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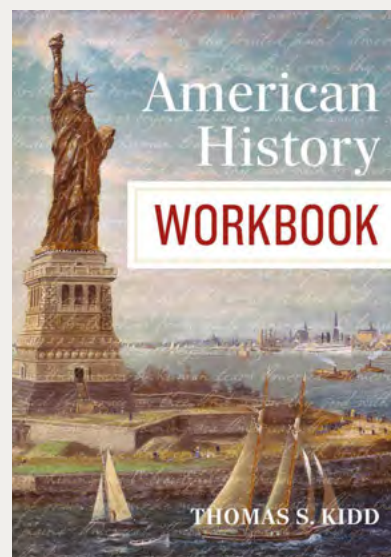
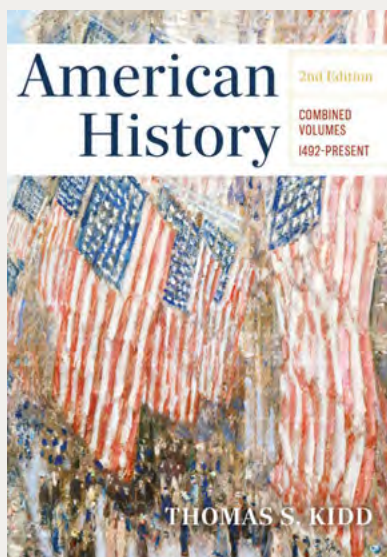
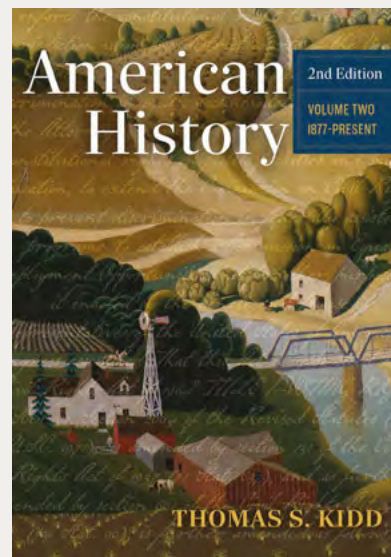
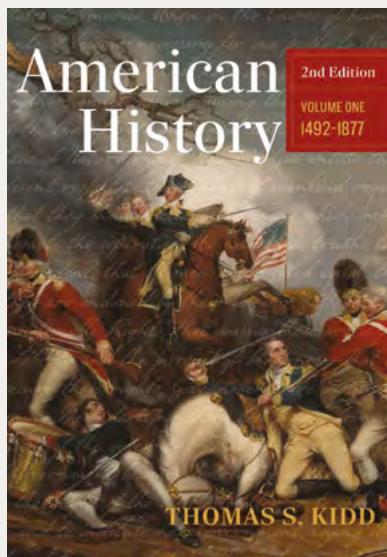
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BETSY ROSS AND THE FIRST STARS AND STRIPES, BY JOHN WARD DUNSMORE (PHOTO BY FRANCIS G. MAYER/CORBIS/VCG VIA GETTY IMAGES)

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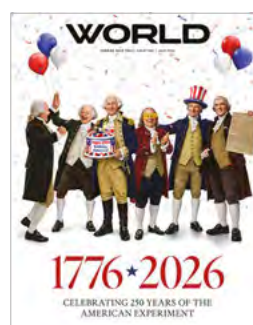
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by Kevin McGivern

Founding Fathers (from left): James Madison, John Adams, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson

WORLD

BIBLICALLY OBJECTIVE JOURNALISM THAT INFORMS, EDUCATES, AND INSPIRES

“The earth is the LORD’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.” —Psalm 24:1

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WORLD NOTES



July marks the start of a new fiscal year for WORLD. That makes it a natural time to reflect on stewardship: God's provision in the year behind us and our responsibilities in the year ahead.

As a nonprofit organization, ending a fiscal year well is important. Our goal has always been to finish each year with a small surplus. Not a large surplus. Not a war chest. Just enough to help sustain the work God has given us to do.

We believe that the Lord provides resources through His people to fund our mission, not to be hoarded. At the same time, wise stewardship does require prudence. We have had years that ended in losses, and while a loss is not the end of the world—no pun intended—no organization can sustain losses indefinitely without risking its future.

There have been years when WORLD's board believed it was wise to build a modest cash reserve. In the late 2010s, that proved to be a good and timely decision. During the COVID period, when paper was difficult to obtain and cash flow tightened, that reserve helped us meet our obligations and even buy several months' worth of paper in advance.

**Planning keeps us
focused on the work
we believe God has
given us to pursue and
helps keep us from
wandering down every
interesting path that
opens before us.**

It helped again after our offices flooded. We continued producing all our content after that storm, and we never faced a serious risk of failing to pay our bills.

I should be clear: A cash reserve did not get us through those trials. God did. He used that reserve to provide short-term relief, but He met our needs in ways we didn't anticipate, including the immediate support many of you offered. What might have been crises became moments we now look back on as blessings.

With all of that in mind, even though I am writing this a few weeks before the end of our fiscal year, we expect to finish with a small surplus. Thank you for your part in that result.

But stewardship involves more than finances. A new fiscal year also requires planning. It offers a fresh start, much like a new school year or a new calendar year.

Like every year, we are making plans for what comes next.

I am always a little hesitant to say too much about what we hope to do in the future. A recurring biblical theme—at WORLD, in this space, and, I assume, in all our lives—is that “the heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.” I have lost count of how many times I have told you about one of our plans, only to come back later and explain that the plan had to change.

That does not keep us from planning, and it should not. Planning is another part of wise stewardship. It keeps us focused on the work we believe God has given us to pursue. It also helps keep us from wandering down every interesting path that opens before us.

So that is how we enter this new fiscal year: grateful for God's provision, thankful for your generosity, and committed to stewarding well what He has entrusted to us.

We will make plans. We will pursue the mission. And we will trust the Lord to establish our steps in ways that glorify Him.

KEVIN MARTIN
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
kevin@wng.org



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I came into college unsure of what I wanted to study...What stood out to me the most as I switched majors was the way the professors and my advisors were not trying to sell their major or department to me. They genuinely wanted to get to know me and my strengths and weaknesses in order to be able to guide me into what the Lord might be calling me into. They asked questions to help guide me in what the Lord could have for me in this life.

JONATHAN MARSHALL '27
Psychology

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M A I L B A G

“For someone who received a lot of grace and second and third chances in his life, Dawson is pretty quick to pull the trigger on someone else.”

ALABAMA'S CHIEF MUCKRAKER

Page 71: After a complimentary introduction to 1819 News and its work, and Dawson's commendable journey to salvation and respectability, the story takes an interesting twist. To tell a story is one thing. To wrap it in a Christian context can be tricky. For someone who received a lot of grace and second and third chances in his life (did he get threatened with 384 years of prison for nothing?) Dawson is pretty quick to pull the trigger on someone else, someone who might need some grace himself.

Yes, Copeland obviously did some wrong things. When WORLD's reporter says that *Esquire* downplayed Copeland's offenses, how do those stack up against Dawson's attempted murder, aggravated robbery, and extortion? Who is going to judge what's more reprehensible here? And is that the point? All of us can use a little grace. Even if we don't deserve it. Especially if we don't deserve it.

In an increasingly polarized environment if we—as fellow sinners—can't figure out how to give each other enough grace to at least live together, it's only going to make things more difficult.

SAM REID
Issaquah, Wash.

FIGHTING WORDS

Cover: I love the May cover! A Founding Father in his curled wig, a roaring fire crackling behind him, bent with patriotic zeal over his—laptop computer?!



MAY 2026

The true Spirit of 1776 is alive and well 250 years later. Praise be to God. May we continue looking to divine Providence for help and wisdom both individually and nationally.

ELIZABETH RAMIREZ
Harrisburg, Pa.

I was amused by the cover drawing of a 1770s Colonial era character in period surroundings sitting in front of a laptop computer. I also had to chuckle at the “Revolutionary reporting” article on page 64. Here were more Colonial-era characters, and the majority of them seemed engrossed with their smart phones just like so many today. One person is sitting with his back to the group messing with a laptop computer.

Based on what I've observed of so many today whose entire existence

seems intertwined with their phones to the exclusion of the reality around them, I have to wonder, if such devices had actually existed in the 1770s, if we would not still be a British colony.

I did read the article, by the way, and it was very good.

TIMOTHY MCGOWAN
Lund, Nev.

FOUNDATIONAL PROBLEMS?

Page 94: Erick Erickson says fractures in the MAGA base are greatly exaggerated, and from what I can read, it is not about Trump, but about revitalizing America. There are many folks in my circles who don't particularly like President Trump but tolerate him and would vote for a third term (if it were possible) because they love the return to the Reagan years. So it will be interesting (and important) to see if they vote in the midterms.

HOWARD EYRICH
Director of the DMin program
Birmingham Theological Seminary
Birmingham, Ala.

I was reading Erick Erickson's story about “the MAGA base,” and I am wondering how he defines MAGA (or how most would define it). I voted for Trump, both times. However, both times I voted for someone else in the primary. I thought he did a great job in his first term, for the most part, but I was troubled by him personally. I don't appreciate the way he puts people down, how he says such nasty things about people— →

especially those who oppose him in any way. I could go on, but I guess the point is that I am not a fan of him as a person. Am I MAGA? A Trump supporter? I don't feel like I am. How are we defining MAGA?

MARTIE VACEK
Moline, Ill.

LIFE IN CUBA

Page 84: Thank you for the article on the beautiful people working/volunteering in Cuba to save babies with meager funds but God's rich blessings.

CHERYL IRISH
Bastrop, Texas

What a breath of fresh hope, learning of the church's pro-life work in that unfortunate country!

DALE E. BROWN
Holt, Mich.

A TIME TO DANCE

Page 90: I enjoyed reading your article "A time to dance" by Theresa Abell Haynes. I wonder if WORLD is also aware of the traditional form of dance known as "contra dance," which is family friendly, wholesome, and suitable for a very wide range of ages. In our state, I know of at least three groups who host dances on a monthly basis, with 100 to 150 people attending.

This form of dance has a large appeal to the conservative Christian homeschooling circles that I'm a part of, because you can bring your whole family to the event, socialize with your community, meet like-minded people (including potential spouses!), and join in wholesome dances accompanied by a live band playing traditional folk music.

KIERAH HINES
Bradford, Maine

LINDSEY GRAHAM'S REPEAT PERFORMANCE

Page 18: I always give Sen. Graham the benefit of the doubt and am willing to hear him out on a variety of issues. Seven-and-a-half years ago during the Brett Kavanaugh Supreme Court confirmation hearings, Graham eviscerated the Democrats for their shameless

treatment of Kavanaugh. Graham's comments that day encouraged me to believe there are still those willing to speak truth in Washington, D.C. Graham's masterclass in calling out "this unethical sham," as well as his unending pro-life support, has made him a hero in my book. I hope the good people in South Carolina reelect him.

CINDY MOUW
Holland, Mich.

Carolina Lumetta's profile on Lindsey Graham lacks both an historical understanding of Southern politics and relies too much on his critics. South Carolina is a small state, with a total population about the size of the Atlanta metropolitan area. Political survival here, and in the South, requires reelection and incumbency, which leads to seniority in Congress. Despite criticism, Graham was the first Republican elected in his third congressional seat since Reconstruction, and he followed Strom Thurmond—a legend in longtime survival. Graham wins because he "gets things done."

A number of GOP candidates have opposed him from the right, and they have all failed. His power comes because he's been reelected and has been close to important Republicans in Washington. Seniority epitomizes success, and he's an influential conservative spokesperson. The article should have referenced the quote from Ben Robertson's *Red Hills and Cotton* about the state political culture. "We hated bankers and we hated merchants ... they were usurers

and thieves, and we fought them ... in our counties, in our state and at every national convention."

J. DAVID WOODARD
Thurmond Professor of Political Science Emeritus
Clemson University
Clemson, S.C.

THE STORY OF EVERYTHING

Page 57: Bob Brown's tongue-in-cheek review of *The Story of Everything* is brilliant! Thanks for the chuckle and also the thoughtful commentary.

BEVERLY JACOBSON
Monument, Colo.

TIME FOR SOME TOUGH LOVE?

Page 76: I read with interest Addie Offereins' article. One method not explored in the article is the highly successful one running in Austin, Texas, called Community First! Village. The distinctive that makes it work so well is in the name. Housing is important, yes, but not in isolation behind a locked door, as the article points out clearly. The answer is housing ... but with community, which provides the needed support through neighbors from like circumstances and trained staff living among them. Other nonprofits around the country are replicating this model, including the organization I serve, Joppa.org, in Des Moines, Iowa.

BILL MECH
Des Moines, Iowa

IS THE WEST BREAKING UP?

Page 14: The tone of Lauren Smyth's article was Europe good, Trump bad. Left unsaid was that there is a global shift and Europe is increasingly less relevant. Without our support financially and militarily, they would be a shell of what they are. Almost all European countries have become more secular and their governments more progressive. We have an "America First" president, and I am comfortable with him putting us first and giving Europe the cold shoulder. We've done too much for them for too long with very little appreciation.

KATHY CONNORS
Medina, Wash.

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VOICES LYNN VINCENT

Pilgrims of a certain age

Gen Z Christians aren't the only ones migrating to liturgical traditions

A flurry of recent media coverage has focused on a sub-trend: the migration of evangelicals to more rooted, liturgical traditions such as Anglicanism, Catholicism, and Eastern Orthodoxy. Most reporting has centered on Gen Z spiritual émigrés and even more narrowly on young men, seeking a more rigorous—and in some cases “masculine”—

Christianity. But a quieter migration may also be underway.

The evangelical émigrés I know aren't young marrieds or young men. They are older, single women. I am one of them.

After 35 years in Bible churches, I am exploring biblically faithful liturgical traditions. Meanwhile, close friends of mine are also striking out in their 60s toward ancient spiritual destinations.

In 1968, my friend Anita was a bona fide Southern California Jesus Freak. The spiritual wave that began at Pastor Chuck Smith's Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa had swept south to laidback San Diego. There, evangelists roamed the sands, witnessing to surfers and other young seekers, baptizing them by the hundreds in the blue Pacific.

After high school, Anita's spiritual journey took her deeper into the world of evangelicalism through Gordon College and the Massachusetts branch of L'Abri Fellowship. Despite a taste of an Episcopal congregation and exposure to iconic Reformed churches, she stayed connected to her nondenominational roots for decades.

Then in 2023, after prayer and formal catechism, Anita was confirmed at International Anglican Church (IAC) in Colorado Springs. “What appealed to my spirit was that it was not an American version of Christianity,” Anita told me.

“It is ancient Christianity, unbounded by conventions of modern culture.”

Anita is now 72 years old. Her long spiritual arc wasn't mere denominational restlessness, but a late-life search for rootedness, belonging, and fellowship with the worldwide communion of saints.

We “women of a certain age” aren't leaving evangelical churches because we've abandoned faith in Christ or the doctrine of grace. Some of us have simply lost confidence in the late-modern evangelical delivery system. After decades inside personality-driven, sermon-centered churches, we are looking for reverence. For sacrament, creed, and calendar. For theological continuity that stretches beyond Mr. Gutenberg's movable type to wax tablets, parchment, and papyrus.

My friend Jill, who is 65, also spent 35 years in nondenominational evangelicalism. But during the pandemic and Black Lives Matter movement, her church began losing its biblical footing on moral issues. “It was blowing with every wind and tossing with every wave,” Jill says. “Its positions were only vaguely aligned with the Bible, and I became more and more uncomfortable with that.”

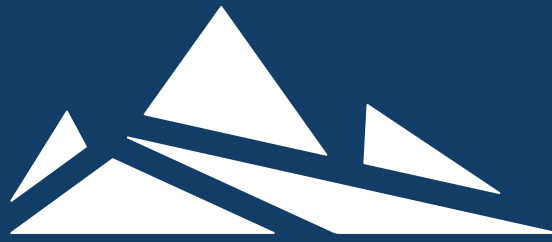
Over the years, she'd noticed her Catholic friends had deep, coherent theologies of life and ready answers to issues of the day. Not “culturally relevant” answers, but answers grounded in centuries of Catholic scholarly tradition. Jill was attracted to that: “There's something about getting older that you want things you can count on. You're looking for solidity. Consistency.”

In 2024, Jill left nondenominationalism and was confirmed in the Roman Catholic Church.

The idea of evangelical-to-liturgical migration is hardly new. In 1985, Wheaton College professor Robert Webber published a book, *Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail*. Back then, the trail hosted only a trickle of pilgrims. Today, though, the pilgrim ranks have swelled enough to draw fresh reporting. Still, Pew Research Center's 2025 figures on religious switching suggest it remains a small and hard-to-measure current within American Christianity.

I admit it's very un-Pew-like for me to cite just myself and two friends and hint at even a sub-sub-sub-trend. Any statistician would label our stories anecdotes, not data. Still, Jill and Anita don't know each other, and each of us, in our 60s, embarked on our journeys independently. So with the broader trend well-documented, perhaps it's reasonable to wonder whether this pattern extends beyond my own circle.

At some point, perhaps older, single Christian women don't need Sunday worship as a weekly presentation or churches as inspirational event platforms. Speaking for myself only, I am finding that the Anglican practices of Word and table, creed and calendar, along with rhythmic prayer, support endurance, hope, love, forgiveness, and moment-by-moment fellowship with God. It is a different walk on the Canterbury Trail, one I hope will help me complete my life in peace and repentance. ■



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DISPATCHES





IN THE NEWS

Congo's deadly struggle

Relief workers scramble to contain Ebola's spread amid rampant misinformation and violence

by GRACE SNELL

Dr. Abdou Sebushishe recently watched a video on social media featuring an influencer who claimed to report from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. “I’m in DRC currently,” the woman said. “And whatever they say is wrong. There is no Ebola here.”

Sebushishe said posts to this effect—claiming Ebola is just a hoax humanitarian workers use to collect money—have circulated widely online amid the ongoing outbreak in Congo and Uganda. They fuel rumors that doctors are experimenting on isolated Ebola patients or selling their organs.

Sebushishe knows nothing could be further from the truth. He knows Ebola, and over the past decade, he’s witnessed just how deadly it can be.

In 2014, Sebushishe said he was among the first nine doctors the African Union sent to respond to the West African Ebola outbreak—the largest ever on record. Over 11,000 people died.

Later, Sebushishe responded to South Sudan when epidemiologists feared Ebola would spread there in 2019, and he helped with another Ebola outbreak in Congo late last year. But this time, the fight is especially personal. Sebushishe, now a

senior global health adviser with International Medical Corps, is spearheading the group’s response from Goma, Congo—his hometown.

The Congolese province of Ituri is the epicenter of this latest Ebola outbreak. Cases have also surfaced in North and South Kivu provinces. It’s a vast response area Sebushishe says is roughly the size of Portugal, Austria, and Belgium combined.

The region is also an active conflict zone, where healthcare resources are already taxed and scarce. The type of Ebola spreading there, Bundibugyo, is a rare strain that currently has no vaccine or effective treatment. The past two Bundibugyo outbreaks had fatality rates ranging from 30% to 50%. On top of all these risks, healthcare workers must battle waves of online misinformation and overcome public skepticism as they try to stop the virus’ spread and care for the sick and dying.

The current Ebola outbreak is much smaller than the West African one in 2014. As of June 4, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 471 confirmed cases and 84 confirmed deaths across Congo and Uganda. But it is spreading fast, in part because it was identified late.

The Congolese government officially announced the outbreak on May 15 and the World Health Organization declared a public health emergency of international concern two →

Health workers assist with the burial of a person suspected of having died from Ebola in Bunia, DRC.

days later. Sebushishe said experts don't know exactly how long the virus spread before that, but they've heard reports of unexplained deaths in Ituri at least a month before the official declaration.

As a result, it's not clear how many people might have been exposed to Ebola. Sebushishe said healthcare workers are doing their best to catch up and trace this outbreak back to its original source. But he said they missed a critical window for early detection, leaving experts to worry it might eventually rival the West African outbreak.

Albert Baliesima Kadukima is doing his best to make sure that doesn't happen. Kadukima is executive director of ESADER, an organization caring for orphans and vulnerable children. A decade ago, he helped launch a radio station called Umoja FM to serve Congo's conflict-ravaged eastern district. Now,

“The resources are limited and the needs outstrip resources at a normal time, much less during Ebola.”

Physicians with Doctors Without Borders check a patient at an Ebola treatment center in Munigi, DRC.



he's using that station to raise awareness about Ebola and what people can do to help keep themselves safe.

Stopping Ebola's spread is a life-or-death mission, Kadukima said: "If people do not apply the preventative measures, then many people will die."

Kadukima explained the situation on the ground is especially dangerous because of the dozens of armed rebel groups and militias already plaguing the Ebola-affected regions. On June 2, one of these groups, the Allied Democratic Forces, murdered at least 16 civilians in a village close to where four Ebola cases were recorded, according to Reuters.

ADF is loyal to the Islamic State terror group, and just a few days earlier, killed another 16 people in the nearby city of Beni. Kadukima said ADF fighters have also destroyed and looted healthcare facilities and kidnapped some healthcare workers.

David Munkley is World Vision's Zonal Director for Eastern DRC. He said now that Congo's borders with Rwanda and Uganda are closed, humanitarian workers traveling from Goma to the cities of Beni and Bunia must traverse territory where ADF and other militant groups are active. "It's incredibly risky," he said.

Munkley said the recent ADF incursion into Beni scared residents and might cause some internal displacement—escalating the risk of further Ebola spread. He said contact tracing is essential to keep numbers down. But reports he's heard estimate the effectiveness of current tracking somewhere between 20% and 50%. "It should be 95%," he added.

Unlike COVID-19, which spreads through the air, Ebola transmits through an infected person's bodily fluids. As a result, the corpses of those who die from Ebola are highly contagious. However, recommended medical protocol conflicts with Congolese burial practices that often involve washing the body and hosting large funeral wakes.

Already, residents of Ituri have burned down two Ebola treatment centers after officials refused to return the body of a suspected Ebola patient to

his family and then banned funeral gatherings of more than 50 people.

Munkley said his team relies on partnerships with Congolese medical officials, teachers, and religious leaders to bridge cultural divides and relay life-saving messages in ways that make sense to people.

As the Ebola crisis wears on, doctors and nurses often find themselves running short on medical supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE), according to Samaritan's Purse Director of International Health Dr. Elliott Tenpenny.

"They do their absolute best," Tenpenny said. "But the resources are limited and the needs outstrip resources at a normal time, much less during Ebola."

"This is why providers, nurses, and others get sick," he added.

On May 19, American missionary and surgeon Dr. Peter Stafford was medevaced to Germany for treatment after contracting Ebola at a Congolese hospital shortly before the outbreak was declared. Berlin's Charité hospital released Stafford on June 6.

Meanwhile, Samaritan's Purse is building two different Ebola treatment centers in the city of Bunia and at Nyankunde Hospital, where Stafford worked. It has shipped nearly 80,000 pounds of medical supplies and PPE there.

Back in Goma, Dr. Abdou Sebushishe recently saw another video on social media—this one claiming to show the funeral of a doctor who died from Ebola. Sebushishe said posts like that sow fear among healthcare workers. He spends much of his day trying to make sure doctors and nurses have the training and support they need to feel confident in their work.

Just the other day, Sebushishe's mother called him. She still lives in Goma and wanted reassurance from her son that he was safe.

But Sebushishe isn't dwelling on what could happen to him. He's concerned with holding the line for the rest of the world. "We just need to contain this now and locally before it causes more trouble other places," he said. ■



BY THE NUMBERS

America's big news

Word of the Declaration of Independence spread fast, by Colonial standards

BY JOHN DAWSON

37 days

The time it took for word to reach London that the American colonists had signed the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776. The news of the American rebellion merited just a 16-word report in an Aug. 10 edition of *The London Gazette*. By the time the mail ship *Mercury* reached England with word of the Declaration, printers across the Colonies had already published it in dozens of American cities.

6,000+

The number of letters, including a dispatch from British Gen. William Howe reporting on the events of July 4, carried by the *Mercury* during its mail run.

200

The estimated number of copies of the Declaration of Independence made by Philadelphia printer John Dunlap.

26

The number of Dunlap Broad­sides—poster-sized copies of the Declaration—still known to be in existence today.



WASHINGTON MEMO

Competing celebrations

Dueling committees vie for America's semiquincentennial attention

by JULIANA CHAN ERIKSON



Stefanie Weiss remembers when Washington's Metrorail system opened in 1976. It consisted of just five stations, but for Weiss, who was 18 at the time, it meant independence, and the chance to visit the Smithsonian with her sister.

That year also marked America's 200th birthday, and Weiss' family took the Metro to catch the fireworks on the National Mall before she headed off to college.

"We felt lucky to live in Washington, where all this stuff was happening," she said.

But this year, Weiss won't attend celebrations for America's 250th in the D.C. area. Instead, she's headed to Maine to celebrate a family birthday.

"Washington has become a source of chaos on a daily basis," Weiss said. "It doesn't feel like we're all celebrating the same things."

That's partly due to competing event planners vying for America's attention.

Until last year, only one committee managed the 250th planning efforts—America 250. Appointed by Congress in 2016, the bipartisan commission had a simple task: arrange local events to com-

memorate the 250th across the country. For example, the group organized a time capsule to be buried in Philadelphia, set to be unearthed in 250 years.

But internal strife marred the group's work. Last September, America 250 fired its executive director, Ariel Abergel, for alleged security breaches involving the commission's social media account,

ABOVE: Spectators watch the Freedom 250 Memorial Day Parade in Washington, D.C. **RIGHT:** An attendee prays during the National Jubilee of Prayer, Praise & Thanksgiving on the National Mall in May.

and trying to push other commissioners to resign. And the time capsule project proved more costly and complicated than planners had expected.

Then in 2025, President Donald Trump created Freedom 250, which diverted attention toward splashier D.C.-based events like the U.S. Army's 250th anniversary parade in June 2025, a Sunday worship and prayer rally in May 2026, and a series of Ultimate Fighting Championship matches on the White House lawn in June. An IndyCar street race through downtown D.C. is scheduled for August.

Freedom 250's efforts also meant less money for America 250.

Both planning committees operate using a mixture of private donations and public funds. When Congress appropriated \$150 million for festivities, only America 250 was planning events. But now, both groups have been requesting government money, according to *The Wall Street Journal*. Both have also had to compete for corporate sponsorships.

All of which has left some Washingtonians a bit confused about how to actually celebrate. City officials have promoted events like the Great American State Fair, and a new museum underneath the Lincoln Memorial. Locals told me they're disappointed that some of the events the president touted

lacked the pageantry, patriotism, and polish of celebrations past.

"There were no UFC fights at the White House in 1976," noted Jonathan Den Hartog, professor of history at Samford University. "The distinction would be, are you celebrating the memory or are you just celebrating the present?"

Den Hartog said the 1976 celebrations were successful because the organizers brought the past into the present.

He pointed to one of the most memorable bicentennial symbols of the 1970s—the Freedom Train, a 26-car traveling museum that showcased artifacts and official documents from America's past, including an original copy of the Louisiana Purchase. Millions saw the display as it toured 48 states and traveled 25,000 miles.

Photos and local newsletters from 1976 also show that the bicentennial did more than just celebrate America's history. In the case of Alexandria, Va., it revitalized an entire city.

Dan Lee, Alexandria's city historian, said the area had been in decline in the 1960s. But in 1969, the Bicentennial Commission took an interest in Alexandria's past and purchased several properties. By 1976, they were reopened as gathering spaces, museums, or historic sites. Fifty years later, Alexandria celebrated America's 250th with an

outdoor jazz festival and tall ships on its waterfront.

"Our understanding of Old Town Alexandria now is very much shaped by the urban renewal that happened in the late '60s," Lee said.

Other towns in the D.C. area did not see such a dramatic change, but historical and eyewitness accounts suggest that Americans made a much bigger deal of the bicentennial than this year's semiquincentennial.

Ninety-year-old June Lassman, a longtime resident of Vienna, Va., remembers it was hard to avoid anything with a bicentennial label. She bought cookie tins, tea bag canisters, and beer bottles. "They were going whole hog on everything bicentennial," she said.

An archived newsletter from 1976 noted that the town threw an outdoor celebration on the Fourth of July that included a grease pole climb, tug of war, and a chance to dunk the mayor. That capped off months of special events, including a parade and three bicentennial balls in March, band concerts in May, and a flag ceremony in June.

But 50 years later, Vienna has opted for a quieter, more reflective tone. It will host a series of book talks, a discussion of the latest Ken Burns documentary, and a "Boston Tea Party" tea tasting. No climbing grease poles, and no mayoral dunking.

No matter how Washingtonians celebrate, locals all share the same tip for anyone who dares to go downtown to watch fireworks on Independence Day, on any given year—expect long waits everywhere.

Stefanie Weiss says her family learned this the hard way back in 1976.

Taking the Metro on July 4th to see fireworks on the National Mall proved easy enough. But getting home was not, especially when tens of thousands of sweaty and tired tourists all wanted to leave at the same time.

Weiss said her father ended up hitchhiking home and driving the family car back into the city to pick up the family at 3 a.m. the next day. Weiss laughs about it now, but says it's a piece of history she doesn't plan to repeat. ■



MATT MCCLAIN/BLOOMBERG VIA GETTY IMAGES

DEPARTURES

Disney crooner dead at 75

by JOHN DAWSON



**Peabo
Bryson**

A crooner with a special talent for duets who lent his voice to some of the best-known movie scores, Bryson died June 2. He was 75. While still a teenager, Bryson left home to sing background vocals for a variety of groups performing the southern Chitlin' Circuit in the late 1960s. Eventually, Bryson made it as a songwriter and solo artist, cutting a dozen soul albums in the 1970s and '80s. He also recorded albums with Natalie Cole and Roberta Flack but found his greatest success singing for Disney movie soundtracks. He won a pair of Grammy Awards in 1991 and 1992 for duets recorded for showstoppers in *Beauty and the Beast* (performed with Celine Dion) and *Aladdin*.



