

EPOCH INSIGHT



COVERT WARFARE

China's insidious tactics inside American borders

BY EVA FU



The CCP's Covert Warfare in the US

A SCHEME OF BRIBERY BY CHINESE AGENTS in the United States has revealed another aspect of the Chinese regime's insidious operations in this country.

An agent linked to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has been arrested and charged by the Justice Department after he attempted to bribe an undercover FBI agent posing as an IRS official. The Chinese man wanted the IRS to revoke the tax exempt status of a nonprofit group run by Chinese dissidents.

It's just the latest in a string of cases that have exposed the "transnational repression" carried out by proxies of the CCP.

In just the past six weeks, the Justice Department has charged 40 members of China's national police force with carrying out a cyber propaganda campaign to harass U.S. residents; arrested one Boston man believed to be secretly feeding Beijing a "blacklist" of regime critics; and arrested two more in New York who were overseeing one of four known Chinese police stations in the United States.

"You're not just talking anymore about organizing some counter-protesters, or trying to convince someone to come back to China, or monitoring a dissident. This was really an attempt to use institutions of the United States, including things like whistleblower systems and protections, to basically go after a perceived enemy of the CCP," Sarah Cook, a senior China analyst at Freedom House, told The Epoch Times.

Read this week's cover story by reporter Eva Fu to learn more about Beijing's sprawling campaign to silence dissent abroad.



JASPER FAKKERT
Editor-in-chief



ON THE COVER

Recent charges against Chinese agents for a bribery scheme that targeted Falun Gong reveals the extent of the Chinese regime's operations in the United States.

KEVIN FRAYER/GETTY IMAGES

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Many common drugs, taken together, can increase the risk of accidental overdose.

Hundreds of people who crossed the southern border illegally line up outside of the Jacob K. Javits Federal Building in New York on June 6. New York City has taken more than 30 upstate counties and Long Island to court, accusing them of violating state and federal law by refusing to take in illegal immigrants relocating from the city.

DAVID DEE DELGADO/GETTY IMAGES

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SPOTLIGHT

Breezy Ride

CYCLISTS RIDE DURING THE FIRST STAGE OF the 2023 Criterium du Dauphiné cycling race in France on June 4. This year marks the 75th edition of this annual event, which takes place in the Dauphiné region in the country's southeast.

PHOTO BY ANNE-CHRISTINE POUJOLAT/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



The Week

G-7 leaders walk through Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima, Japan, on May 19.

PHOTO BY STEFAN ROUSSEAU - WPA POOL/GETTY IMAGES



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“The [FBI] is afraid their informant will be killed if unmasked.”



Rep. Anna Paulina Luna (R-Fla.), about a person who has provided information alleging a criminal bribery scheme involving President Joe Biden and his family

20 STATES

As of June 9, at least 20 U.S. states had **issued air quality alerts due to smoke from wildfires in Canada.**

“My faith is by far the most important decision I make.”



Sen. James Lankford (R-Okla.), on the role of faith in his personal life and political career

\$700 MILLION

Crypto platform Binance experienced more than \$700 million worth of withdrawals after the Securities and Exchange Commission filed a lawsuit against the company.

50 FACILITIES

New York Mayor Eric Adams has announced a plan to house nearly 1,000 illegal immigrants in up to 50 houses of worship, faith-based spaces, and private residences.



\$300,000

Former presidential candidate and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s organization has donated \$300,000 to Climate Emergency Fund, which finances the eco-activists Just Stop Oil, according to tax documents.

1 IN 4 AGENTS—Roughly one-quarter of Customs and Border Protection and Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents plan to quit their jobs in the coming year, according to a Department of Homeland Security survey.

THIS PAGE FROM TOP: ANNA MONEVMAKER/GETTY IMAGES; BONNIE CASH/POOL/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES; SHUTTERS TOOK; RIGHT PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: SCOTT OLSON/GETTY IMAGES; DIA DIPASUPPL/GETTY IMAGES; DIMITRIOS KAMBOURIS/GETTY IMAGES

2024 ELECTION

Pence Formally Announces 2024 Presidential Run

FORMER VICE PRESIDENT MIKE PENCE has entered the 2024 presidential race with a video announcement released on Twitter that included religious language and references to the Republican glory days of the 1980s.

In doing so, the Indiana native positioned himself as a candidate representing religious faith and the can-do optimism of the Reagan era.



Former President Donald Trump speaks at an event in Grimes, Iowa, on June 1.

INDICTMENT

Trump Indicted in Classified Documents Probe

FORMER PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP said on June 8 that his attorneys had informed him that he had been indicted by special counsel Jack Smith, in connection with an investigation into his handling of classified documents.

“The corrupt Biden Administration has informed my attorneys that I have been Indicted, seemingly over the Boxes Hoax,” Trump wrote on his social media platform, Truth Social. He went on to point to the parallel investigation into President Joe Biden’s handling of classified documents.

News of the indictment arrived days after Trump’s lawyers spent about two hours inside the Department of Justice on June 5, apparently addressing concerns about the way the case has been handled.



Former Vice President Mike Pence during an interview at Fox News Channel Studios in New York on Feb. 22.

MEDIA

CNN’s Licht Is Out as CEO Just Weeks After Trump Town Hall

CHRIS LICHT, who was named CNN’s chairman and CEO about a year ago, will depart the corporate news network, according to the chief executive of CNN’s parent company.

David Zaslav, the head of Warner Bros. Discovery, which owns CNN, said that he “met with Chris and he will be leaving CNN,” according to a report from CNN media reporter Oliver Darcy. He made the remarks during a conference call with CNN’s employees.

Zaslav didn’t say when Licht would be leaving the company.

Licht came under fire recently for his defense of a CNN town hall event in mid-May that featured former President Donald Trump.



Chris Licht, chairman and CEO of CNN Worldwide, speaks at The Theater at Madison Square Garden in New York on May 17.

REGULATIONS

Biden Administration Targets Another Household Appliance

THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION may soon finalize regulations on gas-powered home furnaces, restricting consumers’ ability to purchase units found to be outside of the administration’s greenhouse gas emissions goals within the next few months.

Critics say the regulations proposed by the Department of Energy in June 2022 would likely limit consumer choice, lead to higher prices, and have a minimal effect on greenhouse gas emissions on the heaters used in more than half of American households.

According to the current federal Unified Agenda, the Biden administration is moving forward with rules affecting dozens of additional appliances, such as pool pumps, battery chargers, ceiling fans, and dehumidifiers.



Medical personnel wearing protective gear transport a COVID-19 patient to a hospital in Seoul, South Korea, on March 9, 2020.

COVID-19

Some Sudden Deaths Caused by COVID-19 Vaccines, Autopsies Confirm

EIGHT PEOPLE who died suddenly after receiving a messenger RNA (mRNA) COVID-19 vaccine died due to a type of vaccine-induced heart inflammation called myocarditis, South Korean authorities said after reviewing the autopsies.

“Vaccine-related myocarditis was the only possible cause of death,” said Dr. Kye Hun Kim of the Chonnam National University Hospital and other South Korean researchers in a report of study findings published by the European Heart Journal.

All of the sudden cardiac deaths occurred in people aged 45 or younger, including a 33-year-old man who died just one day after receiving a second dose of Moderna’s vaccine and a 30-year-old woman who died three days after receiving a first dose of Pfizer’s shot.

Myocarditis wasn’t suspected as a clinical diagnosis or cause of death before the autopsies, researchers said.

CANADA

Canada on Track for Worst-Ever Wildfires: Officials

WILDFIRES have been burning in nearly all Canadian provinces and territories, and federal government officials said their modeling shows increased wildfire risk in most of Canada through August.

“The distribution of fires from coast to coast this year is unusual. At this time of the year, fires usually occur only on one side of the country at a time, most often that being in the west,” said Michael Norton, an official with Canada’s Natural Resources ministry.

Lightning has ignited multiple fires in hard-hit Québec, in eastern Canada, Norton said. “The rate of increase of area burned is also high. ... If this rate continues, we could hit record levels for area burned this year,” he said.

Flames have been mushrooming rapidly in eastern Canada and have forced evacuations in the Atlantic province of Nova Scotia, as well as in coastal Québec. The wildfires also have forced evacuations in parts of Alberta, Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories, and British Columbia.

UKRAINE

Ukraine, Russia Blame Each Other for Destruction of Critical Dam

UKRAINE has blamed Russian forces for blowing up the dam of the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant on the Dnipro River in Russian-occupied southern Ukraine. Meanwhile, Russian officials have blamed the incident on Ukrainian military strikes in the contested area.

The explosion at the Soviet-era Nova Kakhovka dam—which holds the same amount of water as the Great Salt Lake in Utah—sent millions of liters of water bursting through a gaping hole.

The damage has prompted mass evacuations of multiple villages along the banks of the river, including parts of Kherson.

WORLD

US, Japan, Philippines Hold 1st-Ever Trilateral Sea Exercise

THE COAST GUARDS of the United States, Japan, and the Philippines conducted their first-ever trilateral exercises in the South China Sea to strengthen defense cooperation amid China’s growing assertiveness.

Around 400 coast guard personnel from the three nations participated in the week-long Kaagapay maritime exercise in the Philippine waters off Bataan Province, GMA News reported.

The Philippines Coast Guard (PCG) deployed four vessels to take part in the trilateral exercise, while the U.S. and Japanese coast guards deployed two ships—the USCG Cutter Stratton and Akitsushima.

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Final War” is a film that is so relevant to current events and so important that we’re offering it to EVERYONE for free. It will answer your questions about the pandemic, the impending invasion of Taiwan, and how the CCP works to keep the United States occupied with at least four global adversaries.

See the film. Know the danger. Be prepared. The final war is already underway.



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The Week in Photos



1.

1. Buddhist devotees and tourists release a lantern into the air at Borobudur temple during celebrations for Vesak Day in Magelang, Indonesia, on June 4.



2.

2. Rescue workers sift through wreckage at the accident site of a three-train collision near Balasore, India, on June 3. At least 288 people were killed and more than 1,000 were injured, officials said. It's the country's deadliest rail accident in more than 20 years.



3.

3. Australian surfer Sally Fitzgibbons rides a wave during the 2023 ISA World Surfing Games at El Tunco beach in El Salvador on June 6.



4.

4. U.S. military personnel place U.S. and French flags next to the graves of the fallen at the Normandy American Cemetery ahead of the June 6 D-Day commemorations, in Colleville-sur-Mer, France, on June 5. This year marks the 79th anniversary of the Allied invasion of Normandy during World War II, a pivotal moment in the war.



5.

5. Smoke billows from a wildfire south of Fort Nelson, Canada, on June 3.



6.

6. Children ride donkeys as they transport water containers along a road in Kishindeh district, Afghanistan, on June 4.

COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM TOP L: ULET IFANSASTI/GETTY IMAGES, DIBYANGSHU SARKAR/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES, MARVIN RECINOS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES, CHRISTOPHER FURLONG/GETTY IMAGES, WAKIL KOHSAR/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES, B.C. WILDFIRE SERVICE/HANDOUT VIA REUTERS

WILL G-7 LEADERS MAINTAIN RESOLUTION ON CHINA?



What it means for China as G-7 leaders vow to 'de-risk' rather than 'de-couple' from the nation

News Analysis **BY EMEL AKAN**

(L-R) G-7 leaders European Council President Charles Michel, Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, French President Emmanuel Macron, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, President Joe Biden, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen pose for a photo at the Itsukushima Shrine during the G-7 summit in Hiroshima, Japan, on May 19.

THE LESSON OF RUSSIA'S war in Ukraine has forced the Group of Seven (G-7) countries to confront Beijing head-on this year, and the unified statement from the Hiroshima summit represents a big step that, according to some experts, was "unthinkable" two years ago.

The big question, though, is whether the G-7 countries can stay united and strong when confronting China, as they've pledged—or will they continue to put commercial interests ahead of "the rule-based international order" or their core values, such as human rights and democracy?

The 49th annual summit of the world's most advanced economies—the United States, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, and Canada—was held from May 19 to 21 in Hiroshima, Japan.

While these summits rarely make headlines, this year's communiqué, more sanctions against Russia, and a separate statement on China demonstrated that, at least in terms of messaging, the leaders of the world's richest democracies are more united than ever.

China's harmful tactics that undermine international rules and norms were a primary focus of this year's summit, as articulated in a new special statement on economic security.

The G-7 leaders have stated publicly that they see China as an economic bully and that the international community will not put up with Beijing's "economic coercion." They warned for the first time that there will be "consequences."

"We will work together to ensure that attempts to weaponize economic dependencies by forcing G7 members and our partners, including small economies, to comply and conform will fail and face consequences," the statement reads.

The G-7 statement on China, according to Bonnie Glaser, director of the Asia Program at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, was "quite robust."

While the special statement made



Trucks wait to be loaded at a port in Keelung, Taiwan, on June 10, 2020. G-7 governments acknowledge that a Chinese military takeover of Taiwan would cause severe supply disruptions in many industries.

"We are not decoupling or turning inwards. At the same time, we recognize that economic resilience requires de-risking and diversifying," the leaders stated in the communiqué. "We will take steps, individually and collectively, to invest in our own economic vibrancy. We will reduce excessive dependencies in our critical supply chains."

The G-7 leaders have stated publicly that they will not put up with Beijing's 'economic coercion.' They warned for the first time that there will be 'consequences.'

EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who was also present at the summit, favored de-risking as a strategy.

"It is past [the] time to decouple," Graceffo said, noting that the G-7 leaders are finally recognizing this.

"This de-risking involves diversification," he explained. "New investment is not flowing into China as it did before. Decoupling would mean pulling existing companies out of China. De-risking involves making new investments in India or Vietnam instead. And that is what is happening."

As part of this strategy, the leaders agreed to implement export control and outbound investment measures to safeguard sensitive technologies and build resilient supply chains.

This de-risking strategy conforms to "the October Controls," a set of restrictions enacted by the U.S. Department of Commerce that prevents big manufacturers from shipping high-end chips and inputs to China to protect critical technologies.

U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan explained these restrictions during a press briefing last October, stating that the administration is implementing the so-called small yard, high fence concept. The goal is to lim-

it outbound investments in sensitive technologies, particularly those that could give an advantage to competitors.

"The devil is in the definitions and the details," Glaser told The Epoch Times. "In my view, decoupling was never on the agenda—the U.S. was not going to stop trading with China," she said.

"The question remains: how big are

the 'small yards' and how high are the fences?"

Ezell agreed, adding that the G-7 leaders' "actions matter more than words."

"It's certainly sensible to recognize that G-7 nations aren't going to fully decouple from China's economy. The integrated nature of global supply chains and markets make that infeasible and undesirable," he explained.

"But 'de-risking' to decrease core dependencies and vulnerabilities—especially those which could be weaponized by China through economic coercion—is precisely the right step to be taking."

Mixed Messaging

Some criticized the summit's communiqué for sending conflicting messages by including references to constructive engagement with Beijing, which didn't exist a year ago.

The leaders stated their willingness to establish "constructive and stable relations with China."

They also emphasized that "our policy approaches are not designed to harm China, nor do we seek to thwart China's economic progress and development."

According to Steve Yates, a China expert and former White House national security official, the summit sent out

no mention of China, it was made clear during the summit that it was all about China. In the summit's communiqué, the G-7 leaders made their positions clear, condemning Beijing's military activity in the East and South China seas and human rights violations in Tibet and Xinjiang.

The way the G-7 countries have addressed China together, according to a report by the experts of the Atlantic Council, was "unthinkable" two years ago.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida made countering China's economic coercion a top goal, and during the summit, the leaders announced the launch of a new "Coordination Platform on Economic Coercion."

This new platform is particularly noteworthy, because it "shows that G-7 countries are willing to coordinate to collectively come to one another's defense in the face of Chinese economic coercion," Stephen Ezell, vice president

of global innovation policy at the Washington-based think tank Information Technology and Innovation Foundation (ITIF), told The Epoch Times.

China's efforts to use its growing economic might to influence governments throughout the world have increased in recent years.

For instance, after Australia called for an independent investigation into the origins of COVID-19 in April 2020, the Chinese communist regime imposed sanctions on roughly a dozen Australian goods, including wine, for which China was the major market.

Beijing also used coercion against other countries, most notably South Korea in 2017 after it installed a U.S. missile defense system, and Lithuania in 2022 in response to that country's efforts to increase diplomatic ties with Taiwan.

While G-7 leaders seemed more united this year, they still demonstrated

some weakness by not putting their foot down and imposing sanctions on Beijing, according to Antonio Graceffo, a China economic analyst and author of "Beyond the Belt and Road: China's Global Economic Expansion."

"They even recognize that China is supporting the war in Ukraine but fail to bring meaningful sanctions, such as a trade ban, against China," said Graceffo, who also is an Epoch Times contributor.

"The good news is that the G-7 are united," he noted. "The war in Ukraine has changed the power dynamic in the world, bringing the allies closer together and cementing the U.S. position as leader of the free world."

'De-risking'

Another key outcome of the summit was the leaders' use of the phrase "de-risking," rather than "de-coupling" from China, which has become a new official G-7 term.

ANN WANG/FILEPHOTO/REUTERS



a lot of mixed messages.

“It seemed to me like a basic kindergarten tutorial on dealing with the Chinese Communist Party,” he told NTD TV’s “China in Focus.”

Yates said that the Chinese regime deals “in actions and power” and doesn’t “respect the word games,” adding that there was no substantial progress at this year’s summit because of mixed messaging.

There are still G-7 nations such as France and Germany that chase economic opportunities and rely on both China and Russia, while “giving lip service to deterrence,” Yates said.

