

# EPOCH INSIGHT

## **FIRED FOR PRO-LIFE VIEWS**

A Southwest flight attendant's journey from abortion to pro-life advocacy and winning her case

*By Janice Hisle*



# Fired for Pro-Life Views

IN THIS WEEK'S COVER STORY, read about the journey of Charlene Carter, a veteran flight attendant for Southwest Airlines who sued the company for trampling her rights and firing her.

Carter's story goes back to age 19, when she had an abortion she would regret for years to come.

"I was sick from the anesthesia and sick from what I just did," Carter told Epoch Insight.

Getting an abortion is "something you can never take back," she said.

Many years later, the pro-life Carter used social media to criticize her union's participation in a Washington-based march sponsored by Planned Parenthood.

Carter was subsequently fired, with the union arguing she had violated strict social media policies.

In July, five years after Carter filed her lawsuit, a jury sided with her, awarding her \$5 million in damages. It remains unclear whether she will get her job back.

"I want to go back, hold my head up high, and say, 'You can't do this anymore,'" Carter said.

JASPER FAKKERT  
Editor-in-chief




**ON THE COVER**

Charlene Carter was fired for expressing pro-life views, after having worked for Southwest Airlines for 21 years. In July, she won a lawsuit against the airline.

MICHAEL CIAGLO FOR THE EPOCH TIMES

## EPOCH INSIGHT

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A video of former President Donald Trump is played during a hearing of the House Jan. 6 Committee in Washington on Oct. 13. The committee voted unanimously to subpoena Trump over his role in the events of Jan. 6 in a resolution, submitted by Ranking Member Liz Cheney (R-Wyo.).

ALEX WONG/GETTY IMAGES

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# SPOTLIGHT

## In the Sky

**ENTHUSIASTS FLY THEIR HOT-AIR BALLOONS,** with Mount Ararat in the background, during the “Discover Armenia From the Sky” international ballooning festival, near the settlement of Garni, Armenia, on Oct. 12.

PHOTO BY KAREN MINASYAN/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



# The Week

**Abel Garcia**, a Texas man who shares his experiences and demystifies some of the popular beliefs about transgenderism and “gender-affirming care,” in Denton, Texas.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ABEL GARCIA



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#### County Removes 'Shocking' Sex Ed Graphics

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*“Taxpayers spent millions of dollars to develop cutting-edge technology that the DoE then gave to communist China.”*



Sen. Joni Ernst (R-Iowa), on the government’s “illicit transfer of a \$15 million, taxpayer-funded advanced battery technology” developed by a U.S. laboratory to a Chinese firm.

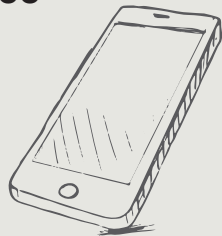
**“[We have a program where] we inject mRNA in people’s hearts after a heart attack to grow back new blood vessels and revascularize the heart.”**

Stephane Bancel, CEO, Moderna, telling Sky News about new developments at the company, which has made billions from its COVID-19 vaccine.



**\$89.5 MILLION**

Department of Homeland Security agencies issued **more than 255,000 smartphones, at a cost of \$89.5 million, to illegal aliens during fiscal year 2022**, according to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement website.



**175,000 Jobs** — Bank of America has warned that the Federal Reserve’s policies aimed at tackling inflation could see the U.S. economy lose 175,000 jobs a month beginning early next year.

**\$1 MILLION**

The FBI offered former British intelligence agent **Christopher Steele \$1 million as an incentive** if he could prove the allegations made in his infamous dossier against former President Donald Trump, a senior FBI analyst has revealed.

**\$1 BILLION**

Alex Jones must pay **nearly \$1 billion for defamation, slander, and emotional damages** to families of victims of the 2012 Sandy Hook school shooting, a Connecticut jury has ruled.

**\$1.4 TRILLION**

The U.S. federal budget deficit was **\$1.4 trillion for the 2022 fiscal year, ending Sept. 30**, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

THIS PAGE FROM TOP: BRANDON BELL/GETTY IMAGES; FABRICE COFFRINI/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES; SHUTTERSTOCK; RIGHT PAGE FROM L: SPENCER PLATT/GETTY IMAGES; ANNA WONG/MAKER/GETTY IMAGES

**2022 MIDTERMS**

**Tulsi Gabbard Announces Plan to Stump for GOP Candidate After Leaving Democratic Party**

**FORMER 2020 PRESIDENTIAL** candidate Tulsi Gabbard, who left the Democratic Party this week, will campaign for a Republican Senate candidate ahead of the 2022 midterms.

Retired Army Brig. Gen. Don Bolduc, who won the Republican primary and is campaigning against Sen. Maggie Hassan (D-N.H.), has confirmed in a statement that Gabbard will be stumping for him.



Tulsi Gabbard speaks at an event in Washington on June 23.

**VACCINES**

**Pfizer Exec Concedes Insufficient Testing of COVID-19 Vaccine Before Release**

**A PFIZER EXECUTIVE** has told members of the European Parliament that neither she nor other company officials knew whether its COVID-19 vaccine would stop transmission before it entered the market last year.

Member of Parliament Rob Roos asked during the session: “Was the Pfizer COVID vaccine tested on stopping the transmission of the virus before it entered the market? Did we know about stopping immunization before it entered the market?”

Pfizer’s Janine Small, president of international developed markets, said in response: “No. ... You know, we had to ... really move at the speed of science to know what is taking place in the market.”



Election workers count ballots in Philadelphia on Nov. 4, 2020.

**SCOTUS**

**Supreme Court Backs Republican in Pennsylvania Mail-in Ballots Case**

**THE SUPREME COURT** has vacated an appeals court decision that required Pennsylvania to count mail-in ballots even if they are missing the date on the envelope.

“The judgment is vacated, and the case is remanded to the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit with instructions to dismiss the case as moot,” wrote Justices Sonia Sotomayor and Ketanji Brown Jackson, siding with David Ritter, an unsuccessful Republican candidate for a judgeship.

They also threw out a U.S. 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals’ ruling that allowed the counting of mail-in ballots that Ritter had sought to remove because voters didn’t write the date on the ballots. Ritter lost his 2021 bid to serve on the Lehigh County Court of Common Pleas after 257 mail-in ballots that didn’t have dates were counted.

**PAYPAL**

**Despite Initial Pullback, PayPal Will Continue to Fine Users for ‘Intolerance’ and ‘Hate’**

**PAYPAL INTENDS TO FINE USERS** who engage in activities that the payment service believes come under the categories of “hate” and “intolerance,” according to the latest update to its Acceptable User Policy (AUP).

In September, PayPal announced that it was amending its AUP, which is scheduled to come into effect in November. The policy stated that PayPal users cannot send, post, or publish any content that the company deems harmful, including promoting “misinformation.” For each violation, the company said it will take out \$2,500 from the violator’s PayPal account. The update attracted immense criticism, and many people announced intentions to close their PayPal accounts.

A spokesperson told The Epoch Times that the AUP notice “went out in error” and had included “incorrect information.” The firm insisted that it was “not fining people for misinformation.”

However, the policy, which was last updated on Sept. 20, still states that the fine will apply to individuals who use the service for activities related to “the promotion of hate, violence, racial or other forms of intolerance that is discriminatory or the financial exploitation of a crime.”



The U.N. Human Rights Council room during a debate in Geneva on June 26, 2019.

**VIETNAM**

### Vietnam Wins UN Human Rights Seat Despite Abysmal Record

**VIETNAM HAS WON A SEAT** in the U.N. Human Rights Council for the 2023–2025 term with 145 votes, despite the country’s numerous human rights violations.

The Southeast Asian nation was one of the 14 new council members elected by the U.N. General Assembly, marking its second term on the council.

The 13 other elected countries are Algeria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Chile, Costa Rica, Georgia, Germany, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Morocco, Romania, South Africa, and Sudan.

International human rights groups were skeptical of Vietnam’s appointment to the council, given the country’s dismal human rights record and diplomatic support of major rights violators abroad. Vietnam is ranked as “not free” by Freedom House.

**WORLD**

### Ireland, Spain Investigate Covert Chinese Overseas Police Stations

**BOTH IRELAND AND SPAIN** have initiated investigations of Chinese police stations located in their countries, after a human rights group exposed that the Chinese regime has established at least 50 police outposts worldwide.

Human rights NGO Safeguard Defenders says that the regime has extended its prosecutors’ tentacles overseas through its police service stations. Some 230,000 Chinese nationals were “persuaded to return” to mainland China from April 2021 to July 2022, according to the Chinese Ministry of Public Security, and it’s believed the overseas stations have played a part.

Facing parliamentary questions about the stations’ activities in Dublin, the Irish government said it was in talks with the Chinese Embassy “to ensure the appropriate application of relevant international and domestic law,” The Irish Times reported.

Spanish newspaper El Correo reported that the Spanish Ministry of the Interior acknowledged that it was also investigating the matter. Safeguard Defenders identified a total of nine stations in Spain, located in Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Santiago de Compostela, and Manresa.

**TAIWAN**

### Taiwan Says It Will Comply With Latest US-Issued Chip Export Rules Aimed at China

**THE U.S. DEPARTMENT** of Commerce has announced sweeping new export controls that will cut China off from certain semiconductor chips that are made with U.S. technologies, regardless of whether the chips were manufactured in the United States.

In response to the new move, Taiwan’s Economy Ministry said that Taiwanese firms would comply with the latest measures put forth by the United States.

**UK**

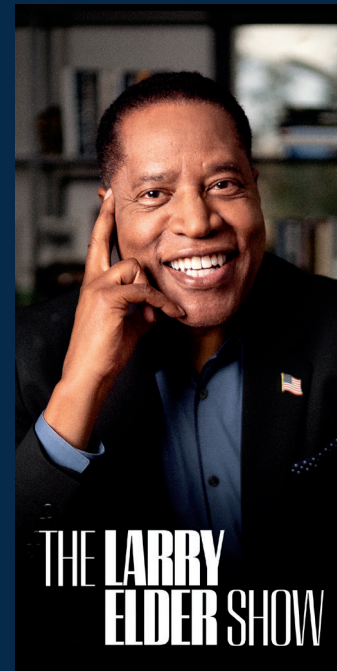
### UK Police Record Number of Reported Hate Crimes After Change in Guidance: Former Officer

**NEW UK GOVERNMENT FIGURES** show that the number of hate crimes recorded by police in England and Wales has risen by 26 percent this year, but critics say the figure indicates that the police believe that “hate is everywhere.”

The Home Office released the latest data on hate crime, which saw the biggest yearly increase since records began in 2012. The majority of hate crimes were reportedly racially motivated, while transgender hate crimes reportedly saw the biggest rise at 53 percent, up from 2,630 in 2020–2021 to 4,035 in 2021–2022.

But critics say that the rise is due to the police’s hyper-focus on collating alleged hate crimes.

“There is an entire industry that is entirely predicated on there being a vast amount of hate out there. It’s not in their interests to solve it. They would solve themselves out of business,” former policeman Harry Miller told The Epoch Times.



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# The Week in Photos

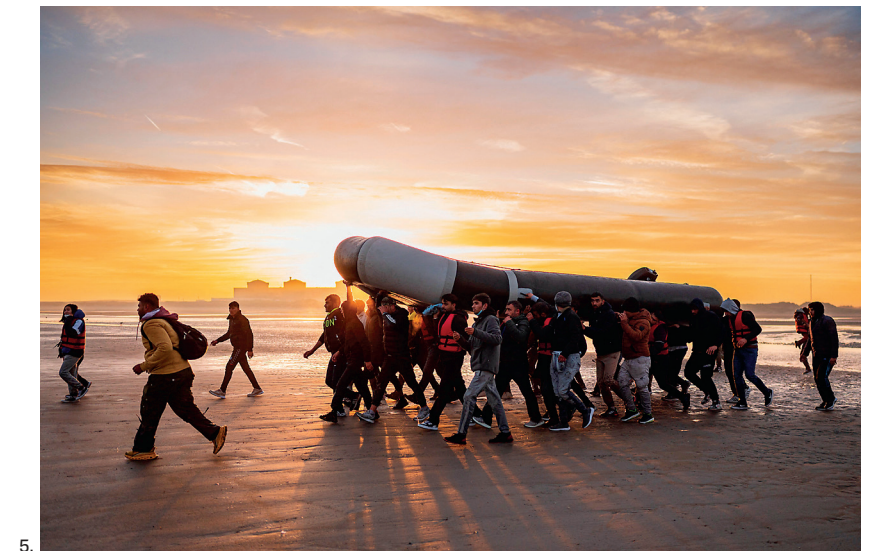


1.

**1. The Liceu Grand Theatre**, filled with balloons as part of an art installation by Brazilian artist Flavia Junqueira, in Barcelona, Spain, on Oct. 11.  
**2. Legionnaires** and their goat mascot march during the National Day Military Parade in Madrid on Oct. 12.  
**3. Saguaro cacti** stand in the Sonoran Desert near Apache Junction, Ariz., on Oct. 8.  
**4. A gondola** travels down a canal through the Villagio Mall in Doha, Qatar, on Oct. 12, ahead of the FIFA 2022 football World Cup.  
**5. Illegal immigrants** carry a boat on their shoulders as they prepare to cross the English Channel, in Gravelines, France, on Oct. 12.  
**6. The Narmer Palette**, one of the oldest Egyptian archeological finds dating from the first dynasty period (31st century B.C.), believed by archaeologists to depict the country's first ruler, Narmer, at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo on Oct. 11.



6.



5.



2.



3.



4.

COUNTER CLOCKWISE FROM TOP-L: JOSEPL LABO/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES; CARLOS ALVAREZ/GETTY IMAGES; MARIO TAMAYO/GETTY IMAGES; GIUSEPPE DAGACE/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES; SAMEER AL-DOLIM/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES; AMIR MAKAR/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

*Charlene Carter, former Southwest Airlines flight attendant, at her home in Aurora, Colo., on Aug. 30.*

PHOTO BY MICHAEL CIAGLO FOR THE EPOCH TIMES

**FIRST AMENDMENT**

*The Untold Story of*  
**THE FLIGHT  
ATTENDANT  
FIRED FOR  
PRO-LIFE  
VIEWS**

*Charlene Carter fired after criticizing Southwest and union on Facebook*

**BY JANICE HISLE**







**(Above)** Charlene Carter with her family in a portrait she took around 2006. **(Right)** Charlene Carter's husband, Jhara, poses with their newborn daughter, Hannah, in 2003.



**A**LTHOUGH SHE WAS ABOUT TO publicly reveal a nightmarish personal experience—and the worst mistake of her life—Charlene Carter strode confidently into a stately federal courtroom in Dallas.

She knew her testimony would prove pivotal in her five-year quest to be reinstated as a Southwest Airlines flight attendant. But she also believed she was carrying the torch for freedom of speech, employee rights, and right versus wrong.

Muffled gasps rippled through the gallery as Carter disclosed the untold story that gave rise to the anti-abortion views that got her fired. At age 19, she had aborted an unwanted pregnancy. The decision would haunt Carter in almost every facet of her life, touching off a chain reaction that thrust her into the national spotlight.

In July, days after Carter testified in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas, a jury awarded her more than \$5 million—a unanimous verdict declaring that Carter's former employer, Southwest Airlines, had trampled her rights and had illegally fired her for "protected speech" about religious beliefs and opposition to her union, Transport Workers Union of America Local 556.

The jury also decided that Local 556 breached its duty to represent Carter. Instead of protecting Carter's interests, the union president sought to get Carter fired for social media activities.

On Facebook, Carter had railed against the union's participation in the 2017 Women's March, a massive protest sponsored by abortion provider Planned Parenthood that was held in Washington

**"This is about freedom of speech for all of us, freedom to oppose the union, and to stand up for what you believe in."**

*Southwest Airlines worker*

the day after Donald Trump's presidential inauguration.

Now, as lawyers spar over how the will of the jury should be imposed, Carter still doesn't know whether she will get her job back—and concerns are mounting over the alleged alliance that Carter's case has exposed: union leaders and company management working in concert to target union dissidents for terminations.

"For a long time, Charlene stood by herself, with very few people by her side. ... People misunderstood the nature of the lawsuit," said a Southwest worker who asked not to be identified, for fear of losing her job.

Now that Carter's trial transcripts are publicly available, many airline employees have read them. "And they see this is much bigger than [Carter], and that she's not just some crazy right-wing, pro-life nut," the Southwest employee said. "This is about freedom of speech for all of us, freedom to oppose the union and to stand up for what you believe in."

**Horrified During Abortion**

The genesis of Carter's case dates to 1985. Then a student at Texas Woman's University, she felt apprehensive as her boyfriend drove her along

MacArthur Boulevard toward a Planned Parenthood office in the Dallas area, where she would terminate her pregnancy.

Years later, Carter would drive along that same road, heading toward Southwest Airlines' headquarters in search of a job—the same position that, ironically, she would lose in 2017 because of anti-abortion sentiments that arose from her experience at the abortion clinic.

In an interview with The Epoch Times, Carter, 56, of Aurora, Colorado, talked about her lawsuit, the events that led up to it, and what she hopes will happen next.

When the 19-year-old Carter arrived at Planned Parenthood, she asked questions about the baby she was about to abort—a decision that contradicted her values and beliefs.

Carter had aspired to become an OB-GYN, so she could help women give birth. From a very young age, even though Carter's household wasn't particularly religious, she felt close to God. She would habitually pray, saying, "God, please protect all the children of the world."

Still, Carter felt backed into a corner. She and her boyfriend were unprepared for parenthood and feared the repercussions of revealing an out-of-wedlock pregnancy to their families.

With coaxing from her boyfriend, Carter made an abortion appointment. At that time, very little information was available. Carter wanted to know more about the development of the 10- to 12-week-old fetus she was about to abort. She recalls a Planned Parenthood staffer telling her: "At this point in your pregnancy, it's just a clump of cells. You have nothing to worry about. It's just basically this round blob of stuff."

Based on that belief, Carter went forward with the procedure. Feeling "a little loopy" from a mild sedative, Carter remained aware of her surroundings. She heard the whirring of a suctioning machine and felt pulling inside her—as forewarned. Then, Carter encountered the unexpected.

"Something made me turn over to the left," giving her a glimpse of a container, she said.

The container held the vacuum-extracted contents of her uterus: bloody fluid and identifiable "little parts" of a baby, she said.

She was horrified. She burst into tears and immediately knew she had committed a cardinal sin. She vomited.

"I was sick from the anesthesia and sick from what I just did," she said.

**Years of Agony**

Carter was filled with regret and self-loathing—feelings that would linger 37 years later. When she shared her abortion experience in court on July 8, jurors seemed to have been taken aback, "like, 'whoa,' they didn't see this coming," said one observer who asked not to be identified because she works for Southwest Airlines.

"A few people were getting teary-eyed and grabbing each other's hands," the observer said. "I think it was a shock to the majority of the people there who didn't know the very personal reason why she felt so strongly about abortion."

Carter said that women need to know that "this isn't just a clump of cells."

"It truly is a little human, and he's now torn apart," she said.

Carter says she would never have gone ♡

*Charlene Carter terminated her pregnancy at a Planned Parenthood office in the Dallas area at the age of 19.*



FROM TOP: COURTESY OF CHARLENE CARTER; SAUL LOEB/AFP/VIAGETTY IMAGES



Passengers check in for a Southwest Airlines Co. flight at Los Angeles International Airport on Aug. 10.

through with the procedure had she been better informed.

She was astounded to learn many things about the baby she had aborted.

“Its heart was already beating. Its fingerprints were already developed, specific to that child. Eye color had already been decided,” she said. “It’s an amazing creation that God has made. Each one is so different, so intricately made.”

From the time an egg is fertilized, cell multiplication goes into overdrive.

“It’s like an explosion,” Carter said. “It’s like when God created this world.”

