

EPOCH INSIGHT



FORCED ENVIRONMENTALISM

How the government and an investment giant have united to force transition to electric cars

By Katie Spence

Forced Environmentalism

FIRST, CALIFORNIA ANNOUNCED PLANS TO ban sales of all new gas-powered cars by 2035.

Soon, New York followed with a similar proposal.

In this issue of Epoch Insight, reporter Katie Spence writes about the intersection of government and the private sector in the push to enact a climate and political agenda.

While governments are limited to the use of laws, major financial institutions can force social agendas through the use of so-called environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG).

In many ways, the private sector is able to do what government branches are unable, or not allowed, to do.

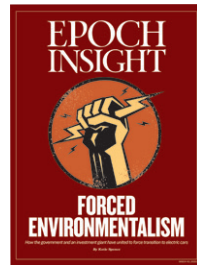
“When we harness the power of both the public and private sectors, we can achieve truly incredible things. This is what we must do to get to net-zero,” BlackRock CEO Larry Fink said in this year’s annual letter to CEOs, referring to the reduction of carbon emissions.

As Spence writes, a major lever under the control of power institutions such as BlackRock is influence over corporate boards. Companies such as BlackRock are among the largest shareholders in top corporations.

In BlackRock’s case, the investment firm exercises corporate board power over 2,700 companies.

Read this week’s cover story about the climate agenda and how it’s being forced on America.

JASPER FAKKERT
Editor-in-chief



ON THE COVER

What’s behind the push to force the transition to electric cars?

GETTY IMAGES, ILLUSTRATION BY THE EPOCH TIMES

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EPOCH INSIGHT

30 | Data Accuracy
Wildly divergent data make it difficult to know real COVID-19 death numbers.

32 | Power Source
Is green hydrogen the next direction in energy sources?

40 | Philanthropy
Foster Friess: A generous man whose heart was in the American West.

50 | Oil Prices
Biden has turned the Strategic Oil Reserve into a strategic political reserve.

51 | CCP Influence
Beijing resorts to “wolf warrior” diplomacy and transnational repression.

52 | Debt Relief
The student loan relief raises questions of equity and more.

53 | Homeless People
Misguided government policies worsen the U.S. homelessness crisis.

54 | UK Economy
Liz Truss is not to blame for the UK market turmoil.

55 | Global Investments
The strong U.S. dollar will rev up global mergers and acquisitions.



Features

14 | Peer Pressure
Children are under pressure to use pronouns and identify as LGBT.

18 | Prison to Prayer
Arizona bikers rise above past trauma through their faith-based club.

24 | Transgender Surgery
A court clash in Arkansas over a law banning child surgeries will set the precedent.

THE LEAD 36 | BlackRock Clout
The asset manager aligns with the government to impose a shift toward electric vehicles.

44 | Domestic Extremists
Despite Democrats’ rhetoric, more threats come from the left, say experts.

The United States will stop at least two of its nuclear weapons programs, according to Department of Defense documents, which state that the country will retire the aircraft-delivered B83-1 gravity bomb and will cancel a program to further develop sea-launched cruise missiles.

REUTERS/JOSHUA ROBERTS

56 | ‘Unprincipled Partisanship’
“If you’re a principled person, you’ll be punished for it,” lawyer Alan Dershowitz says.

60 | Live Today Fully
Don’t let unfounded fears of what might happen ruin the present.

62 | A California Classic
Complete with vineyards and stables, this is a tranquil oasis.

64 | A Unique Athens Neighborhood
An elegant hidden gem, only a short train ride from Athens.

67 | The Taste of Venezuela
Talented immigrant chefs share Venezuelan culture at Alma Cocina Latina.

68 | 6-String Investments
Vintage guitars can be very viable alternative investments.

71 | Dive Watch Roundup
You don’t have to be a professional diver to like these watches.

74 | Minding Party Ps & Qs
How to get on the guest list for all of this season’s gatherings.



SPOTLIGHT

Auspicious Flower

A FARMER CULTIVATES LOTUS FLOWERS in a reservoir ahead of the Diwali festival in Bhopal, India, on Oct. 23. The lotus, India's national flower, is a symbol of wealth, prosperity, and purity.

PHOTO BY GAGAN NAYAR/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

The Week



An Antifa extremist pushes a burning recycling bin during a free speech rally in Berkeley, Calif., on April 15, 2017.

PHOTO BY ELIJAH NOUVELAGE/GETTY IMAGES

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The Domestic Left-Wing Extremist Threat 44

Pressured to Sexually Identify

Students nationwide are facing pressure to become LGBT. 14

Fallen Souls Finding the Light

Out of darkness, motorcyclists bond through a higher calling. 18

The Legacy Lives On

One of the "century's greatest investors" continues to inspire others. 40

INSIDE

“This is not something you would normally hear me say, but Donald Trump was right on TikTok years ago.”

Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.), on the security risks posed by the Chinese-owned social media platform.



25
YEARS

Mortgage applications fell to their lowest level in 25 years as interest rates hit record highs this month, according to the Mortgage Bankers Association.

16
ARRESTED

Police in Arizona have arrested 16 suspects in connection with child sex crimes and human trafficking following an undercover operation known as Operation Tangled Web, officials said.

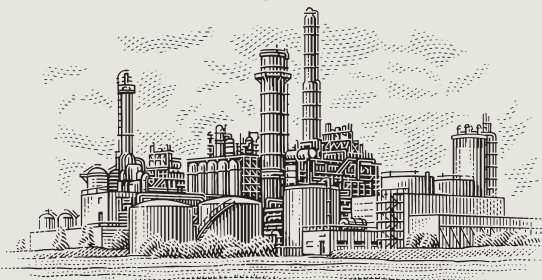
“There is a crime emergency in New York.”

Rep. Lee Zeldin, Republican candidate for New York governor, who added that if he's elected, he will suspend cashless bail.



30 to 80 Cents

Fuel supplier Mansfield Energy says that **diesel prices are running 30 to 80 cents higher than the market average.**



\$400
MILLION

Kanye West has dropped off the Forbes list of billionaires after Adidas cut ties worth about \$1.5 billion with the businessman rapper over comments he made on social media. Forbes now says West's net worth is around \$400 million.

38,500 Illegal Aliens — Border Patrol agents in the El Paso, Texas, area apprehended more than 38,500 illegal immigrants in the first three weeks of October, according to Customs and Border Patrol data.

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Election workers process vote-by-mail ballots at the Orange County Registrar of Voters in Santa Ana, Calif., on Oct. 27.

ELECTIONS

Odds makers favor GOP in 2022 to Retake House and Senate

BETTING FIRMS are favoring Republicans to take control of both chambers of Congress, with less than two weeks to go before the 2022 midterms. UK-based betting company Smarkets has the Republican Party favored to take control of the Senate with 63.69 percent. The GOP is favored to win the House at 89.29 percent. Democrats are projected to receive 36.23 percent of the vote for the Senate and 10.87 percent for the House.

Another oddsmaker, PredictIt, has the GOP favored to take control of the Senate with 67 cents for a share, as compared with 34 cents per share for Democrats. For winners, they get a dollar back per share.

For the House, Republicans are favored 83 cents to win per dollar, as compared to Democrats with 11 cents, according to the oddsmaker. House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) is favored to become the next House speaker at 84 cents, as compared with current House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), who stands at 8 cents.

VACCINES

CDC Pushed for COVID-19 Boosters Without Clinical Trials: Emails

THE CENTERS for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) pressured U.S. regulators to clear COVID-19 boosters without clinical trial data, according to released emails.

CDC officials relayed to counterparts at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in early August 2021 that they wanted authorization for Moderna and Pfizer boosters as data began showing that the vaccines weren't working as well as initially promoted.

The conversation took place on a call that was described by Dr. Phil Krause, a top FDA official, to several other FDA workers.

“Take a deep breath before reading this next paragraph. On that call, the CDC evidently stated that they will assemble all the data they are aware of on third dosing in this setting and send it to us in the hope that we will (very soon) authorize the third dose for immunocompromised as part of the EUA,” Krause wrote in the Aug. 5, 2021, email. EUA stands for emergency use authorization.

The emails show that “the CDC wanted the booster approved without a trial,” Dr. Jay Bhattacharya, a professor of medicine at Stanford University, wrote on Twitter.

IRS

IRS Boosts 401(k) Contribution Limit by Record Amount Amid Raging Inflation

THE IRS has announced that it will raise the amount that Americans can contribute to 401(k) and similar retirement savings plans by a record 9.8 percent amid decades-high inflation.

Starting in 2023, Americans can contribute as much as \$22,500 into 401(k), 403(b), and most 457 retirement plans, as well as the federal government's Thrift Savings Plan, according to the agency's announcement. That's \$2,000 more than the current contribution limit of \$20,500, it said.



The Internal Revenue Service in Washington on Sept. 19, 2018.

HEALTH

FDA Recalls More Blood Pressure Medications Due to Cancer-Causing Chemical

THE FOOD and Drug Administration (FDA) has announced that Aurobindo Pharma USA is recalling two blood pressure medications due to high levels of nitrosamine.

The New Jersey-based company initiated a recall of two lots of quinapril and hydrochlorothiazide in 20-milligram and 12.5-milligram tablets due to the presence of the chemical, which is associated with a higher risk of cancer. The tablets are used to treat high blood pressure.

The FDA alert doesn't say to stop taking the medications, but does advise patients to consult their doctor.



Attorney General Merrick Garland (C) at a press conference at the Department of Justice in Washington on Oct. 24.

US-CHINA

US Charges CCP Spies Over Alleged Campaigns to Recruit US Spies

THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE has announced charges against 10 Chinese intelligence officers and officials over their alleged involvement in espionage campaigns in the United States to further communist China's strategic interests.

The charges, across three separate cases, state that agents of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) conspired to forcibly repatriate Chinese dissidents living in the United States, obstructing the criminal prosecution of a Chinese telecommunications company, developing pro-China spies within the United States, and illegally acting as agents of the CCP's intelligence and security apparatus.

UK

UK's Rishi Sunak Delays Plan to Plug Britain's Budget Black Hole

NEW BRITISH PRIME MINISTER Rishi Sunak has delayed the announcement of a keenly awaited plan for repairing the country's public finances until Nov. 17, 2 1/2 weeks later than previously announced.

The postponement, Sunak's first policy decision since taking over from Liz Truss, briefly raised British borrowing costs in financial markets.

Sunak is taking on an economy facing recession at a time when the Bank of England is raising interest rates to tame double-digit inflation. Low growth and rising borrowing costs have worsened the strain on already-stretched public finances.



UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak leaves 10 Downing Street in London on Oct. 26.

IRAN

Death Toll of Iran Protests Surpasses 230: Human Rights Group

AT LEAST 234 PEOPLE, including 29 children, have been killed in ongoing protests in Iran, a human rights organization reported on Oct. 25.

Iran Human Rights (IHRNGO) stated that they've also received multiple reports of Iranian authorities attempting to cover up the killing of protesters.

"Returning bodies is made contingent on families promising to stay silent or confirming the false causes of death cited by the Forensic Medical Organisation on the death certificates," the organization stated.

While people in Iran have been demonstrating for weeks and repeatedly demanding the overthrow of the Islamic regime in Iran, security forces have dispersed gatherings with live ammunition and tear gas, according to IHRNGO.



Iranian police patrol in the capital city of Tehran amid widespread protests on Oct. 8.

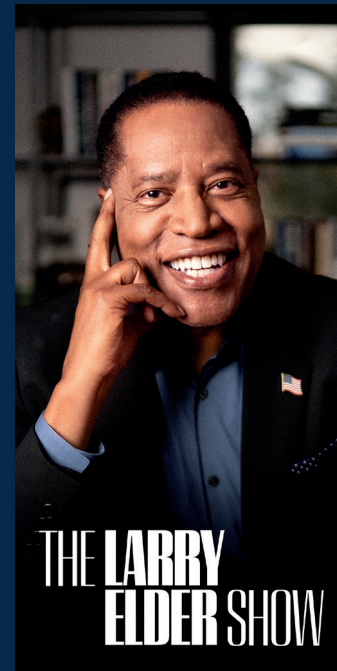
SERBIA

Serbian Parliament Appoints New Government

THE SERBIAN PARLIAMENT has appointed a new government whose main priorities will be investment in energy infrastructure and membership in the European Union.

The new Cabinet will be led by Ana Brnabic, who also served as the prime minister in the previous two terms.

It will have 28 ministers, mainly from the ruling Serbian Progressive Party and its ally the Socialists.



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The Week in Photos



1. A Lithuanian Mi-8 helicopter and a Belgian armoured vehicle during the NATO Iron Wolf military exercises in Pabrade, Lithuania, on Oct. 26.

2. A woman lights earthen lamps in celebration of Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights, at her home in Guwahati, India, on Oct. 24.

3. Participants compete in a race on office chairs during the ISU-1 Grand Prix, a two-hour endurance race organized by the Japan Office Chair Racing Association, in Ichinomiya, Japan, on Oct. 22.

4. Shepherds guide a flock of around 1,100 sheep and 200 goats through the streets of Madrid, in a demonstration for ancient grazing and migration rights that are increasingly threatened by urban sprawl, on Oct. 23.

5. The steam engine Flying Scotsman, now owned by the National Railway Museum in York, sets off from a platform in Swanage, England, on Oct. 22.

6. A contestant in the 32nd Tompkins Square Halloween Dog Parade in New York on Oct. 22.



COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM TOP: SEAN GALLUP/GETTY IMAGES; BJUBORO/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES; TOMOHIRO OHSUMI/GETTY IMAGES; OSCAR DEL POZO/AP VIA GETTY IMAGES; FINNBARR WEBSTER/GETTY IMAGES; TIMOTHY A. CLARY/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

GENDER NEUTRAL RESTROOM



THIS BATHROOM IS FOR EVERYONE

A sign posted outside Santee High School's gender-neutral restroom in Los Angeles on May 4, 2016.

PHOTO BY MARK RALSTON/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

INSIDE SCHOOLS

YOUNG CHILDREN PRESSURED TO SEXUALLY IDENTIFY

From pronouns to identifying as LGBT, school children face intense confusion

BY JACKSON ELLIOTT

IN A SMALL, CONSERVATIVE TOWN in North Dakota, 12-year-old Rebecca has faced unrelenting pressure from her friends to announce an LGBT identity. It's a pressure she doesn't want or need, according to her mother, Sarah.

Sarah and Rebecca have asked that their full names be withheld to prevent them from being identified, which they fear would exacerbate the problem.

Rebecca has helped care for a terminally ill relative and wants to be a nurse one day, said Sarah. The middle-schooler values her friends and does great in school.

But a few years ago, she was sexually abused by another girl close to her in age, who made unwanted advances and touched her inappropriately, Sarah said. She feels Rebecca isn't even old enough to mentally process the trauma she experienced.

Among young girls, it's a common trend now for friend groups to suddenly all announce an LGBT gender identity because it's cool, experts say. And children often suddenly choose a new gender identity as a result of intense peer pressure.

Rebecca has experienced this pressure. And for some children, it might be easier to dismiss.

But for Rebecca, every time classmates pressure her to announce a non-heterosexual identity, it causes her trauma to resurface.

As the promotion of LGBT sexuality sweeps into American schools, vulnerable children like Rebecca face increasingly sexualized environments, Erika Sanzi, director of outreach for Parents Defending Education, told The Epoch Times.

"A fifth grader often still believes in Santa Claus," Sanzi said. "They are just young, and usually the only reason they have mature topics on their minds is because adults have made it so that they have to think about these things."

Secret Suffering

Under pressure from classmates who wanted her to join in on the trend, Rebecca got moody and depressed. She started to physically attack her parents, because she was too immature to communicate her feelings in other ways, Sarah said.

One day, Rebecca started crying and begged her parents not to send her back to school anymore.

"The other girls that I'm around in school say that they're gay or lesbian, and they are trying to force me to be

like that, too," Rebecca said at the time. Sarah was shocked.

The school, town, and state generally seem to espouse predominantly conservative values, Sarah said. But it's no protection. LGBT ideology is spread to children through TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and other popular social media platforms.

"There's no reason for any 12-year-old to be talking about their sex life or anything regarding that," Sarah said. It should be nonexistent as a topic for children, she added.

But experiences like Rebecca's have become common for American youth, Sanzi said. Due to LGBT influences on social media platforms and in schools, children spend a lot of their time in spaces characterized by a focus on sexuality.

"Schools have become blanketed in political messaging around the topic of LGBTQ," Sanzi said. And the most concerning aspect of this focus on LGBT sexuality is the "T," she added. She believes widespread encouragement of transgenderism in school endangers children.

Sanzi said that it's troubling for girls that a "safe space" means "biological males can come into [their] bathrooms, come into [their] locker room, sleep ♦♦



The increased focus on LGBT sexualities in schools has led to more peer pressure to take on an LGBT lifestyle, an expert says.

in the same room as [them] on an overnight field trip, and compete against [them] in sports.”

Increased focus on LGBT sexualities in schools has also led to increased pressure on peers to take on an LGBT lifestyle. This pressure hits girls especially hard.

Sanzi shared a story another parent told her, about a group of girls that fell into LGBT identities one after the other.

“I talked to a dad who said that his daughter was quitting her travel team for soccer, because all the girls were suddenly identifying as some sort of sexual gender identity, and that the pressure on his daughter to do the same was so ridiculous,” she said.

Often, children face pressure to become LGBT from a number of sources at once, said Sanzi. A child might hear about a gender identity online and have questions. Mentioning those questions to friends can bring quick approval. Mentioning those questions to some teachers or school counselors can lead to encouragement to assume new pronouns.

“That’s why so many parents talk

about how they feel so ganged up on,” Sanzi said. “They’re like, ‘I went to the school. They were against me. I took my kid to a therapist. They work against me.’ Everyone is going along with what the parent feels like is a delusion.”

In Front of Children

Today, the LGBT ideology is the “religion” of American life, said Delano



“Schools have become blanketed in political messaging around the topic of LGBT.”

Erika Sanzi, director of outreach, Parents Defending Education

Squires, a research fellow at The Heritage Foundation’s Richard and Helen DeVos Center for Life, Religion, and Family.

“We already live in a religious society,” Squires said. “The most dominant denomination right now is everything having to do with the LGBT community.”

According to Squires, Christianity should rule America’s “public square” because America’s government was built to run on Christian culture. There’s no such thing as an empty public square.

“What a more Christianized public square would look like in this most immediate term would be to bend back some of the craziness that we’ve been riding for the last five to 10 years,” he said.

In contrast, Squires asserts that the dominance of the LGBT “religion” has unleashed “a wave of confusion, particularly for young people.”

He opposes “drag queen conservatism,” the perspective that anyone should have the right to do anything in public.

“There’s always been a ‘closet’ in every society since the beginning of time,” Squires said. “Some things, people only

do in the privacy of their homes.”

An America dominated by the public religion of the LGBT movement will face cultural cataclysm, and a generation raised on this religion will experience immense suffering when their beliefs clash with reality.

“We’re going to have a generation of children who look back on this period of time with not just regret on a personal level, but intense anger, on a more systemic level, directed towards the adults who would not tell them no,” Squires said.

No Escape

According to Sarah, the internet means that every American shares the same public square.

“The kids are getting all their values and morals from social media,” she said.