‘Anti-China Workshop’

On May 22, China’s foreign ministry slammed the G-7 communiqué and summoned the Japanese ambassador in protest to the summit’s host. The state-backed Global Times ran an editorial, calling the G-7 summit an “an-

ti-China workshop.”

According to the editorial, the G-7 communiqué demonstrated that Washington “is pushing hard to weave an anti-China net in the Western world.”

In retaliation, Beijing also announced sanctions against U.S.-based chip maker Micron, claiming that its products pose significant security risks.

The regime’s response came after President Joe Biden predicted a “thaw” in relations with China soon during a press conference at the close of the summit on May 21.

Biden blamed the recent deterioration in relations with China on a “silly balloon” that flew over the breadth of the United States with spy equipment before finally being shot down by a U.S. fighter jet over the Atlantic Ocean.

“Everything changed in terms of talking to one another. I think you’re going to see that begin to thaw very shortly,” Biden told reporters.

Some criticized Biden for sending mixed signals to Beijing and failing to show strength during the news conference, while others applauded his unexpected Taiwan statement.

‘Strategic Clarity’

When questioned about Taiwan during the news conference, the president grabbed the microphone and began speaking while strolling on the podium.

Biden emphasized that Washington has been committed to the “one China” policy, which recognizes the communist regime as the government of China, and wouldn’t expect Taiwan to declare independence on its own.

“But in the meantime,” he said, “we’re going to continue to put Taiwan in a position that they can defend themselves. And there is clear understanding among most of our allies that, in fact, if China were to act unilaterally, there would be a response.”

LOOKWISE FROM L: MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF JAPAN; HANDOUT VIA REUTERS; COURTESY OF ANTONIO GRACEFFO; ANRONA X/GETTY IMAGES

The G-7 member nations, partner countries, and Ukraine meet as a part of the G-7 leaders’ summit in Hiroshima, Japan, on May 21. Some criticized the leaders for stating their willingness to establish “constructive and stable relations with China.”

The Chinese regime, which claims Taiwan as part of its territory, has intensified military harassment and threats against the island in recent years, alarming Western nations. Washington, under the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979, is obliged to provide the self-ruled island with the means to defend itself from attack.

Many China hawks in Washington welcomed Biden’s comment because it provided much-needed strategic clarity on the Taiwan issue. Some, though, questioned his statement, wondering whether he was really referring to a military response and whether he truly meant what he said.

Biden has previously on several occasions said that the U.S. military would support Taiwan if the Chinese were to launch an invasion of the democratically ruled island, departing from the long-standing policy of “strategic ambiguity,” which is to be deliberately vague on what the United States would do in the event of an attack. On each occasion, his officials have walked back on his comments, saying Washington’s approach hasn’t changed.

But experts believe that Biden deliberately chose his words while speaking about allies, and that most G-7 nations had at least agreed not to sit back and watch if China invaded Taiwan.

Biden’s statement indicates that “there is an agreement on the lowest common denominator, but no agreement on what those responses would be,” Glaser said.

As Taiwan is a critical hub in the global semiconductor supply chain, G-7 governments acknowledge that a Chinese military takeover would cause severe supply disruptions in many industries that rely heavily on Taiwanese chips.

Rupert Hammond-Chambers, a Taiwan expert and president of the U.S.–Taiwan Business Council, believes Biden’s message is important because it clarifies his stance on the issue once again.

“It’s the fourth time he’s done it, which is so interesting,” he told The Epoch Times. “He continues to bring strategic clarity to this issue, when even hawkish

presidents before him had been reluctant to be so clear about the American intent.”

Hammond-Chambers believes the United States should abandon its “strategic ambiguity” stance and send China a clear message.

“I think it’s exactly where American policy should be.”

In the G-7 communiqué this year, the



“[G-7 leaders] recognize that China is supporting the war in Ukraine but fail to bring meaningful sanctions, such as a trade ban, against China.”

Antonio Graceffo, China analyst and author

leaders reiterated the importance of “peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait” and urged a peaceful resolution of cross-strait issues. They also expressed serious concern about the situation in the East and South China Seas and underlined their strong opposition to “any unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion.”

The leaders of the Quad Group—Australia, India, Japan, and the United States—which met on the margins of the summit, also gave a similar message to Beijing.

“We strongly oppose destabilizing or unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo by force or coercion,” the group stated.

On the Taiwan issue, U.S. allies have gradually begun to adopt the same language that Washington has used for many years, Hammond-Chambers said.

“If, God forbid, China attacked Taiwan,” he continued, “I believe Japan would fight alongside the United States, and very probably the Australians and British as well.

“As it stands right now, that coalition is growing.” ■



An island in Kinmen, the closest land in Taiwan to China, in front of the Chinese city of Xiamen, on Feb. 4, 2021. The Chinese regime, which claims Taiwan as part of its territory, has intensified military harassment and threats against the island nation in recent years.

A man reads a posted announcement from the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. about the seizure of First Republic Bank and sale to JPMorgan Chase in San Francisco on May 1, 2023.

PHOTO BY JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES

ALLIANCES

The Marriage of POLITICS *and* FINANCE

'Wall Street and Washington are more tightly intermeshed with each other than ever,' expert says

By Kevin Stocklin

THE ABSORPTION OF FIRST REPUBLIC Bank by JPMorgan Chase on May 1 was just the latest step in a relentless march of consolidation among U.S. banks, as the U.S. banking industry becomes both more concentrated and more closely entwined with the federal government.

Since the "Great Financial Crisis" of 2008, federal regulators have become comfortable with a banking industry led by a handful of mega-banks, with which agencies have an ever-closer working relationship.

The strategy of bank regulation has been to allow the banking industry to consolidate into an ever-smaller number of ever-larger institutions, which are then subject to tighter regulation, higher capital requirements, and various stress tests. This theoretically makes the banking system more robust and less prone to financial crises.

The close relationship between federal agencies and banks has featured a collaboration between regulators and banks such as JPMorgan Chase, Citibank, Bank of America, and Wells Fargo on a \$30 billion fund in a failed attempt to prop up First Republic. It also included surveillance conducted by Bank of America for the FBI in a warrantless search of customer accounts to track travel and purchase records during the Jan. 6, 2021, U.S. Capitol breach.

Many who study the U.S. banking industry say consolidation will inevitably continue and that the recent failure of several regional banks is merely the latest chapter in this saga. Others worry that having the country's financial system so heavily concentrated in a handful of "universal" banks that are now "too big to fail" brings its own set of systemic risks and that banks have now become too closely aligned with the federal government.

"You only need to recognize that much of Dodd-Frank was effectively written with the assistance of people working at prominent banks to know that this is the case," Samuel Gregg, a political economist at the American Institute for Economic Research, told The Epoch Times.

The Dodd-Frank Act, passed in 2010 in response to the global financial crisis of 2008, promised to protect the American taxpayer by ending bailouts and reducing exposure from too-big-to-fail banks. While the Dodd-Frank Act has increased regulatory control, it has failed to reduce the financial system's exposure to single

institutions. Rather, it has done the opposite.

"[Dodd-Frank] benefited large banks at the expense of small- and medium-sized banks," Gregg said. "Wall Street and Washington are more tightly intermeshed with each other than ever."

Small Banks Versus Large Banks

Speaking at a financial regulation conference on April 14, Federal Reserve Board member Michelle Bowman said the number of banks in the United States has been cut in half in the past two decades and that the formation of new banks "has essentially stagnated... limiting the availability of banking services to underserved communities."

Despite the recent failures of three regional banks, Bowman said that "the smallest banks often outperform larger banks during periods of stress, like the pandemic and during the 2008 financial crisis."

"Historically, during times of economic and financial stress, the smallest institutions have performed extremely well," she said. "For example, small banks demonstrated this strength during the pandemic through their outsized commitment to supporting small businesses."

According to Michael Hsu, who runs the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency and supervises approximately 1,000 national banks, some U.S. banks may have become "so big and complex that control failures, risk management breakdowns, and negative surprises occur too frequently—not because of weak management but because of the sheer size and complexity of the organization."

"In short, effective management is not infinitely scalable," he said.

And while investors have taken a dim view of smaller banks this year, selling off shares and withdrawing deposits often in a panic, they don't seem to be enamored of universal Wall Street banks either.

A December 2022 study by McKinsey, a management consultancy, states that the U.S. banking industry was "the lowest-valued sector in the world in 2021." Investor sentiment grew even worse in 2023; banks started the year trading at an average 40 percent premium to their book value, but by April, they were trading at valuations equal to their book value.

This means that investors see banks as worth no more than their theoretical liquidation value. The average price-to-book-value for S&P 500 companies is currently 4.05. ♦



The JPMorgan Chase headquarters building in New York on May 26. In 2022, the “Big Four” banks, JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America, Citibank, and Wells Fargo, collectively spent billions of dollars on progressive political causes.

The McKinsey report notes that banks’ profit margins had fallen by more than 25 percent over the past 15 years and were expected to fall by another 20 percent over the next decade. It also predicted that banks’ return on equity, which has fallen to 9.5 percent in 2021 from 15 percent in 2007, would continue to decline in the coming years.

“Banking stocks trade at an accelerating discount to other industries—from a 15 percent discount in 2000 to a 70 percent discount in 2022,” the report reads. “This means that global investors are voting with trillions of dollars

The number of banks in America has been cut in half in the past two decades, Federal Reserve Board member Michelle Bowman says.

against the future profitability and sustainability of the existing model of universal banks.”

The consultancy deemed the banking industry to be “a \$20 trillion breakup opportunity,” which, although unmentioned in the report, would also be a lucrative opportunity for consulting fees.

Continuous Decline in Bank Numbers

The number of banks operating in the United States has declined steadily, with several episodes of rapid decline. Coming out of the Great Depression in the 1930s, the number of commercial banks in the United States held steady for decades at between 13,000 and 14,000. Then, starting in the 1980s, that number began to fall, eventually reaching today’s level of about 4,800 banks.

The savings and loan crisis of the 1980s featured banks with long-term fixed-rate asset portfolios, usually mortgages and property loans, that were squeezed by rising interest rates. As a result of this crisis, 6,000 banks went bust. This was followed by the “Great Financial Crisis” of 2008, when massive defaults in mortgages threat-

ened the stability of the entire financial system.

The savings and loan crisis was similar to today’s regional bank crisis, which so far has been mostly limited to regional banks with large amounts of uninsured deposits that were invested in longer-term fixed-rate assets. These banks, including Silicon Valley Bank (SVB), Signature Bank, and, most recently, First Republic Bank, were caught by rising interest rates.

U.S. financial markets are unique, the result of historical efforts to diversify risk, preserve community banking, and protect depositors. The National Bank Act of 1863, and later the McFadden Act of 1927 prohibited banks from being owned and operated across state lines. In an effort to protect depositors, the Glass-Steagall Act of 1933 established the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. and separated banks that dealt in stocks and bonds from banks that took in deposits.

The result was a wide array of banks, from fast-dealing Wall Street investment banks to mammoth commercial banks to small local and regional banks. But, fearing that banks with concentrat-

ed exposure to a single state or region created excessive risk for the financial system, Congress passed the 1994 Interstate Act, which allowed banks to branch across state lines.

In 1999, the Financial Services Modernization Act repealed the provisions in Glass-Steagall that separated deposit-taking and investment banking. This led to a wave of mergers and acquisitions between commercial and investment banks, resulting in the absorption of storied firms, such as Salomon Brothers, First Boston, Bear Stearns, and Merrill Lynch, by large “universal banks.” And the universal banks themselves merged—for example, JPMorgan Chase and Bank One merged, and Wachovia was absorbed by Wells Fargo.

Banks Venture Into Politics

For Americans, this trend of mergers and tighter collaboration with government, dubbed the “Great Consolidation,” may ultimately lead to a dearth of banking services for individuals, small businesses, and smaller communities and fewer opportunities for banks to innovate and serve customers profitably. It has also ushered in an era in which Wall Street takes on a larger role in politics, even as the federal government takes on a stronger role in directing Wall Street.

Venturing into politics in his 2022 letter to shareholders, JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon said that “we need to find a way to more rapidly reorganize our government for the new world” and called for the United States to embark on an industrial policy, which means “the federal government, through incentives and policies, drives American industry,” to foster industries such as batteries, rare earths, semiconductors, and electric vehicles.

“We may even need to evoke eminent domain,” he wrote, referring to government seizure of Americans’ land, in order to build out a “green” energy infrastructure. But “rest assured, your CEO is a red-blooded, patriotic, free-enterprise, and free-market capitalist (properly regulated, of course),” he wrote.

In 2022, the “Big Four” banks—JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America, Citibank, and Wells Fargo—collectively spent billions of dollars on progressive political causes. Bank of America CEO Brian

Moynihan said in his 2022 shareholder report that the bank intends to “deploy \$1.5 trillion in sustainable finance by 2030, \$1 trillion of which is aligned to the environmental transition and \$500 billion to inclusive social development.”

This includes Bank of America’s \$2 billion Equality Progress Sustainability Bond, which will “help advance racial and gender equality, economic opportunity, and environmental sustainability.” JPMorgan Chase and Bank of America also reportedly provide financing to certain favored races on preferential terms.

‘Shadow Banking’ and the Closure of Branches

Currently, 95 percent of Americans have bank accounts. However, the trend among banks is to close branches, particularly in rural, remote, and low-income communities.

According to a report by S&P Global Market Intelligence, nearly 3,000 bank branches were closed across the United States in 2021. Wells Fargo, the most aggressive in shutting down branches, closed 267 of them. Overall, the five states with the most branch closures were California with 269, Michigan with 247, New York with 221, Florida with 192, and Illinois, with 153.

“America’s capital markets remain very competitive by global standards,” Gregg said. “But as they become ever more tightly regulated, the less competitive they will become, because large banks can absorb the cost of ever more regulation in ways that medium- and small-sized banks cannot.

“It is possible that a smaller number of banks may result in the banking industry becoming less interested in backing new entrepreneurs and startups, as well as giving less attention to existing small- and medium-sized businesses, because large banks will tend to gravitate toward focusing on big clients.”

Part of the trend of branch closures

is the result of fewer people visiting bank branches, due to the rise of the fin-tech industry. Banks are now facing competition from big tech with the increasing acceptance of new technologies such as payment apps, including PayPal, Venmo, Apple Pay, and Google Pay. And the rise of online banking also allowed customers at banks such as SVB to pull their deposits out of the bank immediately, without having to visit a branch, following rumors that spread over social media that the bank was in trouble.

At the same time, some areas of banking have been taken over by specialty companies, creating what Bowman called a “shadow banking” industry that largely operates outside the banking regulatory framework. This includes not only the fin-tech industry but also

companies such as mortgage lenders.

“Mortgage origination and servicing—both long-standing, traditional banking activities—shifted onto nonbank entities following the 2008 financial crisis,” Bowman said.

In 2020, 68 percent of new mortgages

were issued by mortgage companies and other nonbank institutions. Nonbank lenders are also stepping into other areas, such as corporate loans, farm loans, commercial real estate, and consumer lending.

And while the “shadow banking” system may be encroaching on banks’ profits, they aren’t necessarily relieving banks of risk.

“The growth of lending in the shadow banking system can have significant consequences for the availability of credit over economic cycles, with losses eventually being transferred to regulated depository institutions, as appears to have occurred after the 2008 financial crisis,” Bowman said. “While [these] activities may be pushed out of the regulated banking system, losses may be transmitted back into the banking system through related activities like the extension of credit by banks to those same nonbank lenders.” ■

**3,000
BRANCHES**

**NEARLY 3,000 BANK
branches were closed
across the United States
in 2021, a report shows.**

FBI headquarters in Washington on June 30, 2018.

PHOTO BY CHARLOTTE CUTHBERTSON/THE EPOCH TIMES

J. Edgar Hoover FBI Building

BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

FBI WHISTLEBL *Suspension,*

OWER DETAILS *Retribution*

Being targeted by the FBI is worse than serving in Iraq,

says Garret O'Boyle **By Joseph M. Hanneman**

VERNON, Wis.— What hit home the hardest for suspended FBI Special Agent Garret J. O'Boyle was a handcrafted note made by his 7-year- old daughter, Gwen.

A sensitive and conscientious girl, Gwen colored her note with blue marker—Dad's favorite color. On the cover, she drew a blue heart. Inside she penned her best words of encouragement.

"I love you," the note read. "Hope you start attacking. We believe in you that you get your job back. Love, Gwen."

The father of four girls got choked up trying to read it.

O'Boyle, 36, and his wife, Heidi, 37, have tried to shield the girls from the tempest swirling around them. Little girls are perceptive, however.

Tears welled up in O'Boyle's eyes, thinking about his girls.

"For a little 7-year-old girl to see that and suffer in that way," O'Boyle said, his voice trailing off. "I thought I was covering it up as best I could. And then she gave me that, and I knew that I wasn't."

This Wisconsin family of six is at the center of an FBI firestorm. O'Boyle is part of a whistleblower group trying to expose the weaponization of the

FBI Special Agent Garret O'Boyle struggled to figure out why the bureau pushed so hard to link a subject to violence at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

once-vaunted federal agency, founded in July 1908.

O'Boyle had his FBI security clearance yanked by the bureau on Sept. 26, 2022, after the lodging of an allegation that he characterized as retaliation for his reporting of abuses by the bureau to a U.S. House committee.

He was one of three current and former FBI employees who testified on May 18 before the House Judiciary's Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government, chaired by

Rep. Jim Jordan (R-Ohio).

The U.S. Army veteran and former patrol officer with the Waukesha, Wisconsin, police department is trying to expose what he and others see as the dark path being followed by the FBI.

Testimony given by O'Boyle, former agent Steve Friend, and suspended agent Marcus Allen put them under heavy fire, with all three being suspended from their jobs, losing their incomes, and receiving deeply personal attacks from Democrats. While on suspension,

the men were not allowed to seek other employment.