Lamenting her ignorance and flawed judgment, Carter descended into a fog of depression and shame that didn’t dissipate for years. Getting an abortion is “something you can never take back,” she said.

As a Christian, “it’s the worst thing you could probably do,” violating one of the Ten Commandments, she said.

Carter’s initial post-abortion years were a blur.

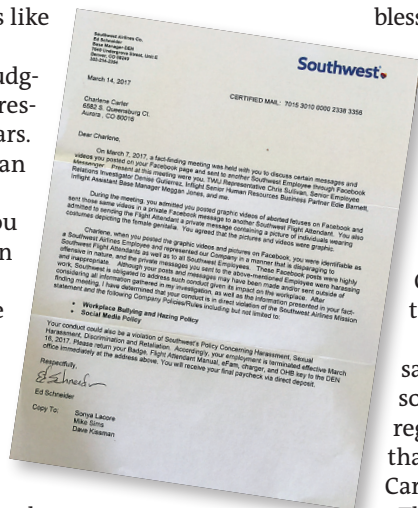
“I just wanted to forget. I just wanted it to go away,” she said.

**Physical Harm**

Although Carter later married her boyfriend, disagreements and tension over the abortion persisted—especially after she learned that the abortion jeopardized her chances of having a baby when they were ready.

About two years into the marriage, Carter suffered a medical emergency: an ectopic pregnancy. The fertilized egg had implanted inside a fallopian tube instead of the uterus, requiring surgical embryo removal.

During an internal examination, a doctor found scar tissue, apparently a consequence of a previous



The letter that Charlene Carter received, informing her she had been fired from her job at Southwest Airlines in 2017.

procedure. Carter had to admit that she had had an abortion.

The doctor told Carter that because of abortion-inflicted damage to her reproductive organs, he didn’t know whether she would be able to have children.

Again, she was devastated. She was filled with renewed disgust for herself and resentment for the man who had been her first love.

“At that point, I thought God was telling me, ‘What you did was so wrong,’” she said, and that God was punishing her by taking away her second baby.

**Forgiving Herself**

Despite her doctor’s concerns, Carter conceived another child. Her son, Christopher, was born in 1990. Grateful for the gift of a happy, normal, and healthy infant, Carter began reexamining her relationship with God. She began to feel that he had forgiven her and had some greater mission intended for her. It just hadn’t yet become apparent what that mission would be.

Partly due to not recovering after the abortion, Carter’s first marriage ended in divorce. She met her second husband after going into the nail salon business. One of her clients had a son with an unusual name: Jhara. When the client introduced Carter to her son, Carter immediately recognized him as her soulmate.

The pair married in 1998 and had a daughter, Hannah, in 2003. By this time, Carter was feeling blessed. She was a happily married mother of two.

She also was well-established in her career as a flight attendant for Southwest Airlines.

Still, Carter hadn’t quite forgiven herself. That changed around 2007, when she attended a “hot topics” women’s meeting at Fellowship Church in Grapevine, Texas. The purpose was to explore “things that most churches don’t discuss,” Carter said. And, to Carter’s surprise, on that autumn evening, the topic was abortion.

Speaking to about 100 women in the main sanctuary, a woman stood up and told her personal story. After having an abortion, she let regret wreck her life. But she finally realized that God had forgiven her and “wiped it clean,” Carter recalled.

Then, the presenter said, “Please stand if abortion has ever affected you, a family member, or an acquaintance.”

“Almost every one of the women in attendance stood up,” Carter said. “I just couldn’t believe it, how many women abortion has touched.”

Carter believed that God had placed her at that meeting for a reason. She left inspired.

“From that night on, I promised God that I would never, ever stay silent about abortion again,” she said.



(Above) A pin that Carter wore on her Southwest Airlines flight attendant uniform.

(Right) Getting an abortion is “something you can never take back,” Charlene Carter says.

She vowed to become an advocate for the unborn and to help women understand the potential consequences of abortion, such as those she had suffered. This, she decided, would be her mission.

**Soaring With Southwest**

For years, Carter felt like she and Southwest Airlines were riding high together.

“I had gotten my dream job,” she said, noting that she was hired in 1996 after three attempts. Before working at Southwest, Carter had done a stint at American Airlines. There, she started in an office job before becoming a flight attendant—a position her first husband frowned upon.

But her second husband, Jhara, was a pilot, so he shared her passion for flight. Shortly after meeting Jhara—who flew airplanes for other employers, not Southwest—Carter landed her coveted job at Southwest.

“It showed me how small and how beautiful the world really is, and it made me so happy to bring some happiness to people who got on board,” Carter said. “I thought working at Southwest was a huge gift.”

Besides enjoying close-knit, fun-loving relationships with co-workers, she worked under “the most amazing CEO in the world,” Carter said, referring to Herb Kelleher, the founder of the airline, who remained a top executive for 30 years, more than half of the company’s 51-year existence.

Kelleher, who died in 2019 at age 87, was beloved for his folksy, down-to-earth attitude and emphasis on treating customers and employees with “LUV,” the stock-ticker symbol for the airline based at Dallas Love Field in Texas.

Carter says she and other veteran Southwest employees miss the billionaire executive who waded into the trenches with them.



**“[The fetus] isn’t just a clump of cells. It truly is a little human.”**

Charlene Carter, former Southwest Airlines flight attendant

“Your CEO gets on the airplane, and he’s slinging drinks and peanuts, and helping you fill your glasses with ice, and he’s talking to the flight attendants and then the people on the airplane,” Carter said.

“It was just the most amazing thing to see that he cared about all of us here and would go from city to city just flying around on what I considered to be his airplanes.”

Carter also respected Kelleher’s right-hand lady, Colleen Barrett. She had worked at Kelleher’s law firm as an executive assistant. But as Southwest grew, so did her influence. Barrett became president of the airline in 2001.

“She wanted to make sure it was a family, a loving culture between the employees,” Carter said.

Serving as president until 2008, Barrett has been president emerita since then.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: PATRICK T. FALLON/AFP/VIAGETT IMAGES; MICHAEL O'GALLO FOR THE EPOCH TIMES; COURTESY OF CHARLENE CARTER

**Tensions Escalate**

Carter and other employees say that the culture that Barrett and Kelleher spent years cultivating is now fading.

For longtime flight attendants, one cause of the alleged cultural deterioration can be traced back at least a decade ago, when a series of ugly disputes within the labor union began. Carter's court case outlines some of that history with Transport Workers Union of America Local 556.

In 2013, the ouster of a duly elected slate of candidates under "dubious" accusations rankled many members; Carter and many other employees "opted out" of Local 556. But as nonmembers, they were still forced to pay fees that supported the union—and the union was obligated to represent the employees' interests.

Conflicts continued for the next several years, with union bosses complaining to management about dissenters such as Carter. Emails documenting the conversations surfaced as part of Carter's court case.

In a 2014 example cited at trial, union activist Brian Talburt emailed Sonia Lacore, a senior manager of flight attendants. Talburt said he favored "targeted assassinations" of the union's enemies—using the company's strict social media policy to fire employees who dared to speak out.

This could apply to employees who, like Carter, expressed their opinions on personal social media pages with no direct reference to Southwest.

**Controversy Peaks**

On Feb. 7, 2017, in response to union activities that she viewed as pro-abortion, Carter posted a video of an aborted fetus on her Facebook page, along with the words: "Warning, this is very graphic! I want my tax dollars to stop funding this ... period! This is murder."

Company officials searched back about five years in Carter's Facebook posts to find several photos that they argued could be used to connect Carter and her "highly offensive" anti-abortion posts to Southwest. This, they said in her termination letter, made her "identifiable" as a Southwest employee and could create a false impression that she was representing the airline with her anti-abortion messages. Officials said this constituted a violation of the company's social media policy; that was one reason they cited for firing Carter.

In contrast, the company took no action when its name appeared on a banner that Local 556 members carried during the Women's March; pictures of that banner and the marchers from Local 556 showed up on social media, too, according to court records.

The company also said it fired Carter because



*The 45th Annual March for Life rally in Washington on Jan. 19, 2018.*

she repeatedly sent private messages to Audrey Stone, who was then-president of Local 556. Stone said the posts upset her. But she never sent a reply to Carter, nor did she block her on Facebook.

A week after her aborted fetus post, Carter sent four Facebook messages to Stone, including two videos of aborted fetuses. In a comment posted with one of the videos, Carter wrote: "This is what you supported during your paid leave with others at the Women's March in D.C.... You truly are despicable. ... By the way, the recall is going to happen."

On Feb. 22, 2017, a company official sent a warning to all flight attendants, reminding them of the company's policies on social media and workplace bullying. That same day, Stone filed a complaint against Carter alleging violations of those policies—and Talburt lodged a flurry of similar allegations against other union objectors.

The company summoned Carter for "a fact-finding meeting," but Carter said she felt like company officials' minds were already made up. Soon afterward, they fired her.

Carter was in disbelief that after devoting herself to an otherwise unblemished career of nearly 21 years, she was terminated over social media

posts that, in her view, had nothing to do with the company.

She believed she had a right to complain about the union's activism, and as a Christian, she felt compelled to share videos showing "the truth of what abortion is all about," she said.

After her dismissal, Carter was despondent. She went through internal procedures to get her job back but found the company's reinstatement terms unacceptable.

**Heading to Court**

Carter turned to the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation, a nonprofit that fights union abuses. When the foundation asked Carter what she wanted from litigation, she replied, "I never want this to happen again to any other flight attendant or any other employee who is under a union."

Carter's lawsuit went to trial in July, almost five years after she filed it. Ed Schneider, a Southwest manager, testified as to why he fired Carter.

"She crossed the line" and violated company policies with her social media postings, he said.

Schneider also stated, "I didn't consider it to any extent to be religious activity," which would

be protected under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Nor did he consider whether Carter's complaints to the Local 556 president constituted "union activity."

During closing arguments, Southwest's lawyer emphasized that "the policies are important" and argued that Carter's messages contradicted Southwest's policies and "culture of respect and tolerance."

But Carter's lawyer rebutted, saying that "robust speech is protected" under the Railway Labor Act, a federal labor relations law that applies to railroads and airlines.

"Their policy doesn't overcome the law," Carter's lawyer said.

After daylong deliberations on July 14, the jurors decided in Carter's favor. They found that Southwest and the union had violated her rights under federal laws and that Local 556 had breached its duty of fair representation.

The jury also awarded Carter more than \$5 million.

Patrick Semmens, vice president of the foundation representing Carter, said in an email: "A win like this shows that an individual can successfully fight back. ... Rank-and-file workers covered by the Railway Labor Act have robust protections when they are speaking out against union policies."

Unbeknownst to the jury, Title VII caps damages. Carter's attorney is asking the judge to approve the maximum of \$600,000, plus \$150,000 in lost wages and benefits.

Her lawyer is also asking the court for other orders, including returning Carter to her job. In a court filing, the company objected, asserting that Carter's reinstatement would cause "workplace disruption in a safety-sensitive environment."

But Carter says the company and the union have the power to restore harmony. She called upon them to halt the tactics used against her and others.

"I want to go back, hold my head up high, and say, 'You can't do this anymore,'" she said. "I'd like to see us bring back what the original Southwest was, or at least some form of that." ■



*Protesters in the Women's March in Washington on Jan. 21, 2017.*



**"I'd like to see us bring back what the original Southwest was, or at least some form of that."**

*Charlene Carter, former Southwest Airlines flight attendant*

**\$5 Million**

**A JURY HAS** awarded Charlene Carter more than \$5 million.

CLOCKWISE FROM L.: SAMIRA BOUADU/THE EPOCH TIMES; MICHAEL CIAGLO FOR THE EPOCH TIMES; MARIO TAMAYO/GETTY IMAGES

# Pandemic Committee Didn't Work During Pandemic

Group exists to evaluate research projects on pandemic-causing pathogens

BY ZACHARY STIEBER

An attendant talks to a person waiting in a car line at a COVID-19 testing site at Ascarate Park in El Paso, Texas, on Oct. 31, 2020.

PHOTO BY CENGIZ YAR/GETTY IMAGES

**A** COMMITTEE FORMED TO evaluate research projects involving pathogens that could cause pandemics hasn't worked during the COVID-19 pandemic, The Epoch Times has learned.

The Potential Pandemic Pathogen Care and Oversight (P3CO) Review Committee was formed in 2017 under a new framework aimed at strengthening oversight of potentially risky projects that were up for funding from the U.S. government, following a multi-year pause ordered after issues involving anthrax and avian influenza.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), which includes the National Institutes of Health (NIH), created the panel.

According to the HHS website for the panel, it has only reviewed three projects, all of which were for influenza viruses. The most recent review took place in 2019.

The Epoch Times asked the HHS records office for any projects the panel has reviewed since Jan. 1, 2020, determinations for each project reviewed since then, and details, such as transcripts, of all meetings held.

The HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) searched and found no records responsive to the request, according to the records office.

"Specifically, the ASPR has informed our office that the Committee has not reconstituted within the search dates given for the search," Arianne Perkins, a Freedom of Information Act officer, told The Epoch Times in a letter.

When asked what that meant, Ruhma Sufian, another records officer, responded in an email that "because the HHS P3CO Review Committee has not met within the search frame you gave ... ASPR responded with no records."

That means no work has been done by the committee despite it coming to light that the NIH funded risky experiments at the laboratory in Wuhan, China, located near where the first COVID-19 cases appeared in 2019.

"It is unconscionable that the Committee has not reviewed any of the

thousands of HHS-funded coronavirus research projects when people are still dealing with the COVID-19 outbreak—the American people deserve better,” Sen. Roger Marshall (R-Kan.), who has tried halting grants for risky research, told The Epoch Times in an emailed statement.

“We are troubled that the P3CO Review Committee may have been sidelined and isolated from reviewing any research proposals,” Jack Heretik, a spokesman for Republicans on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which has been investigating the HHS review process, told The Epoch Times via email.

The HHS, ASPR, and the NIH didn’t respond to requests for comment.

**How It Works**

The P3CO panel can’t review projects on its own accord. The funding agency must refer proposals to the panel.

To refer a project, an agency must determine that it’s “reasonably anticipated to create, transfer, or use enhanced PPPs,” or potential pandemic pathogens, according to the framework.

The HHS defines PPP as a pathogen that’s “likely highly transmissible and likely capable of wide and uncontrollable spread in human populations” and “likely highly virulent and likely to cause significant morbidity and/or mortality in humans.”

The definition of enhanced PPP is even narrower and is said to be a potential pandemic pathogen that results “from the enhancement of the transmissibility and/or virulence of a pathogen.” Experts often refer to such research as “gain of function.” Some say the United States has funded a number of gain of function experiments in the past, including experiments performed at the Wuhan Institute of Virology.

The HHS excludes naturally occurring pathogens in circulation in nature, or recovered from nature, from the enhanced PPP definition. It also excludes activities associated with vaccines and surveillance activities such as sequencing.

If a funding agency does refer a project, the P3CO review group is convened



*David Christian Hassell, a Department of Health and Human Services official who chairs the Potential Pandemic Pathogen Care and Oversight Review Committee.*

to evaluate the proposal, including performing a risk-benefit assessment and suggesting a risk mitigation plan. The panel then makes recommendations to the HHS, which may or may not be accepted. Ultimately, the project can still be funded with no changes, funded with changes, or not funded.

**Call for New System**

David Christian Hassell, an HHS official who has said he chairs the committee, said the group is “robust” and “tough.”

“This isn’t some rubber-stamp group,” he said during a National Science Advisory Board for Biosecurity meeting in 2020, adding, “It’s a very critical group. It’s a tough group to get through.”

But the fact that only three projects have been reviewed shows the system is failing and needs changing, according to some experts.

“Most covered projects, including the project by EcoHealth Alliance and its Wuhan partners, were not reviewed due to a failure by the NIH to identify and flag covered projects,” Richard Ebricht, a professor of chemistry and chemical biology at Rutgers University, said during a congressional hearing in August.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: L. SAMIRA BOUJAOU/THE EPOCH TIMES; LEIGH VOGEL/PODOL; GETTY IMAGES; STEPHANIE KERTH/GETTY IMAGES; DEFENSE.GOV

*The Department of Health and Human Services in Washington on Aug. 14, 2018.*

Ebricht and Dr. Steven Quay, CEO of Atossa Therapeutics, urged lawmakers to quickly put a different system in place. They cited the dearth of reviews in recent years.

The NIH and its parent agency never responded to requests for comment on the recommendations.

Marc Lipsitch of the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and Dr. Tom Inglesby of the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, previously urged the government to be more transparent with the system.

“Currently, none of the HHS departmental review process for approving enhanced PPP experiments is public. This is inconsistent with the [White House]



**“It is unconscionable that the Committee has not reviewed any of the thousands of HHS-funded coronavirus research projects when people are still dealing with the COVID-19 outbreak.”**

*Sen. Roger Marshall*

guidance which said: “To the maximum extent possible, agencies’ enhanced PPP review mechanisms should provide transparency to the public regarding funded projects involving the creation, transfer or use of enhanced PPPs,” they said in a 2020 paper.

“To that end, the HHS review should make public who participates in the review, as well as the basis of the decision that the research is acceptable to fund, including the U.S. government’s (USG’s) calculation of the potential benefits and risks of the proposed enhanced PPP research.”

**Secrecy**

None of the members of the P3CO committee are known to the public, a system that critics say sets up issues such as conflicts of interest.

“American taxpayers deserve to know the committee’s composition, like how many reviewers are employed by HHS, how many are biothreat and national security experts, and how opinions are weighted,” Marshall said.

Hassell said possible harassment was a reason for not naming the committee members.

“Names get out, you become subject to a number of vulnerabilities,” Hassell said during the 2020 meeting.

“As much as it would be good to pub-

licize the individual names, which has been suggested, if that chills anyone being willing to serve on that committee, that will be detrimental because we do manage to get good people on that committee that give of their time to work on this thing.”

All members are government workers, Hassell said at the time. He said some are from outside HHS, including from the U.S. military. Hassell told the House Energy and Commerce Committee that the members include NIH employees. One works for the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), which is headed by Dr. Anthony Fauci. The NIAID worker co-authored articles with an investigator who was engaged in research proposals that could have been reviewed by the P3CO committee, according to Reps. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Wash.), Brett Guthrie (R-Ky.), and Morgan Griffith (R-Va.).

Dr. Francis Collins said in a statement in 2019 that the pre-funding reviews done by the committee aren’t public “to allow for candid critique and discussion of individual proposals.” He noted that information about projects funded by the NIH is publicly available, once the awards are given.

“NIH takes the need to ensure the safety of the public very seriously. We believe the HHS Framework process strikes the right balance of rigorous oversight with the advancement of the important science necessary to prevent and treat infectious diseases,” added Collins, who stepped down as NIH director in 2021 but still works for the agency and advises President Joe Biden. ■



*A young girl sits inside a painted circle for social distancing in Madison Square Park in New York on May 22, 2020.*



## SPOTLIGHT

### Fatal Catastrophe

**A MAN STANDS ON A DESTROYED VEHICLE** that was washed away by a landslide during heavy rains in Las Tejerías, Venezuela, on Oct. 9. Thousands of rescuers and residents were engaged in an increasingly desperate search through thick mud for people missing after the landslide swept through the town, killing dozens.

PHOTO BY FEDERICO PARRA/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



The U.S. Capitol Rotunda in Washington on Jan. 6, 2021.

PHOTO BY SAUL LOEB/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

EXCLUSIVE

# FBI TRANSCRIPT REVEALS OATH KEEPERS INTERVIEW

*Oath Keepers founder Stewart Rhodes ordered members away from Capitol on Jan. 6*

BY JOSEPH M. HANNEMAN

**T**HE OATH KEEPERS NOT ONLY “had no plan” to attack the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, but founder Elmer Stewart Rhodes III told his members that afternoon, “Whatever you do, don’t try to enter the Capitol,” Rhodes told the FBI in an extensive interview obtained by The Epoch Times.