Rebecca’s classmates see it as normal to discuss sexual orientation with fellow fifth graders. They often pressured Rebecca to declare an LGBT identity, and they showed her inappropriate media she was too ashamed to reveal to her mom. Rebecca has refused to name the girls pressuring her.

So her mother suggested requesting a new lunchtime at school and proposed looking for other ways to avoid those children.

“Even if you do that, they’re gonna find a way to get to me,” Rebecca said. “They’re not going to leave me alone.”

Eventually, Rebecca told her classmates she was bisexual so they would stop bothering her.

“She knew that she didn’t feel that way. She knew the abuse that she had when she was younger, that she hated that. She felt such shame that she didn’t want to do that. She had this huge inner turmoil,” Sarah said. “And it came out by literally hitting us, literally biting us. Crying. She didn’t know how to verbalize what was going on.”

Continued exposure to talk about sexuality made Rebecca’s problem worse, Sarah said.

“What about those kids that are similar to my daughter, who have had things forced upon them?” Sarah asked. “And now they’re all talking about sexuality like it’s supposed to be a part of a 12-year-old’s life.”

Sarah plans to work with the school to protect her daughter. Between classes



(Top) Signs regarding LGBT rights and sexual harassment posted in a stairwell at P.S. 124 Yung Wing in New York on June 29, 2020. (Above) A paper lists preferred gender pronouns for students to use, at Gorham High School in Gorham, Maine.

others using “correct” gender pronouns.

The Epoch Times reached out to Gorham High School but did not receive a response.

Teachers at Gorham spotlight LGBT ideology to students in many ways, HB said.

“They showed us one video where they would have a bunch of teachers say their names, and some of them were mentioning their pronouns,” he said. “They do the same thing with papers, too. They ask you what your pronouns are.”

The school held a “Banned Books Week” where it handed out the novel “13 Reasons Why” to students, HB said. The book by author Jay Asher includes vulgar scenes, such as a teenager stroking a girl under her underwear and plans on how to commit suicide.

This consistent focus has a huge effect on impressionable high school students, HB said. He estimated that about a third of his classmates strongly promote the use of preferred gender pronouns.

Internet Warriors

HB said that students often also adopt aggressive attitudes in promoting their new sexual identities, especially online.

“You have to get their pronouns down and get them right, or they’re gonna be angry at you like it’s the end of the world,” HB said.

In person, however, the LGBT students tend to be less aggressive, he said. Even so, students often display outrage over the incorrect use of their preferred pronouns.

“Some of them just, like, go crazy about all the pronoun stuff. Like, I could hear them in class talking about it,” he said.

HB thinks “preferred gender pronouns” are here to stay. He figures he’ll most likely enter adulthood in a world where employers, schools, and others demand his pronouns from him.

“I hope it’s just the trend and people will eventually get over it,” he said. “But with the amount of people that are doing it, it’s probably not going to be over for a little bit.”

Students who don’t believe in constantly announcing their pronouns have learned to cope with the madness, HB said.

“We’ve just lived our normal lives, and when we see all the crazy stuff happening around us, we just look at it and we laugh,” he said. “And then we just move on with our day. We act like it never happened.” ■

ARIZONA BIKERS RISE ABOVE PAST
TRAUMA THROUGH THEIR
FAITH-BASED MOTORCYCLE CLUB

Eddie "Smiley" Hernandez of Phoenix joined the Ascendants Motorcycle Club three years ago after being homeless for nearly a decade.

PHOTO BY ALLAN STEIN/THE EPOCH TIMES

ARIZONA

FROM PRISON AND DRUGS TO GOOD DEEDS AND PRAYER

TEXT & PHOTOS BY ALLAN STEIN



JEROME, ARIZ. — TERRY “T” Donahue never became an outlaw biker, although he had his rowdy moments.

He had everything he wanted in the form of “stuff”—everything except the one intangible thing that mattered. A feeling of wholeness.

“There had always been a kind of lack in my heart. I had all the toys—the home, the motorcycles, the cars—but there was always something missing,” said Donahue, president of the Ascendants Motorcycle Club in Phoenix.

Now older and wiser, and sporting a graying goatee, Donahue admits he has mellowed as he proudly dons the colors of his faith-based motorcycle club.

He wears a black vest covered in patches with his name, rank, and club association, along with a pair of sunglasses perched atop his smoothly shaved head.

Donahue has plenty of stories to tell about his wild and crazy past, but he prefers to keep those a secret.

“Without a doubt, the older you get, the milder you get,” said Donahue, 55, who sees himself closer to the end of the road than the beginning.

“For me, that opened my eyes—mortality. What was I doing? Is this all there is?”

By their admission, the Ascendants are fallen souls.

Nothing—not even money, power, or possessions—could fill Donahue’s spiritual void apart from the faith he acquired through a higher calling seven years ago.

It happened when he and four close biker friends were out doing security for volunteers handing out food to the homeless in downtown Phoenix.

It was a dangerous job, Donahue recalled. There’d been fist fights, stabbings, muggings, and shootings. But the five men were formidable as enforcers working as a team. They managed to keep order and the vital assistance flowing.

“Being able to be of service filled that void,” Donahue told *The Epoch Times*. “By keeping [people] safe, we found our calling: helping others—keeping law and order, but actually seeing what’s going on and assisting people.”

The group of bikers would become the “First Five” members of the Ascendants MC, founded by Mike “Big Mike” Cameron of Phoenix in 2017. Five is the required number of members to form a motorcycle club.

Cameron said that most of the club’s founding members remain active to this day, “shining by example.”

“We’re a bunch of guys who came from dark



Ascendants Motorcycle Club President Terry “T” Donahue said he joined the club once he realized his materialistic lifestyle left him feeling empty.



Ascendants Motorcycle Club President Terry “T” Donahue points to a patch indicating his faith.

20 MEMBERS

THE ASCENDANTS Motorcycle Club today boasts around 20 permanent members.

20 YEAR BATTLE

JASON “THUMPER” Kowalski, the chaplain of the club, says that it gave him the hope and faith he needed to go on after a 20-year battle with a methamphetamine addiction.

Members of the Ascendants Motorcycle Club hold a prayer celebration in Jerome, Ariz., on Oct. 15.

places and found the light,” he said.

They are “brothers” in their passion and faith in every sense—risen men with nicknames including Thumper, Scooby, Robo, Tommy Gun, Wizard, Rock, and Brutus.

“We’re out there sharing hope with people that are feeling hopeless,” Cameron said.

The club today boasts about 20 permanent members. Each inductee wears a three-piece black leather vest of “outlaw configuration,” consisting of the club name and a black-and-wine-hued patch depicting a medieval Christian knight wielding a shield and sword.

The black represents the darkness from which the club’s members all came—and wine, the blood of Christ.

The club’s mission is to serve the downtrodden, answering to no other club and no other man except the “man upstairs.”

“I like to call us hope dealers because that’s what we do,” said Jason “Thumper” Kowalski, the club’s chaplain. “These guys are the guys to do it.”

Kowalski said the club gave him the hope and faith he needed to carry on after a 20-year battle with a methamphetamine addiction.

Thankfully, that’s all in the past, he said.

Cameron, 57, has been involved in motorcycle clubs most of his life—“some good, some not so good.”

The not-so-good clubs go by the umbrella title “one-percent.” They include the Hells Angels, Mongols, and Warlocks, and other notorious biker gangs. As society’s modern-day renegades, the one-percent clubs live by their own rules and code of ethics.

Drugs, alcohol, sex, and mayhem simply go with the territory.

The net result is a public relations stigma and image problem for the 99 percent of law-abiding motorcycle clubs, whose members feel they’ve been unfairly profiled by the police.

WHERE OUR DEMONS HIDE

“In any society, you have good and bad,” Cameron said.

“It’s the same thing with motorcycle groups. Each has its bad apples, [although] it seems like the media focuses on the bad stuff. We do toy runs every year with almost every club in town, whether it’s a one-percent or regular club.”

To be accepted into the ranks of the Ascendants is a testament to each member’s faith and good character.

The process begins with a statement of Christian values and a vote whether to accept the applicant as a “hang-around” for three months.

If all goes well, the hang-around may advance to the next level as a “prospect,” a six-month



Jason “Thumper” Kowalski, chaplain of the Ascendants Motorcycle Club, gives a hands-on blessing to club member “Smiley” during a family gathering in Jerome, Ariz., on Oct. 15.

test before full membership is granted.

Cameron describes the Ascendants as a brotherhood much like the cohesive units found in the military.

The bonds among club members run deep and last a lifetime.

“I would lay my life down for any of my brothers,” he said. “I don’t know many motorcycle clubs that would not tell you the same thing.”

When people ask Cameron why the Ascendants choose to wear colors reminiscent of outlaw biker clubs, he replies that the answer is simple: The Ascendants are a group of men who have broken the chains of a painful past, acknowledging the darkness within to show others the way out.

Cameron admits that as a passionate biker, he ran with the wrong crowd and went “through hell,” serving 10 years in prison before his faith straightened him out.

“I was a drug addict—you name it, I did it. And I came out the other side alive,” he told *The Epoch Times*.

He credits his faith and a trusty moral compass for delivering him from the wicked fray and its logical conclusion. Through his personal trials and tribulations, he tapped into a well-spring of strength and discovered a new sense of life purpose.

GOD, FAMILY, CLUB

While other Christian motorcycle clubs sought to recruit him, Cameron said he wanted to start fresh with a club of his own.

He did a lot of praying first.

“I don’t do a whole lot without praying. I was torn about what I wanted to do,” Cameron said. “I had to learn how to listen. Some people call it a sixth sense. Some people call it intuition.”

He feels it was divine inspiration.

“I felt like God was telling me, ‘Hey, this is what I want you to do. Go and do it.’ Things just started to fall into place,” he said.

On Oct. 15, the club held its annual meeting and celebration at the Gold King Mine in Jerome, Arizona.

Sitting around a bonfire, club members and supporters shared “testimony” of how the club helped them rise above past traumas and repair character flaws.

“I’m going to try to do it without getting emotional,” said Cameron, a burly man wearing a bandana on his head and whose arms are covered in tattoos.

Then, the circle of testimony began.

“I look around the circle right now and see a vision of the light. But it’s not just the men,” Cameron said, pointing to the women sitting in the group.

“You, you, and you. It’s about all of us. It’s about this family. I want you all to know that I love you.”

Cameron wiped his eyes and said: “Smiley! Tell me what this club has done for you. You’re sporting it on the back of your head.”

Eddie “Smiley” Hernandez, 50, stood up and removed his sunglasses, his shaved head glistening in the afternoon light.

Tattooed above his forehead is the word “Ascendants,” with the club’s knight logo etched in flesh on the back of his head.

“I’m a person that if I’m going to do something, I’m going to do it 100 percent,” Hernandez said of his tattoos.

“This motorcycle club changed my life. It’s not something that I’m going to get away from.”

Hernandez then expressed his profound love of his new life after seven years of homelessness and drug addiction.

Without the club, he said, “I don’t think I’d be in the place I am now—in God.”

Hernandez said he joined the club three years ago, having grown up in a very dark place in Phoenix.

“I came into this world through the drug cartel,” Hernandez told *The Epoch Times*. “I started dealing drugs, selling drugs since I was 10 years old.

“After all the drugs, I ended up in prison for eight years. When I got out, I got addicted to methamphetamine.”

Nineteen years ago, his sister-in-law, diagnosed with terminal cancer, asked Hernandez to accompany her to a church service, hoping it would end the pain of his addiction.

He granted her dying wish and stopped using drugs that very same day.

“She just asked me to go to church and told me God could change my life,” said Hernan-

dez, who used to ride fast and furious with a “dominant” one-percent motorcycle club in his maverick days.

He declined to mention the club by name but confessed he knew the Hells Angels leader and founding member Ralph “Sonny” Barger, who died on June 29 at age 83.

Hernandez was among the 7,000 invited guests who attended Barger’s funeral in California in September.

“[The] one-percent world respects us because of who we are [as Christians],” Hernandez said. “We go where anybody needs prayer. That’s what we’re here for.”

Steven “Robo” Harmon, 57, one of the First Five, said that the road he chose to travel eventually landed him in prison before his faith intervened.

Before that would happen, “nothing would change [him],” Harmon told *The Epoch Times*.

“Nothing would change me from that [self-destructive path],” he said.

“Everybody has their issues. We used to be takers. Now we’re givers.”

Like his fellow club members, Harmon discovered compassion for others within himself, and he believes that potential for kindness exists in every person.

Even the most hardcore biker “wants to be loved,” he said. “Everybody has some sort of trauma—some worse than others—the things we miss.”

Cameron can attest to the downward spiral of unresolved trauma and the feeling of peace he gets whenever he’s out on his motorcycle, in the sun and wind, talking with God.

In those moments of perfect solitude, all is well with his soul—and he is free. ■



“We’re a bunch of guys who came from dark places and found the light.”

Mike “Big Mike” Cameron, founder, Ascendants Motorcycle Club

(Bottom Left) Ascendants club member “Wizard” listens to testimony from other members during the club’s annual meeting on Oct. 15.

(Below) An Ascendants Motorcycle Club member displays the club colors at a gathering.



Chloe Cole tearfully shares her detransition journey in Anaheim, Calif., on Oct. 8.

PHOTO BY JOHN FREDRICKS/THE EPOCH TIMES



LEGAL CHALLENGE

COURT CLASH OVER 1ST TRANSGENDER BAN

Constitutional test of Arkansas law banning child surgeries will set precedent, send ripple effects

BY JANICE HISLE

WHEN AMERICA'S FIRST LAW banning "gender transition procedures" for minors was passed in Arkansas last year, it spawned a wave of similar legislation.

But legislative proposals in a dozen other states withered on the vine, while the Arkansas law faced an immediate court challenge that temporarily blocked the law from taking effect in July 2021.

Since then, Alabama and Arizona moved forward and passed their own versions of the Arkansas act, while California took a 180-degree turn to counteract the bans. Last month, California became the nation's first "sanctuary" state welcoming out-of-state youths who seek puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, and surgeries.

And now, the Arkansas law, called the Save Adolescents From Experimentation (SAFE) Act, remains closely watched from all sides as it heads to trial in Little Rock starting Oct. 17.

The outcome will determine how lawmakers and activists nationwide plan their next moves in the evolving controversy over medical intervention for transgender-identifying minors.

'Necessary' or 'Experimental'?

U.S. District Court Judge James Moody Jr. must decide a case that pits the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) against Arkansas officials who are defending the SAFE Act.

The ACLU contends that the SAFE Act unconstitutionally denies "medically necessary" treatments for youths suffering from gender dysphoria, which is persistent distress about one's gender.

In its lawsuit, the ACLU is representing four gender-dysphoric children, ages 9 to 16 at the time of the filing in May 2021, and two doctors who provide

"gender-affirming care."

The children's parents described seeing marked improvements in attitude and reduced anxiety after counseling and, in some cases, treatments with hormones.

The parents worry about what would happen to their children if the law were to take effect, requiring the treatment to abruptly stop.

Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge counters that the state is obligated to protect juveniles from "experimental" treatments that can permanently alter their still-developing bodies. She and other supporters of the SAFE Act say that long-term effects of the treatments remain unknown.

Multiple Appeals Likely

The case serves as the nation's first test of the constitutionality of this type of law, Danielle Weatherby, an associate professor at the University of Arkansas School of Law, told The Epoch Times.

Regardless of which way the judge rules, "this is just the beginning of a wild ride," Weatherby said.

She predicts multiple appeals will follow, along with legislative proposals in a number of states.

From a legal standpoint, Moody's decision will be considered a precedent only within the Eighth Circuit, a six-state federal court region that includes Arkansas.

At least two Eighth Circuit states, Iowa and Missouri, had introduced bills resembling the SAFE Act. (The remaining states are Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota.)

If the ACLU prevails and Moody strikes down the SAFE Act, "it will mean that any state that is in the Eighth Circuit will not be permitted to pass one of these laws," Weatherby said.

When Moody agreed to temporarily block Arkansas from implementing the SAFE Act, he was



"None of these treatments have been approved by the FDA. They couldn't satisfy the requirements."

Vernadette Broyles,
attorney

COURTESY OF VERNADETTE BROYLES



required to base that decision on a “reasonable likelihood” that the ACLU would prevail in its lawsuit. Arkansas sought a reversal of Moody’s decision, but the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit upheld the preliminary injunction.

Thus, Moody’s court and the appeals court both appear to have telegraphed that they’re leaning toward the ACLU’s contentions in the case.

But Moody is expected to have five long days of testimony to mull over, leaving open the possibility that he still may uphold the SAFE Act.

Court Disputes ‘Reversible’ Tag

On a personal level, Weatherby said she cares about the outcome of the case because she knows several transgender people and their families.

“I know that firsthand, having worked with transgender children, they do not make this decision lightly,” to undergo gender-altering medical procedures, she said. “And I think that gets lost in the conversation.”

She also is aware of the debate over whether “gender-affirming care” is safe and effective. She said that’s a decision each family has to make, in consultation with doctors, and “do the best we could do with the knowledge we have, because these kids are suffering from certain fear, anxiety and depression.”

One atypical argument in favor of the SAFE Act relies on a British court ruling, as opposed to one in the United States.

“When there’s no precedent, we look elsewhere,” Weatherby said.

Rutledge, the attorney general, wrote, “The SAFE Act responds to widespread, growing international concerns” over body-altering medical treatments being performed on minors’ still-developing bodies.

She noted that, a few months before the SAFE Act was approved, the high court in the United Kingdom “determined that children likely cannot ever understand the irreversible consequences of using puberty-blocking drugs as a transition procedure.”

The UK court also disputed assertions that puberty blockers’ effects are “fully reversible,” if the patient stops using the medications.

Instead, the court found: “Missed development and experience, during adolescence, can never truly be recovered or ‘reversed.’”

In its initial complaint against Arkansas, the ACLU declared: “Puberty-delaying treatment is reversible.” But further down on the same page, the ACLU cites professional guidelines describing the “partly irreversible effects” of those prescriptions.

Such conflicts arise because the science is unsettled, Arkansas officials have argued.

Odd Battle Lines Drawn

Another unusual aspect of the case: The unexpected mix of people on both sides.

A large number of medical organizations, in-

Detransitioners Abel Garcia (L) and Chloe Cole (R) take part in a demonstration in Anaheim, Calif., on Oct. 8.

FROM L-R: BRAD JONES/THE EPOCH TIMES; CLAUDIO REYES/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

cluding the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics have thrown their support behind the ACLU, along with other groups supporting civil rights and LGBT rights, plus 20 states, predominantly Democrat, as The Epoch Times reported in a previous story.

On the other side, backers of the SAFE Act include 19 mostly Republican-dominated states, along with a number of “detransitioners,” who say medical transitioning didn’t solve their problems—it just created more issues. Those people express regret over their gender-altering medications and surgeries.

Additional supporters of the SAFE Act include a handful of individual doctors, the conservative Family Research Council, and a nationwide feminist group, the Women’s Liberation Front.

The somewhat unexpected alliances within each camp show “what an anomaly this case is,” attorney Vernadette Broyles told The Epoch Times.

Broyles, who holds a Harvard University law degree and an undergraduate biology degree from Yale University, is positioned as a rare authoritative voice when legal and medical battles intersect.