Their private testimony before Jordan's committee in February 2023 was leaked to corporate media in highly selective—and often inaccurate—snippets.

"They leaked parts of these guys' interviews to the press. The press reported on it, and then the press had to issue corrections," Jordan said, "because what the Democrats told them [The Washington Post, The New York Times, Rolling Stone] wasn't accurate—what they re-

ported wasn't accurate."

The men have been subjected to some of the same treatment that hundreds of Jan. 6 defendants have experienced since early 2021. O'Boyle had a hard-earned promotion snatched from him and was left in a situation that forced his family to move into a recreational vehicle (RV), with nowhere else to go.

"It has been a trying time," he said in an interview with The Epoch Times at the tidy rental home in a quiet subdivision near Waukesha where he now lives.

Jan. 6 Cases

O'Boyle was assigned to the FBI's Wichita, Kansas, resident agency, part of the Kansas City field office. Like many special agents, he was assigned to investigate Jan. 6 cases after the 2021 Capitol breach.

One case involved following up on a tip that came to the FBI's National Threat Operations Center. The tip said that a particular man was at the Capitol on Jan. 6 "with a group of other people, and that they had weapons."

O'Boyle said that for tips like this to be useful, they must be corroborated. So he traveled to the man's hometown and made contact with him through an officer at the local police department.

The man said he did not want to speak to the FBI. Still, O'Boyle said that he wanted to perform his due diligence in the investigation and that he spent about a week making sure he had dotted every I and crossed every T.

A short time later, O'Boyle received an email on the FBI's unclassified system with an alleged facial-recognition match for the subject. He checked it against the man's most recent driver's license photo. There was no resemblance.

"The photo they used of someone on the steps at the Capitol was of a guy with a full head of hair, and [who] was probably 150 pounds lighter than my guy," O'Boyle said. "And I'm like, 'What the heck is going on here?'"

O'Boyle tracked the facial recognition "match" back to an FBI employee in Kansas City. "This guy was adamant about how I had a match," O'Boyle recalled. "I was like, 'What is not clear about this? You sent me a driver's license photo from 25 years ago. Do you understand due process at all?' And he's like, 'You have a match.'"

After further discussion, "we end the phone call, and he goes, 'It's your case, do whatever you want with it, but you still have a match.' I'm like, 'What the heck is wrong with your brain?'" O'Boyle said.

A short time later, an agent in the FBI's Washington field office sent an email requesting that O'Boyle draw up a grand jury subpoena for someone with an account on the website AR15.com—ostensibly O'Boyle's subject.

"Where are they getting this ❖



CHRIS DULZINSKI/FOR THE EPOCH TIMES

idea?” O’Boyle said. “Based off that anonymous tip, you think that John Doe is the username from AR-15.com? Based off of what?”

Digging deeper in the FBI’s system, O’Boyle discovered that the grand jury request had also been sent to a special agent in Baltimore or Pittsburgh. That agent declined to pursue a subpoena.

Lack of Evidence

“They didn’t do the grand jury subpoena either, because they didn’t have enough. You can’t just subpoena whatever you want,” O’Boyle said. “You have to have some type of indicia that you can.”

“I read what that guy wrote up, and he closed his report on Saturday. There’s not enough information here for me to subpoena this because there was this post on AR15.com.”

O’Boyle took all of his information on the subject to his training officer, to get a sense of whether he was missing something.

“He’s like, ‘I don’t know what’s going on here. I don’t know what is up with these people, why they’re really trying so hard to get this information,’” O’Boyle said.

As a final step, both men called the agent in the Washington field office who originally asked for the grand jury subpoenas.

“We call her up,” O’Boyle recalled. “She’s giggling [and gives] not one answer about why she wants me to do the things she’s asking me to do. We get off the phone, and I look at [my training officer]. I’m like, ‘I ain’t doing that. I’m not doing any of that.’”

O’Boyle declined to pursue the subject further for lack of evidence. He eventually submitted the case to Congress as an abuse of authority, gross mismanagement, and violation of a rule or policy.

“If it’s happening in Wichita, Kansas, [it’s] happening everywhere,” he said. “I bet you they got that subpoena from

somebody. They were just shopping it around. There was no indication that it was my guy.”

A New Assignment

After some time in his role at the FBI, O’Boyle decided to apply for a new position based in Washington. A new unit was being formed to do surveillance—a kind of quick-response force that would aid any FBI office that needed more substantial surveillance capabilities than what was on hand locally.

After being chosen for the unit in late May 2022, O’Boyle began looking for a new home in suburban Virginia. He was in Washington for training for the new assignment. He decided to use his evenings to look for a new house.

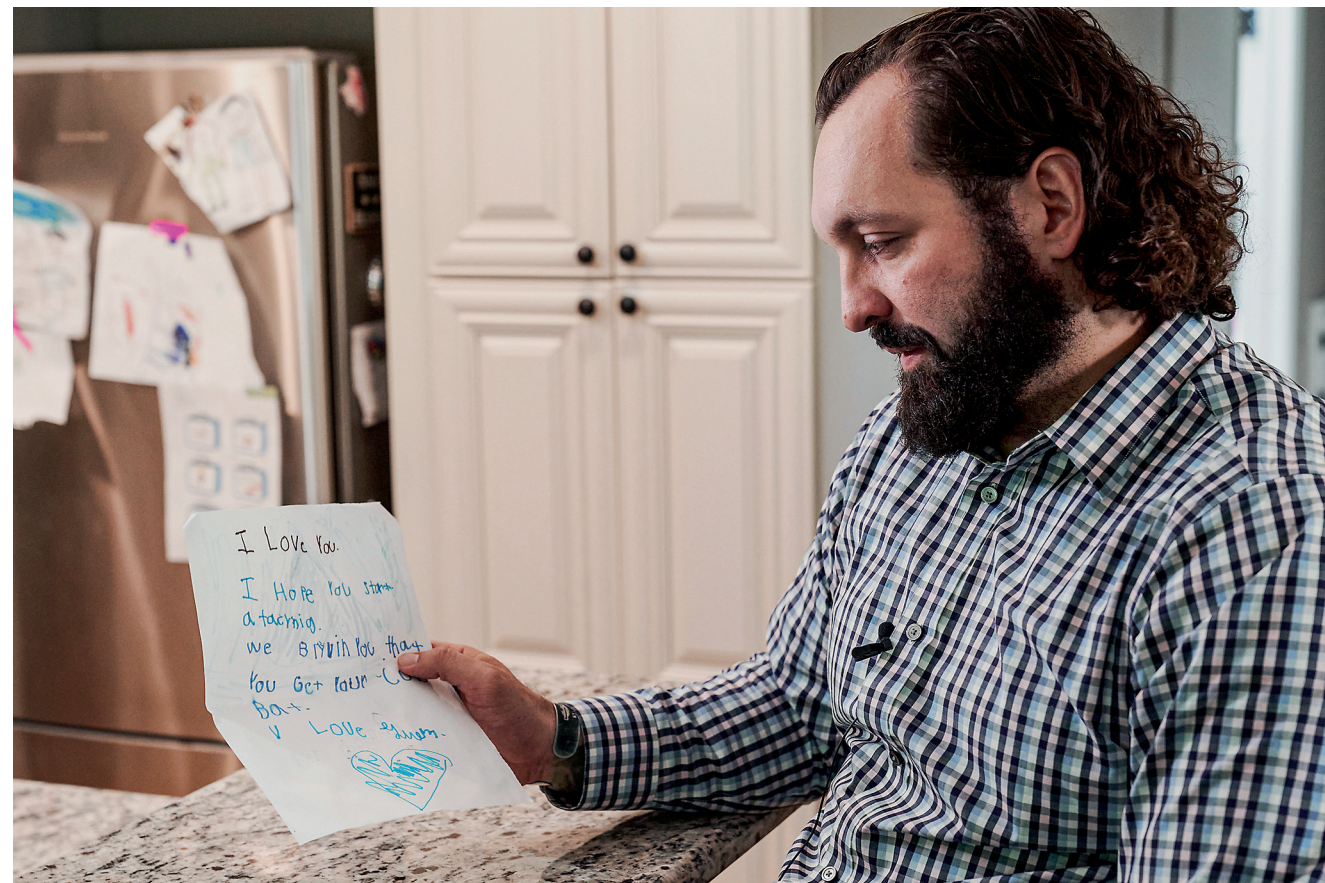
After the last day of training, he found a house that he loved in Stafford, a city of about 160,000 in northern Virginia. The move was going to be good for the family.

By late September 2022, O’Boyle was ready to start his new job. The family



(Left) Garret O’Boyle with daughters Iris and Gwen, shortly before he left the Waukesha Police Department for the FBI.

(Above) Waukesha Police Department Officer Garret O’Boyle with his daughter Gwen, around 2017. O’Boyle’s former co-workers have stepped up to help his family while O’Boyle hasn’t had an income for more than eight months.



Seeing his 7-year-old daughter’s concern for him expressed in a note left FBI Special Agent Garret O’Boyle almost speechless.

FROM L: CHRIS DZYNSKI FOR THE EPOCH TIMES; COURTESY OF GARRET O’BOYLE

house in Kansas had been sold. The family was living in an Airbnb until the new house was ready. All of the family belongings were in storage in Virginia.

O’Boyle said that his new boss tried to talk him into taking a few days of leave rather than report on the agreed-upon date. He was anxious to get started, so he showed up on Sept. 26.

One other employee showed up for orientation that day. That person was led down one hall, while O’Boyle was shown into a conference room.

That’s when the trouble started.

O’Boyle said he was told that someone had made an allegation that he leaked protected information to two media outlets: the Washington Times and Project Veritas.

“I met with two agents ... who never identified themselves with their creds,” O’Boyle said. “I don’t even know if they told me their names. They asked me some of this stuff about Veritas and Washington Times. And I’m like, ‘Nope, not me.’ I’m thinking like, ‘Oh, I’m just gonna tell them it wasn’t me. And I’m gonna go back to work.’”

That didn’t happen.

A security officer and two more agents

entered the room. O’Boyle was told to surrender his service weapon, his credentials and his building-access card.

“I take my gun out of my holster, and I go to unload it, and this other agent grabs my arm and takes it out of my hand,” O’Boyle said.

“That’s the part that has been the hardest for me is to have my livelihood stripped, my ability to take care of my family just taken.”

Garret J. O’Boyle, special agent, FBI

“I’m thinking, ‘Really, dude?’ I’m thinking, ‘If I wanted to shoot you, you would have been shot.’ You don’t need to do that. But he did.”

O’Boyle’s security clearance was re-

voked by the FBI, and he was placed on unpaid suspension. In a matter of minutes, his dream promotion and his income evaporated.

His belongings were being held by the bureau. His wife was back in Wisconsin, recovering from the cesarean section delivery of their daughter, Lucy.

“That’s the part that has been the hardest for me, is to have my livelihood stripped,” he said. “My ability to take care of my family, just taken. And, you know, I’m sure people would say this is too extreme, but I don’t think it is.”

“In the modern era, when you take a man’s livelihood away from him, and you tell him he can’t have another one, that’s a death warrant. And you’re going to say, ‘You quit. We’re not going to fire you. You quit.’ And then you can go on about your life.”

O’Boyle said the FBI handed him a \$2,500 tax bill for the cost to move the family belongings from Kansas to Virginia, claiming the covered moving expenses were income under federal tax rules. He is challenging the bill.

Partisan Attacks

Before O’Boyle, Friend, and Allen spoke a syllable of testimony be- ❖



Even after experiencing the horrors of service in Iraq and Afghanistan, Garret O'Boyle says being targeted by the FBI is worse. "I never thought I would be a target of my own government for trying to do what's right," O'Boyle said.

fore the Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government, committee Chairman Jordan warned them about attacks from Democrat lawmakers.

"I just want to tell you guys, get ready," Jordan said. "Get ready because these guys are going to come after you. You know they are."

Wearing a blue suit, light blue dress shirt, and a green, blue, and orange patterned tie selected by his daughter Iris, O'Boyle was the first to testify.

"I'm sad. I'm disappointed, and I'm angry that I have to be here to testify about the weaponization of the FBI and the [Department of Justice]."

He sat before a deeply divided group of lawmakers and told his story of FBI retaliation for reporting malfeasance to Congress.

"I never swore an oath to the FBI," O'Boyle said. "I swore an oath to the Constitution."

As soon as the men finished their prepared remarks, the attacks from Democrat members of the subcommittee began.

Rep. Linda Sanchez (D-Calif.) confronted Allen with a Twitter post about Jan. 6 Capitol breach. She seemed unfazed when he told her that it was not his post or his account.

Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla.) repeatedly interrupted Jordan, asserting that the men were "not whistleblowers."

Rep. Stacey Plaskett (D-U.S. Virgin Islands) said: "MAGA Republicans are a threat to the rule of law in America." She called the witnesses "former agents" who lost their top-secret clearances "because they were a threat to our national security."

\$590,000

A FORMER FBI SPECIAL AGENT

organized an online fundraiser for the O'Boyle and Allen families that raised more than \$590,000 in just two weeks.

Schultz suggested that Friend's decision to come to Congress with whistleblower disclosures was timed to coincide with the forthcoming release of his book "True Blue."

Friend told The Epoch Times that he had refused to take a \$25,000 advance from the publisher and told the company that he did not care if he made any money from the book.

Tougher Than War

As a war veteran, having his loyalty and patriotism questioned has been especially vexing for O'Boyle.

He enlisted in the U.S. Army as an infantryman in 2006, and served in Afghanistan and Iraq. He reenlisted and was promoted to sergeant and assigned to the 101st Airborne Division, 4th Brigade Combat Team, based at Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

In Iraq, O'Boyle's platoon was stationed about 50 miles from the Iranian border. One day, a man on a bus full of people blew himself up in a town that was part of his platoon's area of operation.

"We get spun off to go respond. So we get out there, and it's mayhem. You know, it's, I think in total, there were right around 45 dead, 77 wounded, and body parts," he said.

"The two I remember the most was this little kid; my oldest nephew, they were about the same age at the time. Just [lying] on the ground. And then this old lady. You know those white plastic lawn chairs, the cheap ones? [She was] just sitting in one of those, slumped over."

Even after experiencing the horrors of service in those countries, O'Boyle said being targeted by the FBI is worse.

"It has taken more of a toll than war, and I think that's really quite the statement," he said. "I think part of that is because I never thought I would be a target of my own government for trying to do what's right, for trying to live up to the oath that I've taken."

In an email to The Epoch Times, the FBI national press office said it didn't "have any comment" on O'Boyle's testimony.

Helping Hands

O'Boyle and his family spent about eight weeks living in his brother-in-law's RV back in Wisconsin before finding a rental home.

On early mornings when he couldn't sleep, O'Boyle sat outside in a lawn chair, watching videos of the trial of Darrell Brooks, the Milwaukee man who drove his red SUV down the Christmas parade route in Waukesha in November 2021, mowing down children and adults. Six people were killed and more than 60 were injured.



(L-R) Suspended FBI Special Agent Garret O'Boyle, former FBI agent Steve Friend, and suspended FBI agent Marcus Allen recite the Pledge of Allegiance during a hearing before the Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government of the House Judiciary Committee on Capitol Hill in Washington on May 18.

The parade massacre hit home for O'Boyle, since his former colleagues worked all along the parade route. One of his best friends at the Waukesha Police Department—Officer Bryce Scholten—fired three shots into the SUV in an attempt to stop Brooks's deadly rampage.

O'Boyle's former co-workers have stepped up to help his family, which has been without benefit of his FBI salary for more than eight months.

Kyle Seraphin, a former FBI special agent who said he was targeted for suspension for questioning the Bureau's COVID-19 vaccine mandates, said the treatment O'Boyle received from Democrats on Capitol Hill and the FBI was "atrocious."

"It feels calculated," Seraphin told The Epoch Times. "And it was pathetically unprofessional and sloppy investigative work to make an allegation about him doing something

when there is zero evidence he did what they alleged.

"Any serious and competent investigation would have involved asking me questions, since he and I were coordinating whistleblower activity."

Seraphin organized an online GiveSendGo fundraiser for the O'Boyle and Allen families that raised more than \$590,000 in just two weeks.

House Democrats tried to make an issue of \$5,000 grants given to the whistleblower families at Christmas 2022 by a foundation run by Kash Patel, a former senior Trump administration official. O'Boyle said the money was a godsend.

Patel, the co-host of "Kash's Corner" on EpochTV, said his foundation will continue to help whistleblowers.

"We provide support to brave patriots who protect our nation while the radical left and government gangsters destroy the essence of our republic

with their two-tier system of justice," Patel told The Epoch Times.

"Having a charitable foundation is not a monopoly they own. We are committed to the truth, and give financial assistance to those in need, especially the courageous Americans who shed sunlight on government corruption."

One of the most remarkable moments during the whole whistleblower ordeal came when a former Waukesha Police Department officer passed along a message from O'Boyle's former captain. It said simply: "Are you safe?"

"I was like, 'I don't know. I won't hold my breath,'" O'Boyle said. "But think of that. He's a captain. I think he's been there over 20 years. He was an Army Ranger. That's what real law enforcement thinks of the FBI."

"They think that their former colleague is now unsafe because of his speaking out. What does that tell America? That's scary stuff." ■

FROM LYNORIPAS/REUTERS; ALEX WONG/GETTY IMAGES

SCHOOLS

Parents Urged to Act Over Teacher Impropriety

Concerned parents should push back if teachers are sharing inappropriate details with kids, critics say

By Jackson Elliott

ACROSS THE COUNTRY, SOME young children are coming home from school confused because, increasingly, teachers are revealing details about a previously secret LGBT lifestyle, experts say.