**Claude
Lemieux**

A bruising right winger who forged a 21-year career, Lemieux died May 28. He was 60. The Quebec native entered the National Hockey League in 1983 with the Montreal Canadiens. He won his first of four Stanley Cup championships in 1986 before moving on to the New Jersey Devils ahead of the 1990–1991 season. Lemieux garnered the reputation of a fierce competitor who sometimes pushed boundaries. While playing for Colorado in 1996, he checked an opponent into the boards hard enough to break his jaw, nose, and cheekbone. But Lemieux also built a reputation as one of the sport's best playoff performers. He won the league's Conn Smythe Trophy for best playoff performance after the Devils won the Stanley Cup in 1995.



**Kyle
Busch**

A stock car racing legend whose 63 NASCAR Cup Series wins placed him in the racing series' top 10, Busch died May 21. He was 41. The Las Vegas-born Busch grew up around racing, working the pit for his older brother, Kurt Busch. By the time he was 16, Kyle Busch had notched a top 10 finish in a NASCAR truck series event. By 2005, Busch signed with Hendrick Motorsports and began competing in NASCAR's premier series full time. In both 2015 and 2019, he bested all other NASCAR drivers with a Cup Series Championship. Busch fell ill during a May 10 Watkins Glen NASCAR event with sinus and respiratory symptoms and died of a related infection less than two weeks later.



**Barney
Frank**

A 16-term Democratic congressman who tackled banking policy and was known as a gay rights icon, Frank died May 19. He was 86. Voters outside Boston first elected Frank in 1980. After news reports outed several congressmen as homosexual, Frank came out publicly as gay in 1987. He rose to legislative prominence through his position on the influential House Financial Services Committee and used his perch as chairman to cut deals with Republicans following the 2008 financial crisis. Once Democrats won back the White House, Frank and Sen. Chris Dodd lent their names to a landmark banking reform bill enacted in 2010 meant to tighten regulations on housing and banking policy.



**Mark
Fuhrman**

A detective for the Los Angeles Police Department who became a household name during the O.J. Simpson murder trial, Fuhrman died May 12 at age 74. Fuhrman joined the LAPD in 1975 and had made detective by the time Nicole Brown Simpson and Ron Goldman were murdered in 1994. Police charged Simpson, a world-famous celebrity athlete and actor, and prosecutors called Fuhrman to testify. Simpson's attorneys leveraged Fuhrman's past use of racially-charged language to taint police and the state's case against Simpson. Eventually, the jury found Simpson not guilty. After the case, Fuhrman became a nonfiction author writing about famous murder cases, a frequent Fox News guest, and a talk radio host.

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HUMAN RACE

California surprise

by MARY JACKSON

➔ In a state where Democrats have dominated for decades, Republican candidate Steve Hilton appears to have secured second place in California's crowded primary to replace Gavin Newsom as governor. Hilton, a British-born former Fox News host backed by President Donald Trump, came in behind Democratic front-runner Xavier Becerra, a former Biden administration official, with progressive billionaire Tom Steyer coming in third. Under the state's top-two primary system, the two candidates with the most votes advance to the November general election, regardless of party affiliation. Hilton promised dramatic reform after 15 years of Democratic governance, while Becerra cast himself as an experienced politician who could withstand intrusions from the Trump administration. Cracks in California's one-party rule also were on display in the Los Angeles mayoral race. Former reality TV star Spencer Pratt, a Republican, initially appeared to finish in second place, surpassing far-left city councilwoman Nithya Raman to face Democratic incumbent Karen Bass, until late-return vote tallies appeared to favor Raman. With sleek AI-generated campaign ads and slogans such as "Californable" and "Make California Golden Again," Hilton and Pratt appealed to frustration over the state's excessive cost of living, rampant problems with drugs and homeless encampments, and deteriorating infrastructure and academic achievement.

VIRUS SMUGGLERS

Federal agents charged two scientists on June 2 with trying to smuggle vials of monkeypox virus from Africa into the United States. Vincent Munster, who is Dutch, and Claude Kwe, a Cameroonian, lied to investigators about their efforts, U.S. Attorney Jerome F. Gorgon Jr. said. Munster, 53, works as the chief of the virus ecology section at Rocky Mountain Laboratories in Hamilton, Mont., and Kwe, 38, works as a research fellow, according to a criminal complaint. Prosecutors said samples had been deactivated, meaning the vials didn't pose an active viral threat. —Liz Lykins

OUT OF PRISON

Tina Peters, a county clerk in Colorado convicted for promoting claims that Donald Trump won the 2020 presidential election, is out of prison. Gov. Jared Polis, a Democrat, commuted Peters' 9-year sentence after Trump



pressured him to show leniency. A jury convicted Peters in 2024 of attempting to influence a public

servant, conspiracy to commit criminal impersonation, violation of duty, and other crimes related to the 2020 election results. In the letter commuting her sentence, Polis noted that although her crimes were serious, the sentence was "extremely unusual and lengthy" for a first-time, nonviolent offender. Peters says she plans to challenge her conviction, vowing to take the case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court if necessary.

—Leigh Jones

MIRACLE BABY

A Florida boy is celebrating his first birthday after a groundbreaking surgery allowed him to be “born twice” and saved his life. At 19 weeks pregnant, Greg and Keishera Joubert learned their unborn son, **Cassian**, had CHAOS, a potentially fatal condition that blocks the airway. At 25 weeks, doctors partially delivered Cassian during a C-section while he remained attached to the placenta. They inserted a temporary airway tube, then returned him to the womb. Keishera delivered the boy six weeks later, and after 132 days in the NICU, Cassian came home. Although he faces the likelihood of health challenges in the future, his mother told reporters, “God turned what was our greatest heartbreak into a leap of medical science, and now there’s a whole new era of treatment for these babies.” —*Kim Henderson*



TENNIS COMEBACK

After a nearly four-year retirement, tennis legend **Serena Williams** will pick up her racket once again. On June 1, Williams announced she had accepted a wild-card invitation to play doubles at the HSBC Championships held in London the following week. “The G.O.A.T is BACK,” the Women’s Tennis Association wrote on social media. Throughout her two-decade career, Williams won numerous accolades, including 23 Grand Slam singles titles, four Olympic gold medals, and 14 doubles titles with her sister Venus. Although future matches

have yet to be confirmed, Williams said in a statement that the London match would kickstart her career’s “next chapter.” —*Bekah Bernhardt*

BREAKING NEWS?

CBS News fired **Scott Pelley**, a prominent correspondent for its flagship program *60 Minutes*, on June 2 amid an ongoing shakeup at the network. Pelley claims Editor-in-Chief Bari Weiss and the program’s newly installed executive producer, Nick Bilton, fired him after he criticized editorial decisions that amounted to “murdering” the program. Pelley lambasted Bilton’s lack of traditional broadcast news experience and also claimed editors had asked him to “inject falsehoods and bias” into his work, without offering specifics. Pelley is the fourth correspondent to leave the program since Weiss joined the network last year. In late May, Weiss announced plans to make changes to *60 Minutes*, which first aired in 1968. It is the longest-



running prime-time show in TV history. —*Leigh Jones*

READY TO LAND

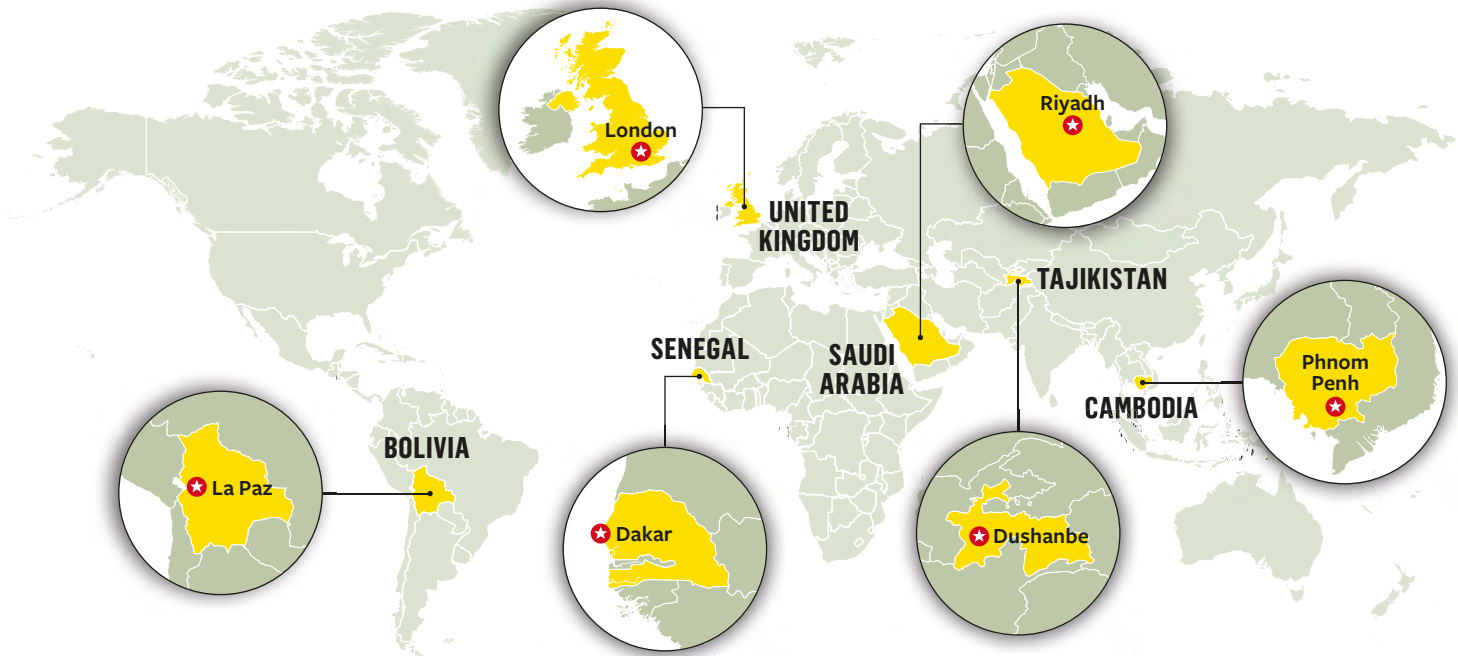
Joan Prince Crandall, who claims to be the longest serving flight attendant in the U.S. airline industry, is preparing to retire after 66 years in the air. Crandall began her career at Pacific Airlines in 1959, a time when flight attendants were vetted for their looks and expected to bring a sense of glamour to air travel. She first served on propeller planes with a maximum capacity of 24 passengers. Now she flies on Airbus passenger jets with seats for 306 people. Crandall has worked for Delta Airlines since 2008. Once she retires, she plans to write a book and continue traveling the world. —*Leigh Jones*

A WHOLE NEW WORLD

A senior Disney executive has admitted to a growing “affection” for a humanoid assistant. Jason Cox, executive director of AI R&D and engineering at the Walt Disney Company, used OpenClaw to develop an AI bot he calls Sam. According to a June 1 report in the *New York Post*, some of Cox’s coworkers feel uncomfortable about what Cox has described as a father-son-like relationship. Per his personal website, Cox admits to being curious about the onset of “digital soul[s].” Cox said Sam has enormous capacity for empathy-like responses. “In the attempts to create an intelligent auto-completer that is trained on all human knowledge, we may have indeed created an image of ourselves,” he wrote. —*Bekah Bernhardt* ■



Tajikistan cements its future



Tajikistan Central Asia's poorest and most remote nation will soon become an exporter of cement. The country announced plans to add four new cement plants to its current 16, doubling its output of the vital building material by 2029. Emomali Rahmon, president since 1994, gave strict instructions for domestic cement needs to be locally supplied. The country's increasing infrastructure—roads, bridges, and dams—uses vast quantities of cement. The new hydroelectric Rogun Dam, a joint project with China as part of the Belt and Road Initiative, will be the world's tallest dam at 1,099 feet and will double the country's energy production. The new cement plants will increase Tajikistan's output from 30,000 tons to 5.5 million, build economic stability, and provide thousands of jobs for Tajikistanis. —Amy Lewis



POPULATION

10.9 million

LANGUAGE

Tajik,
Russian

RELIGION

Muslim 99%,
Christian 1%

GOVERNANCE

Presidential
republic

GDP

\$19 billion

MAJOR EXPORTS

Mineral ore,
raw cotton,
aluminum

United Kingdom Courts sentenced Vickrum Digwa, a 23-year-old British Sikh man, to life in prison June 1 for the murder of 18-year-old student Henry Nowak. Details about the murder uncovered in the investigation sparked violent protests against the Southampton police station in early June, injuring 11 officers. On Dec. 3, 2025, Digwa stabbed Nowak with a Sikh ceremonial blade in Southampton. When police arrived, Digwa said he had been the victim of a racial attack, and officers did not believe Nowak when he said he'd been stabbed, but instead handcuffed and arrested him. Nowak died soon after in custody. Prime Minister Keir Starmer criticized Nigel Farage, leader of the Reform UK party, for calling people to respond with "pure cold rage" to evidence of "two-tier policing and anti-white prejudice."

—Evangeline Schmitt



Saudi Arabia The kingdom signed contracts for six new urban development areas in the city of Mecca, a project valued at \$3.5 billion. The city's commission says the projects will upgrade infrastructure and public services while enhancing Mecca's attraction for investors. Only Muslims can own land in Mecca, and non-Saudis can only purchase under specific conditions. Analysts see the developments as steps toward the nation's 2016 goal to triple the number of annual pilgrims to Mecca by 2030. In recent years, authorities have introduced measures to streamline pilgrimages, like digital coordination and bigger entry point facilities. Despite war in the region, the number of pilgrims to Mecca increased in 2026. —*Evangeline Schmitt*

Senegal Political deadlock looms after ousted Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko declared June 1 that his party won't join President Bassirou Diomaye Faye's new government. The two men were formerly allies from Pastef, a party headed by Sonko, which holds 130 out of 165 parliament seats. But disagreement over how to handle loan negotiation with the IMF led to Sonko's firing in May. Financial audits from 2025 uncovered \$13 billion in unreported debt left behind by the prior administration. Senegal faces a severe debt crisis and soaring cost of living, with one of the highest debt-to-GDP ratios in Africa. Faye has appointed economist Ahmadou Al Aminou Lo as the new prime minister, and analysts say the departure of the fire-brand Sonko may pave the way for closer ties between Dakar and Washington. —*Olalekan Raji*



POPULATION
18.5 million

LANGUAGE
French, Wolof

RELIGION
Muslim 95%,
Christian 4%

GOVERNANCE
Presidential
republic

GDP
\$40.4 billion

MAJOR EXPORTS
Petroleum,
gold,
phosphoric
acid, peanuts,
fish

Cambodia Prime Minister Hun Manet announced June 2 that Cambodia has begun arbitration under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to resolve a longstanding maritime dispute with neighboring Thailand. In May, Thailand unilaterally terminated a 2001 agreement with Cambodia to jointly manage energy resources in a disputed area in the Gulf of Thailand. The 10,000-square-miles contain an estimated \$300 billion worth of natural gas and oil. Thailand's move came after deadly conflict with Cambodia erupted along a disputed land border last year. Thailand said it will comply with the UN compulsory conciliation proceedings. A five-member commission consisting of appointees from Cambodia and Thailand will recommend non-legally binding dispute resolutions. —*Joyce Wu*



POPULATION
17 million

LANGUAGE
Khmer

RELIGION
Buddhist 95%,
Muslim 4%,
Christian 1%

GOVERNANCE
Constitutional
monarchy

GDP
\$52.3 billion

MAJOR EXPORTS
Clothing,
shoes, leather
goods

Bolivia The education and defense ministers resigned June 2 amid growing political rifts gripping the country. Protests intensified this spring, when Bolivian labor unions began a "siege" of the nation's capital to pressure the new democratic government. Last October, Bolivians elected centrist President Rodrigo Paz after nearly 20 years of socialist one-party rule. But market reforms and austerity measures under Paz have more than doubled the price of fuel while deepening the country's economic recession. Vice President Edmand Lara turned against Paz last December and accused him of "siding with the rich." Paz enjoys U.S. support, but has struggled to build a unified political front during his presidency. —*Carlos Paez*





U.S. BRIEFS

New Jersey sues over ICE detention center

➔ State officials have filed a lawsuit against the private prison company GEO Group for allegedly refusing to allow health inspectors into the Newark-based immigrant detention facility known as Delaney Hall. The detention center is the latest flashpoint in the nationwide fight over the Trump administration's immigration policies. Hundreds of detainees began a hunger strike on May 22, according to the New Jersey Attorney General's office, to protest substandard meals, insufficient medical care, and overcrowding. Protesters are also demanding the release of the most vulnerable detainees, such as the elderly, pregnant women, and those with medical conditions, said the New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice. Anti-ICE protesters and counterprotesters supporting the agency have surrounded the 1,000-bed facility for weeks. New Jersey Gov. Mikie Sherrill deployed the state police to keep the peace and prevent the federal government from sending more ICE officers to the area. Delaney Hall has attracted controversy since it reopened in May 2025 under a 15-year, \$1 billion contract with GEO Group. Just one month later, detainees pushed down a wall during a protest, and four immigrants escaped. —Addie Offereins



POPULATION

9.5 million

GOVERNOR

Phil Murphy ▮

U.S. SENATORS

Andy Kim ▮,
Cory Booker ▮

INDUSTRY

Finance,
manufacturing,
pharmaceuticals, life
sciences,
transport and
logistics

Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey officially declared June “Strong Families Month,” timing the proclamation to coincide with Father’s Day on June 21. The designation emphasizes the role of fathers and mothers in fostering stable families and healthy communities. According to Ivey’s announcement, research shows children raised by engaged parents are more likely to graduate from high school, avoid substance abuse, and achieve economic stability as adults. The governor’s office also cited U.S. Census Bureau data showing nearly one-third of Alabama children live in single-parent or unmarried-couple households. In Arkansas, Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders issued a similar June designation. “Fidelity Month” encouraged residents to renew their commitment to “God, family, community, and country.”

—Kim Henderson

North Carolina House lawmakers on June 3 approved a bill that sets guardrails around data center development and encourages reliance on nuclear power. The Ratepayer Protection Act addresses widespread concerns about the rapid growth of data centers and their toll on power grids. The bill would require data centers to use closed-loop cooling systems to limit water use and prevent them from getting property tax breaks. To address growing energy needs, existing power plants cannot be retired until nuclear resources replace them. That provision caused the most disagreement. “I wish we would ... pass [the data center part] unanimously, and then take this energy portion of the bill and really sit down and review it,” House Democratic Leader Robert Reives said. —Bekah Bernhardt



California The federal government sued the University of California Los Angeles on May 26 for acting “deliberately indifferent” toward anti-Semitic harassment of Jewish and Israeli students on campus. The 53-page complaint centers on pro-Palestine rallies and encampments in 2024 following the Hamas attacks on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023. Students were “physically assaulted, injured, excluded from campus, and deprived of educational opportunities” due to perceived Jewish or Israeli heritage, according to the Department of Justice filing. The complaint states the university violated Title VI requirements to protect students from unlawful discrimination and breached federal funding contracts and grants. It requests the court force the university to repay federal grant money going back more than two years, potentially hundreds of millions of dollars, and prohibit new contracts until UCLA complies with civil rights law, with a court-appointed monitor overseeing the process. The lawsuit is the third the DOJ has filed against UCLA in recent months. UC President James B. Milliken told the *Los Angeles Times* the most recent lawsuit ignored the university’s recent actions to combat anti-Semitism. —*Mary Jackson*

Hawaii The Aloha State unveiled a program aimed at easing its chronic doctor shortage—a gap equal to roughly 833 full-time physicians. State leaders appropriated \$28 million in federal funding to pay the medical school tuition of qualified applicants who agree to work in rural Hawaii for five years after graduation. The Hawai’i Outreach for Medical Education in Rural Underresourced Neighborhoods (HOME RUN) workforce education program launched in April. The program defines rural Hawaii as any of the islands surrounding the main island, also called Hawaii, and some parts of the island of O’ahu, the third largest island. It costs roughly \$146,688 to attend Hawaii’s only medical school. Gov. Josh Green said the state’s high housing costs make it difficult for students to pay off their student loans. Green, who is also a physician and helped create the program, didn’t finish paying off his medical debt until age 53 when he became governor. As of June 2, officials had received 122 applications and approved 44. —*Addie Offereins*

Minnesota City officials in St. Paul will not pursue state charges against anti-ICE protesters who interrupted a Sunday service at Cities Church in January and occupied the building. St. Paul City Attorney Irene Kao said she had insufficient evidence to criminally charge the protesters under Minnesota law. She said her office evaluated video footage, investigative reports, and other materials and determined the incident did not include acts of violence, property destruction, or threats to public safety. She added that protesting peacefully was a protected right. Cities Church Pastor Jonathan Parnell said the city’s decision makes it acceptable for people to “invade a mosque, cathedral, or temple” and halt religious services while shouting in people’s faces and scaring their children. He accused the city of protecting only those it agrees with. The U.S. Department of Justice has already pressed federal civil rights charges against more than 30 people for their involvement in the protests. —*Liz Lykins*



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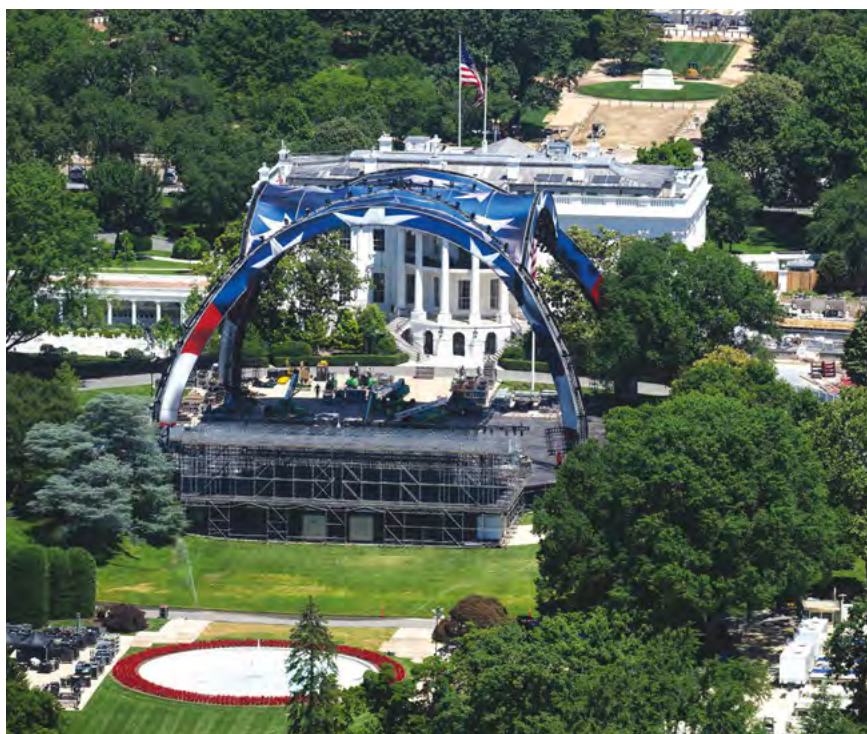
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BACKGROUND

Why is UFC at the White House?

by RAY HACKE



President Donald Trump has incorporated some unusual celebrations into this year's semiquincentennial events, including a military parade last year and an IndyCar race through the streets of Washington, D.C. planned for August. But no event raised more eyebrows than UFC Freedom 250, a series of up to seven mixed martial arts ("MMA") bouts held on the South Lawn of the White House. The fights comprise the first pro sports event the presidential residence has ever hosted.

What does UFC stand for? Ultimate Fighting Championship. Since 2001, the organization has arranged, regulated, and promoted sanctioned MMA events.

What is mixed martial arts? MMA blends together a variety of combat sports that involve punching, kicking, grappling, and other moves. Fighters typically have training in multiple disciplines, including boxing, jiu-jitsu, karate, kickboxing, sumo wrestling, and free-style wrestling. Fighters can use moves from any chosen discipline at any time in the ring, called an "octagon."

How popular is MMA? Though survey data from 2022 showed that only 1.7% of U.S. adults viewed UFC events, the organization had 28 million Instagram followers in 2024, indicating a strong social media reach. This may explain why MMA is especially popular with Gen Z: Roughly 52.2% of those aged 13 to 28 identify as fans of the sport.

MMA also has a strong global sports market, generating \$14 billion worldwide, and projects a 7.2% revenue increase by 2030.

What is the connection between Trump and UFC? Trump is reportedly a die-hard MMA fan who has staged UFC events at his properties since the company's early days.

Why did UFC hold this particular fight on the White House lawn? Dana White, the UFC's chief executive officer, said it was Trump's idea to host the one-time-only event there, according to ESPN. Trump initially broached the idea in 2025, suggesting it be part of a yearlong celebration of America's 250th year.

Who fought in the main events?

American Justin Gaethje battled Ilia Topuria of the nation of Georgia for UFC's lightweight championship. In a heavyweight bout labeled a "co-main event," Brazil's Alex Pereira faced France's Cyril Ganne in a bid to become the first UFC fighter to win titles in three weight classes. Pereira had previously captured middleweight and light heavyweight title belts.

What did UFC have to construct to hold the event? Fighters clashed in a ring called the Octagon, which UFC started building in late May. The Octagon's eight-sided, circular shape differed vastly from the square-shaped rings used in boxing and pro wrestling. Instead of ropes, chain-link fencing surrounded the fighters—which is why TV broadcasters sometimes call the Octagon a "cage." UFC also installed a canvas floor inside the Octagon and built seating for roughly 5,000 viewers—primarily military personnel who received free tickets.

Who will pay for the damage to the grass? UFC and TKO Group Holdings, a sports and entertainment company that works with UFC, are picking up the tab, which White estimated will be \$700,000 to \$1 million. No taxpayer funds were expended on the event. ■



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Los Angeles Angels outfielder JO ADELL to reporters after a June 2 loss during which a routine fly ball hit him in the head and bounded over the fence for a home run.



“Congress gave the Kennedy Center its name, and only Congress can change it.”

Federal Judge CHRISTOPHER COOPER in a May 29 ruling prohibiting the Trump administration from adding the president’s name to the Kennedy Center building.

“(He was) warming up fish in the microwave, causing an odor in the office.”

Text from a South Carolina police report detailing an altercation between Myrtle Beach police officers that caused one officer to draw his service weapon and point it at another for causing a bad smell in the break room.

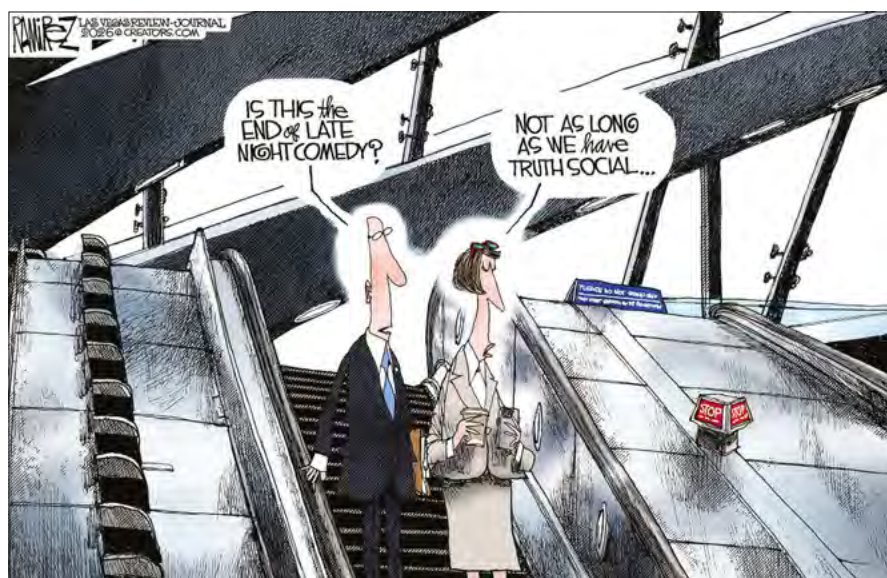
“I was trying to free myself, but I just ended up sliding down more and getting more stuck.”

Rescued spelunker AIDAN KIRSCH describing how he ended up spending seven hours in a cave in Canaan, N.Y.*

“The higher the price of copper ... our theft goes up. Direct correlation there.”

AT&T official TODD SWENSON on the rapid increase in copper thefts hurting communication companies.**

*New York Post; **NPR





QUICK TAKES

A speedy mistake

Traffic cameras peg a piece of TV memorabilia in a case of mistaken identity

by JOHN DAWSON



One heavily modified Pontiac inside an Illinois museum is still garnering attention despite being parked for several years. In a May social media post, an official with the Volo Museum said it received a speeding ticket from New York City after a traffic camera spotted a black Pontiac Trans Am speeding down Brooklyn's Ocean Parkway. The violating vehicle bore modifications to make it appear like the car featured in the 1980s action adventure television series *Knight Rider*, complete with a California vanity license plate emblazoned with the word *KNIGHT*. Officials with the city's Department of Motor Vehicles somehow linked the vehicle to the Volo Museum in the suburbs north of Chicago. Problem: The automotive museum's replica of KITT, the car from *Knight Rider*, hasn't moved in years. "We're still trying to figure it out," Volo marketing director Jim Wojdyla said, adding that the museum's KITT replica Trans Am isn't even registered. Museum officials say they plan to challenge the \$50 speeding ticket and suggested in a Facebook post that show star [David Hasselhoff](#) should pony up for the bill.

All-natural competition

In a field full of pumped-up athletes, swimmer Hunter Armstrong bested them all. And he passed a drug test too. Armstrong, a former Olympic gold medalist, competed in the first Enhanced Games on May 24, an event that encourages athletes to use performance-enhancing drugs (see p. 107). Armstrong bested all other competitors, notching a 24.21-second performance in the 50-meter backstroke. And while many of his competitors used steroids or other PEDs, the American competed clean. After the event, Armstrong submitted to a drug test to prove his non-enhanced status even as he dominated an enhanced field.