Conveyor Belt Approach?

Broyles and her team with the Child and Parental Rights Campaign filed a brief that shares stories of 10 families whom the SAFE Act would have protected.

The brief reveals a pattern.

Medical professionals often told the parents that “gender-affirming care” is essential—and without it, their gender-dysphoric children would likely kill themselves.

Caregivers told Kristine W.: “Transgender identity is very trendy in the hospital setting right now.” They said she should ask her anorexic, bulimic child, “How can we help you with your gender identity?”

With little assessment or attempt at non-medical treatments, “a conveyor belt” whisks away young people into the treatment queues, as “one-page marketing materials gloss over the harms,” the brief said.

The drugs often render the children infertile and cause numerous potential side effects, Broyles said, such as deteriorating bones and cardiovascular problems—without solid evidence that shows the risks are worth taking.

Studies are of low quality and are flawed in many other ways, she said.

Sometimes, one parent gets shut out of the process. A father, Ted H., learned that his son was taking “gender-affirming treatments” only after his health insurer sent a statement showing payment rendered to an endocrinologist at a gender clinic: \$210,000, the brief said.



Rank-and-File Dissent

Broyles said only “a sliver of the medical community” favors prescribing these treatments, but the ACLU-aligned medical groups are claiming most doctors agree with this practice.

Few people realize that the large medical associations do not submit position statements to their entire membership for approval, Broyles said. Rather, committees put them together and send them to the board for a vote.

“These medical associations have become captive to activist professionals who made it their business to get onto the board or to get onto the critical policy-making committees,” Broyles said. “There is an effort to suppress any opposition to the ideological narrative.”

Among the information that is being tamped down: puberty blockers are an “off-label” use for those drugs.

“None of these treatments have been approved by the FDA ... they couldn’t satisfy the requirements,” Broyles said.

Broyles expressed grave concerns over “the distorting effect ... on the medical community,” damage to the public trust, and the impact on children and families.

“The idea that we would hijack a child’s adolescent developing body, override their genetic operating manual, without the gold seal of appropriately controlled clinical studies ... it is unjust to our children,” she said.

She believes that mentally vulnerable children are being used in a mass experiment, which is “beyond the pale.”

Regardless of how the case ends, one of its most important effects might be this, Broyles said:

“It finally brings to light, to put onto the public record, what these interventions actually do to children, adolescents, and young people—what they do to their developing bodies.” ■

A transgender individual shows a testosterone ampoule at a hospital in Santiago, Chile, on Jan. 8, 2020.

“The idea that we would hijack a child’s adolescent developing body ... is unjust to our children.”

Vernadette Broyles, attorney



SPOTLIGHT

Preparing for Combat

A SOLDIER OF THE GERMAN KOMMANDO
Spezialkräfte special forces simulates jumping from a helicopter with a dog, as part of amphibious training, at the Graf-Zeppelin-Kaserne base in Calw, Germany, on Oct. 24.

PHOTO BY THOMAS LÖHNES/GETTY IMAGES



HEALTH STATISTICS

Counting COVID-19 Deaths Accurately

Wildly divergent data, no uniform criteria make it difficult to assess real numbers **News Analysis**

By Autumn Spredemann

The number of deaths resulting from COVID-19 infections has been controversial and debated since the onset of the pandemic. Much of this stems from how doctors continue to report fatalities associated with the virus.

Shifting numbers from major health organizations have also contributed to the confusion, fueling speculation. This is because mortality rates based on “excess death” estimates from officials are subject to change.

The term “excess deaths” concerning COVID-19 refers to a theoretical number of fatalities not listed in official reports by individual countries’ health departments.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) describes “excess deaths” as a difference between the number of observed and expected mortalities within a certain period.

And like any theory, it isn’t necessarily accurate.

In May, the World Health Organization (WHO) released a report on the global excess death count from COVID-19, putting the figure at 15 million. Barely a month later, scientists from the organization acknowledged mistakes in their estimates, resulting in adjusted excess numbers.

By contrast, the actual reported number of global fatalities from COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic is slightly more than 6.5 million.

The drastic differences in figures prompted some governments to fire back at the WHO’s excess death figures. India’s government openly called the estimates “speculative and misinformed.”

In March, the CDC also made a similar adjustment and removed 72,277 COVID-related fatalities from its data tracker.

A Matter of Opinion

Meanwhile, medical professionals in the United States are opening up about the dubious nature and challenges associated with reporting COVID-related deaths.

That’s because even today, there’s no across-

Registered nurses provide post-mortem care to a deceased COVID-19 patient at Sharp Grossmont Hospital in La Mesa, Calif., on Dec. 14, 2020.

“It’s a judgment call by the doctor who fills out the death certificate.”

William Schaffner,
professor, Vanderbilt University Medical Center

the-board regulation for determining whether COVID-19 is an actual cause of death in a patient who tests positive, or just a coexisting condition. It’s entirely at the discretion of the attending physician, medical examiner, or coroner.

“Early on in COVID, that was a source of great controversy by people who said if you had an underlying illness that was severe and you got COVID, you shouldn’t have those patients listed as COVID deaths,” Dr. William Schaffner, professor of infectious diseases at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, told *The Epoch Times*.

Schaffner explained that some physicians countered the argument, saying that their patient would still be alive were it not for a COVID-19 infection.

The end result: COVID-19 was often labeled as the primary cause of death, despite significant or even life-threatening preexisting conditions, in many patients.

Consequently, that pushed the associated mortality rate even higher.

“It’s a judgment call by the doctor who fills out the death certificate,” Schaffner said.

Chief scientist and CEO of SyneuRx, Dr. Emil Tsai, told *The Epoch Times* that COVID-19 death reporting has become “increasingly murky” and that will likely continue.

“Statistically, we have an average number of deaths that occurred per year in the United States before the pandemic. There has been an excess of deaths, so we can assume those deaths, whether a primary or secondary cause, are COVID-related,” Tsai said.

“As the pandemic continues, those excess deaths will lessen and COVID infection will become harder to recognize. Reporting [deaths] will become increasingly more difficult.”

Tsai noted that many coroner’s offices were likely overwhelmed at the beginning of the pandemic, leading to struggles in determining which deaths should be counted as COVID-19-related.

Moreover, some experts assert that as the virus continues to mingle amidst other contagious diseases—such as during the flu season—identifying what role COVID-19 plays in resultant mortalities becomes another hurdle.

Testing and Misdiagnosis Challenges

The availability of tests for COVID-19 presented an enormous problem for diagnosis in the early months of the pandemic. Yet, after antigen and polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests became widely available, false positives threw another curveball at the health care industry.

Considered the “gold standard” of tests for detecting COVID-19, the PCR is considered accurate within 95 to 100 percent. Even so, that would still leave a trail of thousands of false positives since

official records began in 2020.

This further muddles the dilemma of accurate death counts, since a person listed as a COVID-19 fatality generally isn’t retested, yet it’s the only way to determine if the first test was a false positive.

Testing aside, some health care insiders say part of the problem is accurate diagnostics stemming from how little time doctors spend with their patients currently.

“In the very beginning, when I first started practicing nursing, the focus was on the patient,” Donna Brown, a retired registered nurse, told *The Epoch Times*.

Having spent years working in hospitals, Brown has watched some big changes unfold within the health care industry. Chief among these is a decline in the time doctors are spending with patients to assess and diagnose a condition.

“These days, you can measure it with a stopwatch. ‘I’m sorry, but 10 to 15 minutes isn’t nearly enough time for physicians,’” Brown said.

She added that this is especially true with elderly patients, where a deeper knowledge of previous diagnoses and existing conditions are critical.

Recent studies show the average time doctors interact with patients is between 13 to 24 minutes, with the low end of the average being more common.

Another pre-pandemic analysis revealed only 11 percent of patients and 14 percent of physicians felt their interaction provided the appropriate amount of time needed for the highest standards of care.

Tsai agrees that medical professionals have less time to spend with patients than years ago.

“Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, there were many more patients than physicians could help, and time was stretched thin,” he said.

“Many felt they didn’t have time to make the thorough assessment they wanted for each patient. Add COVID-19 to the mix, and there was even less time.”

While some of this is due to pandemic-related staff shortages, more time is also being spent working with electronic health records compared with patients directly. Due to changes in the way insurance providers and the government pay for health care, doctors now spend more time on computers than with their patients.

This applies to more than just hospital visits.

In a study of 57 U.S. physicians in different specialties, only 27 percent of their time was spent on “direct clinical face time” interactions with patients.

According to Brown, this trend became particularly noticeable once the Affordable Care Act went into effect under former President Barack Obama.

“Insurance companies started dictating the amount of time spent with patients,” she said.

“That certainly doesn’t help doctors make an accurate diagnosis.” ■

6.5 MILLION

The actual reported number of global fatalities from COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic is slightly more than 6.5 million, in contrast to the 15 million number that WHO released in May.

13 TO 24 MINUTES

Recent studies show the average time doctors interact with patients is between 13 to 24 minutes per visit, with the low end of the average being more common.

11%

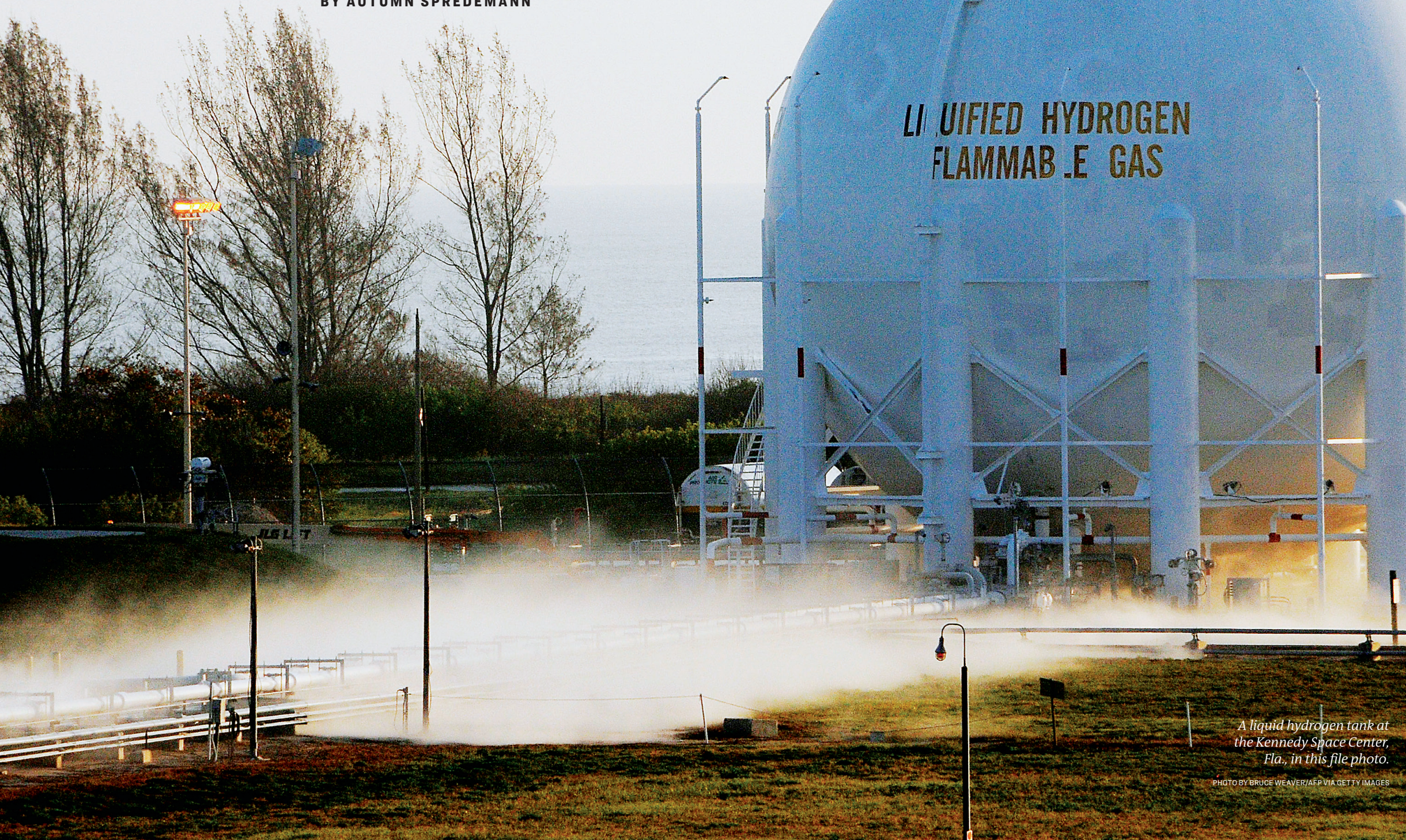
A pre-pandemic analysis revealed only 11 percent of patients and 14 percent of physicians felt their interaction provided the appropriate amount of time needed for the highest standards of care.

POWER SOURCE

America's Next Big Energy Gamble

Is green hydrogen the next direction in energy sources?

BY AUTUMN SPREDEMAN



A liquid hydrogen tank at the Kennedy Space Center, Fla., in this file photo.

PHOTO BY BRUCE WEAVER/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

AS THE STRAINED U.S. electric grid labors under the soaring demand for renewable energy, green hydrogen is ramping up and stepping into the investor spotlight. Producing green hydrogen is pretty straightforward at a glance.

Adherents claim that facilities use renewably generated electricity to split water molecules. Afterward, the hydrogen is stored and distributed with net-zero emissions.

At face value, the growing industry touts itself as a fossil fuel-free path toward cleaner energy. However, enthusiasts must overcome significant hurdles to make this dream a reality.

In the industry, “green” hydrogen distinguishes itself from other forms of hydrogen energy such as “blue” or “gray” in that it doesn’t require natural gas or other fossil fuels to break water molecules and produce energy.

“Green hydrogen is produced through a process called electrolysis. ... The advantage over gray hydrogen is that it doesn’t release any carbon emissions during the production phase,” Martina Lofqvist, senior business development manager for Destinus, told The Epoch Times.

In its innovation of hypersonic aviation, Destinus has big plans for green hydrogen fuel, Lofqvist said.

“We plan to use liquid hydrogen, which is a cryogenic fuel, meaning that it needs to be stored at extremely low temperatures,” she said.

Lofqvist noted that, due to temperature requirements, keeping the hydrogen at subzero temperatures is an expensive challenge, although airports and hydrogen producers are collaborating to ensure that the infrastructure will become more cost-effective in time.

But for the moment, the price tag is a major setback for production everywhere.

“Green hydrogen is more expensive than alternative production techniques such as gray hydrogen that comes from fossil fuels,” Lofqvist said. “This is primarily due to the costs of renewable energy.”

Compared to its fossil fuel-derived rivals, green hydrogen is roughly three times more expensive. That equals higher electric bills for those on the receiving end. However, with a byproduct



Turbines of Constellation Energy's Criterion Wind Project stand along the ridge of Backbone Mountain near Oakland, Md., on Aug. 23.

of only “pure water,” supporters point to drastically reduced carbon emissions as the payout.

Some energy insiders assert it will take years for green hydrogen to reach a high enough production output to make it a truly price-competitive option, in spite of the drastic spike in fossil fuel prices this year.

In July, the price of green hydrogen skyrocketed, topping out at nearly \$17 per kilogram. That’s almost three times higher than other recent price comparisons. By contrast, it averaged about \$6 per kilogram in April.

Due to reliance on inputs such as natural gas or renewable electricity, the cost of hydrogen, in general, has risen alongside other resources, according to Alan Hayes, head of energy transition pricing for S&P Global Commodity Insights.

Infrastructure Challenges

Like most aspiring game changers, there are many “somedays” and forecasted dates sewn into the rhetoric surrounding green hydrogen. Phrases such as “By

2030, prices could drop” and “By 2050, the costs should be even lower” echo throughout the industry.

Regardless, some renewable advocates aren’t convinced. Naysayers within the green community claim that using renewable energy to produce hydrogen is 20 percent to 40 percent less efficient than using a source such as wind or solar directly.

Another potential pitfall for the green hydrogen gambit is electrolysis. Research shows the U.S. electric grid requires up to \$7 trillion dollars in upgrades to support the existing demand for renewable energy.

That’s a critical linchpin for the . Green

Nearly all of the current transmission pipelines in the United States are structurally unsafe for transporting high volumes of hydrogen.

hydrogen requires a lot of electricity to meet U.S. energy demands.

One analysis showed an efficient electrolysis system requires 39 kilowatt-hours (kWh) of electricity to produce one kilogram of hydrogen. Yet, the majority of devices currently in operation are much less efficient. A more realistic figure is 48 kWh to make one kilogram of hydrogen.

So, additional strain on the existing grid could result in more blackouts and energy usage alerts during peak hours and seasonal temperature swings. Critics of the green hydrogen movement have also cited concerns about volatility, transmission, and storage capacity.

In the United States, about 96 percent of existing gas transmission pipelines are steel. Hydrogen passage could damage the metal through what’s known as “embrittlement,” causing the pipes to crack.

The takeaway: Nearly all of the current transmission pipelines in the United States are structurally unsafe for transporting high volumes of hydrogen. The industry would need ei-

ther a costly overhaul or entirely new transportation lines.

Along that same thread, there’s also an increased storage puzzle to solve.

“There are a few ways to store hydrogen, but the most common is using high-pressure tanks,” green energy advocate Adam Roper told The Epoch Times. “These tanks can be expensive and difficult to maintain, which makes them impractical for many applications.”

Roper is passionate about renewable energy and sustainability. Having also worked in the “green” sector, he says that storage is a hurdle for green hydrogen development.

“Another option is to store hydrogen in underground caverns, but this can be difficult to scale up,” he said.

“While often thought of as the most promising method due to its scalability, it has its own challenges. ... It’s unclear how long the storage would be safe and secure.”

Roper also noted that, in the event of a leak, public safety would be at risk.

The Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy stated that applicable codes and standards for hydrogen storage systems and interface technologies “have not been established.”

Further, the office noted that hydrogen presents two main safety concerns: combustion and exposure burns. With a lower ignition point than either natural gas or gasoline, the office stated that “adequate ventilation and leak detection are important elements in the design of safe hydrogen systems.”

Some industry experts, however, remain undaunted and insist that “green” is still the future of hydrogen.

“Hydrogen is easy to store, which allows it to be used, subsequently, for other purposes and at times other than immediately after production,” Cody Bateman, founder and CEO of GenH2, a hydrogen infrastructure company, told The Epoch Times.

Bateman says hydrogen offers a key advantage over other energy storage technologies—such as lithium-ion batteries—because adding capacity is relatively cheap.

“With hydrogen, you just need to build a bigger tank,” he said, further noting that hydrogen is “safe, reliable, and plentiful, which makes it the strongest option as the new clean energy source.”

13%
THE UNITED STATES IS THE WORLD'S second-largest producer and consumer of hydrogen energy, accounting for 13 percent of total demand.

\$7 TRILLION
THE U.S. ELECTRICAL GRID REQUIRES up to \$7 trillion in upgrades to support the existing demand for renewable energies, research shows.

3 TIMES
COMPARED TO ITS FOSSIL FUEL-derived rivals, green hydrogen is roughly three times more expensive.

Currently, the United States is the world’s second-largest producer and consumer of hydrogen energy, accounting for 13 percent of total demand. Subsequently, industry promoters are aiming to make the country a superpower for future green hydrogen production.

