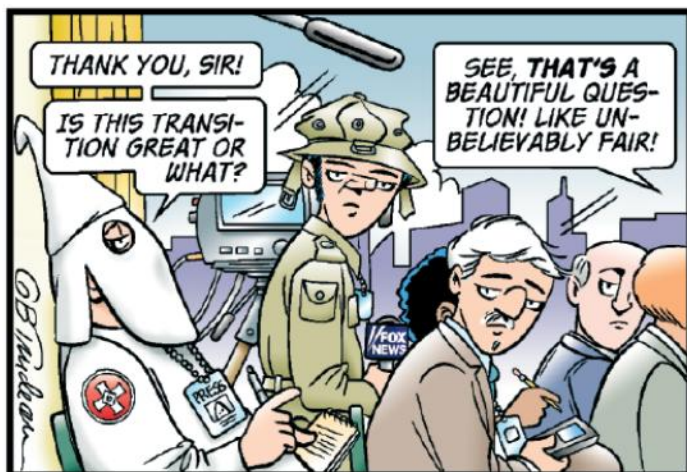


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THE ^{SPECIAL ISSUE} Nation.

MARCH 20, 2017



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Letters

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California Dreamin'

Thank you for Sasha Abramsky's article "The West Coast Fights Back Against Trump" [Feb. 27]. My Scottish great-grandmother walked across the Isthmus of Panama in 1850 to come to California. There she married an English man, who had traded in his covered wagon for a cart because it was faster. Thanks to them, I've had a privileged life here in our beloved state: fine schools; an annual fee of about \$65 to attend the University of California at Berkeley during its golden years; freedom to play in the unspoiled beauty of our woods, swim in the emerald waters of the Eel River, backpack in the Sierras, and mature in the multicultural richness of San Francisco.

The horror of Trump has left us all stressed and sickened. But Abramsky's article has truly helped lessen the pain and stress we are all suffering. Washington, Oregon, California—yes, of course, the "Left Coast"!

CORINNE SWALL WHITE
KENTFIELD, CALIF.

How Far Would the Left Go?

In the lead-up to her excellent discussion of the rewards that Trump voters expect to reap in return for the moral compromises they've made ["Religious Right, Resurgent," Feb. 27], Katha Pollitt claims that progressives, if given the chance, would elect the left-wing equivalent of Trump. That's slander, sure to be weaponized by right-wingers, and it has to be refuted.

Would I vote for someone who was "kind of a dick" if he promised to enact all kinds of good legislation and the alternative was a "flaming reactionary"? Sure. But Ted Kennedy (the example Pollitt cites) was no mirror image of Trump, and Hillary Clinton isn't the left-wing version of a flaming reactionary.

Trump isn't just the most depraved character ever to make it to a general presidential election: By Election Day 2016, it was evident that he posed an existential threat to the country. He'd repeatedly praised dictators, especially Putin, and rarely if ever said a kind word about constitutional democracy. He'd publicly encouraged Russia to hack Clinton's e-mails; repeatedly attacked news reporters as "the most dishonest people on earth" for calling attention to the ceaseless cascade of lies issuing from his own foul mouth; repeatedly condoned violence against protesters at his rallies; only weakly and belatedly disowned the endorsement of hate groups; and said that if he were elected, he would imprison his political opponent. Every indication was that if he gained the presidency, he would try to make himself dictator.

Hillary Clinton is no socialist—she has always been on the exasperatingly soft left. So let's adjust Pollitt's counterfactual to better reflect the reality. Imagine a Democratic candidate whose platform glitters, but who displays a vicious authoritarian streak and contempt for democratic governance and the Constitution, facing off against an Eisenhower Republican. Who would get your vote? Speaking for myself, I'd even vote for John Kasich or Jeb Bush—both far to the right of Eisenhower-era Republicans—if my party fielded a person as terrifying as Donald Trump.

BRIAN KEELING
SPOKANE, WASH.

Weapons of Mass Action?

D.D. Guttenplan's reporting ["Weapons of Mass Distraction," Feb. 27] from Youngstown, Ohio—where Barack Obama won by large margins, only to see the area turn to Donald Trump—suggests those voters can't simply be dismissed

Comments drawn from our website

letters@thenation.com

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Trump's Twisted Budget

Even as the White House descends into further disarray, the Trump/Bannon administration has continued its campaign of political shock and awe, from its stalled Muslim ban to its gutting of environmental protections to its ongoing assault on Obamacare. Now the other shoe has dropped—

a determined effort to shred the social safety net and dumb down the citizenry by slashing government support for the arts and public broadcasting.

And while Trump may have “softened” his tone in his address to a joint session of Congress, he promoted the same vile, reckless, and racist policies—including a pledge to undertake one of the largest military buildups in history. He proposes adding \$54 billion to the Pentagon budget and related programs, and offsetting that sum with cuts in everything from the State Department to the Environmental Protection Agency to a wide range of domestic spending programs. All of these cuts would come from the discretionary budget—which comprises everything other than entitlement programs like Medicare and Social Security. Since military programs already account for more than half of all discretionary spending, the cuts in nonmilitary programs needed to counterbalance this military buildup will be harsh.

As *The New York Times* first reported, Trump's newly confirmed budget director, former South Carolina representative Mick Mulvaney, has assembled a “hit list” of agencies and programs to eliminate. Current candidates include the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the National Endowments for the Arts and the Humanities, the Legal Services Corporation, and Americorps. And Trump has pledged to cut the more than \$500 million in government funding to Planned Parenthood—money that helps to provide basic, life-saving health services to women all over the country.

The proposed cuts have everything to do with right-wing ideology and nothing to do with fiscal responsibility. All of the programs slated for elimination, plus the proposed Planned Parenthood cuts, cost the federal government a combined total of about \$3 billion per year. That amounts to one-half of 1 percent of the current Pentagon budget, which now

runs at about \$600 billion per year. And that's before Trump's pledge to throw an additional \$1 trillion at that bloated department over the next 10 years.

The essential programs on the Mulvaney/Trump hit list could be funded with a small fraction of the money that the Pentagon wastes each year. In December, *The Washington Post* reported that the Pentagon had attempted to hide a report from its own business-advisory board suggesting steps that could cut \$25 billion in bureaucratic waste per year. That's over eight times the cost of the programs that Trump and Mulvaney are hoping to end.

Perhaps the biggest waste of all is the Pentagon's pre-existing plan—first rolled out by President Obama—to spend some \$1 trillion over the next three decades on a new generation of nuclear-armed bombers, submarines, missiles, and factory and laboratory upgrades.

Even if one believes that there's a “need” for nuclear weapons to deter another nation from launching a nuclear attack against us, independent experts have argued that this could be accomplished with a few hundred warheads. The current US arsenal of deployed and stockpiled nuclear warheads numbers 4,500. This needless nuclear excess is good news for Northrop Grumman, Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and General Dynamics, but it's terrible news for US taxpayers. Of course, the only way to be truly safe from nuclear weapons is to get rid of them altogether, as presidents from Ronald Reagan to Barack Obama have acknowledged, even if they were unable to achieve that admittedly daunting goal.

Thankfully, unlike with the Bannon/Trump flurry of executive orders, you can't change the federal budget by presidential fiat. Activists who have helped stiffen the backbone of congressional Democrats need to start pressing them to wage an all-out

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DC BY THE NUMBERS

\$3B

Total annual cost of the programs, including Planned Parenthood funding, to be eliminated in Trump's proposed budget

0.5%

Percentage that total represents of the Pentagon's annual budget (currently about \$600 billion)

\$100B

Additional funding that Trump has pledged to provide the Pentagon, per year over the next 10 years, for a total of \$1 trillion

\$0

Amount Trump proposes to cut from programs like Social Security and Medicare

"People will respect you for doing what you said you were going to do."

Jason Miller, a communications strategist for the Trump campaign, speaking to *The New York Times* about the proposed budget

fight to save needed programs, many of which provide essential services to Republicans and Trump supporters in the reddest of red states.

The Democrats may have some allies among House Republicans, at least on the Pentagon side of the ledger: GOP budget hawks in the House Freedom Caucus like Representative Justin Amash will, one hopes, continue pressing to keep a lid on Pentagon spending, as they did during the Obama years. Before he became Trump's budget director, Mulvaney took a similar stance during his years in Congress. One issue that has support across the political spectrum is the need for the Pentagon to finally get its books in order so that it can at last pass an audit. It's the only major federal agency unable to do so, despite a legal requirement that goes back more than 25 years. The Pentagon should not receive one more penny until it can clean up its books and demonstrate that it is spending the hundreds of billions of dollars it already receives wisely.

There's work to be done in salvaging a sane budget from Trump's twisted priorities, but there is also hope. It will, however, take an all-hands-on-deck effort, including grassroots activists across the country, of a kind that we haven't seen in a long, long time.

WILLIAM D. HARTUNG

William D. Hartung is the director of the Arms and Security Project at the Center for International Policy.

ICE Amps Up

The immigration raids are just the beginning.

Last week, President Donald Trump admitted that his administration's deportation agenda is "a military operation." The United States is "getting really bad dudes out of this country. And at a rate nobody's ever seen before," he announced at a meeting with manufacturing-industry CEOs. "And it's a military operation because what has been allowed to come into our country, when you see gang violence that you've read about like never before and all of the things—much of that is people who are here illegally." Trump's words, however rambling, summed up the aggressive, wide-ranging policy being put into effect by his administration's executive orders and the Department of Homeland Security's recent memorandums.

Two weeks ago, Immigration and Customs Enforcement undertook a series of splashy raids and arrested some 700 noncitizens for removal, and Trump has embarked on a rapid expansion of the country's deportation machinery. But his recent boastfulness undercuts his own cabinet members' attempts to portray his enforcement program as a more restrained affair.

DHS Secretary John Kelly, in a recent meeting that he and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson had with President Enrique Peña Nieto in Mexico, said, "There will be no use of military forces in immigration." Kelly added, "There will be no—repeat, no—mass deportations." It was a reiteration of remarks that Kelly had made earlier that week in Guatemala. But despite his best attempts to ease the panic in immigrant communities across the United States, Kelly couldn't distance himself from his boss's grandiosity—or the reality laid out in Kelly's own memos, released last week, that provide his department with guidance on how to implement the president's executive orders. They make clear that the raids two weeks ago were just the beginning. The memos "are a guide for Trump to enact his mass-deportation agenda," says Marielana Hincapié, executive director of the National Immigration Law Center. "And actually, they are even more extreme than [Trump's] rhetoric."

The first thing that Kelly's memos clarify is how his agencies ought to adhere to Trump's executive orders, which call on immigration agents to enforce the law against "all removable aliens." On February 22, Kelly insisted that enforcement would prioritize targeting "criminal offenders," as prior administrations have done. But such a tiered system, which shielded some classes of undocumented immigrants from removal, is nowhere evident in his memos. In his memo translating Trump's directive for ICE and the Border Patrol, Kelly orders those agencies to treat just about all undocumented immigrants as "priorities" for enforcement. Trump himself called for the DHS to go after nearly every undocumented immigrant, by pursuing those who (1) have been convicted of crimes, (2) have not been convicted but merely charged with a crime, (3) have committed any act that could be construed as a "chargeable offense," (4) have used a fake Social Security number to work or pay taxes, (5) have availed themselves unlawfully of public benefits like food stamps or public assistance, (6) have a deportation order against them, or (7) pose a public-safety risk in the eyes of any immigration officer. These categories are so broad that they eliminate any veneer of "prioritizing" enforcement. The fourth category—using

(continued on page 8)



AP PHOTO / CHARLES REED

Asking for a Friend



Liza Featherstone

Naming Names

Dear Liza,

I have a name-dropping acquaintance who peppers her conversation with references to city or state bigwigs. I've come to avoid her as much as possible because I find this habit annoying and insulting. She makes me feel as if I am totally unimportant in the scheme of things. How can I react to such a person in a way that stops her in her tracks and forces her to stop this irritating habit when we're together? What motivates name-dropping? —Chopped Liver

Dear Chopped Liver,

The essayist Joseph Epstein defines name-dropping as “using the magic that adheres to the names of celebrated people to establish one’s own superiority while at the same time making the next person feel the drabness of his or her own life. Name-dropping is a division of snobbery, and one of the snob’s missions is to encourage a feeling, however vague, of hopelessness in others.”

There’s surprisingly little research on name-dropping, but what little there is shows that you’re not alone: Most people find this behavior off-putting. A Swiss study in which people boasted about their (fabricated) friendship with tennis star Roger Federer found that the braggarts were liked less and considered less competent as a result of their name-dropping.

And societal pressures are at play, too. In some industries—and politics is one—name-dropping is rewarded with respect and prestige. Alfred Adler, a Viennese psychoanalyst who was one of the first to theorize on the causes and effects of social striving, observed that the chronic name-dropper often feels insecure about her own status. We all feel this way sometimes; our ruthless capitalist society is rough on the ego.

Your habitual name-dropper may be compensating for an especially intense insecurity. More disturbing, though, excessive name-dropping can be a symptom of narcissism. Clinical narcissists often need to feel superior, value others purely for the prestige they may offer, and lack empathy, which is why they name-drop.

So how to handle it? If your acquaintance is a narcissist, there isn’t much you can do to change her behavior, and so you should simply limit your exposure. But if you suspect that she isn’t, I’d try lighthearted mock escalation: “Oh, that’s so funny that you had dinner with the governor last Thursday—I was on my way back from Mar-a-Lago and needed to rest up for breakfast with Dennis Rodman, or I would have loved

to drop by.” With every name she drops, you can respond with more unlikely scenarios. Unless she’s clinically self-absorbed, she’ll get your point.

Dear Liza,

Say a Bernie-bro academic living in the Midwest is dating a new girl. Bit of an age gap, and a bit of an education gap, but she says she’s cool with that. Second or third date, he finds out that she disavows feminism. Now, Bernie bro has been roundly bashing mainstream feminism on Facebook in the last year or so for its ridiculous support of Hillary, but considers himself a social-ist feminist. So he feels horror that this girl rejects feminism and also harbors some other strange beliefs—such as that my friend should still be buying everything (dinner, drinks), even on the third date. “A man should woo a lady,” she tells him.

What should my friend do? When asked, the girl subscribes to key feminist ideas, such as equal wages for equal work, but remains adamant that she is not a feminist. To what extent is he now going to be guilty of hypocrisy and/or mansplaining if he starts telling the girl that she should be a feminist, and also needs to start chipping in on a night out? Worse, is the relationship doomed? —Friend of Bernie Bro

Dear Friend of Bernie Bro,

This column has long insisted that while it’s sexist for a woman to assume that a man will pay on a heterosexual date, it’s hardly antifeminist for him to pick up the check. The age and

(continued on page 8)

Questions?
Ask Liza at
TheNation
.com/article/
asking-for-a-
friend.



TRUMPED

Media
Blunders

Eric Alterman examines, at right, a “ridiculous” *New York Times* story accusing liberals of “helping Trump.” The paper isn’t alone in writing head-scratcher headlines about the president:

MOST PEOPLE ARRESTED AT PORTLAND TRUMP PROTESTS DIDN’T VOTE

This November 15 headline from the *New York Daily News* came after protesters were arrested at an anti-Trump demonstration in Portland, Oregon. Apparently, voting alone qualifies one to dissent. Trump, of course, notoriously missed elections until he saw fit to run in them.

TRUMP TAKES AIM AT ‘MILLIONS’ OF VOTES

The *Wall Street Journal* promoted Trump’s lies about illegal voting to the top of its November 28 print edition. The paper’s editor in chief, Gerard Baker, believes that readers should “make up their own mind.” Experts say that there are no two ways about it—voter fraud did not affect the 2016 election.

US RIVALS TEST TRUMP, AND SO FAR THE RESPONSE IS RESTRAINED

NPR’s February 18 story is certainly unusual. It notes that Trump has called for “tough action against Islamic radicals”—but if Trump’s Muslim ban is “restrained,” then what might be considered extreme? Perhaps cutting funding for NPR?

—Brandon Jordan

Eric Alterman



Upside-Down Days

The media’s addiction to false equivalencies has left them vulnerable to Trump.

To merely make it through the day with one’s sanity intact is no small task during Donald Trump’s presidency. There are so many moving targets, and they proliferate so quickly, that it’s all but impossible to maintain any kind of equilibrium between outrages.

The phenomenon I find most difficult to stomach is Trump’s genius for upside-down attacks on the media. CNN spent the last two years sucking up to him, giving him billions of dollars’ worth of free airtime and hiring “analysts” whom Trump was paying to lie for him—and he nonetheless accuses the network of spreading “fake news” on those rare occasions when it actually reports real news. To Trump, it’s the real news that is “fake news,” and vice versa. Every day is Upside-Down Day.

Mainstream-media institutions have no idea how to deal with this situation. They know how to treat a president “respectfully,” saying things like he “misspoke” or, in extreme cases, “asserted, while failing to provide evidence,” when presidents lie. But they don’t know how to cover a pathological liar who has convinced himself of the truth of those lies and who is able to get millions of gullible Americans to believe them too. Trump may be Frankenstein’s creation, but the media long ago lost control of their monster.

Among the institutions trying to find their footing in our newly dystopian democracy, none is more influential than *The New York Times*. And none does a better job, or even comes close. The *Times* was among the first newspapers to call the president’s lies by their proper name, and much of what we know about Trump’s various machinations is due to its energetic reporting. But significant problems remain. They will not be easily fixed, since they’re tied to the paper’s DNA. The Washington bureau is a particular problem: Its reporters and editors see themselves as part of the country’s ruling establishment, along with politicians, lobbyists, and various hangers-on. They can’t shake the old habits that continually allow the *Times*’s pages to be manipulated by the liars and charlatans who now run our government.

Last month, the paper’s public editor, Liz Spayd, published a thumb-sucker about the proper

use of anonymous sources. In it, she quoted “Peter Baker, an accomplished veteran of White House reporting,” acknowledging the Washington bureau’s overuse of them. That same day, however, the *Times* ran a story co-authored by Baker and Maggie Haberman in which an anonymous White House source was invited to defend how the replacement of former national-security adviser Michael Flynn is being handled. This is simply wrong. Whistle-blowing, on occasion, requires anonymity. Flacks should be required to use their names.

On the same day, the *Times* featured an even more egregious example of the kind of reporting that we can no longer tolerate. This story, by Sabrina Tavernise, a reporter whose work I had previously admired, professed to ask the question “Are Liberals Helping Trump?” Its thesis appeared to be that by being such meanies—proponents of “moral Bolshevism,” as Tavernise puts it—to Trump supporters, liberals were hurting their own efforts to convince independents and moderate conservatives to oppose the president.

Its evidence consisted entirely of the following: a self-described South Carolina “conservative” who always votes Republican but is somehow offered as “a natural ally for liberals” (he complains that a woman he wanted to date insisted that he not tell people he’s a Trump supporter); a Silicon Valley techie who thinks that being a Trump voter is like being gay in the 1950s; a Syracuse University administrative assistant who thinks that Democrats are “scarier to me than these Islamic terrorists” and believes that Trump was merely “offering some of the same ideas” on immigration as Bill Clinton; and a woman who feels that Meryl Streep “robbed” her “of that wonderful feeling when I go to the movies to be entertained.”