Watch for wet cement

Wisconsin roadway officials would like to remind drivers: Warning signs about road closures aren't just a suggestion. According to Wisconsin Department of Transportation officials, the driver of a Nissan pickup truck stopped in May to move a "Road Closed" sign and then proceeded forward through construction work on a Milwaukee County highway on-ramp until the vehicle became stuck in more than a foot of wet concrete. "Please—never remove or ignore 'road closed' or any other types of barriers ... or this might happen to you," a department spokesman warned.

Battling a summertime plague

Tech giant Google wants to unleash millions of mosquitoes on California and Florida. And despite sounding like some dystopian plot, the internet company might be on to something good. Google's aptly-named Debug project has asked permission from the Environmental Protection Agency to release millions of sterile mosquitoes into the wild to help combat insect-borne illnesses. According to the group's working theory, 32 million male mosquitoes rendered sterile through bacterial inoculation would compete for mates with normal male mosquitoes. Each fixed mosquito that mates with a normal female would reduce the number of breeding couples. "Male mosquitoes can't bite or spread disease, so good bugs will stop bad ones from reproducing," Debug officials explained on its website. "Over time, there will be fewer and fewer bad mosquitoes."



Bad timing

The honeymoon will have to wait. World Cup soccer player **Brenden Aaronson** picked a bad time to get married—in the weeks leading up to the big international tournament. Aaronson's coaches gave him just one day off between training sessions to attend his own wedding on May 29. Aaronson departed the American team's Georgia training camp on Thursday after practice and was expected to be back for the Saturday training session after exchanging vows in New Jersey with his new wife on Friday. Friend and teammate Gio Reyna couldn't attend the ceremony but sent his wife instead. He said he hoped to share the moment with his teammate via video conference.



**"I didn't know
I could go
that fast."**

Hold onto that string

Deflating the spirits of revelers across the Pelican State, Louisiana's legislature just voted to ban balloon releases. The new law, which takes effect Aug. 1, prohibits the intentional outdoor release of helium party balloons and subjects first time offenders to a \$500 fine. Lawmakers said they were concerned with the danger spent balloons might pose to the state's wildlife. The new law contains one bit of good news for younger balloon enthusiasts: those aged 17 and younger can't be charged.



Hot and fast

Richard Delcid isn't just fast—he can fairly claim to be the fastest pizza maker in the world. Delcid, a Domino's Pizza general manager in Manassas, Va., took home first place in the pizza chain's "World's Fastest Pizza Maker" competition in May. For the contest, Delcid constructed three pizzas—one pepperoni, one mushroom, and one cheese—all in just 31.22 seconds. "I didn't know I could go that fast," the 14-year Domino's veteran told WTOP. Event rules require competitors to make pizzas that could be served to paying customers. Delcid, whose efforts bested the competition's previous record-setting time by 8 seconds, earned \$5,000 for winning the competition and another \$5,000 from his local store as a bonus.



A free market empire

Historian John Steele Gordon on
America's economic values

by ADDIE OFFEREINS



John Steele Gordon jokes that he knew what “selling short” meant before he could ride a bicycle. The New York City native was born on May 7, 1944, to a family long connected with the city’s financial scene: Both his grandfathers worked as stockbrokers. They also passed along their love for history.

Gordon has specialized in the history of American business and finance for close to 40 years. He is the author of several books; most recently, *An Empire of Wealth: The Epic History of American Economic Power*. CNBC aired a two-hour special based on his book *The Great Game: The Emergence of Wall Street as a World Power, 1653-2000*. Gordon has been a frequent contributor to *Forbes*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *American Heritage*, where he wrote the “Business of America” column for more than 10 years.

WHAT VALUES ENABLED AMERICAN ECONOMIC FLOURISHING?

Simply freedom. People were free to take risks. During the Colonial era—the 17th and 18th centuries—the European economy was not flourishing particularly well. A small group of people decided to do something about it. They said goodbye to everything they’d ever known for what one Puritan preacher called a howling wilderness. We are the descendants of those risk-takers. Most risk-takers fail: 80% of the corporations started in this country fail. But the other 20% don’t. And maybe one of those turns into an Amazon. That’s what’s made us all so spectacularly rich.

YOU ARGUE AMERICA HAS ALSO BEEN “EXCEPTIONALLY LUCKY.” WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT?

We’re blessed with incredible geography. The United States has the best geopolitical position on the planet. It’s the only great power that fronts both the Atlantic and the Pacific. From the end of the War of 1812 up until the era of missiles in the 1950s, the United States couldn’t be attacked: We were too far away and too big. Therefore we could maintain a very

small army. In 1940, the United States' Army was smaller than the army of Belgium. If the government is not spending all that money on the military, taxes can be low and people can invest that money into more productive enterprises.

HOW IS THE UNITED STATES A DIFFERENT KIND OF WORLD POWER FROM THE EMPIRES OF THE PAST?

The United States was always a reluctant imperialist. Here we are, the most powerful country in the world, not because of our empire, but because of our wealth we created. We didn't take it from somebody else.

WHAT ELSE MADE US UNIQUE?

European nations followed a system called primogeniture: The eldest son would inherit essentially everything. There are families in England that have been among the richest families in England for 500 years. Here, fortunes very quickly get dispersed. None of the families of the Gilded Age who were legendarily rich—the Carnegies, Rockefellers, Vanderbilts—are on the Forbes 400 list today.

YOU POINT OUT THAT 2026 IS ALSO THE 250TH ANNIVERSARY OF SCOTTISH ECONOMIC PHILOSOPHER ADAM SMITH'S MAGNUM OPUS, *THE WEALTH OF NATIONS*. WHY IS THAT IMPORTANT?

Adam Smith enlightened the world about how an economy actually works. Smith points out that when power is concentrated, the economy suffers. The government has a long history of making people in the government rich. But when power is distributed under the rule of law, you can create much more wealth. Individuals can do much more creative things with wealth than the government can. European governments were always much more involved in the economy. When we became independent, we didn't have an established aristocracy or an established merchant class like Europe did. We've been blessed with a very small government. We could be a much more Smithian nation than any other.

“Individuals can do much more creative things with wealth than the government can.”

BUT YOU WORRY MOST AMERICANS DON'T UNDERSTAND SMITH'S VISION?

They're never taught that. They're taught to feel the world is divided between the oppressed and the oppressor.

WHAT DO PEOPLE OFTEN MISS WHEN THEY TEACH ECONOMIC HISTORY?

I wish they would talk more about how a real economy works. The Bernie Sanderses of this world see the economy as a conspiracy. They really seem to think that if somebody gets richer then everybody else has to get poor. That it's like a poker game: The amount of winnings at the end of the evening are exactly equal to the amount of losses. No wealth is created in a poker game. That's not true in the real-world economy. Who is poorer because Jeff Bezos is so immensely more rich than he was? I use Amazon because it saves me time and money. I put in the order last evening, and it was on my front steps this morning. I'm richer as a result. The whole country is much richer thanks to his bright ideas.

WHAT CONCERNS YOU ABOUT THE UNITED STATES ECONOMIC POSITION TODAY?

The size of the national debt. My history of the national debt is called *Hamilton's Blessing* because Alexander Hamilton said the national debt will be a national blessing if it is not excessive. In 1915, John D. Rockefeller could have paid off the national debt, and he still would've been the richest man in the world. But in 1974, Congress passed the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act. It eliminated the president as a major player in budget negotiations. The president is the only one with a national outlook. The debt immediately began to spiral out of control. The national debt is now greater as a percentage of GDP than it was at the end of World War II. What has that money been spent on? It's been spent on getting senators and congressmen reelected. It's an absolute disgrace. And at some point, Wall Street is going to say, "I'm sorry, we're not taking any more of your bonds. We don't think you're a good risk." This happened to New York City in the 1970s when they were running these constant deficits. And all hell broke loose.

WHAT MAKES YOU HOPEFUL?

I'm an optimist by nature. The great German chancellor, Otto Von Bismarck, at the end of the 19th century famously said that God looks after three things: drunks, fools, and the United States of America. I'm not a very religious person, but the United States does indeed seem to have someone watching over us.

WHY DO YOU LOVE HISTORY?

I like telling stories, and yet I have absolutely no talent whatsoever for inventing characters or plots. God has to invent the plots and characters for me. And God is really, really good at it. History is just full of good stories. My grandfather Gordon would tell me these wonderful stories of Wall Street. My first real book, *The Scarlet Woman of Wall Street*, is about Wall Street's Wild West days in the 1860s. It was a lot of fun to write about. ■



VOICES JANIE B. CHEANEY

To fix what's broken

Caring for orphans remains a cornerstone of the church's calling

The three brothers were only 2, 1, and barely a week old when caseworkers took them from their meth-addicted parents and placed them with foster parents. Not many homes would be willing or able to take in all three. This family did, without hesitation. Long wakeful nights and screaming fits made for a challenging adjustment, but with loving discipline the boys gradually settled into peaceful routines. With no children of their own, the couple became attached: bought clothes and toys with their own money, brought the boys to church, and featured cute pictures of them on their Christmas cards that year.

Then the children were abruptly taken away and returned to their parents.

That happened twice: removal, placement, adjustment. The second time, the boys' caseworker recommended terminating parental rights as a first step to adoption, but the judge disagreed. The biological parents had made only token moves toward reform, but after 13 months of stable care with their foster family, officials from another county are taking the boys away again.

They're so little. How can they understand the convolutions of an overburdened system?

In 1854, Charles Loring Brace of New York's Children's Aid Society organized the first orphan train. It swept young indigents off the street and out to new homes in Midwestern farm country. This was the first experiment in what's now known as foster care. Before then, homeless children were apprenticed to a trade or placed in orphanages. Both options could be abused but at least offered food and shelter for little

orphan Annies and Olivers, as well as a stepping stone to productive adulthood.

Churches took the lead in providing for the least of these until the turn of the 20th century, when the developing welfare system began sending social workers to homes of the poor. These "friendly visitors" were sometimes too hasty to judge a parent "unfit," and children could be removed from loving families with little justification.

Policies change, and today the assumed goal of fostering is family reunification. The Family First Prevention Services Act, passed in 2018, directs resources away from foster care and adoption toward "parental rehab and support"—namely drug treatment, anger management, counseling, or daycare. It's a noble aim, but how it works in practice is the subject of *No Way To Treat a Child: How the Foster Care System, Family Courts, and Racial Activists Are Wrecking Young Lives* by Naomi Schaefer Riley.

Riley found that ideology often undermines the best interests of individual children. And ideology, added to bureaucratic inflexibility and poor quality control, can be deadly. Sometimes literally, in a few well-publicized cases. Caseworkers don't receive adequate training to recognize when a child is in real danger, and bad judgment calls don't reflect on their record. Family court is a low-status position attracting the least-qualified judges. Foster parents are burdened with excessive paperwork, restrictive rules, and intrusive questionnaires. They have few rights to be informed or heard, and judges seldom ask for their views about the children in their care. Between 30% and 50% of foster parents quit within a year.

There are, no question, self-serving foster parents in the system. But "child welfare agencies and family courts are among the most incompetent and inefficient public bureaucracies in the country," Riley observes. "The people they touch are the most vulnerable, and their ability to change the lives of those people is the greatest." Too harsh, perhaps, but anecdotal evidence backs her up. One example: Our hospice social worker told me she started out in Child Protective Services but had to quit. It was too hard seeing children sent back to homes where they were likely to be abused again—all for a noble-sounding principle.

The good news is that the church, which once took the lead in salvaging neglected children, is stepping up again. Riley finds evangelicals at the forefront of child-focused care, such as Colorado-based Project 1.27, which provides training and support teams for foster parents. Christian Alliance for Orphans coordinates hundreds of churches, ministries, and nonprofits worldwide to "inspire and equip God's people to care effectively for vulnerable children and families."

Our church can't snatch those little boys from the caseworkers who come to take them away. But we can pray for their protection, pray for their biological parents, pray for the broken-hearted fosters, and pray for change. To visit orphans and widows in their affliction is still the test of our faith. ■



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CULTURE



TRENDING

America's royal obsession

Why are we still so focused on Britain's monarchy, 250 years after throwing off its shackles?

by EMMA FREIRE



In April 2011, Hannah Brusven was determined to watch the live broadcast of the royal wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton. The only problem? The wedding was on a Friday, and she was in the sixth grade. She would need to cut class. “I convinced my mother that it must be true that everyone at school was going to stay home to watch the royal wedding,” Brusven recalled. “And she thought I was ridiculous, but she let me stay home anyway.”

The wedding was well worth skipping school. She watched in wonder as Kate Middleton walked down the aisle of Westminster Abbey to the majestic strains of “I Was Glad” by British composer Hubert Parry. Years later, when Brusven married her own Prince Charming, she picked “I Was Glad” for her bridal entrance.

Today, she is the editor of *The Swish*, a print and digital quarterly magazine dedicated to celebrating what Brusven calls “classical femininity.” *The Swish* regularly features articles on the British royal family. It’s hardly the only one. Countless media outlets cover the lives, work, and fashion of the royals.

In 1776, America cast off the rule of King George III with the Declaration of Independence, which accused him of trying to establish “absolute Tyranny.” But even as we celebrate 250 years of American freedom from monarchy, our interest in the British royal family seems insatiable.

Gazing at the landscape of American popular culture, you might be forgiven for wondering if 1776 ever happened. It’s hard to enter an American supermarket without spotting magazines that feature a British royal on the cover, usually Kate Middleton, who is officially known as Catherine, Princess of Wales. Books on the British royal family regularly appear on *The New York Times* bestseller list. Prince Harry’s memoir *Spare* was the bestselling nonfiction book of 2023.

In 2022, 11.4 million Americans watched the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II, and that doesn’t include online viewing. Funeral coverage spanned 13 cable and broadcast networks. Back in 2011, Brusven was joined by around 23 million of her fellow Americans to watch the royal wedding. And Americans don’t only watch real-life broadcasts of the royals. We also gobble up fictionalized depictions. *The Crown*, a Netflix drama about the life of the late Queen Elizabeth II, was both popular and critically acclaimed.

Glenn Duerr, chair of the department of history and government at Cedarville University, said America has deep historical ties to the British royal family. “We tend to think about the 13 colonies of the United States, but it is worth noting there were 20 British colonies throughout North America.” The colonies in the region that eventually became Canada were deeply loyal →

The Prince and Princess of Wales, William and Kate, attend a state banquet at Windsor Castle.

to the crown. “In the 13 colonies, probably 15% to 20% were still heavily, heavily loyalist, especially in Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina,” Duerr added. The popularity of the Anglican Church, of which the British monarch is the head, was also an important link during that era.

Duerr argues American fascination with the British royal family should be placed in the context of our love for many aspects of British society. He points to the enormous popularity of the Harry Potter books by British author J.K. Rowling and British costume dramas like *Downton Abbey*.

In the realm of sports, British soccer is beloved enough that “somewhere maybe in the low millions of Americans wake up early on a Saturday morning to watch a game being played 3½-thousand miles away, depending on one’s location,” Duerr said.

He also notes that traveling to London is relatively easy, which means “many Americans have this touch point, a remembrance of being in London.”

In a 24/7 media cycle, the British royal family provides endless angles for coverage. They offer pomp and circumstance. “I don’t think anyone in the world puts on a coronation or a show quite like the British,” Duerr said. They have fashion and history but also, according to Duerr, “a bit of a soap opera.” The strained relationships among Prince Harry, Prince William, and King Charles serve as fodder for gossip columns.

Brusven thinks our interest in the British royal family also stems from something deeper in our natures. “They are one of the last remaining examples, culturally, of what it looks like to have a life of duty and service beyond yourself,” she said. She stresses that being American is a privilege and a blessing. But “we’re very forward-facing, and that



“They are one of the last remaining examples, culturally, of what it looks like to have a life of duty and service beyond yourself.”

has led us to lose our sense, to some extent, of duty.”

Brusven loves covering Catherine in *The Swish* because “she embodies the principles of classical femininity.” Catherine chose “a life of duty and service that is practically unrecognizable in our world of self-aggrandizement and self-made women,” Brusven said.

And America does have something like its own monarchy, Brusven argues: “Our celebrity class is our royalty, and that is constantly changing. We have someone new at the top of the charts, someone new at the box office every month.” Still, she thinks we yearn for the permanence and historical lineage offered by a traditional monarchy.

Modern celebrities often share every detail of their lives with the public. By contrast, the British royal family maintains an air of mystery. “And that, of course, contributes to more interest over time,” Brusven said. ■



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BOOKS

The life of a paper skiff

The legacy of the Declaration of Independence

by DAVID J. DAVIS

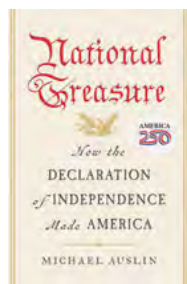
→ In 1823, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson were sniping at each other. Adams believed Jefferson took too much credit for the Declaration of Independence, insisting that its ideas were not original to Jefferson. Defensive, Jefferson complained in a letter to James Madison, “I did not consider it part of my charge to invent new ideas.” Both men knew full well that the ideas undergirding the document went much further back. The Declaration sprang from an alchemical distillation of the Christian religion and the British constitutional tradition dating back to the Magna Carta of 1215.

King Charles III reminded his listeners of our common, political heritage in his recent address to Congress. Even though “ours is a partnership born out of dispute,” Charles explained, “we can discern that our nations are in fact instinctively like-minded—a product of the common democratic, legal, and



When the Declaration of Independence Was News

EMILY SNEFF



National Treasure

MICHAEL AUSLIN

social traditions in which our governance is rooted to this day.”

Unlike the French Revolution, American independence was grounded in its political and cultural traditions, and the ideas enlivening the Declaration had deep roots in those traditions. Two recent books highlight how the Declaration’s deep-rooted ideas were received by people at the time and how the Declaration has influenced American culture since its signing.

Emily Sneff offers a compelling narrative of how the Declaration’s ideas went viral in the weeks and months following July 4, 1776. *When the Declaration of Independence Was News* (Oxford University Press, 272 pp.) approaches the Declaration from a relatively untrodden direction, exploring how the Declaration, as a “communication tool,” reached worldwide audiences and how they reacted to it.

Sneff sheds light on many characters in the Declaration’s history who are easily overlooked. People like Mary (Polly) Palmer received her copy from her friend and pen pal, John Adams. On July 18, the Wolastoqey tribe’s Chief Ambrose Bear listened to a translation of the Declaration into French during the Watertown Treaty talks, and Bear became the first foreign power to recognize the independent states.

Most people were not so well connected. They read the Declaration in cheap broadsides or newspapers, or they heard it read in churches and town halls. One of the first of these groups was the Continental Army in New York City. On July 9, the troops heard the Declaration, and soon afterward, they proceeded to rip down the large statue of King George on the Bowling Green.

However, not everyone shared the army’s excitement. John Dickinson, who opposed independence but fought for the states during the war, described the Declaration as “a skiff made of paper” sailing into a storm. Likewise, the Declaration put 300 North American Anglican ministers in a difficult situation, since the king was the Supreme Governor of the Church of England. Overnight, the head of the church

became a treasonous, foreign power. Many ministers felt isolated, some were threatened, and not a few decided to close up their churches as war with Britain unfolded.

Sneff's account also documents the global spread of the Declaration. While most European powers received the news by late August, it landed in England first, appearing on the front page of the *London Gazette*. Other papers quickly followed, including passages from the Declaration. Most papers were careful about what portions of the document they published, and many removed direct references to the monarchy or words like *tyrant*. Not unlike our own news culture, what Londoners knew about the Declaration very much depended upon what news outlets they relied upon.

As much as the Declaration went viral in the weeks following July 4, in *National Treasure: How the Declaration of Independence Made America* (Avid Reader Press, 368 pp.), Michael Auslin demonstrates that its popularity dwindled within a decade.

Auslin begins with the traditional history leading to independence, from the Intolerable Acts through the Olive Branch Petition to the Declaration's signing. For Auslin, the Declaration is first and foremost a "powerful statement of unity ... in common hopes and shared beliefs of what life is meant to be in America." Despite the chasmic divisions running through American history, the Declaration is a touchstone for everyone. *National Treasure* calls up a variety of characters to demonstrate the Declaration's universal appeal, from the socialist reformer Robert Owen and the domestic terrorist Timothy McVeigh to Ralph Waldo Emerson, Susan B. Anthony, and Martin Luther King.

However, the significance of the Declaration was not a foregone conclusion. After the Constitution was ratified, the Declaration all but vanished from the public consciousness, set out to pasture after a job well done.

The pivotal moment came during the War of 1812, when British troops set fire to the Capitol. If it were not for the

Unlike the French Revolution, American independence was grounded in its political and cultural traditions, and the ideas enlivening the Declaration had deep roots in those traditions.

quick actions of a Treasury auditor, the original manuscripts of the Declaration, the Constitution, the Articles of Confederation, and George Washington's correspondence would have burned.

After it was rescued from the flames, the original manuscript became sacrosanct to the Republic. Preserving it became a cherished responsibility. Auslin celebrates people like the Librarians of Congress Herbert Putnam and Archibald MacLeish as well as archivists and conservationists like Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler and Catherine Nicholson whose work kept the document safe. These individuals make it possible for over 1 million visitors to pay homage to the Declaration at the National Archives every year.

On July 4, 1821, Secretary of State John Quincy Adams read from the original in the House of Representatives, marking the first recorded public display of the Declaration after 1776. Since then, the Declaration is recited on radio and television on July 4th and at many naturalization ceremonies. It is memorialized in the Jefferson Memorial, Mount Rushmore, and the Capitol rotunda.

Of course, like most things American, "selling the Declaration" played a vital role in the revival of its popularity. Auslin takes note of various items that have hit American shelves over the years; everything from engravings and high-quality reproductions to coins and handkerchiefs were produced to market this icon of liberty.

Taken together, Sneff and Auslin provide a captivating journey of the life and legacy of the Declaration in America, and both authors continually return to those ideas that Jefferson and Adams were sniping about. The Declaration provides a model for citizenship in peace and in crisis. In peace, to live in "Safety and Happiness." In crisis, to humbly insist, and keep insisting, before "the Supreme Judge of the world" that justice be done. And, while King Charles is not threatening American shores, issues like fair taxation, an independent judiciary, executive overreach, and the suspension of due process remain all too relevant today. ■

BOOKS

Interceding for our land

A collection of new and old prayers for America

by JANIE B. CHEANEY



Appeal to Divine Providence, a bronze statue by Stan Watts in Valley Forge, Pa., shows Founding Fathers John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson kneeling in prayer.

Dolan, Dr. Ben Carson, Tim Tebow, Jack Graham, and Pat Boone.

In addition, presidential proclamations and remarks are scattered throughout the text. Washington, Lincoln, and John Adams appear, along with almost every modern-day president from Eisenhower to Donald Trump. Though the lives of these men may not have lived up to their statements about seeking God's guidance, the mere fact of making these statements shows the prominence of prayer in our national conscience.

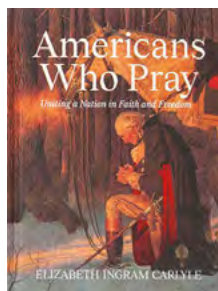
Each prayer includes scriptural references and most follow a familiar pattern of praise, confession, repentance, and thanksgiving. Some are special petitions for women, first responders, military, teachers, and others in influential positions. They are broadly evangelical, sometimes hinting at a romanticized past where Americans were unified around the calling to be One Nation Under God. But most agree that we (Christians included) have strayed from financial, social, familial, and spiritual responsibility, and our nation has suffered because of it.

Americans Who Pray is handsomely produced, with an embossed cover, ribbon marker, and thick durable pages. These heartfelt prayers can be repetitious and are best used as a devotional rather than an exposition. In her introduction, Carlyle writes, "I hope you will pick up the book daily, no matter where you are, and pause to pray for our country." In this she echoes Paul's exhortation in 1 Timothy 2, "that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions."

Carlyle expresses an even greater hope at the end of each of her petitions: "Lord, in Jesus' name, we pray for America to turn to You in faith and for freedom. Let the revival begin with us. Amen and amen." ■

➔ Arnold Friberg's *The Prayer at Valley Forge*, showing Washington kneeling in the snow beside his horse, is so iconic most Americans recognize it at once. Elizabeth Ingram Carlyle, CEO of First Freedom Art, features the painting prominently in the company's Friberg gallery and uses it as a recurring motif in *Americans Who Pray* (Broadstreet Publishing, 240 pp.), a collection of prayers for our country in its 250th year. The picture is a reminder that our nation was a long shot to begin with and that its existence, and survival, relies on divine providence.

Over half the 192 prayers are written by Carlyle herself, "at home, in my office, on planes, and in the car." For the rest, she reached out to notable Christians in many fields: actors, singers, athletes, executives, media moguls, megachurch pastors, and televangelists. Many replied with their own prayerful reflections, including such recognizable names as Anne Graham Lotts, Cardinal Timothy



Americans Who Pray
ELIZABETH INGRAM CARLYLE



Peggy Shippen and her daughter

BOOKS

Divided loyalties

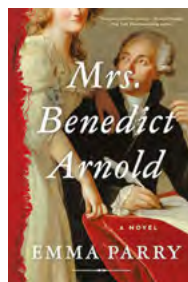
Two historical novels about Revolutionary America

by BEKAH BERNHARDT

→ Emma Parry's *Mrs. Benedict Arnold* (Zando, 320 pp.) retells the story of America's most famous traitor through the eyes of his wife. Clever and idealistic Peggy Shippen belongs to a loyalist Philadelphia family whose ties to Britain are more social than ideological. As the War for Independence drags on, Peggy longs for peace.

Thanks to the influence of men like Joseph Reed, Philadelphia becomes sympathetic to the Patriot cause. Peggy rubs shoulders with heroes like George Washington and Alexander Hamilton and falls in love with and later marries Patriot Gen. Benedict Arnold.

Arnold is a war hero, but he has attracted the suspicion of Reed. As a court martial looms and Arnold's debts swell, the general turns to drink. When a child comes along, Peggy concocts a plan to end the war and restore her husband's dignity.



Mrs. Benedict Arnold
EMMA PARRY



The Belle of Chatham
LAURA FRANTZ

It's an interesting story, but many details don't seem consistent with the setting. Parry includes an openly gay character, and Peggy admits to suffering from anxiety. It seems unlikely that either condition would be discussed at the time. There's a small amount of strong language, and a scene involving premarital sex is awkwardly descriptive.

I expected Arnold's inevitable betrayal to feel disappointing, but I was even more disappointed by how a whining Peggy takes little responsibility for her complicity. Like Eve in the Garden, she offers a tantalizing suggestion to Arnold but eventually refuses to shoulder the blame.

For a story with a similar setting but more attention to historical detail and a more satisfying narrative, I recommend Laura Frantz's *The Belle of Chatham* (Revell, 384 pp.).

The town of Chatham teems with Continental Army soldiers making camp in nearby Lowantica Valley. Close to home, Maj. James Bohannon invites fellow officers Capt. Casper Sperry and Gen. Rhys Harlow to spend the winter with him and his two sisters.

Coralie Bohannon, slim, plain, and a bit stuck-up, doesn't appreciate sharing her home with strange Patriots. She's got a secret loyalist beau in New York. Her sister Maebel is more sympathetic to the Patriot cause and acts as a gracious host. Maebel quickly falls for the quiet and dashing handsome Gen. Harlow.

When she nearly dies after catching smallpox, Harlow reveals the depth of his feelings. That's not the only surprise: Maebel suspects that Coralie is a loyalist spy. But, having very little proof, she says nothing. Even after Maebel and Rhys marry, they continue to keep their own secrets, endangering both their union and the Patriot cause.

Aside from a passionate kissing scene in a linen closet and another on the eve of a honeymoon, the romance between Rhys and Maebel is endearing and chaste—if sometimes a tad melodramatic. I enjoyed the story, but I especially appreciated the novel's refreshing emphasis on honesty between spouses. ■

#2

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*According to the Operationalizing Christian Identity Guide (OCIG)



The Death of General Mercer at the Battle of Princeton, January 3, 1777

BOOKS

Four books that celebrate the Fourth

Must-read introductions to the people and events of America's independence

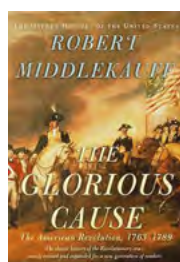
by CHRISTOPHER HAMMONS



There is no shortage of books on the American Revolution, with many published in anticipation of America's semiquincentennial. If you are not sure where to start, here are four older books that merit a place on your summer reading list.

PROFESSIONAL HISTORY

Robert Middlekauf's *The Glorious Cause* (Oxford University Press 1982) is a classic. Written more than 40 years ago and a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, Middlekauf's work provides a sweeping history of the period. Reading the book



is equivalent to taking a college course on the American Founding, and it's often found on university syllabuses.

The book covers ideological battles, military engagements, politics, and relevant leaders. Middlekauf offers insightful analysis along the way, reminiscent of a professor waxing philosophical. The book benefits from the author's engaging style and dry humor. His coverage of the debates in

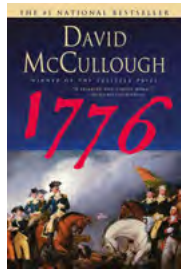
the British Parliament over the rebellious colonies, for instance, is not only captivating but makes you realize the internal turmoil the rebellion created in the mother country.

As a work of professional history, *The Glorious Cause* may not appeal to all readers due to its length, depth, and chronological format. In addition, the author's bird's-eye view sometimes overlooks interesting anecdotes and stories that make the Revolution such a compelling human drama. That said, the book remains an excellent single-volume source for understanding the American →

Founding, from the Colonial era through the Constitutional Convention.

