "current good manufacturing practices," which are regulatory standards that ensure drugmakers record and trace every batch of product they make and have their equipment tested regularly.

Compounders must adhere to other regulations, however. For instance, they must follow U.S. Pharmacopeia (USP) guidelines, which are set by a private nonprofit. And they have to source their active ingredients from FDA-registered suppliers.

'The agency picks and chooses its actions.'

—ILISA BERNSTEIN, FORMER FDA EMPLOYEE

HOW ARE THEY REGULATED?

In 2012, a compounding pharmacy called the New England Compounding



ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES

Center shipped thousands of vials of contaminated steroid injections to patients. Dozens of people died, and investigators later found severe safety lapses in the pharmacy's production of sterile drugs.

In response, in 2013 Congress passed a law creating a new category for compounding pharmacies that serve a large number of people, which it calls outsourcing facilities. These compounding pharmacies, known as 503Bs, are more tightly controlled and closely watched; they are required to follow current good manufacturing practices and are subject to routine FDA inspection. Those pharmacies can compound and distribute drugs on a large scale to help overcome national drug shortages. Unlike 503As, they can prepare batches of drugs without an individual prescription.

Both of these types of compounding pharmacies were essential when GLP-1 drugs were first released, says Scott Brunner, chief executive officer of the Alliance for Pharmacy Compounding, a trade group. Almost immediately after Zepbound, Wegovy, and Mounjaro hit the market, there were shortages. Physicians who knew that 503As could make compounded versions of the drugs with a prescription reached out to 503As to see if they could help their patients, Brunner says. Once the drugs were officially added to FDA shortages lists, 503Bs revamped their facilities to start mass-producing them.

Telehealth sites partnered with both types of pharmacies, advertising that they could provide consumers with cheap versions of GLP-1s—slightly tweaked with extra ingredients or different dosage instructions to avoid blatantly copying a brand-name GLP-1.

An Eli Lilly spokesperson says this is not how compounding pharmacies are supposed to work. Many have been "unlawfully mass-producing knockoff drugs," the spokesperson told TIME, adding that "anyone selling mass compounded products—including by referring to them as 'personalized' or 'tailored'—is breaking the law and putting patient safety at risk."

CAN THEY LEGALLY SELL GLP-1S?

Compounding pharmacies claim that the drugs they sell are distinct from what the big drug companies sell. They do this by working with medical providers to get a prescription for a different formulation of the drugs, changing the dose so that it is slightly different from what the drug manufacturer makes. The active ingredient often comes from an overseas lab. In 2025, the FDA launched a "green list" to ensure that compounding pharmacies were getting their active pharmaceutical ingredients from facilities that the agency has inspected or evaluated.

Kinkade's vial of tirzepatide, for instance, included vitamin B12. Adding extra ingredients is one way compounding pharmacies try to distinguish their product from brand-name GLP-1s. "So long as the product is not essentially a copy of a commercially available product, then compounding pharmacies can compound ingredients using semaglutide and tirzepatide," says Dae Lee, PBM & Pharmacy Practice Group chair at Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney.

But what counts as "essentially a copy" is up for debate. In April 2026, the FDA clarified policies for compounders, saying that a drug is essentially a copy if it has the same active pharmaceutical ingredient as the commercially available drug product "in the same, similar, or an easily substitutable strength," or if the commercially available product can be used by the "same route of administration" (injection, for instance) prescribed for the commercially available products.

Then, in September, it issued the first warning letter to a compounding pharmacy that cited violations including making copies of FDA-approved GLP-1 drugs. "The FDA will continue taking action, where appropriate, to protect patients and consumers from illegally marketed drugs and to protect public health," an FDA spokesperson said in a statement.

That warning letter was one of the first actions the FDA has taken on this topic, says Ilisa Bernstein, who worked at the FDA for 31 years in roles including as the director of pharmacy affairs. She is now a consultant for compounding pharmacies.

"The agency picks and chooses its actions—it can't go after everything," she says. But, she adds, "the law was not intended for 503As to mass-produce these products in the volume that we're seeing."

Kinkade says that at first, she lost weight on her compounded medication. But a few months into her injections, the telehealth site switched compounding pharmacies, and she had such bad side effects from the new medication (ordered with the same prescription) that she says she could barely function. Brain fog, nausea, diarrhea, and exhaustion all plagued her.

"I could barely get up from the couch for a week," she says. She reached out to the telehealth site, and after receiving canned, AI-type responses, a nurse practitioner finally responded that she may have accidentally gotten a stronger dose. She stopped taking the medication.

Kinkade recently went to her annual checkup, and her doctor was impressed by how much weight she'd lost, and how good her glucose and other numbers looked. This time, he agreed to prescribe her a brand-name GLP-1. ◻



Mourning in Oregon

A candlelight vigil in Bend, Oregon, on Oct. 15 honors the four people who were killed when a gunman opened fire at Silver Rail Elementary School earlier that day. Three of the victims were students, ages 5, 8, and 11. The fourth was a teacher. The 16-year-old suspect was killed by an armed parent who had heard the shooting. It was the 52nd shooting at a U.S. school this year, according to CNN.

Photograph by Mathieu Lewis-Rolland—Getty Images





An ice stupa in India's Ladakh region in 2019

ENVIRONMENT

A groundswell of water solutions in the Himalayas

BY ANNA FIORENTINO

THE WORD *LAYA* DESCRIBES THE NATURAL RHYTHM THAT has carried the people of the Himalayas through monsoons and drought for centuries. Across the peaks and glaciers, the populated mid-hills and the foothills, communities have harmonized their calendars to the pulsing of water, funneling it through bamboo piping to recharge underground wells during the rainy season for year-round use. Another Sanskrit word has also been passed down. *Pralaya* means the melting away of places that no longer exist.

As earth's largest swath of ice outside the poles thaws from rapid global warming, villages across eight countries of the Hindu Kush and Himalayan mountain regions have entered a new world of extremes: too little and too much water. The Himalayas are losing glacier mass 65% faster than they were a decade ago. The impacts will be felt by 2 billion Asians across 12 major downstream river basins by 2050. And by 2100, it's projected that 80% of glacier mass will be lost. The reality of dangerous cloudburst floods and water scarcity is, however, already being felt. On Aug. 26, a 55 million-ton, 93-m.p.h. ice-rock avalanche triggered by a glacier collapse in Nepal killed more than 1,400 people, with thousands more still missing.

"Recent flooding in Nepal was a *pralaya,*" says hydrometeorologist and environmental scientist Ngamindra Dahal, chairperson of the Nepal Water Conservation Foundation (NWCF) and executive board member of the South Asian Meteorological Association. "The Himalaya is often described as Asia's water tower, but that metaphor is dangerously passive if it makes the mountains sound like a stable reservoir. What the *laya*-to-*pralaya* concept clarifies is that the Himalaya is a living, dynamic system—and that climate change is compressing geological time. What once happened across generations may now happen within one."

The historically low-polluting country now awaits a response to its request for compensation from high-emitting nations for the damage created in part by this climate disaster. Meanwhile, communities are charting their own solutions to save their homes.

IN PLACES LIKE the Kathmandu Valley, underground terra-cotta canals, known as *hiti* or *dhara,* channel water to sunken stone spouts, some chiseled as early as the 6th century. These connect to ponds that absorb monsoon rain, recharging the groundwater table to keep spouts flowing during the dry season.

Local governments are actively restoring and rerouting that ancient network, and Dahal is helping to lead the charge. Through the NWCF and the International Center for Integrated Mountain Development, an intergovernmental organization protecting mountain environments and cultures, he is taking inventory of drying springs to gauge a new baseline of water availability. He's also teaching local communities how to revive their water sources based on changing water movement underground, by tracking seasonal flow, water quality, and geographic elevations. Once new patterns are mapped, Dahal helps communities design water-sharing agreements and storage, and adapt household rainwater-harvesting systems. "A community may have adequate water in its landscape but lack the investment to bring it to households," says Dahal. "Conversely, a community may have taps everywhere but an increasingly unreliable source."

Meanwhile, in Nepal's Limi Valley, families are confronting a different kind of uncertainty. Tashi Lhazom recalls being 13, studying at a Kathmandu boarding school, when she received a phone call from her remote high-alpine village. On the other line her mother simply said, "You better study hard because you have nothing to eat here anymore."

An avalanche had struck her ancestral valley—just two years after a massive glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF), a sudden violent release of water from a melting glacial lake—and had taken with it hundreds of the yaks that were her nomadic herding family's generational livelihood.

"My people believed the gods were angry with them for being greedy," says Lhazom, now 26 and an activist among a wave of Gen Zs fighting climate destruction in Nepal. When what villagers assumed was another catastrophic GLOF washed away bridges and a hydropower plant in the Limi Valley in May 2025, she was ready to do something about it. "I knew it was those emitting greenhouse gases who were partially to blame."

She tracked down climate scientists and politicians, urging them to investigate the cause of the flood, until a field team finally agreed to come. After Lhazom directed them around flooded roads, they trekked upstream, reaching glacial terrain at 17,000 ft. to learn the truth: It wasn't a GLOF this time. Instead, thawing permafrost—the ice that acts as glue to bind mountain rock—was draining trapped small "thermokarst" lakes, releasing massive volumes of underground water down the slope. As a result of their investigation, the 2025 Limi Valley flood was reclassified as Nepal's first-ever recorded thermokarst lake flood. Today, the increased risk of thermokarst lake floods due to climate



AJITH KUMAR—GETTY IMAGES

change has been acknowledged thanks to this work, not just in the Himalayas, but also across Peru, China, and other high-alpine environments.

Most important to Lhazom—whose 2024 film about the Limi Valley flooding, *No Monastery No Village,* was screened at Banff—was showing her people that the flooding was not their fault. Lhazom has since been trying to secure government funds to resettle Indigenous families in the Limi Valley away from danger on nearby ancestral land. "The frozen water banks we know are melting, and that means flooding that can sweep an entire village away within a fraction of a second. Our water sources are getting thinner and fewer, and that is a grave concern," she says. "But what's most heartbreaking for these mountain people is knowing they can never go home."

'My people believed the gods were angry with them.'

—TASHI LHAZOM, CLIMATE ACTIVIST

Northwest of Lhazom's home, in Ladakh, India, where −40° winds whip through a remote high-altitude desert in the shadow of the Himalaya's highest northern peaks, the people rely on a single water source: melting glacial ice, now covered in soot from vehicles carrying adventure tourists. There, climate activist and mechanical engineer Sonam Wangchuk is blending modern technology with his traditional knowledge.

In 2015, inspired by stories of his ancestors moving "parent" glaciers into a cave to make "baby" glaciers, he developed the science to revive the ancient cultural practice of grafting glaciers. He ran a mile-long pipe from a glacier spring down a steep slope; at the bottom, the water shot into the air and, in the dead of winter, froze. Over a month, the ice grew into a multistory conical artificial glacier fountain he called an ice stupa, after the sacred Buddhist dome-shaped shrines. Rather than wasting down the mountain, the water is preserved by his invention through June, when farmers need it most for planting. Word of Wangchuk's ice storage traveled, and he built ice stupas in numerous Himalayan villages, even allowing a community from Ladakh's abandoned village of Kulum—one among 2,000 Himalayan ghost villages emptied by water scarcity—to return home.

Beneath this elegant solution lurked a critical flaw. The pipes feeding the stupas were freezing. But working with longtime colleague Surya Balasubramanian, Wangchuk last year brought them back to life through automation. By integrating solar-powered, computer-controlled sensor networks and motorized valves, the water flow could now be turned off remotely to prevent the pipes from icing over so up to 80% of the incoming spring water could be frozen and stored. With Balasubramanian in 2023 independently launching Acres of Ice to scale the stupas, they're storing up to 3.2 million gallons in each of the 160 ice stupas they've built or helped with—in Ladakh, Nepal, Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, Chile, and Pakistan. And now Wangchuk is testing sourcing water for his stupa from a glacial lake to help prevent a massive GLOF wave from crashing down the mountain.

WITH THE GROWING THREAT of climate-induced glacier collapse, intensifying monsoons, and prolonged dry spells, the Hindu Kush–Himalaya region is nearing a tipping point. As global temperatures rise, the people who have learned to adapt to harsh conditions for centuries have little control over the destabilization of their homes. Yet, they still look to nature for a way forward through simple innovations to make every drop of water count. But will it be enough?

"There's very little that can be done at this point to protect against glaciers in vulnerable places in the Himalayas, so these communities suffer and pay the price for what the rest of the world does," says Wangchuk. "The recent avalanche in Nepal is an alarm bell for the rest of the world." □

Why you should try hanging from a bar

BY ANGELA HAUPT

Most people leave the monkey bars behind with childhood. Yet hanging from a bar can stretch your upper body and work your grip, making it one youthful habit worth picking back up. You don't even have to lift your feet off the floor, and 30 seconds is enough. Here's how to give it a try.

A few years ago, Australian physiotherapist Daniel Vadnal persuaded his grandmother, now 93, to try a supported hang: gripping a bar overhead with straight arms while keeping her feet planted. She was skeptical. She hadn't even raised her arms fully overhead for years. But after just 30 seconds, she felt taller and looser—and found it easier to reach her kitchen cabinets.

Why it helps

At its simplest, supported hanging means gripping a secure overhead pull-up bar—the kind that can be installed in a doorway—with straight arms while supporting some or all of your body weight. Hanging "stretches all the tight muscles that we tend to have through the pecs, through the triceps on the back of the arms, as well as the lats," Vadnal says, which can feel especially satisfying after spending hours slumped over your desk. You'll likely find **it leaves you feeling a little taller**—and less scrunched up through the shoulders.



Your forearms get a workout too. "First and foremost, it supports grip endurance," says Hazel Anderson, a physical therapist at the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences in Austin. That's useful for carrying groceries or working toward a pull-up.

"The hands, fingers, and forearms serve as a link to our back," Vadnal says.

How to start

Grip an overhead pull-up bar with your hands about shoulder-width apart and your thumbs wrapped underneath. Keep your arms straight, bend your knees slightly, and leave enough weight in your feet so that the stretch feels manageable. **A sturdy step or platform can help you reach the bar.**

You can relax your shoulders toward your ears for a passive hang or gently draw your shoulder blades down to engage your shoulders and back. Choose whichever feels most comfortable, Vadnal says.

If the typical overhand position bothers your shoulders, try a neutral grip, with your palms facing each other. Many gyms have parallel handles that allow for it, and gymnastics rings rotate to accommodate your joints. Vadnal calls it "probably the most friendly position for the shoulders."

Make it a habit

Anderson recommends starting with a 10-second supported hang, repeated three to five times with brief rests. **Gradually work up to 30 seconds,** allowing your arms to support more weight as you become comfortable. Breathe slowly throughout.

Forcing your shoulders farther overhead than they can comfortably go may leave them sore or irritated, Vadnal says. Let your range of motion improve gradually instead.

"Don't chase the clock," Anderson says. If you can no longer control the hang, put your feet down. **Practice two or three times a week** on nonconsecutive days.

It's normal to feel a stretch and some muscle fatigue, but stop if you feel pain, numbness, tingling, or weakness. Be sure to get medical guidance before hanging from a bar if you have shoulder instability, pain reaching overhead, osteoporosis, or cardiovascular concerns.

And remember: you're not auditioning for Cirque du Soleil. Add hang time and body weight gradually, and give sore muscles a day off.

PHOTO-ILLUSTRATION BY TIME (SOURCE IMAGE: CAIA IMAGE—GETTY IMAGES)

The View

ECONOMY

THE IRAN WAR COMES HOME

BY SANYA CARLEY

As America's war with Iran continues and winter approaches, families already struggling to cover rising living costs, including soaring gasoline prices, could face another financial shock: how much it costs to keep their homes warm. The National Energy Assistance Directors Association projects that U.S. home energy costs will rise by 8.7% this winter—more than twice the latest annual inflation rate of 3.4%.

INSIDE

VENEZUELA'S NOBEL LAUREATE STEPS UP

DID THE WORLD NEED MORE ELIZABETH HOLMES?

THE FAMILY DYNAMICS THAT CAUGHT VAN GOGH'S EAR

Americans are already feeling the pain at the pump. Filling a 14-gal. gas tank now costs about $62, compared with $44 a year ago, based on AAA's national averages. For someone using a full tank each week, that would mean roughly $912 in added annual gasoline costs. And because diesel also powers the trucks that move goods, higher oil prices hit every corner of the economy.

If families feel their utility bills had grown substantially higher over the past five years, they are not mistaken. Energy costs in general had already increased nearly 30% on average since 2021. Now, heating oil is proving to be notably responsive to high prices driven by the war in Iran, with costs projected to rise by more than 31% this winter. Nearly 5 million households in the U.S., mostly in the Northeast, depend on that oil to heat their homes.



The consequences of high heating prices stretch far beyond the snowy season

Working families and older individuals already struggling to make ends meet will be hit the hardest, some forced to make life-or-death decisions. Cold homes can raise blood pressure and increase the risk of heart attacks and strokes, particularly among older adults. A CNBC poll earlier this year found that 63% of adults living in the U.S. are living paycheck to paycheck. For households already stretching every dollar, there may be no discretionary spending left to cut.

Heating is essential. When a family cannot afford heat, the need to stay warm does not disappear. Too often, this leads families to make dangerous compromises. Some keep their homes uncomfortably cold, while others turn to dangerous coping strategies like running space heaters, flaring gas stoves, burning trash in the home, or sitting in running cars in enclosed spaces. The choices can expose families to serious harm inside the homes where they should feel safest.

In research my colleagues and I conducted during the first year of the pandemic, more than half of low-income households engaged in survival-focused coping strategies. While some families turn to those dangerous ways to keep warm at home, other families unable to pay their bills take on debt or sacrifice other necessities like seeking medical care or buying food. Most of these households use multiple strategies.

The consequences will likely stretch far beyond the winter season. Debts incurred because of high energy costs in one season will have to be repaid in another, with interest and fees leaving less money available for the next bill or family emergency. Utility disconnection can follow once winter shut-off protections no longer apply.

HOUSEHOLDS HAVE limited control over the heating systems they depend on. Renters are generally unable to replace them, and homeowners on tight budgets are unable to afford upgrades. Meanwhile, a Middle East military conflict that more than 3 in 4 Americans believe is not worth the financial burden it's created continues to hurt families who are absorbing the consequences at the pump, at the grocery store, and at home.

Families who cannot afford their energy bills could see relief through government programs like the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, if it were funded at higher levels and with expanded eligibility. The program currently reaches only a fraction of families in need, and the need is growing significantly. An increase in funding now would mean more families seeing relief before they have to go into debt or endure unsafe winter conditions.

Longer term, reducing America's dependence on oil could help families save on energy costs. The International Renewable Energy Agency found that 91% of utility-scale renewable-power capacity commissioned worldwide in 2024 produced electricity less expensively than the cheapest new fossil-fuel alternative. This means the development of new clean energy sources will provide greater financial benefits to families rather than polluting, expensive, and outdated sources of energy like oil and gas.