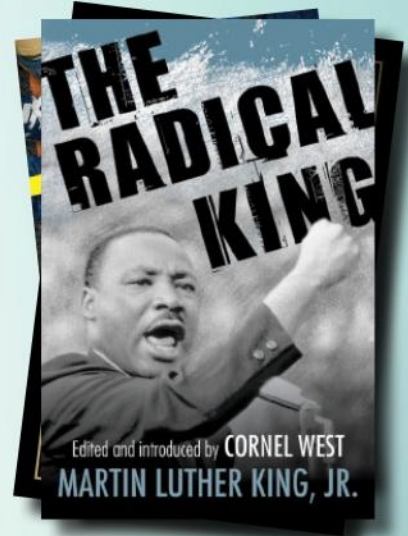
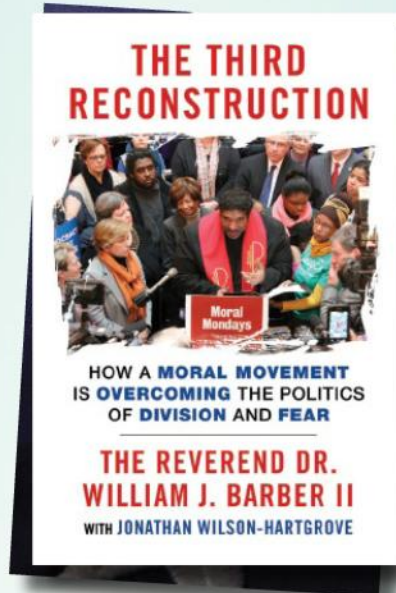
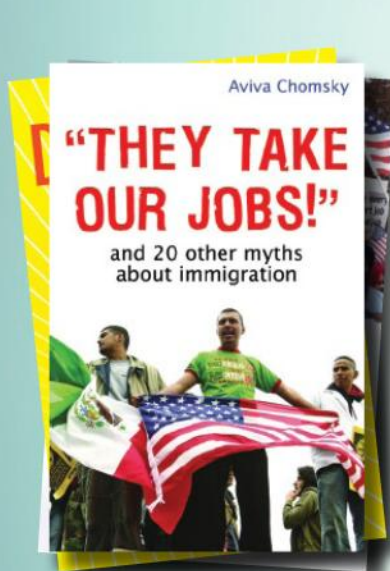
Leave aside the fact that liberals long ago learned to appreciate John Wayne, Barbara Stanwyck, and Clint Eastwood, among other perform-



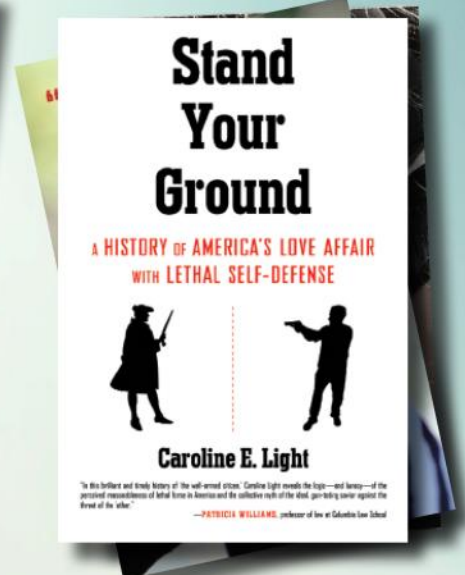
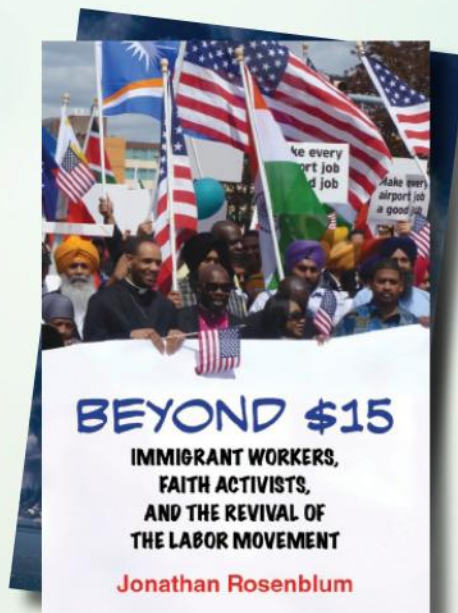
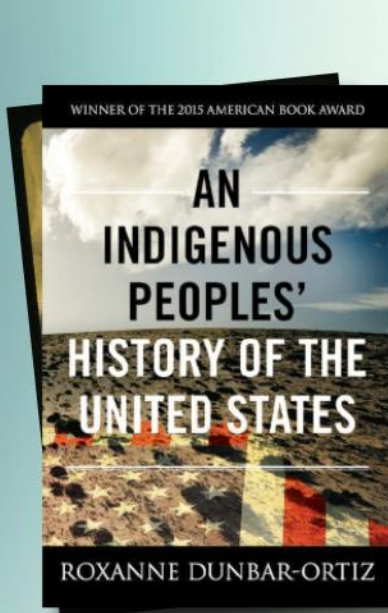
The Times’s DC bureau is a particular problem: Its reporters and editors see themselves as part of the ruling establishment.

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The establishment media have helped to normalize Trump and his assaults on our free press and democratic norms.

ers with right-wing politics. And certainly don't bother to wonder if the *Times* felt it necessary to ask whether nasty Tea Party demonstrators were alienating liberal voters. Just ask which of these ridiculous anecdotes actually proves the reporter's point.

This article, possibly the silliest to appear in the *Times* since Trump's election, is not merely unconvincing. It is also demonstrably false. According to an NBC/*Wall Street Journal* poll undertaken as the piece was being published, Trump's approval rating is already underwater: 44 percent of respondents approve of his job performance, while 48 percent disapprove. That minus-four-point spread at this point in his presidency is nearly 40 points worse than that of America's previous three presidents at the same moment in theirs, and nearly 50 points below that of George H.W. Bush. Among independents, Trump is at a minus-10. If liberal "moral Bolsheviks" are

"helping" Trump, they're doing a lousy job.

The only explanation I can muster for this embarrassment is the *Times's* unyielding commitment to false-equivalency narratives, the product of decades of conservative efforts to work the refs. The thinking seems to boil down to this: "We're running an article about Trump supporters' violence against immigrants, people of color, Muslims, and Jews, so shouldn't we also say something mean about liberals too? We wouldn't want anyone to accuse us of liberal bias." This has long been the modus operandi at virtually every establishment-media institution, and its cost has been normalizing Trump and his assaults on our free press and democratic norms. If, as *Times* executive editor Dean Baquet recently explained, the job of his newspaper is "to critique the president" and to hold this "dangerous" leader "accountable," then this dishonorable practice needs to go. ■

(continued from page 4)

a fake Social Security number to work and pay taxes—is part and parcel of undocumented life. The seventh category offers immigration agents and law-enforcement officers so much discretion as to basically invite racial profiling. The second and third mean that immigrants will be particularly vulnerable in locales where policing and patrolling is discriminatory—which, in the United States, is many places.

And Kelly's memos offer updated directives on that very topic, beefing up programs that allow police to get involved in enforcing Trump's deportation agenda. The DHS secretary calls for the resuscitation of Secure Communities and the expansion of 287(g), programs that enable the federal government to piggyback on local policing to help catch undocumented immigrants. 287(g) deputizes local and state law-enforcement officers as immigration agents so that they can arrest people on federal immigration violations in the course of their policing work.

The DHS will be constrained in its efforts

by the finite number of beds in detention centers, the notoriously backlogged immigration courts, and the size of its enforcement ranks (even though the number of ICE and Border Patrol agents alone has doubled in the last decade). But there, the DHS has offered some ideas, including the hiring of 5,000 more ICE and Border Control agents.

The memos also include a plan to deport those caught entering the country via Mexico back to Mexico—even if they are not Mexican nationals: "Returning [immigrants] to the foreign contiguous territory from which they arrived...saves the Department's detention and adjudication resources for other priority aliens." In recent years, the largest surge in those caught at the border has been children and families fleeing violence and crime in Central America. This plan would shove Guatemalans, Salvadorans, Hondurans, and others into Mexico to await the resolution of their immigration cases in the United States; they would attend their immigration-court proceedings through a "functional, in-

teroperable video teleconference system" that the DHS seeks to build.

The memos also lay out harsher, more punitive policies for asylum-seekers. Among them, Kelly proposes that the parents of undocumented children who migrate to the United States be considered accomplices in human trafficking, since many family members pay smugglers to help ferry the children to safety. He recommends that those parents be pursued for any possible immigration violations and referred for criminal prosecution.

Herein lies the real messaging sleight of hand from a president who boasted that, on immigration, he has "the biggest heart of anybody." The only way to achieve a mass-deportation agenda of the scope that Trump intends is to turn a person's very existence into a crime. The DHS memos released last week show us just how that will be done.

JULIANNE HING

Julianne Hing is a contributing writer for The Nation.

(continued from page 5)

education difference between you—um, I mean your friend!—and this young woman, plus the gender gap, suggest to me a (likely and significant) paycheck gap. This would make his picking up the tab redistributive, not retrograde. Being treated also makes her feel courted and desired; those feelings arise, complicatedly, from patriarchy, but they are also nice feelings to have. If he doesn't like paying for dates, he should, rather than grandstanding about feminism, date women his own age or older who have more earning power. (Of course, if your academic friend is an adjunct or grad student, he's too broke to keep this up and she'll need to relent.)

In supporting feminist goals while rejecting the label, this young woman is firmly within the American mainstream. (She is, however,

in a slight minority among women, especially millennials: In a 2015 survey conducted by the Kaiser Foundation and *The Washington Post*, six out of 10 women identified as feminists.) Your friend is right to resist mansplaining. Instead, he should ask her what the idea of feminism means to her. Some women perceive the movement as elitist or racist (which, admittedly, it has sometimes been), while others just don't know much about it.

Understanding why this young woman isn't a feminist will help your friend have a more productive conversation with her. It may also help reveal whether they share enough values to have a future together. After all, "I'm not a feminist because the term reminds me of my boss—and I hate my boss!" is a lot different from "I'm not a feminist because Rush Limbaugh says women's lib has castrated men and ruined America." ■

A BATCH from the MIT Press

Political Women



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The Battle for the DNC

Can Tom Perez revive a Democratic Party in deep crisis?

The most significant election result for Democrats on February 25 wasn't the selection of former labor secretary Tom Perez as the new party chair at an all-too-predictable gathering of Democratic National Committee members in Atlanta. It was the result announced that evening in Middletown, Delaware, where environmental attorney Stephanie Hansen won what was supposed to be a close special election for an open State Senate seat with 58 percent of the vote. That win gave Delaware Democrats something their party now has in only five other states: "trifecta" control of the governorship and both houses of the legislature. In other words, they can govern.

The point of political parties is to win elections, thousands of them, in communities like Middletown, and to add those victories together so that people with a shared set of values—as opposed to the same campaign donors—are in control of city councils, legislatures, and Congress. Democratic insiders lost sight of that point over the years, becoming so presidentially obsessed that they told themselves they could somehow survive without legislators and governors, congresspeople and senators. If they could just keep the presidency, these Democratic partisans imagined, everything would be OK—and the media, which is more focused than ever on Washington, reinforced that fantasy. Then Hillary Clinton lost, and the Democrats suddenly recognized that they were at their weakest point since 1928 in the

House, and at their weakest point since 1925 in the states.

The truth is that Democrats have been in crisis for a long time. The loss of the presidency matters—as Donald Trump reminds us each day. What matters more, though, is the overall decay of a party that once sufficiently commanded Congress to temper Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan, but that now gets shoved around by Paul Ryan and Mitch McConnell. Democrats, who once ruled the states, now control just 16 governorships and 31 of 98 partisan legislative chambers. And a new breed of hyperpartisan Republicans are using their dominance to lock in electoral power through extreme gerrymandering, voter-ID laws, and assaults on labor rights.

No matter who won the competition between Perez and Representative Keith Ellison to lead the DNC, the new chair's only real job was always going to be to end this losing streak. That's not some crass partisan calculus; it's an absolute necessity if America is going to undo not just Trump and Trumpism but the program of inequality and injustice that contemporary conservatives advance. Ellison had the bolder vision for merging the "demonstration energy" of the resistance to Trump with the "electoral energy" that Democrats must muster in 2018. His approach extended from the left-wing, small-donor-funded, millennial-energizing presidential candidacy of Bernie Sanders, which Ellison backed—and which Perez, and most of the party establishment, opposed. The Working Families Party's Dan Cantor described Ellison's narrow defeat as "a missed opportunity"—and so it is. But it's important to recognize that a majority of DNC members were willing to miss that opportunity, as they've missed so many others over so many years.

Ellison's backers had to reckon with a creepy (though easily rebutted) attempt to portray the congressman, who is Muslim, as

Ellison's narrow defeat was a missed opportunity.

COMMENT

ICP Museum



Sheila Pree Bright, #1960Now: Art + Intersection, 2015, video still. © Sheila Pree Bright

*Perpetual Revolution:
The Image and Social Change*
January 27– May 7, 2017

What is the relation between the overwhelming image world we live in and the volatile social sphere we inhabit? This exhibition examines the connections between the endless new streams of provocative, alluring, and often frightening media images and waves of social upheaval and transformation.



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anti-Semitic. But his defeat had a lot more to do with the refusal of insider Democrats to recognize that their party must get out of Washington (with a genuine 50-state strategy); break the bonds of big money (with small-donor funding); link itself with grassroots activist groups; and abandon the “Third Way” compromises that have turned too many Democrats into errand runners for Wall Street.

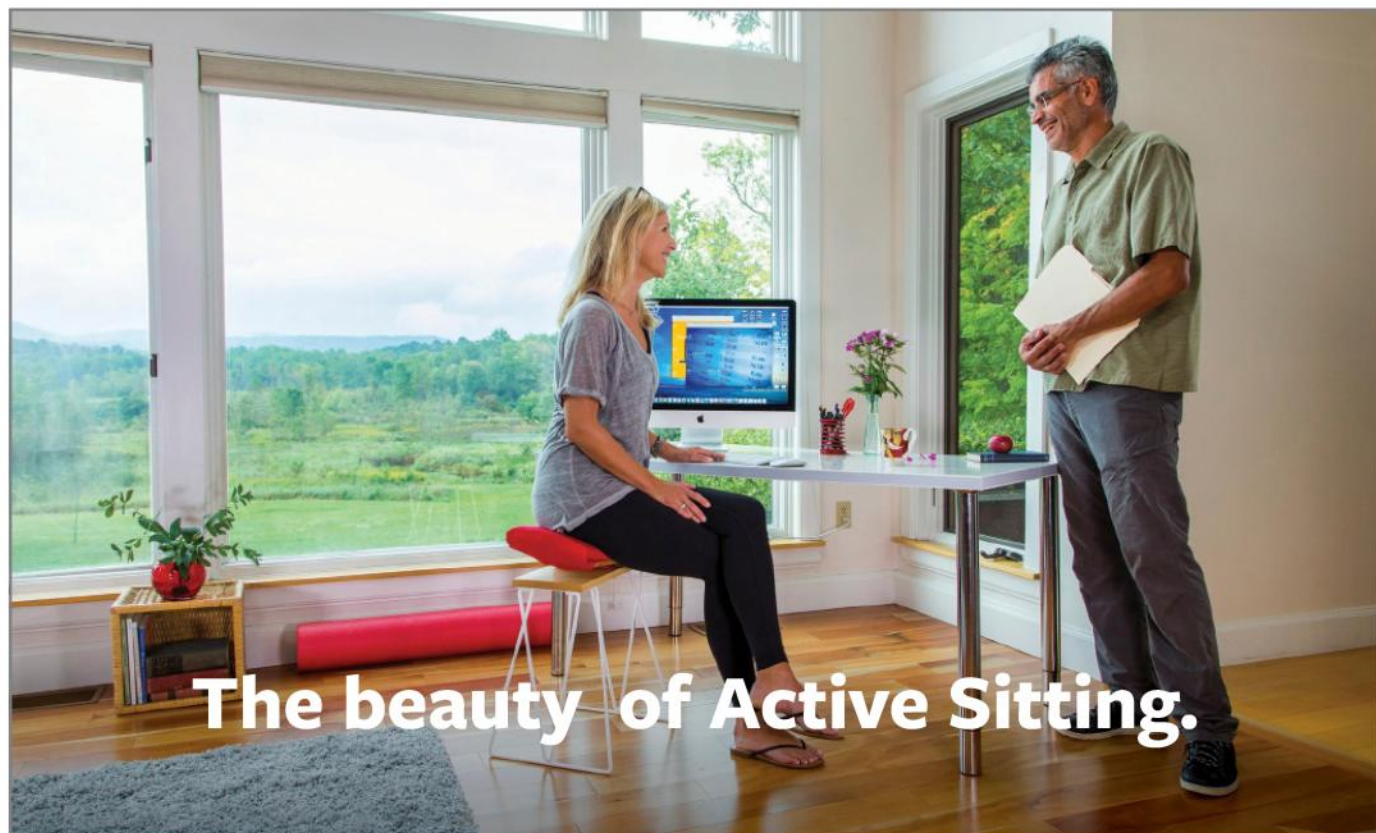
So is the DNC irredeemable? That question will be answered by Perez and Ellison. Perez was to the left of the Obama administration: for unions and a \$15-an-hour minimum wage, for diversity and immigrant rights. He immediately made Ellison his deputy chair. There’s potential in that arrangement—if it really is a partnership, and if Perez implements the “dramatic cultural change” he promises. At the heart of that change must be an understanding that, to advance electorally, partisans must not just resist Trump; they must also resist the uninspiring lesser-of-two-evils arguments

that leave voters wondering if Democrats stand for anything.

In this, they can take counsel from State Senator Hansen. She waged a resistance campaign, speaking at a “Sister March” on January 21; celebrating every endorsement from labor, environmental, and LGBTQ groups; and urging voters to push back against Education Secretary Betsy DeVos by denying like-minded Republicans control of the State Senate chamber. Activists heard her; door-to-door canvasses that traditionally draw 25 people attracted 250.

It has never really been true that “all politics is local,” and it’s even less true now. Parties win when voters know what they stand for—and when what they stand for isn’t winning for the sake of winning, but a clearly defined set of values. Democrats can be a winning party, but it will take a “dramatic cultural change” to make them one. If Tom Perez delivers anything less, he will have failed his party and his country.

JOHN NICHOLS



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TRUMP'S AMERICA

Murder in Kansas

At right, Laila Lalami recounts a fatal shooting that took place in a Kansas bar. Adam Purinton told two Indian-American engineers talking over beers to “get out of my country.” After being asked to leave the bar, Purinton returned with a rifle and opened fire, leaving Alok Madasani injured and his best friend, Srinivas Kuchibhotla, dead. A bar patron, Ian Grillot,



tried to stop the shooting and is recovering from a gunshot wound in a local hospital.

A few days after the attack,

Madasani emerged on crutches to pay tribute to his friend. According to *The Kansas City Star*, he began, “One thing that I really wanted to emphasize... the main reason why I am here is that’s what my best friend, Srinivas, would have done. He would have been here for me, and that’s what I’m doing right now.”

Madasani described the killing as “an isolated incident that doesn’t reflect the true spirit of Kansas, the Midwest and the United States. The United States of America, for us, has been one of selfless people, hardworking people.”



Kuchibhotla



Who Belongs in America?

Trump’s racist policies are dividing families and stoking fear and hate.

On a frigid evening in February, Srinivas Kuchibhotla and Alok Madasani, two software engineers originally from India, were having a drink at a bar in Olathe, Kansas, when Adam Purinton, a desktop-support specialist, reportedly shouted racial slurs and demanded to know whether they were here legally. Management asked him to leave. Moments later, Purinton came back with a gun, allegedly shouted, “Get out of my country!” and opened fire. Kuchibhotla was killed; Madasani and Ian Grillot, a bar regular who tried to intervene, were injured. Purinton fled the scene, crossing state lines into Missouri, where hours later he stopped by an Applebee’s and told an employee that he needed to hide because he had just shot “two Middle Eastern men.”

That bar is America. On an ordinary night, it might host anyone who wants to buy a drink and catch the Kansas-TCU basketball game. But on another, it might turn into a crime scene because one man thinks he has the right to decide who belongs here and who doesn’t. Where did Adam Purinton get the idea that this was his country alone? And what gave him the right to tell people to get out? The answers to these questions have their roots in white supremacy.

Donald Trump spent the last two years telling voters—particularly white voters—that they were losing their jobs and their culture. He cautioned that “bad hombres” were crossing the border, “rapists” and “drug dealers.” He pledged to stop immigration from Muslim countries “until our country’s representatives can figure out what is going on.”

These promises are now being fulfilled. In January, Trump signed an executive order that banned immigrants from seven Muslim-majority countries for 90 days. The ban was rejected by the courts, but the White House plans to bring it back in modified form soon. And in February, Trump directed the Department of Homeland Security to speed up deportations, loosen the definition of the term “criminal” as it applies to immigrants, publish a list of crimes committed by undocumented people, strip them of their privacy protections, and build more prisons.

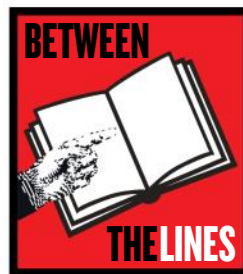
Unsurprisingly, the White House and its allies have insisted that this has nothing to do with race or religion, and everything to do with protecting

Americans. When asked about the immigration ban, House Speaker Paul Ryan responded that “we need to make sure that the vetting standards are up to snuff, so we can guarantee the safety and security of our country.” As for the deportations, the president explained, in his idiosyncratic style, “We’re getting really bad dudes out of this country. And at a rate that nobody’s ever seen before. And they’re the bad ones. And it’s a military operation.”

In fact, the deportations have not been restricted to “bad dudes.” Consider what happened to Sara Beltrán Hernández, an asylum-seeker from El Salvador. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents arrested her at a hospital in Texas where she was seeking treatment for a brain tumor. She is now being held at a privately run prison 40 miles from Dallas. Or take the case of Guadalupe García de Rayos, who came to the United States when she was 14 and has lived here for 21 years. She was caught using a fake Social Security number and ordered to check in with ICE annually in Phoenix. At her most recent meeting, she was arrested and deported to Mexico. (Pause for a minute to consider the crime for which she was separated from her husband and two children: By using a fake Social Security number, she contributed to the retirement benefits of others, while not being able to receive them herself.)

ICE maintains that it is only deporting immigrants who have committed crimes, but its agents have also seized people without criminal records. That’s what happened to Manuel Mosqueda Lopez, a house painter from Los Angeles. In mid-February, agents came to his home looking for someone else, but in the process checked his papers, found he was undocumented, and put him on a bus to Mexico—until lawyers filed an appeal.