THE HUMAN STORY

Readers looking for a more focused take on the Revolution—particularly the events of 250 years past—should start with David McCullough’s *1776* (Simon & Schuster 2005).



This bestselling book from the Pulitzer Prize-winning author focuses on the events and battles of that critical year of the Revolution. The narrow focus allows

McCullough to provide the color and background that a larger work like Middlekauf’s lacks.

McCullough is a master storyteller and creates the sense of urgency, peril, awe, and appreciation that characterizes many of his works. Washington comes across as the central character of the book, the indispensable man who holds the military together. McCullough also gives high praise to many of Washington’s subordinates, like Nathanael Greene and Joseph Reed (though Reed later has a falling out with Washington).

British officers are also given fair treatment as their weaknesses are examined. Gen. Howe, for example, never seemed to be in much of a hurry. A little more energy by Howe might have secured victory for King George and ended the Revolution before it began.

A recurrent theme of the book is how close the colonies came to losing the war in 1776, particularly after the disastrous Battle of Long Island. McCullough covers key battles, but this is not a military history. The Revolution is presented as a human story, with McCullough using diaries and letters to provide a more personal, intimate account of the War of Independence. It’s the story of the “common man”—from farmer militia to young British regulars—that makes *1776* such a delight to read.

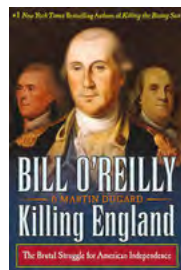
Beyond the battles, politics, and intellectual debates over liberty, at the heart of the American Revolution lies

**While we celebrate
the majesty and
triumph of 1776,
we should not
forget the toil and
sacrifice of that
critical year.**

the tale of men and women caught up in extraordinary circumstances who did their best to defend what they believed was right. It’s the kind of book that makes you wonder how you might have behaved had you lived through the war.

LIGHTER AND ACCESSIBLE

Killing England: The Brutal Struggle for American Independence (Henry Holt and Co. 2017) by Bill O’Reilly and Martin Dugard is an enjoyable read that covers all the major events and players



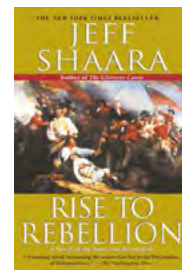
in a novelistic format. The book never gets bogged down in scholarly minutiae, but it covers the major events of the American Revolution, making it a good place to start for readers looking for a lighter, accessible refresher. Attempts to explain what leaders like Washington or Adams were thinking, as well as the literary license taken to flesh out settings, are among the reasons professional historians dismiss such works.

But the book is a good introduction, and it’s fun to read.

ARTISTIC LICENSE

If you want a novel to read by the pool, you might consider *Rise to Rebellion* (Ballantine Books 2001) by award-winning novelist Jeff Shaara. A fictionalized account of the Revolution, the novel explores the growing tensions between the Colonies and Britain, culminating in the eventual move to separation.

Conversations and motivations are largely the author’s invention, but the storyline generally follows the historical events of the Revolution and gives the reader a good sense of what it was like to live through the conflict. John Adams,



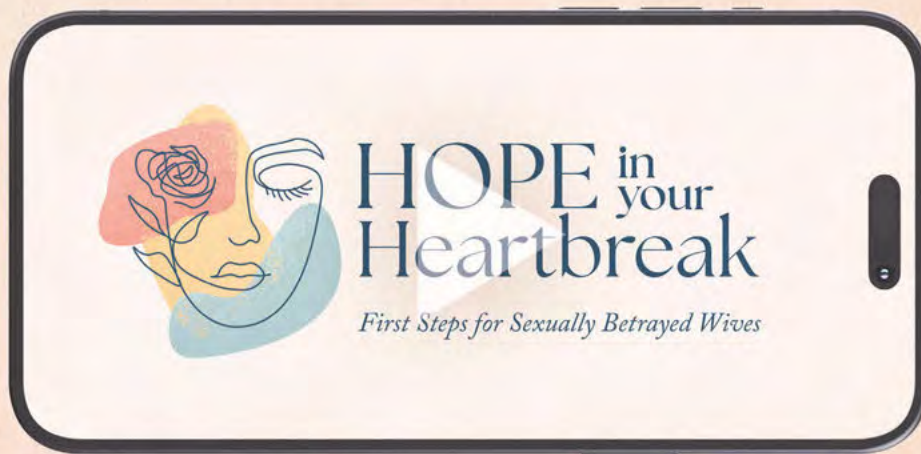
his cousin Sam Adams, and Ben Franklin are the heroes of this first installment, which leads to the Declaration of Independence. The novel is followed by a sequel, *The*

Glorious Cause (2002), which focuses largely on George Washington and his military engagements leading up to Yorktown. Both novels provide an entertaining way to immerse yourself in the period while also learning about the major events, players, and battles of the American Revolution. Readers should keep in mind that the dialogue is artistic license to produce compelling drama. With few exceptions, it is not based on historical records.

While we celebrate the majesty and triumph of 1776, we should not forget the sacrifice of that critical year. As John Adams wrote to his wife Abigail: “I am well aware of the Toil and Blood and Treasure, that it will cost Us to maintain this Declaration, and support and defend these States.—Yet through all the Gloom I can see the Rays of ravishing Light and Glory. I can see that the End is more than worth all the Means.” ■

—Christopher Hammons is a professor of political science and the founding director of the Morris Family Center for Law & Liberty at Houston Christian University

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Revolutionary churches?

Presbyterianism and government upheavals

by TIMOTHY LAMER



D.G. Hart



King George III famously called the American Revolution a “Presbyterian rebellion,”

and he wasn’t the first to think of Presbyterians as a rebellious sort. The question is, *Why?* Is there something unique about Presbyterian belief that leads to conflict with civil governments?

Historian D.G. Hart, in his new book *Protestants and Patriots* (University of Notre Dame Press, 372 pp.), answers that question with a well-researched no. The book offers a thorough history of the relationship between Presbyterians and earthly governments between the 16th and the 19th centuries, and what emerges is the importance of political context.

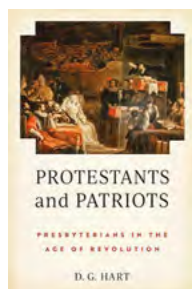
Presbyterianism, from its beginning, inhabited a political world different from that of other Reformed churches. In the Britain of the 16th and 17th centuries, the union between the crown and episcopacy meant that to oppose the bishops was to oppose the monarch. Presbyterians didn’t in principle oppose

the crown, writes Hart, and they “need not have threatened Protestant monarchs without kings and queens themselves seeking to aggrandize their own power and revenues.”

When the English Civil War erupted, Presbyterians sought to have their churches free from government rule while enjoying government support. Over the ensuing decades, they only achieved this type of establishment in Scotland. Meanwhile, controversies in England, Ireland, Scotland, and North America were changing Presbyterian political thinking. “By the eighteenth century,” writes Hart, “Presbyterians were recalibrating ecclesiastical ideals to gain a foothold in the emerging structures of liberal society.”

One result was that, contra George III, the American Revolution was not a “Presbyterian rebellion” but a rebellion that included Presbyterians. Hart cites Founding Father John Witherspoon. “As it turned out,” he writes, “Witherspoon’s own support for American independence likely owed more to ideas he shared with Ben Franklin and Thomas Jefferson than any theological tradition that ran from John Knox to Thomas Chalmers.” While many Presbyterians supported the revolution, tens of thousands remained loyal to Britain.

Hart chronicles further changes for Presbyterians in the next decades: how, in the United States, “disestablishment and voluntarism finally allowed Presbyterians to voice, full throttle, the spiritual independence of the church”; how the Free Church of Scotland left the established church and entered into a voluntarism that it didn’t, in principle, want; how Canada experimented with church unions and a type of multiple establishment; how Presbyterians across the Anglosphere developed a politics that generally favored moral reform and moderate nationalism. It’s a fascinating story, and Hart tells it well. I just wish he had extended it to include Southern Presbyterian support of the Confederacy. But overall, this book is a good resource for those interested in learning about Presbyterian history and revolutionary motivations as America turns 250. ■



Protestants and Patriots
D.G. HART



Tim Goeglein

BOOKS

Hope for America

Affirming the importance of faith and family

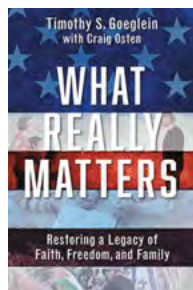
by ADAM RASMUSSEN



What Really Matters: Restoring a Legacy of Faith, Freedom, and Family (Fidelis Publishing,

264 pp.) is a collection of columns by Timothy S. Goeglein, a veteran of the George W. Bush White House and vice president at Focus on the Family. The book's argument is simple: America has drifted off course through a series of moral compromises, and only a series of deliberate corrections can bring us back.

Goeglein marshals Scripture, statistics, social science, and cultural commentary to demonstrate that every measurable societal pathology including poverty, loneliness, crime, academic failure, and political polarization goes back to the same root: the abandonment of the Judeo-Christian foundations that once gave American life its stability. But



What Really Matters

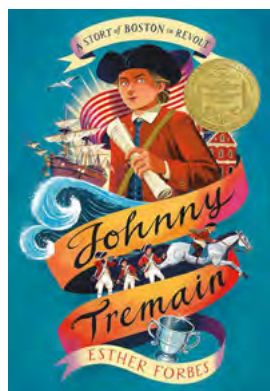
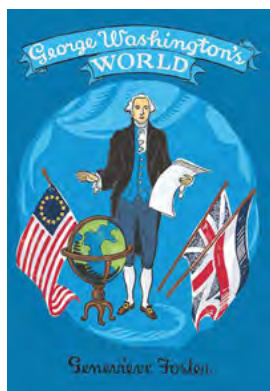
TIMOTHY S. GOEGLIN

his tone is that of a grieving patriot rather than a scornful partisan. He argues for the renewal of the nuclear family, genuine communities of faith, and honest civic memory. These enduring institutions can be rebuilt, one marriage, one dinner table, one church, and one classroom at a time.

As marriage rates decline, America is increasingly becoming “a lonely nation.” This isolation, the author warns, “leads to a number of physical and emotional problems.” Goeglein points out that when politicians and commentators discuss inequality, they routinely overlook the stabilizing power of married parents. He argues that “the breakdown of the nuclear family in American society is, in fact, the primary reason why the gulf between the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ has widened over the past 50 years.” Part of the reason for this is that the American male is in crisis, having embraced “two lies.” The first is that he must be “a tyrannical leader who rules by fear.” The second is that he must “be weak and submissive.”

At the heart of any healthy society, Goeglein insists, stands faith: “It is faith that gives people purpose, makes men strong and compassionate leaders, provides protection and security for women and children, and makes America a strong, vibrant, and united nation. Without faith, we descend into chaos as we have no reason for being.” This truth has been painfully illustrated in many mainline denominations, where drifting from biblical truth toward “social justice” caused the church to become “nothing more than just another philanthropic group or social club.”

This book will aid pastors wanting to encourage their flocks, parents looking to show their kids a path forward, and educators seeking to ask hard questions about how their institutions are forming the next generation. Goeglein offers a coherent, data-grounded, and genuinely hopeful account of why the oldest institutions still matter most. For anyone who suspects that the path forward runs through the front door of a home and the doors of a church rather than the halls of Washington, this book is worth your time. ■



CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Lessons in history

Three classic books for middle graders about the birth of our nation

by JANIE CHEANEY

➔ Genevieve Foster, born in 1893, was known as an illustrator before she turned to writing history for children. Her unique “horizontal” approach centered on using the life of a historical character as a timeline for global events. *George Washington's World* (originally published in 1941, then expanded in 1997 by Joanna Foster for Beautiful Feet Books, 357 pp.) was her first attempt, leading to further explorations of the world of Lincoln, Columbus, and Augustus Caesar, among others.

Written in a conversational style, the biography divides Washington's life into six sections: as a boy, a soldier, a farmer, a commander, a citizen, and a president. Each section begins with a double-page spread of the author's illustrations of people and events during the same time period. These visual clues help readers keep events in order, but with the Enlightenment winding down, revolutionary fervor heating up, and an industrial age in the wings, there was a lot going on. Thus it's best to ponder *George Washington's World* chapter by chapter.

Foster's books have been rediscovered by homeschoolers and used as history textbooks. Some of the terms may

seem archaic, and some of the narrative overwrought (as when young George is pining for Sally Fairfax), but the treatment of other peoples and nations is respectful and our Founding Fathers are depicted as great men in spite of flaws and foibles.

In Robert Lawson's *Ben & Me: An Astonishing Life of Benjamin Franklin by His Good Mouse Amos* (1939 Little, Brown, 114 pp.) our narrator was born into a family poor as church mice, which was fitting, since they were mice who lived in the vestry of Old Christ Church. Once old enough to relieve his family of one mouth to feed, Amos went in search of his fortune. As fortune would have it, the first warm refuge his nose led him to was occupied by an eccentric gentleman with long gray hair, whom Amos discovered hunched over a desk. The man's odd fur cap looked to be a perfect refuge on a cold winter night. Soon Amos was nestling into the furry depths, snugly perched on the renowned head of Dr. Benjamin Franklin.

Like Foster, Lawson made his name as an illustrator, whose credits included

such classics as *The Story of Ferdinand*. *Ben & Me* was Lawson's first excursion into imaginative life stories as told by an animal. Amos paints Franklin as owing much of his success to a certain rodent, whose suggestions included the design of the Franklin stove, improvements to the doctor's spectacles, and even significant revisions to the Declaration of Independence! Amos is rather full of himself, but his story is told with classic Lawson winsomeness and is worth reading aloud for its elegant style—for the mouse was nothing if not learned. Could have been all those prayer books he devoured as a youngster.

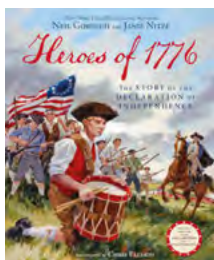
Johnny Tremain by Esther Forbes (1943 Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 256 pp.) skillfully weaves history around the fictional story of Johnny, a silversmith apprentice who is diligent and exacting in his work, but also ambitious and arrogant. When his master Ephraim Lapham refuses an urgent repair order from John Hancock because it would require him to open his shop on the Sabbath, Johnny undertakes the order himself in secret. However, sabotage by an envious fellow apprentice results in a crucible cracking and spilling molten silver over Johnny's right hand, putting his career out of reach and the boy himself out on the street, angry and bitter.

But the year was 1773, and momentous events were about to occur in Boston that would change Johnny's life, his country, and eventually the whole world. Forbes, who knew 18th-century Boston almost as though she'd lived there, recreates the time and the place with breathtaking detail. Her well-developed protagonist is caught up in revolutionary fervor after a young type-setter befriends him and puts him to work, first delivering newspapers to customers, then messages to the Sons of Liberty.

Momentous events and real-life characters overtake the plot of the novel at the expense of some of the dramatic tension. But as a portrait of a significant town in a pivotal historical moment, *Johnny Tremain* has few rivals. ■

Patriotic picture books

by KRISTIN CHAPMAN

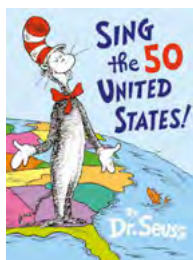


Heroes of 1776

NEIL GORSUCH &
JANIE NITZE

HARPERCOLLINS, 48 PAGES

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch teamed with Janie Nitze to pen a children's narrative highlighting the events and people involved with the birth of our nation. With Chris Ellison's acrylic illustrations as a backdrop, Gorsuch and Nitze weave into their account vignettes of the unsung heroes of the war, revealing the sobering reality of the steep cost of liberty and freedom. They note that the colonists didn't win because they were rich, smart, and well supplied: "They won in large measure because of the daily acts of courage and sacrifice of thousands of ordinary men, women, and children." Gorsuch's afterword reminds young readers that the responsibility of guarding the declaration's principles for future generations is now in their hands. **Ages 5–12**



Sing the 50 United States!

DR. SEUSS

RANDOM HOUSE, 40 PAGES

Random House revealed last year that archivists had found in the Geisel Library at the University of California, San Diego a never-before-seen manuscript and book cover sketch by Theodor Geisel. With its publication timed to celebrate the nation's 250th birthday, the book's text introduces young readers to all 50 United States in Dr. Seuss' typical rhyming style. Paired with Seuss-inspired illustrations by artist Tom Brannon, the sing-song story begins with the Cat in the Hat reciting the M-named states before wandering through the next 42 states. Along the way, the Cat tells children that singing "the 50 United States takes brains" and you need to "sing them from your heart." The endnotes feature excerpts and sketches from Geisel's original manuscript.

Ages 4–8



Gingerbread for Liberty!

MARA ROCKCLIFF

CLARION BOOKS, 32 PAGES

This book originally made its debut in 2015, but it is rereleasing ahead of the nation's semiquincentennial. Alongside Vincent Kirsch's cut paper illustrations, Mara Rockcliff tells the story of Christopher Ludwick, a German gingerbread maker from Philadelphia who baked bread for the troops serving under Gen. George Washington. In addition to boosting morale by baking bread well—and at great personal cost—Ludwick also used his German background to persuade German mercenaries to desert the British side. When the British finally surrendered, Washington had Ludwick bake 6,000 pounds of bread to feed the hungry British troops. Once Ludwick returned home, he resumed making his signature gingerbread and remained steadfast in caring for the poor and sick. **Ages 5–10**

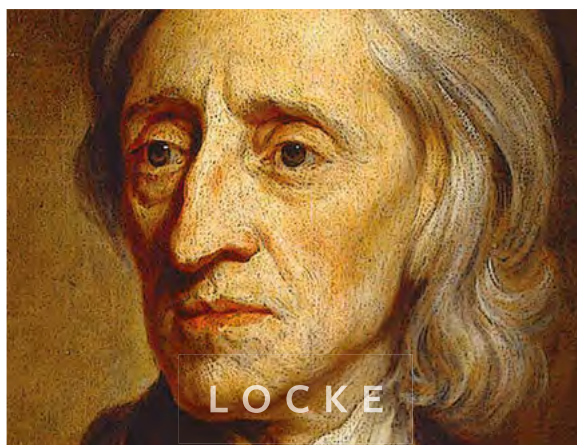
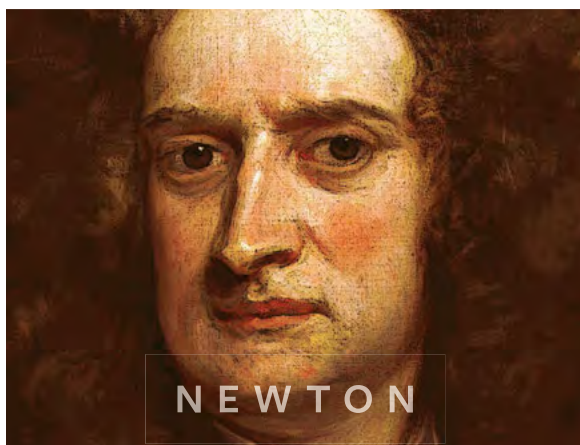


The 4th of July Story

ALICE DALGLIESH

ALADDIN, 32 PAGES

Author Alice Dalgliesh, who also penned *The Courage of Sarah Noble* and *The Bears on Hemlock Mountain*, first published this book in 1956, but it remains in print today due to its accessible and engaging introduction to our nation's founding. Featuring Marie Nonnast's classic illustrations, this extended picture book broadly explains how the Colonies pursued freedom from Britain by unifying under the Declaration of Independence and then banding together on the battlefield to fight for their own country. Dalgliesh's descriptive narrative draws children into the story by helping them visualize moments in revolutionary America while pondering how people would have felt as they heard the news proclaiming, "Liberty throughout the land, Liberty to all the people!" **Ages 5–9**



QUEST

BOOKS THAT SHAPED AMERICAN THINKING

What the Founding Fathers read

by JOHN D. WILSEY



In 1818, John Adams wrote a letter to Baltimore publisher Hezekiah Niles about the essence of the American Revolution. He said the Revolution didn't begin with the battles of Lexington and Concord in the spring of 1775, but rather, it began in the hearts and minds of the people 10 years earlier. In 1765, many American colonists remained committed to hierarchical thinking. Adams said the colonists originally believed the British monarchy enjoyed divine approval, but "when they saw those powers renouncing all the principles of authority, and bent upon the destruction

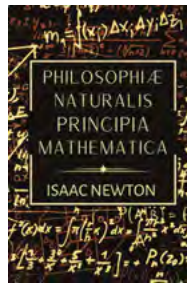
of all the securities of their lives, liberties, and properties, they thought it their duty to pray for the continental congress and all the thirteen State congresses." But the colonists' loss of confidence in natural hierarchy was only part of a broader shift in the intellectual landscape.

Medieval Europeans believed hierarchy defined humanity, and the rest of the universe. Kings and popes sat atop the hierarchy with the nobility and priesthood on a lower rung. The common people toiled beneath these aristocracies of throne and altar. Freedom was understood to apply to the aristocracy.

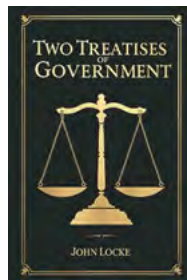
But these views came into doubt in the modern period as the Protestant Reformation undermined the authority of the Catholic hierarchy. Then men like Galileo Galilei and Francis Bacon repudiated old scientific assumptions by warning readers against letting their thoughts be swayed by loyalties to traditional dogmas and authorities. Isaac Newton argued in his *Principia Mathematica* that the movement of substances was governed by laws that could be understood through mathematics. Others began questioning the legitimacy of the antiquated political order.

Thomas Jefferson regarded Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton, and John Locke as the three greatest men ever to have lived. He hung their portraits in the parlor of Monticello. Locke wrote his *Two Treatises of Government* in 1689 in the wake of England's Glorious Revolution and argued that the responsibility of government was to secure citizens' rights to life, liberty, and property. What Newton did for physics, Locke aimed to do for political philosophy—reveal the mysteries of human relationships in society by appealing to reason over tradition. Liberty would no longer be understood as applying only to the aristocracy, secure in a God-ordained cosmic hierarchy. No, Locke argued, people were endowed by God with rights, and those rights were the foundation of liberty. Liberty meant the ability of all people—equal according to rights, law, and relation to God—to live without fear of unjust coercion by the government and the ability to pursue flourishing as far as their talents and abilities could take them. These ideas informed Jefferson as he drafted the Declaration of Independence.

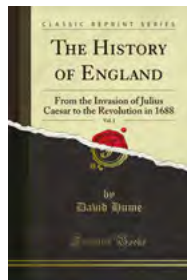
Another work instrumental to the thought of the Founders, and particularly admired by James Madison and Alexander Hamilton, was David Hume's six-volume *The History of England From the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688*. Hume believed it wasn't politics that drove the history of freedom in England, but property. The rise of the middle class and of commerce ate away at the feudal political authority of the Normans after their successful invasion in 1066. The Normans imported the feudal idea that wealth was tied to the land, but as the merchant classes grew in wealth, they also grew in influence. The defeat of the Stuart monarchy in the English Civil War and the Glorious Revolution in the 17th century were due more to the success of the merchant class and commerce than to political considerations. Other historians were prone to see wars, generals, kings, and politics as the drivers of history, but Hume saw property as the key to understanding England's past.



Principia Mathematica
ISAAC NEWTON



Two Treatises of Government
JOHN LOCKE



The History of England From the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688
DAVID HUME



Lex Rex
SAMUEL RUTHERFORD

Property was necessary to liberty, according to Locke. Locke wrote in the fifth chapter of the *Second Treatise* that property emerged as a result of man's mixing his labor with the stuff of the earth. No person, not even the king, could deprive a person of his property without his consent. Thus, property was the basis for a two-fold understanding of freedom—freedom from outside tyranny and freedom to the virtuous pursuit of happiness.

The Enlightenment influenced the Founders, but Christianity was another important source of Revolutionary thought. Between 1763 and 1805, the Bible accounted for a third of all citations in the writings of the founding generation. Samuel Rutherford's 1644 *Lex Rex* was another salient source. Rutherford, a Scottish Presbyterian minister who contributed to the production of the Shorter Catechism in the 1640s, argued that monarchical absolutism was contrary to the will of God. The rule of law was supreme because just government consisted of a covenant governing relationships in every mode of society. Rutherford also argued for a Two Kingdoms conception of the relationship between church and state. *Lex Rex* provided a Christian account for constitutionalism, limited government, and equality before the law.

The American Revolution was not a revolt against authority *qua* authority. It was a revolt against a distant government that exercised arbitrary authority over a group of colonies that had already been governing themselves and had been doing so since their inceptions. The Revolution began in the minds of the colonists as they rejected the old medieval assumptions and adopted new assumptions informed by modernity.

We in the present enjoy the inheritance we have received from our ancestors. It is our duty to steward that inheritance to those who come after us. ■

—John D. Wilsey is a professor of church history and philosophy and chairman of the Church History Department at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and the author of *Religious Freedom: A Conservative Primer*



MOVIE

Star Wars: The Mandalorian and Grogu

by COLLIN GARBARINO

Rated PG-13 • Theaters

→ It's been seven years since *The Rise of Skywalker* wrapped up the sequel trilogy, leaving Star Wars fans with mixed emotions over the state of the galaxy far, far away. The problem with the sequel trilogy, which began with *The Force Awakens* (2015), was that Lucasfilm didn't go into the project with a clearly defined story arc, instead letting filmmaker J.J. Abrams retell the classic story with his own spin. He seeded the film with cryptic hints about later developments, but he didn't plan for where the story was headed. Rian Johnson, who directed the next installment, put

his own stamp on the story, undoing Abrams' groundwork and alienating many fans. Abrams came back to get the franchise on track, but the final entry in the trilogy was so lacking in originality that he didn't win back the fans.

At about this time, Disney needed original content to boost subscribers to its new streaming platform Disney+. Lucasfilm started cranking out streaming content, and much of that content was of uneven quality. The emotions of diehard fans started to become less mixed and more hostile toward parent company Disney. But it wasn't all bad. Both critics and fans approved of the first season of *The Mandalorian*—a Western-inspired

series about a tough-as-nails bounty hunter who rescues an alien child the internet quickly nicknamed "Baby Yoda."

In these years, Lucasfilm hadn't abandoned theatrical releases, it just couldn't finish projects. During her tenure, former president Kathleen Kennedy announced plans for numerous films that never materialized. Now Lucasfilm is pivoting back to theaters in hopes of restoring some of the franchise's prestige, but it's once again playing it safe, adapting its most popular small-screen duo for the big screen.

The Mandalorian and Grogu takes place during the years after the Empire's defeat in *Return of the Jedi* (1983). Mando is no longer a gunslinger for hire. He and his force-sensitive ward work for the New Republic, rounding up imperial warlords who remain at large. But in tracking their latest target, Mando and Grogu run afoul of the galaxy's most notorious crime family—the Hutts.

The movie has much to commend it. It preserves the father/son bond between the protagonists that gave the show its emotional core, while making use of the

bigger screen—the movie was filmed for IMAX—and the bigger budget to tell a story with expansive visuals. Even though the film is rated PG-13, it's safe for younger kids who don't mind sci-fi action. There's no foul language or sensuality. Mando is a one-man killing machine, but for the most part, his action-packed battles remain bloodless. As is typical for Star Wars, this film has plenty of humor. Mando might be a no-nonsense tough guy, but his nonverbal sidekick peppers the film with amusing moments that are also terribly cute.

In many ways, *The Mandalorian and Grogu* manages to recapture the look and feel of George Lucas' original trilogy, and fan response has been mostly positive. Those steeped in Star Wars lore will delight at some of the inclusions, but knowing the back story isn't necessary. Folks unfamiliar with the series can enjoy the film because it tells you everything you need to know. Even so, the film has its faults.

The 132-minute running time is about 20 minutes too long. The second half drags, and a couple of scenes don't add anything to the story, a likely byproduct of the studio's request that filmmaker Jon Favreau scrap the TV series' fourth season to make this film. And while the visuals are impressive, one of the computer-generated Hutts never looks quite as real as the giant Jabba puppet from *Return of the Jedi*.

Despite its deficiencies, the movie succeeds because it respects the franchise and the audience—it contains none of the agenda-laden storytelling that marred some of the other TV shows. And embedded in this story about a grizzled warrior and his adopted son is a message America, in the midst of a demographic crisis, needs to hear. As Mando says, "The old protect the young, and then the young protect the old."

The question is, can Disney convince folks who have grown accustomed to watching Star Wars stories on the small screen to head to the theater to watch the next installment? This film makes a tentative step toward that goal, but fans are still waiting for a truly cinematic Star Wars experience. ■



MOVIE

1776

by COLLIN GARBARINO

Rated G • Tubi



The mostly forgotten musical *1776*, debuting on Broadway in 1969 with a film version in 1972, is a surprisingly joyful adaptation of the Continental Congress' thorny debates over the question of independence.

The musical begins with a morose John Adams (William Daniels) complaining that he can't get any traction for his resolution on independence. One of his only friends in Congress is the venerable Ben Franklin, a man who shares his goal but manages to maintain a sunnier disposition. The story gets going when Franklin and Adams convince a delegate from Virginia to take up the resolution. If independence isn't seen as merely the cause of rabble-rousing New Englanders, then maybe some of the other Colonies will join in. A young Thomas Jefferson gets tasked with drafting a "declaration."

1776 isn't going to appeal to folks who dislike those cheesy Broadway musicals of yesteryear. Also, the movie was rated G in 1972, but standards were a lot looser back then. The delegates tend to take God's name in vain as they verbally abuse one another. There are also a couple of instances of innuendo.

But this light-hearted patriotic story shows with historical accuracy that the fight for independence was a rather precarious thing because of the Colonies' internal divisions. It highlights the fact that the first draft of the Declaration condemned the slave trade, but the Southern colonies demanded the language be removed, and men like Adams sacrificed their principles to achieve independence. Today Americans still find themselves divided, and *1776* forces us to consider the uncomfortable truth that for previous generations the price of national unity involved moral compromise.