Information from Rhodes’s interview with two FBI agents in Texas in May 2021 contradicts much of what’s in the January indictment charging him with seditious conspiracy, conspiracy to obstruct an official proceeding, conspiracy to prevent an officer from discharging any duties, and two other Jan. 6 charges.

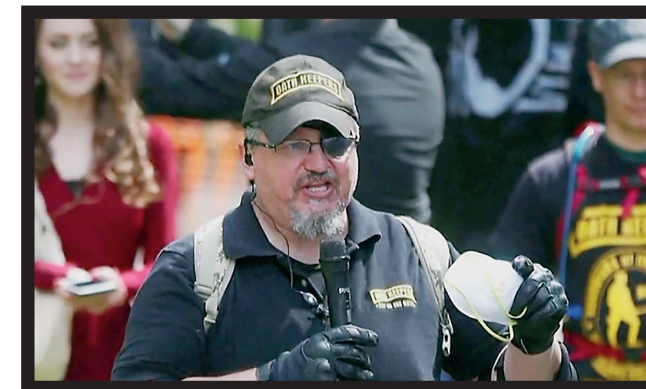
Trial began on Sept. 27 for Rhodes and four co-defendants, accused of plotting to interfere with the counting of Electoral College votes on Jan. 6, 2021, and preventing the “peaceful transfer of power” between then-President Donald Trump and then-President-elect Joe Biden. If convicted, he faces a possible sentence of life in prison, based on threats by prosecutors to seek sentencing enhancers for alleged terrorism.

In the interview—a transcript of which was obtained by The Epoch Times—Rhodes repeatedly said the Oath Keepers had no plan to attack the Capitol and, in fact, did nothing of the sort.

When he realized some Oath Keepers had gone into the Capitol, he called an

end to their event-security mission and ordered them all to rendezvous with him on the east side of the complex, he said.

“Everyone came right there where I told them to go, not because I wanted them to go do anything else, [but] because I wanted to get them all together to keep them out of trouble,” Rhodes said.



EPOCHTV

*Oath Keepers founder Elmer Stewart Rhodes III has said the group did not attack the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.*

“I didn’t want them getting involved in any of the [expletive].”

Florida Oath Keepers leader Kelly Meggs informed Rhodes that he and other Oath Keepers went into the Capitol on a first-aid mission, Rhodes said.

“So when I figured out what had happened, that people had gone in on the Supreme Court side and that some of our guys had gone in, that’s when I was like, ‘OK, guys, let’s move. Get them all

together. Let’s go towards the Supreme Court,” Rhodes said. “Just get off the Capitol grounds. Get the [expletive] out of here. That’s what we did.

“There was no [expletive] plan on our part to go inside that Capitol.”

The FBI agents who met with Rhodes in Texas served a warrant to seize his phone. Rhodes gave them the security PIN to access the phone and walked them through the content in an apparent effort to show that he had nothing to hide.

He offered to turn himself in if there were ever charges in the case.

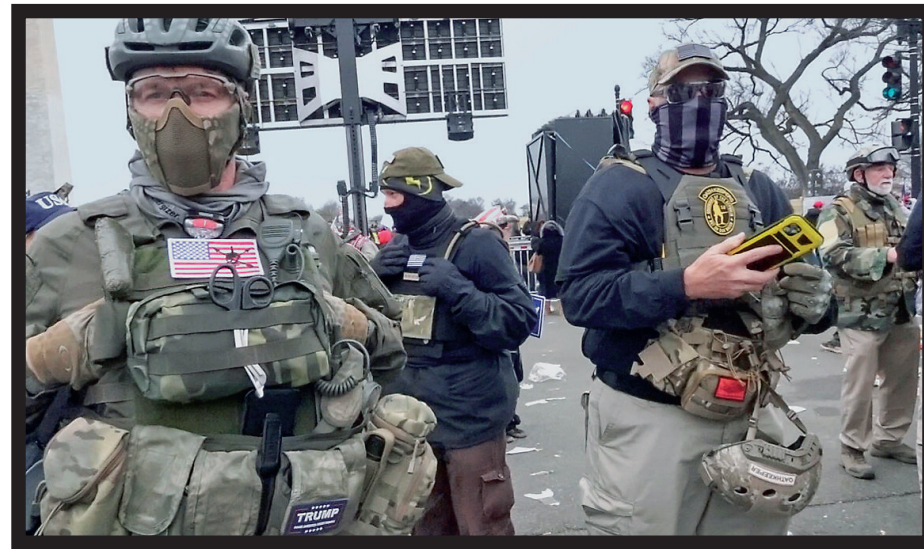
“Based on what we talked about, I can’t see that happening, Stewart,” one of the FBI agents said.

When he was arrested in January, a SWAT team came to his Texas home and ordered him to surrender.

Rhodes and Oath Keepers general counsel Kellye SoRelle—who sat in on the FBI interview—expressed concerns that their accounts of the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol breach would be twisted by prosecutors at the U.S. Department of Justice.

The conversation took place eight months before Rhodes was indicted and 16 months before SoRelle was indicted on four obstruction-related counts.

“Hey, let me know if you need anything else answered,” Rhodes said near the end of the interview. “I’ll talk to you. ...I don’t trust your bosses. Just being ♣



(Above) The J. Edgar Hoover FBI Building in Washington on Jan. 28, 2019. (Right) Members of the Oath Keepers walk to the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. (Far Right) Two Oath Keepers members inside the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. Founder Elmer Stewart Rhodes III said he initially had no idea Oath Keepers members had entered the Capitol.

blunt with you. I don't. Yeah, especially the DOJ. I don't trust any—I don't trust lawyers in general."

Rhodes expressed concern that content on his phone "doesn't get leaked to the [expletive] media."

"We don't operate like that," an FBI agent told him.

SoRelle replied: "Oh, whatever. The DOJ will make sure to do that."

### Oath Keepers Provided Security

Rhodes reiterated the story he has told ever since, that the Oath Keepers went to Washington on Jan. 6, 2021, to provide security for events and escort VIPs to locations around the Capitol, where they were scheduled to speak at various events, from Trump's speech at the Ellipse.

"Well, there were permitted events around the Capitol," Rhodes said. "So there was Latinos for Trump, there was Ali Alexander's, and I believe there were several other ones that were permitted around the Capitol because originally, that's where everyone was going to go."

"Then, Trump decided to go hold his own thing on the Ellipse, which kind of sucked all the air out of those other events," he said. "But none of those events were intended to be, 'Let's storm the Capitol.' It was, 'Go there and protest.'"

Rhodes said he spoke at a Latinos for Trump event near the Capitol on the morning of Jan. 6, 2021. SoRelle—for whom Rhodes was providing security—got cold, so they retreated to a nearby hotel in which one of the Oath Keepers was staying.

### Rhodes told the FBI the QRFs that the Oath Keepers kept at a Virginia hotel would have only been used if Trump called up a militia to protect the White House in the event of attacks by Antifa.

Rhodes said he had no idea that there was trouble at the Capitol until he received a call from Michael "Whip" Greene, who served as operations director for the Oath Keepers on Jan. 6, 2021.

"So we're at the hotel, and then Whip called me and said, 'Hey, they're storming the Capitol.' I'm like, 'Okay. We're gonna head back that way. Where are you at?'" Rhodes said. "And it was just me and him trying to link up."

"And it didn't even enter my head that any of my guys would be that [expletive]

retarded. I put a message out saying, 'Whatever you do, you know, don't try to enter the Capitol.'"

Rhodes said he and SoRelle then headed to the Capitol, walking up on the east side. He said they had no idea that violence had broken out on the west side, where a massive crowd had gathered.

"We walked on the Supreme Court side. There were no barriers or no cops saying, 'You can't come in here.'" he said. "Nothing. Just a bunch of people standing on the steps."

Rhodes said he used the encrypted messenger app Signal to put out the word to the Oath Keepers to meet up at a point on the Capitol perimeter near the Supreme Court. As teams of Oath Keepers arrived, he learned that some of them had entered the Capitol through the Columbus Doors atop the east steps.

"I was like, 'Let's get the [expletive] off this property,'" Rhodes said. "Let's get out of here, you know? Let's go.' That was it, man."

Rhodes said Meggs then told him that a group went inside the Capitol after hearing that a woman had been shot.

"We heard someone had been shot, so we went in to render medical aid," Rhodes quoted Meggs as saying. "Now, if he'd have asked me, 'Hey, Stewart, we think someone's been shot. Should we go inside?' I would have said, 'No. Stay.'"

"You can—he had two medics with him, you know. I was like, 'Hey, post outside, like at the base of the steps. You want to help someone, post outside. They can bring people to you.'"

Rhodes said he and Greene tried to reach Meggs earlier, but they couldn't get a phone signal.

"We got lax as far as command and control," Rhodes said. "So here we are caught with our pants down, wanting to make sure our guys are, you know, coming to us," he said. "We're trying to reach them on the [expletive] phone and there's no signal. So that's why I typed it in the chat."

### QRFs Not Part of a Plot

Prosecutors allege that Rhodes and the Oath Keepers stockpiled a cache of firearms and ammunition at a Virginia hotel to be used by "quick-reaction forces" (QRFs) in the event of an attack on the Capitol.

He told the FBI that the QRFs would have only been used if Trump had invoked the Insurrection Act and called up a militia to protect the White House in the event of attacks by Antifa, which they had threatened to do.

The QRFs were also put in place to throw off Antifa, which had attacked Trump supporters at Washington events in late 2020, according to Rhodes.

"But the QRF thing, that was mostly mind [expletive] for Antifa," he said. "Now, if Trump would have called us up as militia, would I have gone? Of course. Absolutely. But I wouldn't have [expletive]

gone anywhere in D.C. with any firearms, whatsoever, unless he did that."

"Because there was a bunch of talk in November about them storming the White House. They were saying they were gonna go and lay siege to the White House. And so, I was concerned about that. They made a bunch of noise about that."

Antifa doesn't mess with the Oath Keepers, in part because they can't know which of them might be current or retired police officers who are allowed to carry concealed firearms anywhere under the federal Law Enforcement Officers Safety Act (LEOSA), Rhodes said.

"They'd never actually close on us, ever, not once," he said. "None of our guys have ever drawn their weapon on them, to my knowledge. Never pepper sprayed anybody. Never hit anybody with a baton."

Rhodes told the FBI agents several times that the QRFs were for use only "if President Trump called us up as the militia."

"And our big concern was Antifa," he said. "My concern was Antifa was gonna go kinetic. You know, what if Antifa goes kinetic?"

Rhodes told the agents that the Oath Keepers were no threat to the FBI or the government.

"We're pretty [expletive] boring, actually," he said. "All we do is go protect people and property and events. And that's it. That's the drill."

If Rhodes was worried about what the FBI would find on his phone, he didn't act like it. After some initial back and forth as to whether providing the PIN to his

phone would be considered consent to search, Rhodes told the agents where to find various types of information.

"I always told my guys, 'We're not hiding [expletive] from the U.S. government.' Don't even worry about that," he said.

Rhodes told agents that he hadn't deleted content from his phone. He joked with one of them when the agent said, "I'm not gonna be scarred from this, am I?"

"I'm not going back and trying to delete [expletive]. No. All my dirty laundry's in there, man," Rhodes said. "You'll see. All my [expletive] weird-ass [expletive]. ... Don't watch the videos. Unless that's your thing."

The agent responded, "Thank you for the warning."

### 'I Like Guns'

Rhodes was plain-spoken about his affinity for firearms.

"I like guns. I buy guns and ammo all the [expletive] time," he said. "So don't let your DOJ or whatever, D.C. weirdos, freak out on the fact that I like guns. So I go shooting all the time. I buy guns and ammo. Especially right now."

"Our [expletive] focus has been—it wasn't on you guys—it's been on the [expletive] (indiscernible) Antifa and the radical left. Our whole perspective is like, that's our enemies."

Rhodes said he's always armed, except when he goes to Washington.

"I've been carrying guns for years," he said. "So when I go to D.C., we leave our [expletive] in Virginia. You know?" ■

FROM: MARK WILSON/GETTY IMAGES; LIKE COFFEE/SCREENSHOT VIA THE EPOCH TIMES; U.S. DOJ/SCREENSHOT VIA THE EPOCH TIMES



TRANSGENDERISM



Abel Garcia  
as a baby.

COURTESY OF ABEL GARCIA

# A Story of Detransitioning

*Man suffers irreversible harm,  
fears sterility after transgender  
medication, surgery* **BY BRAD JONES**

Abel Garcia in Denton, Texas.  
"I was always a man," he says.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ABEL GARCIA



**A** TEXAS MAN WHO CAME out as transgender, got breast implants, and then later had them removed has joined a growing number of other “detransitioners” in a mission to share their experiences and demystify some of the popular beliefs about transgenderism and “gender-affirming care.”

When Abel Garcia was 19, he was convinced that with enough surgery and estrogen injections, he could become a woman, a theory which he now believes is impossible.

“I was sold a lie,” Garcia, now 25, told *The Epoch Times*. “The lie was sold so well, through doctors, other medical professionals, pharmaceutical companies, surgeons, and everyone, that I believed it.”

He blames part of his mistake on his own “cognitive dissonance.”

“I was so deep into the rabbit hole that I was not willing to accept the possibility of being wrong,” he said.

### Gender Confusion

The son of Mexican parents who were living and working illegally in the United States, Garcia moved with his family from city to city between the Central Valley region of California and Southern California as a child.

Garcia was the first member of his family to be born on U.S. soil, in Utah, and although he was accepted by his family and his parents eventually became U.S. citizens, he always felt a sense that he didn’t belong.

“I never thought I was good enough for anything,” he said.

“My parents were here in the U.S. illegally, so they were always working. I was raised by my grandparents. I didn’t have a male role model in my family. I was also very shy, quite timid kid—very introverted—and I was also an over-thinker.

“So all that put together made me question myself a little, just because I wasn’t the most masculine kid growing up, and I didn’t really have my father in the picture. He was always working.”

The transient lifestyle of migrant workers made it difficult for Garcia to make friends.



Abel Garcia (R) visits Elijah Schaffer for an interview on the BlazeTV show “Slightly Offens\*ve” in January 2020 about his transition and his desire to detransition.

“When my father would get a new job, we would have to move to a different city,” he said. “In school, I was mostly a loner.”

When he was about 13, Garcia learned about transgenderism on social media.

“I didn’t realize what transgender was until, I’d say, late middle school, up to freshman year of high school,” he said.

“I was surfing YouTube, and some video popped up about transgenderism. That made some sense to me at the time and planted the seed in my mind.”

And he began to question whether he was meant to be a boy or a girl.

Through his teens, Garcia mainly kept to himself. He wasn’t into sports and spent much of his time playing video games.

“I’ve never dated anyone,” he said. “I’ve never been attracted to men. Before I transitioned, I never really was interest-

ed in anyone. I didn’t really care about sex or dating anyone.”

### Identifying as Trans

In 2015, Garcia told his mother he was confused about his gender, that he thought he was transgender and planned to get professional counseling. She wept and worried that he would regret his decision, he said.

When Garcia’s father found out his son was confused about his gender, he came up with his own remedy.

“When I did come out to my mother in May of 2016, my father took me to a prostitute against my will in Mexico,” Garcia said. “My dad believed it was a way to cure me.”

But his father’s misguided plan backfired.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF ABEL GARCIA



**“The lie was sold so well, through doctors, other medical professionals, pharmaceutical companies, surgeons, and everyone, that I believed it.”**

*Abel Garcia, detransitioner*

“The therapist worked at a LGBT center and—at my first appointment with her—affirmed me as a transgender woman and said she had my letter to transition,” Garcia said. “So, because she affirmed me right away, I told her I wanted to wait a bit. I even asked her why she affirmed me so quickly. She said that because I was ‘obviously transgender’ she didn’t want to ‘gatekeep’ me.”

He went to several therapists after his first experience, but only one suggested he might want to get tested for Asperger’s syndrome, which is now considered to be part of the broader autism spectrum disorder.

Though he was never tested, Garcia suspects he “might be on some part of the spectrum.”

By 2016, Garcia made up his mind to transition, first taking estrogen pills and later injections.

“I wanted to figure out why I had these feelings, these thoughts, but my father doing that to me was the straw that broke the camel’s back,” he said. “That was a catalyst, because prior to that, it was just thoughts. It was just ideas. I was so traumatized by the fact that I was forced to sleep with a woman who I didn’t know, who I had no attraction to, no connection with, that I did not want to be a man, especially because the man that did that to me was my own father.”

He’s still troubled by his father’s words: “Take good care of him. It’s his first time.”

Over time, Garcia realized it was not so much that he wanted to be a woman; it was more like he didn’t want to be a man.

### The Transition

When Garcia sought counseling, he was astounded at how quickly his therapist affirmed him as transgender, despite his mixed feelings.

He decided not to socially transition until after he had taken enough estrogen to make him look more feminine.

“I did not just want to look and dress like a woman ... while still appearing as a man, so I waited a bit,” he said.

In May 2018, he underwent “top surgery” for breast implants, which were placed under the muscle in his chest, and his nipples were repositioned to make them look more feminine.

“I had health insurance that covered everything,” he said.

Before he started college, Garcia legally changed his name from Abel to April, updated his ID and records to reflect his new identity as a woman, and began using female pronouns.

He wore women’s clothing and makeup and did everything he could to make himself look like a woman.

But, he said, “I was always a man. I was just—at the time—a very feminine man, to the point that I appeared somewhat as a woman.”

In college, he studied criminal justice and enrolled in the police academy after his transition. He was asked by a local police chief to serve on a committee as a liaison to the LGBT community.

Though Garcia was enthused about the offer, which he accepted, he was rejected by the same community that had once embraced him. The LGBT community called him “cisgender” despite his partial gender transition.

The ordeal was traumatizing for Garcia. He failed the police academy exam, dropped out of college in 2018, and has since worked as a security guard. ♦



**(Far Left)** Abel Garcia shortly before he began hormones. **(Left)** Garcia attending a friend’s high school graduation after he recovered from breast implant surgery.

**The Detransition**

Though he tried to accept his new identity as a woman, the novelty wore off quickly. About three months after the surgery, Garcia realized he had made a mistake. He didn't feel like a woman. He didn't feel much different at all, he said.

"After the honeymoon phase of everything ended, I realized that it was just cosmetic and that no matter what I would have done, I would never have become a real woman. I would just become a decoy woman, a caricature of a woman. I would just be a man with so much plastic surgery had I continued down that path," he said.

Despite one therapist who discouraged him from detransitioning, Garcia stopped taking estrogen and had the breast implants removed in 2020.

His decision to detransition was also based on the realization he had done irreversible harm to his body. Even though he didn't go through with "bottom surgery," he said the effects of his partial transition have been devastating.

"I have already suffered enough damage. I don't know whether that's due to the tucking, or the hormones, or a combination of both, but my genitals have atrophied, which just means they are very small," he said.

Garcia said he also suffers sharp pains in his testicles and experiences problems with dripping after urination.

He's afraid he may be sterile and will

never be able to father children, but has never had his sperm count tested.

"I'm very scared of that test, because I know hormones, after a certain point, sterilize you, and I spent a lot of time tucking and wearing very tight clothing," he said.



**"We should obviously give people the actual help that they need, instead of affirming this illusion that they have and that we are feeding to them."**

*Abel Garcia, detransitioner*

Within the past year and a half, Garcia said his body sometimes shakes uncontrollably, mostly on his left side, and he fears he may have developed some other serious condition such as multiple sclerosis.

"I don't know if it was due to surgery, or if it was just the hormones catching up with me, but my body started to shake on its own," he said.