No one is being made safe by these arrests. The only thing they accomplish is to deprive families of a mother or a wife, a husband or a father. They dis-



Worried that they might be swept up in a raid, immigrants have begun to avoid soccer games and church services.



rupt the lives of children and create generational trauma.

The reaction to these deportations among Democrats has been relatively subdued. One reason is that these policies were first tested under Barack Obama, who deported more than 2.5 million people—more than all of the presidents in the 20th century combined. A significant percentage of those deported under Obama had committed only minor offenses, such as traffic violations or drug possession. Only after a huge outcry by immigration advocates did the administration change course and begin restricting its deportation orders to serious criminal offenders.

During his presidential campaign, Trump promised to turn this well-oiled deportation machine on all 11 million undocumented immigrants currently living in the country. Now that he's in office, ICE agents have conducted raids in at least 12 states, sparking widespread fear in immigrant communities. People have begun to avoid soccer games

and church services, worried that they might be swept up in a raid. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that, after a raid on Asian restaurants in Mississippi, some undocumented immigrants stopped going to work and are pulling their children from school. Trump's policies, and the hateful rhetoric that accompanies them, have an undeniably racist element. The president has never proposed building a wall along the Canadian border. ICE is not raiding white neighborhoods in Boston looking for undocumented Irish immigrants. This is simply an assault on those immigrants who are steering America away from a white majority.

Which brings me back to that bar in Kansas. "Get out of my country" may as well be the slogan of the Trump administration, directed at anyone who is not white or Christian or straight. But this country doesn't belong to Trump; it belongs to all of us. We must stop it from being turned into a crime scene. ■

Sara Beltrán Hernández, an asylum-seeker from El Salvador, was arrested at her hospital while seeking treatment for a brain tumor.

SNAPSHOT/TERRAY SYLVESTER

The Fire This Time

A structure burns at the Standing Rock Sioux encampment in North Dakota as police move to shut the base of resistance down. President Trump has ordered construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline to resume. Thousands of indigenous protesters and their supporters had been gathered at the camp for several months.



REUTERS

Calvin Trillin
Deadline Poet

TRUMP ACCUSES THE MEDIA OF SPREADING FAKE NEWS

One has to admire the chutzpah it takes To say such a thing if you're King of the Fakes.

BACK ISSUES/1996

Mapping the Media Trust

The Nation's first special media issue also included the first centerfold in its history: a sprawling chart showing how much of the media was controlled by just a handful of conglomerates. In his introduction, Mark Crispin Miller wrote that any effort to contest the growing "media trust" should begin with a "campaign of public information" that would "involve the whole alternative press, as well as unions, churches, schools and advocacy groups—and progressives on the Internet, which is still a medium of democratic promise, although that promise is also at risk. Indeed, the same gigantic players that control the elder media are planning shortly to absorb the Internet, which could be transformed from a thriving common wilderness into an immeasurable de facto cyberpark for



corporate interests.... Therefore, to expect the new technology to free us from the trust is to succumb to a utopian delusion."

Only people power could accomplish such a liberation, Miller concluded, and only through a campaign to enforce the country's existing antitrust legislation.

"Before we raise the proper legal questions and debate the legislative possibilities, we need simply to teach everyone, ourselves included, that this whole failing culture is an oversold dead end, and that there might be a way out of it."

—Richard Kreitner



The American news media's coverage of last year's presidential election was so bad that most voters "don't know quite what they voted for," said Michael Copps, a former member of the Federal Communications Commission. "They're about to find out," he added.

But will they? Much depends on whether the media do a much better job going forward. This special issue of The Nation explores that challenge, grounded in the conviction that, whatever one's politics, it is in America's interest for all of the media—left, right, and center—to cover President Trump more rigorously than they did candidate Trump.

*Mark Hertsgaard, author of the seminal work of press criticism *On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency*, edited this issue and wrote its anchor piece. Hertsgaard credits the right-wing media infrastructure headed by Fox*

How to Fight Fox and Friends

We need an independent-media infrastructure to counter the right-wing leviathan.

by MARK HERTSGAARD

News as being the kingmakers in US politics, and he urges progressives to build a countervailing infrastructure of independent media that, in the legendary broadcaster Bill Moyers's words, are "unafraid of power and not complicit with it." Also in this issue, a South African journalist experienced with authoritarianism offers sharp advice on how to cover Trump. The editor of the Columbia Journalism Review (which is jointly publishing some of these articles) gives a surprisingly upbeat answer to the perennial question: Is there a business model for real journalism? Rising stars from The Young Turks and A7+ showcase how to reach online audiences with unapologetically opinionated, and wickedly funny, video. Plus a Doonesbury cartoon—because if we can't laugh, we surrender to the darkness.

DONALD TRUMP WOULD NOT BE PRESIDENT TODAY WERE IT NOT FOR the help of Fox and Friends. Their frenzied cheerleading for the birther candidate and their relentless bashing of Hillary Clinton wasn't the only reason for last November's outcome, but it was an indispensable one. Clinton started the 2016 race burdened with some of the highest unfavorability ratings of any candidate in modern history: 43 percent of the electorate told pollsters they disliked her. As a result, Clinton essentially had to run the table with the remaining 57 percent—a daunting task. Nothing, including her own sometimes questionable actions, did more to boost her negatives than the right-wing media, which has been attacking her since she appeared on the scene as the wife of candidate Bill Clinton in 1992.

Nor were Hillary's presidential prospects the only casualty. The United States is the only advanced country in which the denial of climate science is taken seriously in governing circles. ExxonMobil and the other fossil-fuel companies that spent decades and hundreds of millions of dollars promoting this denial are the number-one culprits, but Fox and Friends rank a close second: It was their ceaseless repetition of such corporate disinformation that embedded climate denial in right-wing ideology and made it a litmus test for Republican politicians.

When I say "Fox and Friends" here, I'm not talking about the Fox News morning show of the same name. Rather, it's my nickname for the larger right-wing media infrastructure of which Fox is the most visible and influ-

With smart strategies, an independent media could attract much larger audiences.

ential member. This infrastructure of cable-TV outlets, talk-radio stations, websites, newspapers, magazines, and publishing houses has exerted enormous influence on America's public discourse and political life for nearly 30 years, ever since it began taking shape with the nationwide rollout of Rush Limbaugh's radio show in 1988. This right-wing infrastructure dwarfs its left-of-center counterpart, as illustrated in the charts and graphs accompanying this article. Is anyone surprised, then, that right-wing views enjoy so much more visibility and influence in today's United States?

Collectively, the news media wield perhaps the greatest power there is in politics: the power to define reality. The journalistic choices of news organizations send a message, consciously or not, about what is—and isn't—important at any given moment and who should—and shouldn't—be listened to. Are the Standing Rock pipeline protests being covered by CBS, or ignored? Who gets quoted in *The New York Times*, and how prominently? Which authors are invited on NPR programs, and which are shunned?

Such decisions shape the ideological air we breathe and the political actions we take: whether we vote for candidate X or candidate Y (or vote at all), whether we take to the streets in protest or hope the police bust heads. The media's power over how people think, feel, and act is ubiquitous, but it is exercised in such a routine manner that many do not recognize it as power. Like fish in water, we take it for granted.

Fox and Friends were veritable kingmakers in 2016. Fox itself was the loudest media voice during the presidential campaign: 19 percent of all voters named it as their main source of campaign news, according to a Pew Research Survey—ahead of CNN, the other TV networks, and even social-media platforms like Facebook. In the Republican primaries and general election alike, the right-wing media's unabashed boosting of Trump and savaging of Clinton, along with its slanted coverage of issues from Obamacare to terrorism, had a decisive impact on what millions of Americans believed and how they voted. (Carlos Maza explains in a video for Media Matters how these outlets spread a message of fear that encouraged voting for Trump and kindred extremists.)

It is past time to build a countervailing independent-media infrastructure—not to mimic Fox and Friends' delivery of propaganda disguised as news or to slavishly carry water for any political party or cause, but rather to bring professional, truth-telling journalism to large numbers of Americans, many of whom trust neither Fox and Friends nor the mainstream media to tell the truth. What an independent-media infrastructure would look like—what outlets it includes, how they'll relate to one another, which delivery systems will be utilized—is a matter for discussion, one that *The Nation* hopes to invigorate with this article.

This is an uncertain moment for American journalism, and not simply because a bombastic new president has declared himself at "war" with the media. The economics of journalism are under stress like never before, as the rise of digital platforms has fractured mass audiences, slashed revenues, and given many the dangerous impression that no one needs to pay for journalism.

Kingmakers: Rupert Murdoch (right), chief of News Corporation, introducing Roger Ailes (left) as head of a brand-new 24-hour cable-news network called Fox News, January 1995.



THE RIGHT OVERSHADOWS THE LEFT

Read it and weep. Here's a comparison of the reach of the right-wing media versus its progressive counterpart, as measured by audience size and online engagement. If you ever wonder why your Uncle Fred still believes that climate change is a liberal hoax or why so many folks voted for a bullshitting billionaire who promised to bring their jobs back, the lists below are a big part of the reason: The average American is simply exposed to more right-wing information and commentary. Until progressives seriously invest in media and level the playing field, the tears will keep coming.



CABLE TELEVISION

(Average daily audience)



➤ **Fox News Channel**
2.5 million
prime-time viewers



➤ **MSNBC**
1.1 million
prime-time viewers

Source: Nielsen



Top 5 TALK-RADIO OPINION NEWS SHOWS

(by estimated audience size)

1. **The Rush Limbaugh Show**
2. **The Sean Hannity Show**
3. **The Mark Levin Show**
4. **The Glenn Beck Program**
5. **The Savage Nation**

Source: *Talkers* magazine



Limbaugh



Hannity



Top 10 CABLE-TV NEWS SHOWS

(by audience size, January 2017)

1. **The O'Reilly Factor**
Fox News Channel
2. **Tucker Carlson Tonight**
Fox News Channel
3. **The First 100 Days**
Fox News Channel
4. **The Five**
Fox News Channel
5. **Special Report With Bret Baier**
Fox News Channel
6. **Hannity**
Fox News Channel
7. **Your World With Neil Cavuto**
Fox News Channel
8. **America's Newsroom**
Fox News Channel
9. **Outnumbered**
Fox News Channel
10. **Shepard Smith Reporting**
Fox News Channel

Source: Nielsen+SD Data



O'Reilly



Carlson



SOCIAL-MEDIA REACH

➤ Fox News Channel

f 15M
t 13.4M
More than 500,000
YouTube subscribers

➤ The Huffington Post

f 9M
t 9.17M
More than 200,000
YouTube subscribers

➤ The Wall Street Journal

f 5.5M
t 13.1M

➤ The Daily Caller

f 4.28M
t 272,000

➤ New York Post

f 3.9M
t 1.18M

➤ Breitbart News

f 3.19M
t 638,000

➤ TheBlaze

f 1.97M
t 621,000

➤ MSNBC

f 1.86M
t 1.59M
More than 300,000
YouTube subscribers

➤ ThinkProgress

f 1.78M
t 721,000

➤ The Young Turks

f 1.63M
t 287,000
More than 3 million
YouTube subscribers

➤ Mother Jones

f 1.45M
t 683,000

➤ Daily Kos

f 1.3M
t 250,000

➤ Drudge Report

f 1.2M
t 1.18M

➤ Newsmax

f 1.17M
t 67,000

➤ Democracy Now!

f 1.16M
t 573,000
More than 200,000
YouTube subscribers

➤ National Review

f 1M
t 227,000

➤ RawStory

f 989,000
t 127,000

➤ Salon

f 955,000
t 934,000

➤ Alternet

f 948,000
t 130,000

➤ Infowars

f 714,000
t 247,000
Nearly 2 million
YouTube subscribers

➤ The Guardian US

f 688,000
t 186,000

➤ The Nation

f 607,000
t 998,000

➤ The Washington Times

f 566,000
t 301,000

➤ Brave New Films

f 545,000
t 15,400

➤ RedState

f 533,000
t 191,000

➤ Talking Points Memo

f 417,000
t 247,000

➤ The Intercept

f 295,000
t 384,000

➤ The Weekly Standard

f 286,000
t 262,000

➤ One America News Network

f 123,000
t 66,900

➤ Link TV

f 73,000
t 12,600

But the independent media could well attract much larger audiences if smart strategies are adopted. Bernie Sanders often pointed out during his presidential campaign that poll after poll attests to the fact that most Americans agree with progressives on most issues, from taxing the wealthy and raising the minimum wage to protecting the environment and defending immigrant rights. The challenge is to connect with that audience, which requires recognizing the fundamental role that the media play in shaping our politics and then investing resources accordingly.

BILL MOYERS, THE LEGENDARY PUBLIC BROADCASTer and former special assistant to President Lyndon Johnson, is one of many progressives who have sought to crack this problem. When Rupert Murdoch created the Fox network in 1996 and named Roger Ailes, the former Republican image-maker, to run its news division, Moyers saw what was coming. He warned a small group of very wealthy progressive philanthropists that, with Murdoch's fortune and Ailes's talent behind it, Fox could transform the US media and political landscape by distributing well-produced if journalistically fraudulent "news" to vast numbers of Americans. If progressives didn't want to be left behind while Fox and Friends shaped the news and political agenda, Moyers argued, they had to create their own equivalent to Fox. And they had to buttress that new television network with a constellation of radio stations, and print and online outlets, comparable to the one that fed—and fed off of—Fox's News's programming.

"I didn't want to create a progressive network as a mirror image of Fox—a propaganda arm of the Democratic Party or an ideological operation that would twist the world to that ideology," Moyers recalled in an interview with *The Nation*. "I had more in mind, and actually used these examples: a journalism more in the mold of the BBC at its best—unafraid of power and not complicit with it, reporting what conventional journalism overlooked or wouldn't touch, getting its viewers as close as possible to the verifiable truth...with a strong and independent muckraking mission."

Moyers's appeal failed, as have numerous others over the years, and the reasons why demand examination.



“Progressives have historically not made unified, effective communications a priority.”

—David Fenton

Listen up: The arrest of *Democracy Now!*'s Amy Goodman drew national attention to the Dakota Access Pipeline resistance, seen here confronting police last October.

It's puzzling, to put it mildly, that progressives have not drawn the obvious lessons from the right-wing media's enormous successes over the past quarter-century.

"Progressives have historically not made unified, effective communications a priority," says David Fenton, founder of a progressive communications firm. "The progressive world, unlike the right, does not have a TV network or legions of talk-radio hosts. However, we do have enormous potential power if we adopt more of the basic principles of marketing and communications, such as simple messages and enormous amounts of repetition to target audiences. Our opponents do this routinely. It comes naturally to them, as they mostly have business or marketing backgrounds."

Consciously or not, most progressive organizations, donors, and candidates are following a theory of social change that trusts the mainstream media to report progressives' actions and analysis fairly. According to this theory, coverage by *Democracy Now!* or *Mother Jones* or, yes, *The Nation* is all very well, but it preaches to the choir. Much better to get one's story covered by ABC, *USA Today*, or their mainstream counterparts.

The problem is that the mainstream media usually don't deliver. Of countless possible examples, consider the coverage of Sanders's presidential campaign. Certain that a democratic socialist held no electoral appeal, mainstream media at first ignored Sanders, and then downplayed the idea that he could win, despite primary victories and polls consistently showing him doing significantly better than Clinton would against Trump. The substance of his positions—tuition-free college, health care for all, fighting climate change—was barely noted, much less explained, especially by the TV coverage that remains most Americans' main source of news. Newspaper opinion pages did consider substance but almost always condemned that of Sanders, especially near the end of his run. Opinion pieces in *The Washington Post* ran five to one against him, Thomas Frank observed in *Harper's*; "ignorant," "unrealistic," and "reckless" were just some of the adjectives applied.

There are honorable journalists at mainstream outlets, but they operate within definite limits. Cenk Uygur, founder of the hugely popular *Young Turks* news site, tells a revealing story about why he resigned from MSNBC. (For more on *The Young Turks*, see Laura Flanders's interview on page 38 of this issue). In 2011, Uygur was hosting the 6 p.m. daily newscast for MSNBC. Ratings were good, but according to Uygur, the head of MSNBC said that the tone of the show "concerned" him. "We're not outsiders," the executive allegedly told Uygur. "We're NBC. We're insiders." And Uygur was supposed to start acting like it. Uygur didn't take the hint and ended up leaving the network. "This is how your news media gets watered down," Uygur wrote in an e-mail to supporters. "The big networks are totally captured by the corporate and political establishment, and they don't want to upset the status quo."

By instinct, mainstream news organizations are political centrists, a characteristic that Fox and Friends exploited over the past quarter-century to push mainstream



coverage significantly to the right—arguably their single greatest achievement. The old business model of commercial television, radio, and newspapers called for appealing to the largest audience, which dictated offering news and commentary that spoke to as broad a spectrum as possible. Thus, mainstream news outlets developed a habit of hewing close to the ideological center—or, more precisely, what they perceived as the ideological center. Like Goldilocks's porridge, their coverage would be not too liberal, not too conservative, but just right.

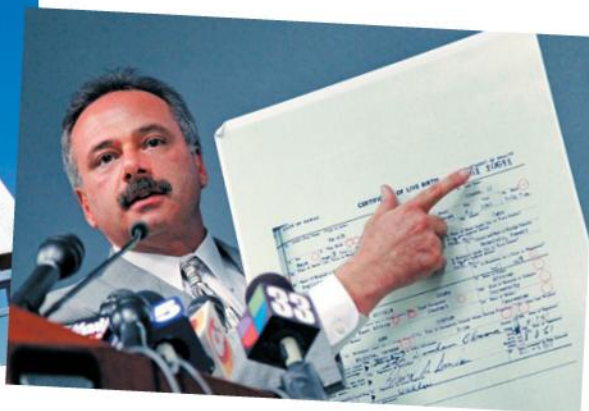
Fox and Friends, by articulating an unabashedly right-wing take on the world and accumulating a large audience

in the process, in effect convinced the mainstream media that the political spectrum extended much further to the right than they had recognized. Right-wingers had long accused the media of harboring a liberal bias as part of a larger ideological offensive driven by right-wing think tanks and the presidency of Ronald Reagan. Now, the marketplace seemed to be confirming it.

As a result, the mainstream media continued and indeed accelerated the rightward shift that began under Reagan. The most extreme examples involved supposed scandals that were first asserted by right-wing media outlets but then picked up, amplified, and legitimized

Birther propaganda:

A billboard in Colorado, November 2009 (left), and a Maricopa County, Arizona, official claiming Obama's birth certificate was forged, July 2012 (right).



FAKE NEWS

HOW LIES SPREAD

Perhaps the right-wing media infrastructure's greatest success has been to insinuate its propaganda into mainstream news coverage. It's a neat trick: Repeat a lie often enough, create a "controversy" around it, and then count on the gullibility and timidity of the mainstream media to pick up the story and spread it to a much larger audience, the facts be damned. Although this happened often during Bill Clinton's presidency, the most recent and consequential example is the slanderous claim that Barack Obama wasn't born in the United States, and thus wasn't eligible to be president—a lie that Donald Trump rode all the way to the White House. This timeline traces the evolution of that lie—from the remote swamps of right-wing media through the mainstream press to the Oval Office.

THE OBAMA BIRTHING LIE

June 2008: *National Review's* Jim Geraghty suggests that Obama release his birth certificate to debunk rumors about his place of birth.

June 2008: Far-right website *WorldNetDaily* starts to promote the "birther" issue, which it will go on to chronicle for years.

June 2009: Rush Limbaugh says that President Obama has one thing in common with God: "God does not have a birth certificate."

July 15, 2009: CNN's Lou Dobbs discusses the birther issue at length on his radio show.

July 20, 2009: Limbaugh says Obama "has yet to prove" that he's a natural-born citizen.

July 21, 2009: CNN airs a discussion on the birther issue between a right-wing radio host and a representative of FactCheck.org.

Late July 2009: Congressman Mike Castle, Republican of Delaware, is berated at a town-hall meeting by a woman holding her birth certificate and yelling, "I want my country back!" After declaring that Obama is a US citizen, Castle is voted out of office a year later.

August 2009: The birther issue dominates cable news during the summer's slow news season, and is discussed regularly on CNN, MSNBC, and Fox.

November 2009: Georgia's Nathan Deal joins other GOP members of Congress in pressing Obama to release his birth certificate.

December 2009: Former Republican vice-presidential nominee Sarah Palin calls the matter of Obama's place of birth "a fair question."

March 2011: Real-estate mogul Donald Trump appears on various TV shows to promote birtherism, dominating cable news for weeks.

April 14, 2011: Arizona's legislature passes a bill that requires all presidential candidates to release their birth certificates.

April 27, 2011: Obama releases his long-form birth certificate and urges people not to fall for "carnival barkers." Trump claims credit for the president's action.

April 27, 2011: The right-wing *Drudge Report* circulates a false report that the long-form certificate Obama released is a forgery.

May 2011: Jerome Corsi of *WorldNetDaily* releases his book, *Where's the Birth Certificate?*, which shoots to the top of the Amazon best-seller list.

August 2012: During a campaign stop in his home state of Michigan, Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney brags, "No one's ever asked to see my birth certificate."