MOVIE

Young Washington

by BOB BROWN



Rated PG-13 • Theaters

→ Who is America's William Wallace? Our red-white-and-blue *Braveheart*? Certainly the Land of the Free began and endures thanks to the sacrifices of countless brave hearts, but Americans don't typically claim *one* near-mythical figure put the colonies on his shoulders to carry us into a homeland.

Young Washington, the new Angel Studios film from director Jon Erwin (*I Can Only Imagine*, *Jesus Revolution*), depicts that hero's origin story, arguing this role in our country's lore should be reserved for our warrior-leader George Washington.

This film, which depicts Washington's life before he became the Revolution's

hero, begins in the early 1740s on the Washington family's Virginia plantation in the days after the death of young George's father. Unable to return to school, George receives his education at the feet of his much older half-brother Lawrence (John Foss), an adjutant general in the Virginia militia.

Fast forward 12 years, George Washington (William Franklyn-Miller) fails to obtain an appointment as an officer in the British military because he's not a "gentleman."

Intent on proving his leadership ability, Washington offers to survey uncharted lands belonging to Lord Fairfax (Kelsey Grammer). Washington also faces competition from ruling-class suitors for the attentions of high-society head-turner Sally Cary (Mia Rodgers).

This story of Washington's early life revolves around three expeditions: the surveying mission, his assignment by Virginia Lt. Gov. Robert Dinwiddie (Ben Kingsley) to lead a militia force to expel French troops from a region the British were claiming (which became the only time in his career Washington surrendered), and the Battle of Monongahela (near present-day Pittsburgh) in July 1755. The always-dynamic Andy Serkis plays Edward Braddock, the British major-general doomed in that battle.

Washington's fierce loyalty to his men inspires us, as breathtaking cinematography plunges viewers into icy rivers and dense forests that don't spare the ill-equipped trespasser.

The film has few expletives, no sensuality, and the battlefield violence shows little blood. It is surprising, however, that the plight of slaves gets thin treatment in the film. Indigenous peoples have greater visibility, but only to show that their stake in the lands they had long inhabited mattered little to Western powers.

Nevertheless, the film instills a renewed respect for the father of our nation and depicts the virtues that make a great leader. Washington is shown as an outsider who must work within the system to overcome it. The film salutes his ambition to command and his warrior's bravery in the face of death—as well as the *sine qua non* of his success, humility.

"Failure is the tutor sent by God," Washington's mother (Mary-Louise Parker) tells him. "If you don't learn from it, you fail twice."

It seems probable that Erwin will follow up this film with a sequel tracing Washington's rise to commander-in-chief of the Continental Army and the birth of our nation out of the Revolutionary War. But even if he doesn't, this movie is captivating.

The story of *Young Washington* is how we Americans once conceived of ourselves: as wild as a river surging through the Ohio Territory but also as determined in course and destination.

How do we see ourselves *now*? ■



joys of the family establishing their new home on the frontier are just as wonderful as viewers might hope. Singing hymns under the stars and dancing a jig as Pa plays the fiddle are among the recurrent pleasures in which the series relishes to dwell. Their neighbor Mr. Edwards' profound sense of peace and belonging in his friendship with the Ingalls creates a familiar kinship between the viewers and our kind hosts as they invite us into this chapter of their lives.

The Ingalls have settled in American Indian territory, and the Osage nation plays a more pivotal part in this adaptation. Rather than being relegated to the role of an existential threat on the edge of civilization, the Osage feature as compassionate citizens as well as bitter rivals for their ancestral lands. Laura's touching friendship with an indigenous girl her own age serves as a poetic bridge between two worlds whose older generations are generally more skeptical about whether they can—or ought—to make peace with one another.

By dwelling on the complexities of the larger narrative of westward expansion, the show loses out on some of the intimate society of the Ingalls under the big sky. Seeing the wide world from little Laura's perspective is what makes the book so magical, and the series suffers insofar as it departs from her limited capacity to make sense of it all—from contentious small town politics to a contrived family fallout between Pa and his father back in Wisconsin.

But the show's tone can be best expressed in the impromptu speech that Laura gives at the first Founder's Day celebration of the town of Independence: "Independence isn't about self-reliance or liberty or freedom ... it's a place to come together." Bring the family. ■

TELEVISION

Little House on the Prairie

by STEVE LIMKEMAN

TV-PG • Netflix

➔ After the end of the Civil War, the Ingalls family felt the Big Woods of Wisconsin was growing too crowded for them. So Ma and Pa don their pioneer spirit, pack up a covered wagon with their young girls, Mary and Laura, and head southwest to the great plains of Kansas to stake their claim.

Netflix's *Little House on the Prairie* adapts Laura's beloved autobiographical novel in this first season, and a second season is already slated to treat the next exciting chapter of the Ingalls' adventures. The book series has sold over 70 million copies across more than 100 different countries since its first publication during the Great Depression, a testament to the power this story has to warm families' hearts worldwide as they relax by their hearths in the evening, dreaming of life on the American frontier.

Fans of Laura Ingalls Wilder's classic book will be delighted that the show has retained the innocent childlike curiosity and amazement of its narrator, Laura, featuring an enchanting performance by the young Alice Halsey. Buoyed by her father's steady presence and his consistent optimism, Laura is determined to charm each new acquaintance she makes out West, and rarely fails to win over her quarry.

Though Laura is brimming with wide-eyed wonder, the show does not limit itself to her perspective. And the adults on the Western frontier offer Pa a more sobering picture of the dangers on the prairie. After witnessing their wagon nearly capsize crossing a river, the town doctor cautions: "It is a myth that men can make it out here alone."

Compared with the novel's narrative of the Ingalls' encounters with wolves, wildfire, and other perils of the wilderness, the show's suspense is not quite so artful in the telling. However, the simple



Nina Hagen

MUSIC

Gospel tunes from unexpected voices

Three recent Christian-themed albums

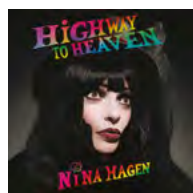
by ARSENIO ORTEZA



In 1979 and 1980, the sudden appearance of what were, to one extent or another, gospel albums by Bob Dylan, Arlo Guthrie, Van Morrison, Maria Muldaur, and T-Bone Burnett led some listeners to proclaim a fresh movement of the Holy Spirit. Alas, without that era's monoculture, it's hard to imagine something similar causing a stir today.

Still, something similar there is. And because it's coming from the "Godmother of German Punk" Nina Hagen, the hip-hopper M.I.A., and the singer-songwriter Joseph Arthur, it's weirder and sometimes wilder than what came before.

When it comes to "weird and wild," Nina Hagen has few competitors. And on that score, her latest album, *Highway to Heaven* (Grönland), doesn't disappoint: It's a collection of hymns and Southern-gospel standards sung as only a theatrical septuagenarian—backed by a combo adept at folk, reggae, blues, and rock 'n' roll—can sing them.



Highway to Heaven
NINA HAGEN



M.I.7
M.I.A.



You're Not a Ghost Anymore
JOSEPH ARTHUR

It is not, however, totally unexpected. Hagen has released gospel music before (*Personal Jesus*, portions of *Volksbeat*). And, the brief half-life of celebrity conversions notwithstanding, she still stands behind her public 2009 profession of Christian faith. So the playful, borderline-goofy zeal with which she and her occasional duet partners put the material across feels authentic.

M.I.7 (Ohmni) and *You're Not a Ghost Anymore: Faith* (Lonely Astronaut), the new albums by M.I.A. and Joseph Arthur respectively, feel authentic too. But, unlike Hagen, who's singing the time-tested words of others, M.I.A. and Arthur are delivering their own faith-based songs while burdened by uniquely 21st-century baggage.

To wit: Both have been labeled conspiracy theorists—Arthur for expressing and doubling down on COVID-vaccine skepticism and M.I.A. for the same plus cozying up to Alex Jones and launching a 5G-blocking clothing line. Various degrees of cancellation have ensued.

M.I.7 finds M.I.A., who traces her conversion to a 2017 vision of Christ, mingling apocalyptic messaging straight out of Revelation with unadorned gospel sentiment (e.g., the Sunday Service Choir-enhanced "Jesus"). What might be called a theological loose end, the mysterious "God thanked it," occurs in all seven of the tracks titled "Trumpet," but it's not half as flummoxing as the concluding track, "30 Minutes of Silence." Pretty much what its title says, it simultaneously provides stark contrast to the rest of the album's rat-a-tat beats and should make fans of John Cage's 4'33" positively giddy.

You're Not a Ghost Anymore has a theological loose end or two as well, but it's mainly Joseph Arthur's 12-song attempt to impress on listeners the radical difference that believing in Jesus and immersion in Scripture is making in his life. To that end, Arthur swathes his singing in the layered, electronically distorted sounds that he's become known for, effectively rendering palpable the ineffability of what he's trying to convey. ■

MUSIC

New and noteworthy

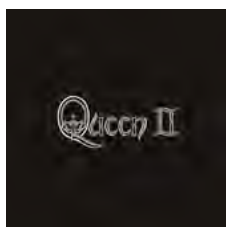
by ARSENIO ORTEZA



Andrea Faccioli Plays *Pet Sounds* ANDREA FACCIOLI

Lots of people consider *Pet Sounds* to be one of the greatest albums of the rock era. Others say that it can't be because there's not much rock on it. This sans-vocals, solo-acoustic-guitar rendition should please both camps—the nay-sayers because it demonstrates how little bass, drums, and electricity had to do with the original version's appeal, the yaysayers because it demonstrates how lovely Brian

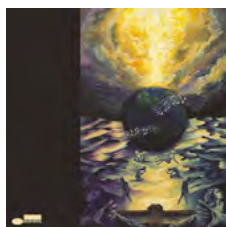
Wilson's melodies were and are.



Queen II: Collector's Edition QUEEN

If you agree with Rick Beato's recent YouTube diagnosis of what's ailing most songs on Spotify's Top 10 ("nothing interesting here," "incredibly repetitive"), you'll love this exemplar of how daring aspiring hitmakers used to be. As if they might never get another chance to strut their stuff, the members of Queen pull out all their "and nobody played synthesizer" stops, unleashing flights of fancy,

thunderous metal, serene segues, and stacks of vocals. Do you need four bonus discs of demos, instrumentals, and live versions? Probably not. But finally getting all 46 seconds of "I Do Like To Be Beside the Seaside" after all these years is nice.



Gospel Music JOEL ROSS

At a time during which people can't even distinguish AI music from the real thing, it's doubtful whether anyone would connect these probing, vibraphone-centric jazz pieces to the arc of salvation if not for their titles ("Trinity," "Protoevangelium," "Repentance," etc.). But Ross does include relevant Scriptures in the liner notes, so ultimately only the lazy will be without excuse. A bigger

question is how easy it is to hear Ross' connections once they've been made. Well, who said jazz should be easy? Or theology for that matter? That it's rewarding is what matters. This music is. And not only that, but because it's vibraphone centric, it twinkles.



Soul of the Machine: A Celebration of the Life & Legacy of ARP founder Alan R. Pearlman VARIOUS ARTISTS

What we have here are three discs totaling three hours and 20 minutes and containing one cut apiece by 36 artists (some well known [Martin Gore, Mark Isham, JG Thirwell], most not), all at the service of what the lengthy subtitle says. You can tell the weird songs by their titles

("Stochastic ARP," "Seance [Vestiges]") but not the outlier (Lamar "Kronick" Mitchell's "Ode to Bernie," which sounds like an early-'80s Al Jarreau single's backing track). Most of the other 33 gently and beautifully evoke the cosmos and do not wear out their welcome quickly.



ENCORE

In 1977, nearly a decade after getting kicked out of Traffic, **Dave Mason** finally hit his solo stride with the platinum-selling *Let It Flow* and the single it rode in on, "We Just Disagree." Exactly three minutes of rich vocal harmonies and ringing 12-string guitars, "We Just Disagree" was a breath of fresh air in an increasingly overproduced and disco-fied time. Columbia Records had every reason to expect Mason's next album to capitalize on the momentum. It should've. Released in June '78, *Mariposa De Oro* was easily the best album of Mason's career.

It was still his best album when he died in April at the age of 79. Yet, for some reason, even though it went gold, yielded a minor hit (a lush cover of the Shirelles' "Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow"), and boasted deep cuts worthy of heavy rotation, *Mariposa* didn't embed itself in the public imagination. It's the public's loss. A better-sounding example of mainstream rock at its FM-radio-friendly finest you won't find. —A.O.

MASTERWORKS

The story he told about himself

The legacy George Washington wished to leave his country

by COLLIN GARBARINO



At the close of the Constitutional Convention in 1787, someone supposedly asked Benjamin Franklin what sort of government they had decided upon. “A republic, if you can keep it,” was his puckish reply. But what sort of republic did the Founders have in mind? In the statue of George Washington housed in the Virginia State Capitol, we see part of their inspiration carved in stone.

In 1784, the Virginia General Assembly decided to commission a statue of the state’s most famous son,

the Revolutionary War hero George Washington. Hoping for a statue of the highest quality, the Assembly hired French neoclassical sculptor Jean-Antoine Houdon (1741–1828). Houdon crossed the Atlantic in 1785 and stayed at Washington’s home, Mount Vernon. Over the next few months, Houdon sculpted wet clay as Washington posed, took his measurements, and made a plaster cast of his face. It’s one of only two times Washington sat for a sculptor, and it’s certainly the most cooperative he had been in helping an artist reproduce

his likeness. But what kind of fruit would this collaboration bear after Houdon returned to his studio in Paris?

The finished product, which took a decade to arrive in Richmond, is probably the closest image we have to Washington’s physical features, but it also provides visual clues as to what kind of country he hoped America would become.

Washington is rendered in Houdon’s clean and balanced neoclassical style, standing with his weight on his right leg in a traditional contrapposto. He looks



JOSEPH SOHM-VISIONS OF AMERICA/GETTY IMAGES

out toward the horizon, a visionary leader whose face betrays a hint of satisfaction with what he sees.

Despite the popular neoclassical trend of the day, Washington dismissed the suggestion that he be depicted in a Roman toga. Instead, this masterpiece employs both classical and contemporary imagery to communicate the spirit he hoped to share with his new country.

Washington wears his military uniform, but his right hand rests on a gentleman's cane rather than a sword. He's become the model citizen soldier—ready to defend his home without identifying with continual conquest. His left arm rests upon a bundle of sticks lashed together, an ancient Roman symbol called a fasces representing political authority. Early Americans interpreted the fasces as symbolizing strength through unity, and our country used the emblem until Italian fascists adopted it in the 20th century. (A pair of fasces still adorn the wall behind the Speaker of the House's rostrum in the Capitol.) Washington's sword hangs loosely on the other side of the fasces. The weapon is nearby, but the need for constant vigilance has passed. Resting behind the man who even then was being hailed as the "Father of the Country" is a humble plow.

What are we to make of this random collection Washington wished to surround himself with? It only makes sense if one knows the story of the Roman general Cincinnatus.

Many Roman writers upheld Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus as the epitome of civic virtue. In the earliest days of the Roman Republic, the wealthy



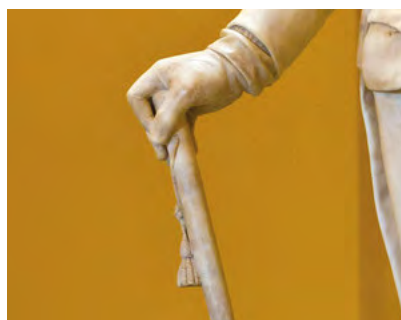
Cincinnatus had served as one of Rome's magistrates before returning to his family lands. But in 458 B.C., Rome was beset by enemies, and the Senate sent messengers to Cincinnatus requesting his aid in saving the city. When the messengers found the nobleman, he was busy plowing his fields. They told him the Senate wished to make him dictator for six months in the hopes he could deal with the emergency. Cincinnatus acquiesced and returned to the capital, but the hero of Rome only needed 15 days to subdue the city's enemies. According to the story, as soon as the danger had passed he relinquished power and went back to his fields.

In the Roman Republic, the ideal man didn't seek to preserve his own power and prerogatives. He bravely answered the call to serve the state, but he demonstrated virtue through his desire to live a quiet life tending to his own affairs. It's this ideal that Washington hoped to inspire in our own republic.

In 1782, an army officer suggested perhaps the country would benefit from having Washington become king. Washington, however, dismissed the idea, and soon after the Treaty of Paris ended the war with Britain in 1783, he

resigned his commission as commander in chief of the Continental Army and returned to Mount Vernon. Less than two years later, he and Houdon began collaborating on this statue. Less than two years after that he would be called upon to preside over the Constitutional Convention and then serve as the country's first executive, a position which he voluntarily gave up after two terms.

How does one "keep a republic"? The Romans and the American Founders both believed it required capable leaders willing to serve. But just as importantly it required virtuous leaders willing to step aside and put the good of the country before self-promotion. ■



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Houdon's statue of George Washington in the Virginia State Capitol; Washington's satisfied gaze; the fasces, a sword, and a humble plow; a gentleman's cane



VOICES NICK EICHER

Minding the store

Candidate Kendall Qualls says Minnesota's fraud crisis raises a larger question: Who was supposed to stop it?

Minnesota has become a strange political paradox. It long enjoyed a reputation for clean government. Yet in recent years, Minnesota has become known for fraud.

The most notorious scandal was Feeding Our Future, in which prosecutors say hundreds of millions of dollars intended to feed low-income children was diverted through a sprawling network of fraudulent meal sites. But it didn't stop there. Investigators later uncovered alleged fraud involving housing assistance, autism therapy, and other social-service programs. Federal prosecutors now say losses may reach into the billions.

The scandal grew so large that Gov. Tim Walz abandoned his bid for a third term, saying he needed to devote himself fully to combating fraud. But the question hanging over Minnesota politics is not what happens next. It is what happened before. How did a state with a clean reputation allow fraud on such a scale to flourish in the first place?

Where was the leadership?

That question sits at the center of Kendall Qualls' campaign for governor.

At their convention at the end of May, Minnesota Republicans endorsed Qualls for governor. Although he still faces an August primary, his argument deserves attention beyond the outcome of a single campaign.

He believes Minnesota's problem is not fundamentally ideological. It is managerial. Moral. Cultural.

"It is a lack of leadership and a lack of moral leadership," he told me. "I think the people are disgusted with the political class, and they want something different."

Qualls is an unusual messenger. He's already the first black candidate to win a major-party endorsement for governor in Minnesota. If elected, he would become the state's first black governor. Yet race is rarely the first thing he talks about. He presents himself as a political outsider—an Army veteran, business executive, and Christian layman who entered politics after a successful private-sector career.

His entry into public life was not planned.

In 2020, he heard U.S. Rep. Ilhan Omar, D-Minn., describe America as systemically racist and capitalism as a system that primarily benefited white people. "That was my tipping point to get involved in politics," he said. "Have never been in politics, never held public office."

After leaving active duty, he and his wife became Christians as adults, and that faith was tested years later when a devastating automobile accident nearly killed both Qualls and his daughter. "She had to relearn to walk, talk, everything," he said.

Yet when he tells the story, he spends more time describing what happened afterward than the accident itself. Members of his church remained at the hospital around the clock.

"They stayed around her for days, 24/7," he recalled. "They said prayers with her. They sang songs with her."

What struck him most was the reaction of relatives who had never witnessed such a Christian community.

"They had no idea that these white people would do the things that they did for us," he said. "They saw true Christian brotherhood right there at a catastrophe."

That experience helps explain why he views politics through a moral lens.

Even when discussing Minnesota's fraud scandals, he repeatedly returns to questions of character and accountability.

"In the private sector, we call it embezzlement," he said. "If there's a leaky bucket, by the second or third quarter, we've done an investigation. We know who's done it. They're fired. They're being charged. It doesn't take eight to 10 years."

Near the end of our conversation, Qualls cited Joshua's command to be strong and courageous and the Psalmist's declaration that some trust in horses and chariots, but believers trust in the name of the Lord.

"Either you believe these things, or you don't," he said.

Then he summarized his campaign in a single sentence: "We're on a rescue mission to save Minnesota."

That phrase may sound dramatic. Yet when fraud becomes a defining political issue, when a governor abandons reelection to focus on it, and when voters begin questioning whether anyone is minding the store, the campaign's stakes become hard to miss. Perhaps "rescue mission" is exactly how many Minnesotans now see the task before them. ■



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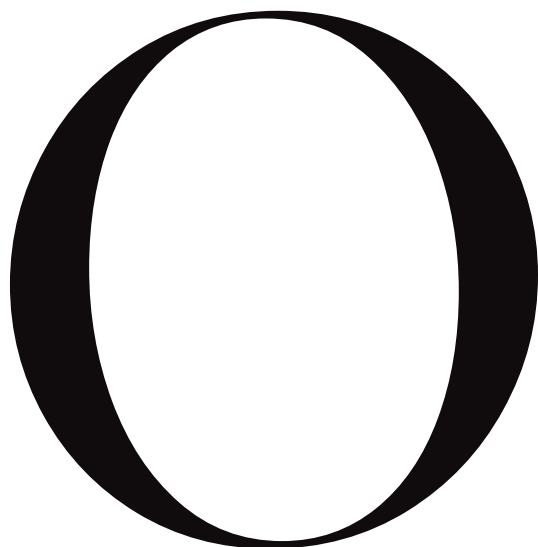
What students learn about



THESE TRUTHS

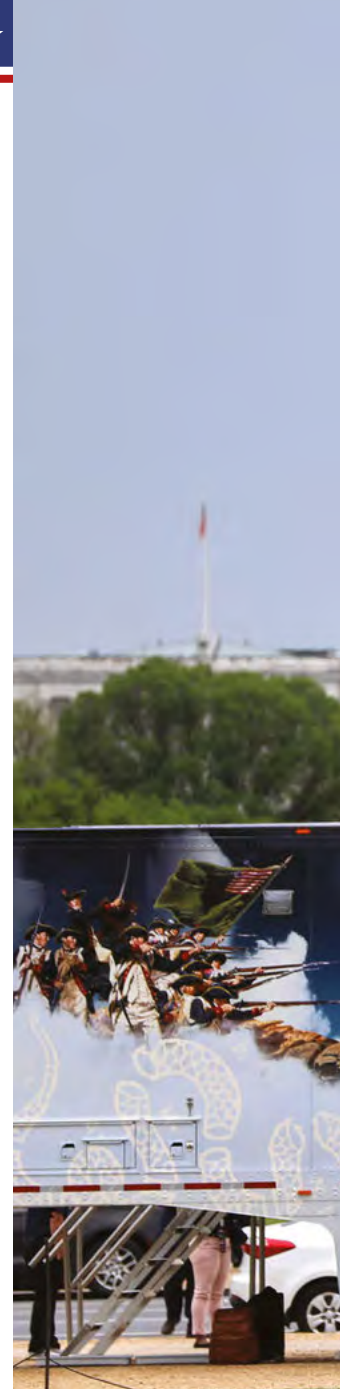
America's past shapes their perception of its future | *by Mary Jackson*

LEFT: DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, BY JOHN TRUMBULL; RIGHT: SPIRIT OF '76, BY ARCHIBALD WILLARD



n a drizzly Friday morning in March, gray sheets of cloud set off an oversized artistic rendering of Gen. George Washington's fleet crossing the icy Delaware River. The mural was plastered on the side of a massive 18-wheel

semitruck parked outside a historic inn and tavern in Middletown, Va. Dozens of people shuffled through the trailer, which had been turned into a compact two-room museum. ★ The semi is one of a fleet of six Freedom Trucks crisscrossing the country to mark the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Before making its way to Middletown, the truck spent a few weeks in Florida, visiting schools and the state fair. It headed to Birmingham, Ala., next, as part of a nationwide campaign called Freedom 250. A network of conservative groups including Hillsdale College, Turning Point USA, and PragerU partnered with the White House to facilitate the displays and other events commemorating the semiquincentennial. The campaign received a \$14 million federal grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to help bring the mobile museums to life. ★ The goal of the Freedom Trucks is to spark patriotism in younger generations and teach them about America's founding. "We're really trying to bring students in," said Jaclyn Gest, one of the truck's tour managers. "It's a different way for them to engage with that history." About 700 students from the local middle school as well as private schools and charter schools in the area around Middletown had already toured the truck, Gest said.



Freedom Trucks, 18-wheel "mobile museums" used to commemorate America's 250th anniversary celebration, arrive at the National Mall in Washington.



That day, three young girls inside the truck took turns crouching to sign their names at the bottom of a floor-to-ceiling electronic representation of the Declaration of Independence, one of several interactive digital displays. One left a heart next to her digital signature.

But not everyone loves the mobile museum's overtly patriotic vision—or the White House's collaboration with conservative groups to commemorate the nation's 250th.

One critic, Jemar Tisby, a historian and author who professes Christianity and writes about religion and race, blasted PragerU's involvement, calling the group "an engine of right-wing historical revisionism, built to indoctrinate rather than inform." Tisby is among detractors who accuse the Trump administration of a form of historical revisionism that over-

corrects and whitewashes injustices from America's past in the name of reviving patriotic education.

"A White House that rewrites the nation's origins cannot be trusted with its future," Tisby wrote.

Since the start of Trump's second term, clashes over how America's history is portrayed have been on full display, from national landmarks to classrooms and statehouses, leaving teachers and parents to wade through conflicting ideas and shifting standards. Political and ideological divides shape how many students learn about America's past and perceive their role in its future.

Now, as the nation turns 250, a milestone that should invoke patriotism and national pride, younger generations are caught between competing visions of America.



LEFT: A view inside the Freedom Truck. RIGHT: A family reads the signage about slavery on an outdoor exhibit at Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia.

Jonathan Den Hartog is an author and chair of Samford University's department of history. He says history itself is being contested. "So that makes it hard to communicate a clear, resoundingly patriotic story that would help renew us. Some progressives will say we shouldn't even celebrate American independence, that we should mark it, but not celebrate it."

Earlier this year, the tension was evident at Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia, where Washington once lived and the Declaration of Independence was adopted. In January, park staff removed an outdoor exhibit at the President's House Site about nine people enslaved by Washington. They soon reinstated it in what turned into a standoff between President Donald Trump and the city of Philadelphia. In March 2025, the president issued an executive

order directing the Park Service, a part of the Interior Department, to review materials at national sites to ensure they "focus on the greatness of the achievements and progress of the American people" and do not "inappropriately disparage Americans."

The city of Philadelphia sued the Trump administration, contending slavery is central to the National Park's story. Siding with Philadelphia, U.S. District Judge Cynthia Rufe, an appointee of Republican President George W. Bush, sharply rebuked the Trump administration for what she deemed

HISTORICAL STUDIES TIMELINE

1791

The Massachusetts Historical Society becomes the nation's first organization devoted to collecting materials for the study of American history.



1832

Noah Webster publishes *History of the United States*. This narrative-driven account is often considered the first American history textbook.





“dangerous” overreach. The Trump administration appealed the ruling and condemned the city’s lawsuit as aimed at “demeaning our brave Founding Fathers, who set the brilliant road map for the greatest country in the world.”

In April, the appeals court ordered Trump to “preserve the status quo” and leave the slavery exhibits intact as the case moves forward.

Trump’s executive order, “Restoring Truth and Sanity in American History,” puts the conflict at Independence Park in a broader context of what the administration called a historical “revisionist movement.” It’s one

Trump has been warning about since 2020. The order claimed America’s past and achievements are being undermined and cast in a negative light, one that’s “replacing objective facts with a distorted narrative driven by ideology rather than truth.”

In the past year, the Trump administration has taken other steps, including bringing back statues of historical figures such as Christopher Columbus, various Confederate generals, and early American leaders. Dozens of historical statues were toppled, vandalized, or officially taken down amid the 2020 protests that followed George Floyd’s death.

The turmoil has spilled over into classrooms. More than half of U.S. teachers polled by EdChoice and Morning Consult in September 2025 said they had modified their curricula or classroom discussions due to political pressure, a 13% jump from March 2025. More teachers are moving away from traditional

textbooks and leaning on their own curated materials, according to a 2024 survey of middle and high school history educators conducted by the American Historical Association (AHA).

But political affiliations shape how educators teach about America’s past. Another AHA survey from 2021 found that 70% of Democrats said the study of history should question the past, while 84% of Republican respondents said the goal was to celebrate it.

One high school history teacher found herself caught in the middle. Jennifer Welch, 55, spent years driving groups of students from Passaic, N.J., about 80 miles south to visit Independence National Historical Park. Her voice grew tense when she spoke about the slavery exhibit’s removal. In her classroom, Welch said, she relied less on textbooks and more on exposing students to primary documents. But when she learned about Washington’s slaves in the late 2010s, particularly the story of one named Oney Judge, she felt compelled to incorporate lessons telling their stories, too.

“How [students] come down on whether George Washington was a hero or a villain, or somewhere in between, that’s on them,” she said. “My job is to make sure they can write that argument well and have a civil discussion with their classmates.”

But Hartog of Samford University thinks there’s more to it than that. As part of the university’s 250th commemoration, Hartog planned lectures from various speakers discussing portions of the Declaration. In his own classes on early American history, as part of students’ primary source study, he incorporates sermons from clergy in Colonial America.

“It really comes down to which pieces of the American story you think are most important, and what’s going to get prioritized,” he said.

Many trace the deepening divisions over American history to the infiltration of critical theory, or its most commonly known offshoot, critical race theory (CRT). Previously confined to college campuses, the Marxist-based academic discipline holds that America was founded on white supremacy and oppression of marginalized groups—and those forces continue to shape life today.

PHILADELPHIA: MICHAEL YANOW/NURPHOTO VIA AP

LATE 1800S

The study of history shifts from a literary pursuit to an academic discipline in which scholars began employing an empirical scientific approach. German historian **Leopold von Ranke** helps popularize rigorous historical research using primary sources.