Sometimes it's an announcement about a teacher's same-sex spouse that bewilders children. Sometimes it's the revelation that a beloved teacher's gender identity doesn't match the exterior that students observe.

And if parents, school boards, and school administrators are uncomfortable with those details being shared with children, they can—and should—take action, said Oregon state Rep. Ed Diehl, a Republican, who's been an outspoken opponent of transgender teachers in classrooms.

"When a teacher walks through the school door, he [or] she is giving up some level of free expression, just like any other employee," Diehl told The Epoch Times by email. "Their job is to teach the curriculum and be as impartial as possible. And, they have a responsibility to keep the students and parents comfortable."

If teachers try to provoke a reaction by dressing sexually, making the classroom ideological, or bringing a personal agenda to work, they should expect pushback, that "can and should take the form of discipline, reassignment, or termination," he said.

Men Dressed as Women in the Classroom

The transgender movement has clashed with parents as women dressed as men and men dressed as women have entered schools as teachers.

Not every teacher identifying as transgender mentions in the classroom that they're actually the opposite sex, according to a survey by NPR of 79

transgender teachers.

About 29 percent of transgender teachers keep their biological sex a secret, the survey found.

But some seem to make no attempt to hide the incongruity.

In Ontario, Canada, an Oakville Trafalgar High School teacher, who goes by a newly adopted name Kayla Lemieux, taught school during the previous school years as a man.

But this school year, Kerry Lemieux switched names and started wearing what many alleged to be prosthetic breasts larger than bowling balls to school. Videos of Lemieux in the classroom became a viral internet sensation.

The Epoch Times has reached out to the school and to Lemieux for comment but did not receive a reply.

But in an interview with the New York Post, Lemieux said he is intersex and



About 29 percent of transgender teachers don't tell their students about their biological sex, a survey found. However, some districts, such as the Los Angeles Unified School District, encourage teachers to display materials such as badges, "pronoun pins," and LGBT history posters.

that his chest shape is natural but swollen by hormone treatment. The term intersex refers to a rare genetic condition of having both male and female sex organs or other sexual characteristics.

The news organization also took photos of a man outside Lemieux's residence who appeared to be Lemieux but without an oversized chest.

The Halton District School Board also reportedly discovered that Lemieux didn't always wear fake breasts when not at school. So board members ordered school administrators to put him on leave from teaching.

But school board members didn't change the dress code enough to prevent a similar incident in the future, the parental activist group Students First Ontario said in a press release.

Sharing Sex Life Details With Children

In Chattanooga, Tennessee, substitute teacher Ezra Fry identifies as nonbinary, which means having a gender identity

that is not exclusively male or female.

Fry, a man, taught at a Hamilton County public school wearing a long dress and sporting long, pink hair, the Chattanooga Times Free Press reported.

A flurry of social media posts suggested Fry told students to refer to him as "Mrs." But Fry, who asks to be called by the pronoun "they," told the news outlet he asked students to call him "Ezra" to prevent confusion.

As of now, Fry has been reassigned to work in a different local school, Hamilton County Public Schools told the newspaper.

Shortly after publication of this article and six days after being contacted for comment, a Hamilton County Public School district spokesman declined to respond to specific questions from The Epoch Times about whether certain teacher attire and behavior would be allowed, or how parent concerns would be addressed.

"Hamilton County Schools requires employees to dress professionally,"

said HCS communications officer Steve Doremus. "We do not comment on hypothetical questions."

For many LGBT-identifying teachers, "coming out" by announcing their sexuality to students is a joyful experience.

In Frisco, Texas, a homosexual teacher at Spears Elementary School gushed in a Twitter post about telling a student he had a husband after the child asked about his family.

"Last week, I came out to some of my students, and it was the best feeling in the world," the teacher said in a video posted online.

The Epoch Times reached out to the school district but received no reply by press time.

Parental Pushback

Diehl noted that parents had taken an increased interest in urging school boards to protect their children from the sexual behavior of teachers.

"I believe that parents and school boards need to stay aware of what is

happening inside the classroom," Diehl said. "Parents should be regularly checking in with their kids."

And parents should go up the chain of command if something goes wrong at school, advised Tiffany Justice, co-founder of nonpartisan parental rights group Moms for Liberty.

"If parents have any concerns about what's happening in their child's life, we recommend they bring it to their teacher," Justice told The Epoch Times.

And if teachers don't respond appropriately, the next step is to go to the principal, district superintendent, and the state board of education, in that order, Justice said.

Some teachers have infiltrated schools to promote their views on gender and sexuality, Justice said.

"Libs of TikTok has shown us that there are activist teachers using their classroom as a platform to enforce or promote their ideology," Justice said. "The classroom isn't the place for that."

A teacher shouldn't bring his or her personal life into school, Justice added.

"I could be 'Mrs. Justice' with a husband or 'Mrs. Justice' with a wife—to my students, my marital status is the same," she said.

She has no problem with teachers having pictures of an unconventional family on a desk, she said. But if children ask about a teacher's personal life, the teacher should quickly redirect them.

"The teacher should reply, 'Families look different. Now let's get back to the math lesson,'" she said. ■



"Libs of TikTok has shown us that there are activist teachers using their classroom as a platform to enforce or promote their ideology."

Tiffany Justice, co-founder, Moms for Liberty

FROM LEFT: TIFFANY JUSTICE/MOMS FOR LIBERTY; FATPOK/REDA/GETTY IMAGES; SCREENSHOT VIA LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

US TARGETS

CHINA'S LOW WATER

The Chinese regime's insidious tactics
inside US borders

BY EVA FU

A man in a trench coat walks past a building (C) that housed a secret police station in Manhattan's Chinatown for the purpose of repressing dissidents living in the United States on behalf of the Chinese regime, in New York on April 18.

PHOTO BY SPENCER PLATT/GETTY IMAGES



SCULPTOR CHEN WEIMING is no stranger to Chen Jun, the man recently arrested over a bribery scheme to help the Chinese communist regime carry out its repression in the United States. He had heard Chen Jun's threats years ago. "Let me tell you, if you have a Chinese passport, and we take a photo of you, you can never go back to China," Chen Jun told him and other Chinese dissidents in Los Angeles during a heated exchange, the sculptor recalled.

Chen Weiming and others were protesting a pro-Beijing flag-raising event organized by Chen Jun, one of many he had arranged in Monterey Park, California. As in other years, a Chinese flag was hoisted at Barnes Park awash with red decorations in celebration of the regime's 70th anniversary.

"If you make it back, you will immediately get arrested," Chen Jun said, amplifying his voice through a megaphone hung around his neck.

That was in September 2019. Three and a half years later, on May 26, it was Chen Jun who found himself arrested by the FBI at his home in Chino. A U.S. citizen, Chen Jun was the subject of a Justice Department probe for his alleged role as an enabler of Beijing's transnational repression campaign, this time targeting the persecuted faith Falun Gong.

A Global Campaign of Repression

Falun Gong, which includes meditative exercises and moral teachings centered on the principles of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance, has been a key target of the Chinese regime since 1999, when the regime began a ruthless crusade to eliminate the spiritual discipline. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) viewed the huge popularity of the practice, which had attracted up to 100 million adherents at the time, as a threat to its authoritarian rule.

Inside China, tens of millions of Falun Gong adherents continue to face harassment, arbitrary arrests, torture, and forced organ harvesting. But even practitioners and dissidents outside of China's borders aren't immune to the Party's machinations. From spying and



Chen Jun worked under the direction of an unnamed Chinese official and was supplied money for bribes by the regime, according to court filings.

physical assault to blackmailing, the regime has deployed an onslaught of coercive tactics devised specifically to silence and sabotage any voices deemed unfavorable to Beijing.

Such campaigns, collectively known as transnational repression, have recently come to the spotlight as U.S. prosecutors have brought charges against dozens of Chinese agents and U.S. citizens involved in regime-directed suppression plots on U.S. soil.

In just the past six weeks alone, the Justice Department has charged 40 members of China's national police force with carrying out a cyber propaganda campaign to harass U.S. residents, arrested one Boston man believed to be secretly feeding Beijing a "blacklist" of China critics, and arrested two more in New York who were overseeing one of four known Chinese police stations in the United States.

One of the men arrested over the illegal Chinese police operation had been involved in targeting Falun Gong practitioners in the United States, court filings show. In 2015, the man, Chen Jinping, re-

ceived a plaque recognizing his efforts in organizing paid protesters to counter demonstrations by Falun Gong adherents when Chinese leader Xi Jinping visited Washington that year.

In the case of Chen Jun, prosecutors alleged that he and a co-defendant worked with officials in China to concoct a scheme to sabotage a U.S. nonprofit run by Falun Gong adherents by trying to get the organization's tax-exempt status revoked.

Chen Jun, the court filing said, offered \$50,000 to an undercover FBI agent who he thought was with the IRS to try to advance a fraudulent IRS whistleblower complaint against the nonprofit. In a recorded conversation, Chen said his goal was to help the regime "topple" the faith group.

Court filings said that Chen Jun worked under the direction of an unnamed Chinese official and was supplied money for the bribes by the regime.

While the documents don't state what agency Chen Jun's handler worked for, they do make multiple references to the megacity Tianjin, where Chen Jun was born and raised. For many years, the city has served as the main base of the 610 Office,



In 2015, Chen Jinping received a plaque recognizing his efforts in organizing paid protesters to counter demonstrations by Falun Gong adherents when Chinese leader Xi Jinping visited Washington that year.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: LIU FEI/THE EPOCH TIMES; COURTESY OF CHEN WEIMING; FREDERIC J. BROWN/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES; DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE



(Left) The "CCP Virus" sculpture, which depicted Xi as a coronavirus molecule, was demolished by vandals in July 2021 after the artist unveiled it to the public in Liberty Sculpture Park in Yermo, Calif. (Below) Sculptor Chen Weiming's "Tank Man," depicting the famous standoff near Tiananmen Square, at Liberty Sculpture Park in Yermo, Calif., on June 1, 2021.



an extralegal Gestapo-like agency that oversees the persecution of Falun Gong. Chen Jun's handler appears to be from Tianjin as well; when Chen Jun called another co-conspirator to discuss payment plans, he said he would "contact Tianjin again."

He said the official is "the one that is always in charge of these matters."

"They are like blood brothers," Chen Jun once told the undercover FBI agent about his Chinese associates, according to the complaint. "We started this fight against [Falun Gong] twenty, thirty years ago. They are always with us."

'Covert Warfare'

For China analysts and advocates, the recent case represents but another example of a long-known sprawling campaign by Beijing to silence dissent abroad.

"It's kind of a pattern that's emerging," Laura Harth, campaign director for Safeguard Defenders, a group that focuses on China's human rights, told

The Epoch Times.

The bribery case, she said, is "the tip of the iceberg."

But even so, Harth was stunned by the tactics used by Chen Jun and his co-conspirators as detailed by the Department of Justice.

The bribery scheme demonstrated the "breadth and creativeness" of the regime's efforts, she said, as well as the "audacity by which they feel they can get away with" these actions.

The alleged attempt to subvert U.S. institutions also stood out to other China analysts.

"You're not just talking anymore about organizing some counter-protesters, or trying to convince someone to come back to China, or monitoring a dissident. This was really an attempt to use institutions of the United States, including things like whistleblower systems and protections, to basically go after a perceived enemy of the CCP," Sarah Cook, a senior China analyst at Freedom House,



Sculptor Chen Weiming, whose artwork was sabotaged by agents of the Chinese regime,

told The Epoch Times.

To her, it reveals both the "degree of effort and resources that the CCP is investing to target Falun Gong, at least in the United States," and the "the lengths the CCP is willing to go to in terms of using democratic institutions against themselves."

Nicholas Eftimiades, a former intelligence analyst for the CIA specialized in Chinese espionage, sees the latest case as part of Beijing's "covert warfare"—an "extraordinarily far-ranging worldwide effort" from China to "influence and corrupt foreign governments and foreign political processes."

"To actually go get someone in the United States to submit basically a lie like this for truth, have the U.S. government take official action, and to bribe U.S. officials—that's corruption at its greatest moment," Eftimiades told The Epoch Times, adding that it's something often carried out by intelligence services and organized crime groups. "So we see the Chinese government behaving as such."

'Canary in the Coal Mine'

In Los Angeles County, 70-year-old Chen Jun, who also goes by John, has developed a reputation among the Chinese diaspora as a talking head for the Chinese regime. A veteran of China's air force, Chen had been a trade delegate for Tianjin before emigrating to California, where he holds top positions in a slew of pro-Beijing organizations, including two he created himself, according to Chinese media reports. He has hosted roughly two dozen annual flag-raising events like that one in 2019 and penned several books trumpeting the regime's narratives. He has mobilized local Chinese communities to welcome top Chinese officials during their visits to the United States, as well as organized protests that the regime deemed "patriotic," the reports said.

With his close alignment with the regime, it was unsurprising to some

that he has kept in step with the regime on its suppression of Falun Gong.

Wu Fan, a former chief editor of pro-democracy Chinese-language magazine Beijing Spring and commentator on China affairs, remembered debating the



“This was really an attempt to use institutions of the United States ... to basically go after a perceived enemy of the CCP.”

Sarah Cook, China analyst, Freedom House

persecution with Chen Jun on the radio as early as 2001. In their approximately 20 other similar interactions on various China topics, Chen Jun had been parroting the regime’s talking points, Wu recalled.

“It seems that his life goal is to follow the CCP,” Wu told The Epoch Times.

Levi Browde, executive director of the New York-based Falun Dafa Information Center, said the U.S. action on the IRS bribery attempt, which was still unfolding at the time of the men’s arrest, shows that U.S. authorities have “really come up to speed on the sheer scope and scale of CCP infiltration into this country.”

“I’ve met a lot of people who think the Falun Gong issue really is the canary in the coal mine for all Americans,” he told The Epoch Times. In many ways, he said, he believes the Falun Gong community “has been a leading voice in trying to not only expose the persecution themselves, but also divulge the true nature of the CCP on the world stage.”

“Seeing what the CCP does to Falun Gong and understanding what the nature of that threat is and how to counter it, that’s a big lesson for all Americans,” he said. “If anybody, not just Falun Gong, finds themselves on the opposite side of the CCP and is doing or saying something the CCP doesn’t like, who’s to say they won’t do the exact same thing to them?”

A Sculpture Targeted

Three days after the row at Barnes Park in 2019, Chen Weiming filed a lawsuit accusing Chen Jun of violating his free speech rights, although he eventually didn’t pursue it due to a lack of funds.

The California pro-democracy artist found it apt that the Justice Department in its press release described Chen and his co-conspirator

as “illegal agents” for Beijing.

“He is a CCP agent, no question,” Chen Weiming told The Epoch Times. “Otherwise, how can he as an individual declare that he can get me arrested? What power does he have?”

Chen Weiming, like others, has experienced the regime’s retaliation firsthand.

In a plot to destroy one of his artworks critical of the regime, Matthew Ziburis, a former correctional officer for Florida and a former bodyguard, approached the Chinese-born New Zealander, who lives in California, while posing as an art dealer interested in getting his works displayed in a New York

museum, according to court filings.

The sculpture, a bust statue depicting Xi as a coronavirus molecule, was demolished by vandals in July 2021 after the artist unveiled it to the public in Liberty Sculpture Park in Yermo, California. It’s unclear whether Ziburis, who was in New York City during that arson attack, had any involvement in the sculpture’s destruction, but two of his co-conspirators, one of whom is based in China, discussed such actions in undated conversations cited in the filing.

Regarding the recently publicized tax bribery scheme, Chinese agents paid \$1,500 to a purported IRS agent to get tax returns of Chen Weiming, believing they could find evidence of tax evasion to discredit him.

For dissidents, “the CCP tries every possible way to threaten you and destroy your reputation,” said Chen, who on June 4 unveiled his latest work—a statue of an abused mother of eight chained in front

FROM TOP: SAMIRA BOUAIU/THE EPOCH TIMES, GREG BAKER/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

of a metal cage welded together with the characters “China,” inspired by a real-life incident that horrified the country last year and at times overshadowed Beijing’s Winter Olympics.

When Chen Weiming was running a pro-democracy newspaper, New Times Weekly, in New Zealand, police had repeatedly received anonymous tips alleging, without evidence, that the outlet’s office engaged in drug dealing and tax fraud.

‘Wake-Up Call’

In Congress, some lawmakers are also taking note of the covert Chinese influence campaigns.

“The FBI calls this ‘transnational repression,’ but we should be clear that this is a foreign adversary emboldened enough to commit crimes against those it deems to be a threat in the United States,” Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-Wis.), who chairs the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party, told

The Epoch Times after the unsealing of the IRS bribery case files.

Rep. Ashley Hinson (R-Iowa), a member of the committee, said the revelation from the case is a “wake-up call to everyone here.”

“There’s nothing more that the Chinese Communist Party hates than people who are pursuing freedom—people who want to practice the religion they want to practice, what we have here in the United States—and that’s a threat to them,” Hinson said on NTD’s “Capitol Report” program.

“So this is happening in our backyard every single day, whether they’re trying to bribe an IRS official, or sneak onto our military bases. They are not a friend to us, and if we don’t hold them accountable, and show them that we’re strong, and we mean business, they’re going to take advantage of that, like they have for decades.”

hensive, strategic, and employing “all elements of national power ... because that’s the way China approaches the situation,” he said.

On a broader scale, the United States should also work in concert with allies, be it to issue sanctions or otherwise, to make deterrence effective globally, according to Eftimiades.

In March, a bipartisan group of senators introduced the Transnational Repression Policy Act, which aims to hold foreign governments and individuals accountable when they stalk, intimidate, harass, coerce, or assault people in the United States—or U.S. citizens abroad.