February 2015: After continuing to promote the birther slander in tweets and live appearances, Trump wins plaudits from *Breitbart News* for telling the Conservative Political Action Conference "we have to...find out" if Obama's birth certificate is "real."

June 2015: Trump announces his candidacy for president.

September 2016: Trump holds a press conference to say he now believes Obama was born in the US and blames the birther issue, inaccurately, on Hillary Clinton.

November 2016: After losing the popular vote but winning the Electoral College, Trump prepares to succeed the president whose legitimacy he slandered.

—Mark Hertsgaard and Douglas Grant

by the mainstream, often despite a notable absence of evidence or relevance to government affairs. Hillary and Bill Clinton's alleged murder of White House aide Vince Foster, Bill's extramarital affairs, and, later, the racist slander that Barack Obama wasn't born in the United State and thus wasn't a legitimate president all took root in the right-wing media before graduating—with a massive assist from Donald Trump—to vastly larger audiences. While the mainstream outlets didn't embrace the birther slander, they did cover and thereby legitimize it, and they didn't definitively call it out until the end of the 2016 campaign. By then, the right-wing media's repetition of the slander had built enough mass support to put Trump within striking distance of the White House. (See the accompanying sidebar for how the birther story migrated from the right-wing media into the mainstream.)

AN INDEPENDENT-MEDIA INFRASTRUCTURE should not, of course, traffic in falsehoods or otherwise stoop to the right's level. The truth, compellingly told, is enough. But an independent-media infrastructure does need to be built out, and this will require marshaling substantial amounts of money, talent, and resources. It will also require acting with both

speed and patience: speed, because the very future of democracy is at stake under Trump; patience, because one reason Fox and Friends wield such influence today is that they have been building their brand for more than a quarter-century.

One needn't start from scratch; valuable pieces of the puzzle are already in place. Despite operating on budgets that are a tiny fraction of what their counterparts on the right and in the mainstream media enjoy, some progressive outlets already reach sizable audiences. *Democracy Now!* is broadcast on more than 1,400 radio and cable stations and is available, via the satellite channels Link TV and Free Speech News, in 34 million US households. *The Huffington Post* receives more than 70 million unique visitors every month.

Progressive outlets often punch above their weight in terms of impact. "*Mother Jones* silenced Mitt Romney's 2012 campaign with the '47 percent' video," observes Jo Ellen Green Kaiser, the executive director of the Media Consortium, an alliance of 82 independent progressive outlets, including *Mother Jones*, *Democracy Now!*, *AlterNet*, and *The Nation*. "Amy Goodman brought national attention to Standing Rock when she was arrested there [last] September."

(continued on page 40)



PLAYING CATCH-UP

DON'T WHINE, ORGANIZE!

Both the left and the right have been complaining about mainstream media bias since the 1960s. But the right was much quicker to recognize a solution: Don't just whine, play offense. Building and supporting its own media has brought huge benefits for the right's conservative ideas, causes, and politicians, as well as setbacks for their liberal counterparts. The left has started to catch up, but it still has a long way to go. Will Trump's arrival hasten the pace?

1988 *The Rush Limbaugh Show*, which premiered in 1984, goes national.

1992 President Bush shares the stage with Limbaugh to boost his re-election campaign.

1993 *The American Spectator* publishes sexual harassment allegations against President Clinton from Paula Jones, whose lawsuit uncovered the Lewinsky affair.

1994 Republicans win control of Congress, credit Limbaugh for the takeover.

1995 The *Drudge Report*, a right-wing news aggregation site, debuts.

1995 *Salon*, a liberal online magazine, debuts.

1996 Fox News, created by Rupert Murdoch and ex-GOP strategist Roger Ailes, debuts in 17 million homes.

1996 *Democracy Now!*, a daily progressive news show, debuts on five Pacifica radio stations.

1998 The *Drudge Report* breaks the bombshell Lewinsky story, leading to Clinton's impeachment.

1998 *Salon* reveals sexual affair of Representative Henry Hyde, manager of the GOP's impeachment campaign.

2002 Fox News overtakes CNN as America's most-watched cable TV channel.

2004 Air America, a left-wing alternative to Limbaugh, launches but soon falters.

2005 *The Huffington Post*, a progressive political blog, debuts.

2007 *Breitbart News*, envisioned as right-wing version of *The Huffington Post*, debuts.

2009 *The Glenn Beck Show* debuts on Fox News.

2010 *The Guardian* publishes over 92,000 documents from WikiLeaks.

2010 *Breitbart News* posts doctored video purporting to show Department of Agriculture official Shirley Sherrod favoring blacks over whites. The video spreads to the mainstream media, and Sherrod resigns.

2016 *Breitbart News's* former executive editor, Stephen Bannon, is appointed senior counsel to the president by Donald Trump.

2016-7 *Democracy Now!'s* reporting on the Dakota Access Pipeline protests sparks broader media coverage; Obama halts construction, but Trump reverses the decision.

—Research assistance provided by Douglas Grant



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—Molly Ivins

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How the Press Should Cover TRUMP

Ditch the false gods of neutrality and access—only fearless independent reporting can hold power accountable and energize democracy.

by NIC DAWES

THIS IS A TIME OF TESTING FOR American journalism—will it rise to the occasion? Today's media environment faces dangers as threatening as our physical environment faces from climate change. Journalism's operating model has been under siege for more than a decade; now it confronts an existential risk as an authoritarian populist attacks democratic norms once taken for granted. But this moment of peril is also a moment of opportunity. Much depends on how a media system already under stress from the epochal changes in technology, economics, and audience behavior responds to this new challenge. And much is at stake: not only a renewal of the journalistic vocation, public trust in the media, and its commercial potential, but also the accountability architecture of American democracy itself. Securing these things will mean returning to some old principles: fairness, accuracy, rigor, and, above all, a position outside of power, exerting pressure on it, rather than inside, transmitting its message. And even that on its own may not be enough. To truly confront this moment and emerge strengthened, the press will require new and sometimes uncomfortable strategies.

I know how bewildering it can be as a journalist to feel the secure foundations of a liberal-democratic culture

shift and slip beneath you. As a parliamentary reporter in South Africa, and later as the editor of Johannesburg's *Mail & Guardian*, a newspaper built on blockbuster investigations of corruption and the abuse of power, I watched it happen in slow motion to a country that was too complacent by half about the strength of its young institutions. In the 2000s, as the leaders of the African National Congress lost patience with the very constitutional constraints on power they had once battled apartheid to secure, they took to closing off reporters' access, launching proxy lawsuits, stigmatizing the press as biased, building a case for regulatory oversight, and abetting the purchase of hostile news outlets by business cronies. Today, under Jacob Zuma's majoritarian rule, a free press survives, albeit in diminished form, thanks to a vigorous and persistent fight.

The United States, where I work now, is not South Africa: Its democratic traditions are older, its legal protections for speech more absolute, its media more diverse and, despite the carnage in print journalism, vastly better resourced. And yet the features of an authoritarian populism, centered on the personality of a demagogic leader, are emerging with stunning rapidity here.

The day after he was inaugurated, Donald Trump made it clear that his "running war with the media" would continue into his presidency. "They are among the most dishonest human beings on earth," he said of journalists in

Nic Dawes is deputy executive director for media at Human Rights Watch, the global advocacy organization. He was previously editor in chief of South Africa's *Mail & Guardian* and chief content officer at India's *Hindustan Times*.



Trump: Media Are The Enemy
LEGISLATORS WILL RECOGNIZE
Trump: Any Negative Polls Are Fake News

Bannon: Press Is 'Opposition Party'
President Trump blasted a day of "fake news" as he took a day of "the opposition party" to the White House.

Trump: Media For Reporting On Election Crowd Size
President Trump blasted a day of "fake news" as he took a day of "the opposition party" to the White House.

THE WEATHER
A BULLETIN OF THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

Nation
People

Trump: Blasts Journalists At CIA HQ
President Trump blasted a day of "fake news" as he took a day of "the opposition party" to the White House.

Kellyanne Conway Cites Non-Existent Bowling Green Massacre
Can the Denialist Enough to Destroy All Substance of Law and Order

a speech at the CIA's headquarters. He then sent his press secretary, Sean Spicer, out to berate the press for accurately reporting on the inauguration's attendance and to fabricate numbers about crowd size. The next morning, Kellyanne Conway, counselor to the president, introduced a spluttering Chuck Todd to "alternative facts" when he questioned her about Spicer's lies on NBC's *Meet the Press*. Four days later, with the sulfur of Trump's first executive orders still hanging in the air, White House chief strategist Stephen Bannon gleefully told the press to "shut up" and then daubed it with the scarlet letter that authoritarians routinely bestow upon independent journalism: "the opposition party." And so it went, compressing into days an assault that in other countries—Russia, Turkey, Venezuela, South Africa—has taken years. But the tropes of illiberal democracy aren't enough for Trump. When stories in *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* helped to bring down his national-security adviser, Gen. Michael Flynn, he escalated to outright dictator-speak, attacking "The FAKE NEWS media (failing @nytimes, @NBCNews, @ABC, @CBS, @CNN)" on Twitter and describing it as "the enemy of the American People!"

Grandiose hostility to the press, performed as a kind of theater, is no longer a tool of voter mobilization for Trump; now he seeks to use it to undermine the basic information infrastructure of democracy. His ultimate target is accountability in the largest sense. No one who has covered other authoritarian leaders could have been surprised when President Trump ridiculed US District Court Judge James Robart for overturning his travel ban against the citizens of seven Muslim-majority countries: "The opinion of this so-called judge, which essentially takes law-enforcement away from our country, is ridiculous and will be overturned!"

IN THE FACE OF THIS BLITZKRIEG, THERE HAVE BEEN some fine acts of individual journalism. The *Times* and the *Post* have kept the spotlight on allegations of Russian campaign meddling, and there have been telling accounts of the access that \$200,000 can buy at Mar-a-Lago. No doubt that's why the president and some of his supporters felt that he needed to "win" his bizarre face-off with journalists in the East Room on February 16, and insist that he succeeded. Be

The tropes of illiberal democracy aren't enough for Trump, who blasted the news media as "the enemy of the American People!"

Beat the press: President Trump attacked journalists during his January 21 speech at CIA headquarters.

that as it may, when NBC correspondent Peter Alexander corrected Trump's false assertion about his margin of victory in the Electoral College and asked: "Why should the American people trust you?," he planted a flag that others may rally to in time.

Overall, though, the press has found it difficult to mount an effective response to Trump. Why? Combating climate change—the global-warming kind—is hard, because fossil fuels are part of the global economy's deep structure. American journalism, similarly, finds itself trapped in dysfunctional practices that it regards as foundational.

Two habits of mind stand out: an insistence that the press must pretend to Olympian neutrality, and a conviction that access to the powerful is good per se. These two beliefs coincide with the persistence of a journalistic professional class that was educated in elite institutions, is convinced of its place within the machinery of power, and has forgotten its blue-collar roots (which are literally invisible in most newsrooms now that printing presses have moved to distant suburban plants and computers have replaced hot lead).

Trump and Bannon understand this perfectly and have hacked the deep grammar of establishment journalism to turn the press against itself. If the press believes its job is to convey messages from the nation's leaders rather than to hold them to account, then news organizations need only send their most polished stenographers to the White House briefing room and carry the proceedings live, lies and all. If the job of journalists is to be "balanced," they will invite Conway onto their programs as a representative of the president, even if she adds no new information or, worse, invents a Bowling Green massacre to justify his travel ban. They may snort at her in derision, as Todd did when she coined the term "alternative facts," but that only enables the propagandist to label journalists as an arrogant coastal elite.

Worse still, if journalists insist on appearing neutral, they will avoid asking hard-edged questions or calling a lie a lie. Instead, they'll default to mealy-mouthed formulations like "What do you say to those of your critics who argue that...?" They will spurn the word "lie" when covering Trump because, as *Wall Street Journal* editor in chief Gerard Baker maintains, we cannot see inside the president's mind and divine his "state of knowledge and moral intent."

It isn't the word "lie" that really matters in this debate; the deeper problem is the familiar theory of trust that Baker insists on. "If we routinely make these kinds of judgments," he has said, "readers would start to see our inevitably selective use of a moral censure as partisanship. We must not only be objective. We must be seen to be objective to continue to earn our readers' trust." This is an extraordinary claim. Drawing journalistically reasonable inferences from unimpeachable evidence actually enhances the press's authority rather than undercuts it. For a journalist or a news organization to abdicate that responsibility is to give up before they've begun.

Moreover, for the press to articulate a politics of independence, accountability, fairness, and accuracy, and then to choose its words on that basis, is not partisan. Nor does the press risk its credibility with such reporting any more



than it currently does with phony “he said/she said” formulations. On the contrary, this will be the basis for a more enduring trust—perhaps the only kind that can survive a president who attacks as partisan any outlet that contradicts his fables.

THE FIRST IMPERATIVE IN WAR IS TO RECOGNIZE that you’re fighting for your life and act accordingly. The war for freedom of the press in the Trump era must be fought on many fronts. It must be fought in the White House briefing room, where reporters need to shun stenography, ask more pointed questions, and stand up for colleagues when the administration attempts to punish a given reporter or outlet. It must be fought in the courts, where lawsuits and the threat of legal action will aim to sap journalists’ will and reduce their bosses’ appetite for risk. It must be fought in the publishers’ suites, where crony deals or concern over pressure from regulators on associated companies or deals can encourage the softening of coverage. According to the *The Wall Street Journal*, Trump son-in-law and senior adviser Jared Kushner has already complained to CNN’s parent company, Time Warner, about the network’s coverage. Time Warner is planning a merger with AT&T, which must clear a series of federal hurdles. Even if this pressure has no effect on CNN, it sends a message to the entire industry.


Nowhere are the sacrifices that Washington journalism makes at the altar of access more egregious than with the annual White House correspondents’ dinner. Astonishingly—or perhaps not—this year’s dinner is still scheduled to go ahead on April 29, despite rising unease and the withdrawal of the “failing” *New York Times* and the “way down” *Vanity Fair*. Jeff Mason, the president of the White House Correspondents’ Association, recently told the *Times* that his organization “looks forward to hosting our annual dinner this year as we do every year to celebrate the First Amendment, reward some of the finest reporting of the past year and recognize promising young student journalists.”

The First Amendment and student journalism need all the love they can get, but the true function of the correspondents’ dinner is quite different: to bind the establishment press and the White House in a slightly awkward hug and then sprinkle both with celebrity stardust. There is mutual ribbing, but any sting is always drawn by the certain knowledge that “we”—journalists and government officials—are all in this together.

Until we aren’t. On February 24, Spicer excluded the *Times*, CNN, the *Los Angeles Times*, *BuzzFeed*, and the BBC, among others, from an off-camera briefing, saying the White House would continue to “push back” on the “narrative” they were reporting. The following day, amid gathering outrage and rumbles about a boycott, Trump pulled out of the dinner, tweeting: “Please wish everyone well and have a great evening.”

If the correspondents’ association had any sense of what the politics of the moment demand, it would have cancelled the dinner or changed its format weeks earlier. Alternatively, the big networks, papers, and newswires could have pulled out, making the whole sad charade untenable. Instead, Trump robbed the press of an opportunity to demonstrate its political savvy, setting himself up to dismiss statements in defense of press freedom at the dinner as sour grapes. Indeed, reporters for *Time* and the Associated Press, who declined to attend Spicer’s “friendlies-only” briefing when rival outlets were excluded, showed a much clearer sense of the solidarity that is required.

That adversarial posture doesn’t come easily to Washington



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journalists, but at a moment when *The New York Times* feels constrained to take out advertisements for the truth during the Oscars, it is now coming upon them willy-nilly.

To be clear, journalistic access can be very useful, but only if journalists and their bosses make sure that “access” does not mean the tacit or explicit trading of your independence for information. As the public’s surrogate, the press has a right of access to the places where the machinery of government is working—places where documents funnel through the system, where officials can be confronted directly, or where they can find reporters when they have something important to leak. You do not bargain about this kind of press access, and you accept no diminishment of it, because it belongs to you, not the government of the day.

When I arrived as a reporter in the press gallery of South Africa’s Parliament in the early 2000s, I was stunned and thrilled by the openness of the place. Each morning, a giant sheaf of official documents would arrive at my door, which was just 30 feet from the main chamber of the National Assembly. We reporters could wander in and out of committee meetings and buttonhole top officials and CEOs giving testimony; lawyers and activists, cabinet ministers and functionaries would drop by to chat.

This was the very definition of an access journalist’s perch, and it would have been easy to succumb to the comfortable rhythms of stenographic reporting. But the veteran reporters on the beat made sure that a different culture prevailed. They taught the rest of us to scan the official documents for hints of conflict, to read deeply through dull reams of print, to fulfill our responsibilities as the public’s watchdog. It was a place we would later have to fight for, with only partial success, once the government tired of our prodding.

It is this cultural outlook that Washington journalism must revive, buoyed by a conviction that the public—notwithstanding right-wing jeers about a biased liberal press—wants someone to keep a skeptical eye on government. Such a cultural shift, in turn, implies a range of tactical reforms. Bobby Ghosh, a former international editor at *Time*, suggests that news organizations reassign their foreign correspondents to the White House beat, because they are used to asking hard questions of hostile leaders. Mehdi Hasan, whose Al Jazeera program is a master class in tough interviewing, has offered Twitter tutorials in real time as Spicer’s briefings unfold: “Stop asking open-ended questions [like] ‘what do you say to those...’”; and “Ask pointed questions: ‘Is it right for a 5-year-old boy to be detained at the airport?’”

Gilded cage: Jeff Mason of the White House Correspondents’ Association speaking at Trump Tower following a meeting with Sean Spicer.

To deal with the onslaught it now faces, the press needs to get organized to accomplish things more difficult than an annual dinner.

At a minimum, it seems clear that carrying the White House press secretary’s briefing live is of no news value. Doing so simply amplifies the administration’s demonstration of its power over facts and its humiliation of the press. (On the other hand, carrying a briefing by President Trump is clearly newsworthy, as the February 16 encounter starkly illustrated.) Margaret Sullivan, *The Washington Post*’s media columnist, urges greater skepticism and selectivity in reporting on White House briefings. “Official words do matter,” she observes, “but they shouldn’t be what news organizations pay most attention to, as they try to present the truth about a new administration.” Press critic Jay Rosen has suggested letting sharp interns cover the briefing; this would free up experienced correspondents to go out and do the reporting that would yield real news.

Beyond tactical adjustments, American journalism needs to develop a larger strategy and institutional structure for defending freedom of the press. At the moment, nothing of the kind exists—and worse, despite frenzied debate about the future of journalism and how to cover this president, no one is even beginning to discuss what such an institutional strategy might look like.

To deal with the onslaught it now faces, the press needs to get organized to accomplish things more difficult than an annual dinner. Organizing implies taking a stance, if only in defense of the precedents and practices that secure the press’s role in a constitutional democracy. This will call forth more accusations of partisanship, which is why it will be important to show that this stand is not a partisan one, but rather an affirmation of bedrock values. The press should champion a politics of independence, accountability, ethical standards, and legal rights; this is the basis on which it can fight to defend its role in a democratic society and to fulfill its duty to the people and founding ideals of the United States. The editors of America’s grandest news institutions are now beginning to speak out clearly on Trump’s tactics. We will know that something deep has shifted when they begin to act together in defense of the information infrastructure of democracy.

The press will also need friends to help in its defense. A coalition of news organizations should articulate common principles and assemble the staff and funds to pay for litigation and outreach to fellow pillars of civil society: good-government groups and press-freedom NGOs; business organizations that recognize the value of independent journalism; religious and ethical leaders; and, not least, the legion of unofficial press critics. There must also be a more robust discussion of the effects of corporate consolidation on independent journalism and the ability to serve diverse publics. To regain trust, news organizations must not only produce first-rate work; they must show that they understand why so many people lost faith in them and take concrete steps to make amends.

Neither a reinvigorated journalism nor a movement for press freedom will be enough on its own, but together they’re a baseline for survival. Climate-change denial may be back in vogue, but the facts of this case are on the nightly news. The waters are rising for democracy in America, and the world is watching. All hands to the pump.

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Bill Miller is an accredited journalist at the UN for the Washington International and has written extensively on UN issues.

He is the Principal of Miller and Associates International Media Consultants, which created the Global Connection Television concept.

Bill developed an interest in international issues and the UN when he served as a US Peace Corps volunteer in the Dominican Republic. In his first year he worked as a community developer in a remote rural area; his second year he was Professor of Social Work at the Madre y Maestra University in Santiago, the country's second largest city.

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America Is Finally Winning Again!^(TM)

A self-confessed dishonest journalist's plea for White House press credentials.

by FRANCESCA FIORENTINI



DEAR MR. TRUMP SIR,
 IN CASE THIS LIBERAL RAG IS STILL BEING DELIVERED
 TO 1600 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, PLEASE KNOW THAT
 WE ARE NOT WITH THEM.
 THIS WAS OUR ONLY WAY TO GET TO YOU.
 PLEASE CONSIDER GRANTING NEWSBROKE WHITE
 HOUSE PRESS CREDENTIALS. WE WILL SIT QUIETLY
 BEHIND THE BREITBART TECH BLOGGERS AND LAUGH
 ON CUE.
 PLEASE ACCEPT THIS ARTICLE AS PROOF OF OUR
 LOYALTY TO THE TRUTH.