1882

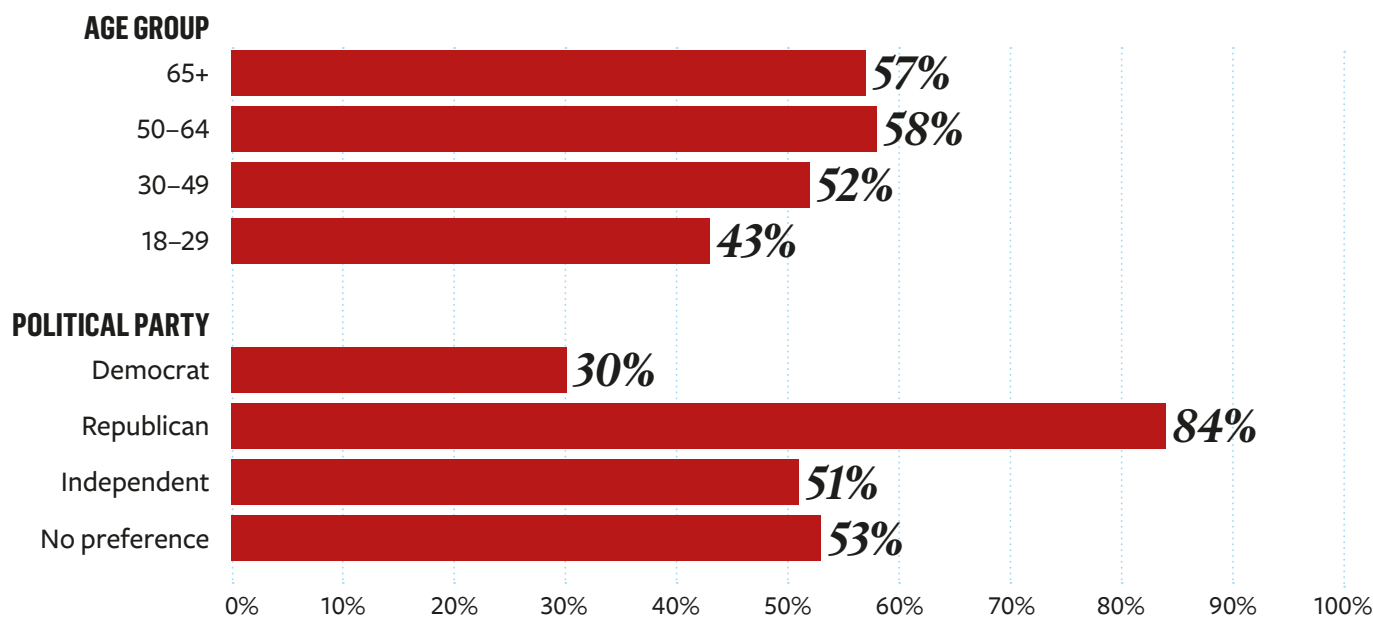
Yale awards the first specialized Ph.D. in History to Clarence Bowen, a journalist who completed his dissertation on “The Boundaries of Connecticut.”

1884

The American Historical Association is founded to collect and preserve historical manuscripts and disseminate historical research.

Should history celebrate America's past?

■ Survey respondents who said yes; remaining respondents said history should *question* our nation's past



Results from a 2021 "History, the Past, and Public Culture" national survey by the American Historical Association

The 1619 Project from *The New York Times* became one recognizable signpost of how diffused those ideas had become. The multimedia initiative launched in 2019 aimed at overhauling the claim that America's story began with the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Instead, it reframed the nation's origin around the arrival of the first enslaved Africans in Virginia. The project claimed the founders' motive in declaring the colonies' independence from Britain was "to ensure that slavery would continue."

Historians and scholars have since disputed the 1619 Project's claims. But its ideas and subsequent corresponding

curriculum continue to circulate. About 15,300 K-12 teachers have been trained in the curriculum, according to Jon Sawyer, founder and senior adviser at the Pulitzer Center, an educational partner to the *Times* on the 1619 Project. More than 500 educator partners across 30 states have developed projects related to the curriculum for 25,000 K-12th grade students, Sawyer claimed.

In 2020, Trump established the 1776 Commission to combat the 1619 Project and promote what he felt was severely lacking—patriotic education. The advisory committee included the late TPUSA founder Charlie Kirk, Hillsdale

BEARD: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

1913

Progressive historian **Charles A. Beard** publishes *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*, giving rise to the idea that the Founding Fathers were motivated by financial interests rather than principled ideals.



1934

The Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, Germany, credited as the birthplace of the Frankfurt School and critical theory, relocates to Columbia University in New York City. Frankfurt theorists promoted ideas that spread through universities and intellectual circles, critiquing capitalism's perceived effect on social and cultural structures.



BERKELEY: LONNIE WILSON/OAKLAND TRIBUNE STAFF ARCHIVES/DIGITAL FIRST MEDIA GROUP/OAKLAND TRIBUNE VIA GETTY IMAGES

College President Larry Arnn, and Matthew Spalding, vice president for Hillsdale’s Washington, D.C., operations and dean of the Van Andel Graduate School of Government.

Two days before Trump left office in 2021, the group released a 45-page 1776 Report, including what some say were previously indisputable facts about American history. Patriotic education “doesn’t mean ignoring the faults in our past, but rather viewing our history clearly and wholly, with reverence and love,” the report stated. While it addressed the reality that some of the Founders owned slaves, it noted they came to realize slavery was incompatible with the Declaration’s claims that “all men are created equal.”

The American Historical Association and nearly 50 other historical groups condemned the report for its “simplistic interpretation that relies on falsehoods, inaccuracies, omissions, and misleading statements.” Sections on the Founders “envision godlike men” who crafted documents asserting “universal and eternal principles” while erasing the experiences of swaths of marginalized groups, the AHA wrote.

Upon taking office, President Joe Biden immediately disbanded the 1776 Commission.

But since then, the so-called history wars have only ramped up. Critics of progressivism and CRT, including parents and conservative activists, grew more outspoken. Conservative investigative journalist Christopher Rufo published numerous CRT-related reports detailing anti-white and anti-American rhetoric in K–12 public school classrooms and curricula.

State legislators took note. In recent years, dozens of states, primarily led by Republican lawmakers, have adopted laws restricting CRT-related content, including how educators teach U.S. history. Those battles continue in statehouses today. In Virginia, after years of wrangling over state history and social studies standards under former Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin, Democratic lawmakers recently proposed legislation to revise current standards to include more emphasis on the contributions and experiences of so-called marginalized groups, including racial and ethnic minorities, immigrants, and people who identify as homosexual and transgender.

In April, the Texas State Board of Education approved an early draft of new K–12 curriculum standards for social studies that emphasize the importance of students reading U.S. founding documents and gaining an understanding of American and Texas “exceptionalism.” The Republican-led overhaul of social studies standards attracted heated disputes over how much time students should spend learning about cultures other than Western civilization and the influence of Christianity on America’s founding. The board is expected to finalize the new standards in June.

Amid these debates, millions of parents across the country have flocked to homeschooling or classical education. But even in these spaces, a growing contingent champions progressive ideas, including CRT, according to Becky Aniol, a pastor’s wife, homeschooling mother of four, and founder of Living Heritage Homeschool. She cited reading lists aimed at fostering “white guilt” and one homeschooling convention with sessions that included topics like “forms of decoloniality” and another titled “All History Is Queer History.” Earlier this year, Well-Trained Mind, a popular classical homeschooling curriculum publisher, came under fire for posting a lengthy political statement on social media that criticized immigration crack-downs. Some, including Aniol, perceived in the post a leftward turn that raised doubts about the publisher’s newly updated history series, *The Story of the World*.

In 2025, Aniol and a handful of other homeschooling moms published a statement to “draw attention to dangerous ideas rooted in postmodern thought permeating the culture which have infiltrated home education, philosophy, methods, and community.” History, the statement reads, “tells the unfolding human story as authored by God. As His Story, history should neither be revised or rewritten in an effort to manipulate the present or future, nor should it emphasize propaganda or calls to activism.”

Aniol argues older students can grapple with the complexities of America’s beginning and the Founding Fathers. “But it’s a mistake to teach kids evil first, or evil as equal,” she said. “Young kids especially need to have heroes, not just those who were powerful, but those who had virtue and built our country based on principles that are compatible with a biblical worldview.”

MID-1900S

The rise of what historian John Higham termed “consensus history,” a counter-movement to progressive historiography that emphasized national identity and shared American ideals.



EARLY 1960S

The New Left emerges at the **University of California, Berkeley** and University of Michigan. This student-led radical political movement drew on Frankfurt theorists to redefine oppression, from economic struggles to modern identity politics.

Against this backdrop, America ushered in its 200th anniversary in 1976. The bicentennial landed in the immediate aftermath of the Watergate scandal, President Richard Nixon's resignation, and the Vietnam War. Knott was 19 and living outside Boston. He recalled protesters shouting down President Gerald Ford while he attempted to give a speech at the North Bridge in Concord to mark the first shots fired during the Revolution. "It wasn't all peaceful and patriotic," Knott said.

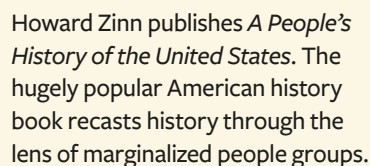


Hillsdale's Matthew Spalding was in middle school in Central California at the time. He recalls a celebratory "immersive experience" on TV and in real life, "with ships, parades, activities, the Freedom Train coming through town." Spalding said his city painted fire hydrants to look like miniature colonial soldiers. His mother gave him and his brother one crisp new \$2 bill each, taking them to the post office to get them stamped. "It sparked my first interest in our nation's history," he said.

Four years later, though, Howard Zinn's book, *A People's History of the United States*, became a touchstone in America's

CAKE: AP; FLAG: DAVID ATTIE/GETTY IMAGES

America turns 200
amid a groundswell
of patriotism,
despite political
upheaval.



The New York Times publishes the 1619 Project, which argues that U.S. history should begin with the arrival of the first slaves.

“DESPITE OUR DIFFERENCES, WE AGREED ON ONE FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH: THAT OUR RIGHTS ARE A GIFT FROM GOD, NOT A FAVOR FROM KINGS OR COURTS.”

history wars. Zinn, who described himself as “something of an anarchist, something of a socialist,” popularized an interpretation of American history that emphasized race, gender, and ethnicity categories. The book recast the American story as one of oppression against marginalized groups—namely, enslaved Africans, women, Native Americans, and immigrants. Since its publication, the book has sold more than 2 million copies and had an outsized influence on elementary, high school, and college students, including a 2008 graphic novel adaptation for junior high readers.

In 2020, one critic labeled Zinn’s book “fake history that turned a generation against America.” (As recently as last fall, it was required reading for my son at a California community college.) The extent to which younger generations have turned against America is debatable. Indeed, Trump’s return to office accelerated cultural pushback against radical iterations of anti-American and anti-white ideologies in curricula, classrooms, and other historical institutions.

But Spalding believes there’s still much to recover. He spearheaded Hillsdale’s involvement in developing the academic and educational content for Freedom Trucks. “This is a unique moment to capture the imagination and remind people of the history and revive it,” he said.

For some who visited the Freedom Truck in Middletown, the conservative groups behind the museum were a selling point. “We knew they’d have a good idea of what the Revolution was about,” said Nicole Russell, a homeschooling mom who toured the truck with her four children.

The exhibits, presented in patriotic colors and eye-catching fonts, included a timeline of the major battles, an interactive

map showing the westward expansion, and a quiz for visitors to determine whether they would have been a Loyalist or a Patriot during the Revolutionary era. One touch screen display informed visitors about lesser-known figures of the revolution: “slaves seeking liberty, women holding families together, Jewish merchants funding the cause, Indians navigating alliances, and pastors igniting revolution.”

The displays highlight America’s Judeo-Christian roots and center around the Declaration’s key argument: that God, not the government, gives individuals their rights. A large AI-generated version of Washington welcomed visitors to the two-room museum. “Despite our differences, we agreed on one fundamental truth,” Washington says in a deep voice. “That our rights are a gift from God, not a favor from kings or courts.”

Meghan Fisher visited the Freedom Truck with her red-haired 8-year-old daughter, Lily. Fisher, 47, was initially concerned that the museum would de-emphasize slavery. Toward the end of their visit, she noted one display that acknowledged it took decades to fulfill the truth that “all men are created equal and endowed with unalienable rights.”

Lily, her almost waist-length hair pulled back from her face with two bright pink bows, seemed excited to explore the truck. “We’re here to celebrate the birthday,” she explained.

“The birthday of America,” her mother finished for her with a smile.

Fisher said she chose to homeschool her daughter, despite working for an education publisher. “I’ve been in a lot of different schools over the years, and I just wanted to be able to choose what she learned,” she said. “Sadly, like everything else, [history] has become really political.” ■

—with additional reporting from Addie Offereins

2020

During his first term, President Donald Trump establishes the 1776 Commission to counter the 1619 Project and support “patriotic education.”



2025

Trump issues the executive order “Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History.” The order directed the Interior Department to ensure properties under its jurisdiction do not “inappropriately disparage Americans past or living.” —M.J.



LAND OF PROMISE

For the last 250 years, millions have flocked to America
seeking a better life | *by Grace Snell*

W

When Abel Carriço first stepped foot in the United States, he started shivering on the airplane gangway. He was just 17 years old at the time, and back in his home country of Brazil it was 90 degrees and sunny. In Washington, D.C., a blanket of snow covered the ground. ★ Later that day, Carriço landed in Knoxville, Tenn. He can't quite explain it, but somehow, he felt at home right away. ★ Some family friends picked Carriço up from the airport and drove him straight to an Applebee's. He felt like he'd stepped into Hollywood. Everything—from the waitress to the menu—looked like a scene from one of the American movies he watched growing up. ★ Then, Carriço discovered free refills. He decided he never wanted to leave America. "This is it," he thought. He'd arrived.





Immigrants arrive in the early 1900s at Ellis Island in New York and are processed by customs officials.

Soon, Carriço learned to love and appreciate his host country for more substantive reasons. He realized why people called the United States the land of opportunity. In Brazil, he'd witnessed people working hard but never seeming to reap the fruit of their labors.

Not so in the United States. "In America, hard work pays off," he said.

Carriço stands in a long line of immigrants who have come to the United States to build a better life for themselves and their children and make good on the enduring promises of life, liberty, and a chance to pursue happiness. According to one Cato Institute analysis, more than 100 million people have come to the United States with plans to settle since the end of the Revolutionary War.

Unlike many nations, which formed around a common ethnicity or heritage, the United States is based on an idea: the notion that God created all men equal and endowed them with certain unalienable rights. And that means people of many different ethnicities, languages, religions, and backgrounds can become truly and fully American by swearing allegiance to our creeds and agreeing to uphold our laws.

Today, the United States is home to more immigrants than anywhere else in the world. Nearly half of them—over 23 million people—are naturalized U.S. citizens. They are people who have willingly chosen to leave behind their past loyalties and become part of We the People and the ongoing experiment in American democracy.

In 1921, British author G.K. Chesterton visited the United States and later famously wrote: "America is the only nation in the world that is founded on a creed."

Gordon S. Wood is a professor emeritus of history at Brown University who's written extensively on the American Revolution and the early history of the United States. Wood said most countries root their sense of national identity to some degree in a homogeneous ethnicity. Even the word *nation* comes from the Latin *natio*, meaning "birth."

But the United States formed out of a common cause, not a common ancestry. Wood said only 60% of the white population in the colonies in 1790 had English ancestry. Most of the others were Scottish, Scots-Irish, or Irish, but there were also Germans, Dutch, French, Swedes, and Spaniards represented. Another 700,000 people of African descent and tens of thousands of Native Americans also lived there.

Wood said the Founding Fathers themselves didn't think in terms of being a creedal nation. They were concerned with holding their fledgling country together and worried its diversity threatened its fragile union. But the seed of an idea sown in 1776 took root and blossomed during the 19th century.

LEFT: UNIVERSAL HISTORY ARCHIVE/UNIVERSAL IMAGES GROUP VIA GETTY IMAGES;
RIGHT: ARCHIV GERSTENBERG/ULLSTEIN BILD VIA GETTY IMAGES



By the time Abraham Lincoln took office, Wood said, it was clear where he sourced American identity: “It’s the Declaration of Independence for Lincoln that makes us Americans.”

The Declaration and the U.S. Constitution launched an unprecedented experiment in liberty and democracy—one lots of people wanted to participate in. According to the Pew Research Center, the first significant surge of immigration started in the 1840s and spanned through the 1880s. More than 14 million people arrived on American shores from places like Germany, Ireland, and the United Kingdom.

After that, immigrants continued to come in waves, many arriving before the country had formal visa requirements.

Jennie Murray is CEO of the National Immigration Forum, a nonprofit advocating for increased legal immigration and immigration system reform. Murray’s family tree is filled with the names of people who came to the United States from places like Spain, Ireland, France, and England.

Her great-grandfather, Frank Murray, was an Irish immigrant who settled in San Francisco. He belonged to the lowest level of society and could only find work at the local fire department, she said. But after the 1906 earthquake sparked fires that ravaged the city, Frank Murray and the other firefighters were hailed as heroes. “Because they worked hard and contributed and gave back, they changed their own life and their family’s trajectory,” Murray said.

She noted that opportunity is a big part of what makes America unique.

Abel Carriço grew up in a coastal Brazilian city, just a few hours outside Rio de Janeiro. Stunning white sand beaches and ocean vistas attracted crowds of tourists, but crime rates were high and locals often struggled to make ends meet. In some parts of town, gangsters and drug traffickers also plagued residents.

Both Carriço’s parents worked, and he rode his bike to and from school each day. By the time he was in his teens, Carriço was also working full time and attending school at night.

Everything Carriço knew about the United States, he learned from American media. He listened to CCM artists like DC Talk and Michael W. Smith. He read American books translated into Portuguese. And he watched tons of American movies. From these, he pieced together a picture of what life there might look like.

But he never expected to come to the United States. Instead, he imagined himself following in the footsteps of

other Brazilian athletes and playing for a European soccer team. Then, some family friends came to visit from Tennessee. They encouraged Carriço to consider coming to the United States for college.

He took some time to pray about it and felt God was calling him to pack up everything and move to America.

So, he did.

After visiting several U.S. colleges, Carriço flew back to Brazil and traded his tourist visa for a student one. In the fall of 2010, he started his freshman year at a small Methodist school called Hiwassee College.

Carriço’s first taste of life in the United States was in the town of Englewood, Tenn.—population then just over 1,500. He described it as a one-stoplight town with little more than a Subway, a gas station, and a handful of churches. Life there was vastly different from the city bustle Carriço was used to. But he felt welcomed right away.

Carriço came in wanting to work hard and succeed. And in the United States, those goals felt a lot more achievable. Tasks like getting a driver’s license—which he said would have been expensive and time-consuming in Brazil—came together in just a few weeks. “All of a sudden, voila! I can drive,” he said. “Things just worked.”

Carriço was also amazed to discover that in America, people still talked about how their great-great-grandparents came here to work and secure a brighter future for their families. He started to understand why his Appalachian neighbors held

such a fierce dedication to protecting their freedoms and a way of life built on a system of principles—principles that have been the bedrock of the United States for the last 250 years.

While immigration has long played a significant role in America's growth, the country has often had a conflicted relationship with it.

In various eras, Congress passed laws excluding people from citizenship based on ethnicity or national origin—starting with a 1790 law limiting naturalization to “free white persons.” A series of acts passed in the late 19th century specifically targeted Chinese immigrants and later gave way to the 1917 Immigration Act barring immigration from much of Asia and the Middle East.

Later, when the United States established a national origins quota system in 1924, it dramatically restricted immigration from outside Western and Northern Europe and the Western Hemisphere.

But, despite this, America has nonetheless offered freedom and opportunity to millions who did manage to come—receiving the world's tired and poor, those “yearning to breathe free,” in the acclaimed words of poet Emma Lazarus.

And, as the 20th century unfolded, Congress started to roll back restrictions and expand legal immigration pathways to a wider array of people. In 1965, a new act overhauled the immigration system and exchanged the quota system for an emphasis on family reunification. After that, arrivals from Asian countries like China, India, and the Philippines began to surge.

Latin American immigration also started to explode, and since 1965, nearly half of new arrivals have hailed from this region.

Many, like Carriço, come first to study. Others come to work or join family members already living in the United States.

After Carriço made up his mind to attend school in America, his parents pooled their savings to cover his first year's tuition. But that was all they could afford. They told him it would take a miracle for him to finish his degree program.

So, Carriço started praying.

Later that year, he received a scholarship that enabled him to complete his studies. He graduated with his bachelor's degree in December 2013.

Soon after, Carriço married his wife, Nicole, an American classmate. During college, they had both taken a mission trip to Mozambique. They expected to get married and head back overseas as cross-cultural missionaries. But then they felt God leading them to a different mission field: rural Appalachia.

So, the Carriços packed up and moved two hours away to Greeneville, Tenn., where they started working at a local children's home. Over time, that ministry grew into a community church Carriço now pastors.

After getting married, Carriço applied for his first green card. Then, he got another, and eventually, a 10-year green

card. He could have applied for his U.S. citizenship a few years after getting married, but he got so busy pastoring a church, raising kids, and running a rehab program that he didn't start the process right away.

But, in his heart, Carriço already felt like an American.

As a teenager, he had been dazzled by the trappings of American culture: cowboy boots, biscuits and gravy, country music, and sweet tea. Over the years, Carriço fell in love with the people. His wife and kids are American. So are his neighbors, friends, and church members.

“They have become my people,” he said.

For over 50 years, the immigration population in the United States grew steadily. According to a Pew Research Center analysis, it hit an all time peak in January 2025 at over 53 million—a more than fivefold increase since 1970.

But, five months later, those same numbers had dropped by over a million people, indicating more left the United States or were deported than arrived. Although Pew admitted some of that change may be due to lower survey response rates, it nonetheless seems to reflect the first decline in the U.S. immigrant population since the 1960s.

Pew pointed to new restrictions on asylum applications and a rapid-fire series of immigration-related executive actions from the incoming Trump administration—including a



TOP: LYNNE SLADKY/AP; BOTTOM: HANDOUT



ABOVE: Immigrants take the Oath of Allegiance to the United States during a 2024 naturalization ceremony in Miami. **BELOW:** Abel and Nicole Carriço beam at his naturalization ceremony.



crackdown on the previously porous Southern border—as drivers of this change.

National Immigration Forum CEO Jennie Murray said no other country has tried to attract the world's scrappiest and brightest like the United States has. But now, with the immigration debate at fever pitch, she said the nation is at a crossroads: "We're asking ourselves, 'Are we going to continue that experiment?'"

Still, the overall number of immigrants in the United States remains high—and many continue to come even as others leave. While a large number come temporarily to work or study, others choose to remain long term. Pew reports about a quarter of immigrants now living in the United States are lawful permanent residents. The largest share of immigrants are naturalized U.S. citizens, people who have voluntarily chosen to leave behind the countries of their birth and embrace American citizenship.

In 2024, Carriço decided it was time to formalize his allegiance to the United States. He submitted his citizenship application online, paid the associated fee, and completed his interview. Then, he waited.

A few months later, Carriço got a letter in the mail notifying him he had passed his citizenship exam. On Sept. 17, 2025, he drove to Tusculum University—a historic institution founded about a decade after the Revolutionary War—to take the Oath of Allegiance.

Altogether, 101 people became U.S. citizens that day. Like Carriço, many hailed from Latin America. But there were also people from Europe, Asia, and Africa. They filed up the stairs to an auditorium where their friends and family members waited.

The electric buzz of excitement filled the room.

Carriço's wife and kids were there, dressed in their Sunday best. His parents, beaming with pride, had come all the way from Brazil for the ceremony. The judge entered and shared a few words about the meaning of American citizenship. Then, he opened the floor for people to share their stories.

The first man who spoke came from Poland. Tears streaked his cheeks as he shared that ever since he was a boy it had been his dream to come to America. After him, an African man spoke about the blessing of living in a place where he could worship God without fear.

As others shared, Carriço noticed a recurring theme: Many people felt they had been divinely led to the United States.

Carriço knows his new country isn't perfect. But often the people he hears criticizing America the most bitterly haven't traveled the globe much. He said the freedom here for people to speak, worship, and build is a rare and remarkable gift.

"This chance of really going after your dreams and making things happen—it's pretty incredible," Carriço said. Sometimes, he added, it takes "a room full of foreigners" speaking out for Americans to truly appreciate that. ■





LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF PROPERTY

Owning a home was once central
to living the American dream. Few young people
today can afford it | *by Kim Henderson*

ILLUSTRATION BY KRIEG BARRIE



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or more than a year, Corbin and Marion Lester searched for a place to call their own in Billings, Mont., where they lived in an apartment. Rent was sky high, and like many other twentysomethings relying on family for help, they moved in with his mother to save up for a down payment. But scrolling listings in that high-priced market didn't get them anywhere. Finally, with their second child on the way, the couple widened the map. The house hunt became a spreadsheet of different states, with columns for cost of living, homeschool laws, parenting policies, politics, and taxes.

Eventually an area just outside of Spartanburg, S.C., a place where their money had double the buying power, rose to the top of their list. An older house with fading wallpaper became the front-runner—an 1,800-square-foot one-story with four bedrooms, a single bath, and a highly sought-after 3.8-acre yard.

But flying across the country to tour a house they might not buy was a luxury the Lesters couldn't afford. Instead, they relied on technology. Marion FaceTimed with their real estate agent while Corbin took a break

PHOTO BY KIM HENDERSON



Corbin and Marion Lester with their two daughters at home in South Carolina.

from his construction job and listened on speaker.

They liked what they saw and heard described, a fixer-upper with lots of potential. “We wanted to have a guaranteed increase, even if the housing market went down. We knew we could add another bathroom ourselves, things like that,” Marion explains.

So the Lesters hoped for the best and did all the inspections they could from across the country. Convinced the home’s bones were sound and willing to live with what Corbin describes as dated decorative “skin,” they made an offer. The Lesters became homeowners. And, in some ways, outliers.

Nearly 2 million Gen Z and millennials failed to form households in 2025, casualties, in part, of a housing market characterized by low inventory and high costs. Put another way, some 2 million more young adults would have struck out on their own if homeownership rates still looked like they did a decade ago.

Owning property—owning your own home—has long been a part of the American dream. Some would say it’s even a ticket to the middle class. But this milestone of independence that comes with a mortgage and a set

of keys is increasingly out of reach for many would-be buyers.

Most Americans can finish what is arguably the most famous line of the Declaration of Independence: “life, liberty, and the pursuit of ...” But *happiness* wasn’t the framers’ original word for that spot. Early drafts used *property*, reflecting 17th-century British philosopher John Locke’s idea that governments exist to secure the rights to “life, liberty, and property.”

While *property* didn’t make the final cut of the Declaration’s preamble, the issue of land ownership may have been central to the Revolution itself. England’s Proclamation of 1763, which blocked westward settlement, inflamed colonists. Many had shed blood in western conflicts. Many others planned to expand westward, or already had, and saw no reason to halt that momentum. To them, the law was a clear attempt at

tighter imperial control. That shared grievance helped unite diverse groups of disgruntled colonists and contributed to the push for independence.

In the ensuing centuries, however, homeownership wasn’t plausible for the majority of Americans. Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal changed that with the introduction of long-term, fixed-rate mortgages backed by federal loan guarantees. Subsequent administrations also did their part to promote homeownership as a path to stability and wealth. In 1995, Bill Clinton rolled out a sweeping 100-point plan to boost homeownership to an all-time high by the end of the century. George W. Bush later pitched homeownership as a way to fight racial inequality, offering first-time buyers a helping hand with the 2003 Downpayment Initiative. But the financial crisis and Great Recession of 2008 wiped out \$7 trillion in home equity as banks foreclosed on 8 million homes. Suddenly, the American dream looked very different.

Even though U.S. economic policy rewards homeownership with mortgage subsidies, interest deductions, and capital gains breaks, rising home costs could soon leave the United States looking like other countries, where lifelong renting is common. Affordability is the main driver. Mortgage rates are about 6.5%, and home prices keep rising. With inflation and student debt in the mix, scraping together a down payment seems next to impossible for many would-be buyers. By one Realtor.com estimate, it takes a median-income household seven years to achieve that goal.

Scarcity is a problem, too. Louisiana real estate agent David Landry has been in the industry for more than 30 years, and he says he’s never seen anything like the current housing market. “There’s no affordable product out there,” he asserts.

Speaking from his Baton Rouge office, Landry puts the price point on starter homes in his area at \$200,000. He says it’s hard to find anything for less that’s livable and qualifies for the types of financing that first-time buyers use. Typical FHA government-backed loans, the go-to for lower down payments and credit scores, require houses to be move-in ready. That’s frustrating to a generation raised on renovation TV.

“Flaking paint, torn flooring, even a dented Sheetrock wall, those don’t fly with FHA appraisers,” Landry says. “If a seller won’t fix them, I have to list the house for cash or conventional buyers only. It won’t qualify otherwise.”

In other parts of the country, though, a \$200,000 starter home would be a steal. Bostonians pay more than twice that. Ditto for Sacramento. In Atlanta and Albuquerque, it’s close to \$350,000.

There are pockets of relief, however. Savvy buyers can still land a deal in Des Moines under \$200,000, and more of Austin’s fastest-growing neighborhoods are seeing sub-\$250,000 listings. But for an increasing number of young Americans, homeownership feels out of reach. A 2025 report from researchers at Northwestern University and the University of Chicago suggests some are effectively “giving up.” A 2024 Harris Poll underscores that idea: 42% of

“NO MATTER HOW HARD I WORK, I WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO AFFORD A HOME I REALLY LOVE.”

Americans, including 46% of Gen Z, say, “No matter how hard I work, I will never be able to afford a home I really love.”

Economist Kyla Scanlon argues younger people face a sense of “financial nihilism.” She says Gen Z has lived through as many as three big economic downturns, and it’s shaped how they interact with the world. “They’ve watched the American dream rot before their eyes,” she submits.