Gallagher has also suggested increasing the penalties on executors of targeted harassment if they do so on behalf of a foreign adversary.

Eftimiades supports other penalties, such as placing perpetrators on the “no fly” list and barring investments into regional Chinese governments that are involved.

With the recent spotlight on the regime’s spy balloon and its policing networks across more than 100 countries, which Germany suspects were still operating in their country as of mid-May, the West seems to be paying attention at last.

At the G-7 summit in Hiroshima last month, leaders of the member states called on China “not to conduct interference activities aimed at undermining the security and safety of our communities, the integrity of our democratic institutions, and our economic prosperity.”

“The net is closing in” against Beijing proxies, said the California dissident artist, adding that he’s glad the West has “finally become clear on the matter.”

“The CCP will never embrace Western values. As long as it has money and power, it will want to export its authoritarian model, and with it, reshape the entire world,” he said.

Eftimiades zeroed in on the need for a “whole-of-government” response to Beijing’s covert operation campaigns.

“It’s directed against our own citizens. ... The one thing [the government] is responsible for, above all others, is protecting its own people, and we’re failing in that regard,” Eftimiades said. ■

Linda Jiang contributed to this report.



Paramilitary police officers march at Tiananmen Square in Beijing on March 5. Coercive tactics used by the CCP to silence any voices deemed unfavorable to Beijing include spying, physical assault, and blackmailing, to name a few.

\$50,000

CHEN JUN OFFERED \$50,000 to an undercover FBI agent, whom he thought worked for the IRS, to try to advance a fraudulent IRS whistleblower complaint against a U.S. nonprofit run by Falun Gong adherents.

40 AGENTS

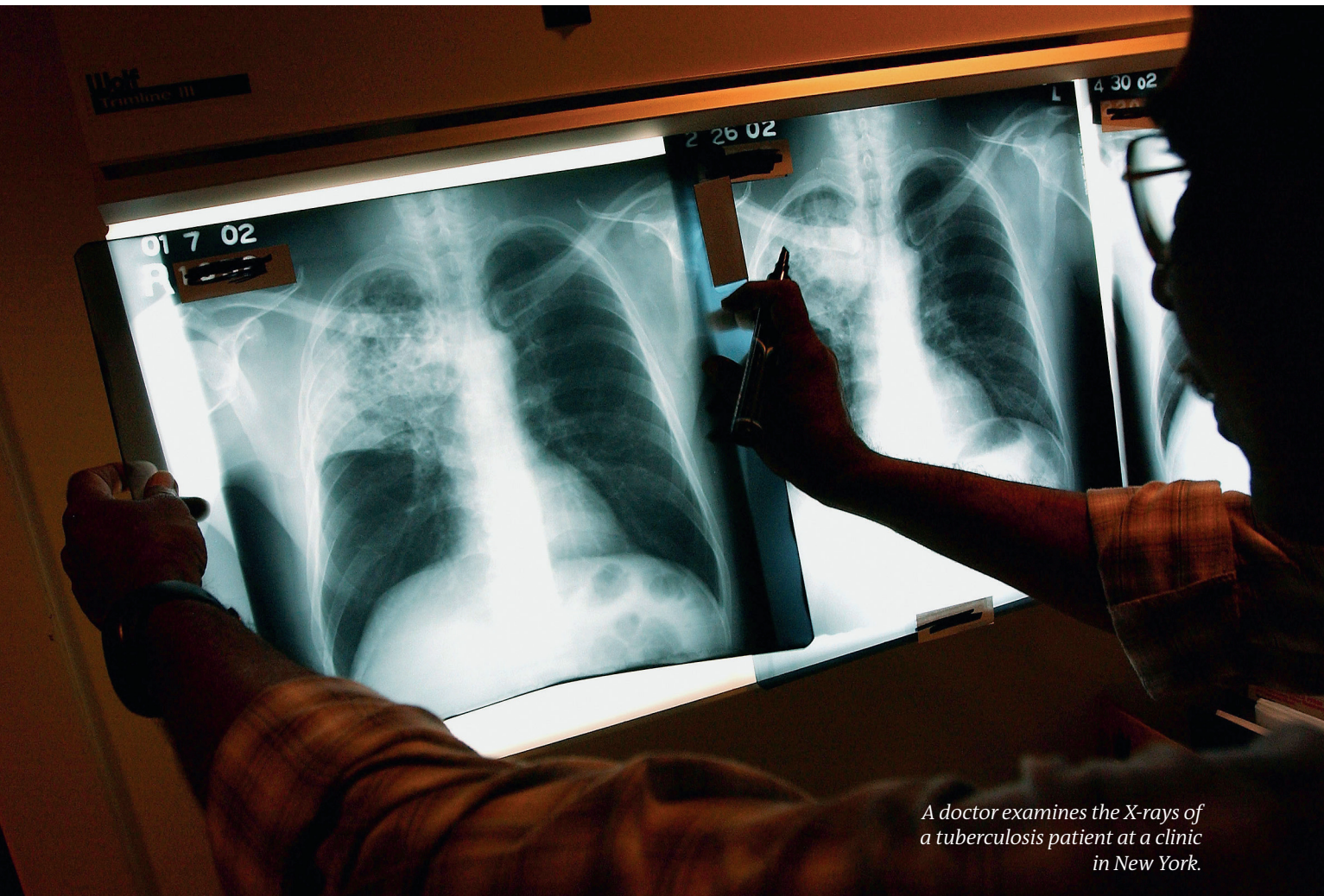
Over the past six weeks alone, the DOJ has charged 40 members of China’s national police force with carrying out a cyber propaganda campaign to harass U.S. residents.

Assessing the US Response

From the national security perspective, Eftimiades considers the repressive activities from China a reckoning call for nation states to reassess their relationship with China and decide whether the commercial benefits from China are worth the national security risks.

In dealing with such state-sponsored “pervasive criminal activity,” law enforcement alone is not effective, he said.

The U.S. approach has to be compre-



A doctor examines the X-rays of a tuberculosis patient at a clinic in New York.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Tuberculosis Is on the Rise

Here's what to know about the disease that's mostly being brought in over the border

By George Citroner

OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, we have experienced isolation, mask-wearing, and significant behavioral changes in response to a declared pandemic.

As that emergency fades into the “new normal” of our post-COVID-19 world, the mass migration of people to Western countries is setting the stage for something potentially worse.

The escalating influx of individuals from various regions has led to an unprecedented situation at the U.S. border, raising concerns about the introduction of tuberculosis (TB) and other infectious diseases not widespread in the United States.

New York City's health commissioner said that the continuing arrival of migrants bused north from states on the southern border is bringing tuberculosis.

New U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data published in March show that tuberculosis cases rose by 5 percent in 2022 to 8,300 cases in the United States.

Tuberculosis on the Rise

By the time the bacterium that caused tuberculosis was identified in 1882, the disease was killing an estimated 1 in 7 people in the United States and Europe. TB remains the leading cause of infectious disease globally as an airborne disease transmitted through coughing and sneezing.

The rise of drug-resistant TB poses challenges for effective treatment, with more than a half-million cases reported

in the past year. Additionally, TB infection after COVID-19 has become more prevalent, raising concerns about potential outbreaks in the post-pandemic world.

Prompt treatment is crucial for individuals with active TB, Dr. Sarah Lee, chief resident for emergency medicine at Northwell Staten Island University Hospital in New York, told The Epoch Times. Symptoms such as coughing up blood, night sweats, fever, and weight loss can worsen without intervention.

“Without proper treatment, about two-thirds of people with active TB will die,” she added.

New York City Health Commissioner Dr. Ashwin Vasana recently announced that the continuing arrival of migrants bused north from states on the southern border is bringing several diseases, most notably TB.

So far this year, the five boroughs of New York City have reported a TB rate more than twice the national average, with Queens experiencing the highest number of cases. Specifically, the Flushing neighborhood of Queens has been severely affected, with a TB infection rate more than three times higher than the city-wide average, primarily affecting recent immigrants.

In a letter to doctors and health care administrators, Vasana notes that a significant number of individuals who have recently arrived in NYC have either resided in or traveled through countries with high rates of TB. To address this issue, Vasana requested that all individuals who have recently arrived in the city from these countries and haven't undergone TB screening be promptly assessed.

In 2022, nearly 90 percent of TB cases in the city occurred among individuals born outside the United States, and almost 80 percent of TB-infected people who were born in the United States were non-Hispanic black or Latino, according to the NYC Department of Health.

Identification, Treatment Are Key

Dr. Sharon Nachman, chief of the Division of Pediatric Infectious Diseases at Stony Brook Children's Hospital, stressed the importance of accessible diagnostics, such as chest X-rays.

Clear X-rays indicate latent infection, treatable with medication. In the case of

active infection, doctors obtain a sputum sample to check for antibiotic resistance.

“We can identify, because we're in the U.S., what the resistance factors for antibiotics are,” Nachman said. Those resistances can be to rifampin or multiple drugs.

There is a range of new-generation TB medicines available, including bedaquiline and delamanid, to effectively treat multidrug-resistant TB in the United States, she added.

“So I want to say that the dangerous part is closing our eyes and not looking for it, as opposed to identifying and treating it.”

Neglected or incomplete treatment of patients with multidrug-resistant TB can lead to its spread in the community, making the disease more difficult—and potentially impossible—to treat.

In the United States, treatment for TB is free for the uninsured because TB is a declared public health hazard.

“You don't need to pay for your meds; you don't need to pay for anything,” Nachman said. “We can get you in and get you treated and get you on meds.”

TB Vaccine Isn't Perfect Solution

An easy solution to rising rates of TB in the United States should be vaccination against infection, according to Nachman. A vaccine, bacille Calmette-Guérin (BCG), has long been available against TB.

The vaccine isn't effective against intra-thoracic TB and only “somewhat effective” against miliary TB, a potentially fatal form of the condition, which can lead to disseminated TB or TB meningitis, Nachman said.

“So people thinking, ‘I've got a BCG vaccine, I'm not going to get pulmonary TB,’ ... actually, you will,” she said. “We don't have anything better.”

The complexity of the TB bacteria makes it difficult to determine which antibodies or components can offer protection.

Another problem, according to Nachman, is that TB is primarily transmitted through close and ongoing household contact rather than casual encounters. She emphasized that the risk of spreading TB is significantly higher in overcrowded living conditions. ■

90%
IN 2022, NEARLY 90 PERCENT of tuberculosis cases in New York City occurred among individuals born outside the United States, according to the city's Department of Health.

8,300
CASES
TUBERCULOSIS cases increased by 5 percent in 2022 to 8,300 in the United States, according to the CDC.



Illegal immigrants seeking asylum in the United States wait to be processed by U.S. Border Patrol agents after crossing from Mexico, in Yuma, Ariz., on May 11.

PENNSYLVANIA

TRUMP SUPPORTERS TEST CLUB APPROACH TO WOO VOTERS

*Following Florida
example, grassroots
organizers launch club
in Pennsylvania*

By Janice Hisle



(L-R) Anthony Ruffa, Louis Aliota, Brad Peganoff, Melanie Brewer, and Greg Hayes gather to work on plans for their new pro-Donald Trump group, AmFirst 47, at an office in Erie, Pa., on May 22.

PHOTO BY JANICE HISLE / THE EPOCH TIMES

ERIE, PA.—AS VOTERS DROWN IN A SEA OF high-priced negative TV and radio ads, grassroots groups can throw them a lifeline: a meaningful personal interaction that might snare their votes, if research findings hold.

One such group is being formed in Pennsylvania, a critical swing state, to build support for former President Donald Trump. The new group is patterned after a similar organization in Florida, where Dr. Anthony Ruffa now lives after working for 35 years as a physician in Erie County, Pennsylvania.

Ruffa saw Club 47 USA, the nation's largest organized group of Trump supporters, draw people in droves to its meetings in Palm Beach County, Florida. Inspired, Ruffa joined forces with four politically savvy people to start a group called AmFirst 47 in Erie County.

He thinks the Pennsylvania club will fill a void for Trump supporters who are reluctant to declare their allegiance publicly or don't know where to direct their energy.

"There are so many people who are for Trump, but they don't have that outlet," Ruffa told The Epoch Times. "They want to get involved."

The Florida and Pennsylvania clubs both include the number 47 to indicate they support Trump, the 45th president, in his quest to displace President Joe Biden and become the nation's 47th president. Republican Trump and Democrat Biden are the current frontrunners among candidates vying to become each party's presidential nominee.

Although online fan groups support Trump, Biden, and other politicians, it's unclear whether any organized in-person "clubs" exist for presidential candidates other than Trump.

It's also hard to pin down how much of an effect such clubs might have on the success of candidates. But scholarly research, coupled with anecdotes from Erie County voters and politicians, suggests that personal connections with voters could pay off at the ballot box more handsomely than high-priced advertising.

Simple Principle: Support Trump

The Florida and Pennsylvania Trump groups welcome people of all political stripes as long as they support Trump and his "America First" policies—shortened to "AmFirst" in the Erie group's name.

These pro-Trump clubs differ from conventional political organizations. Neither group raises funds for any politician. They also aren't directly tied to any specific political party or candidate's campaign organization, although they're happy to work with political leaders.

Leaders of both Trump clubs shy from talking about his political rivals.

Hours before Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis declared his candidacy on May 24, Larry Snowden, Club 47's president, said little about DeSantis's entry into the race.

"It's irrelevant," he said.



Former President Donald Trump greets supporters during an event at Mar-a-Lago in West Palm Beach, Fla., on April 4.



"I don't think you'd find any similar club that draws people in the thousands on a regular basis like ours."

Larry Snowden, president, Club 47 USA

Instead of bashing opponents, Club 47 and AmFirst 47 leaders say their clubs remain focused on correcting misconceptions about Trump, neutralizing criticisms of him, and educating potential voters about his successes and plans for the future.

Keeping the Faith and the Focus

In an apparent nod to Trump's famous line promising Americans would get tired of "winning" under his leadership, Ruffa said he would like Trump to know this about the Erie County group.

"We're going to fight so hard for you that you're going to call us up and you're going to say, 'Guys, stop fighting so hard!' ... We're never gonna stop fighting for you, President Trump."

For the past three months, Ruffa and others have been laying the groundwork to roll out their group's first meeting, which they intend to set in the coming weeks.

They're waiting to hear whether Trump will accept an invitation to make the group's kickoff speech. Ruffa said they also hope to schedule appearances of well-known conservatives, such as former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, author Dick Morris, and MyPillow CEO Mike Lindell.

AmFirst 47 leaders hope their approach will be a game-changer for the 2024 election. They want to flip

Pennsylvania back to Republican "red" after it turned Democrat "blue" in 2020.

The Erie County Democratic Party didn't respond by press time to a request by The Epoch Times for comment.

Avoiding Constraints

Ruffa and other AmFirst 47 leaders outlined their plans in interviews with The Epoch Times in Erie County on May 22.

They are working to unite "fractionalized" groups of Republicans, while also welcoming party outsiders from a nine-county area, Ruffa said.

Erie County forms the corner of AmFirst 47's targeted L-shaped region. It stretches across Pennsylvania's northwest borders, abutting Ohio and Lake Erie. The area stops short of Democrat-dominated Allegheny County, which includes Pittsburgh.

AmFirst 47 hopes to attract 15,000 members before the primary election on April 23, 2024, Ruffa said.

He noted that the Erie County Republican Committee's bylaws forbid endorsement "of any candidate for political office ... prior to the official primary elections."

By then, it would be too late to form a solid network backing the Republican presidential nominee, Ruffa said. But AmFirst 47 isn't bound by such a constraint; that's why the group is trying to build momentum for Trump now.

AmFirst 47's leaders are contacting participants in dozens of civic and issue-oriented organizations. These include pro-life advocates, Moms for Liberty, National Rifle Association members, Hispanics, college students, and others who share conservative values.

Hispanic outreach is significant, says Ruffa, who speaks Spanish. Hispanics are more likely to vote Republican after they learn that the party shares their pro-life and pro-family values, he said.

The club intends to encourage representatives of each community group to spread enthusiasm and information to their members.

"By the time the general election comes, we will have one energized Northwest Pennsylvania Republican Party," Ruffa said.

Key Connections

AmFirst 47's leaders are well-versed and well-connected in politics.

"Our members have personally met presidents Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, H.W. Bush, Clinton, George W. Bush, Obama, and Trump," the group's website notes.

Board member Louis Aliota has a special connection to Trump. His father worked for Trump's dad, Fred, in the 1950s and '60s.

"I met 'The Donald' in 1967-68 when I was going to pharmacy school at the Brooklyn College of Pharmacy, and he was at the military academy," Aliota said, adding with a chuckle, "I should have stayed friends with him."

Because of his personal experience with the Trumps, Aliota admired "the appreciation that the Trump

FROM TOP: ALEX WONG/GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY OF LARRY SNOWDEN

Instead of bashing opponents, leaders say Club 47 and AmFirst 47 remain focused on correcting misconceptions about Trump.

family gives to those individuals that give a day's work, loyalty, and integrity."

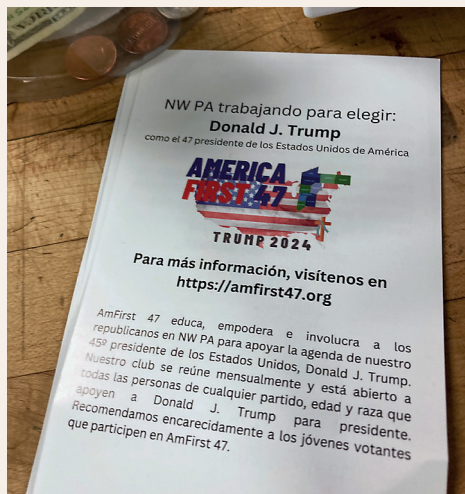
Aliota later moved to Pennsylvania, where he campaigned for Trump in 2016. He was part of a group that spent several months erecting 300 four-by-eight campaign signs. That effort may have helped Trump win Erie County—and, accordingly, Pennsylvania—that year, he said.