**The Backlash**

Although he hasn't been targeted by trans rights activists as much as other detransitioners on social media have been, he has witnessed people such as Chloe Cole and Cat Cattinson being attacked online.

"They dragged Chloe through the mud," Garcia said, in reference to the 18-year-old woman who now regrets undergoing a double mastectomy at age 15.

He said he has connected with several other detransitioners as a support system, and he follows as many detransitioners online as he can to "keep an eye on them to make sure they're OK."

Several parents and some detransitioners have reached out to Garcia since he posted a short video on Twitter talking about the decision to reimbrace his masculinity.

"They're scared and nervous. They don't know what to do," he said.

For friends and relatives worried about a loved one who is transitioning, he said they may have no choice but to wait it out if their loved one is deeply invested in transgender ideology.

Reembracing his masculinity didn't come easily, and was based mainly on his own "self-reflection" and some counseling.

Garcia has wondered why more and more children and young adults are being fast-tracked into gender-transition interventions.

"I'm not angry. I would say I'm disappointed," he said. "Even though we've had people come out and say this has harmed them, it is still being pushed, especially through this administration."

He criticized the Biden administration for promoting the "gender-affirming" agenda. He also blames doctors and pharmaceutical companies for selling transgenderism for profit.

"I believe they are all in it. I would assume some of them believe they're actually helping ... because this entire ideology originally started with just being nice to these people," he said.

Compassion for people who are confused about their gender has been tak-

*Compassion for people who are confused about their gender has been taken too far by society, Abel Garcia says.*



en too far by society to the point where teachers and medical professionals aren't allowed to question a child's chosen gender identity.

Although there are some doctors who are willing to speak out, especially over the gender transitioning of minors, "they're very scared," Garcia said.

Garcia has urged medical professionals to look deeper into the root causes of gender dysphoria instead of "attempting to chemically and surgically castrate" boys and young men.

"We need to figure out what is the underlying issue," he said. "There was something wrong with me. I don't want to sound rude, but there is something wrong with all of us who wanted to transition in the first place."

Garcia said he doesn't want to exaggerate the problem, but wants to expose the "lie" that one can actually become the opposite sex and to dispel the notion that surgeries can bring happiness.

"There are some children who are honestly confused. I would say that was my case. But there are also some that are autistic, and they were led astray," he said.

Others were abused or have experienced some kind of trauma in their lives, while others are simply homosexual, Garcia said.

*Demonstrators raise awareness about complications associated with gender reassignment surgeries in downtown Los Angeles on March 12.*

"We should obviously give people the actual help that they need, instead of affirming this illusion that they have and that we are feeding to them," he said.

**Hope for Happiness**

Garcia, who has lived most of his life in California, except for a three-year stint in Mexico with his mother, recently moved to Texas to start his new life as the man he always was.

His mission to expose what he believes is the truth about transgenderism has lifted his spirit, but he's still searching for solace and redemption.

"I believe in God," he said. "I've always been told I've been forgiven for my sins or what I've done, but personally, I do not feel like I've done enough to accept forgiveness. I'm willing to extend that forgiveness once I feel I've done enough work. And I've just started."

Though he has never been a big drinker, Garcia said he imbibed excessively between his transition and detransition. "When I had to face reality, I became

a heavy alcoholic," he said. "So I just try not to feel too much. I started drinking after I realized I'd made a mistake."

Garcia has since slowed down on the booze and drinks only in moderation, mainly at social events, he said.

"I accepted the fact that I had mutilated my body and that if I continued any further, I would just be a very heavily mutilated man with so much cosmetic surgery, and that I would never become a woman. I was just becoming a caricature of what I believed a woman was," he said. "I was deceived. Therapists, doctors, and even trans activists lied to me."

While his life hasn't been easy, he still holds hope for the future.

"Hopefully, I can find some happiness," he said. "I eventually want to date and have a wife, and, if I can, I'd love to have a couple of children. I'm just worried about dating because, obviously with my past, I don't know how that will go over with other people, and if I date any women, how they'll take that."

Garcia is one of six detransitioners to be featured in an upcoming documentary called "Affirmation Generation: The Lies of Transgender Medicine," which is set to premiere in mid-November. The trailer was released on Sept. 6. ■

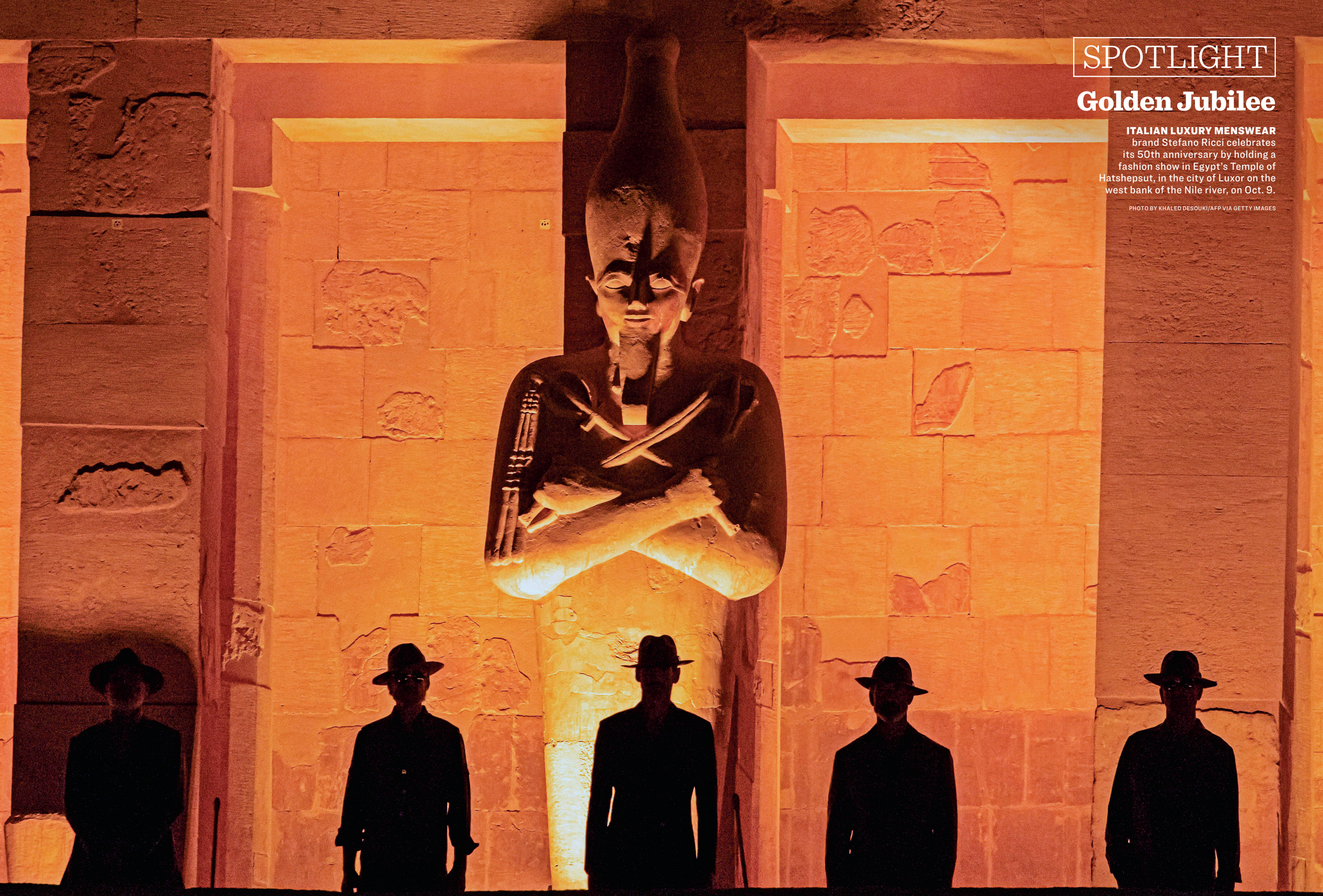
FROM L: COURTESY OF ABEL GARCIA, JOHN FREDRICKS/THE EPOCH TIMES

SPOTLIGHT

## Golden Jubilee

**ITALIAN LUXURY MENSWEAR**  
brand Stefano Ricci celebrates its 50th anniversary by holding a fashion show in Egypt's Temple of Hatshepsut, in the city of Luxor on the west bank of the Nile river, on Oct. 9.

PHOTO BY KHALED DESOUKI/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



FOREIGN BUSINESS

*A sign opposing a corn mill project by Fufeng Group in Grand Forks, N.D.*

# CHINESE CORN MILL

## IN NORTH DAKOTA



**LOCALS RAISE CONCERNS  
OVER MASSIVE PROJECT NEAR  
AIR FORCE BASE**

*TEXT & PHOTOS BY ALLAN STEIN*

**G**RAND FORKS, N.D.—ONE BY ONE, residents opposed to a corn mill investment by a Chinese company with reputed ties to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) through its chairman, got up to chastise the mayor and City Council of Grand Forks, North Dakota.

“You guys are the scariest people I know,” said Dennis Kadlec, an outspoken critic of the project. “You are willing to endanger this city, the people, the country, and this nation.”

He believes city officials have ignored residents’ concerns over the project and the flag they serve.

“This is a republic. Please treat it as such,” Kadlec said.

Kadlec’s accusations of inaction and secrecy on the part of city officials seemed to resonate with other concerned citizens at the Sept. 6 council meeting.

The group views the corn mill as a potential Chinese spying operation, as well as a threat to the environment and municipal resources.

Some residents see divisions over the project worsening in the close-knit agricultural community of 56,000, where sugar beets and wheat—not corn—are king.

The city of Grand Forks isn’t a significant producer of corn, straddling the Minnesota border about 75 miles south of Canada, where winter temperatures can drop to well below zero.

So the question arises: Why would a Chinese company build a corn mill in Grand Forks when harvest volumes are so low?

Critics who fear Chinese espionage say one needs to look no further than the Grand Forks Air Force Base, about 12 miles away. The base stores and tests the U.S. military’s sensitive drone, satellite, and surveillance technology.

However, city officials supporting the corn mill see the project as an economic opportunity that’s too good to pass up. As the most significant single capital investment in the city’s history, it promises 230 permanent high-paying jobs, higher corn prices for regional growers, and other long-term benefits.

Fufeng USA, the American subsidiary of Fufeng Group, wants to build on the 370 acres it acquired, which would add millions in sales and property tax revenues and improve city infrastructure.

The “wet corn” mill would employ thousands of workers during construction and, in operation, extract ingredients used to produce animal feed products for sale in the domestic market.

At least on paper, the project looks and sounds good.

What doesn’t sit well with project opponents is that the parent company, Fufeng Group, is based in Shandong Province in China. The company has



Jodi Carlson (R) of the Concerned Citizens for Fufeng Project addresses the Grand Forks City Council on Sept. 6.

reputed links with the CCP through its chairman and controlling shareholder, Li Xuechun.

Many residents opposed to the corn mill also believe city officials have been opaque in moving the project along, voting to annex land to sell to Fufeng USA without proper notice to abutting businesses.

Some residents have felt so neglected by the local powers that Jodi Carlson and several others recently formed the Concerned Citizens of Fufeng Project in Grand Forks.

The public group, which has nearly 3,000 followers on Facebook, vehemently opposes the corn mill project.

Group meetings have become “very contentious,” Carlson told The Epoch Times, “primarily because we’re just tired. The city council continues to say they’ve answered our questions and haven’t. We still have a lot of questions.”

One question is what Fufeng USA plans to do with 250 acres not listed in the development plan, Carlson said.

“We don’t know what’s going to happen with that. We think we have a right [to know], espe-



**“We don’t want [the mill]. ... We don’t want it because of the pollution. We don’t want it because of water usage. We don’t want it because of the communist connection with China.”**

Frank Matejcek, member, Concerned Citizens

cially since it’s a foreign interest. We don’t think [the city council] vetted it properly. We have a lot of concerns.”

Both U.S. senators who represent North Dakota have voiced their concerns about potential national security issues surrounding the Fufeng USA project, at a time when tensions are growing between the United States and China over Taiwan.

City officials reportedly vowed to stop the project should China invade Taiwan.

On July 14, Sens. Kevin Cramer (R-N.D.), Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), and John Hoeven (R-N.D.) sent a letter to Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, requesting a full review to address military security concerns.

As a result, the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS), an interagency panel overseen by the Treasury Department in business matters involving national security, has stepped in to review the project proposal.

Grand Forks city officials announced the land deal with Fufeng in November 2021 and approved the development agreement in July. The city then changed the land designation to an industrial zone

**230  
JOBS**

**AS THE MOST** significant single capital investment in the city’s history, the project promises 230 permanent high-paying jobs, higher corn prices for regional growers, and other long-term benefits.

**\$350  
MILLION**

**THE FUFENG PROJECT,** if it passes the CFIUS review, is due to begin construction in 2024 or 2025, at a total projected cost of about \$350 million.

*The proposed construction site for the multimillion-dollar corn mill includes 370 acres of former agricultural land on the outskirts of the city of Grand Forks, N.D.*



from agricultural to allow the project to go forward under federal law.

“We don’t want [the mill]. We don’t want it here in Grand Forks,” said Concerned Citizens group member Frank Matejcek, a retired farmer who lives next door in rural Falconer Township, which has a population of 140 and where the city of Grand Forks has annexed some 40 businesses.

“We don’t want it because of the pollution. We don’t want it because of water usage,” he told The Epoch Times. “We don’t want it because of the communist connection with China. [But] the communist connection with China isn’t the only thing.”

Some residents are concerned the mill will divert limited municipal resources. In its current design, the corn mill would draw roughly the same amount of water—more than 6 million gallons—that the city consumes daily from the Red River.

“What’s it going to be in a couple of years? We had to ration water last year” during a drought, Matejcek said.

“These city officials claim that the town will die if we don’t do this project. That’s a bunch of [garbage]. We’ve got plenty of agriculture. There is the North Dakota mill—North Dakota Mill and Elevator—the biggest flour mill in the world.”

Al Nieuwsma, the owner of Al’s Diesel Injection and a Falconer Township resident, said the city annexed his business property to make way for the corn mill project.

He said his property taxes are now six times what he previously paid, including municipal fees.

He considers the Fufeng project “a bad deal” all around.

“It’s a bad deal for the city. It’s a bad deal for our community right here,” Nieuwsma told The Epoch Times. “And it’s going to be terrible for the overall community.”

“I wouldn’t put anything past China. But for me—right here—it’s too close. The pollution—the stink, the traffic, the [depletion of] resources—terrible. ❖



Another sign spells out the concerns many residents have over the corn mill in Grand Forks, N.D. Many residents don't want the project in the city because the owner, Fufeng Group, has ties to the Chinese Communist Party through its company chairman.

"I'll tell you what, it should never have happened. If I had known more about this [project] earlier, I would have done more to prevent it from happening."

Concerned Citizens group member Sheila Spicer said she doesn't want to see any Chinese company doing business in the community.

"I do not want [Fufeng USA] in our town—I don't want them in our country. For one, I do not want a Chinese communist company here. You've got to be smart enough to know that. Water pollution—you name it. There are tons of reasons," she told The Epoch Times.

The CFIUS review appears to be the final hurdle for Fufeng before it can begin construction in 2024 or 2025, at a total projected cost of about \$350 million.

The question is whether CFIUS has the legal authority to perform the review. The law firm representing Fufeng believes the land acquisition through annexation doesn't amount to a business purchase, and therefore, it doesn't fall under CFIUS's legal jurisdiction for review.

Still, the CFIUS review could take months to complete if the committee moves forward. In the meantime, CFIUS requested more time and information from Fufeng before deciding whether to conduct the review.

Despite the delay, most of the Grand Forks City Council voted on Sept. 6 to approve various projects relating to a stormwater pond and

water main construction design along three main highways.

At the meeting, Carlson and several other citizen group members criticized city officials openly for their alleged lack of transparency.

"We hear lies about the equipment, the water—lies about a lot of stuff. When does the truth start?" Carlson asked the council.

Kadlec accused council members of choosing a "godless entity" to further large-scale business interests.

"When you're godless, you're godless. When you're godless, you don't have that much knowledge or wisdom," he said.

Addressing the seven-member council, Michael Coachman shared how one city official accused him of "undermining the republic" for asking questions about the project.

"How am I threatening the republic? I'm asking questions dealing with the Constitution," he said. "Everything I am doing is based on what you are doing."

Another concerned citizen, who asked to remain anonymous, said she fears military surveillance by the Chinese government, using Fufeng as a shell company.

"I'm afraid of them accessing our infrastructure on all levels. The development agreement gives them access to our water, power, air, and roads. They're giving them access to everything."

While it's "always nice for a city to make more

money," she told The Epoch Times, "we are not hurting in the city."

"There's a misallocation of resources," she said. "The problem with the city is not that they don't have money; it's the mismanagement of it. Corn doesn't grow here. Sugar beets grow here. There's a little corn, but it's not ideal conditions."

In an Oct. 27, 2021, email to North Dakota's Republican governor, Doug Burgum, Grand Forks Mayor Brandon Bochenski expressed "great news" that Fufeng Group had selected Grand Forks as its North American location.

Before finalizing a development agreement, however, Bochenski advised in the letter to "keep the information out of the public, for the time being, we need to finalize the details."

Ward 2 City Council member Rebecca Osowski told The Epoch Times that she agrees that the land annexation took place without proper notice and that the project lacks transparency.

"I am against the project and do not vote to support the infrastructure items until things have been settled," Osowski said.

The six other city council members didn't respond to a request for comment.

Bochenski, a Republican, acknowledged that public opposition to the project is based on environmental concerns, questions regarding land annexation, and the "overall deterioration of the relationship between the U.S. and China over Taiwan."

"The city council and I have shared similar concerns and set forth a development agreement to study these concerns, which has been ongoing for 10 months," Bochenski wrote in an email to The Epoch Times. "The city requested Fufeng to voluntarily submit [to] the Committee on Foreign

Investment in the United States (CFIUS), which reviews national security concerns."

CFIUS's findings should come in the next few months, and only design work can take place before then, "which is at the financial risk of Fufeng," the mayor added.

Bochenski said the former landowners requested the annexation of land, which followed requirements set by the state of North Dakota.

"As to the unfounded personal attacks, that is the nature of politics these days, unfortunately," Bochenski said.

At the Urban Stampede coffee shop in downtown Grand Forks, Jim and Rex were having a friendly game of backgammon and talking about local affairs.

"Everybody spies on everyone else," said Jim, a self-described capitalist who isn't worried about the proposed corn mill being owned by a Chinese company.

"I mean, the Russians are spying on us. The Chinese are spying on us. Everybody is spying on everybody so that I wouldn't worry about that," he told The Epoch Times.

The upshot is that the mill would "help bring manufacturing jobs to the area and process the corn to a usable product," he said.

Despite much consternation over the purported lack of transparency related to the project, Rex said, "this has been one of the most transparent things, [and] the city council has done a good job explaining what they're doing every step along the way."

"As long as you read the newspaper and follow the [city] website—if you don't know what's going on, it's your fault," he said. ■



**"We don't think [the city council] vetted it properly. We have a lot of concerns."**

*Jodi Carlson, lead organizer, Concerned Citizens for Fufeng Project*

*Airmen at the Grand Forks Air Force Base, N.D. Some critics say that spying on the Grand Forks Air Force Base, about 12 miles away, may be the reason for why a Chinese company would build a corn mill in Grand Forks.*



EDUCATION

# Florida County Halts ‘Shocking’ Sex Ed

After parental pressure, Duval County removes graphic visual aids in public schools

By Jannis Falkenstern

**W**HEN PARENTS FOUND OUT about the “visual aids” that a northern Florida school district was planning to pass out to middle school students in reproductive health class, they were shocked and disgusted, and they made it clear that they would be speaking up at the next school board meeting.