Wasting no time, financiers unveiled plans in March for the world’s largest green hydrogen plant. Green Hydrogen International, the world’s leading developer in the field, announced in a statement that it plans to build a 60-gigawatt facility near the Piedras Pintas salt dome in Texas. The station would be capable of producing 2.5 billion kilograms of green hydrogen annually.

Corporate chemical giant Linde announced plans on Sept. 8 to install a 35-megawatt proton exchange membrane electrolyzer. The new facility would produce green hydrogen in Niagara Falls, New York.

Fossil fuel-based hydrogen energy is already an established and growing industry. Last year, the global market value of hydrogen production totaled \$130 billion, and it’s projected to grow more than 9 percent annually by 2030.

The United States currently produces 10 million metric tons of the world’s estimated 87 million ton demand for hydrogen energy. ■

The Next Big Boom?

Infrastructure debates aside, the train appears to have left the station. Expanded green hydrogen production is already sparking the interest of some very big investors.



Gasoline prices at a gas station in Washington on May 26.

FRONT: CHIP SOMODEVILLA/GETTY IMAGES; NICHOLAS KAMM/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

International Monetary Fund Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva (L) talks with BlackRock CEO Larry Fink during a session at the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, on Jan. 23, 2020.

PHOTO BY FABRICE COFFRINI/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

**Leadership Lessons:
Building an Inclusive and
Sustainable Financial System**

Anil Menon
Laurence D. Fink
Kristalina Georgieva

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

BlackRock Wields Power to *Force EV Shift*

Asset manager aligns with government to impose transition to electric vehicles

By Katie Spence

THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION's war on fossil fuels and climate change appears to have escalated in the past few months, but it's in fact the fruition of a years-long push by a mammoth private-sector investment fund to force the adoption of electric vehicles, as part of a "net-zero" energy-sector agenda.

BlackRock CEO Larry Fink, in his 2022 letter to CEOs, wrote that "capitalism has the power to shape society and act as a powerful catalyst for change." Companies, he said, need to work with governments to achieve their desired results.

"When we harness the power of both the public and private sectors, we can achieve truly incredible things. This is what we must do to get to net zero," Fink wrote.

The letter was only the latest advance in BlackRock's years-long campaign to combine corporate and state power to achieve its climate agenda.

The major investment firm is advancing this agenda by accumulating assets and exercising its power over corporate boards. At the same time, governments are passing laws and regulations that help further the firm's goals.

"In a few short years, we have all watched innovators reimagine the auto industry," Fink wrote. "And today, every car manufacturer is racing toward an electric future."

In its "2030 Net Zero Statement," the company wrote that "by 2030, at least 75 percent of BlackRock corporate and sovereign assets managed on behalf of clients will be invested in issuers with science-based targets or equivalent."

In response, Mindy Lubber, CEO and president at Ceres, said in a statement, "When the largest asset manager in the world ups its goal from 25 percent of such assets invested in science-based-target issuers to 75 percent of those assets, others should take note."

Lubber added that BlackRock's new bar signaled to the rest of the market "to adjust their investment strategies accordingly" because "the investor transition to a net zero emissions economy is well underway."

Net Zero Transition

Fink argues that governments need to pass certain laws and regulations, ♦

Tesla cars sit at charging stations in Yermo, Calif., on May 14.



while companies like BlackRock need to force change through environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG).

That's especially true in the transition to "net zero," which organizations like the International Energy Agency (IEA) say requires replacing internal combustion engine vehicles with electric cars.

In the United States, California took the lead this past August when it passed a law banning the sale of new gas-powered vehicles by 2035. Seventeen states, including Washington, New York, and Oregon, are expected to follow suit.

The American public, however, has shown little interest in the matter. In 2017, around 280,000 electric vehicles were sold in the United States, according to the IEA. By comparison, 17.25 million passenger cars and light trucks were sold that year.

Financing the Electric Vehicle Transition

In January 2018, Fink sent a letter to the chief executives of the world's largest public companies that, in essence, told them to commit to BlackRock's climate agenda or risk losing the firm's support.

At the time of the letter, BlackRock was the world's largest asset manager—a ranking it'd held since 2009—and, according to its 2018 fourth-quarter report, had just under \$6 trillion in assets under management.

In other words, BlackRock controlled \$6 trillion in other people's investing dollars, which it threatened to withhold or withdraw from companies that wouldn't agree to establishing specific ESG guidelines.

Another major lever under BlackRock's control is corporate boards. In his 2020 letter, Fink said BlackRock would significantly reallocate its capital from "investments that present a high sustainability-related risk, such as thermal coal producers," and screen against investing in other fossil fuels. He followed this with a warning to CEOs.

"Last year BlackRock voted against or withheld votes from 4,800 directors at 2,700 different companies. Where we feel companies and boards are not producing effective sustainability disclosures or implementing frameworks for managing

these issues, we will hold board members accountable," Fink wrote.

"We will be increasingly disposed to vote against management and board directors when companies are not making sufficient progress on sustainability-related disclosures and the business practices and plans underlying them."

BlackRock invests in all three of the world's largest lithium mining companies traded on the New York Stock Exchange, as well as top electric vehicle manufacturer Tesla.

The firm holds 8 percent of the shares of Albemarle, a U.S.-based mining firm valued at over \$33 billion, and is the second top institutional shareholder in both FMC and Sociedad Química y Minera de Chile (Chemical and Mining Society of Chile), holding 9 percent and 3 percent, respectively, of the companies' stocks.

BlackRock also owns around 5.3 percent of total shares in Tesla, which has a market cap of over \$960 billion.

Anything between 5 and 10 percent of direct or indirect holdings in a company is considered a "significant shareholding," giving the holder significant power when voting on how a company operates.

In 2018, BlackRock launched the Future of Transport Fund, after Fink sent his letter to CEOs about committing to the company's climate agenda. The fund's most significant jump happened in 2020, the same year Fink wrote to CEOs stating that a "fundamental reshaping of finance" was underway.

According to BlackRock's website, the fund "seeks to maximise total return by investing at least 70% of its total assets in the equity securities of companies globally whose predominant economic activity comprises the research, development, production and/or distribution of technologies used and applied to transport."

BlackRock has positions in 5,832 companies, according to its filings. And in 2021, it had "the strongest organic growth in [its] history," generating \$540 billion in net inflows (extra cash flowing into a company).

Combined State and Corporate Guidance

In September 2021, at BlackRock's 2021 Future Forum, U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry talked

about the relationship between governments and the private sector in pushing climate goals.

"Government is going to have to step in and ... provide the guideposts and the rules of the road in order to excite that capital and obviously to give that capital the security, the sense of confidence it needs to have in order to make the longer-term investments," Kerry stated.

"There is a massive movement in the private sector which we've been working with very closely.

"BlackRock has been a leader in that effort, and other American banks, the six largest American banks, have been key to putting about \$4.16 trillion on the table to help affect and speed up, accelerate this transition."

Earlier that year, ahead of the 26th U.N. Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26), the IEA released the "world's first comprehensive energy roadmap," which included the requirement that there be no new sales of internal combustion passenger cars by 2035.

At the COP26 in November that year, 153 countries committed to new 2030 net-zero commitments, with developed

countries committing to deliver a \$100 billion climate finance goal by 2035.

Reports from the conference stated that "private financial institutions and central banks are moving to realign trillions towards global net-zero."

The Temporary Trump Wrench

When Donald Trump defeated Hillary Clinton to become president in 2016, he threw a monkey wrench in the steady push toward "tackling climate change," energy scientists bemoaned at the time. As he implemented an "American First" energy plan, the stock market soared and the country's energy independence increased, while gas prices plummeted. As a result, interest in electric vehicles was marginal.

But when Biden defeated Trump in 2020, BlackRock released a statement saying the win would allow the markets to "return" to where they were before Trump's victory.

"We see an increased focus on sustainability under a divided government, but through regulatory actions, rather than via tax policy or spending on green infrastructure," BlackRock stated.

Since taking office in 2021, Biden has

signed several executive orders related to climate regulations and given the Environment Protection Agency teeth by signing the Inflation Reduction Act into law. Despite its stated focus on reducing inflation, the act is the most significant climate action bill in U.S. history. Critics of the act have pointed out the minimal impact it will have on inflation, while amplifying climate change goals.

Meanwhile, Biden's revocation of the Keystone XL Pipeline permit and other anti-fossil-fuel actions have led to skyrocketing gas prices, pushing more Americans to seek out electric vehicles as an alternative. A survey in July found that 36 percent of respondents were planning to buy or lease an electric car, or seriously considering doing so.

BlackRock stated in its June Investment Institute report that the "transition towards a decarbonized economy is underway" and involves "a massive reallocation of resources."

"Nearly 90 percent of the world economy now has net-zero commitments, while about half of major companies and financial institutions do," the report said.

BlackRock did not return a request for comment. ■

\$6 TRILLION

IN 2018, BLACKROCK controlled \$6 trillion in other people's investing dollars, which it threatened to withhold or withdraw from companies that wouldn't agree to establishing specific ESG guidelines.



U.S. climate envoy John Kerry at the 77th session of the U.N. General Assembly in New York on Sept. 21.

FROM TOP: CHRIS DELMAS/AP VIA GETTY IMAGES; ANNA MONSIEUR/GETTY IMAGES

PHILANTHROPY

Philanthropic Legacy of FOSTER FRIESS

*The life story of a Wyoming
businessman continues to
inspire others*

BY EMEL AKAN

*Forbes magazine listed
Foster Friess, businessman
and philanthropist, among
the top 10 money managers
of his generation.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF FOSTER'S OUTRIDERS



WYOMING businessman Foster Friess was well-known for his innovative approach to philanthropy.

He built a life that embodied the American dream. He started his investment business with a few hundred dollars, made a fortune, and donated a large portion of it during his lifetime.

He was fascinated by cowboys and the American West. When he moved to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, in 1992, he took on a Western look. He usually donned a cowboy hat in public, which made him stand out wherever he went.

Foster had a reputation for being a very kind, humble, and generous person. To him, philanthropy wasn't just about writing big checks to charities. He inspired others and served as a good role model for giving.

From the beginning of his career as an entrepreneur until the day he died at the age of 81 in 2021, he devoted a lot of his time and energy to helping others.

Foster, a born-again Christian, believed that "we are merely stewards, not owners, of what God has given to us."

When people criticized him for being too generous, Foster would respond, "It's the Lord's money, and if it were mine, they wouldn't be getting a dead red cent."

"That has been our philosophy ever since we really started giving," Lynn Friess, his wife of 58 years, told *The Epoch Times*.

Over the years, the couple devoted more than \$500 million to charitable causes.

Lynn is now carrying on the work she and Foster started many years ago. In an interview at Foster's office in a two-story log building in Jackson, Lynn reflected on their early days in the business and how they nurtured a life-long passion for giving.

Humble Beginnings

Foster grew up in Rice Lake, a small town in northern Wisconsin. He was a first-generation college graduate and received a degree in business administration from the University of Wisconsin, where he met Lynn, who was from farming country in upstate New York.

Both Lynn and Foster came from ♦♦

humble beginnings. They founded their investment management company, Friess Associates, with just \$800 in 1974.

Success was slow in the beginning, according to Lynn. "It was a lot of work."

She recalls Foster's first office space, a long rectangular room with just a glass door and no window in Wilmington, Delaware.

"He called one day and said: 'I think I need a window behind me. ... Can you make draperies so it looks like there's a window behind me?' And I said yes, I can," she recalled with a smile.

Foster came home one day with the good news that they'd got their first million-dollar account, which was a turning point in their life.

"That's the way it started. And everything was truly by word of mouth. He did no advertising whatsoever. And he loved stocks. He was obsessed with stocks," Lynn said.

Foster quickly became a successful growth-stock picker. He was dubbed one of the "century's great investors" for his high-performing Brandywine Fund. And Forbes magazine listed him among the top 10 money managers of his generation, alongside Warren Buffet, Peter Lynch, and John Templeton.

Ten years after its launch, the Brandywine Fund grew from a \$100,000 initial investment to a \$4.2 billion fund in 1995 with more than 30,000 happy shareholders.

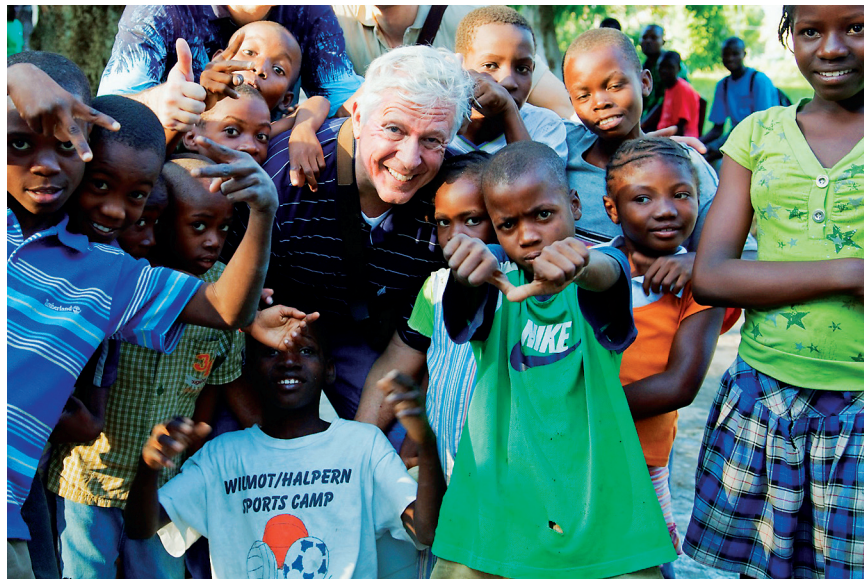
Foster had a unique approach to investing. He was constantly on the lookout for firms that were innovative and had a proven track record of profit growth.

He would only put money into individual stocks, and he cared more about the business than how the price of a stock moved.

"We try to think of ourselves as businessmen buying businesses," he said in an interview with author Peter J. Tanous for his 1997 book "Investment Gurus."

As part of his investment strategy, he also had a disciplined approach to selling stocks, which he called "pigs-in-a-trough" theory. In this way, he avoided the risk of falling in love with the companies in which he invested, a common problem for many stock investors.

"Remember, I grew up on a farm in Wisconsin. If you watch the pigs, you will notice that when a pig approaches a group at



(Top) Foster Friess with Haitian children. (Above) Foster Friess and Lynn Friess during a Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans event.

the feeding trough, it has to shove aside a weaker or less hungry one to get in," he explained in another interview in 1999. "The same survival of the fittest philosophy holds true for the stronger stocks that replace the weaker ones."

In this way, he would usually sell a stock when he wanted to buy a better one. This strategy allowed him to "have the most dynamic companies in the portfolio" and generate substantial returns.

Foster often said that managing billions of dollars wasn't a one-man job and that he depended greatly on his staff. He believed

he had a God-given gift for choosing the right people.

"There was a philosophy of the firm: It was God first, then family, and then work," Lynn added.

He moved his business and family to Jackson in 1992. And in 2001, he sold a majority stake in the company to devote more time to philanthropic work.

Philanthropy

Foster's success in business allowed him to support many charities, causes, and political candidates who shared his values.

He was often among the first philanthropists to respond to natural disasters, and his efforts spanned the globe. He and Lynn supported the relief efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the Sri Lanka tsunami, and the Haitian earthquake.

Foster traveled to the disaster areas on numerous occasions to help victims and identify the best relief efforts. He also sponsored matching grant programs to encourage others to contribute.

From assisting families with disabled children in Wyoming to supporting Christians fighting on the front lines against ISIS, Foster and Lynn engaged in a wide range of humanitarian activities.

Foster was also well-known for his memorable birthday parties. On his 70th birthday, he requested that each guest choose their favorite charity. Lynn and Foster donated \$70,000 to each of the nominated organizations, contributing a total of nearly \$7.7 million.

He also surprised 400 close friends with \$100,000 checks at Christmas in 2020 and asked them to donate the money to a charity of their choice.

Foster, according to Lynn, was an unusual person who touched the lives of countless people in many ways.

After he died, Lynn said she received a heartfelt letter from a young man, in which he expressed his gratitude for Foster's influence on his life.

This young man crossed paths with Foster at the Pine Valley Golf Club in New Jersey, which is regarded as the mecca of golf in the United States, according to Lynn.

Foster's caddy was this "young man, who, during the course of a weekend, told him that he had just finished at Pennsylvania College his first year, but his father and mother had sat him down and said there's no money for the next year," Lynn said.

Foster, touched by this young man's story, offered to pay his college expense. He did, however, invite him to a challenge for the paycheck. According to Lynn, he told the young man: "All I ask you is to read a paragraph in the Bible a day. That's it."

And he agreed. He finished his studies and later found a job. In the letter he wrote to Lynn, he told that he kept up his daily Bible study routine thanks to Foster.

Despite never having met him, the young man's parents also penned "beau-

tiful tributes" to Foster, Lynn said, because of what he had done for their son.

Foster was well-known for his unwavering optimism and ability to lift people up.

"That's the way he was," Lynn added. "He was amazing. Bigger than life."

Passion For the American West

Foster and Lynn fell in love with the American West, its people, architecture, and wildlife after moving to Wyoming.

"I remember one time getting stuck on a road out in the park in Grand Teton National Park. And it was during the elk bugling time," Lynn recalled.

Everyone rolled down their windows to "listen to the harmonies of the various elk calling," she said. "It was a memory I'll never forget."

She believes that the cowboy codes of the West represent virtues that all Americans can embrace today. Those codes were centered on kindness, fair play, loyalty, and respect for the land.

"Foster had done things on handshakes. You probably would not see that on the East Coast. And the people here are warm.

\$500 MILLION

OVER THE YEARS, businessman Foster Friess and his wife Lynn Friess had devoted more than \$500 million to charitable causes.

They're not pretentious," Lynn said.

Foster, who was a major donor for Republican candidates and causes, ran for governor in Wyoming in 2018. He invested in The Daily Caller, a website founded by television host and political commentator Tucker Carlson. He also backed the conservative youth group Turning Point USA.

Foster received numerous awards, including the Horatio Alger Award and the Muhammad Ali Humanitarian Award.

In 2018, Foster founded "Foster's Outriders," an organization with the mission to "help keep America on the right path," similar to the role of outriders in keeping the herd on the trail.

Initially, the organization was involved in a variety of political activities, according to Lynn. It now operates as a charitable organization, primarily providing scholarships to those wishing to attend trade schools.

It's been more than a year since Foster, "the original outrider," passed away, yet his philanthropic legacy continues to serve as an inspiration for his family and friends.

Foster's 15 grandchildren have started to carry on his mission, Lynn says, through a program in which they learn about nonprofits and become involved in charitable giving. Three of the oldest grandchildren have already begun to participate, she noted.

"My guy just lives on. He really lives on. He was a good soul." ■



Foster Friess, who was a major donor for Republican candidates and causes, ran for governor in Wyoming in 2018.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF FOSTER'S OUTRIDERS

NATIONAL SECURITY

THE DOMESTIC LEFT-WING EXTREMIST THREAT

Despite Democrats' rhetoric, more threats
come from the left than the right, experts say

BY SCOTT WHEELER *News Analysis*

People gather in front of a liquor store in flames during a protest over the death of George Floyd, near the Third Police Precinct in Minneapolis, Minn., on May 28, 2020.