*(Paid for by scalped tickets to see
 Milo Yiannopoulos speak)*

Doomsday bunker, Washington, DC

IN HIS FIRST WEEKS AS PRESIDENT, DONALD J. Trump^(TM) has objectively beaten the disgraced former president Barack Obama. From executive orders to the hotness of the first family, experts¹ maintain that President Trump's legacy^(TM) has already outdone that of his predecessor. A cursory look at the masses of people marching in the streets—so happy about the election they can't hold back tears—shows that so far, it's Trump 1, Obama -44.

The winning has gotten so bad that a huge number of very important scientists² from the science community question whether Barack Obama ever actually was president of the United States—or whether he was some sort of mass hallucination induced by decades of America not winning enough. You won't see this winning reported in the shamestream media. But we at *Newsbroke* on AJ+, though currently operating without the benefit of the White House press credentials that some “journalists” take for granted, hold these half-truths to be self-evident: that all facts are created equal, even the “alternative” ones.

The blamestream media, aka the Lying Press^(TM), would have you believe that America is *not* winning and that only Donald J. Trump^(TM), his friends in the fossil-fuel industry, and his immediate family are. But we at *Newsbroke*, aka the Truthing Press^(TM), have it on good authority that this is just another piece of Fake News^(TM) from the flamestream media and liberal Twitter-feedia. White House press secretary and all-around neat guy Sean Spicer has made this clear: “Because Donald Trump considers every American to be family,” he announced, “every American is, in fact, winning.”

And still some so-called journalists are clinging to their lies about Trump's lack of winning, pointing to his presidential approval ratings, the lowest in recorded history. But their data fail to take into account the tremendous ratings for his 15 seasons on *The Apprentice*,

¹ Steve Bannon.

² Steve Bannon.

which, when averaged out, completely and totally beat the recent Arnold Schwarzenegger–hosted season, as well as Schwarzenegger’s approval ratings as governor of California and the *Rotten Tomatoes* rating for *The Expendables 3*. Also, *True Lies* went over budget by \$10 million, and Schwarzenegger didn’t do any of his own stunts because he couldn’t lay off the craft-service snack table.³

It is this reporter’s belief—as a proud nonmember of the maimstream media—that before any more polling on Donald J. Trump™’s performance as president is conducted, we should require a grace period that would allow any residual resentment left over from the alleged Obama administration to dissipate. Not taking that prior disaster into account would be like moving between dinner courses without cleansing one’s palate first: fine when ordering military raids in Yemen, but *not for polling*.

SO WHY DOES TRUMP’S INCESSANT WINNING COME AS SUCH a shock to people who claim to live in America? The answer lies in the lies of the liars who run the lying press. Clearly, the winning has gone unreported, which is why I’m taking it upon myself to tell The Truth™ about what we’ve witnessed so far:

Fact 1: When it comes to security and safety, this president is absolutely destroying the legacy of all other presidents.

Fact 2: No other administration has alerted the American people to more terror. Whether you’re talking Radical Islamic Terrorism™ or the nightly terror of remembering that Donald J. Trump™ is the 45th president of the United States, terror is this administration’s middle name.

Fact 3: Also, its middle name is John—apparently, the “J.” stands for John.

Fact 4: It might also stand for Jesus.

And the massacres! So many massacres have gone unreported by the menstruating feminists of the damestream bleedia—the silent majority of which happen on Sundays, the day that George Soros hands out checks to journalists (coincidence?). These massacres include not only Bowling Green in 2013, but Syracuse in 2011, Malibu Beach in 2014, and Red Lobster in 2015, when a radicalized aorta carried out a lone-wolf heart attack. We must also never forget the slayings at the MTV Music Awards in 2016—where so many radicalized black women in Beyoncé’s entourage absolutely slayed. At the time, we members of the press didn’t do our job in reporting these massacres. We were too caught up reporting on Barack Obama’s eight-year apology tour and its epic after-parties.

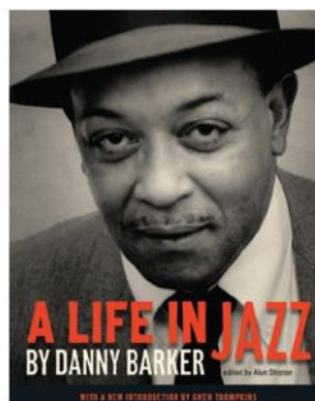
But that’s all over now. These days, with Donald J. Trump™ as president, America is, according to The Source,⁴ winning so hard that it’s hard to remember what losing—or anything else—feels like anymore. And if you, the reader, doubt any of the above, we’d ask if maybe you should be the one to apologize. Because we, as the crooked journalists we’ve decided to become, are so, so, so sorry. (Please, Sean? We promise to be good.) ■

Francesca Fiorentini is host and producer of Newsbroke on A7+. Additional reporting by Newsbroke comedy writer Matt Lieb.

³ Steve Bannon told me.

⁴ The Devil... j/k, Steve Bannon!

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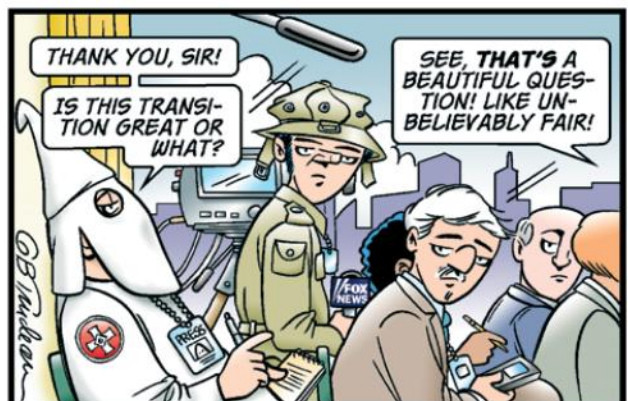
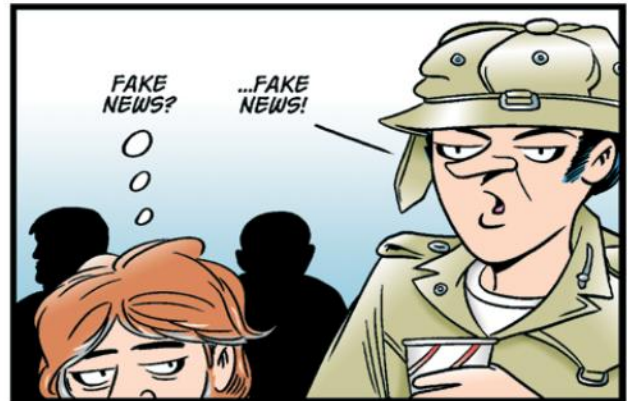
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Is There a Business Model for Real Journalism?

The future offers some surprising glimmers of hope.

by KYLE POPE

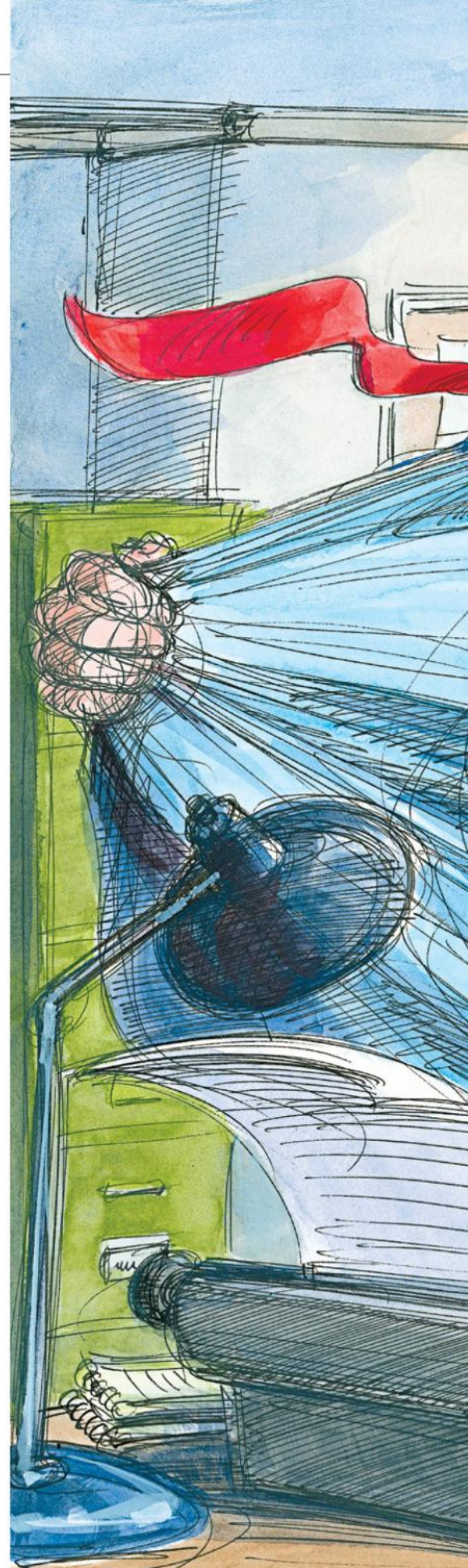
DONALD TRUMP HAS A BULLY'S NOSE FOR THE vulnerable and the defenseless, and he sees the American media as both.

The White House's vicious attacks on the press, and the often-timid response from journalists, stem from the fact that, as a business, the press at this moment couldn't be more exposed: Most of the biggest media companies in the country still haven't settled on a business plan that works (and the smaller ones, in ever-larger numbers, are simply closing up shop); reporters continue to lose their jobs; and magic-bullet answers that once offered hope for turning things around—video or live events or virtual reality—seem to disappoint by the day.

No wonder the ridicule from Sean Spicer and Steve Bannon, propelled by historically low approval ratings for journalists, has turned into an existential threat to journalism that is gleefully being fanned by the commander in chief. There's nothing new on the horizon,

Kyle Pope is the editor in chief and publisher of the Columbia Journalism Review. His work has appeared in The New York Times, the New Republic, the Los Angeles Times, and elsewhere.

ILLUSTRATION BY VICTOR JUHASZ





no business-model savior set to rescue media companies at the very moment they are facing their most critical journalistic test. There are, though, strands of hope, little bits of ideas that are working, albeit in limited ways. By mixing and matching them, we can begin to compile a recipe for a new journalistic model that may work—emphasis on the *may*.

1. “Free” is not a business model.

We can now bury for good any hope that giving away content and paying the bills solely through online advertising is a sustainable media strategy. The digital-ad revenue simply isn't there to support real journalism. As a result, digital-only shops like *Mashable* and *Medium* are sharply scaling back. On the flip side, *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* are proving that paywalls can work, even on a massive scale, while niche sites like *The Information*, in tech, and *Politico* and *Axios*, in politics, are insisting that readers must pay for detailed scoops about their respective industries.

The message from readers is that they're willing to pay for information that tracks closely with their interests and worldviews, while more generic content is falling off. This threatens to create a new kind of content divide: higher-quality and more accurate journalism for those who can pay, less accurate and more trivial reporting (not to mention fake news, which has no subscription future) for those who can't. The higher the price, the more insidery the information: *Axios*, launched in January by the team behind *Politico*, eventually wants to charge \$10,000 a year for its inside-the-Beltway news feed. That may make sense for lobbyists and others looking to make government a profit



Trump’s efforts to paint the press as a single monolith has drawn journalists closer together.

In the rough: Katy Tur of NBC News interviews Trump at his golf course in Scotland on June 25, 2016.

center, but it's pretty much out of the question for everyone else.

One all-too-plausible outcome is that access to the information the public needs to meaningfully participate in self-governance will become even more two-tiered: The well-off will receive accurate and timely news, while the struggling will have to settle for unprofessional, misleading “news” that costs them nothing but the effort required to wade through a barrage of down-market advertising.

This scenario, in turn, will play into the hands of anti-journalism tyrants, who will be able to point—correctly—to a popular press that is ever less credible.

2. The old competitive walls don't apply.

David Fahrenthold, *The Washington Post*'s breakout star of the 2016 election, was lionized by other reporters for his scoops (particularly about Trump's nonexistent charity work), but also because of the way he approached his job. Fahrenthold's default mode was complete transparency: He would tweet about what he was working on before it was published; he'd ask competing reporters for leads and lavishly praise competitors for their scoops. The result was a wiki-style reporting model that runs counter to the siloed world of big media. In return, he was rewarded with tips from competitors who normally would have guarded them jealously, and his paper saw a significant increase in readers and visibility.

Fahrenthold's approach is spreading, as news executives recognize that no outlet has the resources to chase every lead or staff every possible investigation. Far-reaching joint investigations like those that sorted through the Panama Papers grab the most headlines, but dozens of other joint efforts have news organizations working together in ways they never would have imagined before. The Center for Investigative Reporting has allied with NPR, *Politico* with *The New York Times Magazine*; the publication I edit, the *Columbia Journalism Review*, has collaborated on an election oral history with *The Guardian*.

Trump's efforts to paint the press as a single, objectionable monolith has had an unexpected side effect, drawing journalists and news organizations closer together to leverage a reporting pool that had been drained by budget cuts. It seems possible that by the end of Trump's first term, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal*—the three most influential newspapers in America—will pool their resources on a massive joint project that none of them could have accomplished alone. Take it to the bank: The president's name will be in the lede.



3. "First, get a million dollars."

That's Steve Martin's classic tip on how to become a millionaire. It's been clear for several years that the clearest path to producing good journalism is a variation on that line: "First, get a rich patron." ProPublica has built a reporting powerhouse thanks in part to the largesse of California's Sandler family; *The Intercept* has Pierre Omidyar; *The Washington Post's* resurgence wouldn't have happened without tens of millions of dollars in seed money from Jeff Bezos. Money aimed explicitly at breaking scoops has been provided by the Nation Institute's Investigative Fund, the Pulitzer Center, the Marshall Project, and the group Investigative Reporters and Editors.

In a category all its own is the Guardian Media Group, which benefits from a unique form of patronage, the Scott Trust. The trust was established in 1936 under legal arrangements that explicitly forbid the trust's officers from interfering in any way with the editorial independence of its media properties, which now include *The Guardian*, *The Guardian Weekly*, the *Sunday Observer*, and TheGuardian.com.

It may well be that the best journalism in the future will come disproportionately from nonprofits, which have the time and patience and money to produce it. *The Texas Tribune* in Austin continues to lead the state with its political coverage, while ProPublica is expanding into Illinois to counter the hollowing-out of that state's local and regional news organizations. Nevertheless, it's questionable whether relying solely on philanthropic funding can ensure a thriving journalistic future over the long term. Eventually, a commercial revenue stream must also help out.

What does hold promise is a combination of nonprofit and for-profit structures, with the former helping to support the latter. In Charlottesville, Virginia, a group of citizens, concerned by the dearth of local coverage on some key issues, raised money to create a nonprofit outlet, *Charlottesville Tomorrow*, in 2005. As of 2009, the print and digital publication has been sharing its work with *The Daily Progress*, the city's longtime paper. Today, 60 percent of the *Progress's* local stories come from *Charlottesville Tomorrow*, freeing the daily to focus its reporting and resources on longer-term projects.

Likewise, in Philadelphia, Gerry Lenfest, the owner of the city's two dailies and the Philly.com website, is merging for-profit and nonprofit missions in an innovative way. In January 2016, Lenfest donated his three media properties to the newly created Lenfest Institute for Journalism, a tax-exempt organization controlled by the nonprofit Philadelphia Foundation. Thus, the two



"Out of control": Trump's description of reporters at a February press conference.

It may well be that the best journalism in the future will come from nonprofits.



Modern muckraker:
David Fahrenthold of *The Washington Post*.



Experimental tycoon:
Gerry Lenfest of Philadelphia.

newspapers and website can receive tax-deductible donations to keep real journalism alive. A related goal of this strategy is to find new answers to the digital-media and business-model questions that vex other papers of similar size around the country. Lenfest installed Jim Friedlich, a former *Wall Street Journal* business executive, to run the institute, and Friedlich has already set off on a road trip to share his findings with other papers.

4. The partisan press finally arrives.

We've read a lot since the election about the end of down-the-middle political reporting by national publications. Once *The New York Times* decided to call Trump out as a liar on its front page, any notion that it was neutral in the election ended. While the media's high priests (which, I'm happy to say, include my publication) continue to debate whether that's good or bad for journalism, this much is clear: It's great for business.

If the end of ad-supported digital media means that big traffic numbers matter less, and engaging readers with a willingness to pay matters more, then the polarization of the media into political camps makes all the economic sense in the world. While outlets like *The Nation* and the *New Republic* have been playing the affinity game for years, building a base of support among an impassioned core of readers, the new approach seeks to transform this affinity into a bona fide business model, turning people's partisan leanings into a willingness to pay up. Fox News has shown that being brazenly partisan can translate into both viewers and ad revenue. Across the political divide, outlets like MSNBC are catching up. (Al Gore's Current TV, which would have thrived in this climate, was simply too early to the game.)

On the digital side, *Breitbart* has become the Fox of the online world, and *Crooked Media* was recently launched by former Obama aides as a *Breitbart* for the left. Since the *Times* and, to a lesser degree, the *Post* took on a more openly adversarial stance during the

election, the digital traffic at both papers has broken records. The numbers have also surged for ProPublica, *Slate*, the Center for Investigative Reporting, and others (including the *Columbia Journalism Review*). The fear among media executives has long been that increased partisanship necessarily shrinks your audience, since those who don't agree will turn away. And that certainly does happen. But those arguments didn't take into account the power of apathy: For a very long time, most Americans simply didn't care what the news media had to say. Now they do. And the result—an engaged, motivated, hungry audience—is energizing news outlets no longer stuck in the middle of the road.

5. To the great chagrin of traditionalists, personalities matter.

It has taken a surprisingly long time for big media organizations to recognize that people don't read brands or institutions; they read people. This was the election cycle in which reporters finally emerged as bona fide media brands, at least as much a draw for viewers and readers as the outlet itself. Katy Tur at NBC, Craig Silverman at *BuzzFeed*, Olivia Nuzzi at *The Daily Beast* (and now *New York* magazine), Maggie Haberman at *The New York Times*—all of them became go-to sources for consumers increasingly baffled by the diversity of

For a very long time, most Americans simply didn't care what the news media had to say. Now they do.

choices on offer. All brought with them a sensibility that seemed to borrow more from the op-ed pages than from traditional news. But they also seemed to sense intuitively that a personality and point of view were precisely what readers were craving. Their employers were rewarded with stronger traffic and reader loyalty.

6. You have to be everywhere.

Publishers continue to dither about how to deal with the big social networks. That's what a rear-guard action looks like. One way or another, most people in America increasingly get their news from social-media sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram. Being in those places (and on Apple News and Google News and Snapchat and so on), in as big a way as possible, is critical to rebuilding the news business. Yet that still isn't how most big media companies see it. They continue to obsess about ways to protect their turf and keep their content fenced in. They gripe about a business relationship with the tech world that seems to cast them in the role of supplicant.

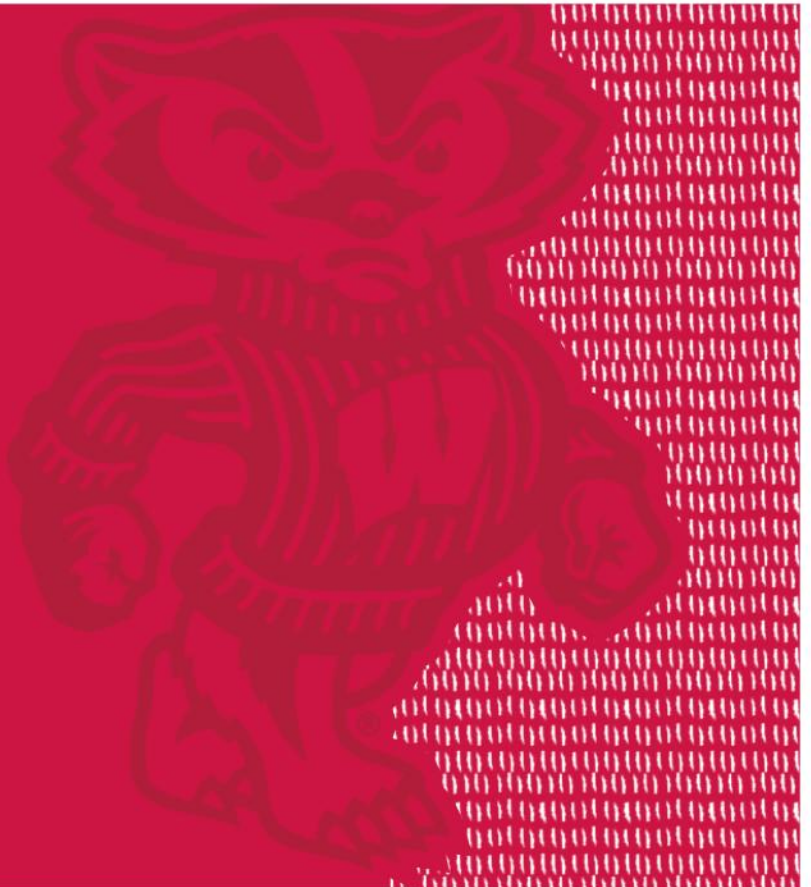
The Washington Post has taken the opposite approach, to great and surprising success. The *Times* hands over only a couple of dozen stories a day to Apple News; the *Post* provides hundreds. While most newsrooms are still working to resolve the internal battles between print and



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the Web, at the *Post* the Web—and the app, the podcast, and the Twitter feed—have already won. It's the demands of Web publishing that determine *Post* reporters' deadlines, not the print press run, and Web success is what determines whether top executives get a bonus. The lesson here is not that the *Post* is succeeding because it has a rich benefactor, though that's clearly true. It's because the paper has dared to tinker with the DNA of publishing. It views itself as a content generator, then looks for ways to blast that content out to the world. It's the information version of the great dot-com bonanza of the late 1990s: grab the market share, gather the customers, then find ways of making them pay.