At that meeting, the Duval County Public School District backed down from its plan, saying that it would create its own learning materials, rather than using items from \$90 classroom kits from ETR, which stands for Education, Training, and Research.

Parents were upset about the contents of the kits, which include seven-inch wooden “condom demonstrators” in the shape of male genitalia, along with colorful condoms. The kits are intended for use by students in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades.

Members of Moms for Liberty, County Citizens Defending Freedom (CCDF) and other enraged parents showed up at a Sept. 12 school board meeting in Jacksonville, Florida, to object to the use of the kits, parent Melissa Bernhardt told The Epoch Times.

Bernhardt, who is lead educator for Duval’s CCDF chapter, didn’t disclose how she found out about the kits, but said her source was “solid” and told her that \$200 worth of kits had been purchased for use in Duval County schools. Duval officials didn’t confirm the purchase.

But before the start of the school board meeting where use of the kits was set to be discussed, a statement appeared on the Duval County Public Schools website announcing a change to its meeting agenda.

The statement reads that Florida school dis-



Students return to attend class at a Florida school.

Students return to attend class at a Florida school.

a statement that appeared to defend the plan to use the kits.

Bernhardt said that even though the school board didn’t mention the kits specifically, it was implied in the statement, which said that the district had to “adhere to state standards by using supplemental materials.”

### ‘We Didn’t Think He Was Ready’

Duval County parent Mara Macie told The Epoch Times that she transferred her four children to charter schools after her eldest son’s eighth grade health education teacher told the class about “flavored condoms.”

“It wasn’t just about the flavored condoms,” Macie said, “but the fact that the banana flavor is not tasty, and the strawberry flavor is good. And then she offered them to students. Show me where that is appropriate in the curriculum.”

Macie also was shocked to hear her son’s account of how the teacher demonstrated how to put on a condom, by holding her index and middle fingers together and putting the condom on



**“My biggest fear is that they’re going to just create a curriculum behind our backs that’s going to be LGBTQ-based and Planned Parenthood-based.”**

Melissa Bernhardt, lead educator, CCDF’s Duval chapter

them with her other hand.

“When she would take it off, she would just let it snap and fling across the room,” Macie said.

The following day, her son didn’t attend the class due to illness, she said, but a classmate told him that visual aids or pictures of male genitalia were used as part of the lesson for that day.

“He shouldn’t have been exposed to some of these things,” Macie said. “As his parents, we didn’t think he was ready for some of these things.”

Macie and Bernhardt would like to know whether teachers plan to follow the state statute that requires educators to “emphasize that abstinence from sexual activity is a certain way to avoid out-of-wedlock pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, including acquired immune deficiency syndrome, and other associated health problems.”

Other school districts throughout Florida utilize curricula for sex ed from more traditional publishers such as McGraw Hill, while Duval County Public Schools uses a curriculum from ETR.

According to its website, ETR bases much of its curriculum on something it calls the “health equities framework,” which is based on “equity at the core of health outcomes; multiple, interacting spheres of influence; and a historical and life-course perspective.”

The framework is designed to provide “fair access to opportunities and resources that are needed to achieve optimal physical, emotional and social well-being,” the website states.

Because of those goals, Bernhardt is concerned that instruction on transgender issues will lead to “gender confusion” among children at an age

Moms for Liberty members at an event.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: OCTAVIO JONES/GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY OF MELISSA BERNHARDT; COURTESY OF MOMS FOR LIBERTY





Some Florida parents say that they believe their children aren't ready for some of the explicit materials used in sex ed classes.

when they're already biologically programmed to be confused by natural hormonal changes.

The curriculum seems to push a "woke" agenda, she said, instead of focusing on state standards that require teaching about avoiding sexually transmitted diseases and out-of-wedlock pregnancy.

"My biggest fear is that they're going to just create a curriculum behind our backs that's going to be LGBTQ-based and Planned Parenthood-based," she said.

Bernhardt said she wanted to know more about the proposed ETR program, so she ordered the 30-day free trial kit and was surprised by what she learned about the organization.

"The marketing director for ETR was the education director for Planned Parenthood," she said. "They also state on their website that they are against the parental rights bill in Florida."

The Epoch Times reached out to the Florida Department of Education and was referred to publicly available state statutes and standards.

"Individual school districts are responsible for determining the content within classrooms, made available in school libraries, or included on a reading list as outlined in" the statute, Cassie Palelis, a spokeswoman for the Florida Department of Education, said in an email.

"This statute states, "The district school board has the constitutional duty and responsibility to select and provide adequate instructional materials for all students in accordance with the requirements of this part."

Duval County Public Schools and ETR didn't respond to requests for comment from The Epoch Times.

Florida state Sen. Keith Perry, who represents the eighth district in northern Florida, reacted to what he saw on the ETR website.

"I'm going to absolutely do everything I can with the Department of Education to make sure that parents understand and know what is being taught, and that whatever is being taught is appropriate," he told The Epoch Times. "We have a lot of work to do."

Perry said that what's needed across the state is "consistency" in the curriculum.

"It makes it a lot more transparent and easier to have all school districts have the same curriculum," he said.

An added benefit to making the curriculum consistent throughout the state is the cost break that could be involved for the 67 school districts.

"If you look at the cost [with a consistent curriculum], you wouldn't have to spend on 67 different things, like procuring different kinds of textbooks and stuff that certainly can be bought at a much better rate. So there are some cost benefits," Perry said.



**"Schools need to make it easy for all curricula to be examined and looked at."**

State Sen. Keith Perry

The senator said he engages in "fact and data gathering" when he attends meetings and speaks to community and religious groups, and that he encourages parents to go to their school boards to find out what's being taught to their children.

Parents need to be more involved in their children's education, and schools need more "transparency," he said.

"Schools are government entities. They are part of the government. And it's inappropriate for the government to be

involved in some of these things," such as graphic sex instruction, Perry said.

"They're not transparent. Schools need to make it easy for all curricula to be examined and looked at."

Both Macie and Bernhardt agree that people need to be more careful about the candidates who ask for their votes, especially in school board races.

"We willingly give [power] to other people, from school board members all the way to the president [of the United States]," Macie said. "We've got to take our power back. That's the only way to fix this." ■

THIS PAGE FROM TOP: CHANDANI KHANNA/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

# Perspectives



Former U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo speaks during the Conservative Political Action Conference at Rosen Shingle Creek in Orlando, Fla., on Feb. 25.

PHOTO BY JOE RAEDLE/GETTY IMAGES



**OPEC'S OMEN**

We're on the verge of an all-out energy catastrophe. **50**



**POMPEO VERSUS THE CCP**

The former secretary of state is a hero for speaking truth to power. **51**



**'WHITE MALE' MANUFACTURING WORKERS**

Many were offended by recent remarks given by the Peterson Institute's president. **53**

**INSIDE**

**THOMAS MCARDLE** was a White House speechwriter for President George W. Bush and writes for *IssuesInsights.com*.

# Thomas McArdle



## OPEC's Omen

*We're on the verge of an all-out energy catastrophe*

**T**HOSE WAGGISH STICKERS we've been seeing at gas pumps, with President Joe Biden pointing to the inflated price, saying "I did that," won't be going away any time soon, now that OPEC is cutting global oil supplies by 2 million barrels per day.

But too few realize that this White House's foreign policy is as responsible for consumer pain at the pump as its big-spending domestic policies are.

October surprises during election years have come in many guises in American history, but this year it comes clothed in a ghutra, as young Saudi ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman gives Joe Biden and his Democratic Party some well-timed payback for accusing the Saudi royal family of "murdering children" during the 2020 presidential campaign and promising he would "make them pay the price and make them, in fact, the pariah that they are." Gasoline at the pump will now be on a sizable upswing on Election Day a month from now as Americans vote for members of Congress.

Unbeknownst to the public until now, Biden officials spent weeks intensely lobbying OPEC countries, in person, on their turf, and hat in hand, to not cut oil supplies; in retrospect, this pathetic begging further exposes to the world the impotency to which U.S. influence has been reduced.

That the crown prince would thumb his nose at Biden so flagrantly illustrates the impotency and ineptitude of the former longtime chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. As Robert Gates, secretary of defense for both President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama, famously quipped, Biden has "been wrong on nearly every major foreign policy and national security issue over the past four decades."

And he was wrong once again—fatally so—in last year's debacle yanking U.S. forces out of Afghanistan, in which 11 Marines, a soldier, and a Navy corpsman were killed in a terrorist bombing during the evacuation at Kabul airport.

**A presumed superpower that is at ideological war with its own domestic energy industry is in no position to negotiate anything with the world's major oil suppliers.**

The Biden administration recently swapped two high-level Venezuelan drug traffickers, both nephews of regime ruler Nicolás Maduro's wife who were convicted in New York, for five U.S. Citgo executives who were lured to Caracas and then arrested and convicted on phony embezzlement charges, a Marine arrested at a roadblock and held on flimsy firearms violations, and a kidnapped 24-year-old Florida man who said he was being waterboarded and electrocuted by Venezuelan intelligence officers while in confinement. The president apparently now hopes the oil-rich, anti-American socialist regime will make up for some of the Saudis' cuts.

It's funny how Democrats, who seek to render fossil fuels obsolete, right now will apparently do anything for an ample supply of evil, filthy oil in the final weeks before midterm elections that threaten to end their majority in the House of Representatives.

That isn't the story here, however. The United States, which defied experts and became energy independent under then-President Donald Trump, has, under Biden, shown friend and foe in the world alike just how weak

its international hand is. A presumed superpower that's at ideological war with its own domestic energy industry is in no position to negotiate anything with the world's major oil suppliers.

This president, upon taking office last year, scrapped the Keystone XL pipeline that was a few months away from transporting 800,000 barrels of oil per day into the United States. Soon thereafter, he issued a series of executive orders obstructing all new oil and natural gas leases on government-held land. This administration has the ignoble distinction of having provided the fewest oil leases of any in the post-war period. It has abused the Defense Production Act of 1950, enacted to support the Korean War effort, to subsidize the production of solar panels.

We're already experiencing the highest inflation this country has seen in four decades, with a recession already happening or about to. After pleading with and being rebuffed by an ally we called a murderer, we may now pivot and implore an outright enemy in South America to supply us with the U.S. economy's lifeblood, which we could and should be supplying for ourselves. Biden has already depleted our emergency Strategic Petroleum Reserve by about 40 percent, down to 416 million barrels, its lowest level since 1984.

We've been led out onto thin economic ice, which could collapse beneath us given the wrong combination of conditions—say, a serious global oil shock raising the price-per-gallon into double digits, compounded by a deep recession, the spread of Europe's double-digit inflation to our shores, and some unforeseen military aggression abroad.

Experiencing that magnitude of disaster, few among the hordes of unemployed will find much mirth in the Biden gas pump stickers reminding them, "I did that."

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# Anders Corr



## Pompeo Versus the CCP

*The former secretary of state is a hero for speaking truth to power*

**M**IKE POMPEO IS taking on the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), not for the first time, but in some of his most direct approaches. On Sept. 14 and Sept. 26, the former secretary of state released videos calling on the Chinese people to free themselves of the regime in Beijing.

At the root of his message is that the CCP knowingly lies about representing the Chinese people and that the Party is committed to the "foreign, anti-Chinese ideology" of Marxism.

Pompeo made the point that the CCP also lies about the United States being a racist country when the "exact opposite" is true. Chinese Americans "contribute immeasurably to our way of life and to America's experiment in self-government," he said.

Meanwhile, the genocidal CCP perpetuates some of the world's worst "systemic racism in Xinjiang, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, and elsewhere."

Pompeo said the "most anti-Chinese force in history is the CCP ... founded on a bankrupt Marxist ideology that's killed tens of millions of Chinese people, [and] launched a Cultural Revolution that destroyed thousands of years of Chinese culture."

Attention to the videos increased when the CCP responded with a letter to Pompeo's current think tank, the Hudson Institute, falsely claiming that the Party was "chosen by the Chinese people" and stands for their interests.

"Any attempts to cut off the blood ties between the [CCP] and the Chinese people are doomed to fail," the letter reads.

As usual, the tone-deaf Party is its own worst enemy, feeding the fire that threatens to consume.

Pompeo published the letter in a Twitter post, replying: "The CCP wants me to stop speaking the truth. Ain't gonna happen."

Hudson Institute President John

Walters said of the letter, "No one at Hudson is intimidated by this."

The Washington Times and Townhall published articles sympathetic to Pompeo.

By continuing with their simultaneously tragic and farcical responses to the world's demand for freedom from the CCP, China's diplomats dig deeper into their hole of disregard for increasing global demands for change. Public opinion in the West is undergoing a sharp shift in opinion against China because it looks more and more like a threat to the very idea of democracy.

**"[The] most anti-Chinese force in history is the CCP ... founded on a bankrupt Marxist ideology that's killed tens of millions of Chinese people."**

**Former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo**

The CCP's claims of "blood ties" to the Chinese people go further, coming off as defining the "Chinese people" in terms of a racial hierarchy, in which the Han ethnic group has always led the CCP and China's state apparatus after the revolution of 1949.

Other "Chinese people," including Tibetans and Uyghurs, for example, merit positions far lower in the regime hierarchy, to the point of relegation to concentration camps ostensibly set up for their "reeducation" into being more Chinese (read: Mandarin speakers and CCP enthusiasts) and less non-Chinese (read: Tibetan and Uyghur speakers and having religion).

Overseas Chinese, according to Chinese leader Xi Jinping, should demonstrate allegiance to the Party just as the Chinese in China do. It should go without saying that the CCP is racist and wrong in making this claim. Nobody, much less those overseas targeted for their race, owes allegiance to an

unelected political party that's more of a mafia or terror organization than a source of legitimate government.

Pompeo previously took decisive steps against the CCP, including designating the oppression of Uyghurs a genocide in 2021, which it is by the United Nations' definition. In 2020, he closed down China's consulate in Houston, which allegedly was serving as a hub for technology theft.

As a result, China sanctioned Pompeo last year, a badge of honor that could, in other ways, have consequences for his career. A CCP sanction can make it risky for businesses operating in China (many if not most of America's largest manufacturers) to hire sanctioned individuals or those engaged with them, for example, as a consultant or board member. That might include the loss of major campaign donations from their leadership, including top shareholders.

That's one way that the CCP attempts to influence U.S. politics—through the influence of businesses that, in turn, have influence on elected officials.

A point that Pompeo has been too diplomatic to say is that the Chinese people have made a huge mistake in allowing the CCP to take over.

The world is making the same mistake now. We empowered the CCP with \$4.7 trillion of international trade (China's imports plus exports) that garnered the country a trade surplus of \$520 billion in 2020, the latest year of data from the World Bank.

The CCP uses that surplus internationally to purchase companies, land, and political influence.

Pompeo is one of America's toughest opponents of the CCP, and the CCP is America's top national security threat, according to the U.S. government and NATO.

So Pompeo is one of those heroes he speaks of, and he deserves America's support in the years to come.



## Federal Financial Mess

*The relentless rise in entitlements lies at the root of the problem*

**E**VEN BEFORE THE recent spate of spending legislation, the authoritative Congressional Budget Office (CBO) warned of the precarious state of Washington’s finances. Its figures show that the relentless growth in entitlements will push up budget deficits and add to the nation’s already heavy accumulation of public debt.

By 2032, the CBO concluded, outstanding government debt held by the public will rise to 110 percent of the nation’s gross domestic product (GDP) and to 185 percent by mid-century, far higher than most any time in the nation’s history.

Here, in broad strokes, is what the CBO expects. Federal revenues from all sources will grow in tandem with the economy, taking, on average, slightly more than 18 percent of GDP each year. The spending side of the ledger will expand faster. Federal outlays will jump to 25.8 percent of the economy by the mid-2030s from 23.8 percent this year. They’ll then climb to about 28.9 percent by mid-century, a relative expansion of 5.1 percentage points.

According to the CBO, Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and lesser entitlements will rise to 13.7 percent of GDP in the mid-2030s and 14.9 percent by mid-century from an estimated 10.8 percent this year. That 4.1 percentage point relative increase amounts to more than four-fifths of the expected relative rise in all spending. The rest of the spending increase will come from the need for Washington to pay interest on an enlarged debt load, itself the result of past increases in entitlement spending.

In many respects, the CBO’s forecast is a straightforward extrapolation of past trends. For decades, the outsized growth of entitlements has driven government spending to

ever greater portions of the economy. Between 1970 and this year, entitlements rose to 10.8 percent of GDP from 7.6 percent. That growth offset the overall budgetary relief that might have accrued to the drop in defense spending to 3.5 percent of GDP from 7.8 percent. So despite this decline in Pentagon demands, overall federal spending has risen to 23.8 of GDP from 18.7 percent.

### By 2032, outstanding government debt held by the public will rise to 110 percent of the nation’s GDP and to 185 percent by mid-century.

Bleak as the CBO extrapolation of these trends looks, its estimates may be too optimistic. They assume, for example, that defense spending will hold steady at about 3.5 percent of GDP, but in today’s geopolitical climate, defense outlays are more likely to rise. On entitlements, there are also signs of budgetary optimism. Three considerations offer perspective.

First, the CBO made its projections before President Joe Biden ordered student debt relief or signed two large spending measures: the CHIPS for America Act and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). Although the White House insists that these two pieces of legislation will more than pay for themselves, independent analyses, including that of the CBO, indicate that Washington will likely increase spending and otherwise enlarge deficits.

Second, the government has already decided to continue the subsidies under the Affordable Care Act, even though they were set to

expire. Especially given how aspects of the IRA suggest enlarged subsidies along these lines, spending in this area will likely accumulate over time to enlarge the portion of the budget and GDP absorbed by entitlements.

Third, and most significant, is the likely impact of aging on the country’s population. The baby boomer generation is retiring and will vastly increase the population of dependent retirees. In 1970, for example, roughly 10 percent of the population was 65 years old or older. By 2019, that figure had grown to 16 percent. The Census Bureau estimates that by the mid-2030s, that figure will rise to 21 percent and 22 percent by mid-century. This huge proportion of older people can’t help but increase demands for Social Security, Medicare, and other federal entitlements. CBO estimates try to account for this trend but likely insufficiently.

None of this is to say that entitlements—already at two-thirds or more of the federal budget—are the wrong way for Washington to spend. That’s a political decision. Economists can only point out that past and likely future practices condemn federal finances to ever-growing debt burdens until Washington takes one of three admittedly difficult steps: 1) get control over entitlements, at least enough to moderate their rapid growth rate, 2) accommodate the ever-increasing demand of entitlements by sacrificing other government services, as was done with defense in the past but in today’s geopolitics no longer seems possible, or 3) tell the voters that they must pay more in taxes so that their representatives don’t have to make these difficult decisions.

As the CBO has made clear, albeit indirectly, these are the only ways to avoid a debt burden that many already describe as unsupportable.



## ‘White Male’ Manufacturing Workers

*Many were offended by recent remarks by the Peterson Institute’s president*

**T**HE PRESIDENT OF AN influential think tank has recently come under fire for remarks he made about American factory workers.

Concerns over U.S. manufacturing employment is an obsession for keeping “white males with low education” in “powerful positions,” says Adam Posen, an economist and president of The Peterson Institute for International Economics, a Washington-based think tank.

Speaking at a Cato Institute event on Oct. 6, Posen expressed his disapproval over the constant attention given to domestic manufacturing as opposed to other industries that have experienced job displacement, whether from economic downturns or automation.

“The fetish for manufacturing is part of the general fetish for keeping white males of low education—outside the cities—in powerful positions they’re in in the U.S.,” he said.