PHOTO BY KEREM YUCEL/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

NATIONAL SECURITY analysts, scholars, and a federal indictment reveal that threats from left-wing extremist groups in the United States are more dangerous than right-wing and “MAGA Republican” groups recently cited by the Biden administration as “threats to democracy.”

According to the U.S. government, some of the left-wing groups are being funded by Russian influence operations to “sow discord, spread pro-Russian propaganda, and interfere in elections with in the United States.”

On July 29, the Department of Justice (DOJ) announced the indictment of a Russian national for working on behalf of the Russian government to sow discord in the United States.

“From at least December 2014 until March 2022, Aleksandr Viktorovich Ionov, a resident of Moscow, together with at least three Russian officials, engaged in a years-long foreign malign influence campaign targeting the United States” the indictment states.

A DOJ statement reads, “Ionov—working under the supervision of the FSB [Russia’s Federal Security Services] and with the Russian government’s support—recruited political groups within the United States, including U.S. Political Group 1 in Florida, U.S. Political Group 2 in Georgia, and U.S. Political Group 3 in California, and exercised direction or control over them on behalf of the FSB.”

Russia Supports Left-Wing Groups

Ionov’s activities weren’t in support of right-wing groups; the operation was allegedly funding left-wing groups that promoted socialism, defunding police, and California secession, according to multiple reports.

In August, the Tampa Bay Times reported that “Political Group 1” named in the indictment is the African People’s Socialist Party (APSP) of St. Petersburg, Florida. On the group’s website, its chairman, Omali Yeshitela, is quoted as saying “We need a revolution,” and he promotes calls for reparations for slavery. On July 29, the same day the indictment for Ionov was unsealed, the group was raided by the FBI, according to the APSP.

When contacted for comment, a



spokesman for the APSP said it was unlikely that the group would be able to answer questions from The Epoch Times based on advice from counsel.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution identified “Political Group 2” in a July 29 article as the Atlanta-based Black Hammer Party. On May 31, 2020, the group’s website featured a statement by Ionov responding to the death of George Floyd that stated:

“Justice for George Floyd and all Colonized people (aka “people of color”), who have died at the hands of White Power Colonial terrorism (aka america’s racist police system).”

The group’s website states that it exists to “take the land back for all colonized people worldwide. ... Currently, our physical and intellectual labor is being coerced to build for the capitalist white colonial state, but it can be redirected to a noble cause.” The Black Hammer Party couldn’t be reached for comment.

The Sacramento Bee identified “Polit-

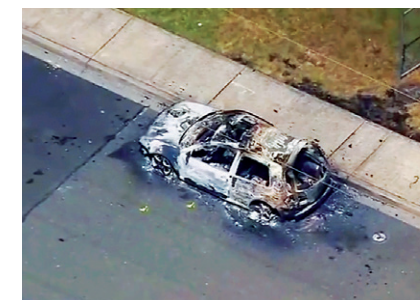
ical Group 3” as Yes California, an organization formed to promote California’s secession from the United States. Louis Marinelli, the founder of the organization, had worked in Russia teaching English. According to some news sources, Marinelli may once have held conservative views; however, Yes California’s Twitter account was critical of President Donald Trump and suggested that his “reactionary” policies were helping to drive the California secession movement. Marinelli couldn’t be reached for comment.

Politicizing Domestic Threats

Critics have accused the Biden administration of using the levers of the federal government to attack his political opposition by prioritizing what he calls threats to democracy and domestic tranquility. Biden’s list of targets has included Trump supporters, “election deniers,” and “white supremacists.”

In early September, bathed in a red-lit

CLOCKWISE FROM L: ALEXANDER NEMENOV/AP/WIA GETTY IMAGES; MARIO TAMIA/GETTY IMAGES; SCREENSHOT/REUTERS



(Left) Russia’s Federal Security Service headquarters in central Moscow on Feb. 25, 2021. **(Top)** A photo of George Floyd (C) is displayed along with others at the Say Their Names memorial exhibit in San Diego on July 20, 2021. **(Above)** Aerial footage shows a car destroyed by an Antifa extremist on July 13.

backdrop and flanked by two U.S. Marines, Biden told the nation, “There is no question that the Republican Party today is dominated, driven, and intimidated by Donald Trump and the MAGA Republicans, and that is a threat to this country.”

Biden’s Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has made groups and individuals that Biden considers a threat a priority for investigation. The DHS refused to be interviewed for this report but provided a “Summary of Terrorism Threat to the United States,” which was published in the June National Terrorism Advisory System Bulletin.

The bulletin states, “The continued proliferation of false or misleading narratives regarding current events could reinforce existing personal grievances or ideologies, and in combination with other factors, could inspire individuals to mobilize to violence.”

Many of the domestic threats listed in the bulletin identify those who question the administration’s policies.

“Some domestic violent extremists have expressed grievances related to their perception that the U.S. government is unwilling or unable to secure the U.S.–Mexico border,” the bulletin reads.

“Given a high-profile U.S. Supreme Court case about abortion rights, individuals who advocate both for and against abortion have, on public forums, encouraged violence, including against government, religious, and reproductive healthcare personnel and facilities, as well as those with opposing ideologies.

“As the United States enters mid-term election season this year, we assess that calls for violence by domestic violent extremists directed at democratic institutions, political candidates, party offices, election events, and election workers will likely increase.”

While the DHS and the Biden administration say they are expecting violence from right-wing groups, others say there’s a more pressing threat from the left.

Academic Report Fears Leftists

In the summer of 2020, Rutgers University’s Miller Center for Community Protection and Resilience issued a report that found evidence that left-wing groups pose a considerable threat.

“Anarcho-socialist militias which explicitly glorify Martyr narratives, classic authoritarian narratives, and revolutionary narratives are now formally organizing—and are growing,” the report stated.

The Miller Center cited leftist groups such as the Youth Liberation Front, John Brown Gun Club, Redneck Revolt, and the Socialist Rifle Association, among others, which claim 10,000 to 40,000 members on social media accounts.

The Miller Center report says these groups use social media to promote violence, stating, “Extreme anarcho-socialist fringe online forums on Reddit use memes calling for the death of police and memes for stockpiling munitions to promote violent revolution.”

The report cites the example of Willem Van Spronsen who was shot and killed during a shootout with police in July 2019. Van Spronsen was fire-bombing an Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility in Washington state. Multiple news reports stated that Van Spronsen was a member of Antifa and the John Brown Gun Club.

According to the global nonprofit organization Counter Extremism Project, many of these groups operate “under the wide umbrella of Antifa,” which is made up of individual cells, and “the leaders of these cells remain autonomous.”

John Farmer, director of the Miller Center, in an email response to questions from The Epoch Times, stated that he doesn’t see a serious national security threat from either the right or left.

“Quite frankly, I don’t view either the so-called ‘anarcho-socialist extremists’ or the ‘white nationalist extremists’ as a serious threat to national security,” he wrote.

However, extremists on both sides do pose problems, according to Farmer.

“Each in their own way is a threat to public order; each, for different reasons, seeks to destabilize our institutions and overthrow the established norms of democracy. Each has proven violent, even murderous, in differing contexts,” he said.



Supporters attend a “Make America Great Again” rally at the Kentucky Exposition Center in Louisville, Ky., on March 20, 2017.

What Political Attacks Mean

J. Michael Waller, a national security and intelligence expert at the Center for Security Policy, told The Epoch Times that the Biden administration is “trying to frighten the public” by labeling Trump supporters as threats to democracy.

“They are trying to create a political, psychological, and legal pretext for cracking down on groups and larger movements that they can connect through guilt by association,” he said.

Waller compares this sort of labeling to the so-called Red Scare period during the Cold War.

“If you apply subjective definitions to words, and you make the words mean what you want them to mean, and you recklessly apply those words to your opponent, you are creating a 21st-century Red Scare,” he said.

Waller says he sees a disturbing pattern in Biden’s words.

“You label someone you don’t like with an inflammatory term that objectively doesn’t apply, which gives you the public support you need to amass more power to create more bureaucracy. You then have the legal grounds to go after what amounts to political opponents,” he said.

“Look at the way they throw around the word ‘fascists.’ They aren’t even using the objective definition of fascist.”

Why Trump Supporters

Emily Finley, author of “The Ideology of Democratism,” told The Epoch Times

that the Biden administration is laying the groundwork to “normalize the idea that MAGA Republicans are extremists,” adding that “the larger philosophical impetus” behind Biden’s Philadelphia speech was to segregate and “marginalize” MAGA Republicans.

“By suggesting they are outside of the democratic process, they can safely exclude these ‘extremists’ from the democratic process. They can be censored. They can be disenfranchised. If they are labeled as ‘domestic terrorists,’ they can be jailed.”

Finley stated that when politicians decide what is and isn’t democracy, it provides them with cover to pursue



“If you apply subjective definitions to words ... and you recklessly apply those words to your opponent, you are creating a 21st-century Red Scare.”

J. Michael Waller, national security and intelligence expert, Center for Security Policy

their own interests outside of the democratic process. Finley calls this “democratism.”

“It’s democracy as they see it, and it doesn’t necessarily incorporate any actual elements of popular rule,” she said. “They can even do away with the pretense that they’re working toward democracy and that their actions are part of the democratic process.”

By declaring themselves arbiters of democracy, politicians can create extrajudicial authority for themselves, according to Finley.

“They can censor, they can collude with Big Tech to censor, and they don’t even have to worry about [being accused of] a First Amendment violation because so many of the elites are in on this understanding of democracy. There’s almost an unspoken agreement that certain voices can be marginalized and silenced and can be excluded,” she said.

“They have a very particular idea about normative politics in mind,” Finley said, referring to the political class and the media, which she says explains why it appears that there’s collaboration.

“This ideology is like the air that we breathe. There’s such a widespread understanding of democracy as democratism instead of actual popular rule; the understanding of that is so wide and deep in Western society now, there doesn’t need to be someone telling them how to interpret events,” she said.

“They hold certain assumptions on social issues. They have certain assumptions about human nature, about biology, about social organization, about gender. They have pre-conceived ideas about what society should look like, and so the vision they have in mind, to them, is considered the democracy that we should be striving toward.

“So whenever the electorate goes in the opposite direction from what they think is true democracy, then they will find ways to label that opposition as ‘anti-democratic.’”

The White House press office didn’t respond to a request for comment. ■

THIS PAGE FROM TOP: JIM WATSON/AP/WIA; GETTY IMAGES; CENTER FOR SECURITY POLICY

Perspectives



Commuters wait in long lines for buses outside of the Victoria train station in London on March 1.

PHOTO BY CHRIS J RATCLIFFE/GETTY IMAGES



DYSTOPIAN SLIP

Oil, natural gas, and coal make up 80 percent of the energy sector. **50**



US HOMELESSNESS CRISIS WORSENS

The “Housing First” policy is a costly short-term band-aid solution, experts contend. **53**



TRUSS ISN'T TO BLAME FOR THE TURMOIL

The UK should avoid the high inflation and economic stagnation of the '70s. **54**

INSIDE

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

Thomas McArdle



Dystopian Slip

Oil, natural gas, and coal make up 80 percent of the energy sector

A LONG WITH POLYESTER leisure suits and lines at the gas station, the 1970s are remembered for moralizing dystopian movies, most of which blame the global catastrophes facing the principal characters on corporate greed or excessive procreation, such as “Soylent Green,” with a title that refers to a government mass-produced food with sinister ingredients that turn out to have nothing to do with soy; “Rollerball,” in which a corporate-run death sport is the opium of the masses; and “Silent Running,” in which we see the last forests of a totally synthesized planet Earth relegated to the outer reaches of the Solar System awaiting orders either to return or be discarded and destroyed as obsolete.

But so obscure that it fails to make even exhaustive sci-fi geek lists of the era’s films of the doomed future is the 1980 Canadian picture, “Firebird 2015 AD.” Its story could have been conceived by a MAGA supporter during this or the past decade. Featuring the familiar TV faces of Darrin McGavin and Doug McClure and co-written by Maurice Hurley, who a few years later would be the chief writer in the first years of “Star Trek: The Next Generation” and who ironically would pass away in that very year of 2015, the film depicts an early 21st century in which oil and the vehicles that run on it are outlawed.

“Burners” defy the government and drive classic ’70s muscle cars such as a Pontiac Firebird or Ford Mustang, fueled by their hidden gasoline stashes, and are hunted by Washington’s Department of Vehicle Control. We soon discover that the supposed depletion of fossil fuels on the planet is a hypocritical deception, as politicians and the

military have kept plenty of oil for their own use.

Today it’s 2022 A.D. and the California Air Resources Board is scheduled to abolish the sale of gasoline-powered automobiles by the middle of the next decade. U.S. President Joe Biden boasts of having “united automakers and autoworkers around the bold goal for electric vehicles to make up 50 percent of all vehicles sold in the United States by 2030.”

In a Freudian near-slip, Biden came close to calling the SPR what he has spent this year turning it into—a Strategic Political Reserve, using taxpayer-funded oil to buy their votes.

But in the real world, as opposed to the celluloid one, about 80 percent of the energy economy is made up of “burners,” using oil, natural gas, and coal rather than windmills and solar panels.

And Biden very much wants their votes, which is why on Oct. 19, he gave a speech telling the “burners” to make sure they give him and his party credit for a modest reduction in the price at the pump that may take place when he, once again, taps into our nation’s emergency oil supply, meant to ensure that the economy survives in case of a major war or other serious calamity, the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR).

Here’s an excerpt from the White House’s official transcript of the speech: “Right now, the Strategic Pol—the Strategic Petroleum Reserve is more than half full, with about 400 million barrels of

oil. That’s more than enough for any emergency drawdown.”

In a Freudian near-slip, Biden came close to calling the SPR what he has spent this year turning it into—a Strategic Political Reserve, using taxpayer-funded oil to buy their votes.

Whatever pittance that gasoline prices may go down by in the two weeks before the midterm congressional elections because of the president releasing another 15 million barrels from the SPR, it will be a drop in the petroleum ocean compared with the 2 million barrels per day in oil production that the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), led by Saudi Arabia, will be cutting beginning in November, a move sure to bring the global price of crude back up into the \$90 to \$100 range—just in time for Christmas shopping.

Biden scrapped the Keystone XL oil pipeline practically before his chair in the Oval Office was warm in early 2021, then he suspended scheduled drilling leases in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska and prohibited drilling on federal lands.

Much of the rest of the speech was spent complaining about what oil companies do with their own money; it should be noted that if oil firms over the past two decades had followed the environmentalist extremism of the Democratic Party’s now-dominant hard left, there would never have been a hydraulic fracturing revolution allowing access to previously unreachable new domestic sources of oil, which multiplied supplies and kept energy prices low for hundreds of millions of Americans, much to the horror of the greens who are determined to deindustrialize the world—and turn it into something resembling a dystopian science fiction movie.

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Anders Corr



China’s Wolf Warrior in Manchester

The consul general reportedly attacked a protester in England

O N OCT. 16, ONE OF China’s consul generals in England reportedly stormed through a group of pro-democracy protesters in Manchester, kicking and tearing down posters, and pulling a man by the hair onto the consulate grounds. There, a consulate enforcement squad, some of whom wore riot gear, brutally beat the protester.

The victim came from Hong Kong, which, since 1997, has suffered under Beijing’s rule.

The protest coincided with the opening of the twice-a-decade Chinese Communist Party (CCP) congress in Beijing, where Xi Jinping was expected to be given an unprecedented third term.

Earlier in the day, Xi made a “triumphalist and combative” speech, calling on Chinese officials to show “fighting spirit” in their work. The consul general was probably watching.

The violence by “diplomats,” who thereafter emerged from the consulate, targeted art depicting Xi as an emperor who wears no clothes. The artist depicts Xi admiring himself with the false belief that he represents 1.4 billion Chinese people.

The consul general suspected in the violence, Zheng Xiyuan, wore a beret and was accompanied by thugs who attempted to bring the banner of Xi back into the consulate.

A scuffle broke out to retrieve it, and a protester was dragged onto the consulate grounds while one of the thugs was kicked on the ground. Zheng was filmed pulling the protester, Bob Chan, into the compound by his hair, after which he was beaten by the thugs.

Chan called the violence “barbaric.”

Eventually, one officer heroically entered the consulate grounds to halt the beating and retrieve the protester.

During a Sky News interview that followed, the consul general was asked about the hair-pulling, which he

initially didn’t deny, saying it was an “emergency situation” in which he tried to protect his colleague’s life. Then, he claimed not to have attacked anybody. When confronted with the photographic evidence of hair-pulling, he said the victim “abused my country, my leader,” and that “it’s my duty” as it would be for “any diplomats, if faced with such kind of behavior.”

The CCP is illegitimate—and so is its extension of thuggery around the world.

Chan later told the BBC: “It’s ridiculous. They [the attackers] shouldn’t have done that. We are supposed to have the freedom to say whatever we want here [in the UK].”

Another eyewitness told CNN that the consul general was “out of his mind and he wasn’t thinking before act[ing].”

British government ministers are being accused, including by members of their own Conservative Party, of a “totally inadequate” response to the violence.

Former Conservative leader Iain Duncan Smith said the government should tell China’s diplomats that “if they do not follow [British] rules, they get expelled.”

Natalie Bennett, a Green Party peer, wrote on Twitter, “Those in the consulate responsible must not be allowed to remain in the UK and China must apologise.”

Manchester is the latest incident of Beijing’s “wolf warrior” diplomacy gone mad and now combined with its transnational repression. The CCP appears to simultaneously encourage this behavior among its diplomats and then cover it up when it causes outrage abroad.

Beijing has established 54 “secret police stations” around the world,

according to the nongovernmental organization Safeguard Defenders, including in New York; Toronto; Tokyo; Paris; London; Dublin; Rome; Athens, Greece; Frankfurt, Germany; Madrid; and Amsterdam.

They supposedly target transnational crime, which is broadly defined by the Chinese regime to include some free speech at odds with CCP dogma, including that practiced in Manchester. Like the Manchester violence, they invite an illegitimate use of force on foreign soil by an illegitimate government.

Family members of those targeted are intimidated to “persuade” the targets to return to China, where they could face torture, imprisonment, or worse, according to Safeguard Defenders.

From April 2021 to July 2022, the regime arrested 230,000 people, mostly from Southeast Asia, according to the NGO.

“These operations eschew official bilateral police and judicial cooperation and violate the international rule of law, and may violate the territorial integrity of third countries involved in setting up a parallel policing mechanism using illegal methods,” the report states.

That sounds like Manchester.

No person, regardless of diplomatic status, should have the right to commit violence without consequence against those conducting free speech activities.

Beijing’s international thuggery and “police” violence must end. The CCP is illegitimate—and so is its extension of thuggery around the world.

Any of China’s consul generals who see it as their duty to limit free speech in their host countries through violence or other means should be sent home. Allowing CCP thugs to masquerade as diplomats representing 1.4 billion Chinese people just buys into their lies and empowers their crimes.



Biden's Student Debt Relief

The relief raises concerns over equity and more

PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN has offered student debtors some relief. Legal challenges question whether he has the authority to make such a financial commitment. However, even if the White House prevails in court, arguments pro and con will still matter, especially as the nation approaches this year's midterm elections and the 2024 presidential contest.