Since then, Aliota, a pharmacist, has remained devoted to conservative causes. He paid \$300,000 to fight a First Amendment case against a school board—and eventually won.

He says he and others with AmFirst 47 are focused on "trying to preserve our constitutional republic—period."

Ruffa first became involved with politics in the 1980s. He served as a staffer for the Republican National Committee in Washington. Also, he held positions in the White House under Republican President Ronald Reagan, in the U.S. Congress with Rep. Gerald Solomon (R-N.Y.), and in the Pennsylvania Senate.

Politics, however, took a back seat for Ruffa while he focused on his medical career. Now that he's semi-retired, he's diving headlong back into politics.



A flyer written in Spanish promotes AmFirst 47, a new pro-Donald Trump organization, in Erie County, Pa., on May 23.

Changing Voting Habits

He and other AmFirst 47 leaders have learned from past mistakes.

AmFirst 47 board member Greg Hayes ran to become a state assemblyman in 2020. But, Hayes said, he "got Trump-ed," as vote tallies initially showed he was winning on election night, just as Trump seemed to be. Trump still disputes the results of the 2020 election; he has never conceded.

In Hayes's case, his opponent benefited from about 10,000 mail-in ballots days after the election, while only 1,000 came in for Hayes.

The importance of mail-in ballots was further underscored last fall across the United States. One prime example involved Democrat U.S. Sen. John Fetterman, who overcame concerns primarily about his health.

Democrat midterm-election victories such as Fetterman's were attributable to a "white wave" of mail-in ballots, The Epoch Times previously reported, quashing an anticipated "red wave" of GOP victories even as discontent with the Biden administration escalated.

Such outcomes prove that Republicans need to set aside their reliance on in-person, Election Day-only voting, said Melanie Brewer, another AmFirst 47 leader.

For years, Republican voters were told to avoid mail-in ballots because "they're wrought with fraud," Brewer said. But Democrats have "capitalized" on the opportunity to encourage early or mail-in votes from "the busy mom or dad who has four kids, baseball and softball practice and everything, and forgets that it could be potentially Election Day," Brewer said. "Those are the voters that the left has garnered."

Ruffa credits Brewer for being at "the epicenter of Erie politics." Numerous politicians turn to her for advice in Erie County and throughout the entire AmFirst 47 target area, he said.

He thinks Brewer will be a key player in elevating AmFirst 47, along with Brad Peganoff, who has long been involved with state and governmental affairs, particularly in workforce development.

Blue Collar Versus White Collar

Peganoff, a graduate of the executive development program at the North Carolina Center for Creative Leadership, became fascinated by Trump years ago.

"I read Trump's book 'The Art of the Deal' I think when I was a freshman in high school, and I read it more than once; not many people in high school were reading that," Peganoff said.

Since then, he has worked with state and federal candidates and government leaders, helping them to communicate well with blue-collar workers, "the 5 a.m., dented-metal-lunchbox type of people." Such workers have "a totally different mentality" than teachers, for example, who work abbreviated schedules and have a nice pension accumulated by age 45, Peganoff said.

That's one of the unique challenges of engaging voters in Erie County, where there's a dichotomy between



Mail-in ballots for the 2020 presidential election are sorted in Pomona, Calif., on Oct. 28, 2020.

substantial white-collar and blue-collar workforces.

The county's largest employer is the Erie Indemnity Co., an insurance firm whose campus dominates the city of Erie. Another top employer is Wabtec Corp., which designs and manufactures railroad cars, engines, and other freight and transit rail equipment.

Ruffa says Peganoff has the unusual ability to establish rapport with people from various backgrounds. He's connected to Trump's son Eric, but also has ties to Republicans that he "never even knew were for Trump."

"He has a great relationship with all of them," Ruffa said of Peganoff.

The Battle Over Erie

Nathan Gonzales, the publisher of InsideElections.com, considers Pennsylvania to be one of four "toss-up" states in the 2024 presidential contest. The others are Arizona, Georgia, and Wisconsin; 270towin.com agrees.

Biden won each of those states by a slim margin in 2020, Gonzales noted in a recent column.

"Either party's nominee will likely need to win three of the four states in 2024 in order to win nationwide."

Among those states, the Republican Party's chances for victory are most remote in Pennsylvania, where Democrats have an estimated 4.1-point advantage, according to Gonzales's analysis.

Erie County, where AmFirst 47 is based, is home to about 173,000 voters; there are about 14,000 more Democrats than Republicans, according to current state voter registration totals.

Over the years, Pennsylvania's population has dipped. As a result, the number of votes the state is allotted in the Electoral College, which declares the presidential election winner, has dwindled.

Even so, the Keystone State still contributes 19 Electoral College votes toward the 270 votes needed for victory.

In 2020, Trump lost Erie County—and the state, which then had 20 electors. Those electoral votes went to Biden. The opposite was true in 2016, when Trump prevailed in the county, state, and nation.

Pennsylvania voters have trended increasingly Democratic since 2000, voting for Republicans only 17 percent of the time, according to Ballotpedia.org.

Pennsylvanians are good at picking winners, too. ♦

FROM L.JANICH/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM; THE EPOCH TIMES; ROBYN BECK/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



President Joe Biden speaks during a rally in Philadelphia on Nov. 5, 2022.

They voted for the winning presidential candidate 77 percent of the time from 1900 to 2020.

Voters Cross Party Lines

In particular, Erie County has long been considered a “bellwether” county, or a predictor of how the political winds are blowing.

But its citizenry and even party leaders have been known to be fiercely independent in their voting choices.

Several high-powered Republican politicians broke ranks and voted for Biden in 2020.

Perhaps the most prominent, respected defector was Tom Ridge. He served multiple terms as a Pennsylvania governor and a U.S. congressman. Ridge was such a trusted GOP leader that after the terrorist attacks on America on Sept. 11, 2001, President George W. Bush appointed him as the nation’s first homeland security director.

Like Ridge, many citizens in the Erie County area have been known to split their votes among Republican, Democrat, and independent candidates.

Joe Wisinski, 86, a retired tool-and-die maker and avowed “fish-aholic” who loves casting his line into Lake Erie, says he has voted Republican most of his life.

“But that doesn’t mean I won’t vote for a Democrat if I like ‘em,” Wisinski told The Epoch Times as he ate breakfast at New York Bagel & Deli on May 23. Wisinski is such a regular there that employees start prepping his favorite—bagel with cream cheese, toasted—as soon as he arrives.

Wisinski said he likes Trump’s policies but takes issue with his brashness.

“He can’t shut his mouth,” he said.

Still, he said it’s too soon to decide which presidential candidate will get his vote.

Making a voting decision is difficult because it’s hard to find trusted sources of information about candidates, he said.

“I listen to the news, and I ask myself, ‘Is that really true?’” he said.

However, he takes pride in being a faithful voter. Smiling broadly, Wisinski said he and his wife “have never missed voting” during their 70 years together, 64 years as a married couple.

Support for Biden Wanes

Another regular at the bagel shop, Kevin Asmus, a 45-year-old father of five who served in the Marines and works as a welder-mechanic, said, “I’d like to see Trump back in there again. ... Biden is just an embarrassment.”

But he, too, wishes Trump would ease up on the rhetoric.

AmFirst 47 leaders recognize that’s an issue the former president faces.

“People complain about his mean tweets” or other inflammatory remarks Trump makes, Hayes said.

“How’s it going to affect you personally? It’s not,” he counters. “So, when you look at that, get over those tweets. With everything that’s going on right now, it’s not going to take a Mr. Nice Guy to come in and fix it.”

FROM L: ED JONES/AP/WIDEWORLD IMAGES; JANICE HULSE/THE EPOCH TIMES

Brewer thinks that many people who voted for Biden are regretful now.

“It only hits home when it hits pocketbooks and when it hits their own family,” she said.

“I believe that the average voter is looking back on the 2020 election now and saying, ‘Would we have Ukraine and Russia? Would we have the high gas prices?’ I feel like the average voter sees now the benefit of a strong CEO-like president like we had.”

‘New’ Info Affects Votes

In addition to policy concerns and economic conditions, personal connections can heavily influence voting decisions.

Even though many candidates rely heavily on political ads, “the most effective way to turn out voters is with high-quality, face-to-face conversations that urge them to vote,” a pair of researchers wrote in a 2014 Vox article.

“Two decades of rigorous random experiments” proved that “having an actual conversation is crucial,” the researchers said.

They noted that “when canvassers rush through scripted interactions, just trying to cram their message into voters’ minds, the impacts they leave are minimal.”

More recently, one of the same researchers, Joshua Kalla, now an assistant professor of political science at Yale University, found that “campaigns are actually able to teach voters new information,” according to a 2022 blog post.

Kalla studied the 2020 election and discovered that “voters knew a lot less about Joe Biden than they did about Donald Trump.”

As a result, voters were more receptive to new information about Biden, whether it was pro-Biden or anti-Biden.

Learning new information about Biden “was able to move vote choice more than pro- or anti-information about Donald Trump,” Kalla said.

“The more specific that information is, the more effective that persuasion can be,” he said.

Based on Kalla’s findings, a lesser-known challenger to either Trump or Biden might be able to take advantage of the “new information” effect. That could present a challenge to the pro-Trump clubs since they’re supporting a candidate whom most people feel they “know” already.

Biden Support Waning

Two bagel shop employees said repeated political conversations have affected their voting habits.

“I just don’t follow politics that much,” clerk Kim Edwards, 59, said. “I was never interested in it.”

So, when it comes to voting, she relies on the advice of her 39-year-old son, who’s constantly researching political issues.

Edwards, who also works as a bartender in Erie, said that between her two jobs, she hears from many people who are now supporting Trump because they’re so disenchanted with the direction Biden has taken the country.

Democrats have ‘capitalized’ on the opportunity to encourage early or mail-in votes, a AmFirst 47 leader says.

However, she said an older regular at the bar has remained steadfast in his support of Biden. But his arguments aren’t resonating with the other patrons, Edwards said.

The bagel shop’s manager, Iraq war veteran Matt Hess, 38, said, “I haven’t heard anyone saying they want Biden back.”

A close relative of his who is a Democrat voted for Trump previously, he noted, but he’s also heard some people express interest in voting for DeSantis.

A father of five with a sixth child on the way, Hess ➡



(Top) Pennsylvania voter Joe Wisinski, 86, pauses to discuss politics during breakfast at New York Bagel & Deli in Erie County, Pa., on May 23. (Above) Pennsylvania voter Matt Hess, 38, a manager at New York Bagel & Deli, says he dislikes the direction that America is headed under President Joe Biden, on May 23.

Supporters of former President Donald Trump gather near his residence at the Mar-a-Lago Club in West Palm Beach, Fla., on April 4.



says high grocery prices and the ideological indoctrination of children are major concerns for him. He blames both situations on Biden's policies; all but one of Hess's children are homeschooled because of such concerns. Meanwhile, Mike Ryen, a 36-year-old who preps food orders, said hearing others in the bagel shop talk about Trump motivated him to cast his first-ever ballot for Trump in 2020. He intends to vote for Trump again. Ryen believes that Trump kept America's safety and security paramount and sent the world a strong message: "Don't mess with us."

Ryen is an example of the type of citizen who AmFirst 47 hopes to reach.

Lessons From Florida

Formerly named Club 45 USA, Florida's Club 47 USA boasts a membership roster of 17,000 people.

"I don't think you'd find any similar club that draws

people in the thousands on a regular basis like ours," the club's president told The Epoch Times.

Meeting attendance rarely dips below 1,000 and often exceeds 2,000; political heavy-hitters regularly speak there.

Conservative commentators have included Dan Bongino, Project Veritas founder James O'Keefe, actor Kevin Sorbo, Gen. Michael Flynn, and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich. Next up, 2022 Arizona gubernatorial candidate Kari Lake is scheduled to speak at a sold-out Club 47 event on June 12. Media coverage is allowed only if the guest speaker approves, Snowden said.

Based a few miles from Mar-a-Lago, Trump's home in Palm Beach, Florida, the Palm Beach County organization welcomed the former president as the guest speaker to overflowing crowds on President's Day this year and in April 2022.

Snowden, who was part of the group that formed the

FROM: OCTAVIO JONES/BETTY IMAGES; COURTESY OF LARRY SNOWDEN

77%

PENNSYLVANIANS VOTED for the winning presidential candidate 77 percent of the time from 1900 to 2020.

15,000 MEMBERS

AMFIRST 47 hopes to attract 15,000 members before the primary election on April 23, 2024, a group leader says.

17,000 PEOPLE

FLORIDA'S CLUB 47 USA boasts a membership roster of 17,000 people.

club in January 2018, said the group initially operated without charging admission fees; there are no membership dues. However, he said the group now charges a nominal fee to cover venue costs.

"You can still come to our club meetings for \$10," a reasonable price to pay for hearing from nationally known speakers, Snowden said. The group charges up to \$25 apiece for VIP seats.

The club's founding members considered becoming a charter club under the Republican Party. But attendees at early meetings resoundingly rejected that idea, Snowden said.

"I'm sure there were a number of reasons for that. But one of the big reasons is we had Democrats and independents coming," he said. "So, from that day forward, we never gave any consideration to being a Republican club."

Still, all three of Club 47's current board members—Vice President Linda Stoch, Snowden, and his wife, Sue, the group's secretary—are all Republicans.

"And we do encourage people to become a part of the Republican club and the Republican Party. But that's not our major focus," Snowden said. "Our major focus is all about President Trump and his reelection."

Devoted Followers

Snowden, 77, has been voting for Republicans his whole life and has been involved in Florida politics throughout the 32 years he and his wife have lived there. His wife, in particular, had been hoping Trump would run for office long before he announced his candidacy. His ride down a golden escalator on June 16, 2015, in New York City's Trump Tower is still seared in many people's memories.

Snowden said it felt "natural" to support Trump by forming a club in his honor.

The club appeals to a broad range of people, he said. "We have billionaires who attend our meetings. We have people that are living off Social Security attending our meetings.... But they do have that one thing in common, and that is they're all Trump supporters," he said.

Club 47's proximity to Trump's home, which served as Trump's de facto winter White House, probably has played a role in the club's popularity, he said.

"The main reason it's such a success, though, is President Trump. People are very, very excited about the president," he said.

Snowden advises Ruffa and others seeking to form pro-Trump clubs: "Never let it be about yourselves. ...

That's something we have never, ever done. It's always been about President Trump. And it's been about people and the support, and it's never been about money."

Snowden said that failure to follow those simple principles has killed similar fledgling organizations.

He said his group has "stayed the course," regardless of Trump's ups and downs. In fact, the former president's legal woes, including a criminal indictment in late March, have motivated more people to be involved with Club 47.

"When these legal challenges occur, we have much greater attendance, much greater support," he said. "And the polls are all in sync with the experience we have right here with our club."

He said the group hasn't tried to gauge its effects on voter registration numbers or engagement. But members are encouraged to vote and become active in their communities. Some fly from distant states to attend Club 47 meetings.

And people frequently share how good they feel to be involved. They will say, "I never voted before President Trump came along." Such comments are "very, very frequent," Snowden said.

Snowden is confident that Club 47 is making a difference in building support for Trump.

"[If not], we wouldn't spend our time doing this." ■



Former President Donald Trump poses with Sue Snowden, a founder of Club 45 USA, which has been renamed Club 47 USA in support of Trump's 2024 reelection bid.



EFFECTIVE REMEDIES FOR our everyday ailments are readily available as over-the-counter (OTC) medications we can pick up any time at the pharmacy or local grocery store. They are easy, relatively inexpensive fixes for headaches, cold and flu symptoms, constipation, diarrhea, and other minor infirmities the entire family can sometimes suffer.

Approximately 70 percent of Americans take OTC medications to treat their cold and flu symptoms. While OTC medications are considered generally safe, they come with risks, even when taken as directed.

A study conducted from 2017 to 2019 found that 26,735 people in the United States went to the emergency department for harm caused by taking OTC cough and cold medications, and more than 60 percent took the OTC medications for reasons other than their intended use.

POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS OTC DRUG COMBINATIONS

Inaccurate self-diagnosis isn't the only way OTC medications can be harmful;

safety depends on using the medicines properly and thoroughly reading the drug label, which many people fail to do. Even then, spotting these potentially dangerous OTC medication combinations isn't always easy.

Tylenol and OTC Cold and Flu Medication

Many OTC cold and flu medications contain acetaminophen to relieve symptoms such as sore throat, headache, and fever. Many people don't know that acetaminophen is the off-brand name for Tylenol. Even though acetaminophen is in more than 600 different OTC and prescription medications and is one of the most trusted and used pain and fever relievers, it has potentially dangerous (and sometimes deadly) side effects. Every year, approximately 60,000 people are admitted to the hospital for acetaminophen overdose.

Recommended dosages for acetaminophen are based on weight, age, and dosing frequency. However, the maximum recommended dose can still lead to liver damage if taken for an extended period of time, and exceeding that dose could

lead to acetaminophen poisoning, the most common cause of acute liver damage and failure in Western countries. Acute liver failure is life-threatening, often requiring a liver transplant.

If you drink alcohol, you may want to consult with your doctor before taking any products that contain acetaminophen. Dr. James Walker, a clinical physician and general practitioner, told The Epoch Times: "The liver metabolizes both alcohol and acetaminophen, and they compete for the same enzymes. If you consume alcohol, your liver will be busy metabolizing the alcohol, causing more of the acetaminophen to convert into a toxic byproduct that can injure liver cells."