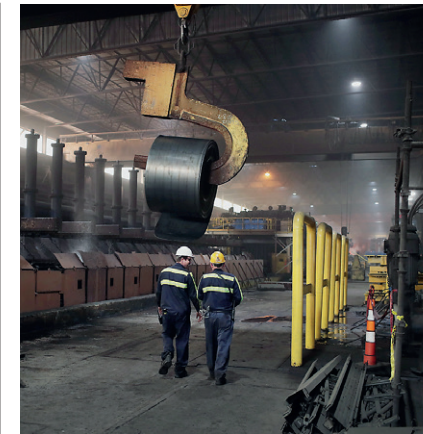
Posen explained that there hadn’t been a comparable concern for the displacement of blacks during recessions or single women who were replaced by computers beginning in the 1970s. These developments, he argued, didn’t receive much political attention.

“But when it started being the white male manufacturing people in the so-called Heartland, which by definition was not urban, then suddenly this was a crisis.”

Posen’s comments garnered backlash from many parties, including the Alliance for American Manufacturing (AAM), a nonprofit organization to strengthen domestic manufacturing.

“Not only are Posen’s remarks stunningly condescending, his offensive argument is just factually incorrect,” the group wrote on Twitter.

“What Posen is trying to do, on behalf [of] big corporations who want to keep outsourcing jobs, is convince people we shouldn’t worry when ‘low education’



### Critics have pointed out that Chinese tech giant Huawei Technologies donated to the Peterson Institute between 2010 and 2018.

white workers complain when their livelihoods are taken away in order to pad some shareholder’s bottom line. DON’T FALL FOR IT.”

Rana Foroohar, a Financial Times columnist and author, remarked that his comments show “how out of touch most economists are with how business actually works.”

“If you are a country today with no ability to make crucial goods or access them from allied nations, God help you,” she said.

Matt Stoller, author and director of research at the American Economic Liberties Project, also reacted to Posen’s comments on Twitter.

“I can’t think of a better recipe for inducing racial tension than having D.C. elites financed by Wall Street pushing offshoring and then saying that anyone who opposes having their community and livelihood destroyed is racist,” he stated.

Moreover, critics have pointed out that Chinese tech giant Huawei Technolo-

gies donated to The Peterson Institute between 2010 and 2018. The think tank didn’t respond to a request for comment.

The U.S. manufacturing industry has greatly transformed over the past 50 years when many workers would go to work at the local factory and construct everything from automobiles to steel.

National manufacturing output had steadily increased since 2000, topping \$2.3 trillion before the coronavirus pandemic. However, during this same span, it has represented a smaller portion of the nation’s gross domestic product, accounting for about 11 percent, down from 15 percent in 2000.

But while domestic manufacturing has enjoyed greater output, employment levels peaked in 1979 at 19.5 million, falling to below 13 million in 2022.

Experts cite two reasons for this trend: China and automation.

Some of the largest companies in America shifted operations to China, resulting in 3.7 million lost U.S. manufacturing jobs between 2001 and 2018, according to the Economic Policy Institute (EPI).

However, there has been a gradual reversal since the COVID-19 public health crisis, with many U.S. companies leaving China and reshoring their businesses in the United States. The Reshoring Initiative reported last month that American businesses are on track to return close to 350,000 jobs this year, the highest on record since records began in 2010.

From supply chain snafus to geopolitical challenges involving China, companies have desired to bring their operations closer to home.

Despite Posen’s contention that this has largely been a problem for uneducated white people, AFL-CIO chief Economist William Spriggs and his team reported that the China trade shock that decimated U.S. manufacturing exacerbated racial inequality by reducing the percentage of black employment and hire rate.

**DANIEL LACALLE** is chief economist at hedge fund Tressis and author of “Freedom or Equality,” “Escape from the Central Bank Trap,” and “Life in the Financial Markets.”

# Daniel Lacalle



## Strong Dollar, Global Currency Debasement

*During times of complacency, central banks boost money supply*

**W**HY ARE MARKET participants scared of a strong dollar? Because, for years, there was a massive carry trade against the U.S. dollar predicated on a bet that constantly printing currency and cutting rates would never create inflation.

The world got used to betting on one thing—massive money supply growth—and the opposite—weak inflation. Cheap money became expensive, as I explained in my book, “Escape from the Central Bank Trap.”

The U.S. dollar isn't strong. The loss of purchasing power of the greenback is the largest of the past three decades. The U.S. dollar is only “strong” in relative terms against other currencies that are collapsing in a global currency debasement that comes after years of monetary excess.

The pound isn't collapsing because of a misguided prime minister's tax plan. It's collapsing alongside the yen, which also saw the Bank of Japan intervene to try to stop its depreciation; the euro; the Swedish krona; the Norwegian and Danish krone; and most currencies.

In the past year up to the time of writing, the U.S. dollar index (DXY) has risen by 19 percent and reached a 20-year high. The yen is down by 23 percent against the U.S. dollar, the euro has fallen by 15 percent, the pound has fallen by 17 percent, and the emerging market currency index has also fallen by 14 percent. Even in China, the People's Bank of China has had to intervene, like the Bank of Japan or the Bank of England, to control a massive depreciation against the U.S. dollar.

In periods of complacency, the world's central banks play at being the Federal Reserve without having the world's reserve currency or the legal security and financial balance of the United States. Many massively increase the money supply without



**Now, the boomerang effect is vicious: high inflation and currency collapses, as well as an equities and bonds market crash.**

paying attention to the global and local demand for their currency, and, in addition, governments issue more U.S. dollar-denominated debt, hoping low rates will make the financing of huge deficits affordable. Complacency builds, and all asset classes see massive inflows and elevated valuations because money is cheap and abundant—a monster multi-trillion carry trade with many bets on the long side and one short: the U.S. dollar.

All this, in turn, leads the global demand for U.S. dollars to increase, not because the Federal Reserve is conducting a restrictive policy, but because the comparison with others shows that the alternative fiat currencies are much worse.

This is the hangover from the great monetary binge of 2020, which saw an unprecedented increase in the balance sheet of central banks and the global money supply soar to all-time highs. Furthermore, the massive binge

was directly targeted at government current spending. Now, the boomerang effect is vicious: high inflation and currency collapses, as well as an equities and bonds market crash.

“Spend now and deal with the consequences later” was often repeated by Keynesian consensus economists, and now they shrug their shoulders and wonder why their “models did not work,” as Christine Lagarde and Paul Krugman have said recently. Why didn't they question their “models”? Because the models said what they wanted to hear. However, inflation did appear, it wasn't transitory, and the trap was set. An overleveraged, massively indebted world with gigantic imbalances built on top of each other due to the placebo effect of monetary laughing gas generated the “bubble of everything”—and now it's bursting.

The next time you read from Keynesian consensus experts that massive stimulus plans are warranted because the models say there's no risk, remind them that they built the models to always show that government and monetary excess are nonexistent and, therefore, the models are rubbish. The problem is that policymakers won't learn because they benefit from inflation and currency depreciation. It's a form of taxation and wealth transfer from the productive to the politically connected.

Many will blame the Fed for acting too quickly and aggressively, not for doing it too late and after too much. Most will demand more currency debasement and monetary excess. And the result will be the same. U.S. citizens are suffering the loss of the purchasing power of their currency and the collapse of their investments while the rest of the world's families and businesses are seeing their real wages vanish and their currencies become worthless. Cheap money is expensive. Always.

SAMIRIA BOUAOU/THE EPOCH TIMES

**FANYU** is an expert in finance and economics and has contributed analyses on China's economy since 2015.

# Fan Yu

## Mortgage Market on Red Alert

*Struggling mortgage companies hope to survive until the market turns*

**T**HE FINANCIAL MARKETS are fragile right now. And there's no better illustration of this than the multiple layers of issues plaguing the U.S. mortgage market.

To U.S. consumers, the mortgage interest rate is probably the most direct translation of the Federal Reserve's interest rate moves. More than 50 million Americans have a mortgage, and a significant portion of Americans' net worth is tied to their primary homes.

Let's quickly walk through what happens when someone takes out a mortgage. A bank or mortgage lender, such as Rocket Mortgage, originates the mortgage and earns a fee from the borrower. The lender sells the mortgage within 30 days of closing—which frees up the cash to make the next loan—to an entity that pools bundles of hundreds of mortgages and issues a mortgage-backed security (MBS). Depending on how the mortgage was underwritten, many MBSs are backed by federal government agencies such as Fannie Mae, Ginnie Mae, and Freddie Mac. Investors, including investment funds, pension funds, insurance companies, and foreign institutions, buy these MBS bonds. As the homeowner makes monthly principal and interest payments, a mortgage servicer ensures that the right parties (the investors) receive their appropriate payments in a timely manner.

That's the basic premise. Today, this intricate financial system handling mortgages is seizing up. And in this volatile market environment in which Wall Street analysts are watching for something to go wrong that could trigger a cascade of financial woes, the mortgage market is a potential falling domino.

There are two developments causing this.

One such development is the speed of the Federal Reserve's interest rate hikes. Mortgage rates have risen and fallen



**The mortgage market is suddenly beset by a significant price decline caused by sudden interest-rate moves and a massive liquidity drain caused by buyers no longer buying.**

throughout history, but very rarely have mortgage rate changes moved with the velocity seen over the past few months.

This has brought mortgage issuances to a screeching halt. Today, with rates at about 7 percent, there are few people getting new mortgages or refinancing their existing mortgages. We should note that refinancing, which is replacing an existing mortgage with a new, often lower interest rate one, has provided banks and lenders significant volume over the past several years when interest rates were low. Who wants to replace a 4 percent mortgage with a 6.5 percent one? Nobody.

The trend has hit mortgage companies particularly hard. Thousands have been laid off. A few mortgage lenders have either declared bankruptcy (e.g., First Guaranty) or shut down (e.g., Sprout). The speed at which rates move has caused significant losses for lend-

ers who haven't yet sold their recently originated loans—after all, no entity will want to buy a three-week-old mortgage at par if prevailing rates have suddenly gone up by 200 basis points.

An increase in interest rates has also significantly increased the effective duration of MBS bonds. When borrowers are refinancing and paying off old loans, mortgage bonds are also paying off quicker. Today, borrowers are likely to keep their mortgages for longer, effectively lengthening the time horizon that these bonds will be outstanding. The longer duration makes the price of these bonds more sensitive to rate movements.

The other development is that the biggest buyers of mortgages are suddenly no longer buying. Liquidity for mortgages and MBS securities is lower than it has been in a long time. The Federal Reserve, which bought more than \$1 trillion of MBS securities during the past two years, is in the midst of its quantitative tightening policy and is no longer buying. Investment banks, another source of liquidity for the mortgage market, have also ceased purchasing mortgage loans.

To sum things up, the mortgage market is suddenly beset by a significant price decline caused by sudden interest rate moves and a massive liquidity drain caused by buyers no longer buying.

Struggling mortgage companies are retrenching, laying off staff, and just hoping to survive until the market turns. LoanDepot reported a \$223 million loss in the second quarter, closed its wholesale business, and cut nearly 5,000 jobs. Online mortgage lender Better.com is in the midst of its fourth wave of layoffs since the end of 2021.

A panic or an error in this environment can set off a domino effect of financial destruction. Conversely, an astute and contrarian investor can see significant opportunities in this market.

“You can lapse into radical, absurd irrationality. I believe that’s what we’ve witnessed in the corona crisis.”

Mattias Desmet, author and professor of clinical psychology.

THOUGHT LEADERS

# Mass Formation and the Danger of Technocracy

*Manipulated masses create a paranoid atmosphere, ignore collateral damage*



LEFT PAGE: OTIABIUS WILLIAMS/THE EPOCH TIMES; THIS PAGE: CHRIS FARBER/UNICEF VIA GETTY IMAGES

“**P**eople in the grip of this corona narrative couldn’t see that these measures would ruin their lives, the health of their children, the wealth of their children, and the future of their children,” Mattias Desmet says.

In a recent episode of EpochTV’s “American Thought Leaders,” host Jan Jekielek discusses the new technocratic totalitarianism and a way of resistance with Desmet, professor of clinical psychology at Belgium’s Ghent University and author of “The Psychology of Totalitarianism.” Desmet is one of the world’s leading experts on the concept of mass formation.

**JAN JEKIELEK:** We’re doing a follow-up on our initial interview on your book “The Psychology of Totalitarianism.” I’ve been telling people that this is one of the most important books I’ve read in the past few years. So, let’s start with technocracy. What exactly is that?

**MATTIAS DESMET:** A technocracy is a system led by technical experts, and not by democratically elected politicians. In a technocratic system, people believe that rational understanding should be the cornerstone of society and that society should be led by the people who have a rational knowledge about certain things.

For instance, in a pandemic, society should be led by people who have a technical knowledge about viruses. In



UNICEF unveiled “Pandemic Classroom” to raise awareness of the need for governments to keep schools open during the pandemic, in New York on March 3, 2021.

an economic crisis, choices shouldn’t be made by democratically elected politicians, but by people who have a technical knowledge about the economy. That’s the essence of a technocratic system.

**MR. JEKIELEK:** If there’s anything that would tell us that this rule by technical experts is a terrible idea, wouldn’t it be the past two or three years?

**MR. DESMET:** I agree. The last two or three years show how irrational so-called rational experts can be. We really need to think about rationality and what rationality is, and the fact that the experts claim that they represent science. The strange thing is that on one hand, you can see science as an accumulation of rational knowledge, but you can also see science as an epistemological practice, which shows us that rationality is limited, and that much of reality cannot be understood in a rational way.

If you try to reduce life just to the rational component, you destroy the essence of life. That’s why a society which believes that its cornerstone is rational understanding, in the end, is always extremely destructive and becomes even more radically irrational.

It’s a strange paradox. If you follow rational understanding, you must be humble and honest enough to admit there will be a limit to that understanding. Your rational mind can never fully grasp the essence of the phenomenon you’re studying. You can lapse into radical, absurd irrationality. I believe that’s what we’ve witnessed in the corona crisis.

For everyone who was not really hypnotized and could take a bit of distance from the narratives of those experts who claimed to represent rationality and science, it was clear that it was utter irrationality. The measures were fundamentally and intrinsically irrational.

For instance, it was clear

from the beginning that lockdowns and other corona measures probably would claim more victims than the virus. Many scientists and institutions warned us about that. But we were so blind and so focused on the possible victims that most of us didn’t see that the measures themselves would also claim a lot of victims.

**MR. JEKIELEK:** You argue that this occurred because of people coming into the grips of a mass formation. What is this mass formation, for those unfamiliar with the concept?

**MR. DESMET:** The entire society was looking at the virus and didn’t see all the collateral damage. In a strange way, people felt empathy for the victims of the coronavirus, but they couldn’t feel empathy for those who suffered from the collateral damage of the measures.

That’s when I started to develop my theory on mass formation. Mass formation is a kind of group formation that emerges when society is in a specific condition.

In a nutshell, these conditions are met when many people feel socially isolated and suffer from a lack of meaning-making. There have to be high levels of so-called free-floating anxiety, frustration, and aggression, where people don’t know why they feel anxious, frustrated, and aggressive. A population with this specific condition is extremely sensitive to mass formation.

This mass formation usually starts with a narrative being distributed through

the mass media indicating an object of anxiety while at the same time providing a strategy to deal with that object. What happens then? All this free-floating anxiety in the population suddenly centers on this object of anxiety provided in the narrative.

People feel that they now know why they are anxious, and that they can control their anxiety by participating in the strategy for dealing with the object of anxiety, for instance, like having lockdowns to deal with the virus. At the same time, because so many people participate in this strategy, they feel connected again. The root cause of the mass formation, which is always the loneliness and disconnectedness that existed before the mass formation started, seems to be solved. People seem to feel connected again. I say, “seem,” because they aren’t really connected.

In a mass formation, each individual connects to a collective ideal, but they don’t connect to each other. On the contrary, in a mass formation, the social bonds between the individuals deteriorate even more. All the solidarity, all the psychological energy, all the love, you could say, between individuals is extracted and injected into the bonds between the individuals and the collective.

That’s why mass formations lead to a paranoid atmosphere in which everyone snitches on everyone to the state. People feel no solidarity with each other anymore, but they feel a lot of solidarity toward the collective ideal.

Mass formation is exactly the same as mass hypnosis. It’s a focusing of attention on

one aspect of reality to the extent that the rest of reality seems to disappear.

And that explains why people in the grip of this corona narrative couldn’t see that these measures would ruin their lives, the health of their children, the wealth of their children, and the future of their children.

In a mass formation, people accept everything the group believes. They all believe in the same dogmatic ideals and the same narratives. This always leads to a radical intolerance of dissenting voices, which is typical of totalitarianism.

**MR. JEKIELEK:** We’re not living in a totalitarian society today. But you’re saying that we are, somehow.

**MR. DESMET:** What we’re dealing with now is not a communist or fascist totalitarianism. It is the emergence of a technocratic authoritarianism, which nobody feels is totalitarianism.

In 1951, Hannah Arendt warned us that we had seen fascist totalitarianism and communist totalitarianism, and then she said, “Very soon, we will witness the emergence of a new totalitarianism, which is not led by gang leaders like Stalin and Hitler, but by dull bureaucrats and technocrats.” And that’s what is about to happen right now.

Democratic rights are quickly disappearing. Look at how a certain ideology is imposed on society, and how a certain narrative is fanatically believed by a part of the population. They will accept civil rights being suspended

because of this narrative.

So, you have this rationalist view of man and the world, and it created a new elite which believed that it should no longer lead society based on truth speech. The new elite believes that society should instead be led based on indoctrination propaganda.

**MR. JEKIELEK:** You just mentioned truth speech. Please explain what that means. And what is indoctrination propaganda?

**MR. DESMET:** Truth speech has to do with sharing what you really believe with someone else. You could contrast that to rhetoric, in which you try to convince the other of something you may not really believe yourself. That’s also the case with indoctrination propaganda. It’s a kind of speech in which you try to convince the population of something you ultimately don’t believe yourself.

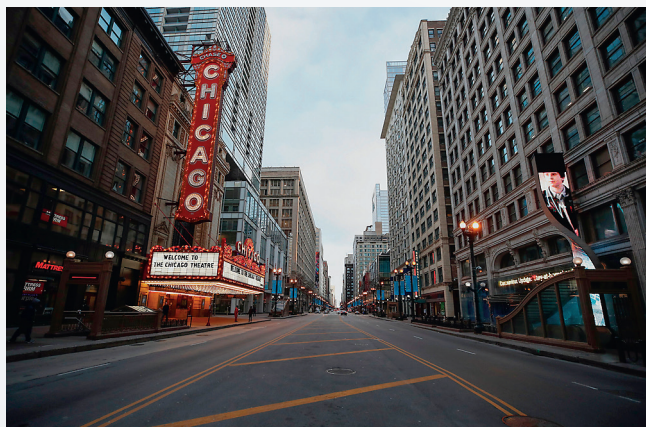
**MR. JEKIELEK:** How do we help people escape mass formation?

**MR. DESMET:** The remedy for mass formation is always the same. It is to speak out. The people who aren’t in the grip of the mass formation must speak out. If we speak out, the mass formation will be constantly disturbed. That’s what I say time, and time, and time again. The most important thing is to speak out.

That is where truth speech starts. It means a kind of courageous speech practiced by individuals who refuse to go along with the narrative of the group. They follow their own feeling of what is sincere and honest and articulate the words that seem to them truthful.

They must also be aware that what they believe may not be entirely true, that it may be wrong. But that doesn’t matter. If, to the best of your own understanding, you believe that something is right, then you have to articulate it, and you have to have the courage to speak out in public space. ■

*This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.*



The closed Chicago Theatre during the pandemic, in Chicago on March 21, 2020.

THIS PAGE: KAMIL KRZACZYNSKI/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

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# Learn to Conquer Anxiety

Don't allow worries to rule your thoughts and life

By Jeff Minick



“**W**HAT, ME worry?” was the slogan of Mad Magazine’s fictitious Alfred E. Neuman, whose boyish image became the magazine’s logo. Cartoonist Harvey Kurtzman, who helped develop the icon, remarked that his was “a face that didn’t have a care in the world.”