Here's what the White House plans. It would extend to Dec. 31 the existing pause in student loan repayments. It would give up to \$20,000 of debt forgiveness to all Pell Grant recipients and up to \$10,000 in forgiveness to non-Pell Grant recipients with incomes up to \$125,000 a year and married couples with incomes up to \$250,000 a year. Debtors who work for certain nonprofits, in the military, or for federal, state, tribal, or local governments can have their student debt forgiven entirely through the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program.

Though Biden has yet to account for how much this relief will deny federal coffers, the prestigious Penn-Wharton Model estimates that figures could exceed \$1 trillion.

While the White House argues for this action in terms of the urgent needs of some 45 million young Americans burdened by some \$1.6 trillion in federal student loan debt, questions nonetheless arise in three areas: the value of a program that effectively pushes many young people into college, matters of equity, and whether this approach gets to the root of the problem.

The first of these objections effectively takes exception to the White House assertion that college is, in the words of its own fact sheet, a “ticket to a middle-class life.” If the degree were, in fact, such a “ticket,” the debt wouldn't seem so onerous to so

many. This grim reality causes many to raise the counterargument that many who presently attend college would do better in trade schools or apprenticeship programs. From this perspective, debt forgiveness only fosters a dysfunctional pattern.

Many have argued that the easy terms of student lending have facilitated price increases at private and public educational institutions alike.

Then, there are questions of equity. One part of these objections considers those who saved for college or have already paid down a significant portion of their debt. Forgiveness laughs at their sacrifice. Those who set themselves up in a business or a trade might question why Washington isn't helping them.

Nor does debt forgiveness consider future students. To be sure, part of the White House order would limit the amount of debt service to 5 percent of a debtor's discretionary income and ensure that debt couldn't grow as a portion of the borrower's income.

But these provisions fall far short of what's being offered to existing debtors.

A full consideration of equity would also have to go beyond the apportion of benefits and consider who pays. Because the debt is owed to the government, forgiveness would deny the budget a source of revenue. Debt relief would then burden all taxpayers. Those who have already paid down their debt would not only miss the benefit, but also see a federal budget much less able to provide other services they might need.

Such a constrained budget would make it hard for others still less fortunate to argue for the services they need, many of them low-income people who never even considered college, perhaps for financial reasons. A single mother supporting her family off a meager paycheck might prefer that Washington extend food stamp subsidies rather than give up revenue for the sake of credentialed college graduates.

None of these alternatives are necessarily more worthy than helping indebted students, but a consideration of fairness surely demands that people weigh these aspects of the debt forgiveness question.

The final set of objections takes up the root of the problem, which, as the White House material itself points out, is the rapidly rising cost of college. Many have argued that the easy terms of student lending have facilitated price increases at private and public educational institutions alike. In this, the debt has benefitted college administrations and faculties more than anyone.

This presidential order would shift the burden for those benefits to taxpayers from the students. Still, the fuel for college cost increases would remain and continue to benefit those in administrations and faculties, possibly the most privileged people in the nation.

It's easy to want to help young people struggling with their finances, especially because many were duped into believing that their course of study would enable them to discharge the debt more easily than it has.

This order, however well-intentioned, also has significant drawbacks, as is almost always the case with public policy matters. These drawbacks are legitimate and need to be aired even if, in the end, the order proceeds, and the population has to accept it.



US Homelessness Crisis Worsens

Housing First is a costly short-term band-aid solution, experts contend

HOMELESSNESS IN the United States has increased dramatically over the past decade and is now at crisis levels in many major cities. It's also one of the most pressing issues among voters in many communities right now.

According to a new study by the Discovery Institute, the overall number of homeless people across the country is approaching 1.2 million, far greater than the 500,000 figure typically cited by media outlets.

Even before COVID-19, homelessness was on the rise despite huge increases in government welfare spending, according to the report.

Robert Marbut, Jr., a renowned expert on homelessness and senior fellow at the Discovery Institute, believes that before the federal government can effectively combat the problem of homelessness, it must first understand the root causes of the problem.

At a luncheon in Washington on Oct. 12, Marbut presented his new research, “How Congress Can Reform Government's Misguided Homelessness Policies.” He argued that homelessness should be treated primarily as a mental and behavioral health issue rather than a housing issue.

Marbut was also the executive director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness under then-President Donald Trump from 2019 to 2021.

At the heart of the homelessness problem, according to Marbut, is the “Housing First” policy, which provides homeless people with unconditional access to subsidized housing. This policy has been the main approach used by the government to address homelessness in the past 20 years.

Advocates of the Housing First strategy believe that permanent housing is the best way to address the problem and that all homeless people should get housing right away, without any conditions.



Over the five years prior to the onset of the COVID-19, the number of unsheltered individuals suffering homelessness surged by more than 20 percent.

According to critics, the Obama administration adopted Housing First as a one-size-fits-all solution in 2013, which has seen the homelessness problem get worse. As part of his strategic plan to tackle the problem, then-President Barack Obama pledged to end veteran homelessness by 2015, chronic homelessness by 2017, and family homelessness by 2020.

“The results have been disastrous,” Marbut said.

He said the Housing First approach has, in practice, turned into a “housing only” solution. The policy has had negative consequences, such as the removal of requirements for the homeless to participate in effective support programs and therapies, as well as the elimination of federal funding for wraparound services for treating addiction and mental health problems.

“By ignoring the root causes of homelessness—such as untreated

mental illness combined with substance use disorders—Housing First is, at best, an expensive short-term band-aid that only addresses the symptom of an individual's living on the street,” Marbut wrote in the report.

Over the five years prior to the onset of COVID-19, the number of unsheltered individuals suffering homelessness surged by more than 20 percent, even as subsidized housing vouchers increased by more than 40 percent, according to the report.

In recent years, Marbut has come under fire for rejecting Housing First by those who believe that the fundamental cause of homelessness is the lack of affordable housing. They argue that mental health issues are just a small part of the problem.

Advocates also defend “a flexible approach,” stating that the security of a home will assist homeless people to succeed in treatment, jobs, education, and health.

However, a Manhattan Institute study found that Housing First did a poor job of addressing serious mental illness and drug addiction, as well as assisting homeless people to find employment and overcome social isolation.

According to the California Policy Lab, a nonpartisan research center at the University of California, 78 percent of the unsheltered homeless population reported having mental health conditions, and 50 percent said their mental health conditions led to their loss of housing. A total of 75 percent of the unsheltered population indicated substance abuse conditions, and 51 percent said using drugs or alcohol contributed to their homelessness. These findings were based on an analysis of more than 64,000 surveys conducted in 2019.

Marbut says there are more deaths among the homeless on the streets each day than there have been U.S. troops killed overseas.

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Daniel Lacalle



Truss Isn't to Blame for the Turmoil

The UK should avoid the high inflation and economic stagnation of the '70s

WE LIVE IN STRANGE times. The same people that vehemently defended massive deficit spending and money printing as the solution to the global economy now blame the turmoil of the UK bond and currency markets on a deficit-increasing budget.

I find it astonishing that not one of the so-called experts who have immediately placed the cause of the British market volatility on former Prime Minister Liz Truss's budget has said anything about the collapse of the yen and the need for Bank of Japan intervention, which has been ongoing for two weeks. Why did so many people assume the Truss mini-budget was the cause of volatility when the euro, the yen, the Norwegian krone, and most emerging market currencies have suffered a similar or worse depreciation versus the U.S. dollar this year?

What about the bond market? This is the worst year since 1931 for bonds all over the world, and the collapse in prices of sovereign and private bonds in developed and emerging market economies is strikingly similar to that of their UK fixed-income peers.

The same economists that say deficits don't matter and that sovereign nations can spend and print currency as they please (“expansionary policies,” they call them) now say that a UK Keynesian budget that increases spending but cuts taxes may destroy the economy. Yet they forget that Japan had to massively intervene in the yen as well without any tax cuts and keeping its misguided fiscal policy of spending and borrowing.

Truss and her former chancellor of the Exchequer, Kwasi Kwarteng, aren't to blame for this insanity. The policy of negative real rates and massive liquidity injection by the



Truss should have presented the budget she believes in, not the one that she thought that consensus would buy.

Bank of England is. Kwarteng and Truss are only to blame for believing that the policies of spending and printing that are defended by almost all mainstream Keynesian economists should work even when the music stops.

In these past years, British and developed nations' governments didn't pay any attention to fiscal imbalances because money was cheap and abundant. Deficits soared, spending was uncontrolled, and the problem was hidden in the balance sheets of central banks that, like the Bank of England, purchased more than 100 percent of net issuances of government debt. After years of printing money and increasing debt to new all-time highs, persistently high inflation appeared, and now central banks need to hike rates and reduce money supply growth just when fixed-income funds are loaded with toxic debt at negative nominal and

real yields. And the rate hikes mean that margin calls are more expensive and that losses are unbearable.

UK pension funds need to get rid of the liquid assets they own as margin calls rise. When margin calls kick in, many need to sell their most liquid assets, which are Gilts in the UK and government bonds elsewhere.

The irony of it all is that the defenders of monster deficits and borrowing if it comes from bloating the size of government feel vindicated. It was the evil tax cuts!

The political analysis of the mini-budget is astonishing. No one in the UK parliament sees any need to cut spending it seems, yet those expenses are consolidated and annualized, which means that any change in the economic cycle leads to larger fiscal imbalances as receipts are cyclical and, with it, more currency printing.

Every time a UK government buys the argument that higher tax rates finance higher annual and consolidated spending, they get one step farther away from being a leading global economy and one step closer to bringing the UK back to the 1970s.

Truss should have presented the budget that she believes in, not the one that she thought that consensus would buy. By presenting an “expansionary” spending budget that she probably didn't even believe in sprinkled with a few modest tax cuts, she handed her opponents the axe to use against her, and the opportunity to attack came from a global market collapse and blaming it all on minuscule tax incentives.

The only lesson for the UK is to remember that if you follow Greece's economic policies, you get Greek debt, unemployment, and growth. The UK government should do everything to avoid the '70s elevated inflation and economic stagnation, not try to vigorously replicate them.

ROB PINNEY/GETTY IMAGES

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Fan Yu

Strong US Dollar Will Boost Global M&A

Overseas companies now look mighty cheap to US companies

THE RELATIVE STRENGTH of the U.S. dollar is expected to continue, propelled by the Federal Reserve's determination to combat inflation by tightening monetary policy.

The dollar's strength has been a headache for U.S. multinational corporations, with revenues that they earn in other countries being worth less in dollar terms after currency translation. U.S. companies report earnings in local currency.

But this dynamic has also created a unique opportunity. Like U.S. vacationers landing in Europe suddenly armed with more purchasing power, overseas companies now look cheap to U.S. companies looking to make acquisitions.

The dollar has risen by about 20 percent year-to-date against the British pound. It's up by roughly 16 percent against the euro, and its nearly 30 percent gain against the Japanese yen is even more pronounced. This means that any acquisition in those markets is suddenly massively discounted compared to the beginning of the year—everything else being equal.

Traders expect this foreign exchange trend to continue. According to data from the U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission, investors are placing more wagers on the U.S. dollar to make advances against currencies such as the yen, the euro, and the Canadian dollar.

This is happening despite the Fed having already raised interest rates by 75 basis points (1 basis point is equal to 0.01 percent) at each of its past three meetings. This is mainly due to the central banks in other countries enacting somewhat different mandates. The Bank of Japan isn't budging on keeping Japanese rates below zero, the People's Bank of China is looking to cut rates as the country's economy deteriorates, and both the Bank of England and the European Central Bank are tightening policy, albeit at a much slower pace than the Fed.

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Hedge funds are betting on a wave of merger activity as U.S. corporations and private equity funds prepare to go shopping abroad.

The U.S. dollar is further boosted by its status as a “haven” asset during times of distress, with global investors pouring into U.S. assets because of America's relative economic stability.

This has created a divergence across global interest rates after more than a decade of lockstep rate cuts.

With this fact pattern established, it's no wonder that U.S. firms are gearing up to spend.

“Everything in the UK is on sale,” Blair Jacobson, co-head of European credit at U.S. private equity giant Ares Management, said at an Oct. 12 Financial Times event in London.

Jon Gray, president and COO of Blackstone, echoed the same sentiment about UK assets in a recent interview with MarketWatch.

Private equity executives singled out the UK because of the country's recent turmoil—Prime Minister Liz Truss's controversial tax cuts and resignation—but the same sentiment also

applies broadly to Europe and Asia.

Hedge funds are betting on a wave of merger activity as U.S. corporations and private equity funds prepare to go shopping abroad.

The so-called merger arbitrage or event-driven hedge funds are preparing to place more bets on deals closing, according to a recent Financial Times report. These funds tend to make bets on companies after merger and acquisition (M&A) deals are announced and take a position on whether these deals would ultimately close, taking a view on specific regulatory, governance, and competing bid risks. They can also bet on companies they speculate would be candidates for takeover.

Hedge fund managers such as AQR, Millennium Management, Cheyne Capital, and Balyasny Asset Management all run event-driven funds. There are also mutual funds that specialize in event-driven and merger arbitrage strategies, such as the BlackRock Event Driven Equity, Gabelli ABC Fund, and The Arbitrage Fund.

These funds tend to be volatile, and performance is dependent on the competency and know-how of the portfolio managers. The Financial Times stated that through nine months of 2022, merger arbitrage funds are up by 0.7 percent on average, a paltry amount during normal times but significantly better than the deeply negative performance of the broader S&P 500 this year.

One very public and dragged-out M&A deal this year has been billionaire Elon Musk's takeover attempt of Twitter. The Musk-Twitter deal has been an especially bumpy roller-coaster ride, dragging Twitter's share price up and down over the past several months and ultimately proving to be a profitable trade for investors making the right calls.

During times of macro uncertainty, investors could be wise to take a view on specific micro-events.

THOUGHT LEADERS

Dershowitz: Partisanship Is Destroying Principles

'If you're a principled person, you'll be punished for it,' says lawyer Alan Dershowitz

“How dare they call themselves progressives,” Alan Dershowitz says. “They are regressives. They are reactionaries. They are repressors.”

In a recent episode of EpochTV’s “American Thought Leaders,” host Jan Jekielek and Harvard law professor emeritus Dershowitz discuss his latest book “The Price of Principle: Why Integrity is Worth the Consequences,” which argues that “unprincipled” partisanship has taken over the United States.

One of the top constitutional lawyers in the country, and a self-described liberal Democrat, Dershowitz has been excoriated by both the right and the left for defending highly unpopular public figures. Here, he shares his thoughts on systemic racism, due process, civil liberties, and the rise of anti-Semitism in the United States.

JAN JEKIELEK: “The Price of Principle” raises exactly the kinds of questions I’ve been struggling with. Has partisanship completely taken over?

ALAN DERSHOWITZ: Partisanship has taken

over, but it’s an utterly unprincipled partisanship. If you dare to put principle before partisanship, you’re canceled. Your group won’t have anything to do with you. You have to be 100 percent partisan, no matter what the principles are. People claim principle, but they’re using it in a partisan way. It’s the opposite of principle. It’s doublespeak. Today, if you’re a principled person, you’ll be punished for it. Nobody wants principle or consistency.

MR. JEKIELEK: You have a chapter in the book about systemic racism. Essentially, it’s partisanship masquerading as principle, isn’t it?

MR. DERSHOWITZ: It is. Meritocracy is a dirty word. You can’t use meritocracy. That’s white supremacy. There has to be racial advantage. But when there’s racial advantage, there’s racial disadvantage. Look at the Harvard case. Who’s suing Harvard? It’s Asian students, who are discriminated against because of quotas for black students. That case is going up to the Supreme Court, which I think will decide it the right way. But you know what will happen? All the major universities will cheat. They’ll still have racial quotas, but they’ll describe them as something else.

MR. JEKIELEK: Do you see these Harvard student quotas as a form of racism?

MR. DERSHOWITZ: No, it’s an attempt to eliminate racism. But it’s a very awkward attempt, and it introduces new elements of racism. It’s not going to work in the end. We aren’t a systemically racist country. We’re a systemically anti-racist country.

The killing of George Floyd was inexcusable and horrible, but that event dramatically transformed us. The transformation was already occurring, but that one event changed it quickly, and the result isn’t equality. The result is to introduce a new kind of inequality and an anti-meritocratic approach.

Today’s woke generation looks for opportunities. They find events and use them to project their narrative. I tend to agree with a lot of their points of view, but they think the ends justify the means. Their utopia is going to be achieved, and so we don’t need the barriers of equal protection, due process, and free speech. Why do you need free speech if you already know the Truth with a capital T? Why do you need due process?

The left loves it when somebody they identify

with is released, but they don’t want to apply the same due process standards to former President Donald Trump, or to a white person accused of oppressing blacks. I don’t like it when that happens, but I’ll defend anybody who the government is after. The more unpopular you are, the more likely I am to want to defend you.

And how dare they call themselves progressives? They are regressives. They are reactionaries. They are repressors. They want to stop due process and free speech and equal protection.

MR. JEKIELEK: Three principles have dominated your life. I’m going to read them, because I found this very valuable. Number one: freedom of expression and conscience. Number two: due process, fundamental fairness, and the adversary system of seeking justice. Number three: basic equality and meritocracy.

MR. DERSHOWITZ: Yes. The one that’s the most unpopular today is the adversary system. If you want to appreciate defense lawyers like me, go to Iran, Russia, China, or Cuba, where people can’t get defense lawyers. People say I’m a horrible person because

“We are not a systemically racist country. We’re a systemically anti-racist country.”

Alan Dershowitz,
Harvard law professor emeritus

I defended O.J. Simpson or Leona Helmsley. Yes, and I'm going to continue to do that, just the way John Adams defended those who were accused of the Boston Massacre. It's the essence of our system, yet it's very unpopular. People love me when I defend people they like and hate me when I defend people they don't like.

MR. JEKIELEK: You cite Judge Oliver Wendell Holmes, who says: "I'm on the side of law. I'm not on the side of justice." It isn't necessarily obvious why these things are different.

MR. DERSHOWITZ: I'll give you an example. To convict somebody, you have to prove his guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. What if he's guilty, but there's no evidence of reasonable doubt? A guilty person goes free. That's not justice. That's the law. That's a good law. It's better that 10 guilty go free, than one innocent be wrongly convicted. That emanates from the Bible, from Abraham's arguments with God over the sinners of Sodom. But it's not justice, and I have produced injustice on some occasions.

Yes, I have occasionally gotten guilty people off. I don't lose any sleep when I do that. I lose sleep when an innocent client gets convicted. That's only happened a few times in my life, but it has destroyed me, because then I say it's my fault. That's why I fight so hard against that happening.

MR. JEKIELEK: You said there were three things that made you a pariah in certain social circles.



Demonstrators protest ahead of a "Freedom's Safest Place" rally, in Long Beach, Calif., on April 28, 2019.

MR. DERSHOWITZ: Representing Trump was number one. That put me on the "margins of academia." Number two was representing Jeffrey Epstein. And the third, as the result of representing Epstein, I was accused by a woman named Virginia Giuffre, whom I never met and never heard of, of having sex with her on seven occasions, including in front of my house in a limousine. Her own lawyer admitted on tape that she was wrong. Her other lawyer admitted she was wrong. We discovered emails they tried to suppress, which revealed she never knew me, yet people believed it.