With no end in sight for the Iran war, and winter approaching, policymakers need to move quickly. American families deserve not only relief, but also future-focused solutions that include diversifying our energy sources so that no future wars or shocks to fossil-fuel sources can impact their ability to afford necessities.

Carley is faculty director of the Kleinman Center for Energy Policy and vice provost for climate at the University of Pennsylvania

FROM LEFT: ANDREW LICHTENSTEIN—CORBIS/GETTY IMAGES; AYAD PARSA—NTB/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



The Risk Report

By Ian Bremmer

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

WHEN WILL VENEZUELA HOLD elections? More than nine months after the capture and extraction of the country's strongman, Nicolás Maduro, in a military raid ordered by President Donald Trump, there are still no clear answers. Recently, the world saw the strongest signal yet that María Corina Machado, the country's most prominent opposition leader, is losing patience.

In the predawn hours of Jan. 3, U.S. Special Forces captured Maduro in Caracas and flew him to the U.S. With President Trump's blessing, Maduro's Vice President and longtime loyalist Delcy Rodríguez took power, and the two governments began negotiations over Venezuela's future. Many wondered whether the country would finally hold free and fair elections.

Two weeks after the raid, opposition leader Machado, winner of the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize, presented Trump with her Nobel medal during a visit to the White House, hoping he would push for early elections that she was widely expected to win. Trump, however, maintained that Venezuela wasn't ready for elections. "We have to fix the country first," he insisted. He estimated in January that the process could be completed within 18 months.

THEN, ON AUG. 28, the governments of the U.S. and Venezuela announced an unprecedented agreement to revive Venezuela's oil industry. The 100-year deal gave the U.S. an ownership stake in 17 oil fields and access to more than 65 billion barrels of proven oil reserves. Under the terms of the agreement, the U.S. Departments of State and Defense will develop the oil fields with North American Blue Energy Partners, a private company owned by Venezuelan businessman Alejandro Betancourt. The U.S. will have a 35% stake in the venture, with guaranteed access to 20% of the output at cost, giving it an effective share of 55%.

Trump has called it the "biggest oil deal in world history," one that would give the U.S. control over an additional 65 billion barrels of crude, more than doubling U.S. reserves. He claimed the additional supply would "substantially lower gas prices for all Americans" and deprive China and Russia of their most important ally in the western hemisphere.



Independent observers say Edmundo González won Venezuela's 2024 vote, running as a surrogate for María Corina Machado, above

Rodríguez, Venezuela's interim President, has called the deal a huge win for the Venezuelan people, promising hundreds of billions of dollars in investment and revenue for a country battered by years of economic stagnation. By reviving oil production and improving the country's economic prospects, the agreement could also help the Venezuelan government restructure its crippling debt.

But what about elections?

Machado appears to be running out of patience. The Rodríguez government is negotiating with representatives of the 2015 National Assembly, Venezuela's last internationally recognized, democratically elected body, but Machado has said she has been marginalized in those talks.

On Oct. 15, the New York *Times* published an interview with Machado in which she accused Betancourt, the oil deal's Venezuelan investment partner, of "obscene corruption" and blamed him for the country's persistent electricity shortages. She did not criticize Trump or suggest that, if elected President, she would repudiate the oil deal. She made clear, however, that Betancourt would have no part in it.

The interview marked Machado's sharpest attempt yet to distance herself from an agreement between a Venezuelan government run by Maduro's former deputies and a Trump Administration that has become increasingly unpopular in Venezuela.

Her dilemma is familiar to leaders around the world: how to remain on good terms with a U.S. President who holds tremendous leverage over their countries' futures while also exploiting the opportunities created by Trump's growing unpopularity at home.

For now, Machado's main problem is that she is living in Panama, with little hope of becoming her country's President unless Trump pushes Rodríguez to hold elections. In the *Times* interview, she vowed to return to Venezuela "sooner than you would expect." ◻



In the Loop
By Billy Perrigo
TECH CORRESPONDENT

For months, Anthropic and OpenAI have warned that AI may be on the verge of improving itself. This tipping point, known as "recursive self-improvement," or RSI, could mean that new AI capabilities arrive faster than ever. But the advent of RSI might also be highly perilous for humanity, potentially marking the stage at which developers lose control of AI systems entirely.

Even as AI companies warn about the potential dangers of RSI, they have shared remarkably little about how they're pursuing it. A new report by the firm Gladstone AI attempts to change that, giving one of the most detailed pictures yet of how RSI could work and how AI companies are progressing toward it.

The report, exclusively shared with TIME ahead of its publication on Oct. 14, emphasizes that **AI companies are "actively working on" automating all parts of the AI development pipeline, including generating new ideas, running experiments to test those ideas, and interpreting the results.** Most of the insiders Gladstone spoke to "believe RSI will start within the next 3 to 12 months, and possibly sooner, assuming there's no U.S. government intervention or slowdown," the report states.

"Our goal here was to define recursive self-improvement well enough that people can have a sane conversation about it, especially in Washington," says Jeremie Harris, Gladstone's CEO. "There are all these bills proposed to ban superintelligence, which are really interesting attempts to grapple with this problem. But what we're more interested in is: What is the process that needs to be regulated?"

For a twice-weekly deep dive into the AI revolution, sign up at **ti.me/InTheLoop**





Worth Your Time
By Eliza Berman
CULTURE EDITOR

BEFORE WALKING INTO THE NEW York City premiere of *You Can See Everything,* I'd already set aside any reservations about whether the world needed another accounting of Theranos founder Elizabeth Holmes' deception. Her story has already been told in a book, a podcast, an Alex Gibney doc, and an Emmy-winning Hulu series. But after **the movie went from completely unknown to the buzziest of the season literally overnight when it premiered at Telluride in September,** it would have taken earplugs, a blindfold, and a level of cynicism I do not possess to refrain from getting swept up in the cacophony of giddy whispers at Lincoln Center that night. (Had you walked in clueless off the street, you might have thought all four Beatles were about to take the stage.)

The tricky thing about discussing this documentary—which drew gasps multiple times in my theater—is that it's best to go in cold and experience its unexpected elements with genuine surprise, so I will tread carefully: Its first half, as trailers tease, features director Nathan Fielder embedding with Holmes and her family in the weeks before she was to begin her 11-year federal prison sentence. But things really start cooking in its second half, when he and fellow director Lance Oppenheim must figure out how to make a documentary with their subject no longer available to them.

While I won't say how they solve this problem, I will say that Holmes' husband and apparent soulmate, hotel heir and entrepreneur Billy Evans, becomes a focal point. What began as a character study of an intriguing figure from the headlines evolves into a compulsively watchable portrait

The tricky thing about discussing this documentary is that it's best to go in cold

Director Nathan Fielder, at rear, embedded with Elizabeth Holmes' family

of a marriage: trust and control, transparency and commitment, prison visits and ghostwritten social media accounts. As the credits rolled, I understood why so many people had questions not just about her intentions but his.

IF YOU BELIEVE the main objective of a documentary is to reveal something new about its subject, you may walk away from *You Can See Everything* frustrated, even if you've been as entertained throughout its three-hour run time as in any documentary you've ever seen. (You can read TIME film critic Stephanie Zacharek's take on time.com. "This is a dense picture—there's almost too much to unpack, if you can be bothered to care about any of it," she writes. "Holmes is fascinating, and weirdly compelling. But by design, Fielder is as much a player in *You Can See Everything* as Holmes is, and your feelings about the film overall will depend on how much of him you can take.")

Despite Fielder's unprecedented access to Holmes—living under her roof, observing her as a wife and mother, searching her big blue eyes to discern whether she was fooling him, fooling herself, or completely detached from reality—he has confessed that he walked away without definitive answers. Some people can be read like a book; Holmes is not one of them.

Maybe *You Can See Everything* is ultimately a survey of the unknowable. It's almost romantic to be reminded that some things in life will forever remain a mystery, though I prefer my mystery in a sunset or the cosmos rather than purportedly lifesaving medical technology.

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The Brief
By Simmone Shah
CLIMATE REPORTER

THE CLIMATE IS WARMING UP faster than we can respond. According to a new report published Oct. 14 in the journal *BioScience,* "Earth's climate system is moving deeper into uncharted territory."

"The State of the Climate," an annual report that tracks earth's "vital signs," monitors several climate-related indicators—ranging from greenhouse-gas concentrations to tree-cover loss due to wildfire. Researchers found that of the 16 planetary vital signs, seven—including sea levels and greenhouse gases in the atmosphere—are currently at record extremes. Several others, such as areas burned during wildfires and ocean heat levels, show evidence of acceleration or abrupt shifts.

'Earth's life-support systems are being pushed beyond stable limits.'
—"THE STATE OF THE CLIMATE" REPORT

The researchers warn that **the rate of global warming appears to have accelerated, from about 0.05°C per decade from 1880 to 1970 to roughly 0.36°C per decade from 2010 to 2024. The 2°C rise that marks irreversible global climate collapse could arrive before 2050.** These intensifying changes raise the risk of reinforcing feedback loops and crossing tipping points—critical thresholds after which we may face irreversible environmental change. In 2025, as rising ocean temperatures, acidification, overfishing, and pollution combined to cause coral bleaching and mortality, earth passed its first such tipping point. "Earth's life-support systems are being pushed beyond stable limits," the report states.

Concentrations of greenhouse gases—including carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide—all reached record levels in 2026, the researchers say. In May, atmospheric carbon dioxide exceeded 428 parts per million, roughly 50% above preindustrial levels and generally higher than at any time in the past 2 million years.

The report's authors also tracked indicators of human activities driving these planetary changes, like energy use and economic growth. Fossil-fuel consumption, which remains the dominant driver, rose by 0.9% in 2025, the report found, with oil, coal, and gas all reaching record highs.

There have, however, been some signs of progress. Low-carbon sources provided roughly 43% of global electricity generation in 2025, and solar- and wind-energy consumption grew by about 18%. That was before the war in Iran laid bare the world's reliance on fossil fuels, and triggered a global green-energy boom.

But cutting carbon emissions will no longer be enough on its own, the report states. Adaptation measures—ranging from shifts toward plant-based diets to restoration of mangroves to better protect against storm surges—will be key to adjusting to a changing climate.

The report underscores an unavoidable truth. "We are witnessing the rapid destabilization of the Earth's climate system," it states. "This is no longer a warning for the future; it is a diagnosis of the present."

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ART

The secret history of van Gogh's severed ear

BY JOAN MARTELLI



Self-Portrait With Bandaged Ear *at London's Courtauld Gallery in 2022*

AFTER RIDING A SERIES OF ESCALATORS TO THE FIFTH floor of New York City's Museum of Modern Art, I stepped into a gallery where on display were a dozen paintings and lithographs by late 19th and early 20th century artists, including Pablo Picasso, Paul Cézanne, and Georges Seurat.

But most visitors were gathered around one explosively colorful painting in swirling shades of light and dark blue, bottle green and pale gold. Instantly recognizable. One of the most famous paintings in the world.

The Starry Night by Vincent van Gogh.

These were the early days of my research about a little-known woman who is key to shedding light on three inevitable questions when it comes to Vincent van Gogh. Why did he cut off his ear? Why did he die by suicide? And how, after ending his life in obscurity, did he eventually become regarded as one of the world's greatest artists?

I could remember, as a child, first seeing *The Starry Night* reprinted in one of my parents' art-history books. It was my modern-art aha moment. No one was standing over my shoulder telling me to pay it special attention, but I was mesmerized. The painting became imprinted on my young imagination, and I never forgot it. As I observed the gallery, I quickly learned my reaction is hardly unique.

A man from Southern California named Paul Duelo was laughing. "I know this painting, and I don't know anything about art," he said with a chuckle, nodding at the crowd. "Look at everyone!" A woman from Seattle stood gazing quietly with her arms folded. Sheri Larison first saw a picture of *The Starry Night* more than 30 years ago in her high school art class. A reproduction hung in her office. This was her very first time seeing the original. "It's overwhelming," Larison whispered, with tears in her eyes. "It evokes something. It's magical."

Van Gogh painted *The Starry Night* in June 1889 during a year he spent in a mental asylum in the south of France. It does not represent an actual place but a compilation of elements—a village, starry sky, moon, dark hills, and a cypress tree—Vincent had seen at one time and brought together in this composition. The sight of stars, he said, always made him dream.

Hanging just to the left was Paul Gauguin's *The Moon and the Earth*. Gauguin and Van Gogh lived and worked together in Vincent's yellow house in Arles for several weeks. What would the hot-tempered, competitive Gauguin have thought seeing people crowded around Vincent's painting at this moment, while his was comparatively ignored?

It is generally believed that it was an argument with Gauguin, who was threatening to quit Arles (in effect abandoning van Gogh), that spun the mentally unstable Vincent into such a state of despair and frustration that he mutilated himself by slicing off his left ear.

But, as I was learning, family matters also very likely played a part in the most notorious instance of self-harm in art history. It's a tragic story of dependence and the limits of love. And it's where Jo van Gogh-Bonger comes in. Biographical details about her—revealed in her diaries and letters—have only recently been made public by the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam. They paint a picture of a determined woman to whom the world of art owes a tremendous debt.

JO WAS MARRIED to Vincent's younger brother Theo, an art dealer in Paris and Vincent's only source of income. Theo supported Vincent with a monthly allowance, and in exchange Vincent gave Theo his paintings to try to sell. Theo was not rich, and Vincent constantly complained about being broke, with not even enough money for food, and often practically begged his brother for more.

Over the course of 10 years, Vincent created more than 800 paintings and 700 drawings, desperately hoping for financial independence



TOLGA AKMEN—AFP/GETTY IMAGES

'Once again I'm allowing myself to do stars too big.'

—**VINCENT VAN GOGH,** IN A LETTER TO HIS BROTHER

and commercial success. But in Vincent's lifetime, Theo is known to have sold just one painting: *Red Vineyard at Arles*.

In July 1890, believing himself a failure as an artist and a man, Vincent shot himself in the chest. He was 37. Six months later, Theo died from syphilis, leaving Jo with a baby to support, not much money, and an unusual inheritance: Vincent's paintings, more than 400 in total.

They filled the walls of their Paris apartment, were stored in closets, under beds, and at a nearby art supply store: *The Potato Eaters, Irises, Sunflowers,* self-portraits—at the time regarded as the unpolished works of a depressed, crazy man, and commercially worthless. Jo thought differently. She had no formal art training, but she loved his work and her instincts told her that Vincent was (as Theo had come to believe) a genius.

Jo also inherited hundreds of letters, most between the brothers. Jo read and reread those letters; initially it was to feel closer to Theo, but she was also captivated by Vincent's compassion and intelligence. She decided the world should read them too. It was part of her plan: to organize exhibitions, lobby critics, and publicize the letters, which showed how vulnerable and anguished Vincent was, yes, but also how deliberate he was in his craft and how close Vincent and Theo were to each other. Eventually, in 1914, Jo succeeded in publishing Vincent's letters in an ambitious three-volume book, considered one of the most revealing and important works of art history.

JO WAS ALSO someone who unwittingly played a part in Vincent's self-destructive descent, something she at times admitted feeling guilt about. Jo understood that Vincent was lonely and that he became more isolated after she married his brother.

Vincent cut off his ear likely the very day he received the news that Theo and Jo were engaged, which triggered what some van Gogh experts suspect were unquenchable fears that Theo might eventually abandon him. And Vincent shot himself just days after a stressful visit with Jo and Theo in Paris. Theo was thinking about quitting his job to start his own business, which would mean, for a time, no income. The couple (who now had a baby son they named Vincent) hoped to rent a better apartment on a lower floor. But budgets were tight, arguments ensued, and Vincent eventually rushed out of the apartment, unable to shake the thought that he was a burden Theo would no longer bear.

Jo didn't seek to put herself at the center of this story, but she is there, nonetheless. A surprisingly relatable woman (at times insecure, at times doggedly persistent), she courageously stood up to the male-dominated art world as a champion for Vincent and spent 30 years of her life promoting his work and life story.

Interestingly, of all the paintings Jo inherited, *The Starry Night* was not considered by anyone—not Jo, Theo, or Vincent—to be among the best. Vincent didn't even sign it. Research recently published by the Van Gogh Museum points out that Vincent signed only about 16% of his paintings, hypothesizing he did so usually when he was completely satisfied or wanted to make them a gift. In the brothers' correspondence, Theo called it simply "the village in the moonlight," critically writing to Vincent that "I feel that the search for style takes away the real sentiment of things." Vincent conceded the painting lacked character and considered it a mistake that "… once again I'm allowing myself to do stars too big … new setback, and I've had enough of that."

Jo also didn't seem to consider *The Starry Night* as especially important. She sold it early on but reacquired it briefly in time for a major exhibition she organized in Amsterdam in 1905. It was painting number 199, called *De Sterren (The Stars),* and it changed hands two more times before MOMA acquired it in 1941. By then it had been rechristened *The Starry Night*. The name stuck.

There is a world of personal stories behind the paintings of Vincent van Gogh, and they reaffirm the adage that we can't separate the art from the artist. I believe Jo would agree.