In truth, few people past the age of 18 have carefree faces, and by the age of 25, even fewer would adopt “What, me worry?” as a guiding principle of life. “The world is too much with us,” William Wordsworth wrote, and for most of us, that’s just a plain fact. Unlike Neuman, we worry.

Some of these worries are easily put to rest. When we take the car in for servicing, we have the mechanic check the air in the spare tire. If we are afraid that we’ll forget a friend’s birthday, we mark it on a calendar or put it in our phone.

But these small anxieties aren’t the fears that add stress lines to our foreheads or keep us awake until all hours of the night. There’s no quick fix for those voices in our heads, the whispers of apprehension and imagination kicking into overdrive. These are childhood terrors—monsters under the bed, ghosts in the attic—transformed into dragons for more mature audiences. The pre-med student is certain he’s going to flunk his first college calculus test; the expectant 28-year-old is worried sick

that she’ll be a terrible mother; despite his exemplary record, the software salesman is terrified every day that he isn’t measuring up and will find himself unemployed.

## When we take care of the present, the future generally takes care of itself.

But here’s some good news: A number of researchers have found that most of what we fret and fume about never comes to pass.

In “How Often Do Your Worries Come True?” Seth Gillihan reports on one such study at Penn State University, in which subjects kept track of their short-term worries. All of these participants, incidentally, had general anxiety disorder. The results? Ninety-one percent of their fears never saw the light of day. And of those worries that did become reality, a third of them induced less stress than anticipated. These results, Gillihan points out, are examples of what some researchers have called “worry’s deceptions,” the scenarios we act out in our minds that usually never appear.

Nor is worry about the future necessarily a bad thing, at least when kept in check. Worry can give us time to strategize possible outcomes, to consider options and tactics should the imagined fear become real, and to muster up courage in the face of

looming disaster.

Sometimes we try to conquer these worries about the future by confiding in friends. A kind word, some sound advice, a pat on the back—and in certain circumstances, a kick in the rear—can be helpful. When Douglas MacArthur went to take the exams to enter West Point, tests for which he had dedicated months of preparation, he was so afraid of failure that he felt physically sick and wanted to give up and return home. With her encouraging words, his mother pushed away those doubts, and MacArthur ended up outscoring the other candidates by far. He entered the Academy, excelled as a cadet, and went on to become one of the most famous generals in American history.

Other tips for fighting worry can be found online. Google “How not to worry about the future,” and a battalion of websites pop up, with suggestions ranging from learned optimism to breathing exercises.

Perhaps the best bit of advice, which appears on many of these lists, is to focus our attention on today’s tasks, or as some call it, mindfulness. Barring grave catastrophes, when we take care of the present, the future generally takes care of itself.

**Jeff Minick** lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. He is the author of two novels, “Amanda Bell” and “Dust on Their Wings,” and two works of nonfiction, “Learning as I Go” and “Movies Make the Man.”



# Unwind



The southern region of Portugal known as Algarve is studded with an array of impressive resorts, Michelin-starred dining opportunities, and more than 100 spectacular beaches.

PHOTO BY ROBERTO MOJDLA / SYSAWORLD/GETTY IMAGES

## Exploring Portugal’s Extraordinary Beach Region 64

**CHEF KIRSTEN DIXON’S** menu items at Winterlake and Tutka Bay Lodges in Alaska are derived from 20-plus years of delighting the palates of their guests. 67

**LUCKILY FOR CAR ENTHUSIASTS,** owners of rare and exceptional vehicles allow the public to see them at events known as concours d’elegance. 68

**WE’VE COLLECTED ITEMS** that may be useful if the power goes out in the office, you need to make a minor repair, or you simply need to open a bottle. 71

# A Grecian Delight

*This impressive residence features astounding views and luxurious accommodations for owners and guests*

By Phil Butler

The residence affords owners and guests alike a commanding view of one of Crete's most majestic landscapes.



**P**ERCHED ON A DRAMATIC HILLSIDE overlooking Spinalonga Island and Elounda Bay near Agios Nikolaos, Villa Phaedra is a fusion of elegance and incredible nature. This spacious villa on Crete's north shore offers awe-inspiring vistas and serenity against a backdrop of ancient myths.

Designed with cool lines, decorated in mild tones, and built using the finest local materials, the property overlooks one of Greece's most epic landmarks. Listed for \$5.7 million, the 6,800-square-foot residence is a symphony of marble, local stone, fine woods, and eco-friendly fabrics laid out over two residences.

The main house has five bedrooms, each with walk-in closets and dressing rooms. The open plan features inviting social spaces, a living/dining area with a fireplace, an open kitchen, and direct access to the gardens outside. In addition, the main house has two master suites; the upper-level suite has a jacuzzi on a private balcony affording panoramic views of the area.

A separate guest house adds another luxurious bedroom and kitchen, plus a gym and massage room, all connected via a winding path through the property's 1.2 acres of sculpted green spac-

es. Spacious terraces and a magnificent heated infinity pool are embraced by almost an acre of wild Crete nature.

There's also an alfresco dining area, casual seating areas, and a BBQ area with stunning views out over Spinalonga Island's fortress and Elounda Bay. A short three-minute walk leads to a private beach on one of Crete's most picturesque shorelines.

Spinalonga Island is a Greek national treasure, where the walls of a formidable fortress still stand. At one time, the island was also a leper colony. Its picturesque location has appeared in many movies, novels, and TV shows. Offshore of the island lies the sunken ancient city of Olous, where myth has it that Daedalus erected a wooden statue to the goddess Britomartis at her temple that once stood in the port.

Lastly, the bustling seaside town of Agios Nikolaos, with its sparkling Lake Voulismeni, is only a short drive from the villa. There you will find some of Crete's finest restaurants, cafes, and shopping experiences. ■

*Phil Butler is a publisher, editor, author, and analyst who is a widely cited expert on subjects ranging from digital and social media to travel technology.*



**VILLA PHAEDRA  
CRETE, GREECE  
\$5.7 MILLION**

- 6 BEDROOMS
- 6 BATHROOMS
- 6,800 SQUARE FEET
- 1.02 ACRES

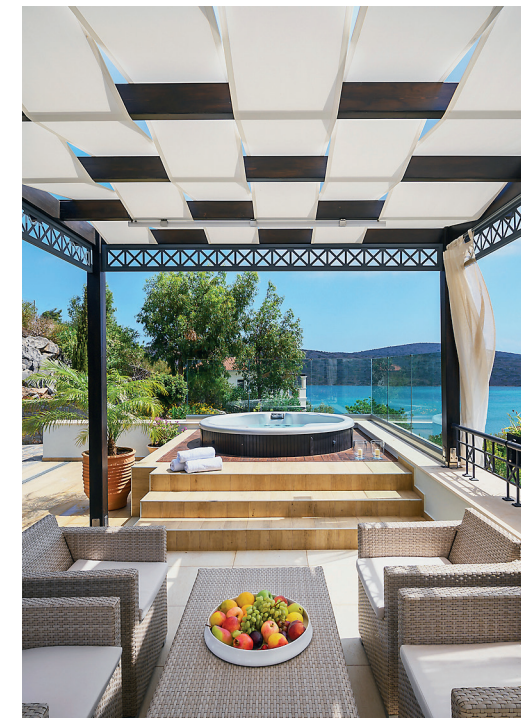
**KEY FEATURES**

- PANORAMIC VIEWS
- HEATED INFINITY POOL
- PRIME LOCATION

**AGENT**

GREECE SOTHEBY'S INTERNATIONAL REALTY

DESPINA LAOU,  
HEAD OF PRIVATE  
OFFICE



**(Above)** The upper-level master suite in the main house features its own private balcony and jacuzzi. **(Top Right)** The one-bedroom guest house is designed to ensure guests enjoy privacy and a comfortable stay. **(Right)** The interiors feature a crisp, clean design with generous use of local stone and marble.



COURTESY OF GREECE SOTHEBY'S INTERNATIONAL REALTY



# Portugal's Algarve

The beaches are stunning, but venture beyond them for countless treasures

By Tim Johnson



Fishermen boats at dusk, near a village in Portugal's Algarve region.

IT'S A CASTLE THAT ALMOST NOBODY visits, and on this relatively cool, cloudy day, I had the place all to myself. The Castelo de Loulé has a long history, set as it is on a strategic site that has been occupied since the second century, when the Romans built a military fortification here. Successive empires passed through, adding their own touches and building and rebuilding the walls and towers, which have been protected as a national historic landmark since 1924. This pile of stone sits in the center of a town of the same name, with battlements right out of a nursery rhyme rising next to shops and restaurants. Walking atop the walls, I could see all the way to the sea, shimmering below me on the horizon.

## Go Beyond the Beach

Portugal's Algarve is one of Europe's most popular vacation destinations, and rightfully so. Stretching across the southern end of the country, it's bordered by the Atlantic, with ocean frontiers fringed by cliffs on two sides. Many fly to Faro and, after checking into their seaside hotel, spend the next seven days simply enjoying the drinks, deck chairs, and general joys of being by the water. But there's definitely more to see—and do—away from the beach.

## The 'Venice of Portugal'

For example, there's the small town of Tavira. Just a 30-minute drive west of Faro (a little longer by train), people sometimes refer to Tavira as the "Venice of Portugal." That's kind of a shame, really, because it sells this destination short—Tavira has its own unique pleasures. Now a scenic, secondary center with fewer than 30,000 residents, this was the most influential city in the region during the 15th and 16th centuries due to its powerful port and rich fishing industry.

Arriving by rail, I first toured a small but mighty city museum, which outlined the town's prestigious past in faithful, colorful detail. Then I checked out the castle and the Igreja da Misericórdia, a 16th-century church considered by many to be a Renaissance masterpiece. Entering through the whitewashed exterior, I admired the vaulted ceiling, the golden altar, and especially the blue-and-white azulejo tiles, an 18th-century addition that depicts 14 separate works of mercy. Vibrant and blue, they felt like the essence of the region and the country.

Later in the afternoon, I descended to the Gilão River. I found a small waterside bar, where they poured me a glass of inexpensive, delicious local wine, and I settled into my seat to watch the boats go by.

As I later walked along the banks of the

The Algarve region is home to **86** "blue-flag" clean beaches.



**Cabo de São Vicente**, overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, is the Algarve region's most southwesterly point.

The famous historic Belmarco palace in downtown Faro.



FROM L: GETTY IMAGES; THE EPOCH TIMES; SHUTTERSTOCK



(Above) Praia do Camilo, a beach in Lagos. (Right) People enjoying their tea and coffee at a shop in Aljezur.



river, I chit-chatted with local fishermen who had just finished their day. Then, I boarded a small tour boat for a sunset cruise. The destination was Ilha de Tavira, a barrier island that's mostly known for its beaches. But I'm mainly in it for the ride.

Cruising on those calm waters through a late-afternoon daylight that felt like airborne caramel, we spotted a big flock of pink flamingoes in the Ria Formosa Natural Park.

### Jewels of the Algarve

Over the next few days, my adventures continued. In Vilamoura, I explored the marina, where docks were stacked up with sailboats and yachts. In Albufeira, I meandered through the curving cobblestone lanes to find dinner and just go for a stroll. In Loulé, a railroad town that many bypass, I explored the impressive castle, perhaps the most underrated attraction in the region.

And in Lagos, the largest city in the western Algarve, I boarded a motorboat and made haste for the grottoes. On the way out, we waded to incoming fishing families, all of them finishing their day's work on the waters. A relatively

small place with just about 30,000 residents, this city retains the feel of its glory days when it was a base for new world exploration. Its walls encircle the oldest areas, while big church towers rise over it all. The other famous Lagos—the sprawling Nigerian capital—was probably named for this Portuguese town.

Making a turn out of the protected waters into the Atlantic, we passed a couple of tucked-away beaches and arrived at the grottoes. Carved into coastal cliffs, each one has a personality all its own. One grotto, called The Cathedral, is enclosed by a vaulted rock ceiling, and I'm sure more than a few have felt it to be a religious experience to visit, the boat nosing inside, rocking around, then rolling out.

On the horizon, I could see a headland and asked the guide what it was. "Sagres," he responded. Now, it's a surf town. "But once, they thought it was the end of the world."

We didn't make it that far, the boat turning back to port. Arriving back in the harbor, I would eat a quick dinner and then catch a train back to Albufeira. A full and fun little trip and definitely worth it, going beyond the beach. But the end of the world? It will have to wait for another day. ■

*Tim Johnson is based in Toronto. He has visited 140 countries across all seven continents.*

### If You Go

#### Getting There:

You can fly directly from European hubs to the international airport in Faro (FAO). From North America, your route will likely include a stop at Lisbon's International Airport.

**Stay:** Marriott Pine Cliffs Hotel is a true retreat. From here, Faro, Vilamoura, Loulé, Tavira, and Albufeira are all close by.

**Getting Around:** While it's advisable to rent a car to explore deeper, the rail system in the Algarve is very good.

**Take Note:** Most people who work in the service industry here speak very good English.



The Castle of Loulé dates back to the 13th century.



## REFINED COOKING IN ALASKA'S RUGGED WILDERNESS

*At her family's luxury wilderness retreats, chef Kirsten Dixon introduces adventurous travelers to the unspoiled bounty of the Alaskan backcountry*

By Nick Dauk

IMAGINE STANDING ON THE rugged terrain of an ancient glacial fjord, just as likely to spot a black bear, moose, or wolf as another human soul. The setting is remote. Wild. Unforgiving. But for chef Kirsten Dixon, this untamed Alaskan backcountry is simply home, sweet home. For 40 years, Dixon and her family have encouraged visitors to embrace the beauty and bounty of their state's natural landscape.

"I met my husband working at an Anchorage hospital," she said. "He planned to move deeper into the natural world, so we quit our jobs and bought land on the Yentna River."

It was in their small cabin—a bare-bones abode without running water—that Dixon indulged in her passion for cooking. Initially welcoming only four guests at a time to their humble fishing lodge, Dixon honed her technique with help from her visitors.

"Many European chefs visited annually for salmon fishing," she recalled. "One French couple took me under their wing, invited me to Paris to study at Le Cordon Bleu, and toured me through the country's Michelin-starred restaurants. They created a formal foundation for my culinary education."

Dixon's plates have changed dramatically since the 1980s. She originally prepared American country food such as baked ham and potatoes. Now, she showcases local fare such as chaga mushrooms and reindeer tenderloin.

"I had to learn how to forage, fish, and grow a garden within a season lasting roughly 100 days," she said. "It's an intense growing season. We use high tunnels [greenhouses] to extend the season year-round now,

**Co-owner and chef Kirsten Dixon prepares wild salmon for a cooking class.**



**Alaskan sockeye salmon with romanesco from the garden, roasted fennel, leeks, and sea lettuce.**



**Dry-aged duck with broccolini from the garden, strawberry sofrito, polenta pecorino, and kale greens.**



**Tutka Bay Lodge**, near Homer in southcentral Alaska, is one of the two Alaska adventure lodges operated by the Dixons' luxury travel operator Within the Wild.

### KIRSTEN DIXON

**Age:** 66

**Born:** Marin County, California

**Lives:** Between her family's two lodges, office in Anchorage, and farm in Homer, Alaska

**Favorite Meal:** Russian salmon pie: "It reminds me of my daughter's childhood and is a dish I now prepare for special occasions."

**Coollest Foraging Find:** "There are three archaeological sites on our property, so we regularly find Native American artifacts."

but when I started, I didn't have a community to teach me how to live off of the land."

Dixon sold that first cabin, and today, she and her family proudly own and operate two luxury retreats: Winterlake Lodge along the Alaska Range and Tutka Bay Lodge in Kachemak Bay, both about an hour's trip from Anchorage by seaplane. While adventurous excursions and cozy fireside nights are always on the itinerary at the lodges, a unique hallmark is a cooking school set on a 1940s crabbing boat.

"Our classes combine culinary techniques with a taste of our backyard," Dixon said. "We teach them how to make salads from foraged edibles and how to prepare Alaskan fish. When we travel, we bring home international inspiration to help us

craft new lessons." For instance, Dixon may host a class demonstrating how to make Japanese ramen noodles and then merge them with local ingredients such as garden produce, local seafood, and seaweed from the bay.

"Each dish is meaningful to my family. We want to share our stories with our guests, get to know each other through food, and give them an intimate experience that they'll cherish," she said.

Dixon hopes to inspire the next generation of chefs to see the importance of protecting Alaska's natural spaces.

"I want to make a difference in their lives and leave a legacy with them of belonging to something that's bigger than themselves." ■

*Nick Dauk is an Orlando, Fla.-based writer and avid traveler*

THIS PAGE FROM TOP: MARCO BOTTIGELLI/GETTY IMAGES; COUNTER/GETTY IMAGES; TIM JOHNSON

COURTESY OF WITHIN THE WILD

# ROLLING MECHANICAL MAGNIFICENCE

*Walking among the world's most unique cars  
at a concours d'elegance*

◆ By Bill Lindsey



**For vehicles entered**  
in a concours  
d'elegance, perfection in  
all regards is expected  
to be achieved.

**G**ETTING OUTSIDE IN THE sunshine and fresh air is always fun—but add cars normally tucked away in private collections, now driving around on manicured lawns, for even more fun. That's a concours d'elegance, an adventure worth considering, even if you think a Pontiac Aztek is pretty cool.

For enthusiasts of all things vehicular, from motorcycles to sportscars and everything in between, a car show is an enjoyable way to spend an afternoon casually admiring the entries amid the company of like-minded people. However, for the most discerning car aficionados, only a concours d'elegance will do.

## A Competition of Elegance

To quote Merriam-Webster, a concours d'elegance is a competition of elegance, a contest of vehicles and accessories in which the entries are judged chiefly on their excellence of appearance and turnout. In plain words, it's a collection of classic cars that are in fresh-from-the-factory condition or better. The first concours were held in 17th-century France, during which aristocrats would gather to show off their spectacular horse-drawn carriages.

Today, these events draw motorized

vehicles from all eras, as seen in the annual Pebble Beach Concours's partial list of classes, which includes the Post-war Touring Open, Graber Coachwork Early, European Classic Early Open, Unorthodox Propulsion, Rolls-Royce Prewar, Antique, and American Classic. The cars are typically displayed out in the open, such as on a golf course, to allow guests—and judges—to see them up close as they sip champagne.

## Only the Very Finest

All cars selected for exhibition at a concours will be among the finest examples in the world, so judges are chosen based on their extensive knowledge of the various classes and their ability to apply objective criteria of authenticity, condition, and appearance, as well as subjective criteria that include beauty, significance, and visual impact.

For the exterior, the bodywork must be precise and the chrome must be sparkling. The interior is also closely scrutinized, with attention paid to the seats, interior panels, carpeting, headliner, steering wheel, and gauges. The judges are seeking examples that represent excellence in all aspects; they're also looking for vehicles that draw a crowd for reasons such as having a royal pedigree or serving as a perfect snapshot of a time when things were simpler.

## Attending a concours for the first time can be exciting, as is rubbing elbows with people who simply love cars.

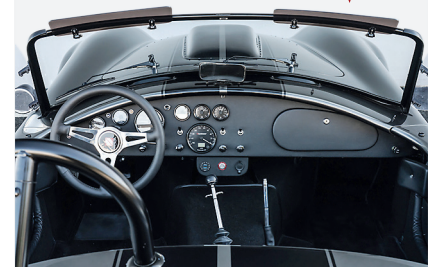
An exciting part of many concours is that moment when the vehicles parade by on their way to the judging station. In addition to simply looking great, these cars must also be capable of being operated on and around the viewing grounds. Seeing and hearing exceptional cars in action is a thrilling experience. For this reason, many collectors spend vast amounts of money to not only acquire unique specimens but to then restore and maintain them to better-than- ◆

## ONLY THE BEST MAY COMPETE

*In addition to looking good, the cars must also be capable of being driven past the judge's station.*



*In order to take top honors, all aspects of a car's interior must be perfect in every way.*



*The car's exterior is closely scrutinized and judged, from paint to tires, and chrome.*



LEFT PAGE: OSCAR SWEEP/SHUTTERSTOCK; THIS PAGE FROM TOP: SIXTYEIGHTWEST/SHUTTERSTOCK, HILBANKRACING.COM, ETHAN YETMAN/SHUTTERSTOCK



With the cars parked in the open, it's easy to get a close-up look.