7. Show up in person.

Doing successful journalism today often means, as Bill O'Reilly might put it, doing it live. Before joining the *Columbia Journalism Review*, I ran a group of hyper-local weeklies in Manhattan—small-town news in the middle of one of the biggest cities in the world. It soon became clear that finding a way to create some kind of village green, even if only for an afternoon, was crucial in building loyalty and support for our local news. So we held election forums and town-hall meetings (on everything from pedestrian safety to the death of small businesses), and we even rented an RV, parked it on the street, and

Having moved beyond the existential question, it is now time to figure out a business model that can work.

invited readers to come visit our “mobile newsroom.” (They did, on the Upper East and Upper West Sides, lining up down the block.)

Surprisingly, the digital-news outlets enjoying the most success with younger audiences—the demographic that spends the most time staring at a screen—are also the most aggressive about putting people together in the same physical place. But the demands of conference booking can get journalistically tricky. Can you write critically about someone you've just wooed to appear on a panel for an event you hope to make money from? Can you take on a company that's just agreed to underwrite your cocktails? These may be ethical questions that journalists can no longer afford to ask.

THIS IS A RECIPE, NOT A BLUEPRINT. SOME OF these ideas will work; others will fail. New problems will crop up, but so will new opportunities. Fundamentally, I'm optimistic. We have moved beyond the existential question of whether journalism will continue to exist. It is time to tackle the more interesting and exciting question of what the new business model will be. We should do so with the confidence that an audience for quality, hard-hitting, challenging work is out there, just waiting to be reached. That's not a bad place to be. ■

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Room with a view: Cenk Uygur and Ana Kasparian on the set of *The Young Turks*.

Are *The Young Turks* Progressive Media's Rising Stars?

The success of the pugnacious video channel should give other left-wing outlets hope—as well as a useful new model.

by LAURA FLANDERS

ANYONE QUESTIONING THE VITALITY OF progressive media in the United States needs to check out *The Young Turks*. This online video channel claims 80 million unique views a month. This puts it in the same league as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*.

Founder and host Cenk Uygur launched *The Young Turks* as a radio show in 2002 before taking it online in 2006. He joined MSNBC as a contributor in 2010, but left the network a year later over editorial differences. (See Mark Hertsgaard's article in this issue for Uygur's version of his clash with the corporate bosses at NBC.) Currently, *The Young Turks* streams live for two hours every Monday through Friday, starting at 6 p.m. Eastern time, and is hosted by Uygur and Ana Kasparian.

Laura Flanders interviewed Kasparian and the channel's chief business officer, Steven Oh, about the secrets of their success—and why they banned coverage of Donald Trump for a time from the show. This interview has been edited for space and clarity.

Laura Flanders: Ana, what makes a Young Turk?

Ana Kasparian: Someone who is opinionated, strong, passionate, and doesn't worry about censoring him- or herself.

Flanders: Am I correct in thinking that Donald Trump is one of two people you've ever banned?

Steven Oh: Correct.

Flanders: Ever regret it?

Oh: No, because that's exactly what we don't want to reward—people who say ridiculous, over-the-top things just to get more attention. We banned Ann Coulter and Donald Trump because we didn't believe that they were honest about anything they were saying. But we couldn't ban him forever, because he was going to become president; he was winning the Republican primary, so we had to rescind the ban. We covered him, but we tried to cover him in a way that didn't cater to his particular needs.

Flanders: On election night, *The Huffington Post*, Nate Silver's *FiveThirtyEight*, Steven here—lots of progressives—were confident Hillary Clinton was going to win.

Oh: Correct.

Flanders: How are you processing that fail with your audience?

Laura Flanders is a Nation contributing writer and the host of The Laura Flanders Show.

Kasparian: Honestly, I think that the pollsters, the establishment media, a lot of liberals—including ourselves—unfortunately kind of fell into this bubble, and this belief, that someone as hideous as Donald Trump could never win... even if Hillary Clinton was a flawed candidate, even if she didn't really represent progressive values. I think that we really discounted the number of people who were disillusioned with the way politics were going. Conservatives give us a lot of heat for being elitist, but I now understand what they meant when they said that. We look at individuals who would vote for Donald Trump as if... we kind of undervalue them. And we underestimated them.

Flanders: Ana, you were pretty angry at Trump voters, particularly women, whom I think you called "stupid."

Kasparian: I think that there is an interesting double standard happening with conservatives versus progressives: They say some of the craziest things, and they don't get heat for it. That helped [Trump], because individuals felt like he wasn't politically correct and he told it like it is. I don't regret what I said. I think that members of the [Republican] Party have shown women time and time again that they see women as second-class citizens. I think that voting for a party that has those beliefs is voting against your best interest. I'm not going to tone down my rhetoric, and I'm not going to censor myself in sharing what I believe to be the truth. People could either love that or hate that, but I'm not really interested in playing games in order to appeal to a broader audience.

Flanders: Does your business model depend on going outside the pool of supporters that you have now, Steve?

Oh: Our business model is the audience first. That's gotten us in trouble with advertisers, because sometimes our hosts say things

that are not advertiser-friendly. That's OK, and we have a spectrum of views. I don't want to ever tell someone to tone it down. All I ask is that they actually believe what they're saying... that they're not saying it just for attention or whatever, that they actually believe it.

Flanders: What is your budget, and how do you meet it?

Oh: Our budget is roughly \$1 million a month. It's covered by a number of revenue streams, one of which is advertising revenue from YouTube, Facebook, Hulu, Pluto, Twitter, Amazon, and these other platforms.... Another big part is our subscribers. We have people who pay \$10 a month to subscribe to our content, and sometimes they pay more than \$10 a month because they just feel so connected to who we are and what we do. If you want to watch the whole show whenever you want, ad-free, at your convenience, there's really no way to do that unless you're a member.

Flanders: You're in town for an investor meeting. Have you always had investors?

Oh: We're at an inflection point. The current business model in news on television is geared toward servicing insiders of Washington, DC, and New York City. We've always been of the mind that we should serve outsiders, the masses, the people who really care about these issues. We want to do that on a global scale. I am taking meetings with investors to get money. It's very important that we meet with the right investors, who are going to always allow us the freedom to do what we've always done.

Flanders: Ana, what do you see as your mission at this point?

Kasparian: To empower people and mobilize people to resist some of the policies and executive actions that Donald Trump will push forward... and to ensure that the Democratic Party doesn't play the same games they played during this last election. ■

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(continued from page 20)

Still, the rap against progressive media remains that it preaches to the choir, and the choir ain't that big. Kaiser fields the question again and again from potential donors: Why don't her member organizations reach more people? "Well, they would," she replies, "if they had the funding for marketing and promotion."

Providing such funding is an immediate priority for building out an independent-media infrastructure: Give existing outlets with a proven track record the money they need to reach their full potential. If Sanders is right that the majority of Americans agree with progressives, it stands to reason that they would be interested in journalism that treats their views fairly. But reaching them requires promotion and marketing. Over time, it will also require other investments: hiring more reporters, editors, managers, and publicists; buying equipment and studios.

Another early priority is closer collaboration, including a joint news feed on social media. "We need to create a trusted, branded source of progressive news with real reach on Facebook," urges David Fenton. "This would be a kind of *Reader's Digest* effort that would take the best progressive content from all sources and get it far more reach and penetration on Facebook than would happen normally. It would mean investing in building up a huge Facebook audience for this content, so we have a guaranteed reach to many millions of people."

The second stage of building an independent-media infrastructure would include creating some new institutions, especially to target audiences not currently reached. Some younger audiences prefer to get their news via short videos like the ones offered by AJ+. Larry Meli, a TV executive who helped launch New England Cable News and National Geographic Channels International,

wants to create a "Heartland News" network in the Midwestern states that were critical to Trump's Electoral College victory. "There is an opportunity," says Meli, "to peel away some of the viewership that East Coast-based Fox News enjoys and to segment the market with an honest dose of fact-based news."

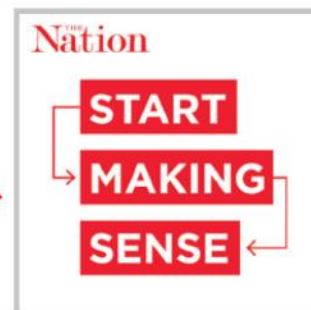
A key lesson of Fox and Friends' success should be kept in mind: What delivers impact is not so much any individual outlet; rather, it's the overlapping collective reach of the entire infrastructure. "The 'friends' part of 'Fox and Friends' is really critical," Kaiser notes. "You need a full ecosystem of outlets to make it work. Progressives tried Air America [a national AM radio network launched in 2004]. We tried Current TV [in 2005]. They either failed or didn't scale. But if you have lots of outlets operating in different formats and sending audiences to each other, you can build a whole that is much greater than the sum of its parts."

Will all of this cost money? Yes, lots. Getting serious about media will require progressives to increase their spending on journalism by orders of magnitude. That may seem like a non-starter, but in fact there are plenty of deep pockets on the left; they just haven't invested, thus far, in media. Besides, as the schoolteachers' bumper sticker warns: "If you think education is expensive, try ignorance." The American people are by no means stupid, but they've been swimming in a sea of media-imposed ignorance for many years. That's not the only reason a narcissistic know-nothing now occupies the Oval Office and, God help us, controls the nuclear codes, but he certainly wouldn't be there otherwise. If this predicament doesn't cause us to rethink old strategies, what will? ■

Mark Hertsgaard is The Nation's investigative editor at large.

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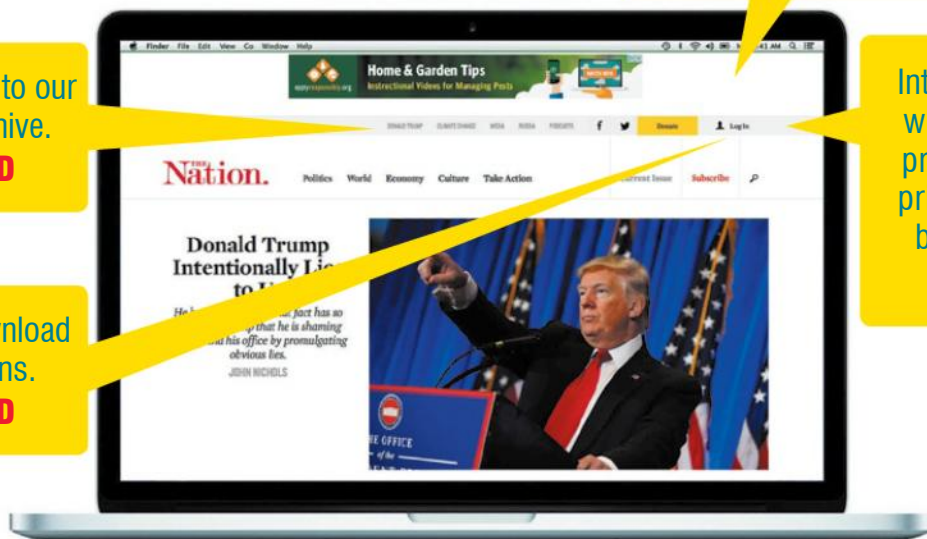
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(continued from page 2)

as racists. Perhaps it's time to resurrect James Carville's slogan during Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign: "It's the economy, stupid." Set that as the priority, and then maybe we'll find common ground on some issues with Trump voters.

TOM GROENFELDT
STURGEON BAY, WISC.

With all the focus on President Trump, no one seems to be watching the Senate and the House of Representatives. Dark money has wrapped its tentacles around Congress. What are good sources of information on the actions that Congress is taking with respect to laws that potentially hurt the environment, restrict access to medical care, or enrich the wealthy at the expense of the 99 percent? The text of some of the bills that have been introduced reads worse than the small print on those "As Seen on TV" products.

JOHN STEINER

I am a longtime subscriber to *The Nation*, and a huge fan. This is the first time I have felt compelled to write in 30 years. In response to "Weapons of Mass Distraction," I would beg to see a follow-up article with specific suggestions for activism. D.D. Guttenplan writes: "Attending less to Trump's words and more to his actions might also free up time to listen to the legitimate fears and grievances of his supporters." This is fine as cultural criticism directed at the Democratic Party, the late-night TV hosts, and the Twitter obsessives. However, I don't fit into any of the aforementioned categories, and I don't think my time would be best spent listening to Trump supporters. I sincerely want to spend my time in the most effective way possible to

oppose Trump's agenda. I think there are many of us out here who want to oppose Trump's actions, who haven't previously been very politically active, who want to understand how to become involved with effective strategies to block him now and to prevent him from staying in power. Until further notice, we are protesting, signing petitions, writing letters to the editor, and attempting to help the immigrants in our communities. Please show us what else we could be doing at the local level.

DEBBIE KOPPMAN
OAKLAND, CALIF.

Marx, Past and Future

In "Marx's Revenge" [Feb. 27], Benjamin Kunkel writes: "Marx's so-far mistaken expectation of working-class revolution is the tragic flaw in his outline." So far, indeed—and too soon to call it a "tragic flaw." History is still being written. Perhaps Marxists are guilty of the sin of optimism, but also the virtue of patience. Remember, in 1989, we all thought we'd heard the last of Marxism.

JIM FARIS
MOUNTAIN VIEW, CALIF.

The People Have the Power

Many thanks to *The Nation* for publishing the "People vs. the President" forum [Feb. 6/13]. I am particularly grateful to Benjamin Barber and Michael Massing for their insights. Massing's contribution, "Journalism in Trump's America," points to the kind of outreach into Trump territory that all of us need to be doing right now, while Barber's "Think Globally, Resist Locally" gives me hope that the United States will survive the next four years.

GRACE ROOSEVELT
NEW YORK CITY

Books & the Arts.



Hitler with Hermann Göring, Joseph Goebbels, and Rudolf Hess.

A WARNING FROM HISTORY

A new biography of Hitler reminds us that there is more than one way to destroy a democracy

by **RICHARD J. EVANS**

There are more ways of destroying a democracy than sending troops into the streets, storming the radio stations, and arresting the politicians, as Adolf Hitler discovered after the failure of his beer-hall putsch

Richard J. Evans is the president of Wolfson College, Cambridge, Regius Professor of History Emeritus at the University of Cambridge, and provost of Gresham College, London. His books include The Coming of the Third Reich, The Third Reich in Power, and The Third Reich at War.

in 1923. Ten years later, on January 30, 1933, when he was appointed head of the German government, Hitler was the leader of the country's largest political party, the National Socialists. Even five years earlier, in May of 1928, he'd been a political nobody, with the Nazis gaining less than 3 percent of the vote in national elections. But in the elections held in July 1932, they won 37 percent of the vote—and six months later, Hitler was in power. He seemed to have come from nowhere.

As the German historian and journalist

Hitler

Ascent, 1889–1939

By Volker Ullrich

Translated by Jefferson Chase

Knopf, 1,008 pp. \$40

Volker Ullrich shows in the first part of his highly readable and well-researched new biography, *Hitler: Ascent*, even if Hitler wasn't directly elected to power, his appointment as Reich chancellor was legal and constitutional, the result of political intrigue surrounding Germany's aging

conservative president, Paul von Hindenburg. Many people in Germany thought that Hitler would be a normal head of government. Some, like the conservative politician Franz von Papen and the leaders of the German National People's Party, thought that they'd be able to control him, because they were more experienced and formed the majority in the coalition government that Hitler headed. Others thought that the responsibilities of office would tame and steer him in a more conventional direction. They were all wrong.

Hitler won mass support between 1928 and 1930 because a major economic crisis had driven Germany into a deep depression: Banks crashed, businesses folded, and millions lost their jobs. Hitler offered voters a vision of a better future, one he contrasted with the policies of the parties that had plunged the country into crisis in the first place. The poorest people in Germany voted for his opponents, notably the Communist Party and the moderate left-wing Social Democrats, but the lower-middle classes, the bourgeoisie, the unorganized workers, the rural masses, and the older traditionalists—Protestants and evangelicals who wanted a moral restoration of the nation—switched their votes from the mainstream centrist and right-wing parties (save for the Catholic Center Party) and gave them to Hitler instead.

Whereas other politicians seemed to dither or to act as mere administrators, Hitler projected purpose and dynamism. They remained trapped within the existing conventions of political life; he proved a master at denouncing those conventions and manipulating the media. The first politician to tour the country by air during an election campaign, Hitler issued an endless stream of slogans to win potential supporters over. He would make Germany great again. He would give Germans work once more. He would put Germany first. He would revive the nation's rusting industries, laid to waste by the economic depression. He would crush the alien ideologies—socialism, liberalism, communism—that were undermining the nation's will to survive and destroying its core values.

Ullrich quotes a police report on one of Hitler's early speeches, in which he "used vulgar comparisons" and "did not shy away from the cheapest allusions." Hitler's language was never measured or careful, but "like something merely expelled." Yet, revising earlier opinions, Ullrich shows how carefully Hitler prepared his speeches. Seemingly spontaneous, they were in fact calculated. Full of base allegations and vile stereotypes, they were precisely designed to gain maximum attention from the media

and maximum reaction from the crowds he addressed. When he declared that fines were of no use against those he called Jewish criminals, his listeners interrupted him with chants of "Beatings! Hangings!"

Aided by his talented propaganda chief Joseph Goebbels, Hitler not only flaunted his vulgarity and exploited tribal hatreds; he also lied and lied his way to success. The Jews, he argued, had stabbed the German Army in the back in 1918; the politicians of the other parties, he insisted, were hopelessly venal and corrupt and should be put in jail; the Nazi thugs who were condemned to death in 1932 for the "Potempa murders" were victims of a "monstrous blood-verdict"; liberal newspapers that criticized Hitler were, as Goebbels put it, the "Jewish lying press."

Few took Hitler seriously or thought that he would actually put his threats against the country's tiny Jewish minority, his rants against feminists, left-wing politicians, homosexuals, pacifists, and liberal newspaper editors, into effect. Fewer still believed his vow to quit the League of Nations, the forerunner of the United Nations. But within a few months of taking office, he did all of these things—and much more.

Once in power, the Nazi regime was run exclusively by men: Only heterosexual white males, the Nazis thought, had the required detachment and lack of emotional connection to the issues at hand to make the right calls. Nazi propaganda mocked disabled people; within a few years, they were being sterilized and then exterminated. Hitler railed against the roving bands of criminals who were destroying law and order and called for the return of the death penalty, effectively abrogated under the Weimar Republic. Within a short space of time, the executions began again, reaching a total of more than 16,000 during his 12 years in power, while Germany's prison population rocketed from 50,000 in 1930 to more than 100,000 on the eve of the war. Feminist associations were all closed down, the law forbidding homosexual acts between men was drastically sharpened, vagrants were rounded up and imprisoned, illegal Polish immigrants were deported. Germany pulled out of international organizations and tore up treaties with cynical abandon, dismantling or emasculating the structures of international cooperation erected after World War I and freeing the way for rogue states like Italy and Japan to launch their own wars of conquest and aggression. Ullrich tellingly quotes the Nazis' triumphant declaration of "our departure from the community of nations," buttressed by Hitler's assurance that he would

"rather die" than sign anything that was not in the interests of the German people. Hitler followed up on this commitment as well, though of course this proved not to be in the interests of the German people in the end.

The story of German politics between January 30 and July 30, 1933, is essentially the story of how the Nazis shut down the country's democratic institutions, destroyed the freedom of its press and media, and created a one-party state in which opposition was punishable by imprisonment, banishment, or even death. It was Hitler's "first hundred days," but the radical changes went on for longer and seemed terrifyingly easy to perpetrate.

There was nothing underhanded about these changes: Nazi leaders gave clear warnings about what they planned to do. But too few people saw them as a threat before they came to power. As Goebbels said on February 10, 1933: "If the Jewish press still thinks it can intimidate the National Socialist movement with veiled threats, if they think they can evade our emergency decrees, they should watch out! One day our patience will run out, and then the Jews will find their impudent, lying traps plugged."