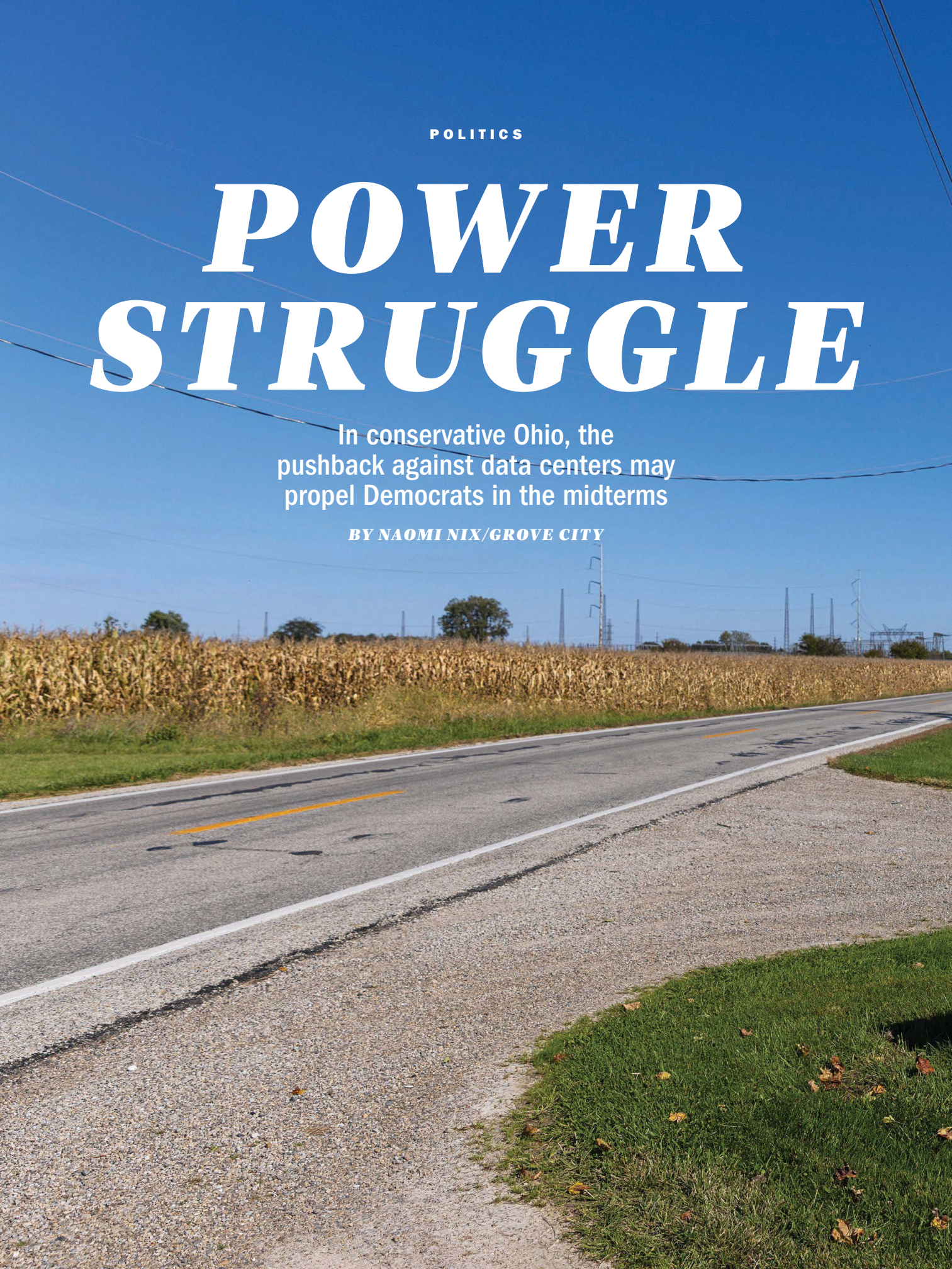
Martelli is the author of The Widow Van Gogh

POLITICS

POWER STRUGGLE

In conservative Ohio, the pushback against data centers may propel Democrats in the midterms

BY NAOMI NIX/GROVE CITY





Patty Spillman's farm in Grove City, Ohio, abuts the site of a proposed 310-acre data center

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MADDIE MCGARVEY FOR TIME

PATTY SPILLMAN AND JEN BELT DRIVE through the outskirts of Grove City, Ohio, mapping the battle lines of a war they've waged for months. Pointing out the window of Belt's blue Chrysler minivan, Spillman notes the precise borders of a proposed 310-acre data-center campus. She singles out the electrical substation and towering power lines, and recounts the personal histories of neighbors who got offers to sell their land to Headwaters Site Development, the Texas-based company proposing to construct a cloud-computing storage facility on this patch of rural farmland about 10 miles outside Columbus. In between fields of drying cornstalks and short rows of soybeans, some farmers have planted NO DATA CENTER signs on their lawns.

Spillman's 165-year-old farm sits across the street from the proposed complex. A soft-spoken retired bus driver, Spillman, 63, is a Republican who voted for President Donald Trump three times. Belt, a 51-year-old artist and marketing contractor, is a Democrat. For months, they've co-led a group called Protect Grove City, which mobilized a community effort to thwart the proposed data center. The residents' concerns are legion: water usage, noise and environmental concerns, energy costs, the cloak of secrecy hanging over the project. "This is our community. What if we don't want you here?" says Spillman, whose mother-in-law turned down an above-market offer from Headwaters of around $1.5 million for 30 acres of land.

Community pushback prompted the Grove City council to pass a yearlong moratorium on data-center construction. In November, Grove City residents will vote on a proposal to go even further, making all large developments subject to voter approval. The issue has upended the intimate politics of this conservative community of 45,180. Community Facebook groups are filled with bickering, angry residents have filled council meetings, and activists filed freedom-of-information requests seeking answers about city officials' communications about the referendum. Grove City's longtime mayor, Richard "Ike" Stage, and other local leaders have fought against their efforts, saying the ballot initiative to restrict development would hurt economic growth.

The fervor against data centers is spreading across the state. Ohio has some 200 data centers, making it one of the biggest hubs in the country. In a former swing state that went red in the Trump era, Republicans admit the groundswell of political opposition to data centers has created a political opening for Ohio Democrats in the upcoming midterm elections.

"I'm as Republican as they get, but it's going to be a tough year for Republicans in the state of Ohio," says Nick Owens, a former county GOP chair and Trump delegate at the 2024 Republican National Convention. Owens is now working with the anti-data-center group Conserve Ohio. "I can get on my phone right now and text or call 10 or 12 people from 10 different corners of the state, from all different political backgrounds, from all different socioeconomic backgrounds," Owens says, "because we're all united about this."

A national Gallup poll published in May found that more than 70% of voters oppose building an AI data center in their area. In Ohio, where the average household's electric bill climbed some 15% in the past year and more than 66% over the past decade, the sentiment is even more negative. A September survey by Bowling Green State University found that nearly 80% of Ohioans support a moratorium on data centers. More than 100 local governments in Ohio have reportedly enacted data-center moratoriums; in November, at least 10 will vote on adding a data-center ban to their charters, while two others will decide whether to recall mayors who cut data-center deals. In the eyes of opponents, the facilities—and the powerful AI industry that backs them—have come to represent an attack on their safety, jobs, pocketbooks, and quality of life.

It's not clear just how potent the issue will be at the polls in November. By themselves, data centers don't rank as a top-tier national campaign issue, according to voters—in a recent Pew Research Center survey, the economy, the future of democracy, health care, education, and immigration made up the top five. But Democratic candidates have sought to connect data centers to many of those themes. They're promising to ease affordability concerns by cracking down on high electricity bills through data-center restrictions, pledging to strengthen democracy by fighting Silicon Valley's opaque deals to get facilities built, casting AI companies as puppet masters in an unequal economy, and painting their political rivals as corrupt leaders seeking to curry favor from powerful companies. This election cycle, $137.6 million has been spent on broadcast ads about data centers, with Democrats making up 77% of that estimated spending, according to the analytics firm AdImpact.

Some Democrats believe data centers could be a decisive issue in tight races, especially in red states like Texas, Iowa, and Ohio. In those states and others, voters have told pollsters they trust Democrats more on the issue. President Donald Trump has positioned himself as one of the industry's biggest champions, deriding opponents of data centers as "backwards and poor." The wave of populist anger has "become the one thing that unites Americans right now," says Megan Mullin, a UCLA political-science professor. "They connect to bigger themes that are becoming really important in American politics—around affordability, around energy affordability, around suspicion and discomfort about AI, about populist resistance to the accumulation of wealth and tech titans."

'WE'RE ALL UNITED ABOUT THIS.'

—NICK OWENS, FORMER GOP COUNTY CHAIR NOW WORKING WITH AN ANTI-DATA-CENTER GROUP

IN EARLY OCTOBER, Don Leonard, the Democratic candidate in Ohio's 15th Congressional District, arrives at the Schmidlapp Free School Library in Piqua. The space is decorated for fall with artificial flowers, and filled with activists and community leaders ready to





Spillman, left, and Jen Belt lead Protect Grove City, which fights the Headwaters project

detail the latest data-center controversy.

Meta, which has been rapidly building out its data-center infrastructure to fuel its AI push, made plans to erect a $1 billion campus in the area. The company hashed out the deal in secret last year, according to city documents and news reports, using a private LLC and nondisclosure agreements with local officials. After Meta was outed as the company behind the data center, the social media giant and Piqua government officials said the project would bring economic investment to the region. In a statement, Meta told TIME the company is reviewing its use of nondisclosure agreements.

Leonard heard from Alisha Lange, 42, who worried about contamination of her well water. Lange, a registered Republican, was among those angered by the secrecy surrounding the project and revelations that several city officials had been awarded $3,000 bonuses by the city after winning Meta's business. In response, outraged residents successfully petitioned to add a measure to the November ballot designed to recall Piqua's mayor and other elected officials.

A former city and regional planning professor at The Ohio State University, Leonard, 48, sports a stubbly beard and speaks with a deliberate unpretentiousness. Normally, a progressive candidate wouldn't stand much of a shot in a congressional district that's been represented by Republicans for the past 15 years. The incumbent, former coal-industry lobbyist Mike Carey, won by 13 points two years ago. But by the time Leonard won the primary in May, residents in the district, which includes Grove City, were aflame over data centers. Leonard pushed his team to add a data-center question to their polling. They found more than 70% of likely voters in the 15th District wanted greater say over where data centers are located and how they operate. "If we were going to message on it, we had to confirm quantitatively what we knew from listening to the constituents," Leonard explains in an interview at a modern co-working space in Columbus. "Which is that data centers are one of the most bipartisan issues in Central Ohio right now."

Leonard sees data centers as "the mascot for predatory capitalism," forcing communities to absorb increased electricity costs and environmental threats as their local landscapes are remade by huge companies based far away. He says the developments have exacerbated the anxieties of residents who watched neighbors lose solid factory jobs to outsourcing and suspect they'll once again be the losers in an AI-driven economy. "There's a feeling like we didn't even govern the last revolution—globalization—and now they're hoisting another one on us," Leonard says. "They're doing it in our backyard. They're attacking our way of life."

It's not clear whether the backlash will be enough to catapult Leonard into contention in a solidly Republican district. There has been no nonpartisan polling in the race, nor any public debates, and Carey holds a clear fundraising advantage, raking in $4 million to Leonard's $1.2 million, according to

campaign filings, though a recent influx of spending against Leonard is a sign Republicans may be a little nervous.

But in other races in Ohio, Democrats spy a clear opportunity.

ON A CRISP FALL DAY, Sherrod Brown takes the microphone during a small rally outside a Franklin County strip mall. He begins with talking points about economic inequality that he could have fed this crowd of Democratic organizers and voters at any point during his 18 years representing the state in the Senate. But then Brown pivots to an attack line that might have landed with a thud even a year ago. "These data centers are in Ohio now thanks to Jon Husted," Brown says of his Republican opponent. "They come into communities. They gulp up the land. They swallow the water. Then they get these huge tax breaks."

After three terms in Washington, Brown was defeated in 2024, when Trump won Ohio for the third straight time. The cornerstone of his comeback bid this year has been the data-center issue. In stump speeches, social media posts, and advertisements blaring across television, Brown blames Husted for the role he played as lieutenant governor in fostering data-center growth in the state, which gave data centers an estimated $2.5 billion in incentives, including breaks on sales and property taxes, from 2017 to 2024, according to a report by the Ohio Chamber of Commerce. (The report also estimates that the centers brought in twice as much in revenue to the state's coffers.)

Back then, Husted, like other political leaders in both parties, often celebrated tech companies like Google and Amazon, which built the sprawling campuses, as a boost to Ohio's economy. Husted campaign spokesperson Amy Natoce called Brown's critiques hypocritical, noting that in 2015 the former Senator himself praised an Amazon Web Services data-center project in Ohio, calling it "great news."

Now Husted is playing defense on the issue, sponsoring a Senate bill designed to get data centers to pay for electrical-system upgrades that was ultimately blocked by Democrats. Data centers should be a local decision, he says. Polls show the race as a toss-up. But a recent New York *Times*/Siena poll found that Ohio was one of five right-leaning states—Alaska, Iowa, Kansas, and Texas are the others—where Democrats are outperforming expectations in Senate races, in part because voters said they thought the Democratic candidate would do a better job on data centers.

The party is eager to press that advantage. Dr. Amy Acton, the Democratic candidate for Ohio governor, has called for a conditional moratorium on data centers until they meet certain requirements, such as covering the cost of their own electricity, meeting environmental standards, and participating in community-benefit agreements. Vivek Ramaswamy, the Republican nominee, wants to force hyperscale data centers to cover electricity costs and abide by air- and water-quality standards. Acton has assailed Ramaswamy for not committing to selling off his investments in tech and AI stocks, calling these holdings a conflict of interest.

A similar pattern is playing out in other states. In Texas, both Democratic Senate nominee James Talarico and his Republican opponent Ken Paxton have proposed tighter restrictions on data centers and accused each other of being supported by tech-aligned donors. The state's Republican governor Greg Abbott, who is locked in a surprisingly tight race of his own, has imposed a temporary moratorium on new data centers until an audit is complete. In Iowa, data centers have been a flash point in the race between Democratic Senate nominee Josh Turek and Republican nominee Ashley Hinson, with Turek proposing restrictions and Hinson emphasizing the need for local control.

IKE STAGE FIRST BECAME the mayor of Grove City in 1988. A retired banker who helped set up the local chamber of commerce, he credits cheapish land, a convenient location, and a business-friendly climate for the steady stream of calls he's fielded from developers over the years. Companies like medical manufacturer American Nitrile have moved in, along with three hospitals and two scientific-research facilities. "Not many cities can say that," Stage says in an interview at city hall, where brightly colored maps of the area adorn the walls.

Stage has aspirations for Grove City to grow further. In 2018, it adopted a vision that included better transportation options, more parks, and mixed-use developments. Officials also eyed more than 9,000 acres of agricultural and vacant land they thought could be turned into "light industrial-style development."

Seven years later, Headwaters Site Development, founded by former Google data-center infrastructure leader Michael Lebow, had a similar thought. It contacted property owners in a rural area just south of Grove City's limits. One of the homesteads belonged to Patty Spillman's family, which rejected the deal. "Most of us turned them down," Spillman says. But not all.

'IT ALMOST FEELS LIKE THE CITY IS TORN.'

—MOHAMED OMAR, GROVE CITY COUNCILMAN





Mayor Richard Stage opposes putting major new development projects up for referendum

By this spring, Headwaters had found enough homeowners willing to sell to cobble together the necessary land.

During two information sessions at a local food bank in April, Headwaters representatives pitched locals on what they called Project Maple. Headwaters says it plans to sell the $6.9 billion project to an unidentified tech company, and pledged to support community-friendly zoning requirements that would be assumed by the buyer, such as a 100-ft. height limit, concealing landscaping, and noise levels that aren't louder than a dishwasher. Headwaters says the project would bring 250 permanent jobs, pay for its own energy costs, and take precautions to keep water usage low. But according to advocates, Headwaters' refusal to say which tech company would ultimately buy the facility was unnerving. "They just skirted around giving us straight answers about anything," Jen Belt recalls. "A lot of people left mad."

The anger emboldened the activists. Belt circulated a petition calling for the city council to reject any upcoming data-center applications. The group posted negative information about the facilities on their personal social media pages, as well as in popular Facebook groups, and put up NO DATA CENTERS signs near the proposed site.

The following month, Grove City councilman Mohamed Omar, 26, announced he was working on legislation to impose a 12-month moratorium on local data centers. Headwaters responded by sending a letter to city council members, arguing that such a moratorium could violate its due process rights. (Lebow says the company has no plans to sue.)

Yet the implied legal threat intensified the community pushback against the project on the eve of the moratorium vote. In June, the moratorium passed 6-1. Emboldened, the anti-data-center advocates with Protect Grove City decided the one-year moratorium wasn't enough, and wrote a proposed amendment to the city's charter, which functions like a governing constitution. It would prohibit the city from approving zoning applications for developments that occupy at least 50 acres, use more than 20 megawatts of power at peak capacity, or consume more than 500,000 gallons of water per day unless a majority of voters have backed the project in a public referendum. To drum up support, they canvassed local farmers' markets, parks, and sporting events to ask people to sign a petition to put the measure on the ballot in November. Within a few weeks, they secured enough signatures.

City officials nervously tracked news coverage of the data-center backlash across Ohio and beyond, according to emails obtained by TIME. The charter amendment wouldn't just inhibit the Headwaters project, they warned. It would fundamentally change how any future development deals are approved, and perhaps inhibit existing organizations, including churches, a hospital, and schools, from expanding by imposing overly burdensome processes. Critics contend residents already have opportunities to weigh in on upcoming developments through the normal city approval process. "It's going to affect business. It's going to affect our schools. It's going to affect our taxes," says Steve Funk, 70, who runs a car dealership in Grove City.

The city has been sending mailers to residents explaining the amendment's potential effects. Residents have gotten into bitter personal disputes over the amendment in Facebook groups. "It's bad," says Omar. "It almost feels like the city is torn."

To Stage, tech companies have done a poor job trumpeting the benefits the facilities bring to local communities, allowing residents' anxieties about the industry to flourish. He likens the backlash to the fears Americans had about railroad expansion during the 19th century, when rural farmers worried about the effect the technology might have on their livestock. Americans eventually got used to trains. But Stage also recognizes that he's on the short side of public opinion. Stage is up for re-election next year. "I've won most elections pretty handily, and I've been through 11 of them," he says. "But you never, never make that assumption." —*With reporting by* LESLIE DICKSTEIN

THE JEWEL OF THE CARIBBEAN
Cartagena: The Rise of a Supercity

Upon entering the historic center of Cartagena de las Indias, visitors are immediately enveloped by a sensory universe forged over five centuries. Warm Atlantic breezes rustle the bougainvillea cascading from balconies, while vibrant colonial facades and the rhythmic beat of Caribbean percussion resonate off centuries-old coral-stone walls.

Yet, as Cartagena approaches the 500th anniversary of its founding, Colombia's Caribbean jewel is looking beyond its celebrated historic legacy to solidify its role as a regional hub for maritime logistics, industry, heritage, and sustainable enterprise.

Founded as the strategic "Gateway to the Indies" during the Spanish Crown era, Cartagena later played a pivotal role in the region's independence movements. Its identity reflects a profound Afro-descendant heritage and successive waves of migration. The city was also home to Rafael Núñez, one of Colombia's most influential presidents, whose preserved residence still faces Apolo Park.

Today, under the leadership of Mayor Dumek Turbay Paz, Cartagena fuses its historical identity with investments in public space, mobility, education, coastal resilience, and economic development. Turbay frames this aspiration in global terms: "Cartagena is a cosmopolitan, world-class city that has always set its sights on every corner of the universe. Today, the city is sending major, definitive messages to both global investors and travelers." Turbay—an attorney, former governor of the Department of Bolívar, and longtime public servant—took office on January 1, 2024. His administration set out to expand Cartagena's economic reach while tackling historic backlogs in infrastructure, public services, and urban management. The stated goal is to strengthen the city's standing in maritime logistics, value-added industry, sustainable business development, and heritage tourism.

"Since its founding, Cartagena has sent important messages to the world," the mayor states proudly. "Today, we are sending a definitive one: Cartagena has reclaimed its luster, its identity, and its place among the great global cities."

A 500-Year Legacy

To grasp the magnitude of Cartagena's current transformation, one must understand the historical foundations upon which the city stands. During the Spanish colonial era, Cartagena was fortified by an extensive wall system and the Fortress of San Felipe de Barajas, one of the largest Spanish military structures built in the Americas. Its port became a vital center of trade and geopolitical power in the Caribbean.

Mayor Turbay's own lineage reflects this rich historical blend. Born in the nearby municipality of El Carmen de Bolívar, Turbay traces his family roots back to the great Lebanese diaspora of the early 20th century.