Corbin Lester says he didn’t crave homeownership until he had a family. He was perfectly fine renting, then his priorities shifted. “You want your own place. You want to give your kids the kind of life you had—space, the outdoors, maybe even animals. Good luck finding a rental that offers all that.”

An inheritance after his father’s unexpected death gave Corbin and Marion the means to pursue a conventional mortgage, the kind that would let them renovate a property at their own pace. The home they chose was built more than 100 years ago. It still smelled new when the country was preparing to celebrate America’s sesquicentennial.

In February 2025, the Lesters pulled into South Carolina after a grueling three-day drive from Montana. Marion was five months pregnant. Their toddler daughter was strapped into the back seat of their car.

“When we walked into the house, I honestly thought we had made the worst mistake,” Marion remembers. She and Corbin are both pretty clear about what they felt that day: despair.

“The house was freezing cold. No lights. Everything was dark. It needed a good cleaning,” Marion says. Utilities soon sparked to life, though, and even with their moving van and belongings delayed, the young family had a good first night on a borrowed air mattress and pillows.

But somewhere below the home’s heart pine floor joists, pipes thawed, then burst as the Lesters slept. By morning, the well had pumped unchecked for hours, leaving two feet of standing water underneath the house. It flooded their furnace and their hot water heater. When quotes for the needed HVAC and plumbing repairs came in at \$35,000, Corbin just shook his head. No, thank you, he decided. He’d do it himself.

It was a painful introduction to homeownership. While Corbin delayed his job start by a week to get their water restored, Marion made do without water, heat, and her gas stove, buying an electric skillet for cooking. She remembers messaging a woman she’d met at church. “I told her that my house is freezing and we don’t have any water. Could my toddler and I please come over?”

For days on end, Corbin came home from his kitchen renovations job, then worked on his own house until he dropped into bed. “That was the routine. I was probably YouTube’s No. 1 user for three months straight.” His plucky efforts paid off in big savings. The plumbing repairs cost \$2,000, he estimates, and the HVAC around \$8,000. But Corbin doesn’t dwell on that part of their home story. “It was one of those things where you just have to thank God that He’s in control. And you know you’ll look back one day, and it’ll be funny.”

Although the American dream isn’t inherently biblical, homeownership can be a godly desire. Besides the financial equity it offers, a home can anchor a family and enable its members to thrive as dependable members of a church and

Prospective buyers arrive during an open house in Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.



community. Still, Psalm 49 cautions against pride in wealth, reminding believers that homes and status are ultimately temporary.

For Marion, that truth was underscored in her childhood when she witnessed the financial upheavals of 2008. Homeownership could quickly flip from an investment to a liability, and “guaranteed assets” weren’t so guaranteed after all. “It showed me that for most, owning your home is more of a rent-to-own from your mortgage holder. There isn’t much safety or stability when the economy can turn a lifetime investment upside down at any given time.”

Last year’s National Association of Realtors survey of recent homebuyers and sellers revealed a striking shift. The share of first-time homebuyers dropped to a record low 21%, while the typical age of first-time buyers climbed to an all-time high: 40. For perspective, the median age of first-time homebuyers in 1991 was 28. That delay comes with real consequences. Homeownership has long been one of the primary pathways to building wealth in America, and pushing it further into midlife can mean significantly reduced financial gains—up to an estimated \$150,000 in lost equity on a typical starter home.

Policymakers are responding with a range of efforts aimed at helping prospective first-time homebuyers make the mortgage leap. In Georgia, lawmakers targeted housing scarcity with a proposal to curb corporate ownership of residential properties. With as much as 30% of the state’s rental homes owned by large companies, the bill would cap corporate holdings at 500 homes and bar foreign investors from purchasing residential properties. It failed.

In March, a bipartisan group of California lawmakers introduced a package of six bills aimed at lowering construction costs. Modular housing is central to the effort, with several measures focused on cutting red tape for this type of construction and reducing transportation costs for building components.

At the federal level, Sen. Rick Scott, R-Fla., is pushing the American Dream Accounts Act, designed to offset rising costs as the typical down payment has more than doubled since 2019 to \$30,400. The proposal would allow first-time buyers to shelter savings from the IRS, helping them save for down payments faster.

Meanwhile, mortgage credit standards are shifting. The long-standing 620 FICO threshold for many borrowers is being phased out by entities like Fannie Mae that supply capital to the mortgage market. In its place, lenders will be able to consider a wider view of creditworthiness, including rent and utility payment histories.

Lawmakers and lenders have their reasons for wanting to promote homeownership, but at its core, owning a home is about laying claim to a small corner of the world. It offers permanence in a way few other investments can. It’s where mail is delivered, clothes are folded, and homework gets done.

On a bright July morning last year, the Lesters’ daughter, Meribelle, made her entrance into the world via the master bedroom of her new family home in Spartanburg. She and her barefoot older sister are fond of the spacious backyard that came along with the deal, and they were enthusiastic spectators when their parents hand dug a duck pond among the leaves last fall. Ducks, in Marion’s opinion, have advantages over the family’s flock of chickens.

“They take longer to mature, but ducks lay longer,” she said. “They’re more of a long game.”

The Lesters are all about the long game. They have a new garden in the works, along with plans to update their bathroom, repaint the exterior, and finish the chicken/duck house they started out back. They even found time to refinance their mortgage, dropping from 7.3% to 5.9%.

“It was worth it,” Corbin says. “A \$220 a month savings.”

They’re putting down roots and beating the odds. For the Lesters and many others, buying a home isn’t so much about chasing the American dream as it is about taking responsibility for it. ■



KYLE GRILLOT/BLOOMBERG VIA GETTY IMAGES



LONG LIVE THE KING?

250 years after throwing off royal rule, some Americans are hoping for its return | *by Emma Freire*

ILLUSTRATION BY RAÚL ARIAS

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n Jan. 23, thousands gathered for the annual March for Life on an abnormally sunny and warm winter day in Washington, D.C. Among the crowd marched an earnest group of young men carrying a banner that read “Monarchists for life.” It featured the logo of an American bald eagle with a crown, holding a sword and a scepter in its talons.

The young men are members of Monarchists of America (MOA). As they marched, they took photos and videos for their social media platforms. Others participating in the march frequently approached to ask about the banner. The young men were ready with brochures that explained their mission: “We believe that replacing the office of president with a nonpartisan monarch

will do much to restore faith in the government and will act as a stabilizing force for the entire nation.”

In other parts of Washington, officials were busy organizing celebrations for the 250th anniversary of American democracy. In 1776, our country declared independence from King George III. But in 2026, some younger Americans want to turn back the clock.

Polls show that our faith in government has faltered for decades and hit new lows after the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, only about 17% of Americans trust the federal government to do what is right “always or most of the time.” Younger Americans are increasingly open to radical solutions. In New York, they recently helped elect a self-proclaimed socialist as mayor. Monarchists of America is at the other end of the spectrum. Its members believe that elections, rather than being a critical part of American identity, are destroying us.

The day before the March for Life, I met four members of the group—Skyler Thompson, Eric Zurlippe, Ian Hoover, and Richard Knight—at a coffee shop in Washington.



They all dressed up for the interview because, as Knight noted, “This is a professional setting.” Hoover stood out as the most formal in a gray three-piece suit. His lapel featured a large pin of an eagle with two heads. He picked it because of its similarity to the emblem of the Habsburg family, a European dynasty that ruled for centuries over an empire that sprawled the globe. He also held on to a metal rosary throughout the interview. He’s Roman Catholic, but this is an ecumenical group. The others are Baptist, Anglican, and Methodist.

The four young men have an easy rapport, as if they’re longtime friends. They joke around and even finish each other’s sentences. But they only met in recent years. They hail from Louisiana, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Ohio and rarely see each other in person. They connected online over their shared dissatisfaction with the 2020 presidential election. Thompson explained it wasn’t so much about Biden or Trump, “but just how violent, how uncivil, and basically just how tragically and disorderly that entire election cycle went.” They love America but concluded elections “would eventually come to destroy our country.”

Thompson is just 25, but he’s the oldest member of the group. America has a stark generational divide in attitudes toward monarchy. Less than 1% of Americans over the age of 65 think having a monarchy in our country would be a good thing, and 84% say it would be a bad thing. By contrast, 27% of Americans ages 18 to 29 think a monarchy would be a good thing, and only 40% think it would be a bad thing, according to a 2023 poll by The Economist/YouGov.

Social and economic circumstances play a big role in that divide.

“We grew up immediately during and after the 2008 financial crash. We didn’t see the golden age everyone else had,” Zurlippe said. He’s hardly alone. Poll after poll shows younger Americans are more pessimistic and disillusioned about the future of our country than their older counterparts. Zurlippe argues it’s natural for young people to question our system of government because “it’s not really giving us what was promised.”

But why is something as radical as monarchy the solution? Well, for one thing, according to Zurlippe, it’s better than some of the proffered alternatives: “We’re seeing young people saying, ‘I’m a Socialist or a Communist.’” New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani, a self-described democratic socialist, captured 78% of voters under 30. “Or they’re following people like Nick Fuentes,” Zurlippe added, referring to the far-right provocateur who has a popular online show.



ABOVE: Monarchists (from left) Eric Zurlippe, Richard Knight, Skyler Thompson, and Ian Hoover. RIGHT: King George III.

Compared to figures like Mamdani and Fuentes, “we are the moderate option,” Zurlippe said.

Hoover believes a monarch will serve as “the middle ground, the golden medium ... between the few different classes, parties, etc. to unite them under a common banner.” And, he says, that’s exactly what America needs.

Thompson cites a quote attributed to French monarchist Charles Maurras: “For monarchy to work, one man must be wise. For democracy to work, a majority of the people must be wise. Which is more likely?” Several members of MOA canvassed for political campaigns before their conversion to monarchism. They noticed that voters’ questions usually center around “What’s in it for me?”

“A lot of the problems in our country can be chalked up to the poor moral character of the electorate,” Thompson says. “It’s easier to ensure that the monarch is of good moral standing.”

But what happens when he’s not? The bad kings and queens of history are a strong argument against monarchy. Hoover notes that since monarchy has been around for thousands of



years, it's natural to find plenty of bad examples, yet in fewer than 250 years of presidents, he says we've already produced many bad ones. He adds that people's fears are based on the idea of an absolute monarch, which isn't accurate. "For most of history, monarchies have had a division of power," Hoover says. That's what he wants for America, too.

Hoover and his friends want to establish an American monarchy by amending the Constitution at a constitutional convention. That's an uphill battle on several fronts. Our Constitution is one of the hardest in the world to change. Moreover, our country was born out of throwing off monarchy.

The Declaration of Independence, signed 250 years ago, directs 27 specific grievances toward George III. It accuses him of "repeated injuries and usurpations" with the goal of establishing "absolute Tyranny."

"The modern American understanding of monarchy is shaped by our national myth surrounding George III," acknowledges Thompson. But there's more to the story.

Kevin Slack, a professor of politics at Hillsdale College, said monarchs played a "crucial" role in setting up our country early on by issuing royal charters. But soon afterward, civil war upended the British form of government. A king was beheaded, and there were several changes in government culminating in the Glorious Revolution of 1688 that ushered in "parliamentary supremacy." According to Slack that means, "Parliament believes it is sovereign over the colonies, even though most of the rule was through, depending on the type of charter, a royal governor, or proprietary governments." The Declaration of Independence wasn't directed at Parliament "because they were arguing Parliament wasn't sovereign over them by that time."

Slack said the Founders were not as hostile to monarchy as we assume today: "John Adams famously recognizes monarchy as a viable form of government. But what he means is a limited monarchy." Alexander Hamilton gave a lengthy speech during the Constitutional Convention in which he advocated for something like an elected monarch. "Hamilton believed an energetic executive is a central element in the definition of

good government. And Madison shared that view," Slack said.

But the Founders never seriously considered the idea of an unelected, hereditary monarch, according to Slack. Adams wrote in a letter that the idea of monarchy was being "whispered about in Coffee Houses," by which he meant it was a ruse to divide the colonies against each other.

The young men of MOA realize it may take decades or longer to change American beliefs about monarchy. That's part of why they don't have an official answer to the obvious question: "Who should be the monarch?" Any candidate currently living is likely to be dead before he could ascend the throne.

But several of the young men confess to having preferred candidates. One name they mention is Eduard Habsburg, a member of the illustrious Habsburg family.



After leaving the White House in 1909, President Theodore Roosevelt traveled abroad. One of the many dignitaries he met was Emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria-Hungary, a Habsburg. At the time, Franz Joseph had ruled for 62 years. During their conversation, Roosevelt asked Franz Joseph about his role. The aged emperor replied, “My job is to protect my people from their politicians.”

Some historians dispute whether this exchange actually happened, but Eduard Habsburg, a distant relation of Franz Joseph, believes it did. And he likes to tell this story when addressing American audiences. “People usually smile and laugh. And then they usually get a more serious expression because they ask themselves, ‘So who protects us from our politicians?’” he said.

I reached Habsburg by phone in Europe, but he often travels to America. He serves as a distinguished visiting fellow at the Danube Institute, a Hungarian conservative think tank, promoting transatlantic relations. Before that, he spent a decade as Hungary’s ambassador to the Vatican.

Habsburg has also carved out an unusual niche for himself in America’s conservative political movement. He published a 2023 book titled *The Habsburg Way* that features endorsements from Daily Wire podcaster Michael Knowles and Newt Gingrich, former speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Habsburg owes some of his influence in America to his large following on X. He thinks his famous last name gives him a “certain immunity” when posting. “When I say something that is slightly conservative or outrageous, people will say, ‘Oh, he’s a Habsburg. He probably doesn’t understand the modern world.’” Like his ancestors, Habsburg is a devout Roman Catholic. He uses X to share his faith. “I’m very happy that over the last nearly 15 years on X, so many conversations began visibly or even via direct message with people, where they asked me to pray for them, where we became friends, and then got to know each other and prayed together.”

When I told Habsburg some Americans would like him to be their king, he paused and then replied in a manner that reflected his years as a diplomat. “I think the United States are absolutely fantastic the way they are. I don’t have a feeling that they will seriously ever consider introducing monarchy in the United States, because there is no tradition.”

When he addresses American audiences, Habsburg observes their interest is less in monarchy than in the



Eduard Habsburg (above) thinks “the United States are absolutely fantastic the way they are,” while Curtis Yarvin (right) calls for the end of democracy.

Habsburg family itself. They were “a very clean, wholesome family with high ethical and faith values, and they really tried to serve their subjects,” he says. He acknowledges not all his ancestors lived up to those values, but it was their ideal. “Every Habsburg emperor knew they had to render accountability when they met God.”

He thinks Americans yearn for political leaders who are “trustworthy, upright, and good people,” he said. “I believe this trust in leaders has been shaken a bit in the last decades or years, and the Habsburgs are a very attractive counter model to that.”

For Eduard Habsburg and the young men of MOA, monarchy is inseparable from Christian faith, so it’s surprising that the most famous American advocate for monarchy is a self-professed atheist.

“THE REAL CRISIS THAT FACES US IS HOW WE CAN BECOME A PEOPLE, DESPITE OUR VARIOUS INTERESTS, THE WAY THAT THE FOUNDERS HAD INTENDED.”



Curtis Yarvin gets up from his wooden chair and greets the studio audience before him. He's a guest on the PBS show *Open to Debate*. The moderator begins the night by noting the venue in New York City is near the tavern where in 1783 George Washington said farewell to his troops after their victory in the American Revolution.

In his opening statement, Yarvin balances awkwardly from foot to foot. "So I have a proposal here which many people would find instinctively horrifying, anathema, strange, exotic, weird." The proposal he means is also the title of the episode: "Should the U.S. Be Ruled by a CEO Dictator?" Yarvin believes it should. Ironically, *Open to Debate* describes its mission as "to strengthen our democracy through real debate." But Yarvin called for ending democracy. He uses the terms *monarch* and *CEO dictator* interchangeably. He argued that nearly anything we can think of—from a restaurant to a company—operates best when run by one person, and government is no exception.

"The idea that monarchy is the norm is completely accepted up until 250 years ago," Yarvin said. But his support for monarchy is based on efficiency rather than religion or tradition. He argued modern governments have done a "poor job" compared to premodern governments, despite having vastly superior technology and substantially more employees.

Yarvin has a following in Silicon Valley, and Vice President JD Vance has expressed admiration. Since Trump's reelection, nearly every major American media outlet has interviewed him.

When I asked MOA about Yarvin, they groaned simultaneously and called him a "liability." But Hoover interjected that Yarvin has been helpful because he "put the idea of monarchy out there."

Jonathan Keeperman runs Passage Press, Yarvin's publisher. He thinks Yarvin's popularity in Silicon Valley is due to his unusual gift for writing about culture and political power "in the way an engineer would." People in Silicon Valley are also "constitutionally attracted to transgressive or outside-the-box thinking." And Yarvin's provocative style appeals to that.

In January 2025, Keeperman organized one of the hottest tickets of the Trump inaugural festivities, a party called "Coronation Ball," which Yarvin attended. But Keeperman says his own reading of Yarvin doesn't lead him to the conclusion we need a king or CEO-dictator. He notes Yarvin often holds up Franklin Delano Roosevelt as a role model. Conservatives have many critiques of FDR, but to

Keeperman the salient point is that FDR

"didn't require a wholesale exchange of our government. It could all be done within the apparatus that preexisted." An elected president who served as a "countervailing conservative version" of FDR could act forcefully to solve America's problems, he said.

Keeperman doesn't have much patience with the idea of an American monarchy. "It would require a kind of complete rearticulation of what it means to be American," he said, noting younger generations often flirt with extreme ideas. "When you're 20, maybe you've got the poster of Che Guevara on your dorm room wall, and maybe the guy next to you has the poster of a Habsburg."

Hillsdale's Kevin Slack believes a republican form of government is "the best means of preserving our natural rights." He thinks young people's increased openness to alternate forms of government is a sign that "we have really failed in our education of history." Schools should be teaching "a kind of common history that everybody can identify with." The challenge facing America is massive. "The real crisis that faces us is how we can become a people, despite our various interests, the way that the Founders had intended," he adds.

Before they left the café, the young monarchists solemnly shook my hand and offered to pray for me. They planned to drive back to their various states as soon as the March for Life wrapped up the next day. At this moment, they can't imagine their belief in monarchy is only a youthful ideal. They intend to stay the course, even if they don't live to see the fruits of their labors.

"We're concerned about doing it right, and that is worth taking as much time as it needs," Thompson said. ■



VOICES R. ALBERT MOHLER JR.

America's Christian roots

Hope for recovery in the Providential Republic

Is America a Christian nation? The answer depends upon your understanding of what it means to be a Christian nation. Are we constitutionally Christian with a legally established religion and a state church? Clearly not. Is Christianity central and essential to any honest account of American history? Certainly so. There is no honest way to deny the fundamental importance of Christianity to the American experience and our polity of ordered liberty. The entire culture was saturated with Christianity and Christian influence.

In the 1830s, the brilliant French intellectual and aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville described religion as the first among the nation's "political institutions." From the beginning, Christianity played that central role—starting well before the revolution. By 1776, well over 90% of the population identified with some major branch of Protestantism. Even those often described as deists (and most were not classical deists) were specifically Christian deists, in the sense that some denied central Christian doctrines but still insisted on the cultural authority of Christian morality.

Historian Robert Middlekauff asserts that a specific sense of God's providence was crucial to the American Revolution and the patriot cause. "Almost all Americans—from the Calvinists in New England searching Scripture for the will of God to the rationalists in Virginia studying the divine mechanics in nature—agreed that all things fell within the providential design," he explained. He went on to argue the central role of divine providence in the American mind.

Middlekauff was not writing a theological treatise. His book, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763–*

1789, published by Oxford University Press in 2005, just makes this point as central to our understanding of the times and the worldview of those early Americans. They had no explanation for the universe, for their own lives, for the passing of time, or for the meaning of human liberty and human dignity apart from the reality of God's providence. This does not make them all believing Christians, but the contours of the biblical worldview were essential to the American project.

Steven D. Smith, a law professor at the University of San Diego, makes the same point emphatically clear in his recent book, *The Godless Constitution and the Providential Republic*. He asserts that the nation was born out of "providentialist premises and with a providentialist self-conception."

Smith's argument, carefully traced through American history, is that a modern secular liberalism had attempted to deny—and replace—that providential understanding. He points to one central issue: the moral authority that comes with a providential worldview but is subverted by secularism.

It comes down to whether or not morality has an ontological basis—a basis in objective reality. Christianity grounds ontology in the sovereign and glorious triune Creator, who created the world as the theater of His glory and infused all of creation with moral truth. Christianity is also founded upon the Bible and God's gracious gift of special, scriptural revelation. For a long time, the vast majority of Americans—even those with an irregular personal faith—affirmed the same moral truths.

As Smith observes: "Here we have a fundamental difference between providential and modern secular liberalism: the first claims that liberalism needs—and has—a foundation in the basic ontology and history of the world, while the second forgoes and indeed eschews any such foundation." By liberalism, he means the classic liberty enshrined in the Constitution. By modern secular liberalism, he means the attempt to make all claims of value stand unrestrained and without foundation.

"So, which interpretation is more viable?" he asks. "Is the transition from a foundational to an anti-foundational liberalism one of progress? Or of decline—even perhaps of collapse?"

I think the answer is clear enough already. If modern secular liberalism reigns supreme, civilizational collapse is inevitable. On the other hand, if Americans will reclaim and reassert the basic affirmations held by the founding generation and treasured for generations after them, there is hope.

Secularism offers no basis for genuine hope. It provides no cement to hold society together. It leaves every moral good untethered and vulnerable.

Is America a Christian nation? Understood rightly, at the very least this would require a recovery of the Christian consensus that existed in the founding generation. Can this Christian consensus be recovered? We must pray that it can ... and will. ■

AMERICA AT 250

Who will tell of her Christian founding?

As the United States approaches its 250th anniversary, Americans face a defining question:

What will the next 250 years look like?

The answer will not be determined by politicians alone, but by those who tell of the nation's genesis.

For generations, Christian communicators have reminded America of the truth proclaimed in our founding: that our rights come from God, not government; that liberty requires virtue; and that a free people must first govern themselves.

Today, those founding truths are increasingly forgotten.

America's Semiquincentennial must be more than a celebration of our past. It must be a rededication to the Christian values that forged this nation.

Faith. Freedom. Truth. Personal responsibility. Human dignity. The sovereignty of God.

If we hope to remain One Nation Under God, then Christian communicators must lead with truth.

America's first 250 years has been written—the next 250 has not. Our future depends on what we choose to proclaim today.

Will we remain ***One Nation Under God?***

Take the Faith & Freedom Pledge

NRB is calling on communicators, broadcasters, media leaders, and ministries to step forward and pledge to lead this national moment of rededicating our country as One Nation Under God.



NOTEBOOK



TECHNOLOGY

The quest to disconnect

Dissatisfied with smartphones, more people are looking to the past for alternatives

by THERESA HOUGHTON

Reagan Rose desperately wanted to kick his smartphone addiction, but none of the typical tips for reducing screen time worked.

“I always found myself going back to the doomscrolling,” he said. “And it seemed to be getting worse over time.”

Influenced by Cal Newport’s book, *Digital Minimalism*, Rose decided to quit both social media and his smartphone completely. He had a few false starts with alternatives before settling on an Apple Watch synced to his wife’s iPhone through the Watch For Your Kids feature. He can still make calls, send texts, and listen to podcasts and audiobooks but not access apps like YouTube or social media. “For me, it was all the productive benefits of a phone, but none of the distractions.”

Giving up his phone was no small thing. As the creator of the online ministry Redeeming Productivity, Rose needs digital technology to run his business. Yet he’s one of a growing number of people who believe the benefits of decoupling from smartphones outweigh the challenges. The shift is driving demand for simpler “dumbphone” models and prompting startups to breathe new life into the once-ubiquitous landline.

Jose Briones, creator of the Dumbphone Finder online database, believes the move toward

basic devices may be a response to what he calls “a bubble of hyper-digital interaction” that arose during the COVID-19 pandemic. He says the constant rush of information that smartphones enable keeps people glued to online platforms, worried they’ll miss something important if they disconnect.

Briones tried switching to the Light Phone II in 2019 but returned to a smartphone during the pandemic when most activities went online. But his first Zoom call convinced him that a dumbphone was essential to keep him from going back to spending 12 to 13 hours a day staring at a screen.

“I was just like, ‘No, I don’t care. I don’t want this in my life again,’” he recalled. “So I went back to the Light Phone, and I said, ‘OK, it doesn’t matter how hard it is. I’ll figure it out.’”

Briones decided to document his journey of “learning to live like it was the 2000s again” with the Light Phone. He started posting videos on YouTube, and the questions flooded in. People wanted to know which phone had features like WhatsApp or Spotify or which model would be a simpler option for their kids. In response to the repeated questions, Briones began posting video reviews of other dumbphones.

“Over time, we started aggregating a lot of data,” Briones said. “That’s what turned the Dumbphone Finder into its current form: a →





Tin Can makes colorful WiFi landline phones for kids.

place where people can find something that works with their needs.” The database now includes 131 phones, a number that’s Briones says has grown steadily since he launched the site.

For those who want a completely screen-free option, startups are tapping into millennial nostalgia and reviving wall-mounted landline phones. Tin Can, a device marketed specifically to families with young children, is a landline handset that runs on home internet. It lets kids have a measure of independence without the dangers of unrestricted smartphone access. The idea is gaining traction: The company claims it has sold hundreds of thousands of phones since the first model hit the market in 2025.

Landline options like Tin Can can also help foster better listening skills while encouraging sustained attention. Kids can enjoy richer conversations with one friend at a time instead of bouncing between multiple text

Kids can enjoy richer conversations with one friend at a time instead of bouncing between multiple text messages, chat apps, and social media notifications.

messages, chat apps, and social media notifications.

But there’s still a cost. Landline devices run from \$25 to over \$100, and phone plans cost \$10 to \$60 per month. Some dumbphones marketed as “minimal” or “mindful” may cost as much as \$700 per device.

Briones also finds people often bring unrealistic expectations from smartphones into their search for a dumbphone. They want to disconnect but still access features like music, maps, and messaging, three main desires that Briones says are “mismatched with the current availability and features of dumbphones.”

Finding a suitable dumbphone may continue to be a struggle unless the trend toward digital minimalism becomes mainstream. Data from Statista shows that sales of feature phone models like dumbphones are declining in the U.S., and the number of households that rely solely on landlines dropped from 13% in 2022 to 9% in 2024. Because smartphones and wireless plans are more lucrative for phone manufacturers and providers, most companies focus on feature-rich devices.

Briones admits adopting a low-tech life in a society dominated by increasingly complex devices means relearning a lot of skills. “That is frustrating to some people because they have been trained to not have to think about anything,” he says.

For Rose, the effort was worth it. “I started remembering what it’s like to feel bored,” he says. “My attention span started returning.” He started reading more books and noticed that he was more present in relationships with his kids and in conversations at church. He says he is able to produce higher-quality work now that he isn’t constantly distracted. The changes even prompted him to unplug in other pursuits, including writing the first draft of his latest book by hand.

“I want to choose quality and depth over efficiency,” he said. “I’m convinced going slower and thinking deeper is going to produce something that’s higher quality in the end.” ■

THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL IS FORGIVENESS



Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand were imprisoned in Communist Romania for their bold Christian witness. Through it all, they loved their enemies and sought to win their torturers to Christ. Be inspired by their story of forgiveness and faithfulness to Christ in the feature films *Tortured for Christ* and *Sabina: Tortured for Christ, the Nazi Years* or the book *Wurmbrand: Tortured for Christ, the Complete Story*.



Tortured for Christ + Sabina DVD Set

Experience the amazing story of how two atheistic hedonists became witnesses for Christ, enduring torture and imprisonment for their bold faith.

Tortured for Christ and *Sabina: Tortured for Christ, the Nazi Years* share the true story of Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand, founders of The Voice of the Martyrs, who suffered to advance the gospel amid Nazi and Communist oppression in Romania.

Wurmbrand: Tortured for Christ, the Complete Story

Richard Wurmbrand spent 14 years in prison in Communist Romania because of his bold Christian witness and faith in Christ. His wife, Sabina, was imprisoned for three years, including several months in a labor camp. Through it all, their faith never wavered as they continued to advance God's kingdom. You can read their inspiring story of faith, suffering and service in *Wurmbrand: Tortured for Christ, the Complete Story*.



Get these resources at vom.org/VOMoffer





POLITICS

Redo in the Show Me state

Pro-lifers fight to overturn constitutional amendment

by ADDIE OFFEREINS



Missouri voters will consider a measure in November to prohibit abortion from the moment of conception, with exceptions during the first 12 weeks for certain fetal anomalies, medical emergencies, rape, and incest. The measure would overturn a constitutional amendment approved unexpectedly in 2024. Missouri became a cautionary tale for the pro-life movement when voters approved Amendment 3, the Right to Reproductive Freedom Initiative, establishing a constitutional right to abortion until the baby is able to survive outside the womb.

State courts required the authors of the 2026 proposal to rewrite the lan-

guage to clearly state the new measure would repeal the 2024 amendment. Missouri had prohibited abortion in most cases and strictly regulated abortion facilities before voters approved Amendment 3.

Despite the constitutional change, Missouri Attorney General Catherine Hanaway pushed to preserve regulations governing abortion facilities, including rules mandating centers have admitting privileges at nearby hospitals, and requiring a 72-hour waiting period before an abortion. But Planned Parenthood has filed numerous legal challenges to the state's dozens of pro-life laws on the basis of the 2024 constitutional amendment.

ABORTION ADVANCES

Voters in Virginia and Nevada will weigh amendments that would enshrine the right to abortion into their state constitutions. Abortion is already legal until the third trimester in the commonwealth, but proponents of the measure fear the laws could change since Virginia is a swing state.