**Pebble Beach** is one of the top concours events in the United States, drawing exceptional cars from all over the world.

perfect condition in all ways.

Unlike a typical car show, at a concours, there are no open hoods or signs explaining the history and pedigree of the car. Hoods are only opened at the request of a judge and then promptly closed; the intention is for the vehicles to be seen while they're ready to drive. Similarly, signage or props aren't permitted. However, owners are encouraged to discuss the car's history with the judges, providing details of how, when, and why they acquired it. If it has been completely rebuilt or has been in the family for many generations or was the owner's dream car—the judges want to know all about it.

**See Them All**

Being active in the world of concours is no simple matter, but it brings with it membership in an elite group sharing a love of all things mechanical. While touching is strictly forbidden, a concours represents an excellent opportunity to take the family on an al fresco adventure. There are many concours events held around the world, with those held in the United States including Pebble Beach in California, Amelia Island in Florida, Greenwich in Connecticut, and the Audrain Newport Concours & Motor Week in Rhode Island.

With a bit of planning, attending all or

several of these could be the basis for an exciting road trip. Because having a car accepted for judging is a rare honor and several events bar entries that have been recently exhibited elsewhere, chances are excellent that new cars will be seen at every concours. There's certainly no rule that a car must be entered into multiple events; based on geographic constraints, some cars are only entered into events located relatively close to home or only in one event.

A word of warning: After attending a concours d'elegance, a seed will be planted to seek out and discover a notable car stashed forgotten and dusty in a barn somewhere, painstakingly restore it, and have it ready to take top honors at next year's event. ■



**One of the best parts** of a concours is watching a rare car being driven past the crowd by its excited owners.



**LIFESTYLE**  
**FIRST IN CLASS**

*The world of concours d'elegance*



**1**  
**Only the Best**

Unlike a local car show where anyone can enter any car, only the cream of the crop, the rarest and most intriguing vehicles, are selected for display at a concours d'elegance.



**2**  
**A Great Road Trip**

There are several notable U.S. concours, creating the opportunity for an epic road trip with points in Amelia Island, Florida; Westport, Connecticut; Newport, Rhode Island; and Pebble Beach, California.



**3**  
**Star Sightings**

Celebrity sightings are common, with comedians and avid car collectors Jay Leno and Tim Allen often seen admiring the vehicles on display.

THIS PAGE FROM TOP: OSCAR SWEEP/SHUTTERSTOCK; KEITH J. PINKS/SHUTTERSTOCK

# BE A PROBLEM-SOLVER

*Staples and tape can only fix so much, so consider these handy items for your office toolbox*

By Bill Lindsey



**Write This Down**  
**TACTILE TURN ACTION PEN**  
**\$99**

We've all been in this scenario: You're away from your desk and need to write down a phone number or address, but you either don't have a pen, or the one in your briefcase was crushed under your laptop. Crafted with titanium in order to survive the worst abuse, this pen utilizes a clever bolt action to lock it open and is available in a compact 4 1/2-inch size that can be tucked into the smallest pocket.



**No More Loose Screws**  
**SPYDERCO CLIPITool**  
**SCREWDRIVER/OPENER**  
**\$53**

Our grandfathers always carried a small pocketknife, and they would be impressed by the bottle opener and screwdriver on this tiny marvel. The compact design incorporates a handy clip to attach it to a briefcase pocket. The combination bottle opener/screwdriver blade has a hole at the end for easy opening, and the screwdriver edge can be used on a wide variety of screws. The two-inch knife blade also has an easy-open feature, making it a perfect choice for opening well-wrapped packages.

FROM TOP: L. COURTESY OF TACTILE TURN, DULUTH TRADING, SPYDERCO, UNCHARTED SUPPLY CO.; LEATHERMAN



**Bright Idea**  
**DULUTH TRADING**  
**INSPECTORS PEN LIGHT**  
**\$16.95**

A penlight is an item that will amaze you with its handiness as soon as you use it for the first time. Drop a contact lens or tiny thumb drive on the floor? No problem, shine the beam on the floor and under the desk to spot them. Priced to allow you to store one in your desk, another in a briefcase, and one in the car, all with spare AAA batteries, the 100-lumen, impact-resistant light is a must-have that you'll use very often.



**Power It Up**  
**UNCHARTED SUPPLY CO.**  
**ATHENA POWER PACK**  
**\$139**

At first glance, a power pack may seem like overkill, but it's easily stashed in an office drawer or a vehicle trunk and can be invaluable when the power goes out. The 16,000 milliamp hours integral battery with USB-C, MicroUSB, and USB ports keep personal electronics and phones powered for many hours. It also comes with cables to be used to jumpstart a vehicle with a dead battery, which can happen all too easily. The integral flashlight can prove valuable in a windowless office or stairwell.



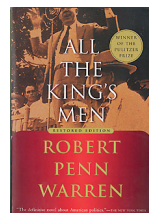
**Get a Grip**  
**LEATHERMAN STYLE PS**  
**\$34.95**

No need for a crisis when you need to tighten a nut on a piece of office furniture with this pocket-sized toolkit handy. Despite being tiny enough to easily stash in a briefcase or desk drawer, it has pliers for gripping, a file for smoothing, tiny scissors, a combo Phillips/flathead screwdriver, and tweezers to tug out tiny computer parts. The integral carabiner clip lets you put it where it's easy to find.

## RECOMMENDED READING

*This week, we feature a sobering assortment: potent novels on how power corrupts, moving poetry of WWI, and a history of the winter at Valley Forge.*

### FICTION

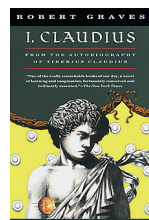


**'ALL THE KING'S MEN'**  
By Robert Penn Warren

#### When Power Corrupts

"All the King's Men" is one of the most potent stories of how power can corrupt even the seemingly incorruptible. When honest and well-meaning Willie Stark is urged into becoming governor, his new power proves too much to rescind, leading to the inevitable.

MARINER BOOKS RESTORED EDITION, 2002, 656 PAGES



**'I, CLAUDIUS'**  
By Robert Graves

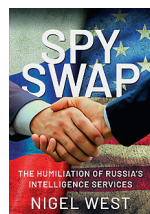
#### The Triumph of the Weak

Crippled and thought by many to be an idiot, the neglected Claudius survives plots and murders by Roman emperors Tiberius and Caligula. In this fictionalized first-person account, Claudius pursues his love of history and makes a few friends, but once Caligula

takes the throne, bumbling Claudius finds himself as a front-row spectator to a madhouse of mayhem, murder, and cruelty. With humor and sharp wit, this novel explores history, politics, and power and offers insights applicable to our own age.

VINTAGE REISSUE EDITION, 1989, 468 PAGES

### ESPIONAGE



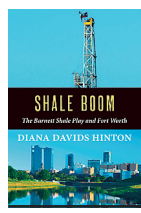
**'SPY SWAP'**  
By Nigel West

#### A Double Game With Double Agents

In 2010, the FBI swooped up a network of Russian spies living illegally and undercover in the United States. Press coverage focused on one spy, the exceedingly attractive Anna Chapman. The press portrayed them all as inept klutzes, caught because of their own carelessness. This book reveals that these spies were extremely professional and highly dangerous—and under observation for more than a decade. "Spy Swap" reveals why the FBI acted to bust them in 2010 and in a manner humiliating to Russia.

NAVAL INSTITUTE PRESS, 2021, 248 PAGES

### SCIENCE



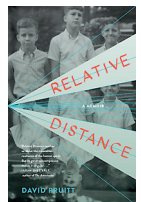
**'SHALE BOOM'**  
By Diana Davids Hinton

#### How Fracking Helped the US

In 2020, the United States was energy independent. This book explains how that happened, looking at a key part of that transformation: A certain shale helped trigger the fracking revolution. It looks at the benefits and costs (societal, environmental, and financial) of drilling and of the hydrocarbon industry, as well as the benefits and excesses of environmental opposition to fracking. It's a balanced look at a tech revolution.

TEXAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2018, 192 PAGES

### MEMOIR



**'RELATIVE DISTANCE'**  
By David Pruitt

#### One Man's Journey of Faith

Statistically, the odds were stacked against David Pruitt. He was the

youngest of three sons raised by an abusive father and detached mother. Ultimately, he overcame his tragic and tumultuous upbringing in a personal triumph. Poignant and painful, this courageous and redemptive memoir of his personal struggles is sure to inspire.

SPARKPRESS, 2022, 328 PAGES

### CLASSICS



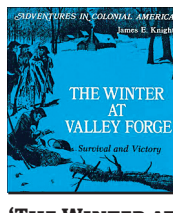
**'SOME CORNER OF A FOREIGN FIELD'**  
Edited by James Bentley

#### Poetry and Art of the Great War

The poets and artists of World War I, some of whom died in battle, have gone to their graves. But they left a rich legacy of what they had witnessed in print and paint. In this small book are some poets who may be familiar to us—Rupert Brooke, Rudyard Kipling—and others greeting us for the first time. Accompanying each poem is a painting, nearly all of them depicting combat, trench life, or field hospitals. In this memorial to those who fought and died, we find a sadness and a grave beauty that deeply touches the heart.

GALILEO PUBLISHERS, 2019, 120 PAGES

### FOR KIDS

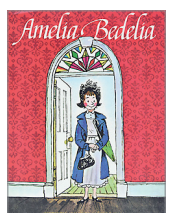


**'THE WINTER AT VALLEY FORGE'**  
By James E. Knight

#### Survival and Victory

This fine first-person account of the hunger, cold, and disease suffered by American soldiers during the winter of 1778 reminds children of the sacrifices made for liberty. The black-and-white illustrations by George Guzzi. This book is for third and fourth grades.

BEAUTIFUL FEET BOOKS, 2006, 32 PAGES



**'AMELIA BEDELIA'**  
By Peggy Parish & Fritz Siebel

#### Quite Hilarious, Literally

Amelia Bedelia is a charming housekeeper who takes everything literally. When her to-do list reads "draw the drapes," well, she follows instructions. This hilarious tale not only ignites giggles but encourages play with language.

GREENWILLOW BOOKS ANNIVERSARY EDITION, 2013, 40 PAGES



**Ian Kane**  
is a U.S. Army veteran, filmmaker, and author. He enjoys the great outdoors and volunteering.

## MOVIE REVIEWS

*This week, we feature two biographical dramas: one about the fate of a severely deformed man and the other a rousing epic about a Spanish hero.*

### NEW RELEASE



#### 'Summit Fever' (2022)

Intrepid British mountaineer Michael (Freddie Thorp) has his sights set on three of the most dangerous peaks in the world. Despite seeing the terrifying fatalities of climbers scaling the mountains, he remains undeterred. But then his own climb and friends are put in jeopardy by an unexpected storm.

This film is a hodgepodge of disparate elements that don't always come together. Although it features incredible shots of natural scenery and has some thrilling cliffhangers (pun intended), its melodrama somewhat holds it back.

#### DRAMA

**Release Date:**  
Oct. 14, 2022  
(United States)

**Director:**  
Julian Gilbey

**Starring:**  
Ryan Phillippe,  
Freddie Thorp,  
Hannah New

**Running Time:**  
1 hour, 55 minutes

**MPAA Rating:** R  
**Where to Watch:**  
Theaters

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

### A ROUSING EPIC ABOUT A SPANISH HERO



#### 'El Cid' (1946)

Charlton Heston stars as the Spanish hero El Cid, who struggles with internal politics in his valiant quest to defend Spain against

the Muslim hordes of Africa.

With stunning cinematography, exotic locales, and some of the best acting performances of any of Hollywood's epics, this film's

incredible battle scenes never overshadow the intimate drama between the main characters.

#### BIOGRAPHY | DRAMA | HISTORY

**Release Date:**  
Dec. 14, 1961

**Director:**  
Anthony Mann

**Starring:**  
Charlton Heston,  
Sophia Loren, Raf Vallone

**Running Time:**  
3 hours, 2 minutes

**Not Rated**  
**Where to Watch:**  
YouTube, Amazon

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

### FAMILY PICK

#### 'Wolfwalkers' (2020)

It's 1650, and the town of Kilkenny in Ireland has been taken over by the cruel British Lord Protector (Simon McBurney). The lord orders hunter Bill Goodfellowe (Sean Bean) to kill a local pack of wolves. But when Bill's daughter Robyn (Honor Kneafsey) befriends a tribe that can

transform into wolves, she tries to save them. This splendid cartoon harks back to the days of hand-crafted animation. It offers plenty to ponder and valuable lessons about



resisting tyranny and good triumphing over evil. (Perhaps scary for wee ones.)

#### ANIMATION | ADVENTURE | FAMILY

**Release Date:**  
Nov. 13, 2020

**Directors:**  
Tomm Moore, Ross Stewart

**Starring:**  
Honor Kneafsey (voice),  
Eva Whittaker (voice),  
Sean Bean (voice)

**Running Time:**  
1 hour, 43 minutes

**MPAA Rating:** PG

**Where to Watch:**  
Apple TV+

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

### A POWERFUL BIOGRAPHICAL DRAMA

#### 'The Elephant Man' (1980)

In Victorian England, brilliant Dr. Frederick Treves (Anthony Hopkins) rescues a severely deformed man, John Merrick (John Hurt), from being exploited in freak shows. Despite his setbacks, Merrick's deep humanity is soon revealed.

This is an incredibly powerful film about a societal outcast who, despite being degraded and ostracized, manages to maintain his dignity, passion for life, and sensitivity. It's tough to watch at



times but evolves into a rich story about the inherent humanism we all share.

#### BIOGRAPHY | DRAMA

**Release Date:**  
Oct. 10, 1980

**Director:**  
David Lynch

**Starring:**  
Anthony Hopkins,  
John Hurt,  
Anne Bancroft

**Running Time:**  
2 hours, 4 minutes

**MPAA Rating:** PG

**Where to Watch:**  
DirectTV, Vudu, Hoopla

★ ★ ★ ★ ★



# How to Enjoy a Night at the Movies

*The key to having a great time at the movie theater is to focus on the show and your manners*

Enjoying the latest blockbuster from Hollywood is a treat, allowing you to lose yourself in the action on the silver screen. But as you enjoy the entertainment, show consideration for those around you.

By Bill Lindsey

## 1 Be on Time

Show up on time, settling into your seat at least five minutes before the movie begins. Walking in while the movie is playing is disruptive to those who managed to get to their seats on time. When the movie ends, you can get up once the credits begin to roll, but consider waiting to see if there are short, new movie trailers after the last credit. Even if there are no trailers, the lobby and restrooms will be less crowded when you wait for everyone else to leave before you do.



## 2 Hold That Thought

People go to movie theaters in order to escape from the outside world for a little while, and reasonably expect to be able to focus entirely upon and enjoy the movie they've selected—and paid—to see. Accordingly, don't talk during a movie; there is nothing so important that it cannot wait. Don't text, either! Continual whispering can also be disturbing to those around you. Apply a slight revision of the golden rule: Don't behave in a way that would annoy you.

## 3 No Calls, Please

Turn your phone off; the ring of a cellphone during a movie is not only jarring, but also disrespectful to others in the theater. If you are truly expecting an important call, you shouldn't be sitting in a movie theater! Allow incoming calls to go to voicemail until after the movie. If you insist on taking a call, get up and leave the viewing area immediately, with as little fanfare as possible. Reconsider returning to watch the movie, as doing so may once again disturb the patrons who have better manners than you.

## 4 Sit, Stay

The appeal of a movie theater is the ability to sit back, relax, and immerse yourself in the experience. Frequent trips to the snack counter, bathroom, or lobby are rude to those around you. Pick the perfect seat by arriving a bit early and trying out several to determine which one provides the exact, perfect view. If you bring children, explain to them the importance of staying in their seats and quietly enjoying the movie; if they have phones, take them temporarily, returning them after you leave the theater.

## 5 Relax, but Not Too Much

Being comfortable with snacks is part of the "going to the movies" experience, but don't create and then leave behind a pile of trash or spilled food. Similarly, you're not in the privacy of your home, so don't put your feet up on the seat in front of you or the seat adjacent to yours. If you are inordinately tall, consider taking a seat at the end of the aisle so as not to block the view of those seated behind you.

OSAI IMAGES/BETTYPAGES

# Courageous Reporting

We believe that investigating and exposing the truth is the only way that we can remain safe and free

## CROSSFIRE HURRICANE

ON MAY 25, 2017, The Epoch Times published an article headlined "Despite Allegations, No Evidence of Trump–Russia Collusion Found." The article detailed that—despite a media frenzy at the time—no actual evidence had been uncovered that President Donald Trump or anyone associated with his campaign had colluded with Russia to influence the 2016 presidential election.

OUR REPORTING was proven accurate with the conclusion of the investigation by special counsel Robert Mueller.

NOT ONLY DID WE NOT BUY INTO the false narrative that Trump colluded with Russia, but we have also been a leader in reporting on the irregular and apparently politicized nature of the FBI's investigation of the Trump campaign. During the past five years, we have published dozens—many of them exclusive—articles on the topic.



## ELECTION INTEGRITY

FOLLOWING THE 2020 ELECTION, The Epoch Times was at the forefront of investigating and reporting on the questions surrounding the integrity of the election. Through our fact-based and independent reporting, we were able to uncover multiple irregularities.



## ORIGINS OF COVID-19

ON APRIL 15, 2020, The Epoch Times published its documentary "Tracking Down the Origin of Wuhan Coronavirus."



The film, which received over 100 million views, explored the origins of the virus, including the possibility of a lab leak. It presents scientific data and interviews with top scientists and national security experts.

YEARS AFTER THE RELEASE of this groundbreaking documentary, the possibility of a lab leak is considered by government officials and experts as the most likely explanation for the virus's spread.

## CHINA THREAT

SINCE ITS INCEPTION in the year 2000, The Epoch Times has been at the forefront of reporting on the infiltration of the United States by the Chinese Communist Party. Numerous times over the years, we've broken major China-related stories ahead of other news organizations. In 2003, The Epoch Times was the first media outlet to systematically and continuously report on the spread of SARS, well ahead of most other Western media. We were also the first to report on state-sponsored forced organ harvesting in China—one of the most underreported atrocities of our time—in



which prisoners of conscience are killed for their organs, which are then sold for profit on a large scale.

THE EPOCH TIMES also published the editorial series "Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party," revealing the true nature and history of the Communist Party and inspiring a movement that so far has seen more than 400 million Chinese people quit the Party and its affiliated organizations. Another of our series, "How the Specter of Communism Is Ruling Our World," systematically exposes the evil nature of communism, as well as the harm it has brought and continues to inflict on the United States and the world.

# What Our Readers Say

“It’s a magazine that’s FOR the American people, not against.”

*Vanessa Morrison, medical records clerk*

“Well thought out material, thoroughly investigated, and I trust [the] sources.”

*Gail F. Sauve, homemaker*

“It is straightforward, rather than a lot of speculation or pontificating.”

*Jan Hamilton, retired professional*

“[Insight] reminds me that there are still a LOT of wonderful, good, and dedicated people in this country.”

*Creed Haymond, surgeon*

“Unbiased reporting. Short, impactful articles.”

*Mark Naumann, photographer*

“I can trust what I read and make up my own mind how I feel about the subject.”

*Jim Edwards, retired*

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