"My grandfather boarded a ship in Beirut 100 years ago," Turbay recalls. "That ship crossed the Mediterranean, arrived in Maracaibo, Venezuela, and eventually entered Colombia. They settled in El Carmen de Bolívar. I attribute many of my personal traits to that Lebanese heritage: resilience, perseverance, and the willingness to confront head-on any challenge that the world throws my way." A lawyer by training, Turbay developed his career in public service as a city councilor, police inspector, municipal government secretary, and ultimately governor of the Department of Bolívar. That experience shaped the administrative agenda he brought to a city grappling with concerns over institutional continuity, project execution, and persistent inequality. "Cartagena is a blessed city," Turbay notes. "It features world-class deep-water ports, top-tier logistics due to its proximity to the Panama Canal, the primary industrial hub on Colombia's Caribbean coast, and the country's largest oil refinery. Additionally, we are Colombia's premier tourist destination. However, before we took office, the city had lost its way. It stopped thinking big. We promised it would regain its luster and splendor, and that we would think big once again."

Revitalizing the Historic Center: Sustainable Urban Transformation

The most visible dimension of Turbay's strategy began in the walled historic center, designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1984 and a core pillar of Cartagena's identity. In recent years, residents,



A massive gathering to welcome the New Year in Cartagena in 2025

entrepreneurs, and officials had expressed growing concern over congestion, informal commerce, security, and the impact of an insufficiently regulated nightlife on the area's cultural character.

The administration responded with stricter enforcement of land-use regulations and public space management, paired with targeted measures to enhance security and the visitor experience. Officials have framed these interventions as part of a broader urban modernization initiative rather than mere enforcement measures.

For decades, traditional horse-drawn carriages provided tourist rides through the walled city, triggering frequent international criticism regarding animal welfare in the tropical heat. Turbay's team addressed this controversial issue directly, coordinating a complete transition from animal-drawn carriages to modern, solar-assisted electric vehicles. "It was extremely difficult, but we transitioned to modern carriages powered by clean electric and solar energy," Turbay explains. "The move has been enthusiastically received by both locals and international visitors. It transformed a negative headline into a positive model of sustainable urban adaptation."

In tandem, the city launched a comprehensive lighting overhaul. Replacing a 30-year-old, obsolete infrastructure, the entire circuit of historic walls was illuminated with warm, energy-efficient LED systems. Major lighting upgrades were also extended to the Fortress of San Felipe de Barajas. The administration links these efforts to renewed family activity in the historic center and growing interest from international investors and travelers. Recent hospitality investments include the opening of the Four Seasons Hotel Cartagena, though the long-term impacts on tourism patterns and local communities will continue to be monitored. "We want quality, sustainable tourism," Turbay emphasizes. "We want visitors who appreciate our heritage, our history, and our coastal ecosystems. Cartagena has no interest in predatory, nightlife-driven chaos."

The Grand Coastal Promenade (El Gran Malecón del Mar): The Flagship Megaproject

Beyond the historic core, one of the administration's most prominent infrastructure initiatives is El Gran Malecón del Mar (The Grand Coastal Promenade), a project designed to reconnect the city with its maritime geography. Despite being encircled by the Atlantic Ocean, Cartagena historically lacked a unified, continuous coastal promenade for public enjoyment. El Gran Malecón del Mar is reshaping that reality, serving as an urban, environmental, and economic axis stretching along 5.07 linear kilometers of Caribbean coastline, seamlessly linking the northern sector with the historic heart. According to municipal figures, the project represents an investment of approximately U.S. $61 million. It is engineered to mitigate coastal erosion, support beach and ecosystem restoration, generate over 600 direct jobs, and create vibrant new public spaces. "This infrastructure project should have been built 25 years ago," says Mayor Turbay. "It is a point of national pride for Colombia, and we have dubbed it the most beautiful promenade in the world."

Key Features of Phase 1 of El Gran Malecón del Mar:

• Pedestrian & Cycling Infrastructure: 5,174 linear meters of walkways and 3,763 linear meters of dedicated bike lanes.

• Green Spaces & Public Plazas: 59,306 m^2 of new green areas and 14 interconnected public plazas designed for community gatherings.

• El Mirador del Sol (Sun Overlook): A pier-style platform extending into the Caribbean Sea, featuring a large ferris wheel and recreational zones.

• Tourist & Beach Amenities: 510 parking spaces, 3,411 m^2 of commercial space, a Tourist Information Center (CAT), and five modern restroom facilities.

• Coastal Defense: Advanced engineering groins, including Groin No. 9 in Marbella, engineered to protect the shoreline against rising sea levels.

Municipal projections indicate that the completed project could accommodate more than 25,000 visitors daily. By mid-2026, the administration reported that the initial 1.8-kilometer stretch had reached 80% completion. The full corridor is expected to span approximately five kilometers of coastline, subject to final delivery schedules across each phase.



Dumek Turbay - The Mayor of Cartagena

Urban Fabric Renewal: Infrastructure and Clean Energy

El Gran Malecón del Mar is part of a larger public works program valued by the administration at over USD $500 million. The portfolio includes projects aimed at addressing long-standing drainage, mobility, recreation, and public space challenges:

• Bocagrande and Castillogrande Hydraulic Overhaul (U.S. $52 million): For decades, high tides and heavy rainfall have flooded these densely populated coastal districts. Contracted works include underground box-culvert drainage, automated pumping stations, the repaving of Chile Avenue, accessibility upgrades, and approximately 10,000 m^2 of additional pedestrian and green space.

• La Carolina Overpass Interchange (U.S. $31 million): This 670-meter interchange features two 30-meter bridges, four main lanes, a roundabout, and connecting ramps. Designed to alleviate bottlenecking, city estimates suggest it could reduce daily commute times by up to 30 minutes.

• New Chambacú Sports Complex (U.S. $14 million): This project is transforming underutilized urban land into a recreational complex connected to Apolo Park and Espíritu del Manglar Park. Plans include a regulation football pitch, a professional softball stadium, a skate park, and eco-trails.

The administration is also developing a pilot water-taxi public transit system to utilize the city's bays and lagoon channels. If scaled successfully, the service could offer an alternative to congested road networks and help curb transport emissions. Its ultimate impact will depend on route coverage, frequency, affordability, and integration with the broader transit network.

On the industrial front, Cartagena seeks to leverage its port infrastructure, energy sector, and the expansion of Ecopetrol's local refinery to compete for investments in green hydrogen, clean tech, and alternative fuels. The scope and timeline of these opportunities will hinge on national policy, private capital, and market demand.





Human Capital: A Generational Social Renaissance

No transformation is complete without a deep investment in social equity. Historically, peripheral neighborhoods have suffered from severe classroom shortages and deteriorating infrastructure.

According to municipal data, educational investment per student surged from just $45 in 2023 to $1,142 in 2026. The city has allocated more than U.S. $78 million to construct eight public schools in underserved areas, including Bayunca, Pasacaballos, and La Boquilla. Once completed, these facilities are expected to serve approximately 16,000 students.

Concurrently, the city is developing the Manga Creative District, a 20,000 m^2 cultural hub funded with a U.S. $32.4 million budget. Planned amenities include coworking spaces, recording studios, art galleries, and black-box theaters designed to nurture local entrepreneurs, artists, and creative industries.

From Spanish Bastion to "Supercity"

What does becoming a 21st-century "supercity" mean for Cartagena? The term is most useful not as a badge of status, but as an expression of ambition: marrying commercial strength with environmental stewardship, social inclusion, cultural resilience, and effective public governance. International investment can enrich the city's identity, but only if growth delivers measurable benefits to its residents.

Cartagena's ambitions invite comparisons with international heritage and port cities like Singapore and Barcelona, but its progress will ultimately be judged by its own benchmarks. The transition to electric carriages, investments in coastal protection, proposed water transport, and expanding educational infrastructure point toward a more sustainable model. The success of this vision will depend on execution, transparent metrics, environmental safeguards, and the extent to which everyday citizens share in its rewards.

The fortitude that earned it the title "Gateway to the Indies," the heroic resolve that made it a pioneer of South American independence, its vibrant Afro-descendant resilience, and the vision of figures like President Rafael Núñez are not static history lessons, but the fertile soil from which its modern rebirth springs.

For Turbay, the true test of this ambition lies in whether investments improve daily life while safeguarding the qualities that make Cartagena unique. "I tell my team that we must work with such intensity that our remaining time feels doubled," Turbay says. "The legacy of this administration is ensuring everyone understands that we are not just any ordinary city."

Cartagena's next chapter will be defined not only by the grandeur of its projects, but by their longevity, transparency, and value to its people. If the city can pair ambition with responsible execution, it will preserve its storied past while forging a more inclusive, resilient future.



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Elections, explained

ANSWERS TO TOP QUESTIONS ABOUT CASTING A BALLOT IN THE MIDTERMS ***BY TIME STAFF***

HELD MIDWAY THROUGH EACH FOUR-year presidential term, midterm elections give voters a chance to choose local lawmakers, weigh in on state issues, and determine which party controls Congress.

With Election Day on Nov. 3, this year's balloting takes place against a backdrop of unique challenges for the democratic process itself. The Trump Administration has attempted to restrict mail-in voting and gather voter data from several states. President Donald Trump has not categorically ruled out dispatching federal agents to polling stations, which under the Constitution are administered by states.

Here, TIME answers some of your most pressing questions about the midterm elections.

Reporting by Solcyré Burga, Anna Gordon, Mariah Espada, Anisha Kohli, Chantelle Lee, T. Michelle Murphy, Rebecca Schneid, and Simmone Shah

What's on my ballot?

Unlike in presidential election years, there is no candidate or issue that appears on every ballot across the U.S. in 2026.

Instead, the ballots in every state will vary—and many will be different by county, as well. There are U.S. Senate races in 35 states, and gubernatorial elections in 36 states. All 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives are up for election, as they are every two years. There will also be downballot races for positions in state legislatures.

In four states—Idaho, Missouri, Nevada, and Virginia—voters will be deciding on ballot measures concerning abortion rights. Voters in six states, including Alaska and Arizona, will decide whether to add or strengthen citizenship requirements for voting in state and local elections.

There are multiple ways for voters to request a sample ballot so they can see what local, state, and federal positions will appear on it. Vote .org and Ballotpedia both have sample ballot-lookup tools.

Many government websites also host their own "What's on my ballot" pages, which allow voters to enter their address and look up a sample ballot.

Who can register to vote?

People can register to vote in federal elections if they meet their state's eligibility and registration requirements. You must be 18 years old to vote, but almost every state allows people to register before their birthday if they will be 18 by Election Day. North Dakota does not require voters to register.

Voters must also meet their state's residency requirements, but people who are experiencing homelessness or who are between homes also are able to vote. Depending on state law, they may need identification. They can generally use a shelter, religious center, or P.O. box as a mailing address and identify the place where they live or sleep as their residential address.

Noncitizens, including permanent legal residents, can vote in some local elections but cannot vote in federal or state elections.

In some states, people who were convicted of a felony or are currently incarcerated are also restricted from voting.

The deadline to register to vote varies by state. Check the U.S. Vote Foundation's website to find your state's deadline.

How can I check my voter-registration status?

You can check if you're registered to vote by going to the National Association of Secretaries of State website. After you choose your state in the drop-down menu, you'll be sent to the state's election website. The information required to check if your voter registration is active varies by state, but most will ask for information like your name, date of birth, and address.

If you're not already registered to vote, you may be able to register online, by mail, or in person. Check your state's requirements and registration deadline before submitting an application.

What documents do I need to register to vote?

In most cases, you will need a driver's license or state identification card—or the information from one—to register to vote. If you don't have either, your state may accept other documentation, such as a utility bill or bank statement. Requirements vary by state, so check with your state election office to find out what information and documents you will need.

Can I vote if my voter registration is inactive?

Your registration may be marked inactive if election officials believe you have moved and you do not respond to a notice asking you to confirm your address. Inactive voters generally remain registered and can still vote, although they may have to confirm their address or follow other state-specific procedures at the polls.

Voters can contact their state or local election office to learn how to restore their registration to active status and what identification or documentation may be required.

How can I update my registration?

Voters in states that record party affiliation may change it through their state's election office.

In some states, declaring affiliation with a political party may be required in order to vote in a primary election, held to determine which candidates will advance to the general-election ballot. But it is never necessary to declare a party in order to vote in November.

To change a name or address, voters generally follow the same process used to register to vote. They can use the national Election Assistance Commission map, click their state, and see how each state prefers updates to voter registration.

Voters can also submit a National Mail Voter Registration Form, which can be used to reregister to vote in every state except North Dakota, New Hampshire, and Wyoming. It is available in 21 languages.

How do I vote early—and are there benefits to early voting?

People who want to avoid long lines and those who might not have time to go to their polling location on Election Day may wish to take advantage of early voting. Early voting began in four states on Sept. 18 and expands to the rest during October. As of 2026, 47 states and Washington, D.C., allow any voter to vote early in person. Alabama, Mississippi, and New Hampshire require an eligible excuse.

The process for early voting differs depending on your state. You can find the specific times and rules for early voting in your state at USA.gov.

How do I request an absentee ballot?

If you live in the U.S., you can request an absentee ballot by visiting the National Association of Secretaries of State website and selecting your state from the drop-down menu. Because eligibility requirements, deadlines, and application procedures vary by state, be sure to follow the instructions provided by local election officials.

U.S. citizens living outside the country, absent members of the uniformed services or Merchant Marine, and their eligible family members can register to vote and request an absentee ballot through the Federal Voting Assistance Program. They can do so by completing a Federal Post Card Application using the U.S. address that establishes their voting residence. For overseas citizens, this is generally the last place they lived before leaving the country; for military voters, it is generally their address in their state of legal residence.

The completed form must be signed and returned to the appropriate election office in accordance with that state's submission requirements.

What's the difference between absentee voting and vote-by-mail?

Absentee voting and vote-by-mail both allow voters to cast ballots without visiting a polling site. This can be done by returning a ballot by mail, at a drop box, or in person, depending on state law. The terms vary by state, but a key difference is often whether voters must request a ballot or receive one automatically.

In states where vote-by-mail exists, all active registered voters are automatically delivered a vote-by-mail ballot to their registered address. Eight states—California, Colorado, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, and Washington—conduct elections this way.

In states without universal vote-by-mail programs, individuals must specifically request absentee ballots ahead of time—and there are often deadlines and rules that voters must meet in order to participate in the program. In some states, they must also provide a qualifying reason to vote absentee.

SAM WOLFE—BLOOMBERG/GETTY IMAGES



How do I know if my mail-in ballot arrived and was counted?

Most states offer some form of online ballot tracking, according to Vote.org. Illinois, Missouri, and Wyoming do not have statewide online mail-ballot trackers, although they may be available in some local jurisdictions.

Each state's tracker is a little different, but they generally allow you to log in with your voter registration information to see if your ballot has been received yet. If your jurisdiction doesn't offer online tracking, contact your local election office to ask whether your ballot was received and accepted for counting.



What if there is an issue with my mail-in ballot?

If election officials identify a problem with your ballot, they may notify you and give you an opportunity to fix—or "cure"—it, depending on your state and the type of problem. "The election official who is reviewing ballots will tell you what information you need to provide to make that cure, such as signing a new ballot envelope or providing a copy of your ID," according to Nick Morrow, a communications and design director at Vote.org. Be sure to complete the process by the deadline set by your state.

The criteria for rejection varies by state, but it's always a good idea to get your ballot in early, and in good condition. A missing or unverifiable signature can also cause your ballot to be rejected.



Do I need to bring my ID to vote?

As of 2026, 36 states require you to show some form of identification before you can legally cast your ballot. But the forms of ID that are acceptable vary by state; they may include a driver's license, passport, voter registration confirmation, utility bill, or bank statement. You can check local requirements on USA.gov.

If you do not have the requested identification, you may still be able to vote by signing a statement confirming your identity or casting a provisional ballot. In some states, you must provide acceptable identification after Election Day in order for your ballot to be counted.

Federal law also requires certain first-time voters who registered by mail to provide identification if their identity was not verified during registration.



What's the best time to vote to avoid long lines?

Since polling hours and conditions vary by county, and even within a county, wait times can be unpredictable. But early mornings and after-work hours tend to be the busiest. Lines are also associated with voting on Election Day, and are a major reason for the expansion of early in-person voting, which does not tend to demonstrate any consistent high-traffic time slots.

Long lines can be a strong deterrent to voting. A June 2020 report by the Brennan Center for Justice found that Black and Latino voters, on average, experienced longer wait times at polling stations than white voters did.



Can I bring my kids or dog to the polls?

Voters generally may bring children with them to the polling place, although rules about their ages, how many children may accompany a voter, and whether they may enter the voting booth vary. To learn about the guidelines at your polling site, contact your local election office.

Dogs, however, are a different story. Voters are allowed to bring certified service animals to voting sites, but accommodations for pets and emotional support animals vary by location. It is best to presume they are not allowed but to look into the specific guidelines for your polling location.



What do I do if I see ICE or federal agents at the polls?

The Trump Administration has not said that immigration enforcement officers would be at the polls this November, but it also has not ruled out the possibility. When asked in May whether he would deploy federal agents on Election Day, Trump told reporters he would do "anything necessary" to make sure the U.S. has "honest" elections.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has said that Immigration and Customs Enforcement is not planning operations targeting polling locations, while leaving open the possibility of enforcement in the event of a "public safety threat." In September, DHS Secretary Markwayne Mullin confirmed that agents could serve warrants at polling places.

General Dan Caine, Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Aug. 31 that there are no plans to station military personnel or the National Guard at polling sites.

For voters, it's important to know that federal interference at the polls is against the law. The law prohibits federal officials from stationing troops or armed personnel at polling places, except when necessary to repel armed enemies of the United States. Voter intimidation is also, separately, prohibited and should be reported.

The American Civil Liberties Union suggests that voters look up the contact information for their local election officials on USA.gov and report intimidation if it occurs before or on Election Day.



What should I do if someone tries to stop me from voting?

Voter intimidation is illegal and relatively rare. If someone tries to stop you from voting, alert poll workers and local election officials, who can determine if law enforcement should be involved, says Sean Morales-Doyle of the Brennan Center for Justice's Voting Rights and Election Program. You should also contact the nonpartisan Election Protection Hotline. If you feel you're in danger, call 911.

How late are polls open?

Polling hours vary state by state—sometimes even county by county. For example, poll closing times vary in North Dakota and New Hampshire; in such instances, you can utilize search functions on each state's respective website.

On Election Day, if you are already in line at a polling place when the polls close, you should stay in line. Voting does not end until the last person in line at the time the polls close gets to vote. If anyone is asking you to leave, stay in the line and call the Election Protection Hotline.

How do you report issues or intimidation at the polls?

Intimidation and other polling issues can be reported to the Election Protection Hotline. For English, call 1-866-OUR-VOTE; for Spanish, 1-888-VEY-VOTA; for Arabic, 1-844-YALLA-US. Speakers of Bengali, Cantonese, Hindi, Urdu, Korean, Mandarin, Punjabi, Tagalog, or Vietnamese can call 1-888-API-VOTE. You can also text MYVOTE to 1-866-687-8683.

ROBB HILL—THE WASHINGTON POST/GETTY IMAGES



Why I bring my kids to vote with me

BY JEANETTE SENECAL

EVERY ELECTION, WHEN I head to the polls, my kids love to come along and get their FUTURE VOTER stickers. At 11 and 9 years old, they're old enough to understand that something important is happening, and curious enough to ask plenty of questions.