Common OTC cold and flu medications such as Dayquil, Mucinex, and Theraflu contain acetaminophen in different dosages. Beware of combining these with other OTC medications containing acetaminophen to prevent overdose.

Signs and symptoms of acetaminophen poisoning include vomiting, abdominal pain, and confusion. Head straight to the emergency room if you're experiencing any of these symptoms after taking a high dose of acetaminophen.

A pharmacist works at the pharmacy in a Giant grocery store in Washington on Feb. 25, 2021.

phen. Immediate treatment with activated charcoal along with N-acetyl cysteine, the antidote for acetaminophen poisoning, could save your liver and life.

When buying cold and flu medications, read the label for the drug name. Acetaminophen may be classified as a pain reliever or fever reducer on the packaging, but it's still the same ingredient. Also, look for acetaminophen abbreviations such as APAP, AC, and Acetam. It may be listed as paracetamol in some European countries, Australia, New Zealand, and India.

Ibuprofen, Naproxen, and Aspirin

A doctor can prescribe nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) in higher strengths but they're also readily available OTC. An estimated 30 million people take NSAIDs daily throughout the United States to treat acute and chronic pain and inflammation and to reduce high fevers.

Although NSAIDs are widely used, they can also potentially be unsafe for everyone and can cause dangerous side effects, especially when taken in excess or accidentally combining different classes of NSAIDs simultaneously.

The most popular NSAIDs include:

- Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, Nuprin)
- Naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn)
- Aspirin (Ecotrin, Bayer)

It's important to know the names of the different brands of NSAIDs to avoid accidentally combining them since they come with many risks and can cause serious stomach, kidney, and heart problems.

NSAIDs block an enzyme in your body called cyclooxygenase (COX). There are two COX types: COX-1 and COX-2. Both

types are enzymes involved in the body's production of prostaglandins, chemicals that affect pain, fever, and inflammation.

COX-1 also protects the stomach lining and supports platelet function, whereas COX-2 is mainly produced in response to inflammation. NSAIDs work by inhibiting these enzymes, which is why they are also called COX inhibitors.

Aspirin and naproxen are COX-1 inhibitors, and ibuprofen is a nonselective COX inhibitor that blocks both COX-1 and COX-2 enzymes. Aspirin, naproxen, and ibuprofen increase the risk of bleeding, particularly in the stomach. They can also cause kidney problems since they inhibit blood flow to the kidneys.

Because of the various risks and side effects of NSAIDs, it's important to talk with your doctor about which one to take and for how long, which will depend on your medical history. If you've had stomach, kidney, or heart problems, it may be wise to use NSAIDs cautiously or not at all.

Benadryl and Dramamine

Many people don't realize that Benadryl (diphenhydramine) and Dramamine (dimenhydrinate) are both antihistamines. Taking them together can cause excessive drowsiness, blurred vision, difficulty urinating, constipation, and heart rhythm irregularities.

Benadryl is often taken for allergy symptoms such as runny nose and itchy eyes, and Dramamine is commonly taken for motion sickness and nausea. The problem is that they're both in a class of drugs called anticholinergics that are found in several other prescription medications used to treat respiratory disorders, urinary incontinence, and Parkinson's disease.

In 2015, the American Association

of Poison Control Centers reported almost 14,000 anticholinergic toxicities. Although none of the cases in 2015 were fatal, reports in prior years found up to 51 fatal cases of anticholinergic toxicity.

In addition, long-term use of anticholinergics has been associated with dementia in the elderly.

Several common anticholinergic medications can interact with OTC antihistamines, so it's important to check with your physician or pharmacist to ensure you're not unknowingly combining these medications. Also, if you have conditions such as an enlarged prostate, urinary retention, glaucoma, muscle problems, or hyperthyroidism, be sure to inform your health care provider before taking these medications.

INCREASED OTC DRUG RISKS FOR CHILDREN, PREGNANT WOMEN, AND SENIORS

OTC medications could harm anyone, but older adults, pregnant women, and children are often more vulnerable and at greater risk.

Risks for Children

Knowing what children can take and at what age is essential. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has specific age recommendations for giving children acetaminophen and ibuprofen. For the most up-to-date advice, always check with your child's doctor.

Aspirin isn't recommended for children or teens due to its association with the onset of Reye's syndrome. While the cause is unknown, Walker explained that there's a strong association with the use of aspirin during viral illnesses.

"Reye's syndrome is a rare but severe condition that causes swelling in the



(Above Left) Children's Motrin (ibuprofen) at a pharmacy in New York on Dec. 7, 2022. (Above Middle) Packages of Acetaminophen at a pharmacy in San Anselmo, Calif., on Jan. 21, 2020. (Above Right) Boxes containing aspirin tablets at a pharmacy in Miami on April 12, 2016.



70%

APPROXIMATELY 70 PERCENT of Americans take OTC medications to treat their cold and flu symptoms.

60%

OF THE PEOPLE WHO WENT TO THE emergency room after taking OTC cough and cold medications in the United States from 2017 to 2019 took them for reason other than their intended use, a study shows.

60,000 PEOPLE

EVERY YEAR, APPROXIMATELY 60,000 people are admitted to the hospital for acetaminophen overdose.

liver and brain. It most often affects children and teenagers recovering from viral infections like the flu or chickenpox,” Walker said.

The AAP doesn’t recommend cough or cold medication for children under 6 years old.

Some safe and effective cold treatments for children include saline irrigation for stuffy noses, rest, and plenty of fluids.

Risks During Pregnancy

Some OTC medicines are known to cause problems during pregnancy. Before using any OTC medicine while you’re pregnant, it’s always best to speak with your doctor.

“NSAIDs during pregnancy can cause risk to both the mother and the baby,” Walker said. “These include potential problems with the baby’s kidney development and risk of premature closure of the ductus arteriosus, a vital fetal blood vessel. For the mother, NSAIDs can increase the risk of bleeding during delivery.”

NSAIDs such as ibuprofen (Motrin, Ad-

vil), naproxen (Aleve), and aspirin (acetylsalicylate) are all known to cause serious issues with blood flow in the baby if used during the last three months of pregnancy (after 28 weeks). Aspirin may also increase bleeding risk in both mother and baby during pregnancy or delivery.

The FDA also recommends avoiding NSAID use at 20 weeks or later because of the risk of low amniotic fluid.

Decongestants and some antihistamines have risks, especially since there is limited safety data on the use of OTC medications during pregnancy.

Natural remedies for coughs and colds during pregnancy are similar to recommendations for children; rest, fluids, and a healthy diet will speed recovery and lessen symptoms.

Risks for Older Adults

Seniors are more at risk for OTC drug interactions and side effects, explained Walker.

“As we age, our body’s physiological changes can affect how we process medications. Kidney and liver function, vital

for drug metabolism and elimination, often decrease, leading to higher levels of drugs in the body. Also, age-related changes in body composition, such as increased fat and decreased muscle mass, can alter how drugs are distributed within the body,” he said.

Many older adults are unfamiliar with the appropriate dosing of OTC medications and how they interact with other medications they may be taking, putting them at risk for significant harm.

According to a study published in the Journal of Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy, more than half of the adverse drug events (ADEs) involving seniors are caused by OTC medications, particularly NSAIDs. Four of the 10 most frequently used drugs available OTC include ibuprofen, aspirin, acetaminophen, and diphenhydramine.

Diphenhydramine is a notable culprit in ADEs among seniors, increasing the risk of falling and also anticholinergic toxicity, since 40 percent of elderly people taking diphenhydramine also combine it with other prescribed anticholinergic drugs for sleep.

Dangerous drug interactions can be prevented with a careful assessment of all OTC medications and prescription medications used simultaneously, while also considering individual health conditions.

IN CONCLUSION

While OTC medications can be helpful for the occasional treatment of minor aches and pains or nagging cold or allergy symptoms, it’s important to consider their potential to cause significant harm when not used as directed or when combined with other medications.

Before using OTC medications, it’s always advisable to consult with your doctor or pharmacist about your symptoms, health history, and the other medications you’re taking, especially for those at increased risk. ■



People exit a pharmacy in New York on April 26, 2020. Before using OTC medications, it’s advisable to consult with your doctor or pharmacist.

Perspectives



Tesla CEO Elon Musk in Beijing on May 31. Musk remarked that “the interests of the United States and China are intertwined like conjoined twins.”

PHOTO BY TINGSHU WANG/REUTERS



CLUELESS CEOs

Corporate chiefs will come to regret cooperating with Beijing. **56**



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Thomas McArdle



Clueless CEOs

Corporate chiefs will come to regret cooperating with Beijing

RECENT CIRCUMSTANCES present the United States with the rare opportunity to take both China and Russia down a notch in power and influence—yet major American CEOs, like President Joe Biden, are squandering the chance.

For example, Elon Musk of Tesla and Twitter, Jamie Dimon of JPMorgan, and Laxman Narasimhan of Starbucks were among the business bigwigs in mainland China wheeling and dealing with top officials of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) last month. Their visits come in the immediate wake of top executives of Apple, megabank HSBC, fashion giant Kering, communications powerhouse Samsung, and Volkswagen also paying in-person homage to the rulers of the world's second-largest economy.

Musk sounded uncharacteristically naive in remarking that “the interests of the United States and China are intertwined like conjoined twins.”

Equally disappointing was Dimon's declaration, as he met with Shanghai's Communist Party chief, that JPMorgan would facilitate investment into the city and enable better understanding of the metropolis, whose greater environs are home to more than 39 million people. Dimon conceded that China-centered supply-chain disruptions meant that now “there will be less trade” between China and the United States, but that “this is not decoupling; this is de-risking.”

The risk to which Dimon refers, of course, is the vulnerability that the COVID-19 pandemic exposed for the United States and other industrialized countries that have allowed themselves to become dependent on cheap Chinese manufacturing and supply—and how perfectly able Beijing is to pull the plug and devastate their economies when the CCP chooses to do so. It should not have taken a global pandemic for the

most powerful corporations in the world to recognize this.

Outside firms doing business inside China enjoy no real protection from the CCP of their proprietary information or even their own employees, Chinese or otherwise, as the raids of technological consulting businesses in recent weeks demonstrate. And China has been experiencing a crash in demand that may portend serious economic issues for the mainland in the months ahead.

Economic ‘decoupling’ is exactly what this country’s internationally engaged businesses should be doing in regard to Beijing.

Why, then, would the corporate giants of the world's lone superpower, which Beijing is committed to taking down, want to rescue America's most serious adversary? Nike CEO John Donahoe went so far as to declare last month, laughably, of ongoing, full-on economic engagement with communist China, saying, “Frankly, it can almost help promote peace and understanding”—practically an excerpt from CCP propaganda materials.

We stand at a watershed moment in history in which the United States, without firing a shot, could inflict body blows to both China and Russia. Economic “decoupling” is exactly what this country's internationally engaged businesses should be doing in regard to Beijing, despite Dimon's preferences for milder measures.

And in Ukraine, the United States—making the dubious claim that it would jeopardize our ability to win a war—refuses to provide the army with the tactical missile systems that would lead to a resounding defeat of Vladimir Pu-

tin, which would quash Moscow's global ability to project its power.

The Biden administration talks a slick game when it comes to Putin and the CCP's (seemingly) permanent dictator, Xi Jinping. Russia and China “seize every opportunity to sow doubts about the strength of our democracy,” Antony Blinken noted in his first major speech as secretary of state in March 2021. “We shouldn't be making their jobs easier.”

However, a few breaths later, he was promising that the Biden administration “will not promote democracy through costly military interventions or by attempting to overthrow authoritarian regimes by force.” That's because, according to the administration, the United States can't succeed when we commit to doing so. “We have tried these tactics in the past,” Blinken said. “However well intentioned, they haven't worked.”

The secretary of state of the United States was actually conceding and advertising American impotence.

“We're always better off at the table, not outside the room,” he added, casting away the diplomat's invaluable trump card of being willing to walk out of, or refuse even to enter, the negotiating room. Such a policy renders Blinken's later assurance that the United States will be “adversarial when it must be” lacking in all credibility.

The entire speech was actually less concerned with the threats from Beijing, Moscow, and Tehran than with the gender, sexual orientation, and racial composition of Pentagon and State Department employees.

Strong American leadership in the world—which polls show the public wants—is the way to prevent acts of war against the United States. But when our secretary of state and our internationally engaged corporate chiefs can't recognize our enemies, even as they stare them in the face, it's obvious to observers here and abroad that there's no leadership to be found.

Anders Corr



Xi's ‘Bitterness’ for China

Unemployment could spark revolt and democracy

CHINA'S ECONOMY IS IN the doldrums, and youth unemployment is at an all-time high. More than 20 percent of 16- to 24-year-olds seeking jobs cannot find work.

In a throwback to the disastrous Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, Chinese leader Xi Jinping is now telling college graduates to “eat bitterness.”

He recently congratulated agriculture students for “seeking self-inflicted hardships” by “going to the fields and villages to solve the people's livelihood.”

Only through struggle and sacrifice, according to leading communist media, will the youth make China great.

There is plenty of sacrifice to go around. Nearly one-third of recent factory-floor hires at a Chinese tobacco company have college and postgraduate degrees.

“Today, the party's propaganda machine is spinning stories about young people making a decent living by delivering meals, recycling garbage, setting up food stalls, and fishing and farming,” according to The New York Times. “It's a form of official gaslighting.”

The gassed careers of grads throughout China don't seem to bother Xi, whose father rose to the position of vice premier before Mao Zedong exiled him to factory work. The Red Guards beat, interrogated, and paraded Xi's father on a truck.

Xi's mother denounced her son, and his sister was “persecuted to death,” according to the regime. Xi reportedly wore a cone-shaped hat and endured seven years of rural exile. He became depressed, and the normalization of brutality that apparently broke him is now being turned, in a paranoid fashion, against his perceived enemies.

Xi likely sees foreign-educated college graduates who can't find white-collar jobs in China as soft. Indeed, about 75 percent of graduating students want

to work in cushy government jobs rather than the private sector.

But those go to only 2.5 percent of civil service exam takers. The rest would be lucky to find a factory or service sector job that pays \$1,000 a month.

Crackdowns on foreign and tech businesses within China, along with the utilization of trade as a weapon against countries such as Australia and Lithuania, are hurting China's economy.

In a throwback to the disastrous Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, Xi Jinping is now telling college graduates to ‘eat bitterness.’

For example, the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) precipitous ban on for-profit tutoring disappeared employment opportunities and disrupted demand signals from the job market to college students.

Degrees in education and sports rose by more than 20 percent between 2018 and 2021, when the regime banned the \$150 billion industry. As the education and sports market fell beneath them, those graduates had few prospects and are now more likely to take lower-wage jobs.

While grads in state-supported industries such as biology, aerospace, and electrical engineering do marginally better on the job market, the regime now disfavors the property and online tech sectors, both of which are hard to break into for fresh grads.

Concern is rife on social media—and spreading. In response, the regime encourages local governments to hire more grads in the hopes of blunting any potential street protests.

But those jobs must be paid with

growth-restricting taxes. Governments have never excelled at predicting demand and supply or producing the innovation found in a thriving market economy. The regime is thus strangling the market goose that laid China's golden egg.

Lacking opportunity, some of today's youth in China have joined the “lying flat” movement, which avoids hard work and striving. The regime recently ennobled the movement by criticizing it in the party's top paper.

If Xi pushed his plan to invade Taiwan, sanctions would worsen the economy. The crisis in which China finds itself today is precisely because it has allowed the CCP to lead it down a path of aggression rather than friendship and peaceful trade. It would be in a much better position had it followed a peaceful path, with fewer adversaries and more soft power from its global development and trade successes.

Instead, China must contend with not only international opprobrium but also instability within its own borders.

For the discontented and unemployed, Xi's comment to “eat bitterness” may remind them of Marie Antoinette's supposed comment about the discontented poor in 18th-century France. The comment, “Let them eat cake,” could be apocryphal. But the economic boom and collapse that resulted in the French Revolution was real and set in motion a series of revolts in Russia and China that changed the world for the worse.

A corrective revolution in China, where three people cannot gather in Tiananmen Square without the police breaking it up, would be difficult. But a nonviolent one that yielded a truly representative government and market economy to free the people and realize their democratic ambitions would certainly be welcome.

A democratic China would be not a threat but a boon to the world.

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Milton Ezrati



Fed Plans: Tomorrow and Beyond

Chairman Powell offers insight into what may move the Fed

FEDERAL RESERVE CHAIRMAN Jerome Powell recently stepped back from the cut and thrust of immediate policy matters to offer insight into Fed priorities—a review of what events and guidelines will prompt future decisions. Some of what Powell said provided comfort. Other things were not so reassuring. And still others raised fundamental questions about current financial structures.

Powell took up one immediate matter—the prospect of a pause in the pace of interest rate increases. In this context, he alluded to recent bank failures. He denied that policymakers might hold rates steady to relieve pressures on banks. He described counter-inflationary efforts and this kind of financial stabilization as “separate objectives.”

At the same time, he noted that fears in the banking community might convince some managers to reduce risk levels and otherwise slow the flow of credit into the economy—actions that would have a counter-inflationary effect, perhaps significant enough to obviate the need to raise rates.

The chairman has in the past offered other reasons for a pause: policymakers might need space to assess the lagged effect of past rapid interest rate increases. After denying inflation for most of 2021, last year’s rapid catch-up in the need to counter inflationary pressure leaves considerable uncertainty about the ultimate effects of these hikes on credit flows, the economy, and hence inflation.

Because interest rate moves always have variable and lagged effects, policymakers might need a pause to weigh those effects. Such a pause—whatever the reason—could as easily lead to renewed hikes as to a change

of direction. All would depend on these now unknowable effects. Contrary to much media speculation, a pause would no more signal an end to rate hikes than anything else and certainly not a quick reversal in the Fed’s counter-inflationary policy.