In the Silver State, Question 6—a similar amendment that would recognize in the state constitution the right to abortion until fetal viability—already received its first round of approval in 2024. Nevada's constitutional amendments require two favorable votes in consecutive elections to become law. Backers of the constitutional amendment argue it would make the right to abortion more secure given that Republican Gov. Joe Lombardo has already vetoed some abortion-related measures. Proponents note it would also give abortion advocates legal standing to challenge regulations like those requiring parental notification before a minor gets an abortion. —A.O.

PERSONHOOD PROPOSITION

North Carolina lawmakers are debating a measure to recognize that life begins at the moment of fertilization and classify abortion as attempted or first-degree murder. "New human life is recognized by the State as an individual person entitled to the protection of the laws of this State from the moment of fertilization until the moment of natural death," House Bill 1232 reads. If approved, the proposed amendment will appear on the November ballot for voters to decide. —A.O.



TOP: DAVID A. LIEB/AP; BOTTOM: ARTISTGNDPHOTOGRAPHY/GETTY IMAGES



A U.S. Forest Service employee posts visitor information in the Angeles National Forest.

CREATION CARE

Forest Service leaves D.C.

Agency faces major overhaul on its 150th anniversary

by EVANGELINE SCHMITT

➔ The United States Forest Service headquarters will move to Salt Lake City, the Trump administration announced March 31, leaving behind its historic building on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. The goal is to move the Forest Service “closer to the forests and communities it serves,” Forest Service Chief Tom Schultz explained. The administration chose Salt Lake City for its affordability and “family-focused way of life.”

The agency will also undergo a major restructuring, closing all nine regional offices and transitioning to a state-based organizational model. Over 50 research facilities will also close, and research will be coordinated through a single department in Fort Collins, Colo. Schultz said the changes would be in place by summer 2027.

The announcement comes on the Forest Service’s 150th anniversary. Congress established the first forestry

position within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in 1876. The Forest Service began in 1905, led by Gifford Pinchot, who helped Theodore Roosevelt create over 16 million acres of National Forest. Unlike his contemporary John Muir, Pinchot advocated for “multiple-use” management of public lands. He wrote that “conservation means the wise use of the earth and its resources for the lasting good of men.” While Pinchot opposed clearcutting, he made National Forests available for logging and mining by private contractors.

Throughout the 20th century, the Forest Service’s activities expanded to include managing watersheds, wildlife, recreation, and, most recently, care of forest ecosystems. The Trump administration frames the Forest Service restructure as a return to Pinchot’s founding principles. In a press release, Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins said that “proper forest management

means a healthy and productive forest system that provides affordable, quality lumber to build homes right here in America.”

The Forest Service budget changes for 2027 indicate a shift toward extraction. The amount dedicated to extracting forest products increased from \$39 million to \$175 million. The Forest Service cut the trail management budget by 67% and requested no money for research.

Critics, notably conservation and recreation groups, decry the restructure as a disguised dismantling. After releasing a statement lambasting the restructure, outdoor gear company Patagonia is leading a coalition of companies lobbying Congress to stop the changes. “By shutting down USFS research stations, culling staff, and moving the headquarters away from where decisions about federal lands are made, it will be surprising if USFS can effectively manage anything at all,” a Patagonia statement said.

“They’re putting the chess pieces in place to get rid of our national forests,” said former Forest Service firefighter Max Alonzo, voicing a common fear that the government will eventually sell off large swathes of public land.

Other former employees see benefits to operating through state rather than regional offices. Former Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth says it’s “very frustrating” for states like Idaho to coordinate between regional offices in Utah and Montana. But he questions the move to Salt Lake City. “The chief and his immediate deputies ought to be in Washington, where they can work with the other agencies and Congress.”

Ann Bartuska, a former research undersecretary for the USDA, agrees that some consolidation makes sense for research leadership. But she says that many research stations slated for closure have decades-long ongoing experiments. “You can’t just pick up an experimental forest site and move it to Salt Lake City,” she said. ■



EDUCATION

Advanced AI degrees

Christian schools tackle teaching students how to use artificial intelligence

by LIZ LYKINS

→ While commuting to Messiah University in Mechanicsburg, Pa., during her undergraduate studies, Jayna Kitner saw a billboard promoting her school's new master's program in artificial intelligence. Kitner planned to use her undergraduate psychology degree from Messiah to be an effective marketer, but she realized a master's degree in AI could enhance her career opportunities.

Kitner joined the program's inaugural 2025 class, and says that she's already learned skills that have boosted

her marketing acumen. The 22-year-old said she used AI to generate captions for a previous social media job. Kitner also runs a clothes reselling business online, and said she's trained AI chatbots to answer customers' questions, created an AI program that can write product descriptions using photos of the clothes, and used AI to manage email campaigns.

Set to finish classes by August 2026, Kitner hopes to continue to work in marketing. "I thought being kind of on the forefront of the artificial intelligence side of business would be a really great

next move," Kitner said. "Being able to have that kind of [degree] under my belt, I've heard so many employers say, 'It's fantastic that you're ahead of the game.'"

Kitner is one of many students who have signed up for new AI degree programs at Christian universities nationwide. Since 2022, 145 degree programs have been added at 76 Christian schools, according to data from MastersInAI.org, an education media company. Overall, more than 300 U.S. schools offer programs.

Christian university leaders say they need to offer these degree programs to match an evolving job market and teach AI development from a Christian worldview.

Mario Migliori, an adjunct professor at nondenominational Messiah, said the school added its program out of both a deep calling and interest to educate students on this technology. “There’s a gap between proper use of AI and ethical, responsible use of AI,” Migliori said. “What better place to emphasize that and to teach people to use AI for good than a Christian university like Messiah?”

Messiah wanted to offer a full master’s program on the tool so students could learn how the technology functions while also learning to use AI responsibly and in a Christ-like manner. The students can then teach the businesses they work for to model those values. Messiah hopes it can be part of a push for more ethical use of the technology.

“One [Christian AI] program isn’t going to be enough to provide the influence that is needed globally to properly use AI for good,” Migliori said. “It has to be a lot of different institutions. It has to be partnerships between organizations.”

Schools from a variety of denominations, such as Baptist, Presbyterian, Churches of Christ, and Lutheran, are offering AI degree programs according to MastersinAI. But the leading denominations are Roman Catholic, with programs at 40 schools, and United Methodists, with 13 schools.

Richard Kelley, a clinical assistant professor at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., said its master’s and undergraduate degree programs focus on AI from an engineering perspective.

“If a religious school offers engineering, I don’t think they have a choice,” he said. “They’re going to have to confront AI.”

Kelley said schools need to offer more than just a handful of classes on AI. Degree programs allow students to dive into the technology in their fresh-

“If a religious school offers engineering, I don’t think they have a choice. They’re going to have to confront AI.”

man year. Then, in their junior and senior years, they can hone in on how best to apply AI to particular fields like business processes or robotics.

A representative for MastersinAI said there is no indication that the growth of these programs will slow down. Instead, schools will likely start adding AI degree programs with specializations.

Indiana Wesleyan University in Marion, Ind., offers five different master’s and undergraduate degree programs in AI. Their undergraduate programs, set to start officially in fall 2026, offer specializations in marketing, human resources, and supply chain logistics.

Clark Cully, Indiana Wesleyan University’s technology division chair, said the school wants to promote the students’ own innovation to adapt to constantly changing technology.

“The goal is to get people motivated to learn these things, and then get them started on their own kind of educational journey of lifelong learning,” Cully said.

Brady Jones, a freshman at Harding University in Searcy, Ark., chose an AI degree hoping it could lead to more job opportunities than a degree in computer science. He changed his plans when he heard about the AI degree at an event for incoming freshmen. “Computer science has been around for a long time, and it just feels like a lot of people are going for it now compared to AI,” Jones said. “Just because of how new AI is, having people who are experienced in that field will be very beneficial for a lot of companies.”

Joe Faith, an assistant professor at Harding, said he pitched the idea for the new AI program because the job field has evolved, and employers are looking for graduates with AI-specific skills and the capacity to adapt them across a variety of fields, such as healthcare, finance, defense, logistics, and education.

The push for AI degrees comes from both students and employers, as students want to have degrees that lead to jobs that can’t be automated, while employers are looking for AI talent. “It’s a whole new set of skills that are needed that aren’t covered in traditional computer science programs,” Faith said.

Christian schools need to be willing to offer these degree programs, Faith added, because if they aren’t, they’re shirking an important responsibility.

“As Christians, if we are not willing to jump into this arena, we are not as technologists living up to the calling we claim to have,” Faith said. “This is such a pivotal technology that I feel like the world needs people who come from a morally focused background, saying what is the good and the bad of this technology, and how can we help better teach and shine a light on those things?” ■

Uneasy expectations

Economic worries fuel uncertainty but don't affect spending habits

by LAUREN SMYTH



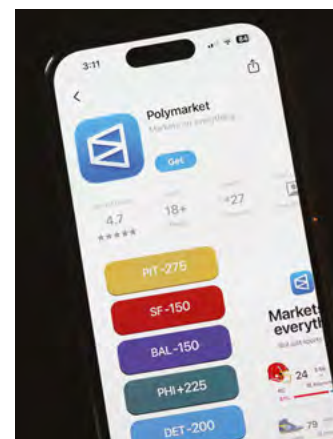
Economic concerns are behind the slide in President Trump's approval rating to an all-time low ahead of the midterm elections. A YouGov poll found just 34% of voters are satisfied with Trump's job as president, below former President Joe Biden's lowest point. That's for a president whose supporters voted for him overwhelmingly based on the economy.

Consumer sentiment also hit a new low in May. Republicans and independents reported the greatest loss of optimism for the current state of the economy. But consumer spending continued to grow, even when adjusted for inflation. Shoppers said 70% of their budgets went toward essential goods and they were economizing discretionary purchases. Still, spending on domestic leisure traveling is rising, and analysts forecast spending on luxury items like branded clothing to increase in 2026.

To cover household expenses, consumers are racking up debt. Total U.S.

household debt topped \$18.8 trillion in the first quarter of 2026. Nearly 40% of U.S. adults say they can't pay their credit card bills each month, according to the Century Foundation, subjecting them to double-digit penalty interest rates. Trump has encouraged credit card companies to adopt a one-year, 10% cap on those rates, although legislation to mandate the cap stalled in Congress.

Most economic indicators suggest a recession this year is unlikely. As of May, Polymarket had the odds at 20% and falling, while J.P. Morgan reported only a 35% chance. But some economists worry an overpriced stock market and stubborn inflation could tip the economy into a downturn. In his last press conference as Federal Reserve chairman, Jerome Powell told reporters that the economic outlook remains highly uncertain, but that the central bank is poised to stave off inflation and unemployment.



PREDICTION MARKET BAN

Minnesota's first-of-its-kind ban on prediction markets is being challenged in federal court. The law would make it illegal to operate or advertise sites like Polymarket and Kalshi, where users bet on future events and generate market-wide predictions.

Gov. Tim Walz signed the bill in May on the grounds that prediction markets are the same as gambling sites, which the state has already banned. The Commodity Futures Trading Commission immediately sued, arguing its authority to federally regulate betting overrides state regulations. It also pointed to farmers who use prediction markets to forecast the weather and other crop-related events, saying the ban would unfairly harm one of Minnesota's largest economic bases. Critics fired back that the lawsuit presents a conflict of interest within the Trump administration, since Trump's son, Donald Trump Jr., is a stakeholder in Polymarket and a paid adviser at Kalshi.

Trump said on Truth Social that uniform federal regulation will give the United States an edge in global competition over prediction markets. —L.S.



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ENERGY

Second chance

Three Mile Island nuclear plant readies for restart

by TODD VICIAN



The lights are on again at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant (renamed the Christopher M. Crane Clean Energy Center) in central Pennsylvania. The nation's largest nuclear energy company is working to restart one of the reactors at the site of the 1979 accident to help meet a growing demand for electricity.

Constellation Energy announced in 2024 its intention to restart by next year

the reactor that provided 835 megawatts of energy before it was decommissioned in 2019. Company officials said at the time it was unprofitable after generating power for more than 40 years. (The reactor that experienced a partial meltdown never resumed operations.)

But a changing market, fueled by data centers, prompted Constellation Energy to request approval to reopen the plant. Industry analysts predict data

centers will account for up to 60% of load growth through 2030, and Microsoft agreed to purchase power generated from the reopened reactor for 20 years. One hyperscale center can draw 100 to 200 megawatts, the same amount of electricity needed to power a city like Charleston, S.C., or Salt Lake City, Utah.

There are 95 nuclear power plants operating in the United States, according to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission. They generate about 20% of the nation's electricity and have consistently operated above 90% of their capacity since 2002, according to the World Nuclear Association. The renewed interest in nuclear power follows a decades-long decline caused by decreasing demand, lower natural gas prices, stringent application of regulations, construction delays and cost overruns, solar and wind subsidies, and opposition following high-profile incidents. Since 2010, several plants, including in New Jersey and New York in 2018 and 2021, respectively, closed before their licenses expired.

The work ongoing in Pennsylvania is the second nuclear power plant restart underway. The NRC said in May that resuming operations at the Palisades Nuclear Plant on the shore of Lake Michigan (decommissioned in 2022) would have no significant environmental impact. Both projects, if completed and approved, will add more than 1,600 megawatts to the national electric grid, according to White House Office of Science and Technology Policy Director Michael Kratsios.

FAST-TRACKED PIPELINE APPROVED AGAIN

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said the Dakota Access Pipeline can remain in place with stricter procedures. The latest decision May 21 follows a 2020 court order to assess potential environmental consequences more comprehensively than originally done in 2016. The nearly 1,200 mile pipeline transports up to 570,000 barrels of oil a day from North Dakota to Illinois refineries. Native Americans and environmentalists fought the pipeline's 1-mile route under Lake Oahe—the nation's fourth-largest reservoir—since it was proposed in 2014.

Dakota Access must now develop procedures to supply clean water, food, and financial compensation in case of a spill, add more groundwater monitoring wells, and allow independent review of its leak-detection systems. —T.V.



THREE MILE ISLAND: TED SHAFREY/AP; PIPELINE: TOM STROMME/THE BISMARCK TRIBUNE VIA AP



SPORTS

Dopers get their day

Showcasing a drugged-up version of sports

by RAY HACKE

➔ In their heydays of the 1970s, the NFL's Oakland Raiders had a saying: "Cheating is encouraged." At the Enhanced Games, held late May in Las Vegas—ironically the Raiders' current home—what most sports governing bodies call "cheating" wasn't just encouraged, it was required: In three sports—track and field, swimming, and weightlifting—50 athletes who openly use performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) competed for millions of dollars in cash prizes.

Prize money exceeded what an athlete earns by medalizing at the Olympics. For instance, World Athletics, track and field's international governing body, awarded sprinters Noah Lyles and Julien Alfred \$50,000 each for winning gold in the men's and women's 100 meters in Paris in 2024. Had they not competed clean, they'd have been stripped of their medals and gone home with nothing.

By contrast, the Enhanced Games offered \$250,000 to its individual

event winners. Fourth-place finishers would take home the same amount as an American who won Olympic gold. Athletes could even earn additional millions as a bonus for breaking a world record, though the original record would still stand.

Such outrageous sums might have been necessary to attract participants. An athlete who uses such PEDs as testosterone, anabolic steroids, and human growth hormone could earn multiyear or even lifetime bans.

Benjamin Cohen, the director general of the International Testing Agency, which spearheads drug testing for the Olympics along with multiple individual sports, objected in the strongest possible terms. So did World Aquatics, swimming's international governing body.

"History has shown us time and time again the grave dangers of doping to human health," World Aquatics told LADbible.com. "This is a side-show to those who compete honestly, fairly, and respect the true spirit of sport."

TAKING ON YOUTH SPORTS

Any parent whose child competes on a youth sports travel team knows how expensive participation can be, with team fees, uniforms, equipment, live-stream app fees, and hotel, gas, and food for long road trips.

Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) and Rep. Chris Deluzio (D-Pa.) want to change that and have co-sponsored a bill targeting private equity firms that have turned youth sports into a \$40-billion-per-year industry.

The Let Kids Play Act would require private equity firms to remove themselves from the youth sports business after two years, give partial refunds to families, and donate to community-based sports programs.

Murphy and Deluzio said at a press conference that families often pay more than \$5,000 per child for a single youth sports season, pricing many families out of participating entirely.

The bill arrives on the heels of investigations in Michigan and Texas of anticompetitive practices in youth hockey. And in Texas, the Dallas Stars—the state's sole NHL franchise—own a monopoly on youth hockey in the state. —R.H.



CROSSWORD

Mind the music

by NATHAN KENISON

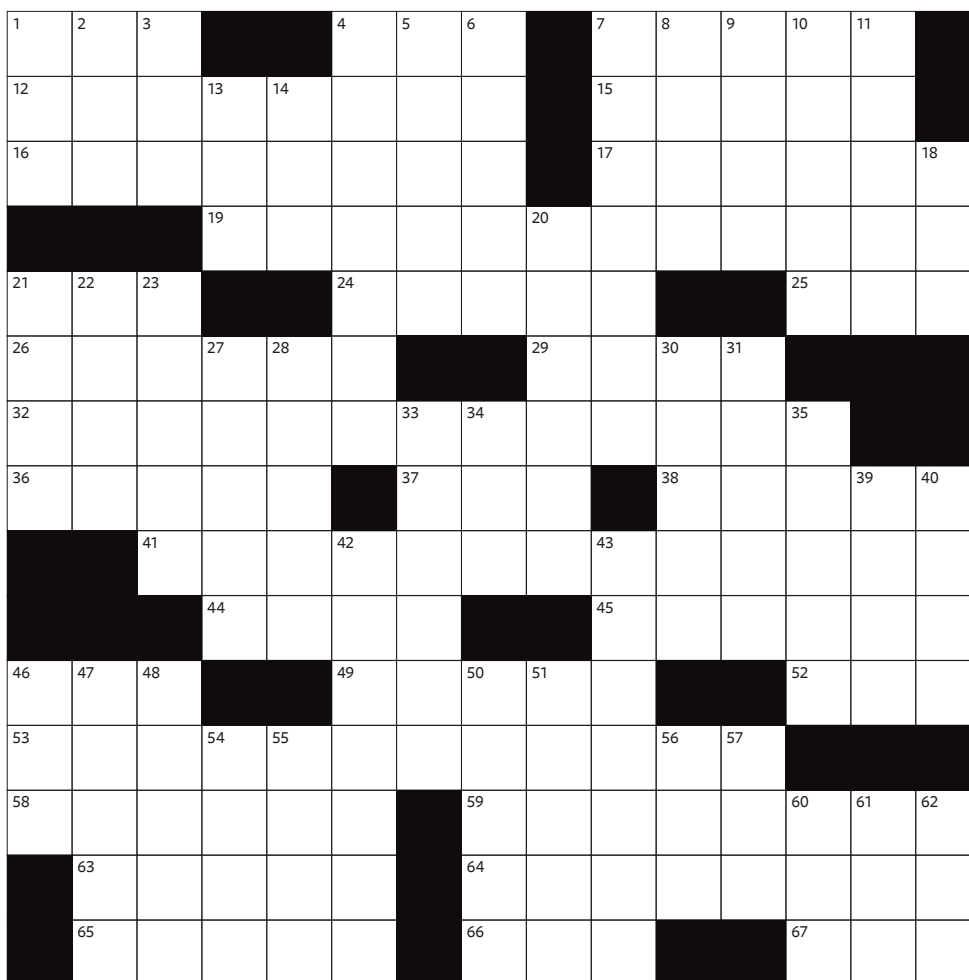
Across

- 1** Fast food chain with a white-mustached mascot
4 Core components?
7 Like 7 and 11, e.g.
12 Gave the go-ahead
15 ____ and aahed
16 Vigorous '60's dance
17 Destined for destruction
19 Person with limited skills ("... a-riding on a ____...")
21 Nail, as a test
24 ____ rays
25 NNW's opposite
26 English actor John of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*
29 Attention-seeking sound
32 Publicly shame ("... stuck a ____ in his cap...")
36 "My name is ____ Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die."
37 ____-American
38 Actress Alexander of *Get Out*
41 Curved pasta ("... and called it ____")
44 "NBA Countdown" channel
45 Like *The Patriot* or *American Sniper*
46 "____ was saying"
49 Barrier
52 Notice
53 Patriotic tune with lyrics hinted at by the ends of 19-, 32-, and 41-across
58 Net-bound, in hockey
59 Come together
63 Body trunks
64 "Sounds like a plan!"
65 Sailing
66 "____ gratia artis"
67 Slang term for someone who lacks a personality

Down

- 1** Soviet spy org.
2 To and ____
3 Head honcho
4 Claimed
5 Local life
6 Thundery weather
7 "Serial," e.g.
8 Chess piece that starts in the corners
9 Breakfast chain with a smiley face logo
10 Notices
11 Idyllic places
13 Id competitor
14 Mum's mum
18 Hair coloring
20 Tame ____ (psychedelic rock band)
21 Shakespeare part
22 Tribe
23 Unnerving

- 27** America's national bird
28 Uppity types
30 Shave, as wool
31 ____ firma ("solid earth")
33 Pandered
34 Shady tree
35 Hoots
39 Certain hammer target
40 White House staffer
42 Shakespeare part
43 "Star Wars" currency
46 Actress Adebiri of *The Bear*
47 Character known as Papa Noël in France
48 Cash bar?
50 Delivery expert
51 Someone who is 17-across
54 Fashion designer Michael
55 Leisure
56 "____ Pollos Hermanos"
57 Terminus
60 It carries a charge
61 Nada
62 And the rest, briefly



Bonus clues and puzzle solution on page 110

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have you puzzled?
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answers, try these
additional clues:

Across

- 24** Third Greek letter
49 Row of bushes
67 Video game figure not controlled by
a human: Abbr.

Down

- 20** Classic Chevy
39 Leg joint
48 Gold bar





VOICES ANDRÉE SEU PETERSON

When Nazis are at the door

Virtue stems from faith, not lies

— I was having breakfast with three dear believers when the “Nazi-at-the-door question” came up. “Is lying ever justified?” one person piped up. These conversations always split the room. Someone trots out Rahab (Joshua 2) and the midwives (Exodus 1). Someone counters that false witness is prohibited by the Ten Commandments. Someone else says the Canaanites and Pharaoh didn’t deserve truth. Then someone changes the subject and asks to pass the salt. It occurs to me that there is a third way of seeing the question.

An old seminary professor of mine was much esteemed by the student body for his forthrightness. (By nature he is of a bent of mind that is impervious to flattery, that mildest form of deceit; it does not even compute with him.) He visited my house years ago, and I’m afraid I made him sing for his supper: “What would you have done if Nazi soldiers had knocked on your door and inquired about Jews in the house?”

The professor surprised me. “I would not have lied—and there is a practical reason for that. I am so unused to lying that I know my face would have turned beet red and given me away.”

“So what would you have done?” I pursued.

“I would have let them in and prayed a silent prayer for God to act,” he said.

What do you say about a man so sanctified in the area of the tongue that he is “unused to lying” and cannot fib without blushing? About someone so confident in God’s presence with power that he expects divine intervention? Where is the theological error in that? Has the prof’s faith gone a bridge

too far? If you think so, then what of the time when Jesus was “amazed” at the faith of the centurion (Matthew 8:10), a faith that was more deeply developed than that of others Jesus had met on the road?

Now let us revisit the scene at the door in the Netherlands, France, or Germany, and consider what God can do in the moments between when Gestapo knock and jackboots cross the threshold. We need not imagine long, for there is a real-life example related in Corrie ten Boom’s autobiographical *The Hiding Place*:

The two sisters Corrie and Nollie have different philosophies on the Nazi-at-the-door scenario. Corrie leans toward deceiving for a greater good, while Nollie admits under interrogation that the woman Annaliese standing next to her in the living room is a Jew. Result? Nollie and Annaliese are hauled off to jail.

So truth-telling was not wise, right? Nollie should have lied, right? Joseph Fletcher’s situation ethics is vindicated, right?

Not so fast. Nollie and Annaliese are later released from jail. What do we say now? We can say, “To GOD, the Lord, belong deliverances from death” (Psalm 68:20).

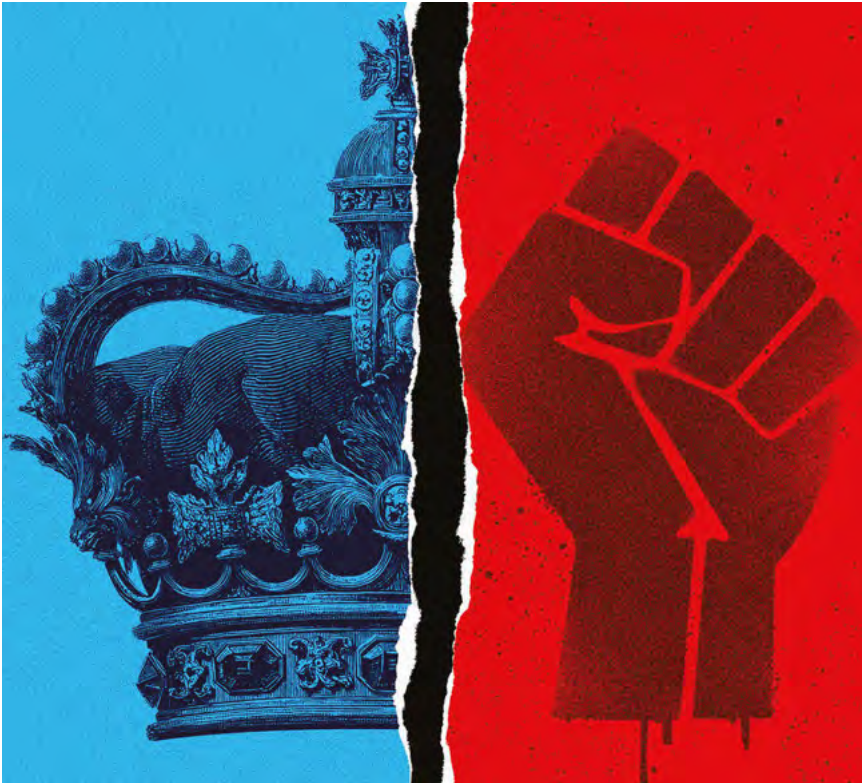
And even if Nollie and Annaliese had not been set free but carted off to Ravensbrück concentration camp, what would that prove? That it was wrong for Nollie to follow her conscience? As Daniel’s three friends told their prison keepers, “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us out of the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not...” (Daniel 3:17–18).

The late Pastor John MacArthur said about the Jericho prostitute who saved the spies: “If Rahab had told the truth, God’s purpose would have worked out in another way; there is no virtue in the lie.”

The virtue of Rahab lay in her faith, not her lie. The virtue of the midwives lay in their faith, not their lies. God’s pleasure in young David on the lam from Saul was in David’s faith, not his lie to the priest Abimelech (1 Samuel 21:2). How would these stories have turned out without the lies? It is not for us to know. As Aslan told Lucy in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, “No one is ever told what would have happened.”

In 2007, I was asked to sign a statement of faith in order to work at a certain Christian school. I disagreed with the last of the 12 points but signed anyway (my version of King Henry of Navarre’s “Paris is well worth a Mass”). Within two months, I was forced out of the teaching position by bizarre and unforeseen circumstances.

Christian author Andrew Murray (1828–1917) writes in *Abiding in Christ*, “A command is to be obeyed. The obedient scholar asks no question about possibilities or results.” Radical moment-by-moment abiding in Christ does not concern itself with outcomes. It is content to do this moment’s obedience and trust the future to God. ■



Political extremes

What do monarchists and socialists have in common?

by LEIGH JONES

→ Emma Freire writes a lot about political trends. In our April issue, she tackled the surging interest in socialism and the rise of Zohran Mamdani in New York. In this issue, she writes about a small but dedicated group of young people who think America should ditch democracy and bring back a king (p. 88). These movements are on opposite ends of the political spectrum, but Emma says they share a common cause.

That seems counterintuitive. How are socialists and monarchists alike? The movements for socialism and monarchism in America today are both driven

by young people who look at the future with despair. They believe the American dream is dead. When you feel like the system isn't working for you, it's not surprising that you'd try to blow it up. Socialism and monarchy are both antithetical to our American tradition. But they have long historical pedigrees. They clearly appeal to something within human nature, or they wouldn't have survived for centuries.

What are some of the underlying factors driving this trend among young people? The despair felt by young people is sometimes called "the black pill" or "doomerism." The 2025 Harvard Youth

Poll found that only 13% of 18- to 29-year-olds feel the nation is headed in the right direction. Nearly half of Americans ages 18 to 29 live with their parents, according to Pew. And the New York Fed found that over 41% of recent college graduates suffer underemployment. The high cost of housing is one of young people's biggest concerns. In 2025, only about 12% of 30-year-olds were married homeowners. That tells us so much about why young people are giving up on the American dream. They are missing out on the important milestones that would give them a stake in society. You can read Kim Henderson's story on p. 82 to learn more about this.

You talk to a lot of smart political analysts. Are they offering suggestions to reverse this trend, or address it in a more constructive way? The problem is multifaceted, but providing younger Americans with a path to homeownership is an important part of the solution. Congress is currently considering the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act, which contains a controversial provision banning large institutional investors from buying up single-family homes. Many experts say this will help lower housing costs. But supply also must increase, and that requires action at the local level.

Does generational strife play a role in young people's "doomerism"? Some younger Americans feel like their elected officials don't represent them. The baby boomers were the largest generation in America for a long time, and they still turn out to vote consistently. So it's not surprising that elected officials are attentive to their concerns. Moreover, leaders like Donald Trump, who is 80, and Chuck Schumer, 75, are staying in office long past the traditional retirement age. The same trend can be seen across many other sectors. People sometimes call this "gerontocracy." Younger Americans are left with a sense that there's no path for them to rise to the top. ■



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