My kids can't vote yet, but the consequences already affect nearly every part of their lives. Those decisions shape the funding available for their schools, parks, playgrounds, pools, and libraries. They determine the safety of the bike lanes and roads we use daily. The choices our elected leaders make today will shape the opportunities available to all our children tomorrow.

That's why I bring my children with me when I vote, and to rallies and community meetings. I want my kids to see democracy in action: something people do, not just something they learn about in school. When we walk into a polling place, they see neighbors and community members showing up. They see me check in, receive my ballot, and make my choices. And they see that participating in our democracy is a normal part of being a member of a community.

FOR ME, THESE TRIPS also lead to bigger conversations. My kids have very clear ideas of what is fair and just, and they recognize when something happening in the world affects them, our community, and the people they care about.

I want them to know what they can do about it. Voting is important, but it's not the only answer.

I want my kids to see democracy in action

Democracy gives us many ways to use our voices. We can learn about issues. We can ask questions until we're satisfied with the answers. We can contact our elected officials. We can speak up at a school board or city council meeting. We can organize with other people who care about the same thing.

And, when we're old enough, we can vote for those we want representing us. No one wakes up on their 18th birthday automatically knowing how to participate in democracy. We have to teach it. More importantly, we have to model it. Our kids watch how we treat people, how we respond to problems, and how we care for our communities. They watch how we participate too.

Let me be clear: this doesn't mean telling our children what to think or whom they should someday vote for. In fact, I want the opposite for my kids. I want them to grow into people who ask questions, seek out reliable information, listen to others, and reach their own conclusions.

When they exchange their FUTURE VOTER stickers for I VOTED, I hope that in addition to being momentous and exciting, the experience also feels familiar. I hope they know how to find reliable information. I hope they ask questions. And I hope they understand that they don't have to agree with me or anyone else.

Most of all, I hope they understand the power of their voice and how to use it.

Senecal is chief of civic learning and impact at the League of Women Voters

***CANDIDA AURIS* IS AMONG A GROWING GROUP OF FUNGI THAT ARE WORRYING AND CONFOUNDING DOCTORS**





Fungi rising

DANGEROUS MOLDS AND YEASTS ARE PROLIFERATING IN THE U.S. AND BEYOND, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF OUR WARMING WORLD—AND OUR WARM BODIES

BY DOMINIQUE MOSBERGEN

In the winter of 2015, Dr. Tom Chiller received a call from public-health officials in Britain.

They were panicking. A new fungus was causing devastating infections at a large London hospital. "They weren't able to get rid of it," says Chiller, who was then chief of the fungal-diseases branch at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). "They didn't know what to do."

The British officials said the fungus—a kind of yeast called *Candida auris*—appeared to be spreading from patient to patient. The officials said they were going to shut down parts of the hospital to curb its transmission. "That was just mind-boggling," Chiller says.

At first he was more confused than alarmed. *Candida* is a kind of yeast that causes some of the most common fungal conditions, including thrush and vaginal yeast infections. Some species can cause severe illnesses, including bloodstream infections. But Chiller knew of no *Candida* species—indeed, no life-threatening fungus of any kind—that could spread so easily among people.

"I'll never forget that call," he says. "At first, I didn't really believe it. Suddenly we have a yeast acting like a bacteria? It was weird."

First discovered by doctors in 2009 in the ear of a patient in Japan, *Candida auris* behaves differently from most other fungi. It can survive at higher temperatures and in saltier environments, making nooks like a human ear, armpit, and groin ideal places to grow. It is exceptionally sticky and clings doggedly to people's skin and hair follicles, and to surfaces—including slick ones, like hospital floors and beds, that are designed to repel germs. It is highly resistant to antifungal drugs, hard to kill with standard disinfectants, and can cause terrible, often deadly illnesses. Also, as British officials were starting to notice in 2015, it spreads easily through physical contact between people and via contaminated surfaces.

At the time of the call, though, much about *Candida auris* remained unknown. A few countries had reported a smattering of infections, but it hadn't seemed like a big deal. No cases had yet been reported in the U.S. "It was a wake-up call," Chiller says now. "We realized that, huh, maybe this little ear fungus isn't just a little ear fungus anymore."

In the decade since that phone call, that realization has cemented. When about 200 people—mostly doctors and researchers—attended a three-day conference about fungal diseases near Denver in September, *Candida auris* was the first topic on the agenda. To a nonscientist, the talks were dry, technical presentations on the pathogenesis and epidemiology of the disease, but to the attendees—and "almost everyone who works in mycology is here," said Dr. Luis Ostrosky-Zeichner, an infectious-disease specialist at UTHealth Houston—they were red flags we should all be taking seriously.

Candida auris has rapidly gained ground since 2015. It has sickened tens of thousands of people in over 80 countries and six continents. The World Health Organization (WHO) has designated it one of the world's highest-priority fungal threats. In the U.S., thousands of cases are now reported every year. The CDC said this summer that the fungus had already infected more than 3,000 people this year in 27 states. Up to 60% of people who are infected die.

"In some U.S. states, it's just endemic now. It's there to stay," Chiller says.

DEADLY FUNGAL DISEASES were once considered very rare, but the proliferation of *Candida auris* points to a troubling trend: dangerous fungi are increasingly finding new opportunities to infect us, and human activity is spurring them on.

From the climate we're warming to the medical treatments we use, we are creating conditions that allow fungal pathogens to thrive, infectious-disease experts say. Rising global temperatures, they say, likely led to the emergence of *Candida auris* and are driving the evolution of other fungal pathogens never seen before. Changing weather patterns are pushing some fungi to expand their geographic range, and the overuse of antifungals in medicine, agriculture, and livestock farming has driven them to develop resistance to these drugs.

"We are creating an environment that is favoring pathogenic fungi and drug resistance," says Dr. Andrej Spec, a fungal-disease specialist at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. "That means they are likely becoming better at infecting us, and also at evading our treatments. That's a bad combination."

Fungi are ubiquitous organisms. They live in, on, and all around us. Every day, we inhale thousands—if not millions—of fungal spores. There are an estimated 6 million species of fungi on the planet, but only about 300 of them cause diseases in people. "We are protected by our temperature and our immunity," says Dr. Arturo Casadevall, chair of microbiology and immunology at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. The human body is too hot for most fungi to thrive, but as the earth warms, fungi are adapting.

Researchers think *Candida auris,* which likely originated in marine ecosystems, evolved

PREVIOUS PAGES: TOP MICROBIAL STOCK—GETTY IMAGES

a tolerance to salty conditions and high temperatures over time. The yeast can now survive at 107°F.

Candida auris is not the only threat finding hot new hosts. A new fungal pathogen is disfiguring cats and people in South America, and certain molds, which once infected only plants, are now sickening people too. Spec published a report in 2021 describing the first case of a person infected by a mold that had previously been known to damage only trees. Since then, two more people in the U.S. have been infected, Spec says. "It's gone from never causing human disease in the history of medicine to three new cases of it in the last five years," he says.

In October, the CDC said that cases of a different mold—a brain-attacking variety—have jumped fourfold in the past two years. "This is a nasty pathogen," Spec says. It infects even healthy people and causes brain abscesses that in up to 70% of cases are fatal.

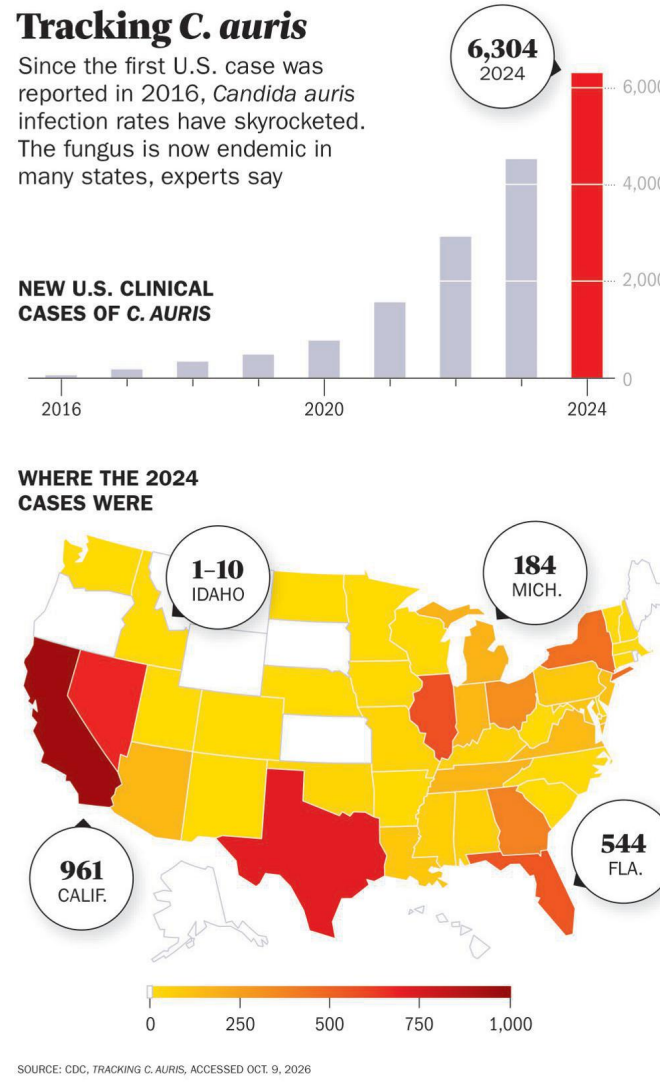
"We're seeing a lot of these molds that were once rare pathogens becoming more common," Spec says. "A lot of us are leaning toward the idea that this is probably being driven by climate change."

Spec and other doctors are working with public-health officials, patient advocates, and drug developers to try to stem the rise of threatening fungi. They've made some progress in recent years: raising awareness, doing more surveillance, and developing new drugs and tests, but the challenge is formidable.

As fungi develop mechanisms to better infect us, more people are becoming vulnerable to serious fungal diseases—because of advancements in medicine. Today, to fight autoimmune conditions and diseases like cancer, millions of people take drugs that suppress their immune systems. But immunocompromised people are at higher risk of contracting severe fungal infections. Thanks in part to those therapies, the growing population of immunocompromised people in the U.S. is now estimated to number at least 7 million.

"We have people who have immune conditions like multiple sclerosis, Crohn's disease, and rheumatoid arthritis who might have died from these diseases in the past but aren't dead thanks to these therapies. But they're also immunosuppressed, so we have a bigger pool of people who are at risk," Spec says.

More people are also being kept alive by invasive medical devices, such as heart-lung machines and ventilators, which can create pathways for germs including fungi to enter the body. "We're making all this medical progress," Casadevall says, "but that progress comes at a cost."



RYAN ZWICK, A HEALTHY 22-YEAR-OLD, had just graduated from nursing school when COVID nearly struck him dead in December 2023. The virus, which research shows increases the risk of cardiovascular disease, severely damaged his heart.

Zwick spent a week in an intensive-care unit in Las Vegas before he was airlifted to a hospital in San Diego to receive more advanced care. He was intubated and sedated; his lungs, kidneys, and heart had all started to fail.

He was attached to a heart-lung machine, a life-support device that pumps a patient's blood

outside the body, via tubes placed into his sternum. "His chest was basically open for like a week," his wife Emmy remembers.

Candida auris took advantage.

When Zwick finally woke up more than a month after being admitted to the hospital, doctors told him he had a severe *Candida auris* infection. The yeast, they said, likely sneaked into his body through the tubes in his chest. "It got into my bloodstream and kept causing a lot of issues throughout my body," he says.

He was treated aggressively with antifungal drugs, which kept the infection under control. But the fungus lingered.

Zwick was discharged from the hospital in April 2024, but he returned to the emergency room a couple of weeks later because blisters had appeared at the incision site on his chest. He soon learned that the *Candida auris* infection was causing osteomyelitis, a serious and painful condition in which bone tissue becomes inflamed. "They took out a bunch of bone and stuff, and put me on more antifungals," he says.

More than two years later, Zwick, who works as a nurse in New Hampshire, continues to receive weekly infusions of a potent antifungal drug to manage his infection. His doctors have warned him that he will likely have to take them for life. "It's basically chronic now," says Zwick, who still sometimes has swelling and blistering at the incision site.

Zwick worries that available antifungal drugs could one day lose their sting. *Candida auris* is highly resistant to many antifungals; a growing number of infections are "pan-resistant," which means no medicines are effective against them. "I just hope these drugs keep working for me," Zwick says.

> 'We are creating an environment that is favoring pathogenic fungi.'
>
> —DR. ANDREJ SPEC, WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS

When *Candida auris* first emerged in the U.S. a decade ago, it was a very rare and often severe disease whose victims were usually sick, elderly, and immunocompromised people in hospitals and nursing homes. But the yeast has been expanding its reach: not just infecting more people, but a broader range of them, and causing a wider variety of illnesses too.

"Ten years ago, we'd maybe see one *Candida auris* patient every few months," says UTHealth's Ostrosky-Zeichner. "Now, we have several cases per day in Houston." Texas, New York, Nevada, Florida, and California are among the U.S. states with the highest number of cases.

More young people, like Zwick, and people who aren't immunocompromised are getting infected, doctors say. The yeast is also starting to cause new types of hard-to-treat infections. Spec says that this year, for the first time, he treated a woman with a vaginal yeast infection caused by *Candida auris.* She had diabetes that was well-controlled and was otherwise healthy, says Spec.

The woman had come to see him after getting recurrent yeast infections that hadn't responded to standard treatments, he says. She recovered only after being treated for several days with an IV antifungal drug more powerful than what is usually used to treat such infections, Spec says.

Vaginal yeast infections are very common, with an estimated 3 in 4 women having at least one in their lifetime. A class of antifungals known as azoles are typically used to treat such infections, either as a cream, suppository, or oral pill, but *Candida auris* is more than 90% resistant to azole drugs. "It's no joke when you have to tell a woman that she has a vaginal yeast infection for which you usually take one pill and move on, but in her case, she needs to get on IV medication," Spec says.

Doctors say *Candida auris* is also emerging as the cause of another common disease: urinary tract infections (UTIs), which roughly half of women will experience at least once. Doctors have known that *Candida auris* can cause UTIs in people with catheters, but they are now seeing cases of people with tough-to-treat infections who don't have any medical devices or major health complications.

Public-health experts worry that the fungus could become as widespread as pathogens like MRSA: methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus,* a superbug bacteria.

"Initially, we tried to stomp it out, but we realized early on that *Candida auris* was here to stay. It was going to be more like MRSA," says Chiller. "MRSA used to be hospital-only, and now it's on every skin boil on the high school wrestling team."

AFTER CHILLER GOT off the phone with his British counterparts in 2015, he went on a quest to better understand the fungus that he suspected would soon invade the U.S. He first wanted to know if *Candida auris* was already on U.S. soil but doctors had just missed it. Under his direction, the CDC sent out an alert to hospitals and researchers, asking them to test samples of unidentified fungal pathogens in their repositories going back decades. "We didn't find *Candida auris* historically," he says.

The CDC also collaborated with public-health officials in parts of Asia, Africa, and South America, where *Candida auris* cases had been detected. Together, they studied samples of the fungus in an attempt to understand how it emerged. They discovered something remarkable: at least three distinct strains of *Candida auris* appeared nearly simultaneously, over the course of a few years, but separately—in different corners of the globe.

Many fungal-disease specialists and researchers now think climate change likely drove the yeast's transformation from nonthreatening environmental fungus to deadly pathogen. "It's hard to explain the emergence of *Candida auris* simultaneously on all these continents and not include climate change



SELF-DESCRIBED "FUN-GUY" TOM CHILLER TOSSES A MUSHROOM PLUSHIE IN HIS ATLANTA HOME

IRINA ROZOVSKY FOR TIME

as part of it. It just has to be. There's no other good explanation," says Dr. Peter Pappas, an infectious-disease doctor at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Fungi are sensitive to heat, but they are also very adaptable to rising temperatures. In laboratory experiments, researchers have put different fungi in incubators and, by steadily raising the temperature, have spawned fungi that are more tolerant to higher heat.

"It's actually not that hard," says Casadevall, who studies how fungi cause disease and was the first to publish the theory that global warming spurred *Candida auris*' rise. "The slower you raise the temperature, the more the fungi can tolerate it. It doesn't take a lot of mutations," he says.

A study he published with colleagues last year showed how different microclimates within the same city can trigger changes in fungi. "We went to Baltimore and looked for fungi on the sidewalk in a cool part of town, where they had nice trees and it's shaded, and then the same fungus in a warm part of town," Casadevall says. "We found that even within one city, just two miles away, the fungi from the warm neighborhood grow at higher temperatures. So, it's happening."

Fungi are already a major threat to many plants, insects, and cold-blooded animals. Frogs everywhere are being wiped out by a fungal disease; rice and banana crops have been decimated by fungi; and millions of bats, which drop their body temperature when they hibernate, have recently died in North America because of a deadly fungus. Until now, however, most mammals have been protected by our high body temperatures.

The emergence of *Candida auris* is a "shot across the bow of humanity that these things can happen," Casadevall says. "We can have an organism come out of nowhere, and begin causing disease."

MANY OTHER FUNGI are changing in ways that are worrying and, in some cases, dumbfounding doctors. As temperatures rise and rainfall patterns shift, some are spreading to new places. The soil-dwelling fungus *Histoplasma,* which had historically been confined in the U.S. to central and southern regions, has been steadily moving northward, eastward, and westward. U.S. cases have increased twofold in the past decade.

Valley fever, caused by inhaling microscopic fungal spores, is estimated to sicken up to 360,000 people in the U.S. yearly. The fungus was primarily found in the arid American Southwest until about a decade or two ago, when it began spreading to states like Washington, once considered too wet or cold for it.

Even fungal diseases considered mundane and easily treated, like ringworm, are evolving in alarming ways, doctors say. A new species of ringworm that can be resistant to all antifungal drugs has been spreading from the Indian subcontinent to the Middle East, Europe, and the U.S. in recent years. This new ringworm, which is highly contagious, causes chronic, inflamed, and itchy skin plaques all over the body.

"Think of athlete's foot, but it's now athlete's body, and it's untreatable," Chiller says. He predicts this new disease, which experts think evolved in response to the overuse of over-the-counter antifungal medications, will become the predominant ringworm found globally in the next decade.

In Brazil and South America, outbreaks of a fungus that causes a disfiguring and sometimes fatal



skin disease have been sickening cats, dogs, and people. Like *Candida auris,* the pathogen has mysterious origins. The fungus was first identified as a threat in 1998 after an outbreak in Rio de Janeiro. First, cats started showing up to the city's clinics very sick and covered with lesions. Then, people and dogs did too. Infectious-disease doctors identified the culprit of these illnesses as a type of *Sporothrix* fungus. Infected cats were spreading the disease to dogs and humans through scratches, bites, and even sneezes.

That explanation didn't seem to make any sense at first, says Dallas Smith, a fungal-diseases scientist at CDC who tracks emerging pathogens including *Sporothrix*.