Ullrich shows how newspapers were weakened by the economic pressure applied by the Nazi government. Editors were forced out, reporters were disciplined or imprisoned, and an increasing number of newspapers were shut down altogether, leaving only a captive press that confined itself to parroting the "news" issued by the government in Goebbels's daily morning press briefings. All that the few remaining decent journalists could do was to write in "Aesopian" language, or in fables involving figures from the past like Genghis Khan; their only hope was that readers might get the message.

With the disappearance of a free, critical media and the subordination of law-enforcement agencies, the path was open for a massive expansion of political corruption at every level of the regime. Ullrich makes good use of recent research to underline the fact that the Nazi regime was, among other things, a kleptocracy; it was dependent on patronage and clientelism all the way down the line, since the formal procedures for state appointments and the rules of conduct for the occupants of high office were scrapped or bypassed in favor of a personal style of rule. The confiscation or forcible takeover of Jewish businesses lined the pockets of the party's leaders; they also benefited from seizing the property of oppositional institutions like the

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71 Year Old Senior Comes Back To Life

"He's coming back to life!" his wife screamed.

Jason had become so frail and tired that he had trouble doing everyday things. Simple things like getting up from the couch and getting up from the bed.

Jason had not always been this way. You see, it started when he was in his 50's and he would start falling asleep on the chair while watching TV, and just taking naps during the day. He started **feeling tired and fatigued, having lower energy, and not wanting to do anything.**

His wife just accepted the fact that he is getting older and that is simply what old people do - fall asleep on the couch. He did not even have the energy to go see his grandkids. Their love life also struggled.

Finally, his wife had had enough and wanted to put an end to this. She researched so many different methods and none of them worked. Jason and his wife were invited to a wedding, and his wife actually got him to come along since it was a close cousin's wedding. At the wedding they met a doctor named Rand McClain, who is an expert on the human body. She told him about Jason's struggles and how she has tried everything but nothing has worked. He actually told her **these are the signs of aging, but he does not need to struggle.**

He told her about a simple at-home solution to fix his problems. This solution was a drink that anyone can make.

Jason's wife gave him the special drink. About 20 minutes later Jason was up and dancing with everyone and his wife was shocked. She said, "How is he doing this? For years he has been too tired to even get out of his bed was falling asleep early at night. He is acting like he is in his 30's again!"

Dr. McClain explained that his method is actually based on a **technology that was banned in 2001. Luckily he has found a "loophole" and**



is fighting back to allow everyone to get in better health and fight the signs of aging.

This was **not just a one-time thing for Jason.** He has been using this special at-home method every day and wakes up **with more energy, can get out of his bed easily, has clearer thinking,** and no longer falls asleep on the couch early at night. Jason's wife is also much happier as well because their love life has had a kick start as well! It is now back to how it was when they first got married.

His wife was also curious to see if this method would work for her too. Sure enough this method is also working for her and she is seeing similar results.

You can find out about McClain's breakthrough discovery and how you too can fight the signs of aging by going to **www.LCR24.com**

It's even more important that you watch the video if you yourself have been experiencing excessive fatigue, a weaker body, and even foggy thinking, because that could mean what happened to Jason may also happen to you as well.

Of course many are not too pleased with McClain's discovery and may try and take this video down. So we do advise that you watch the video as soon as possible. Watch the shocking presentation here: **www.LCR24.com**

socialist-oriented trade unions, the Social Democratic Party, and many others.

Goebbels ensured that he was paid a vastly inflated salary as editor of a Nazi Party magazine, while Hermann Göring was given enough money by people seeking his patronage that he was able to buy and furnish five hunting lodges and to operate a private train. Hitler ostentatiously refused a salary as head of the German government, but he made sure that he earned royalties from the display of his face on postage stamps, which brought him enormous wealth. Well before the war, the Nazi leaders had become millionaires.

How did all this happen—and with so little opposition? What caused German democracy to react so toothlessly and to collapse so swiftly? Historians used to argue that German democracy had shallow roots, having come into existence with the Weimar Republic after the end of the First World War, and thus lacked any kind of tradition in a country whose basic political culture had always been authoritarian. But as the historian Margaret Lavinia Anderson and many others have shown, Germans were in fact already practicing democracy under the kaiser: Political parties were strong and becoming stronger; legislative institutions were gaining more power and influence; and a lively range of newspapers and magazines fostered vigorous public debate, despite the feeble attempts of the government to censor them.

By the time Hitler began his rise to power, the German state, reconstituted after the war, possessed robust constitutional and legal structures that were designed to frustrate any attempt to undermine or circumvent democracy. Judges were independent, as were police and prosecutors. In fact, early in 1933, the provincial Nazi government in Prussia—the state that covered over half of Germany's territory and included more than half of its population—was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. But the Nazis simply ignored this ruling, as they did the thousands of prosecutions brought by local and regional authorities against the storm troopers and others who had beaten up, imprisoned, and, in many hundreds of cases, murdered the

party's opponents.

The courts could safely be ignored, not least because Hitler's government was able to govern by executive order after the burning down of the Reichstag, the national parliament building, on February 27–28, 1933. A lone, deranged Dutch anarchist was found guilty of setting the fire, but the Nazis portrayed it as a terrorist act by the Communist Party in a nationwide conspiracy to take power. The government declared a state of emergency, and Hitler exploited a provision in the Weimar Republic's Constitution that permitted him to rule by decree in such times. Hitler would repeatedly renew the Reichstag Fire Decree all the way up to the end of his rule in 1945.

The Nazi seizure of power was carried out step-by-step through the first half of 1933, each step disguised as a seemingly legal act. On April 7, 1933, the government issued an executive order dismissing

Jews and the regime's political opponents from state employment. Many similar orders followed, culminating in a law to establish a one-party state and then, in the late summer of '34, a law to declare Hitler dictator for life.

It was possible to do these things because Hitler had pushed a bill through the national legislature on March 23, 1933, that effectively disabled the parliament and devolved its power to

make laws onto his cabinet. He was able to secure the necessary two-thirds majority by arresting Communist deputies who would have voted against it and by persuading the large Catholic Center Party to vote for it through a mix of promises and threats. Issuing from the government, these laws had the appearance of legitimacy, and almost no one stood up against them as they were put into effect.

Even after the legal profession and the judiciary had been purged of the Nazis' opponents, there were still some judges who retained a modicum of honesty and independence. Hitler was furious when the Supreme Court, trying the alleged perpetrators of the Reichstag fire, acquitted all but one due to a lack of evidence. He rapidly set up a parallel apparatus of "Special Courts" crowned by a national "People's Court," all of them packed

with committed Nazis. But the vast majority of the legal profession and law-enforcement agencies went along with the party anyway, even as the Nazis passed a raft of new treason laws and transferred the task of enforcing political conformity from the storm troopers and concentration camps to the police, the courts, and the prisons.

There were plenty of Germans who disapproved of these measures: Hitler didn't attain supreme power on a wave of popular acclamation. On the contrary, in the last free elections of the Weimar Republic, the left-wing parties—the Communists and Social Democrats—won more votes and gained more seats in the national parliament than the Nazis did. But they were fatally divided, spending at least as much time fighting each other as they did trying to stop Hitler from establishing a dictatorship. Their rhetoric was feeble in comparison with his, their supporters less fanatical, their electoral propaganda less powerful and less sophisticated.

The concentration of political and legislative power in the cabinet didn't last long. Beneath the surface appearance of normality, the cabinet was being marginalized as Hitler appointed his own cronies and disciples to new positions or pushed out his conservative coalition partners. The men who ruled Germany did not do so because they were constitutionally acting government ministers, but because they were Hitler's cronies: Goebbels, Göring, Heinrich Himmler, Robert Ley, and a handful of others.

Before long, the police and the Gestapo had been merged into Himmler's SS, while regional Nazi Party leaders—Gauleiters—were bypassing the formally appointed state governors and administrators at every level. Senior civil servants were fired if they made any difficulties or were effectively supplanted by parallel appointees of the regime even if they conformed, as the vast majority of them did. German bureaucracy was famously punctilious, but under Hitler decisions were increasingly made on the hoof, by verbal order, leaving behind no paper trail.

Hitler made sure that the armed forces were on his side by giving them massive increases in funding and a huge new armaments program. In 1935, he introduced a draft that forced millions of young men into military service. His program for making Germany great again included a new aggressive attitude in international affairs. He sent the army into the Rhineland, occupied Austria, and annexed Czechoslovakia, before invading Poland and launching a European and, eventually, a world war. All along, the Soviet Union was targeted as Germany's



main external foe, even if, for tactical reasons, Hitler concluded a temporary nonaggression pact with Stalin in August 1939.

Hitler's seizure and remaking of the state was buttressed by a wholesale reorganization of the education system and an effort to redefine German culture. Many, if not most, of Germany's leading scholars and scientists were forced to leave the country, either because they were Jewish and so regarded as non-Christian foreigners, or because they were opponents of the regime (or, indeed, as in the case of Albert Einstein, both). The intellectual quality of German universities, which had led the world in research before 1933, plummeted. It has never fully recovered.

Hitler didn't care. For him, education was a matter of practical instruction; it had nothing to do with the transmission of pure knowledge, let alone the traditional humanistic values that had underpinned the German educational system since the early 19th century. Before Hitler took over, a fifth of all university students were enrolled in the humanities; by the eve of the war, that portion had been cut in half, in a student body that was itself shrinking rapidly, from a total of 104,000 in all universities in 1931 to just under 41,000 in 1939. By this time, fully half of all students were taking degree courses in medicine, its importance boosted by the Nazis' focus on racial research and eugenics.

The regime's assault on culture extended to its policy toward the arts, which were "coordinated" by Goebbels in a Reich Chamber of Culture that ended funding for modern painting, sculpture, and music, and banned allegedly subversive artists from working. Almost all of Germany's major artists and writers left the country, turning it into a cultural desert. The mostly second-rate artists and writers who stayed behind had little choice but to propagate "German" art and culture, and their work was often unimaginative, conformist, and dull. Theater and cinema put out trivial productions aimed at a broad popular audience: costume dramas, musicals, and other forms of light entertainment. Outright propaganda films were relatively rare, though these are the ones remembered today. There were no game shows or reality TV in Hitler's day, but if there had been, Goebbels would have loved them.

The main objective of Nazi education and culture was not, however, to distract people from issues of political importance; it was to instill a new sense of patriotism. Pupils were made to salute the flag before

school every morning, and the religious assembly that opened the school day was turned into a festival of obeisance to Hitler. All children had to join the Hitler Youth or its female equivalent, the League of German Girls, where they sang patriotic songs and performed military exercises and drills. History lessons were turned into a celebration of German heroes from the past. Geography was Nazified in order to justify German claims on other parts of Europe. Math students were required to do calculations based on the number of "racially inferior" people in the population.

Such exercises pointed to the fact that the regime constantly targeted minorities as a way of mobilizing popular approval and support. The Nazis may have dominated state power, but this wasn't the kind of dictatorship that depended solely on repression, important though it was. Like many other modern dictatorships, it wanted to appear popular, not least because this strengthened its hand in negotiations with foreign powers. Regular elections and referendums were put to the voters, and they routinely delivered majorities of 99 percent in favor of whatever the government proposed—results achieved by depriving known or potential opponents of the vote, by manipulating the electoral process, and by directly or indirectly intimidating the great mass of people into supporting Hitler's government.

A key part of the process was the vilification of political opponents. The Communist Party, a mass movement that had gained 100 seats in the national legislature in the last free elections of the Weimar Republic, was suppressed, accused of preparing a violent revolution. The moderately progressive Social Democrats, who enjoyed even more widespread support, were damned as "November traitors," a reference to the November revolution in 1918 that overthrew the kaiser's regime. They were also maligned by the Nazis for having signed the ignominious peace treaty with the Allies at Versailles.

Nazi media and officialdom heaped abuse on democrats and harassed them at every turn. These opponents of the regime bore the brunt of the new treason laws from 1933 onward; in 1935 alone, there were some 23,000 political prisoners in Germany's jails, and more than 5,000 people were being tried and condemned for treason every year.

In speech after speech, Hitler and the other leading Nazis attacked the Jews, who, they claimed, had orchestrated the efforts by these

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political parties to destroy Germany's military prowess and cultural purity. Hitler was a conspiracy theorist without equal: Influenced by a bizarre forgery known as the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, he believed—perhaps as early as 1919, when he incorporated these views into his first-ever recorded speech—that there was a worldwide conspiracy of Jews, directed by a secret cabal probably located somewhere in Paris, to overthrow the German race, annihilate its culture, and render it impotent before its enemies. All Jews everywhere, no matter their political views, were part of this vast plot.

When the Nazis came to power, Jews made up less than 1 percent of the population in Germany, but the Nazis regarded them as a vast, powerful, and deadly threat. Hitler was convinced that without a proper sense of urgency, Germany would be eventually defeated, dominated, and very likely destroyed by them. This is what made anti-Semitism different from the other kinds of racial and religious prejudice held by the Nazis. The disabled and the mentally ill, “Gypsies,” homosexuals, “habitual criminals,” Jehovah's Witnesses, and the other minorities targeted by Hitler were seen as obstacles to Germany's renewal; they weakened the race and undermined its will to assert itself in the world. But the Jews were different: They were the “world-enemy,” as Goebbels called them, the *Weltfeind*. Far more than an obstacle, they were an existential threat. This is why Hitler deprived them of German citizenship, robbed them of their livelihoods, stripped them of their possessions, forced as many of them as he could to emigrate by making their existence in Germany a living hell, and—when he had conquered areas of Europe that, unlike Germany, had very large Jewish populations—eventually murdered some 6 million of them.

Ordinary Germans were not wholly won over by such acts of persecution and destruction; only a minority applauded them. But the great mass of Germans did nothing to stop any of this. Civil courage was in short supply in a country cowed into submission by a ruthless dictatorship that knew no limits in its willingness to apply violence to those it hated. This included foreign states as well as domestic minorities. From the outset, Hitler intended a war of European conquest and, most likely, had that been victorious, world hegemony as well (as demonstrated by his megalomaniacal building plans for “Germania,” a renamed Berlin, as world capital and intended permanent site of the Olympic Games after the war had been won).

With the support of the country's military-industrial complex—grudging and cautious at first; then, after the defeat of

Poland in 1939 and France in 1940, fulsome and enthusiastic—Hitler threw caution to the wind and launched a war that could only end in Germany's defeat. His indifference to human suffering, and his willingness to devise and use weapons of mass destruction, knew no bounds. It is fortunate that he never got his hands on nuclear weapons, though they were in development in Germany's laboratories well before the end of the war.

Violence indeed was at the heart of the Nazi enterprise. Every democracy that perishes dies in a different way, because every democracy is situated in specific historical circumstances. In Hitler's case, as Ullrich shows, the essential context was supplied by World War I, an unprecedented conflict in which millions were killed and those who survived were plunged into a new, militarized, and brutalized world where violence in the service of politics became the norm.

Every political party in Weimar Germany had its paramilitary wing, ready to beat up and even kill its opponents—even the Social Democrats, whose *Reichsbanner* was committed to the defense of democracy. Yet with the unbridled brutality of the storm troopers, the Nazis outdid them all. The election campaign of June–July 1932 saw 105 people killed. This gave the Nazi seizure of power much of its historical distinctiveness and helped acclimatize the German people to the massive violence that underpinned it, with up to 200,000 opponents of the regime thrown into concentration camps in 1933 alone and more than 600 killed, even according to official figures.

For many, the legacy of World War I has long since faded away, and the destruction of Germany's cities, the mass murder of Europe's Jews, and the vast slaughter of World War II have acted as a sharp antidote to cultures of political violence and the militarization of party politics. Anyone who wants to use violence against his opponents to establish a dictatorship today would need to employ a different kind of force. Rather than sending armed and uniformed squads onto the streets, he would need to rely on harassment and persecution carried out by a captive media, and eventually, if opposition persisted, on the state power of the military and the law-enforcement agencies to crush it.

Above all else, Hitler was a media figure who gained popularity and controlled his country through speeches and publicity. Far from being a consistent and undeviatingly purposeful politician, he was temperamental, changeable, insecure, allergic to criticism, and often indecisive and un-

certain in a crisis. There were many occasions in which he nearly came to grief, most notably as a result of his unconventional private life—such as when the suicide of his half-niece Geli Raubal, with whom he'd been having an affair in the early 1930s, threatened to destroy his reputation with the respectable classes of German society.

Ullrich convincingly links Hitler's personality traits with political events. At key moments, such as the crisis of 1934, when the army threatened to move against him if he didn't curb his violent, raucous supporters in the Brownshirt movement, Hitler hesitated and dithered before finally making up his mind. Ullrich corrects many misapprehensions and disposes of many myths. And he paints in the broader political context with great skill and the knowledge gathered over a lifetime of studying German history of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Over the years, there have been many biographies of Hitler, most of which have, in some way, underestimated his talents or underplayed his personal life. Alan Bullock's *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny* (1952) was the first serious life of the German dictator, but it depicted him primarily as an opportunist with no consistent ideas or purposes except the gaining and wielding of power. In Joachim C. Fest's *Hitler* (1973), he's an ignorant, unintelligent, vulgar petty bourgeois whose rise to power owed much to his ability to articulate the resentments of his class at the coming of the modern world. For Ian Kershaw, whose two-volume biography currently holds the field, Hitler was almost an unperson, a man without a meaningful personality or private life, the creature of larger forces in German history. Others have seen him as a psychopath, a warped personality, a man who didn't conform to the normal standards of human behavior. None of these pictures really grasps the man, however. Volker Ullrich provides a more complex and, perhaps for this reason, an even more troubling account of Hitler's ascent to power. His Hitler is one whose personal life provides a key to understanding how he achieved and used supreme power, and his biography—by providing the wider context of German society and politics in which Hitler ascended—also attempts to explain why so many Germans were willing to allow him to do so.

Everyone concerned about democracy should read this book. For the Nazis were “a warning from history” (to quote the title of the still-unsurpassed 1997 television history by Ian Kershaw and Lawrence Rees, now being rebroadcast in the United Kingdom as a response to current political events), and we would all do well to heed it. ■



Bill Clinton and Al Gore in 1992.

AFTER THE FUMBLE

Having dominated the Democratic Party for years, the meritocrats now find themselves in crisis

by MATT STOLLER

Donald Trump is hated by large swaths of the country. Yet despite this fact, he is now president, and in the process of undoing the work of Barack Obama, a man whose elegance and intelligence rival that of any American president in the last 50 years. The results of the election have left liberals and Democrats scrounging for explanations—often those that don’t require accepting their share of the blame for one of the greatest electoral upsets in American history. According to some, it was Putin’s meddling in the election. Others point to a press that has been hostile to Hillary Clinton for decades; or to the various strains of racism and sexism in America that Trump exploited; or to the Republicans’ scorched-

earth strategy against Obama, obstructing his policies and political appointments; or to the Electoral College, since Clinton won the popular vote by several million.

As with any complex event, there is no single cause for Trump’s election. But what is clear is that the Democratic Party revealed much deeper weaknesses in its foundations. The collapse of the party in most states, and the weakness of the center-left globally, underscores a larger ideological problem: a crisis not only of policies but of the theories justifying them.

Two books published before the election—Steve Fraser’s *The Limousine Liberal* and Thomas Frank’s *Listen, Liberal*—issued prescient warnings of this crisis and offer some clues as to the ideological problem facing the Democrats. Fraser’s book examines the 20th-century right-wing

Listen, Liberal

Or, What Ever Happened to the Party of the People?

By Thomas Frank

Metropolitan Books. 320 pp. \$27

The Limousine Liberal

How an Incendiary Image United the Right and Fractured America

By Steve Fraser

Basic Books. 304 pp. \$27.50

populists who attacked liberalism using a frame similar to Trump’s. Frank argues that the Democratic Party has become a group of coddled elites who have embraced the ideology of meritocracy and the inequality and injustice that come with it. In Frank’s attempt to shatter the delusions of Democratic partisans concerning what

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their party has become, he also offers some hope for a populist organizing model that the Democrats would be wise to adopt in the future.

A historian by training and a founder of the magazine *The Baffler*, Frank has long skewered the cultural assumptions of the liberal professional class and its relationship with big business. At the height of the dot-com boom in 2001, he published *One Market Under God*, an analysis of what he called “market populism”: the use of democratic rhetoric to argue on behalf of markets and against democratic governance itself. But it was his subsequent book, *What's the Matter With Kansas?*, that finally caught the attention of many of his intended targets.

In *What's the Matter With Kansas?*, Frank sets out to examine why middle-class Republicans vote against their own self-interest, and argues that the Republican Party has cunningly exploited explosive social issues like abortion. The book was published in 2004, at the height of the Bush presidency, and spent 18 weeks on the best-seller list; Frank followed it up with *The Wrecking Crew* and *Pity the Billionaire*, books that turned their attention away from Middle America's voters to the Republican operators and financial elites that benefited from their votes.