The people on the left don't believe the sexual charges against me. They attack me because of the Trump business. Others attack me because if I've been accused, then I must be guilty. But I've clearly proved her [Giuffre] to be a serial liar. I'm suing her, and it will be resolved in court.

Note: American Thought Leaders contacted Virginia Giuffre about Dershowitz's allegations against her, but didn't immediately receive a response.

MR. JEKIELEK: Let's return to this element of systemic racism. There's a lot of evidence that anti-Semitism is on the rise in this country, both anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism. What's the relationship? Please talk about this, because you have some very good ideas about it.

MR. DERSHOWITZ: It's clear that America in the 1920s and 1930s was a systemically anti-Semitic country. Jews weren't allowed to work on Wall Street or in many law firms. They weren't allowed into certain clubs. That was pure anti-Semitism, and that disappeared with the Second World War. What's come after that, largely from the hard left, is a new disguise for anti-Semitism called anti-Zionism.

Here's just one example: We hear arguments that Zionists have too much control over the American media, but The New York Times is an anti-Zionist newspaper. The Washington Post is certainly not pro-Zionist. At any rate, Zionism is becoming a euphemism for Jew. If you say you're anti-Zionist, you

can get away with it, because that's political, not racial.

Of the social movements, for example, the Women's March was headed by a virulent anti-Semite. Black Lives Matter was headed by anti-Semitic people. The Million Man March on Washington had Louis Farrakhan as a sponsor.

MR. JEKIELEK: In "The Price of Principle," you say, "My loyalty to the family comes first, even ahead of some of these other things." But even in the family now, there's this partisanship, with people not talking to each other. What's the way out?

MR. DERSHOWITZ: There's no clear way out. This trend toward the new McCarthyism on the hard left is going to be enduring because it's being taught to our future leaders in universities.

I see it having a longer pendulum swing than many other things. McCarthyism in the 1950s was gone in 10 years. Left-wing McCarthyism will last many years longer. So, I'm not optimistic.

I'm going to end with a description of a pessimist and an optimist. In Israel, a pessimist is somebody who says, "Oy vey. Things are so bad, they can't get worse." The optimist says, "Yes, they can."

And so I'm partly a pessimist, and partly an optimist. Things can get worse. But, I believe, along with Martin Luther King Jr., that the arc of justice moves in the right direction, but we need to help it. It doesn't just move. We need to help it. I wrote "The Price of Principle" to stimulate that sort of debate and discussion. ■

This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.

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Last Call

Don't let the fear of dying prevent you from truly living

By Jeff Minick

“IF YOU WERE GOING TO die soon and had only one phone call you could make, who would you call and what would you say? And why are you waiting?”

That challenge from Stephen Levine, author of such books as “Who Dies?” and “One Year to Live,” brings many readers to a dead stop (pun intended). A few might crack a joke—“I would call a priest”—as people often use humor to deflect their fear of death.

Others might find Levine’s inquiry irritating. They avoid thoughts of death, especially their own. Like Scarlett O’Hara, they tell themselves, “I’ll think about that tomorrow. Tomorrow is another day.” The trouble is that, eventually, we run out of tomorrows. “Soon one mornin’,” the old song goes, “death come creepin’ in the room,” and all the padlocks in the world won’t prevent that thief’s entrance.

But if we take Levine’s questions seriously, I suspect that most of us would call a parent, a child, or a friend to tell them one last time that we love them. Others might phone someone from whom they were estranged, such as a son who had years before severed all connections or a friend they had deeply wounded. Getting our final affairs in order means more than making out a will.

“And why are you waiting?” is a reasonable question, given that death

can arrive as unexpectedly as a bolt of lightning. However unpleasant the prospect, maybe we should pick up the phone and try mending fences with our long-lost daughter rather than waiting for an oncologist to say, “I’ve got some bad news.”

What if we lived some moments of each day as if they were our last?

But if we dive below the surface of Levine’s questions, we find ourselves faced with a more complex conundrum: Knowing that someday we’ll die, how should we live?

Most of us have probably heard the expression, “Live each day as if it were your last.” That one doesn’t really work for me or, perhaps, for a lot of people. I understand its meaning—to do good and fulfill our nature—but to make these our sole focus would surely become burdensome—and perhaps more dismal—than death itself. If he knew that tomorrow he must die, the accountant who spends his Sunday afternoons watching football would probably turn off the television, but those hours on the sofa, which some might consider a waste of time, is a mini-vacation for him, rest and relief from the past week’s stress.

But a compromise is available. What if we lived some moments of each day as if they were our last? What if we put aside, even for a few seconds, that

swarm of petty details and obligations always buzzing in our skulls, and instead absorbed, really absorbed, what we love and what we’re grateful for? These could be anything—the attentive frown on our daughter’s face as she colors a bouquet of flowers for a kindergarten classmate, the woman we love singing along with the radio as she prepares supper, or the way a November evening wraps itself like a shawl over the backyard.

Yeah, I know, I sound like some sentimental goofball. A “stop-and-smell-the-flowers” kind of guy. All right, then. Guilty as charged. But these are the moments, these tiny slices of time and perception, that add depth to our hearts and souls. They remind us of who we are and why we do what we do in the first place.

“Depend on it, sir,” Samuel Johnson said, “when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully.” True, but we shouldn’t require noose and gallows or fretful anxieties to keep us on track. We can instead simply live, bolstered by those daily snapshots of our treasures.

Do that and maybe the last call we make will be an ode to joy rather than a dirge.

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



In the world of alternative investments, vintage guitars are one of the few options that offer the opportunity to have a hands-on experience.

PHOTO BY POBOODINA NATALIA / SHUTTERSTOCK

Playing Your Investments 68

ONE OF ATHENS’S OLDEST and most elegant neighborhoods, Kifissia offers an array of museums, high-end stores, and cozy restaurants. **64**

A VISIT TO ALMA COCINA LATINA is a multifaceted adventure. In addition to traditional Venezuelan dishes, the décor and staff provide a sense of well-being. **67**

WEARING A DIVE WATCH marks you as a person who craves adventure; this selection will keep you on time under the most extreme conditions. **71**

— YOUR OWN — Resort

This very private, well-appointed estate affords a lush lifestyle against the backdrop of the Santa Ynez mountains

By Phil Butler



The living areas are luxuriously casual, with expansive views and Southwestern-style wood ceilings.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF SIMON BERLYN FOR SOTHEBY'S INTERNATIONAL REALTY

THE PROPERTY KNOWN AS Prancing Horse Estate is a grand 11,000-square-foot Tuscan-style mansion set amid lush vineyards, citrus groves, manicured lawns, and koi ponds. Designed by Don Nulty, the estate's Carpinteria, California, location provides a mix of Italy and Mexico, tucked between Santa Barbara's Santa Ynez Mountains and the Pacific Ocean. The main house has seven bedrooms, eight full baths, two half-baths, plus numerous architecturally intriguing social rooms. The home was created using only the finest materials, such as imported vintage Italian tiles and custom iron and millwork, all handcrafted by skilled artisans.

The residence's interior is generously accented with custom marble, expansive polished surfaces, hand-crafted millwork, and unique vaulted and coffered ceilings above. The master suite has an open-air rooftop gym, a library, an airy sitting area, huge closets, and multiple spa features in the bathroom.

Each of the home's bedrooms also has luxurious appointments to ensure complete

comfort for even the most discerning family members or guests. The restaurant-quality chef's kitchen is well-equipped to keep large groups well fed and features design touches in keeping with the balance of the residence, including a magnificent tiled ceiling. The adjacent formal dining room is equally well-suited for intimate family meals or extravagant formal dinner parties.

The expansive living rooms open onto an infinity-edge pool, a custom LA Lakers-themed basketball court, and a path leading to the property's equestrian facilities and sprawling vineyards. The home's central court is adorned with a stone fireplace, a prancing horse statue that inspired the property's name, a serene koi pond, and a fountain.

This property is essentially an exceptionally well-appointed private resort. Other notable features include a large motor court with a cavernous garage and a detached guest house with an office/media room and private suite. ■

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.



(Above) Prancing Horse Estate lies just a few minutes from Santa Barbara's beaches. The 12.5-acre estate offers resort-style living.

(Top Right) The living area features vaulted and coffered ceilings, custom steel frame windowed doors, and handcrafted stone, hardwood, and vintage tile.

(Right) The appointments and furnishings of the master suite's bath area are 5-star resort quality.



**SANTA BARBARA ESTATE
CARPINTERIA, CALIF.
\$19,985,000**

- 7 BEDROOMS
- 8 FULL BATHS,
2 HALF-BATHS
- 11,000 SQUARE FEET
- 12.5 ACRES

KEY FEATURES

- DON NULTY DESIGN
- VINEYARD
- RESORT-GRADE AMENITIES

AGENT

SOTHEBY'S INTERNATIONAL REALTY
NEYSHIA GO,
BEVERLY HILLS BROKERAGE
+1-310-882-8357

An Athenian Oasis

Often overlooked by tourists, Kifissia is one of Athens's most beautiful suburbs

By Tim Johnson



A leisurely stroll reveals elegant homes.

THE HEAT OF ANOTHER SUMMER day in Athens, the Greek capital, was just starting to ebb. Still far too early for dinner, a few couples and scattered clusters of friends had begun to gather at patio tables, little bursts of laughter and animated debate rising into the air over refreshing-looking iced cocktails.

All Greek; no English at all. Cypresses, cedars, and pines provided a verdant backdrop and plenty of shade. Traffic on the small streets was light and lazy, even on a weeknight.

I don't know how many times I've visited this massive, unknowable city, but I had never imagined a place like this. On that night, Kifissia was a revelation, a true oasis located just 20 minutes from the center of the city.

Few tourists see the northern suburbs of Athens. The vast majority treat this ancient place as a stopover, heading straight to the Acropolis and maybe grabbing some souvlaki in Plaka before hopping on ships bound for Santorini, Mykonos, and Crete. A few may tarry on the Aegean beaches of Glyfada and Vouliagmeni, just to the south.

But almost nobody heads north. Set at a higher altitude and covered in greenery, Kifissia is significantly cooler than the center of the city. You can feel the difference immediately. As I checked into the Life Gallery Hotel, just north of the main shopping district in the neighboring town of Ekali, the stress of the super-heated streets of central Athens fell away. Tucked into the forest with two pools and rooms that overlook the mountains, this felt more like a resort than a city hotel.

Exploring Kifissia

My first activity there was to take a stroll. A cab dropped me at Kelafari Square in the late afternoon, and I followed the gentle slope of Kolokotroni, one of Kifissia's main streets. Grand houses peeked out from behind the trees, some of them now converted into cocktail bars. The streets are lined with international luxury brands, as well as cool little shops such as Par Amour, which stocks a variety of Greek designers.

I investigated one of the two outdoor movie theatres, but the man at the box office told me that they were showing a French film with Greek subtitles. Nearby, I also attempted to visit the Drossinis Museum, housed in a handsome villa. It was once home to the famed Greek author and poet Georgios Drossinis. I rang the buzzer and a kind woman let me in.

"This is where he spent the final years of his life," she told me, showing me around the library on the first floor before relaying the news that the second floor, which

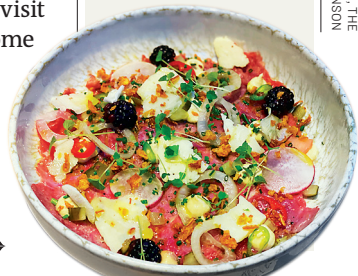
A 30-Minute

Train ride whisks visitors from Athens to leafy Kifissia.



Note that some smaller shops observe siesta hours, closing from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Dining at Il Salumaio d'Atene, a dining institution in Kifissia.



FROM LEFT: PIT STOCK/SHUTTERSTOCK, THE EPOCH TIMES; TIM JOHNSON



Outdoor dining at Nice n Easy, a farm-to-table restaurant.

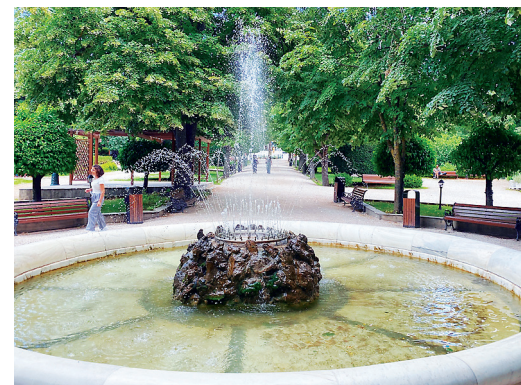
houses his writing and other artifacts, was open by appointment only.

I had better luck at the Goulandris Natural History Museum. Built out of stone and glass in a residential neighborhood, its various wings housed everything from hands-on exhibits to a virtual reality experience that simulates being in an earthquake.

This whole place was a passion project, built to help Greeks connect with the natural world and promote conservation. The collection displays everything from fossils to crustaceans, creepy-cool bugs, and beautiful butterflies.

Dining Like a Local

Feeling fully educated, it was time to engage in Kifissia’s two most popular activities—eating and drinking. First, a wine tasting and a light bite at Il Salumaio d’Atene, a deli and restaurant in



Few tourists get to see the upscale, northern suburbs of Athens.

which outdoor tables are tucked into lush greenery. Indoors, under a stained-glass skylight and chandelier, I pulled up a bar stool and sampled some black Angus salami.

A manager told me that they import many of their meats and cheeses directly from Italy. I tucked into a tender sea bream carpaccio—“the fish is fresh from here,” the manager said, as he plunked it down in front of me, the citrus finish of the dish softening the mineral-rich glass Assyrtiko, a Greek wine poured a moment earlier by the sommelier.

And as the sky finally turned from pink to purple to cobalt, I finished the day with a long dinner at a local fixture, Nice n Easy. The patio filled slowly, the legendary late dining habits of Greeks proving true on this night. Six courses, all very fresh.

“We say, if we can’t get an ingredient locally, we won’t use it,” the general manager, Kyriakos Kyrianiadis, told me, noting that they completely change the menu every season. “A long time ago, villagers would graze their cows and goats, right here on this spot.”

As he explained this, I made my way through chicken gyro tacos, pappardelle pasta, and tender pork tenderloin with mashed potatoes as smooth as velvet.

No, I can’t quite imagine that pastoral scene, looking around at shoppers with their bags full and stylish couples filing in for dinner. Although, it’s equally unfathomable that the Acropolis and the clamor of central Athens were just down the road. As I tucked into dessert, I smile again, happy that I had discovered Kifissia. ■

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

If You Go

Getting Around:

Commuter trains connect the northern suburbs with central Athens, but sometimes it’s just simpler to hop in a cab. Cabs are abundant and relatively cheap. (Just make sure the driver runs the meter.) Once there, Kifissia’s core of shopping streets can be navigated very easily on foot or by bicycle.

Stay:

About five to ten minutes north of Kifissia, Life Gallery Hotel offers a laid-back experience in a sylvan setting. Rooms are bright and comfortable, with big balconies.



THIS PAGE FROM TOP: TIM JOHNSON; ARTHUR BALITSKI/SHUTTERSTOCK

FINDING AREPAS, AND NEW BEGINNINGS, AT ALMA COCINA LATINA

Irena Stein, founder of Alma Cocina Latina, has turned her restaurant into a cultural ambassador for her native country, and a landing pad for fellow immigrants in search of a better life

By Nick Dauk

THE MOST IMPORTANT ingredient Irena Stein has brought to Baltimore’s dining scene isn’t found in her Venezuelan food. It’s her team.

As the proud founder of the country’s first contemporary Venezuelan restaurant, Alma Cocina Latina, and a Venezuelan immigrant herself, Stein is supporting the next generation of Venezuelan chefs in America—which begins with helping them immigrate and secure legal paths to citizenship. Her efforts include sponsoring five chefs for O-1 visas, granted only to individuals with exceptional talent.

“They come here for a better life and for opportunities they can’t get at home because of the situation and violence,” Stein said. “It’s so important for me to build a link between the country I am living in and the country that I’m from. That is what Alma is.”

Stein’s nonlinear path to opening Alma began in 1980, when she emigrated from Caracas on a Fulbright scholarship to earn her master’s in cultural anthropology at Stanford University. After graduating, she endured a period without official status before securing a diplomatic passport to work at the Venezuelan Consulate. She then worked in anthropological sciences and the creative arts, and moved to Baltimore in the late ’90s.

When the 2001 recession hit the art world, “I was encouraged to go into the culinary arts, and was lucky enough to earn a contract with NASA to open a café at their Hubble telescope facility at Johns Hopkins University,” Stein said. Her café was so successful that she opened a second on campus.

For 15 years, Stein wowed diners with her from-scratch Venezuelan

Zamudio’s menu

showcases imaginative Latin cuisine, rooted in Venezuelan culinary traditions.



The beverage

program, designed by Maja Griffin, focuses primarily on spirits and wines from South America and Spain.



Tropical

vegetation and Latin music fill the breezy open-kitchen dining room.



Irena Stein (L), founder and co-owner of Alma Cocina Latina in Baltimore, with co-owner and executive chef David Zamudio, a fellow Venezuelan she helped immigrate to the United States.

IRENA STEIN

Age: 69

Born: Caracas, Venezuela

Lives: Baltimore, Maryland

Favorite Restaurant in Baltimore: The Milton Inn

Biggest Misconception About Venezuelan Food: That it’s very similar to Central American cuisine.

food—particularly her arepas, which always sold out.

“Selling so many arepas gave me the idea to thank Baltimore for its warm welcome,” she said. She opened Alma in 2015, minutes away from campus, to serve the community that supported her.

Stein still remembers her difficult path to legal residency, which continued even after she was married to an American citizen and had a child.

“I’m extremely sensitive to the difficulties of immigration,” Stein said. “It’s important that I support as many people as I can.”

Among the chefs she has sponsored is David Zamudio, who worked on a six-star cruise ship and under Michelin-starred chefs before coming to Alma. He started as sous chef, now, at 28, he’s the executive chef and co-owner. Stein’s mentorship goes beyond

the immigration process. In some cases, she housed the chefs when they first arrived, and she works to help them understand their new city and connect with locals.

“My main goal is to introduce them to the community, so they have a better sense of belonging,” Stein said.

She believes that Alma is more than a restaurant. It’s a place where Baltimore’s community can come together to understand and support each other—and get to know the beauty of the Venezuelan people, culture, and food.

“Food is an extraordinary vehicle for peace, dialogue, and understanding,” she said. “The world is upside-down right now, so helping each other is the only way to make the planet better.” ■

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

An investment guitar is often a long-hold asset, but one that can be enjoyed and bring pleasure while it appreciates.

MAKING MONEY *and* Music

In the world of alternative investments, vintage guitars often combine music history with craftsmanship

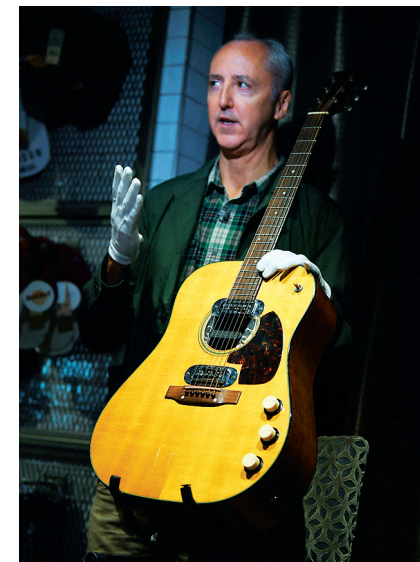
BY BILL LINDSEY

ALTERNATIVE INVESTMENTS may come in many forms, from stamps and watches to coins and cases of wine. Now add musical instruments, specifically guitars, to the list.