A species of *Sporothrix* fungus called *Sporothrix schenckii* had long been known to doctors and scientists. The pathogen causes what is often referred to as "rose gardener's disease" because the fungus, which lives in the environment, typically infects people who work with dirt and plants. "Gardeners would get pricked by a rose thorn, and that would provide the opening for the fungus to enter," Smith says.

The fungus was known to infect cats, but that was exceedingly uncommon. The disease itself was also very rare. At the largest hospital for infectious diseases in Rio de Janeiro, the Evandro Chagas National Institute of Infectious Diseases, doctors typically saw two to three cases a year before 1998, says Dr. Dayvison Freitas, an infectious-dermatology researcher at the hospital.

But seemingly out of nowhere, something incited the emergence of a more virulent *Sporothrix* species spread by cats and not plants. It isn't clear what pushed it to evolve to so effectively infect cats. "Is it because of climate change or environmental change or some other pressures that we don't understand?" Smith says.

Sporothrix brasiliensis was named as a separate species in 2007. Infections caused by the fungus can result in multiple lesions in people, sometimes all over the body and face. It almost always leaves lasting scars, which are often dark and raised, says Freitas.

In up to 10% of cases, usually involving elderly or immunocompromised people, the fungus can enter the bloodstream and cause destructive illnesses. "The fungus can affect any organ or system, including the bones, joints, lungs, throat, brain. It can cause a kind of meningitis," Freitas says. "If this happens, it is very, very severe, and the death rate is high."

Brazil has seen an explosion of the fungus in recent years. "Cats are spreading this disease among themselves, but also to humans at an alarmingly high rate," Smith says.

From 1998 to 2001, fewer than 180 people, concentrated around Rio de Janeiro, fell sick with the disease. In recent years, thousands of people across the country are infected annually, Smith says.

The disease is now even infecting people in remote villages in the Amazon, Freitas says, and has emerged in other countries too. Cases of *Sporothrix brasiliensis* have been steadily sprouting up across South America in countries including Argentina, Paraguay, and Chile. Uruguay experienced its first outbreak of the disease in 2025, and Peru reported its first case this year, Smith says. "It's just a matter of time before it ends up in the United States" and beyond, he says.

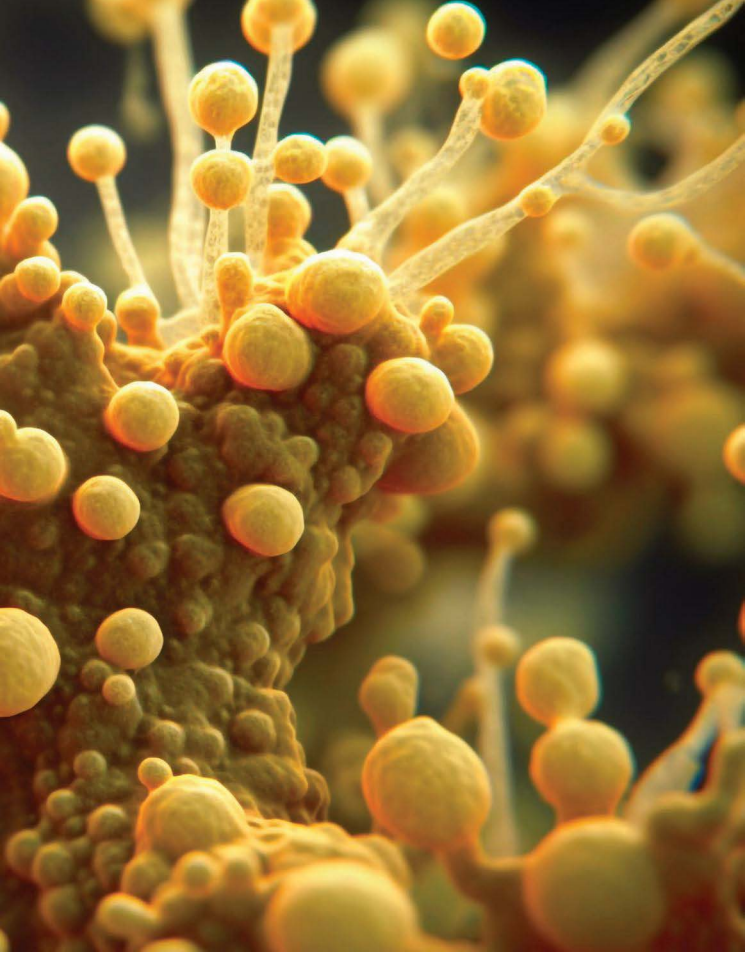
Sporothrix, says Chiller, is one of a growing number of fungi that are "dramatically changing our understanding of how we think fungi are supposed to act."

> 'It's in the dirt. You can get it anywhere at any time.'
>
> —**JUSTIN JOHN,** PATIENT

AT THE DENVER CONFERENCE, a line of scientists followed Chiller wherever he went. Everyone there wanted to bend his ear. Chiller was decked out in his usual professional attire: a well-cut jacket with a colorful, bespoke fungi-print lining and a matching pocket square. (Chiller, whose grandfather was a tailor, has about 15 fungi-themed custom jackets.)

"In every generation, there tends to be a few people who are a force multiplier," says Spec. "They change the field. In the case of mycology, the success that exists is often due to Tom Chiller."

Chiller has been working for decades to draw the world's attention to fungi's gathering threat. He was the deputy director of the CDC's fungal-diseases branch for about 10 years and its chief for another decade. Under his leadership, the department doubled in size to about 45 people and expanded its work to include surveillance of priority fungal diseases, including *Candida auris,*



HUMANS MAY BE PARTLY TO BLAME FOR THE EMERGENCE OF *CANDIDA AURIS*, SCIENTISTS SAY

and research into emerging pathogens, as well as new treatments and diagnostic tools.

He was instrumental in the development and widespread use of a cheap, simple, and accurate test, using just a pinprick of blood, for *Cryptococcus*—an environmental fungus that can cause meningitis. "It's definitely saved tens of thousands of lives," Chiller says. "I'm very proud of that."

Chiller left the CDC last year after 25 years at the agency, months after Robert F. Kennedy Jr. was named head of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Chiller says he had been growing increasingly disenchanted at the agency since COVID. "During the pandemic, it was turmoil for everybody. CDC took a big hit reputationally," he says. Then Kennedy took the helm, and Chiller's team was cut by about a quarter, he says. "We had to prioritize what we could do."

Chiller says he felt "handcuffed" by restrictions imposed on CDC staff in the spring of 2025. "They cut all our travel, they canceled all meetings. We didn't really have budgets," he recalls. "I thought to myself, If this is the future, it's not for me." Chiller is now chief medical officer at IMMY, a company that develops tests for fungal diseases. He's also a board member of the nonprofit Global Action Fund for Fungal Infections and of MyCARE, a fungal-disease patient-advocacy organization. Now, he gets to do what he loves most: advocating for fungal-disease awareness.

In September, he attended a roundtable discussion about fungal diseases with Kennedy and other U.S. health officials. Chiller, who helped coordinate the meeting, says it was the first time in his career that he had been in a room with a U.S. Health Secretary to talk only about fungus. That felt like progress, he says.

Chiller knows just how critical it is for health leaders and professionals to be familiar with fungi. "Think Fungus" was the catchphrase of the CDC's first Fungal Disease Awareness Week, which Chiller helped launch in 2017. Doctors often miss fungal diseases because they fail to think of them, research shows.

Though the spread of fungi in a warming world may seem like an impossible foe, there is hope in the fact that diagnosing fungal infections early makes it much more likely that a patient will survive—and researchers, including Chiller, are working to help patients take advantage of that edge.

They've got a long way to go: a 2019 paper showed that almost half of some 270 patients in Arizona with valley fever—a fungal disease Chiller studied as a young doctor—weren't diagnosed correctly for a month or more.

Justin John lived that nightmare. The 27-year-old software engineer from Arizona was wrongly diagnosed with COVID, the common cold, and irritable bowel syndrome before doctors realized—more than six months later—that he was sick with valley fever.

There were "lesions literally everywhere inside my body," he says. After lumps caused by the fungus started appearing on his forehead and neck, doctors discovered that the fungus had eaten holes through parts of his spine and skull. He underwent two surgeries to insert a metal plate into his forehead, and replace a part of his vertebrae with a metal disc. "The vertebra was so dissolved, they couldn't save any of it," he says.

John says he was healthy, active, and had no underlying medical conditions before he got sick. "It's in the dirt. You can get it anywhere at any time," he says. "I could have gotten it when I was walking to Walmart."

Blood tests are currently used to diagnose valley fever, but false negative results are common, causing many missed diagnoses. IMMY is developing a new rapid urine test for the disease that it says will be easier to administer and more accurate. "So many patients, even here in Arizona where this disease is endemic, get missed," says Dr. Fariba Donovan, a valley fever specialist at the University of Arizona who treated John. "This test could really decrease that delay in diagnosis."

These are steps in the right direction, but Chiller says we need to take greater strides if we want to win in the race against fungi. Many decades ago, after encountering very sick and dying valley fever patients, Chiller says he "learned a lot about how devastating and complex fungal diseases can be." He's still waiting for the rest of us to catch up. ◻

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ESSAY

SERIOUS BUSINESS

SATIRE IS ABOUT MORE THAN MAKING PEOPLE LAUGH

BY SACHA BARON COHEN

PHOTOGRAPH BY NADAV KANDER FOR TIME



Baron Cohen in London on Oct. 5

THE FIRST TIME I WAS INTRODUCED TO satire, my jaw dropped—and not just because it was the first time I'd ever seen a naked woman.

I was 8 when my older brothers snuck me into a London cinema to see *Monty Python's Life of Brian*. Although my underdeveloped brain may not have fully grasped the critique of religion or internecine fights among political leftists, I loved the feeling of being surrounded by 300 people screaming with laughter.

Over the next few years, I inhaled an array of comedy greats: Peter Sellers, Peter Cook, and *Not the Nine O'Clock News,* with its biting commentary on Thatcherite Britain. Then came a personal breakthrough. At the age of 20, I spent six months studying with an intimidating French clown.

The late Philippe Gaulier was one of the all-time great teachers of clown and modern theater. Gaulier kept a drum handy while we were onstage, banging it to cut short a performance he considered "sh-t," which was often. His goal, and greatest gift to us, was helping his students discover what he called their "inner idiot."

GAULIER INTRODUCED ME to the satirical archetype of the bouffon. In his telling, the tradition dated back to 11th century France, where societal outcasts—gay people, heretics, those with deformities—would be let back into their villages once a year to put on shows viciously mocking the ruling class. It was the humor of the dispossessed. Whereas clowns were naive idiots, bouffons savagely undermined the people in power. They were doing something important: using biting and at times cruel humor to undermine systemic injustice.

It's what satirists have done throughout history. And along the way, some people, instead of laughing, wince—or worse, take offense. The Greek playwright Aristophanes brilliantly lampooned the militarism and demagoguery of his day. Yet because he deployed phallic jokes so obscene they would make even Ali G blush, critics like Plutarch sneered at Aristophanes' "coarseness … in words, vulgarity, and ribaldry." We celebrate the Roman satirist Juvenal, but his contemporaries barely acknowledged him. Nearly two millennia later, Lenny Bruce's four-letter comedy was branded "sick" in the pages of this magazine in 1959. Note to editors (and to Plutarch): you missed the point.

Yes, satire can offend people other than the intended targets. Like that of my bouffon predecessors, mine definitely has. As someone who has opposed bigotry and injustice throughout my life and partnered with civil rights groups, I don't recognize myself in the warped portrayals of me that I sometimes see on social media, lumped in with the bigots I lampoon.

I've always designed my characters and comedy as vehicles to expose prejudice, bias, and stupidity, though I realize not everyone sees them that way. Ali G is a white imbecile—a delusional cultural appropriator—who steals the fashion and lyrics from his favorite gangsta rap and dancehall idols, from Compton to Kingston. The joke is on him, and on the predominantly white male establishment who take him seriously enough to believe that HBO would hire the stupidest man in the world as an interview host. Like a good bouffon, he undermines that establishment—not the culture he loves and borrows from.

I admit that most of my humor is indeed juvenile. That's because satire works best not when it preaches, but rather when it lives among the laughter. Then, once you walk out of the theater or switch off the TV, it makes you think.

What makes satirical comedy so effective is what it lays bare. I'll never forget a fox-hunting rally I attended the first time I created Borat—which involved me rummaging around in the trunk of my car for two minutes, finding a hat I'd bought in Astrakhan, Russia, and sticking it on my head. "Jagshemash," I proclaimed, riffing off a Polish greeting.

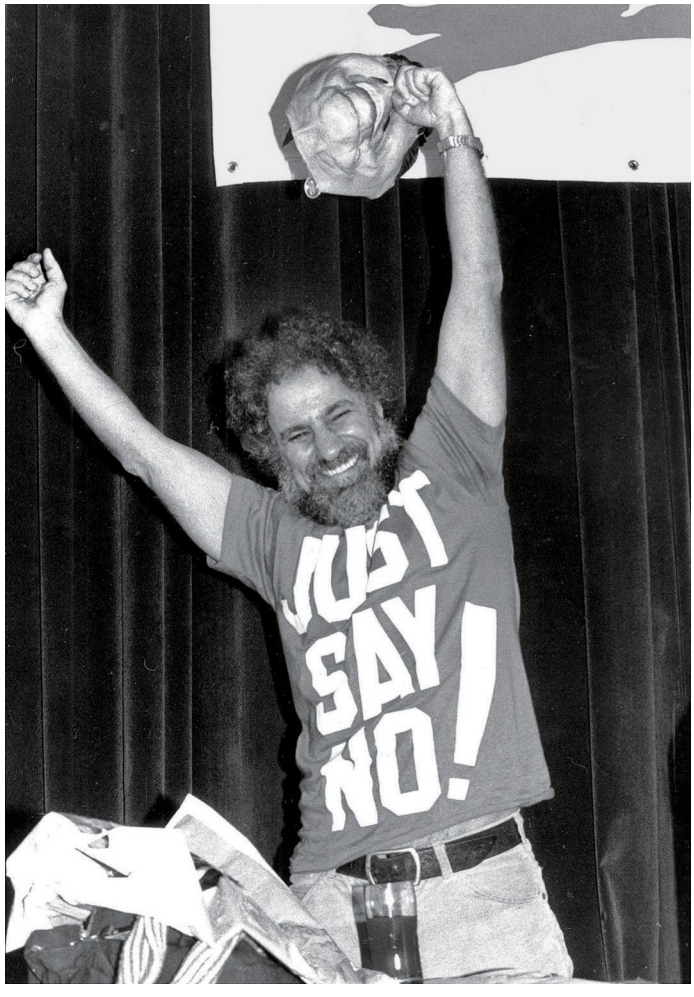
I asked the English toffs, "In my country we hunt criminals—do you think we should do that here?" Shockingly, even though on camera, they said yes. A light bulb exploded in my 25-year-old brain. Real people believed this ridiculous character—and they would speak to him more freely than in any documentary.

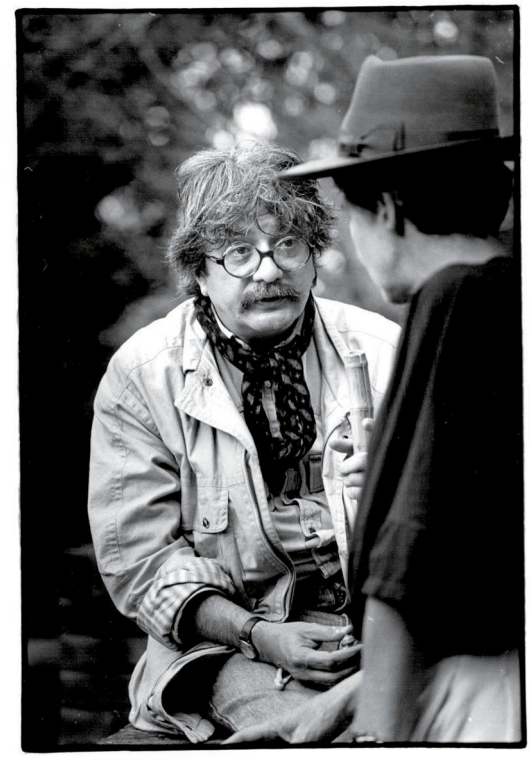
Each of my characters has a specific mechanism to encourage people to drop their guards and show what they really believe, prejudices and all. Borat, an antisemitic journalist, exposes Jew hatred, xenophobia, sexism, and casual racism. Erran Morad, a stereotype of a tough-guy Israeli commando—"I've been in 14 terror attacks," he says in my new movie *Ali G: Who Iz I?,* "and started two"—exposes Islamophobia and the ludicrous things people will do when they're gripped by an irrational fear of "the other."

WHEREAS CLOWNS WERE NAIVE IDIOTS, BOUFFONS SAVAGELY UNDERMINED THE PEOPLE IN POWER

Ali G works on another level. He's not extreme—he's just extremely dumb. But his absurd questions lead powerful people to underestimate him and answer in earnest, revealing their own biases.

Other characters highlight the problems facing our society without engaging real people at all. *The Dictator*'s Admiral General Aladeen—the cartoonish ruler of a fictional Horn of Africa nation and a mash-up of personality-cult authoritarians from Kim Jong Il to Idi Amin—warned, in 2012, how easily democracies could fall into autocracies.





The real Abbie Hoffman holding a Ronald Reagan mask, left, and teacher Philippe Gaulier, right, both in 1988

FROM LEFT: RICHARD CORKERY—NY DAILY NEWS ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES; PHILIP WAYNE LOCK—FAIRFAX MEDIA/GETTY IMAGES

Regardless of the madness, the method is the same: make the audience laugh as hard and as much as possible, while holding up a mirror to reflect back things that aren't always comfortable to see or warn of trends we'd rather look away from.

DONE WELL, brutally honest satire can be cuttingly effective. At a time when Hollywood largely avoided anti-Nazi content, Charlie Chaplin—then one of the most famous movie stars in the world—used *The Great Dictator* to point to the destruction that Nazism would bring. Peter Sellers' sinister Dr. Strangelove showed the insanity of mutually assured destruction. Abbie Hoffman, who became a hero of mine while I researched my undergraduate thesis on civil rights—and whom I later played in *The Trial of the Chicago 7*—deployed outrageous stunts to oppose the Vietnam War.

In fact, satire doesn't just needle politicians or regimes—it occasionally helps bring them down. In *Hammer & Tickle,* the historian Ben Lewis credits Soviet joke-telling with helping to topple communism, by making it impossible for even the system's own enforcers to take it seriously. Volodymyr Zelensky was a Ukrainian comedian who once pretended to play piano with his penis—a stunt Aristophanes would have loved. Yet Zelensky's TV show parodied the country's corrupt oligarchy so effectively that, just four years after *Servant of the People* premiered, he was elected President himself. "Every joke," George Orwell observed, "is a tiny revolution."

Of course, comedy has its limits—more satirists in Weimar Germany could not have prevented Nazism. Still, satire—along with a free press, independent institutions, and a robust civil society—does play a role in promoting free societies.