While many Democrats absorbed his analysis of the conservative movement, it appears they ignored another message in Frank's books: that the Democrats themselves had abandoned heartland voters by ridding the party of its traditional class politics. In *Listen, Liberal*, Frank poses this challenge directly. He begins the book with an indictment: “There are consequences to excessive hope, just as there are to other forms of intemperance.” While the Republicans are the party of the plutocrats, they succeed only because of the Democratic Party's stark failures. These failures, Frank says to his fellow Democrats, are “ours,” and “it's time to own up.”

Listen, Liberal is actually two books in one: a political history of the Clintons and the professional class they sought to represent, and a cultural history of the ideology that the Democrats have used to justify their abandonment of class politics. This is the ideology of meritocracy, a “progressive” view of social hierarchy in which talent and ability are the natural arbiters of who should rule in a society. Meritocracy, Frank argues, is the ideology that allowed Democrats to self-consciously claim the mantle of social justice and egalitarian-

ism while subverting both. In this framework, one's race, creed, color, gender, or sexual orientation shouldn't matter when it comes to achieving success in America; what does matter is having the talent and ability to graduate from a place like Harvard Law. But at the same time, meritocracy demands inequality—not everyone, after all, can go to Harvard Law or become a doctor or a high-tech executive. In fetishizing meritocracy, therefore, the Democratic Party has embraced an ideology based on inequality.

Frank contrasts this ideology with the GOP's more traditional plutocratic one. In the United States, as elsewhere, having a lot of money gives you power. But this “hierarchy of money,” as he puts it, is rivaled by another: a “hierarchy of merit, learning, and status.” The lawyers, doctors, and academics who compose “the liberal class” (to use the journalist Chris Hedges's term) have erected their own edifice of power—one that has also come to ignore the interests of working-class people and reproduced structures of extreme racism, particularly in the prison system.

According to Frank, this meritocratic ideal marks a stark break from the origins of the Democratic Party, which was founded as the “party of the people,” in open rebellion against the political and banking elites. But starting in the early 20th century, progressive politicians in both the Democratic and Republican parties began to turn to this emerging class of educated elites to help run the country from the top down.

The writer and editor Herbert Croly, who inspired Theodore Roosevelt and helped found the *New Republic*, as well as left-wing intellectuals like Thorstein Veblen, were instrumental in building an ideology for this progressive aristocracy. Veblen called for an overthrow of the country's price system, but one led by a monopolistic “Soviet of engineers” rather than the industrial proletariat. If this sounds a bit like the philosophy behind Google, that's because in many ways it is. Meritocracy offered itself as a fairer alternative to the rapaciousness and inequality of laissez-faire capitalism, but it didn't just tolerate inequality; it demanded it. “Professionals are,” Frank notes, “life's officer corps,” and one cannot issue orders without status—in this case, the status conferred by the professional class's monopoly over education. By the 1970s, he argues, this ideology had become a way of life for Democrats; and today, the professional managerial class has become the party's lifeblood.

Frank sees the rise of the gospel of meritocracy as a political development and cites a 1971 memo by the super-lobbyist Fred Dutton, “Changing Sources of Power” (later published as a book), as the origin of its insertion into the modern Democratic Party. With his memo, Dutton sought to extirpate working-class politics from the Democrats and to replace it with the interests of an ascending generation of middle-class voters. The future electoral coalition for the Democrats, he argued, would be an alliance of college graduates, newly liberated women, and empowered black voters. It would oppose a class-based New Deal politics of material things and be poised to look toward a politics of “the psyche” or even “the soul.”

George McGovern attempted to win a presidential election with this coalition, and was smashed in 1972. But the turn against working-class politics nonetheless continued in the years that followed. Jimmy Carter was the first technocratic Democrat to fight the working class. His inflation czar, Alfred Kahn, gleefully talked of destroying the Teamsters, and his Federal Reserve chairman, Paul Volcker, imposed an austerity regime. Abandoned by their former party, the working class moved to the right, looking for a new home in the GOP as Democrats came to disavow the New Deal. This was, as Frank puts it, at least in part a “realignment of choice.”

Some surprising actors appear in this shift of the party's consensus. Robert Reich, today considered a left-of-center pundit, spent much of his career peddling many of these meritocratic premises and working out the justifications for why this new upper class deserved its increased share of the national wealth. In *The Work of Nations*, Reich called them the “fortunate fifth” and noted that they were engaged in a secession from the larger American community. But this was seen as a cause for celebration: “Never before in history has opulence on such a scale been gained by people who have earned it, and done so legally,” Reich wrote. He even wondered to *The New York Times* “whether the traditional union is necessary for the new workplace.”

Reich's friend Bill Clinton played an even more crucial role in the rise of the meritocrats. Clinton brought all of the party's factions together with the hope of formulating a new Democratic coalition. He “led the idealistic Sixties generation and he warred with the teachers' union,” Frank writes; “he smoked dope and he never got high; he savored Fleetwood Mac and he got tough with welfare mothers.” Early in his first term, Clinton was making these meritocratic ar-

guments to blue-collar workers (“what you earn depends on what you can learn”); he believed that education, rather than solidarity, was the key to a better life. In short, if you had problems, such as a foreclosure or a medical bankruptcy, the best way to solve them was to go to school.

The policies that followed from this ideology, Frank argues, were gruesome. NAFTA helped to destroy labor. By signing the 1994 crime bill, Clinton helped the US prison system become “the greatest gulag in the world.” He also signed the bill that instituted the 100-to-1 sentencing disparity for those convicted of using crack versus powder cocaine. (Crack and cocaine are chemically similar, but 88 percent of the people arrested for using crack were black.) Clinton engaged in a savage attack on welfare that climaxed with the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. The Clinton era also saw the sweeping deregulation of many industries, including the telecom, banking, and energy sectors, and Frank details how Clinton worked with the Republican House Speaker Newt Gingrich to privatize Social Security—a deal that was prevented only by the Monica Lewinsky impeachment scandal. Clinton also boasted in his 1996 State of the Union address that his tenure marked the end of the era of big government; and his biographer Martin Walker has gone so far as to say that Clinton finally broke the consensus supporting Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal and Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society. This could never have been achieved by Republicans; it could only be done by the traditional guardian of these policies: the Democratic Party.

Frank argues that Obama continued this reign of the meritocrats, staffing his administration with “satisfied, conventionally minded people” who were happy to find allies on Wall Street. Experienced in financial engineering, investment bankers were, after all, now part of the hierarchy of knowledge as well as that of capital, and the common interests between the two, Frank writes, explains Obama’s support for bailouts, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and Silicon Valley monopolies.

This brings him to Hillary Clinton, a person who was always portrayed by the party as brilliant and accomplished, practical yet idealistic. This portrait, he argues, is a grift. In 1997, for instance, Clinton led a chorus of bankers in singing “We Shall Overcome” to celebrate microlending—a type of financial scam that has had often-devastating consequences for borrowers in the Third World. And a Clinton Foundation event in 2015 found Clinton, Melinda Gates,

NGO leaders, a Silicon Valley CEO, and a large number of women from the developing world, celebrating each other’s achievements (at one point, Chelsea Clinton introduced an “inspiring” chocolatier from Trinidad)—all of which leads Frank to conclude that Clinton’s specialty is trafficking in fake virtue to make the wealthy feel better.

In the end, Frank argues, the Democrats need to recognize that their ideology is the problem. By invoking the rhetoric of meritocracy, partnering with financial elites, dismantling much of the welfare state, and ignoring the interests of working-class Americans, they have created a nation that is far more deeply unequal (and also, ironically, one in which it’s harder for them to win elections). “The course of the party and the course of the country can both be changed,” Frank writes, “but only after we understand that the problem is us.”

Steve Fraser’s *The Limousine Liberal* gives us another gloss on the Democrats’ transition from a majority to minority party. But Fraser shifts the optics: Instead of focusing on the Democrats themselves, he chronicles the history of an image that reactionaries have used for years to go after “elites”: that of the “limousine liberal,” the self-satisfied establishment do-gooder whose condescension creates an “aggrieved sense” among the public. Limousine liberalism as a metaphor, Fraser argues, is the historical glue that binds the 1930s hostility to the New Deal with the anger at “the countercultural and racial reformations of the 1960s.”

Fraser anchors his narrative around John Lindsay, the liberal Republican mayor of New York in the 1960s and early ’70s, and Mario Procaccino, the working-class Democrat who ran against him and coined the term “limousine liberal.” Lindsay, he argues, cared for the elites of New York and the city’s minority communities, but not its white middle and working class. Or as an ironworker told a journalist at the time, “What the hell does Lindsay care about me?... None of these politicians give a good goddamn.” This sentiment became the political kindling for Barry Goldwater, Richard Nixon, the “Reagan revolution,” and, of course, Donald Trump.

But while Fraser zooms in on the moment of the term’s first use, he also has larger ambitions: a history of such epithets going back to the creation of America’s administrative state and the makings of managerial capitalism. The backlash against liberal elites, Fraser writes, started almost as soon as they emerged on the scene, with populists like William

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But while Bryan represented agrarian radicalism, the anti-elite reaction more often came from the right. Henry Ford, for example, was an angry right-wing populist much taken with promoting anti-Jewish conspiracy theories. Ford had a producerist, anti-finance philosophy and, Fraser argues, was the first to conceive of using the idea of a ruling class as a form of cultural subversion.

In the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan picked up the baton, using similar rhetoric about the libertine urban society of the post-World War I Prohibition-era cities ("Jewish jazz"), bathed as they were in speculative excess.

The Limousine Liberal runs through the history of key figures in 20th-century right-wing populism. Fraser discusses the American Liberty League of the 1930s, which was essentially the vehicle for big business's opposition to the New Deal. According to

Roosevelt's Wall Street foes, "'that man in the White House' was 'morally weak,' a 'dupe,' a 'cripple,' a 'liar,' a tool of 'niggers and Jews,' a megalomaniac dreaming of dictatorship." Huey Long, Francis Townsend, and William Lemke all fought Roosevelt on populist grounds as well, but often by invoking the image of a coddled elite condescending to do good for the people—and getting it wrong.

As the New Deal was institutionalized, the "limousine liberal" establishment cemented itself into the formal centers of power. New Deal supporters like Averell Harriman, Vincent Astor, Nelson Rockefeller, and Winthrop Aldrich—all 1 percenters of their era—became the wise men presiding over the administrative state. This elite liberalism crested in the 1950s, when the leader of the conservative Republicans, Robert Taft, mused on how far this vision had penetrated both parties: "[I]f we get Eisenhower we will practically have a Republican New Deal Administration with just as much spending and socialism as under Truman."

As far back as the founding of the New Deal, leftists were already aware of many of the problems created by an increasingly bureaucratic political system ruled by a small cadre of experts and elites. Dwight MacDonal and C. Wright Mills worried about this emerging "power elite" in the 1940s and '50s, and many New Left activists pointed to the bureaucratization of American politics in the 1960s. But the most vociferous reactions came from right-wing figures like J. Edgar Hoover, the antifeminist Phyllis Schlafly, and the segregationist George Wallace, who opposed elite liberalism for cultural and ideological reasons, or from bankers and industrialists, who worried that the new state-centered liberal programs threatened their economic interests.

This antiliberal backlash was paired with policies on desegregation and busing, which fell "disproportionately on the poor of both races." "Hard hats in the Northeast, rednecks in the South, and prospering entrepreneurs in the western Sunbelt...all detested the liberal elite running the country," Fraser writes. They put their backing behind Goldwater in 1964 and, far more successfully, behind Reagan in 1980. The failure of the ruling class to maintain living standards sealed the right's ascendancy.

"However counterintuitive the spectacle might seem," Fraser notes, "during the closing decades of the twentieth century the Republicans made a persuasive case that they had become the party of the people." He closes his book with a discussion of the

Anyone Who Has Left Love

Anyone who has left love,
who has stepped out of the boat, onto
the water, learns what they had not known
or wanted to. Anyone
who turns their back on love, as if
it might not take too long for them to go
all the way around and come up behind it—
anyone who lets love go,
opens their hand while walking through
a crowd, as if getting, piece by piece,
rid of evidence, will lose,
along with evidence of the thing,
the thing itself. Anyone
who sets love down, and takes their eyes
away, anyone who travels far
when love is home, anyone
who homes alone when love is far,
will lose what cannot be found. Maybe they
thought love was the earth under
the road, or the road under the sole
of the shoe or the foot under the body but by now it is
back there. It was a bush like a fire,
and now—no more fragrance or light
will be inhaled, or seen, as when
you die you will not see the world again.
Even if you thought you had not
believed you were loved, something in you
knew that you were—and you stepped right off love's roof.

SHARON OLDS

new billionaire class, and how men like Trump have exploited this anti-elitist rebelliousness to underwrite their own political dominance. In effect, anti-elitism on the right has almost always been a way of empowering other elites.

Although *The Limousine Liberal* provides a useful index of populist and right-wing movements, its arguments, unfortunately, are historically muddled. The book frames Franklin Roosevelt as a figure who, had he appeared later, would have been subjected to the charge of limousine liberalism. Yet the anti-elitist aspects in that line of attack had already emerged, as Fraser notes, decades before FDR's presidency. This points to the larger problem with his book: It fails to make the key point about when the charge of limousine liberalism works—which is to say, when liberals *are* being hypocritical about their policies. Roosevelt was immune to such attacks because he actually delivered for the working class. But when the charge was leveled against Democrats in the 1970s who were smugly calling (as Alfred Kahn did) for the elimination of labor rights, it did work. Recognizing the differences between the two is critical, especially as the Democratic Party begins, in the coming years, to court those people it has lost to the Republican Party. If the Democrats want to win back white working-class voters, they need to take on big business—and not to argue, as the *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman has done, that big business is the great protector of multiculturalism and liberal ideals.

With that said, what's surprising about both books is how well they've held up after this historic election. Many others written before the fall haven't fared nearly as well, given that they were anchored in the self-satisfied ideological framework of Obama liberalism. The best example is Jonathan Chait's *Audacity*, on the legacy of Obama's presidency, which was written under the assumption that Clinton would win, and that Obama's signature programs would prove enormously beneficial and consequential. For Chait, it was simply unthinkable that the American people would reject what Democrats had accomplished and turn to a charlatan like Trump. And yet reject it they did, which left Chait furiously rewriting parts of the book to paper over the Democrats' deep political and ideological failure. He and many liberals are still struggling to figure out what went wrong—when for others, Frank and Fraser included, it's

been clear for years, with Trump as the price we'll be paying for more than 25 years of failed Democratic policy-making. The politics embraced by the Clintons was part of a cultural revolution among liberals—one that replaced a New Deal-era understanding of economic and political democracy with an ideology that justified the pillaging of working-class Americans by a new group of political and economic elites.

It has become clear that Trump's bristling campaign rhetoric against the establishment resonates powerfully with the victims of recent Democratic policies. It also appeals, as Fraser notes, to white nationalists and the oligarchs who have always embraced such rhetoric to peddle populism's evil twin, autocracy. But the way to defeat these maneuvers isn't simply by opposing antiestablishment rhetoric. There are different models for opposing Trump over the next four years, and how that opposition is framed—by collaboration or condescension—will determine whether the Democrats return to their roots as a party of the people, or remain a party of the professional elite.

Perhaps the most potent way to understand how this plays out is to study the befuddlement of liberals at Trump's approach to political economy. Former Clinton Treasury secretary Larry Summers, the epitome of Fraser's limousine liberalism and Frank's knowledge hierarchy, has staked out his opposition to Trump's remarks regarding corporate power. After Trump said that pharmaceutical companies had too many lobbyists and were engaged in price-gouging, Summers argued that his rhetoric was a threat to the rule of law—and after Trump saved some jobs that United Technologies had planned to move to Mexico, Summers asserted that Trump was a threat to capitalism itself. Similarly, Senator Cory Booker testified against Jeff Sessions, Trump's nominee for attorney general, one morning in January and then voted against capping pharmaceutical prices (which Trump called for) that evening. Surely this is opposition—but is it opposition from the party of the people?

Debates within the Democratic Party about the best ways to oppose Trump and his destructive policies matter. But the Democrats must also undo the profound damage of the cultural revolution that Clinton wrought and that Obama continued. If this ideological battle isn't won, then it's possible that Trump won't be the last—or, one worries, even the worst—demagogue to come to power in America. Nor, one suspects, in the ensuing years will these be the last books to make that point. ■



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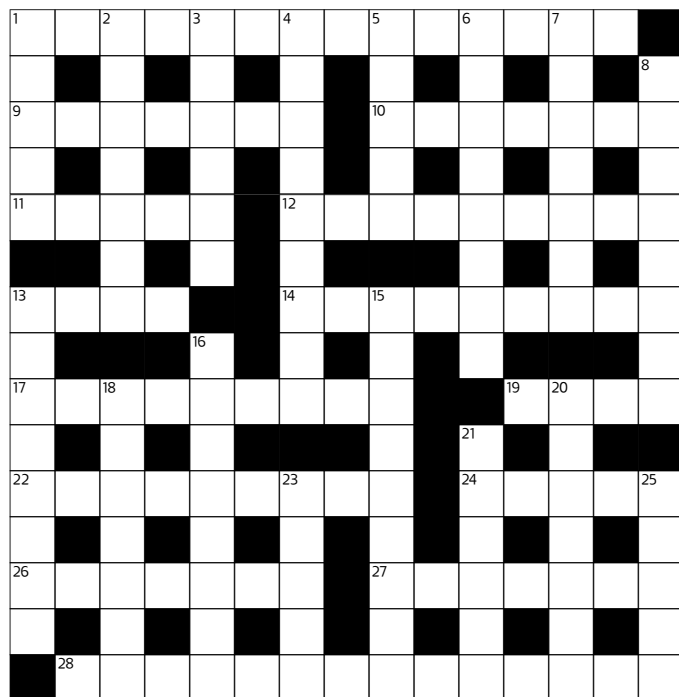
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- 1 Conquest provides material for a series of poems (6,8)
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- 11 Uncool desire to move back around road (5)
- 12 Prophet: "Originally, zygote comes before both egg *and* chicken" (9)
- 13 Priest decapitated ruminant (4)
- 14 Appeared to interrupt Blair rudely, like the British Parliament (9)
- 17 Hawk, getting nearer, grabs pine first off (9)
- 19 Satisfactory haul is put away (4)
- 22 Undercover revolutionary, noticing nothing (9)
- 24 The last bit of flavor is the difference between sour and bitter (5)
- 26 Visits a restaurant to sauté bananas (4,3)
- 27 Prisoner's naked display on a platform (7)
- 28 Artist exerts upward force on government figure with firm control (7,7)

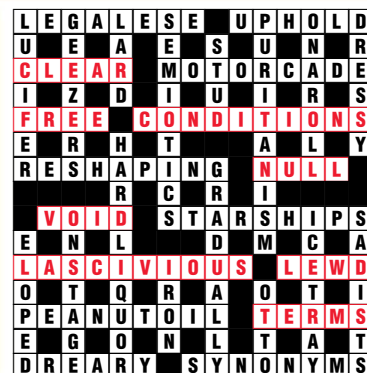
DOWN

- 1 Small, level spot for critter? (5)
- 2 A cure-all without strings attached? (7)
- 3 Rome, by leaps and bounds, becoming something still undeveloped (6)
- 4 Maintaining extraordinary zeal, Gabriel's upset an unsavory character (9)
- 5 Seaman sustains Q&A in country (5)
- 6 Gives a shout, roughly 90 miles outside capital of Azerbaijan (8)
- 7 One spreading the news through town about extremely thickset beast (7)
- 8 Lugosi takes a bow with a pastry (4,4)
- 13 Legislator's cry of disappointment: "A piece of garlic in the foie gras!" (8)
- 15 Goodness gracious—I packed fish in a freighter (5,4)
- 16 Collection of airs with very bad smell? Sure (8)
- 18 A slice of apricot-tasting cheese (7)
- 20 Whirlwind ran wild, breaking into a commotion (7)
- 21 Virginia maiden promoted an underling (6)
- 23 Vamp starts to incite naughtiness through risqué ostentation (5)
- 25 Crap gets smuggled in, I'd reckon (5)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3424

ACROSS 1 LE(GALES)E 5 U + PH(OL)D (lo rev.) 10 CLEA (anag.) + R 11 MO(T + ORCA)DE 12 F(R)EE (&lit.) 13 anag. 15 [f]RESH + APING 17 final letters 18 vid[e]o anag. 20 S + TARS + HIPS 24 LASCIVIO (anag.) + US 26 "lude" 28 [k/P]-EANU + TOIL 29 rev. hidden 30 D + REAR + Y 31 SYNO (anag.) + NY + MS

DOWN 1 LUC(I + F)ER (cruel anag., &lit.) 2 GEE + Z(ER)S 3 hidden 4 pun 6 PURI(TANIS)M (saint anag.) 7 2 defs. 8 [ad]DRESS + Y 9 2 defs. 14 HA(R)D + "licker" 16 GRADU (anag.) + ALLY 19 ON(STAG)E 21 "I stray" 22 S(A DIS)T + S 23 EL + OP-ED 25 hidden 27 2 defs.



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