There's Money in Music

The origins of the acoustic and electric guitar are debated, but likely can be traced back to the guitarra latina (Spanish guitar) and the guitarra morisca (Moorish guitar), which themselves may have been inspired by the medieval lutes and four-stringed ouds. Regardless of their origin, guitars now vie with pianos for the most popular musical instrument. This creates a market, albeit a small one, for historic and rare guitars—and, as such, an opportunity for investors.

At present, the world's most expensive guitar is the late Kurt Cobain's 1959 Martin D-18E, which went for \$6 million at auction in 2020. The chances of stumbling across a guitar with the provenance to inspire a similar price are beyond slim, but based on either a many years-long hold of a model showing strong value-increase potential or discovering Eric Clapton's long-lost, stolen "Beano" '59/'60 Gibson Les Paul Standard at a garage sale for \$50, money can be made. As a plan B, if you don't end up making a fortune on your investment guitar,



The late Kurt Cobain's 1959 Martin D-18E sold for \$6 million at auction.

If you don't end up making a fortune on your investment guitar, at least you can play it.

at least you can play it. When he was a teenager, Cheap Trick's Rick Nielsen was a vintage guitar broker who kept his inventory in perfect tune.

As is the case for all alternative investments, the most important things to keep in mind with guitars are that, first, certain models inspire passion that drives prices to incredible levels; second, values can rise and fall unpredictably; and, third, in order to realize a profit, a seller must find a buyer willing and able to purchase it. The business model calls for sales to collectors by means of private transactions or auction. Sales to retailers will be, at best, at wholesale prices—which is to say, 50 percent or less of market value.

For most investors, a reasonable goal is to develop a plan of what type and model guitar to buy, while also being ready to toss that plan out the window if an amazing deal on another guitar presents itself. It can be difficult to get overly excited by a rare coin or stamp, but unique guitars are tantalizing objects that can become almost living things in the hands of a skilled player, allowing the artist to express him or herself in a way that touches others. No coin, bearer bond, or stock certificate can do that.

Choosing Your Guitar

So, how does one choose an investment guitar? Rarity is a plus for almost any investment, such as limited editions, while unusual features or an interesting provenance can also greatly affect the value of a guitar. Some collectors focus on a specific type, while others focus on specific manufacturers and models, such as acoustic or electric guitars—not unlike those who invest in cars or motorcycles but only look at first-generation Ford Mustangs or Harley-Davidson Panheads. All things being equal, Fender

THE EVOLUTION OF THE GUITAR

The lute from medieval times was one of the first stringed instruments.



Even older than lutes, ouds are said to have their origins in Persia 3,500 years ago.



The guitarra morisca was inspired by ouds, leading to modern guitars.



Acquiring investment guitars requires a wealth of specialized knowledge about the materials used to make them.



LEFT PAGE: ANAS RAD/SHUTTERSTOCK; THIS PAGE FROM TOP: METMUSEUM.ORG; DAPINDIA IMAGES/SHUTTERSTOCK; NEFTAL/SHUTTERSTOCK; DANIELLEA/APP VIA GETTY IMAGES; METMUSEUM.ORG



A great thing about collecting vintage guitars as investments is that you can play them.

electric guitars and Gibson acoustic guitars from the 1950s and 1960s tend to be very collectible. To verify value, do an online search of similar models to see, not what they are listed for, but their actual sale prices. Many retailers, including Guitar Center, sell pre-owned guitars, some of which qualify as vintage. So be careful when buying to ensure there is sufficient margin for a profit when it comes time to sell it.

Others look for guitars with certifiable celebrity-owned provenance. In 1975, Barbara Mintz and Arlan Ettinger founded Guernsey's. This auction house specializes in unique items, including the contents of the ocean liner SS United States, after which it directed its attention to celebrity-associated rock'n'roll items. Guernsey's recent guitar auctions have included Bob Dylan's 1962 Fender Stratocaster, an acoustic 1990 Alvarez-Yairi guitar played by Jerry Garcia, and many more owned or played by celebrities. In 1999, Eric Clapton auctioned 100 of his guitars to raise money for charity; his 1956 sunburst Fender Stratocaster, named Brownie, sold for \$497,500—significantly more than similar vintage Sunbursts.

The most important takeaway from these examples is that the guitars owned or played by celebrities all had certifiable provenances. Even a brief viewing of the TV show "Pawn Stars"

reveals that many so-called celebrity guitars are actually fakes or have histories that can't be documented, resulting in much lower valuations. If you come across a guitar that the seller swears was owned by Prince, Elvis, or any other music superstar, have it appraised by an expert before you hand over the cash. There are shops that specialize in refinishing and replacing parts of guitars to give them a worn and much older appearance, so having an expert carefully examine the guitar and any photos or other evidence of its previous owners is a worthwhile business expense.

Enjoy the hunt for musical treasure! ■



When considering a vintage guitar as a potential acquisition, carefully inspect all components and parts to guarantee authenticity.

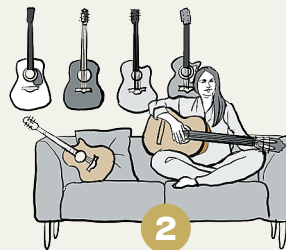
E
LIFESTYLE
A WELL-TUNED INVESTMENT

Adding Vintage Guitars to a Portfolio



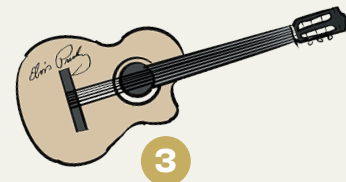
1
Pretty Is Skin Deep

Some of the most valuable vintage guitars owned by famous musicians are in well-worn condition, which actually enhances the value.



2
An Investment You Can Use

Unless you have a huge collection, you can store investment guitars at home, playing them whenever you want.



3
Elvis's Favorite

Guitars owned or played by famous artists can be very valuable, but only if the seller provides an ironclad provenance that the buyer can have verified by an expert. If there's no proof, the value drops to the market value of that model.

THIS PAGE FROM TOP: THIRD EYE IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES, PETER GODELLA/SHUTTERSTOCK

ADVENTURE TIME: WRISTWATCHES TOUGH AS NAILS

These watches can stand up to the most extreme conditions

By Bill Lindsey



UNIQUELY PRACTICAL
Favre-Leuba Raider Harpoon
USD 4,965

This example combines the traditional dive watch features of a helium relief valve with a revolutionary way to display time. Instead of utilizing traditional hour and minute hands, the minute hand aligns with the co-rotating inner hour bezel and outer minute bezels to display the current time; once grasped, the system becomes intuitive. The 42 mm stainless steel case protects the mechanical movement to depths of 984 feet.



BEAUTY AND BRAWN
Tag Heuer Aquaracer Professional 300
\$4,200

Tag Heuer is well-known for automotive-oriented wristwatches, and this model proves the firm's offerings are also ideal for undersea adventures. The green dial, with an inner bezel for seconds, is accented by a green outer bezel used to measure elapsed time—a handy feature for making sure that the parking meter hasn't yet expired. Rated to depths of 984 feet, the case and bracelet are crafted of sandblasted grade 2 titanium.



MULTITASKER
G-Shock Frogman GWF-A1000
\$750

The large yet very lightweight carbon fiber-reinforced case is designed to lay asymmetrically on the wrist to ensure comfort and an ideal viewing angle. Secured by a steel bracelet and solar-powered, it's water-resistant to depths of 656 feet, with unique features including an internal dial LED for low-light use and a tide indicator linked to a global database of dive locations.



SLY'S CHOICE
Panerai Submersible BMG-TECH
\$14,300

Actor Sylvester Stallone helped Panerai achieve global prominence by wearing its models on the silver screen. Proprietary BMG-Tech metal is used to craft the 47mm housing to provide corrosion resistance, protection from magnetic fields, and extreme durability. The in-house mechanical movement has a 72-hour power reserve, and the blue dial features a date window and a sub-dial at 9 o'clock to track seconds.



DEEP DIVER
Omega Planet Ocean 6000M Co-Axial Master Chronometer
\$11,600

This watch made history in 2019 during The Five Deeps Expedition, when it was submerged in the deepest spot on earth. When you dunk it in the sink while doing dishes, rest assured that it's designed to be water-resistant to an astounding 20,000 feet beneath the ocean's surface. The 45.5 mm case is accented by a traditional outer bezel finished in eye-popping bright orange.

COURTESY OF CASIO, TAG-HEUER, OMEGA, PANERAI, FAVRE-LEUBA.

RECOMMENDED READING

This week, we feature two splendid novels about boys' friendships: one set in tumultuous Afghanistan and the other in Brooklyn, New York, in the '40s.

FICTION

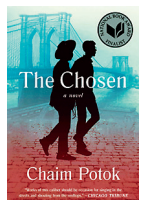


'THE KITE RUNNER'
By Khaled Hosseini

A Tale of Friendship and Redemption

Originally published in 2003, this emotionally deep novel immerses readers in a country in chaos and a friendship strained by class divides and a guilty conscience. Amir and Hassan are torn apart by an act of childhood violence that haunts both of them for decades.

RIVERHEAD BOOKS, 2013, 400 PAGES



'THE CHOSEN'
By Chaim Potok

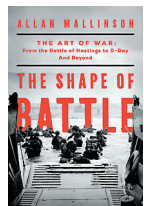
Friends, Faith, and Family

Set in 1940s Brooklyn, this novel offers a banquet of themes: father-and-son relationships, boys' coming of age, Jewish history and customs, the impact of the Holocaust, and the birth of Israel. Two friends are sometimes at odds with each other: secular Jew

Reuven Malter and Danny Saunders, the son of a Hasidic rebbe. In their journey to manhood, they face their families' love and strife as they forge their outlooks on world-changing events that will mark them for life. This is a highly recommended read.

SIMON & SCHUSTER REISSUE, 2022, 272 PAGES

HISTORY



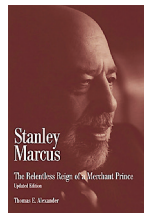
'THE SHAPE OF BATTLE'
By Allan Mallinson

War Through the Ages

This book examines six battles that shaped British and world history. All six, each described in a stand-alone section, focus on Britain's fighting forces: Hastings in 1066, Towton in 1461, Waterloo in 1815, Sword Beach in 1944, Imjin River in 1951, and Helmand in 2009. Mallinson proves to be a marvelous guide to all six battles, describing each period in clear language. His descriptions of the battles are also easily understandable, even by those unfamiliar with the tactics and weapons used.

PEGASUS BOOKS, 2022, 378 PAGES

BIOGRAPHY



'STANLEY MARCUS'
By Thomas E. Alexander

The Man Behind Neiman Marcus

Neiman Marcus is Texas's signature department store and the first place where Texas and high fashion converged. This is a biography of the man who turned Neiman Marcus into the aristocrat of department stores. Insider Alexander, who was with the company for nearly 20 years, presents an entertaining and informative look at the history of a highly respected luxury store and the life of the colorful man most responsible for its greatness.

STATE HOUSE PRESS, 2018, 280 PAGES

EDUCATION



'BATTLE FOR THE AMERICAN MIND'
By Pete Hegseth with David Goodwin

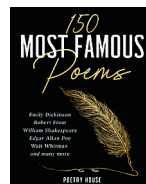
An Alternative to Today's Education System

Over the decades, pro-

gressives have steadily and successfully taken over the nation's public education system, from classrooms to school boards. The authors say that parents can radically reorient their children's learning. Classical Christian teachings, rooted in virtue, faith, and excellence, can be our hope for future generations.

BROADSIDE BOOKS, 2022, 288 PAGES

CLASSICS



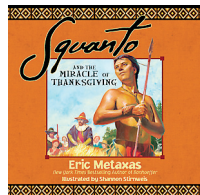
'150 FAMOUS POEMS'
Collected by Poetry House

Good Verse Never Grows Old

For some people, reading this collection will be like stepping into a party attended by old friends. For others, those less familiar with poetry, these works may be strangers on first acquaintance but will quickly win the reader's admiration and affection. Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken," John Masefield's "Sea Fever," Ella Wheeler Wilcox's "Solitude," and Emily Dickinson's "I'm nobody. Who are you?" are just a few samples from this treasury of delights. This is a great book for family read-alouds or for solitary pleasures.

VERVANTE, 2020, 350 PAGES

FOR KIDS

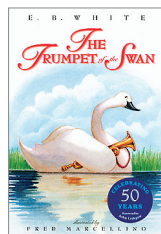


'SQUANTO'
By Eric Metaxas

Mystery in the Wilderness

After making landfall far off-course, the Pilgrims survive with the help of Squanto, a Native American and former slave who speaks English and was taught Christianity. Was this a string of coincidences or a true miracle from God? Ages 5 to 10.

THOMAS NELSON REPRINT, 2012, 40 PAGES



'THE TRUMPET OF THE SWAN'
By E.B. White

A Delightful Classic

In this beautifully written story, Louis the trumpeter swan can't make a sound. He doesn't let that hold him back, however. Packed with humor and solid character values, this is a delightful story and a great option for developing readers.

HARPERCOLLINS ANNIVERSARY EDITION, 2020, 272 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 an epic biography of a man who transformed India and a World War II drama about soldiers on both sides of the conflict.

NEW RELEASE



'A Chance Encounter' (2022)

Hal Flynn (Paul Petersen) is a struggling poet and Josie Day (Andrea von Kampen) is a folk musician who has already achieved a certain degree of success. The two cross paths in the Sicilian town of Taormina, Italy, and begin to inspire each other in their respective fields, eventually finding that a deeper bond may also exist.

Although not a particularly original storyline, the way this romantic tale unfolds feels earnest and organic. And the Italian scenery is gorgeous and complements the chemistry between the two main leads nicely.

MUSIC | ROMANCE

Release Date: Oct. 28, 2022

Director: Alexander Jeffery

Starring: Andrea von Kampen, Paul Petersen, Jason Edwards

Running Time: 1 hour, 31 minutes

MPAA Rating: Not Rated

Where to Watch: Theaters

★★★★★

A POWERFUL WORLD WAR II STORY



'The Young Lions' (1958)

This masterful film follows the stories of three soldiers—one German (Marlon Brando) and two Americans

of American cinema that harks back to its golden days, with incredible acting, cinematography, direction, and writing.

ACTION | DRAMA | WAR

Release Date: April 2, 1958

Director: Edward Dmytryk

Starring: Marlon Brando, Montgomery Clift, Dean Martin

Running Time: 2 hours, 47 minutes

Not Rated

Where to Watch: DirecTV, Apple TV, Vudu

★★★★★

INDIE PICK

'Night on Earth' (1991)

This quirky indie comedy follows the trials and tribulations of five cabbies and their respective passengers—each in different parts of the world. From gum-smacking, glib tomboy Corky (Winona Ryder) in Los Angeles, to Helmut (Armin Mueller-Stahl), an East German refugee in New York, there's a lot of variety here.

As with any film with multiple vignettes, viewers may be drawn to certain storylines and dislike others. Although the



film's peppy pace kept me engaged, the hastily drawn, gimmicky characters sometimes felt contrived.

COMEDY | DRAMA

Release Date: Dec. 12, 1991

Directors: Jim Jarmusch

Starring: Winona Ryder, Gena Rowlands, Lisanne Falk

Running Time: 2 hours, 9 minutes

MPAA Rating: R

Where to Watch: HBO Max, Amazon

★★★★★

AN EPIC BIOGRAPHY OF A BELOVED LEADER

'Gandhi' (1983)

Ben Kingsley stars as Gandhi, a British-trained Indian lawyer turned legendary spiritual leader who defied the British rule of India. This movie showcases not only Gandhi's powerful concept of nonviolent resistance, but also his insistence on treating others with equality and tolerance.

This grand-scale film is not only Kingsley's greatest performance but also one of director Richard Attenborough's most incredible



triumphs, with great acting performances, positive messages, and languid pacing.

BIOGRAPHY | DRAMA

Release Date: Feb. 25, 1983 (U.S.)

Director: Richard Attenborough

Starring: Ben Kingsley, John Gielgud, Rohini Hattangadi

Running Time: 3 hours, 11 minutes

MPAA Rating: PG

Where to Watch: DirecTV, Vudu, Redbox

★★★★★



Holiday Party Manners

A refresher on how to put your best foot forward at festive gatherings

Being asked to attend a holiday gala is an honor, so here are some tips on how to make sure the hosts are glad they invited you, from dressing right to helping clean up afterward, and absolutely not swimming in the punch bowl.

By Bill Lindsey

1 RSVP Is Not Optional

The best hosts will send printed invitations with preaddressed, stamped return envelopes four weeks in advance to allow guests plenty of time to add the party to their schedule. Other hosts may send invitations via email, text, or social media. Invitees need to respond within two days at the most in order for the hosts to know how many people will attend and have ample time to plan for food and drink accordingly.



4 Be Helpful

The hosts will be very busy greeting arrivals, making sure a steady supply of food and drinks is flowing, and making introductions—so offer to help. Let the hosts direct you to tasks that need handling, or simply be aware of when you should step in, such as if a spill occurs or you see the trash can overflowing. After the party, offering to help clean up will make sure you're on the guest list for future events.

2 Dress Right

If the invitation doesn't specify a dress code, ask the host/hostess what they'd prefer you wear on the scale from business casual to Santa sweaters. Asking the other guests what they plan to wear is another option; if you both make the wrong wardrobe choices, at least you won't be the only one who shows up in an aloha shirt. Whatever you decide, make sure it's appropriate; don't arrive in overly revealing outfits, even if you look great in them.

3 Pace the Fun

The entire idea of a party is to enjoy yourself among friends, so exercise moderation at the punch bowl or when enjoying other adult beverages. Overindulging usually doesn't end well, so limit how much you "enjoy." Also, keep an eye on other guests who may have had one too many; arranging a ride home for them is a must. Overdoing it applies to food, too, so don't hog all the pigs in a blanket!

5 Be Thoughtful

Everyone appreciates thoughtfulness, so ask the hosts if you can bring anything, be it food and drinks or extra chairs and tables. If you know the hosts well, offer to stay after the party to help wash dishes and take out the trash; these moments may be more fun than the actual party. No later than two days after the party, mail a handwritten thank-you note to the hosts; don't be lazy and send a text or an email.

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 of articles on the topic, many of them exclusive.



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

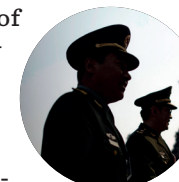
ON APRIL 15, 2020, The Epoch Times published its documentary "Tracking Down the Origin of Wuhan Coronavirus." The film, which received over 100 million views, explored the origins of the virus, including the possibility of a lab leak. It presents scientific data and interviews with top scientists and 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

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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

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than a lot of speculation or
pontificating.”

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that there are still a LOT
of wonderful, good, and
dedicated people in this
country.”

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impactful articles.”

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“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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