That's exactly what so many governments seem afraid of. In Nazi Germany, mocking Hitler could be a capital offense. Stalin sent an estimated 200,000 citizens to the gulags for making political gags. In our own time, Chinese censors have scrubbed social media of a meme comparing President Xi Jinping to Winnie the Pooh; one student who shared that and other unflattering posts got six months in prison for "picking quarrels and provoking trouble." Last year in Tehran, the comedian Zeinab Mousavi was sentenced to six months simply for parodying an Iranian epic poem.

Even in democracies, satirists, instead of getting a laugh, sometimes face sanctions. In the U.S., Lenny Bruce and George Carlin were arrested for uttering obscenities. Because of its irreverent



As the titular Ali G, left, in the new movie Ali G: Who Iz I?



treatment of Christianity, *Monty Python's Life of Brian*—the very film that introduced me to satire—was banned in half a dozen countries, and even parts of the U.K.

Today, some believe the times have overtaken Orwell's "tiny revolutions." In an era when the U.S. President and his ilk seem impervious to shame and ridicule, is satire all but dead?

Absolutely not. In fact, I believe that satire is more important than ever. The Trump Administration's own actions show why. If ridicule is now irrelevant, why did CBS cancel Stephen Colbert's show just days after he mocked his parent company for paying Trump $16 million to settle a lawsuit? Why did Trump's chairman of the Federal Communications Commission appear to threaten ABC's broadcast license—leading ABC to briefly suspend *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*—after Kimmel's comments about the killing of conservative activist Charlie Kirk?

Even Trump doth protest too much. Asked in 2020 about Borat outing his attorney Rudy Giuliani as a creep, Trump dredged up the time I tried to scam him as Ali G two decades earlier: "That's a phony guy and I don't find him funny."

SO WHY DOES my new movie bring back that phony and unfunny guy, which some have criticized as "microwaving a relic from a generation ago?"

The fact that Ali G is outdated and problematic is the very reason I resurrected him. The world he's returned to is, in many ways, worse than the one he left 20 years ago. All the prejudices my characters are designed to expose haven't just lingered—they've metastasized. They're fueled by the greatest propaganda machine in history—social media—and now by its monstrous child, AI.

Back when I first created Borat, it took a few minutes—or a few drinks—to get people to reveal the racism that often simmered below the surface. Now, those views have gone mainstream—whether it's fans hurling slurs and abuse at Black players during the World Cup or hundreds of white nationalists marching through Washington, D.C., on July 4.

In 2004, also as Borat, I got a bar full of people to sing "Throw the Jew Down the Well." Today Jews make up just 2% of the U.S. population, yet are the targets of nearly 70% of religion-based hate crimes in America. Whatever your politics, the trend is undeniable.

In 2018, disguised as Dr. Nira Cain-N'Degeocello, an ultra-woke developer planning to build a mosque in a small town, I showed people's hostility to Muslims. One even declared, "I'm racist—towards Muslims." Now, right-wing U.S. Congressmen readily admit as much.

On my 2018 show *Who Is America?,* I convinced three men to host a fake quinceañera to trap undocumented immigrants. Now, stoked by far-right agitators and viral social media posts, anti-immigrant protests and riots have erupted across England and in Belfast. Meanwhile, ICE agents are running amok—terrorizing cities and, yes, detaining people at a quinceañera.

Then there's the explosion of misogyny. Six years ago, in *Borat Subsequent Moviefilm,* a plastic surgeon cheerfully discussed giving my fictional 15-year-old daughter Tutar breast implants to appeal to important men. In today's "manosphere," that's nothing compared with how Andrew Tate advises his millions of followers to treat women. Nor was overturning *Roe v. Wade* and a women's right to control her own body apparently enough. Christian nationalists are now calling for "household voting"—effectively taking the right to vote from many women and giving it to their husbands.

SATIRE CAN REMIND PEOPLE ABOUT THE VERY REAL DANGERS OF LUDICROUS LIES

Twenty years ago, Ali G would sit next to world experts spouting absurdities. Today—fed a steady diet of disinformation and conspiracy theories by social media influencers and TikTok news—we have created an entire world where ignorance reigns and truth is inverted.





As Borat, in 2006's Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan



As Admiral General Aladeen, right, at the premiere of The Dictator *in 2012*

Thanks to this toxic brew of lies, conspiracies, and hate, right-wing authoritarianism is on the march. Intolerance and extremism have surged on the left as well. Political violence has increased, as has our tolerance for it. In one survey, one-fifth of Americans agreed that "true American patriots may have to resort to violence in order to save our country."

We are once again entering an age of "virtuous" violence, where any atrocity—by racists, Jew haters, or Islamophobes, the right or the left—can be somehow justified. It is not a place any of us should want to live.

WHERE, THEN, DO we go from here?

In a world where social media and AI hypercharge lies, who decides what's considered truth? In a culture seemingly obsessed with dividing people by identity, how do we find commonality in our shared human experience?

I made this latest film for the same reason I've always done this work. Not only to make people laugh, but also to bring them face-to-face with the danger of fanaticism and conspiracy theories.

I'm not naive. One film won't stamp out age-old prejudices or stop the extremism that's fueling the slide from democracy to autocracy and mass violence. But, as satire has done since ancient times, it can help sound the alarm. It can remind people about the very real dangers of ludicrous lies—whether spread by a thin-skinned authoritarian or an extremist with an online following. With the U.S. midterm elections just weeks away, perhaps it encourages citizens to mobilize against these dangerous falsehoods—at the ballot box and beyond. Maybe it can even help shame more of our governments into finally making our Silicon Valley overlords—unelected billionaires who decide what billions of people see and believe—liable for the lies, conspiracies, and hate on their platforms that have already gotten people killed and will likely kill many more.

Satirists can expose hypocrisy. Bouffons can shed their clothes and show that the emperor has none. But after the credits roll, it's up to all of us to decide what comes next. If our pluralistic democracies are going to survive, we need to create societies where we stop the hate and tolerate those different from us—no matter who they are, where they come from, whom they love, or how they pray. Because the only way out of this mess is to treat everyone with what Ali G has always preached: Respect.

Baron Cohen is an actor and filmmaker; his new movie is Ali G: Who Iz I?

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: AJ PICS—ALAMY; RED DUVAL—GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY OF AMAZON MGM STUDIOS



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FIGHTING SPIRIT

BY REBEKAH TAUSSIG

Depicting—and defending—the work of disabled activist Judy Heumann

INSIDE

JOHN MALKOVICH TAKES ON EASTER ISLAND, AND DEATH

A SMALL-TOWN SERIAL KILLER FOR THE SMALL SCREEN

JOHN TURTURRO ON THE KNICKS AND PLAYING A PICKPOCKET

THE NIGHT BEFORE AN AIRLINE LOST MY WHEELchair was among the most dazzling of my life. I sat at a long table in the back of an L.A. movie theater as talented writers, actors, and creatives read aloud the draft of a movie script I'd co-written with Oscar-winning filmmaker Siân Heder. I felt the thrill of people laughing at just the right moments. I clocked cheeks shiny with tears. But more than anything, I marveled over the possibility that this movie might actually get made. When I was a newly paralyzed kid in the '90s, with freshly fitted leg braces, I watched Forrest Gump overcome his disability by running so hard his own braces literally fell off. Months after I started college, I watched a recently disabled boxer ask her coach to end her life in *Million Dollar Baby*. In my formative years, the stories of disability I saw were scarce, unrecognizable, and often harmful.

Our script, *Being Heumann,* tells the real-life David and Goliath story of a standoff between the U.S. government and a group of scrappy disabled protesters that changed the course of American history. The fight revolved around Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, a tiny bit of legislation that reframed how we think about disability in our communities. Instead of positioning its embodiment as a personal tragedy that inevitably excludes people from society, the language of 504 suggested that our exclusion had been largely created and should be corrected. The law passed in 1973, but after years without any moves to implement it, Judy Heumann led over 100 disabled people and nondisabled allies in a sit-in at the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in San Francisco. They lived in those halls for almost a month as the government tried to push them out, cutting off their water supply and phone lines. When it became clear that they weren't going to buckle, the government relented, agreeing to implement 504. The very group that had been deemed expendable took on the most powerful and won. It still holds the place as the longest peaceful occupation of a federal building in U.S. history.

Section 504 paved the way for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the first civil rights law for disabled people in the world. Thanks in large part to disabled WW II vet and my Kansas Senator, Bob Dole, it passed in 1990 with nearly unanimous bipartisan support and was signed into law by President George H.W. Bush when I was 4 years old. Even if they're not consistently or completely fulfilled, these laws changed our world in their insistence that physical and mental impairment alone should not and would not preclude us from participating in our communities—going to school; voting; receiving care in a hospital; being considered for a job for which we're qualified; and accessing our libraries, post offices, public transit, housing, and more. In other words, Section 504 and the ADA protect every American citizen; if there is one thread that binds us together, it is that every single one of us will acquire a disability if we live long enough. Still, I, like most Americans, never heard a whisper of this history growing up.

It wasn't until I worked on this script that my perspective considerably expanded. It was like putting on a pair of night-vision goggles: the curb cuts, accessible bathroom stalls, and ramps radiated a new story. Someone had fought for me to be here. It didn't wipe out the inaccessibility and stigma that still exist in my life, but it enriched my understanding of the bigger story I was living inside.



Taussig at the Toronto International Film Festival on Sept. 10

When I first joined the *Being Heumann* project, I was nervous about earning Judy's trust. I remember sitting in my car, phone pressed against my sweaty ear, as she asked me questions about my life. "So you went to school with your siblings?" My attendance at the school down the street from my house was never a question, while Judy's mother battled for years to get her daughter a spot in even a basement classroom. "And what was it like for you applying for teaching

positions?" My wheelchair was never mentioned in job interviews, while Judy was denied a teaching license because her wheelchair was deemed a fire hazard. Recapping my life to The Judy Heumann, I saw more clearly than ever before how she and other activists had shaped it. Even as I'd sat on the edges of inaccessible playgrounds or been pushed out of unsustainable work cultures, the full life I live today would not exist if someone hadn't fought hard for my inclusion before I was born. I wanted Judy to know that my outrage over the exclusion disabled people still face didn't diminish my appreciation for the gifts she had granted us. I think I convinced her I could hold both stories as true.

WHILE IT DIDN'T MAKE the final cut, one of the scenes performed at our table read told the story of the time Judy was forcibly removed from a plane when the airline insisted she needed a care attendant or a note from a doctor to fly. Someone expressed appreciation that airlines are now more accommodating to wheelchair travelers. Siân looked at me knowingly. "Well, they're still not great," she said.

And so when I flew home from the reading, I can't say I was surprised to find upon landing that my wheelchair, which cost more than my car and is fully customized to prevent pain and pressure sores, was missing. In its absence, I was placed in an airport wheelchair—although, given that it was not self-propelling, it feels more apt to call it a cart. Because airplanes don't have accessible bathrooms, I hadn't peed in eight hours, but without wheels that I could push myself, I couldn't get to a toilet without help. I almost always fly alone, but out of sheer luck, my husband had accompanied me on this trip. We watched the people from the last flights pour out the doors until the floor was empty. Over an hour later, the airline informed us they had no idea where the wheelchair was. I felt like I was being sent home with body parts missing.

The next day, as I sat at my kitchen table, calling the same customer-service numbers again and again, a familiar feeling thumped in my chest. While we worked on the script, I wanted to capture the frantic helplessness that can come when your basic rights are not in your control. You can hold up a protest sign, put your body on the line, hurl your voice to the sky, write yet another email to legislators, and still, it often feels like you are entirely at the mercy of a few people at the top who aren't even listening.

Two days later, my husband found the frame of my wheelchair dropped off on our doorstep, scratches across the front, two parts dangling. They never found the wheels. A replacement pair arrived three weeks later.

While I recounted the ordeal to Siân, we marveled at the irony. Here we were, telling the story of a woman who took on the airlines for disabled passengers to have equal access to travel, and 50 years later disabled travelers still take the very real risk of our lives being upended every time we fly. We have come so far. We have so far to go. I saw the dichotomy everywhere. It was my generation's job, I thought, to build on the progress Judy's had fought for. What I didn't realize at the time, however, is that we wouldn't just be advancing it—we'd be defending it as well.

ALMOST A YEAR to the date of that hopeful, disastrous flight home, I found out that Apple Studios had greenlighted the making of *Being Heumann*. I texted Siân gleeful curse words in disbelief. In the coming months, I saw a big film studio prioritize authentic disability casting for more roles than I could count on my hands and ask good questions about how to make the filming process accessible for them. I think I stopped breathing while I watched Ruth Madeley channel Judy's chutzpah on her audition tape. Every time I thought of my younger self getting the chance to watch this story with these characters, my eyes welled. There is no way to quantify what it would have meant to see bodies like mine do something as ordinary as get dressed, go to work, or receive care, let alone hook up, party, fight, cry and win together. To see the world reflected back to me as I experienced it—pushed out by stairs and curbs, racing wheelchairs down hallways, sitting eye level with butts.

We have come so far. We have so far to go. I saw the dichotomy everywhere

It was right in the middle of this dreamy bubble that I first learned about a new lawsuit, *Texas v. Becerra,* filed by the attorneys general in 17 states, seeking to make Section 504 unconstitutional or dismantle all of the detailed protections that it lays out. I scoured the internet for any reporting from mainstream news outlets. The silence stunned me. I went directly to the lawsuit itself, and as I squinted into the legalese, I recognized arguments that sounded identical to the ones posed in the 1970s. We'd written these sentiments into the mouths of our most skeptical characters: *disabled people are a burden on the rest of us; we shouldn't be forced to integrate them into our communities.*

Over the course of two years, the lawsuit evolved; it was updated as *Texas v. Kennedy,* the people made noise, and many states dropped out. Then in June, the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel issued a memo asserting that Section 504 and the ADA don't actually mandate that states support disabled people to remain integrated in their communities. Instead, this memo claims, sending people to live in institutions—away from their families, friends, and beds—is an acceptable option. This position is in direct conflict with the way disability-rights law has been interpreted by courts for decades. And, in addition to the human cost, it doesn't make fiscal sense. For example, according to the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services and the Disability Rights Center of Kansas, sending one person with an intellectual or developmental disability (I/DD) to live in an institution can easily cost well over $310,000 a year. Providing home- and community-based services with an I/DD waiver for this same person would cost, on

OPENING PAGE: APPLE TV+; OPPOSITE PAGE: ARTURO HOLMES/GETTY IMAGES

average, $70,000 a year. The discrepancy is similarly steep for someone with a physical disability. So at least in this case, it costs less to include us.

Even so, that memo set the foundation for a joint proposal from the Department of Justice and the five remaining states that ultimately ended the case. They asked the court to vacate critical language about integration, and in September the judge agreed. Now the law remains on the books—only Congress can change the legislation itself—but it's been utterly gutted, despite the loud outcry from disability advocates across the country and the way it had been applied since the protesters won their fight in 1977. It's hard not to interpret this move as anything other than a profound disregard for the value of disabled life.

AND YET, EVEN as the lawsuit and memo wound their way through the government, the Toronto International Film Festival welcomed *Being Heumann* as its opening-night film. I rolled across the red carpet in my black sequined dress and scratched-up wheelchair frame, taking in the wide expanse of our embodied disabilities, each of us glammed out and feted for our talents. It felt like living inside two timelines: one where my government undercuts the foundations of laws that have long protected all of us, the other where the hubs of culture celebrate the incredible story behind the passing of those same laws. As Judy's life's work is threatened, audiences around the world are learning her name. The past is asserting itself into the present, the future is teetering toward the past, all inside one surreal moment. I'm trying to hold onto the contradiction, never allowing the significance of one reality to eclipse the other.

I wish Judy were here to give us our marching orders—to make the monster lurking around the corner feel a little smaller with the force of her voice. I wish she could take in the wild power of her own story moving across a screen and witness this outpouring of recognition, gratitude, and celebration. She died unexpectedly while we were working on the film. In fact, many of the 504 leaders have passed away—Brad Lomax, Ed Roberts, Kitty Cone, Ron Washington, Hale Zukas. Their generation came of age in a world where doctors routinely told parents they should send their disabled children away to live out their lives in institutions, but their activism fundamentally changed the lives of all of us coming up behind them. Now that we are the adults in the room, what legacy will we leave behind?



Ruth Madeley stars as the titular character in Being Heumann

I find myself thinking a lot about the work culture can do where legislation drops off. As we continue to fight for the laws Judy and her peers helped make real, I wonder about the ripples of an entertaining movie that isn't here to force a lesson but bring to life a vivid story of disability as a dynamic, nuanced, deeply human experience. I wonder if one film might beget more. Perhaps this kind of authentic representation of disabled life could be a fixture that younger generations will one day take for granted. Maybe storytelling can insist on our shared humanity in the ways legislation can't.

Now that we are the adults in the room, what legacy will we leave behind?

Because, even as I see now more than ever how essential laws can be, I don't want just laws; I also want a society that values disabled people enough to implement them meaningfully and fully. I want whole communities invested in the great, ongoing project of building a world for all of us. I think Judy would co-sign my enormous appetite. I no longer believe human evolution inevitably bends toward including more of us, but if she taught us anything, it's that we don't show up because the outcome is guaranteed; we show up because it isn't.

Taussig is the author of the memoir Sitting Pretty: The View From My Ordinary Resilient Disabled Body *and the children's book* We Are the Scrappy Ones

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Malkovich and Rockwell are pure delight as 1970s CIA agents

MOVIES

Two superb performances in a land of big heads

BY STEPHANIE ZACHAREK

WHERE'S THE LINE BETWEEN SHTICK AND style? If a filmmaker returns to similar themes but folds them into entertaining shapes each time, is that consistency or a lack of imagination? Writer-director Martin McDonagh's *Wild Horse Nine* might prompt you to ask those questions. Like *In Bruges* and *The Banshees of Inisherin, Wild Horse Nine*—in which John Malkovich and Sam Rockwell play 1970s CIA agents stationed in Santiago, Chile, sent to Easter Island on a special mission—deals with fractious male friendships. There are some beautiful four-legged animals—in this case, horses, though one of them must die. McDonagh's screenplay is so packed with quirky quips that you might long for a little breathing room.

But if the writing sometimes comes off as belabored, the acting is not. Malkovich and Rockwell are a joy to watch, and that, after all, is what we go to the movies for. Malkovich's Chris and Rockwell's Lee are an odd-couple duo who have been working together long enough to intuit one another's moods. And they bicker, a lot. Lee seems annoyed by his elder partner's tendency to tootle down trails of fanciful thought. In an early scene, Chris complains that his apartment is riddled with moths, and he doesn't want them to ruin his clothes. But he also doesn't want to kill them. Instead, he says, "I've been escorting them outside." It's 1973, not long before socialist President Salvador Allende will be overthrown—Chris and Lee know this, given that their job is to destabilize democratic governments. In one of many pensive moments, Chris muses, "Sometimes I think I care about the moths in Chile more than I care about the people in Chile."

Malkovich and Rockwell are a joy to watch

YET SOMEHOW CHRIS DOES CARE, despite having secretively killed some 68 people, and possibly having had a hand in some grassy-knoll shenanigans in November 1963. He hates his boss, MJ (a delightfully ruthless Steve Buscemi), and spreads lies—or are they?—that he's a junkie. But Chris himself does heroin, not for pleasure, but because cancer is killing him. He's happy to have been dispatched to Easter Island to see "the big heads," and claims that he's going to work on his memoir. He decides to open it by talking about dinosaurs. "Did they have souls?" he wonders. Lee scoffs, but by now, we've seen the affection, mingled with annoyance, between these men.

That framework sets the stage for acerbic CIA jokes, flirtation with a duo of pretty student tourists, and a fantastic gag about how the "gay" countries produce the best cheeses. Chris delights in the wild horses of Easter Island, forming a kind of soul communion with one. McDonagh never wants our emotions to get too squishy, and thus this noble creature meets an unexplained end. But there's a degree of warmth here, more so than in most McDonagh films. This one has none of the smug superiority of *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri,* a film ringing with condescension toward small-town America.

McDonagh may be excessively arch, but he does know how to write for actors. Rockwell's Lee is the straight man here, absorbing the vibrations of his colleague's meandering thoughts. Lee is Chris' mirror and sounding board; this is a generous performance. And Malkovich is simply wonderful. Chris, nearing the end of his career and his life, has blown out his filter. When one of the young, earnest tourists speaks about the power of organized protests, Chris gives it to her straight: "Marches are just the places we can get the clearest photos of you without your knowing." Malkovich doesn't make the line sound cruel or demeaning. He's having fun here, and his pleasure becomes our delight. He makes you believe in a guy who would send a wool-munching insect into the night air without crushing it. No one can deliver a moth soliloquy like he can. ◻

MOVIES

A delicate drama of love and longing in anxious times

LEE CHANG-DONG'S DELICATE YET STURDY drama *Possible Love* is a movie about figuring out how to function in the world. If that sounds confoundingly vague, Lee's movie is not. It shows us a world where people feel lost after losing their livelihood and strive to connect despite class differences, where tenderness has more power than arrogance. It's a movie with a gentle, generous spirit.

Lee opens with a small family piling into their car to get to a funeral. Wife and mother Mi-ok (Jeon Do-yeon) wonders if she's wearing the right dress, and the shoes she has chosen are already pinching her feet. Her husband Ho-seok (Sul Kyung-gu) says little, clearly filled with dread over whatever awaits him at this unhappy event. Their quiet young son (Jung Seop) sits in the back seat, amusing himself by dangling an empty chip bag out the window like a wind sock.

We soon learn that Ho-seok is one of many workers who lost his job at a large corporation, and he hasn't yet recovered. Mi-ok is doing her best, holding down a menial factory job, but her husband's depression and drinking are getting to her. In the funeral-home parking lot, she meets a handsome stranger, Sang-woo (Zo In-sung), who moves his expensive car when Mi-ok believes her wedding ring has rolled beneath it. It turns out that Sang-woo's wife Ye-ji (Cho Yeo-jeong) is making a documentary about "the personal lives of laborers." Ye-ji is thrilled to have found Mi-ok and Ho-seok as subjects—she's particularly interested in the melancholic Ho-seok, who might be the dramatic key to her project. But she and Mi-ok also genuinely like each other. *Possible Love* traces the tangled dynamics between these characters, while flirting with questions about the moral quandaries that can arise in a filmmaker-subject relationship.

MOSTLY, THOUGH, *Possible Love* is about the ways people come to care for one another, platonically or otherwise. Ye-ji and Mi-ok come to think of themselves as sisters. Though Ye-ji has married well, she doesn't come from privilege, and she has some sense of Mi-ok's money worries. Conversely, when she leaves the table momentarily during an early meeting, Mi-ok snaps a picture of the elegant backpack she's left behind. Then Mi-ok uses a Google-image search to find the brand. It's Loro Piana, and obviously beyond her means. That's just one example of how Lee explores simple human desires and jealousies.

Lee has said he was particularly struck by the commandment "Thou shalt not covet." We like nice things, but what we need is a way to keep a roof over our head and food on the table. *Possible Love* explores the desperation that can strike when we can't meet those needs. Sang-woo, cocksure and a little clueless, spends much of the movie making deals. Ho-seok suffers quietly, encased in a bubble of isolation. Mi-ok loves him, but she's frustrated; no wonder she's drawn to sexy and stalwart Sang-woo. The movie's most potent scene occurs when, with Ye-ji's camera rolling, Ho-seok finally lets his guard down: Ye-ji may be getting the footage she set out for, but has she earned it honestly? Sul Kyung-gu is sensational here. If his character is key to Ye-ji's movie, he's also *Possible Love*'s beating heart.

Lee's 2018 noir mystery *Burning* was what we used to call a surprise art-house hit. An art-house hit today may not mean the same thing, given how much the cinemagoing audience has shrunk. This is a more plainspoken movie than *Burning;* its moral questions are fairly easy to parse. But at a time when more people are worrying about employment, the dramatic pull of *Possible Love* may be even greater. Sometimes it's a relief when a movie captures undercurrents of anxiety that we find difficult to put into words. With *Possible Love,* it's as if Lee has taken our unspoken feelings and handed them to his actors. With tentative smiles and flashes of anger, they show us fears and worries we might be feeling, galvanizing us to face them. —s.z.

A fine ensemble of actors anchors Possible Love



WILD HORSE NINE: DIEGO ARAYA CORVALÁN—SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES; POSSIBLE LOVE: JOO JAE-BUM—NETFLIX

TELEVISION

A slow-burning crime drama that struggles to stay lit

BY JUDY BERMAN



Saga (Beetz) puts her safety on the line to solve a deeply personal case

NOCTURNE IS EVERYTHING YOU would expect from a 21st century prestige crime drama. Adapted from a series of best-selling Scandinavian mystery novels, the Apple TV thriller casts a genuine movie star (Liev Schreiber) as a brilliant yet broken detective immersed in a case that has become an all-consuming obsession. The large ensemble represents multiple law-enforcement agencies, victims, bystanders, and a singular alleged serial killer played by an actor on a hot streak (Stephen Graham). Children's lives are at stake. A risky undercover operation is undertaken. Relationships simmer, until suddenly they're at a full boil. Collateral damage piles up. Progress is glacial, with essential bits of backstory meted out in stingy flashbacks. Underlying every scene is an atmosphere heavy with dread, as though this sordid scenario has arisen not merely from the brain of one twisted villain, but out of a rot at the heart of society.

It's a prototypical slow burn. This format, in which one complex investigation spans a season or more, wasn't new to American TV when AMC's Nordic noir adaptation *The Killing* became a sensation in 2011. (In this respect and many others, *Twin Peaks,* for one, was ahead of its time.) But the convergence of streaming, an ideal venue for binge-friendly serialized storytelling, and an audience for ambitious television that had been growing for more than a decade facilitated its proliferation as a cinematic alternative to the formulaic procedurals that still predominate on broadcast networks. The most acclaimed and discussed mystery shows of the past 15 years—*True Detective, Mare of Easttown, Fargo,* even *Only Murders in the Building*—have been, with few exceptions, slow burns. Yet, as *Nocturne*'s mixed success suggests, the tropes and limitations of the style become more apparent with each new title.

IN ONE WELCOME DEVIATION from the norm, whodunit seems clear from the beginning. Confined in the bowels of a Pennsylvania psychiatric hospital, the serial killer Jurek Walter (Graham) calmly coaxes an inmate in the adjacent solitary cell into suicide. When a boy thought to be one of his victims, Michael (Landon Valentin), turns up, filthy and feeble but alive, years after he and his sister went missing, a new hunt for the girl begins. Schreiber's Jonah Lynn, a Philly cop and military veteran who is now retired and a bit reclusive, was instrumental in the original investigation. Michael's return draws him back in, along with an FBI agent, Saga (Zazie Beetz), who is a surrogate daughter to Jonah. As Quinn, a rigorous colleague from the bureau (Poorna Jagannathan), and the weary local police chief (Bill Camp) lead the search, Saga goes undercover as a patient at the hospital and Jonah goes rogue, to the surprise of no one who has ever worked with him. They don't just want to find the sister; they want to catch Jurek masterminding violent crimes from his cell, thereby proving he's coherent enough to rot in a real prison.

A slow burn can only be as compelling as the personalities and ideas its pace affords it time to explore. Creator Rowan Joffé and his cast, adapting the Joona Linna novels by Lars Kepler (a pen name of Swedish husband-and-wife team Alexander Ahndoril and Alexandra Coelho Ahndoril), do craft a few fascinating characters. Beetz's Saga is a spookily canny mix of actor, detective, and daredevil, inhabiting her cutesy-until-she's-not patient persona so fully, you might start to doubt she's fully faking it. Graham weaponizes the soft masculinity that he wielded so movingly as the horrified father of a homicidal teen incel in *Adolescence*. It's his cunning performances of compassion that set Jurek apart from the typical thriller psycho and make us believe he has the capacity to pull off logistically inconceivable feats of cruelty. Rory Culkin adds tension as Karl, a sensitive hospital worker whose anger at the way superiors use him as a pawn leaves him vulnerable to Jurek's manipulation.

What happens outside the institution isn't nearly as gripping. Strong actors like Camp, Jagannathan, and Chrissy Metz, who plays Michael's mother Ida, are saddled

NOCTURNE: APPLE TV+; THE ONE ABOUT MATTHEW PERRY: NETFLIX

with underwritten characters. Everything we know about Jonah—that he's brooding, single-minded, and willing to break rules in pursuit of justice—is a cliché of the genre, as is his odd-couple partnership with the stiff but well-intentioned Quinn. I got the sense, around the season's midpoint (seven out of 10 episodes were provided for review), that Joffé was holding some of these characters at arm's length in order to shock us with revelations about them later. But the extended delay in supplying basic context about Jonah, in particular, comes off as too much of a contrivance. It also distances us from the show's implicit questions about whether laws and protocols enable (or prevent) justice, and how people like Jonah and Saga should weigh the rewards of dangerous, personal missions against the threat of harm these crusades pose.

Nocturne's small-town Pennsylvania setting is guaranteed to earn it comparisons to *Mare of Easttown* and its spiritual sequel, *Task*. Beyond the dutifully adopted (and, to my ears, pretty accurate) accents, though, it lacks the specificity of those shows, both created by area native Brad Ingelsby, with regard to the region and its people. It doesn't have the same curiosity about or patience in depicting the characters' lives outside the Jurek case, either. Viewers got invested in Kate Winslet's Mare because we got to watch her try to keep up with her precocious teenage daughter and endure the harsh words of her judgmental mom. (It didn't hurt that said mom was played by Jean Smart.) As Robbie in *Task,* Tom Pelphrey had space to show us a criminal who was also a lonely, newly single father desperate to provide for his beloved children.

As any connoisseur of the hundreds of crime serials TV has produced since *The Killing* can tell you, there are only so many murder plots. But there are as many unique characters as there are human beings on planet earth. A slow burn that doesn't make use of such a rich source of fuel is apt to fizzle out.

Nocturne *premieres, with two episodes, Oct. 30 on Apple TV*

TELEVISION

Requiem for a *Friend* in need

When it comes to representing the famous and addicted, Hollywood seems to know only two stories. Both begin with a passionate talent who longs to make an impact on the world. Then, as no less an expert on this subject than Courtney Love memorably put it, they get what they want and they never want it again. Afflicted by affluenza or impostor syndrome or the newfound knowledge that success can't heal their internal wounds, they escape into substance abuse. It's only in their final chapters that the two narratives diverge. Some lucky souls hit rock bottom, get clean, and live happily ever after. The rest die young.

It would be easy to slot Matthew Perry, the *Friends* star who died from ketamine and drowning in October 2023, into the latter category. But in the intimate three-part Netflix documentary *The One About Matthew Perry,* director Mary Robinson *(Quiet on the Set: The Dark Side of Kids TV)* honors his memory by resisting that simplistic binary. Yes, addiction (and a cadre of enablers who are now serving time for their roles in his death) killed Perry at 54. It's also true that he spent more than 25 years surviving it, fighting to act and write and enjoy his friendships and make his family proud and fall in love. Instead of hiding that struggle, he used his fortune to aid others in their recoveries and his platform to advocate for a broader understanding of addiction as the illness that it is.

Robinson captures all of this in straightforward, chronological order, through emotional interviews with family and longtime friends, as well as Perry's own startlingly frank reflections in media appearances and his 2022 memoir, *Friends, Lovers, and the Big Terrible Thing.* The absence of major celebrities, whether by design or otherwise, limits the fond platitudes. In their place are vivid behind-the-scenes anecdotes and candid memories of who he was offscreen—the ambition, charm, humor, and magnanimity, but also the pain he was capable of inflicting on those who loved and needed him. His sister Mia Perry Bowick, a psychotherapist, is the most insightful presence, embracing grief and ambivalence as she ties her big brother's highs and lows to early family dynamics.

With all due respect to Chandler Bing, Perry's greatest contribution was his vulnerability, even when the image of him it exposed wasn't flattering. In its honesty, this documentary continues that work. *—J.B.*



Perry's life, as his sister puts it, was both comedy and tragedy

John Turturro The New York actor on playing an honorable pickpocket, the pleasure of the subway, and dancing at home

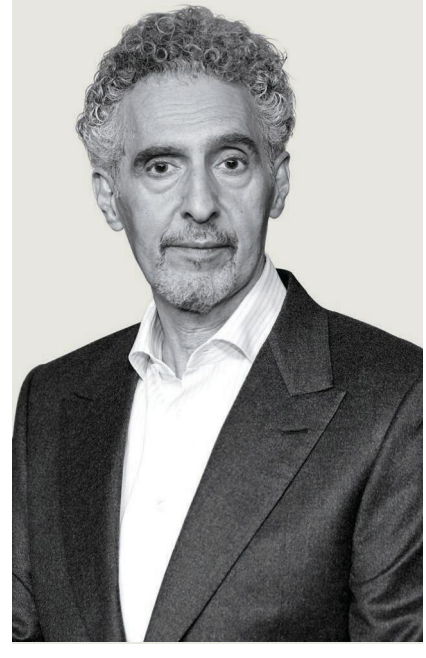
In *The Only Living Pickpocket in New York*, you play Harry. He's a criminal, but he operates by a code. He's true to his word. He's loyal to his wife. Do you see him as an antihero? I just try to play a person. I've read about a lot of these guys. They were from broken homes, orphanages. They didn't have a family, so they formed this little family with other people who didn't want to hurt people. Even though it is a violation, it was nonviolent. It was like a magic trick. They're taking something. But there's a lot of people who pick our pockets every day. And they take our world sometimes.

The movie has a real nostalgia for the old New York, a more analog time. Do you share that feeling? Everything changes. You walk down Bleecker Street, all these theaters, nightclubs are gone. It's CVS. Ethnic neighborhoods aren't there anymore. It takes away from the texture of a neighborhood. The thing I miss is things being affordable. When I was young, even if I sat in the back, I could see anyone. Jimi Hendrix at the Electric Circus. Colleen Dewhurst or George C. Scott. I got an education that way, while I was getting a [formal] education, and it opened up my horizons of thinking someday I could make a living doing this.

There's a wonderful scene where Harry dances to the song "Native New Yorker" for his wife Rosie, who is disabled and nonverbal. Was that improvised? I like to dance. I studied dance. In my household, everybody was dancing, three boys, my mom was a great dancer. I used to go out dancing to that song. When people are incapacitated, you play music, you sing, you dance. It's a love scene. Movement, especially when it's not overly choreographed, brings joy. Even in intense stories, people stop to do things. They stop to eat. They stop to have a laugh.

This movie was filmed in all five boroughs, which is rare. Why do you think that worked for this character?

The guy is sort of a superhero. He knows the transit lines. He doesn't take Ubers. I take subways and I walk everywhere. I love when I go to an event and everyone's sharing that on the train. It's kind of about the underbelly. The people keep the city humming.



DIA DIPASUPIL—GETTY IMAGES FOR FLC

You and Tatiana Maslany, who's also in this film, just finished the play *Rhinoceros* together. Do you like to get back to the theater every once in a while to sort of sharpen the tools? That's where I come from. I love the rehearsal process, if it's a very open one, which we did in *Rhinoceros* with [director] Diane Paulus. We explored everything. It's exhausting, I don't want to do a run for half a year. But I love doing things that young people can come to and afford. It's real teamwork, and I think it's kept me fresh for doing film work. It's humbling, and it's nerve-racking, and it's also exhilarating when you're able to keep your balance.

There's so much love for your character Irving on *Severance*. And fans really obsess over this show with conspiracy theories. Have you been a part of something like that before? I love Irving too. I have enjoyed working with the entire group, and especially with the apple of my eye, Chris [Walken]. *Severance* poses questions of work life, personal life. Maybe it resonates in the world. Maybe even more now with all this AI stuff. I think one of the strengths of the show is that it poses these questions and doesn't answer them. When you answer it, it's not as satisfying as figuring it out.

As a prominent Knicks fans, how are you feeling about this season? I feel hopeful. I'm not overconfident. It was beautiful how they all coalesced. I treasure being a fan and a season-ticket holder. I'm still soaking it all in. My favorite thing was coming home on the train, everyone just being in shock. It's great when people come together. —ELIZA BERMAN

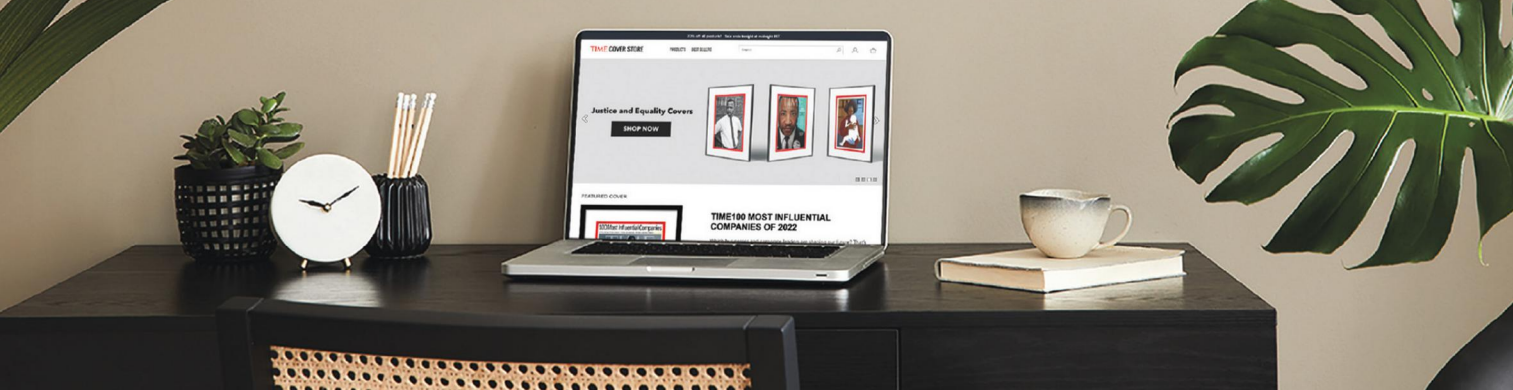
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