Powell stressed the need to stabilize the financial system now that some banks have run into trouble.

The most encouraging aspect of Powell’s remarks was a reaffirmation of the Fed’s 2 percent inflation target. Some in the financial community have speculated that policymakers might settle for, say, 4 percent inflation, allowing them to ease away from counter-inflationary moves sooner than otherwise.

Dismissing this prospect, Powell made clear that such a compromise on inflation targeting would bring considerable economic harm. Because slack efforts to stem the inflationary tide would itself redouble inflationary pressure, such a changed target would ultimately mean “greater harm for families and businesses.”

Welcome as this news on inflation targets is, there is much ominous that came out in the chairman’s comments. Research done by the New York Fed on the so-called neutral interest rate—that which neither encourages nor discourages borrowing and lending—suggested that it is close to the low-interest rate levels that have prevailed for most of the time since the 2008–2009 financial crisis. This may be welcome news for Wall Street, which always loves low interest rates, but it paints an ugly

picture of economic prospects.

Because underlying interest rates should ultimately reflect the returns in the broad economy—the reason businesses and people borrow and lend—low “neutral” interest rates suggest low underlying economic returns, an economy with little growth potential. This may be true, but it is an ugly prospect and one that should prompt the Fed and others in Washington not just to observe, as the New York Fed has done, but also to advance policies to improve that economic potential.

Another deeper policy matter emerged from Powell’s remarks. He stressed the need to stabilize the financial system now that some banks have run into trouble. Of course, in the immediate, urgent instance, there is little else the Fed and the Treasury could do. But these actions raise the question of whether the Fed’s willingness to step in each time a bank faces trouble implicitly encourages bankers to take more risk than they otherwise might.

If the Fed has committed to ensuring stability in this way, then it has an obligation to do a better job of controlling risk in the banking system. The Fed and Washington need to find more reliable arrangements, something as effective as banking was until the 1980s, if not that approach specifically.

For all the resulting questions and concerns, Powell’s comments should have clarified two important points: First, the Fed will hold to its original 2 percent inflation target, and second, any pause in the pattern of rate increases shouldn’t be taken as a signal that policy has changed or is likely to reverse soon. On economic prospects, if the New York Fed research is right, policymakers have much to do to devise a system with less risk and greater financial stability.

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Kevin Stocklin



‘Deep State’ Within Red States

State pension funds vote against anti-ESG laws, watchdog says

CONSERVATIVE STATES working to keep state funds out of the environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG) movement are finding that, when it comes to state fund managers, you can lead them to water but can’t always make them drink.

Despite recent laws in states such as Florida and Ohio banning the use of municipal dollars for political causes, fund managers are continuing to vote the shares owned by state pensions to support the climate agenda, racial equity, and abortion rights, according to an investigation of voting records by the American Accountability Foundation (AAF).

Simultaneously, pension managers are also voting against shareholder proposals that would examine companies’ exposure to China, the AAF reported.

“You essentially have a deep state within these pension programs that is not listening to elected leadership,” AAF President Tom Jones told The Epoch Times. “The elected leadership has given very clear guidance on this: Here’s what we want you to do regarding ESG, this is what the voters of our state have said they want,” Jones said, but fund managers continue to vote shares according to their own personal beliefs.

Under the slogan “where ESG goes to die,” Florida has been one of the most aggressive states working to remove politics from state investments.

In August 2022, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, together with trustees of the State Board of Administration (SBA), passed a resolution that investment decisions regarding state funds “must be based only on pecuniary factors, [which] do



Shareholders are recently learning the cost of companies pursuing political agendas.

not include the consideration of the furtherance of social, political, or ideological interests.”

On May 2, DeSantis signed into law a bill that barred state officials from using public money to promote ESG goals. Despite this, Florida’s SBA, which manages the state’s pensions, voted for a resolution at Boeing on April 18 that requires race and gender equity audits, the AAF reports. On May 4, the SBA voted in support of a “Diversity and Inclusion” audit at the U.S. Postal Service. The SBA voted for climate activism resolutions at Berkshire Hathaway on May 6, and at UPS on May 4.

In Ohio, the state Senate voted 26 to 7 on May 10 to ban the use of state money for the purpose of “influencing any social or environmental policy or attempting to influence the governance of any corporation” toward these goals. However, the AAF report cites instances such as the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System (OPERS) voting for a resolu-

tion at AT&T to block the company from donating to pro-life lawmakers; voting for a resolution at Home Depot against donating to police foundations; voting for racial equity audits at Disney and Home Depot; and voting for a “net zero emissions audit” at ExxonMobil.

OPERS, however, denied that political issues are a factor in how it manages state funds.

“OPERS does not permit ideologies to influence our investment or proxy voting decisions,” OPERS spokesman Michael Pramik told The Epoch Times.

“Our investment objective is to maximize returns within a reasonable risk framework, thus supporting the system’s mission of providing secure retirement benefits to our members.”

A March 2023 Wall Street Journal report stated that the number of shareholder proposals related to ESG has increased from about 600 in the 2020 spring annual meeting season to 682 so far this year. But as conservatives begin to follow the same path, the number of shareholder proposals against ESG initiatives has increased fourfold, from fewer than 20 in 2020 to 74 this year.

Shareholders are recently learning about the cost of companies pursuing political agendas. This includes sharp declines in stock prices of companies such as Target and Anheuser-Busch InBev, which owns Bud Light, after those companies aligned their brands with controversial political and social issues. Target stock was downgraded by JPMorgan and KeyBanc Capital Markets last week after its shares lost more than \$12 billion in market value. Anheuser-Busch InBev shares declined by about \$27 billion, with sales of Bud Light down by about 25 percent.

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Daniel Lacalle



Global Debt Soars Again

Governments use debt for current spending with no economic return

GLOBAL DEBT LEVELS soared by \$8.3 trillion in the first quarter of 2023, climbing to \$305 trillion, nearly the record high set in the first quarter of 2022, according to the Institute of International Finance.

This is almost 335 percent of the global gross domestic product (GDP).

Rising debt is a burden on growth, and soaring public debt means higher taxes, weaker productivity, and declining real wages as governments push inflationary policies to try to dissolve part of their enormous indebtedness.

Public debt isn't a reserve asset for the public sector; it's a negative factor that crowds out investment and credit and erodes purchasing power from families and earnings from businesses as taxes rise.

To make public debt a reserve asset, it would have to generate a real economic return, just as does the debt of private businesses used for solid investments. However, governments use increasing debt for current spending with no real economic return, and this leads to lower growth trends and loss of purchasing power of its issued currency.

Private debt is paid by families and businesses, but public debt is also paid by the private productive sector. Therefore, the impact on the pattern of growth, job creation, and investment is significantly more negative when public debt rises.

There's no such thing as public debt. It's paid by you, always, with higher taxes, higher inflation, or larger budget cuts—maybe all at the same time.

A Dangerous Bet

Global markets have entered a perverse incentive mechanism whereby consensus investors favor rising



Demanding currency debasement and destruction of the middle class for a small expansion of multiples directly attacks those who invest for the long term.

public imbalances, expecting central banks to implement quantitative easing afterward. The main reason is that market participants perceive that it will benefit equity and bond valuations in relative terms. However, this is a dangerous bet.

Those investors that hail public debt and quantitative easing continue to bet on an outcome that hasn't happened for years: low inflation and decent growth added to equity multiple expansion. Those market participants seem to want another fix of money printing, ex-

pecting 2009 to return. It's even worse, however.

Demanding currency debasement and destruction of the middle class for a small expansion of multiples directly attacks those that invest for the long term.

Rising debt means that gold remains as the only de-correlated and safe asset in an environment where currency destruction is likely to continue. Bitcoin and crypto assets are a different thing; in fact, they're highly correlated with nonprofitable tech.

An Era of Inflationism

Governments aren't going to reduce deficit spending, and this means that public fixed income may be the riskiest asset for investors in an era of inflationism.

Inflation is here, and it's a direct consequence of years of monetization of government debt. Furthermore, the dangerous cocktail includes high inflation, rising taxes, and increasing debt. There's no improvement in the public accounts even with record receipts. Inflation isn't reducing the overall debt level because deficit spending rises alongside consumer prices, even higher.

Investors can bet on one thing: The inflationist policies that have been modestly implemented since 2009 are going to be accelerated. This won't be pretty if it leads to a prolonged period of stagflation. Stagflation doesn't create multiple expansion and equity booms. It's bad for fixed-income and equity markets.

You wanted high debt, more spending, and more central bank easing? This is the consequence: record debt, weaker growth, and inflation.

BRENDAN MODERMO/REUTERS

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Fan Yu

Debt Ceiling Aftermath

Treasury liquidity drain, confounding macro data are new worries

AT THE RISK OF SOUNDING like a market curmudgeon, we must warn that the debt-ceiling deal agreement is a double-edged sword.

While the immediate financial risk of a U.S. government default has been averted, a few other consequences resulting from the debt-ceiling increase will likely haunt investors and the U.S. economy in the next few months.

In other words, we should brace for some turmoil in the equity markets.

While the consensus view is that the Federal Reserve will pause its rate increases later this month, the end of the debt-ceiling drama effectively translates to the equivalent of a 25-basis-point hike.

Why? Since the initial U.S. debt ceiling was surpassed earlier this year, the U.S. Treasury has been running down its cash coffers (a.k.a., TGA, or Treasury General Account) to pay its bills. That infusion of liquidity into the financial system has partially fueled the recent U.S. equity market runup led by technology stocks.

With the debt ceiling now lifted, liquidity is about to be drained.

The Treasury will be ramping up the sale of short-term T-bills to replenish the TGA over the coming weeks and months, effectively removing liquidity from the financial system.

This mechanism is going to have a few consequences for investors.

We'll get the good news out of the way. The fresh supply of T-bills will push up yields, which is good news for income investors looking for places to park short-term cash.

But it'll have an adverse impact on plenty else.

A surge in T-bill supply and higher yields will cause both consumer and corporate depositors to shift cash into money funds and short-term



While the worst outcome has been averted by the debt-ceiling agreement, investors and consumers are instead now facing a series of bad outcomes.

bills, resulting in a sharp drawdown in bank reserves. This will occur in an environment where banks were already suffering from cash draws from earlier this year.

Current estimates give a range of \$1 trillion to \$1.5 trillion in new debt sales by the U.S. government, which could suggest a liquidity drain of an amount close to the low end of that range assuming money market funds will move some holdings from reverse repos to T-bills. That's the equivalent of further quantitative tightening without the Fed having to raise rates.

This liquidity drain is coming in a period where the Fed will likely continue to hike rates in July—assuming it does pause in June—and setting the stage for a very challenging economic environment.

All of the headline macro indicators that the Fed pays attention to

are still flashing very hot, at least at first glance.

Inflation is still running hot. The Fed's all-important core inflation, which excludes food and energy prices, was 4.7 percent in May—more than double the 2 percent target.

All of this is to say that some investors' belief that June will begin a Fed pivot is a pipe dream. The Fed is likely to continue hiking rates later this year.

While all of this may be necessary, consumers are already feeling the pain. And the pain will worsen going forward.

When we dive down from the 50,000-foot view, the picture on the ground is vastly different than headline economic indicators.

Department store chain Macy's has noticed that shoppers are tightening their purse strings.

"The US consumer, particularly at Macy's, pulled back more than we anticipated," CEO Jeff Gennette said on the company's quarterly earnings call with analysts on June 1. Gennette shared that consumers are reducing discretionary spending to focus on staples such as food and essentials.

Costco's executives voiced similar concerns. On its earnings call, the membership-based retailer said that it's seeing shoppers shift from pricier beef to cheaper meats such as pork and chicken.

Walmart CEO Doug McMillon told investors that the retail giant continues "to gain market share in the grocery category, including with higher income and younger shoppers." Seeing more wealthy shoppers is great for Walmart, but not a great signal for the broader economy.

While the worst outcome has been averted by the debt-ceiling agreement, investors and consumers are instead now facing a series of bad outcomes.



Christine Anderson, a German politician and member of the European Parliament.

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THOUGHT LEADERS

The Onslaught of Digital Tyranny

The COVID pass, digital surveillance, climate lockdowns, and 15-minute cities

“GERMANY WAS A highly developed society with lots of smart, well-educated people,” says Christine Anderson, “but it was possible for this society to turn evil to an extent that is unimaginable. That’s the question we always get asked, ‘How was that even possible?’ Take a look at the last three years, and you have your answer.”

In a recent episode of “American Thought Leaders,” host Jan Jekielek and Anderson, a member of the European Parliament who represents the Alternative for Germany party, discuss government oppression during the COVID-19 pandemic and the possibilities for a digital dictatorship. Anderson is one of the parliament’s most vocal critics of the pandemic policies imposed in Europe and Canada.

JAN JEKIELEK: Here in the United States and Canada, you’re best known for being a harsh critic of vaccine mandate policies, especially the policies around the Freedom Convoy in Canada.

CHRISTINE ANDERSON: Actually, I just did a tour of Canada on the one-year anniversary of the freedom truckers. They invited me over and organized a Freedom Convoy for me, so I got to ride in a truck and participate, which now makes me a freedom trucker, which I’m really proud of.

MR. JEKIELEK: Your voice is unusual in the European Parliament, and among politicians around the world. How did you come to have these views?

MS. ANDERSON: My parents were born and raised in Thuringia, which was formerly in the GDR [German Democratic Republic]. They were born in the 1920s. My dad fought in World War II. He was drafted when he was 16. When the war was over, he found

“The people are the employers of the elected representatives and of the government. The people get to tell the government what to do, not the other way around.”

himself in communism, and that just did not sit well with him. He spoke up against this so-called democratic regime, and it landed him in one of the most horrific prisons you can imagine.

He was sentenced to 25 years of hard labor. Luckily, he only had to serve five years of that sentence and got released in 1955, but he still wouldn’t shut up, if you can believe that. In 1959, he was about to be arrested again, but this time he had been warned and he fled the country.

So I was born and raised in Western Germany, but I grew up with this idea that you always question your government. You never take anything they’re telling you for granted. That’s kind of what I’ve been doing.

MR. JEKIELEK: What prompted you to start saying extremely controversial things?

MS. ANDERSON: In the beginning of the pandemic, we didn’t know what was coming. On Easter 2020, I completely left that narrative, because the things they were doing didn’t add up. There were steps they could have taken but didn’t, because they were afraid of being called racist. There is this pandemic raging throughout the world, but the refugees still poured in. We were in the absurd situation that anyone could step foot into my country with no questions asked, but as a German citizen, I

was not allowed to enter a restaurant, a shoe store, or a hairdresser without showing a vaccine pass.

Pretty soon, it occurred to me that this had nothing to do with public health. It was always about breaking the people. They wanted to see how far they could go and how far the people would allow them to take away their fundamental rights.

When some people said, “No, we’re not going to mask up, and we’re not going to get this mRNA shot,” they cracked down on these people, threatening them and their livelihoods. They said, “You’re no longer allowed to go to work. You’re no longer allowed to ride on a bus.”

That’s what I’m fighting. I don’t want a government to have so much power and control over people that with the flip of a switch, their life is pretty much over.

I’ve just seen Vera Sharav. She’s a Holocaust survivor, by the way. She was speaking about the future totalitarian regimes. They’ll no longer require electrified, barbed-wire fences. All they need is a phone, a digital ID, a QR code, and then they can do whatever they want with you.

[In the 1920s,] Germany was a highly developed society with lots of smart, well-educated people, but it was possible for this society to turn evil to an extent that is unimaginable. That’s the question we always get

asked, “How was that even possible?” Take a look at the last three years, and you have your answer.

There’s a lot of people that would like to think that they would’ve been in the resistance back then. Take a look at what you did in the last three years, and you have your answer. Most of the people would not have been in that resistance, because they just went right along with everything the government asked them to do.

This whole fearmongering was going on, which, by the way, is something I’m accused of all the time, but it was actually done by governments all around the world.

MR. JEKIELEK: What fearmongering are you being accused of?

MS. ANDERSON: By outlining the fact that if governments have too much power, eventually we will no longer have a democracy.

MR. JEKIELEK: There’s a number of places in the world now—notably in the United Kingdom, as documented by Laura Dodsworth—where unequivocal evidence shows that the government was involved in sowing fear and had a specific strategy for doing so. Was this the case in Germany as well?

MS. ANDERSON: It was supposed to be a documentation only for internal use, but it got leaked. God bless the internet. They were targeting kids, and then, they were also specifically talking about addressing the most rooted fear in people, which is suffocation. They said, “You will suffocate, and you will die a horrible death.”

MR. JEKIELEK: What has to be done at this point? In the United States, a number of congressional members are involved in this subcommittee on COVID, and there’s also the weaponization of the federal government. A



Pedestrians walk through central Glasgow, Scotland, as the United Kingdom enters a national lockdown on Jan. 5, 2021.

number of subcommittees are looking at these questions in Congress. But people don’t have a lot of faith in Congress right now, and I don’t exactly know what the situation is in Germany and in the European Union. What do you see as reasonable for the people to act on?

MS. ANDERSON: First of all, what I always say is to turn off your television set. It’s dumbing you down. Then, especially in the Western democracies, we need to revisit democracy. What is it, what is it supposed to do, and what is it not supposed to do? The people are the employers of the elected representatives and of the government. The people get to tell the government what to do, not the other way around.

People need to realize once again what we have now. Our freedom had to be wrestled from former elites. Our fathers and forefathers literally spilled blood so that we could live in a free and democratic society. But what

we are doing now is just pretty much slandering democracy as though it does not hold any value anymore.

We need to get back to holding elected representatives and the government accountable for what they did. We should never allow them to be able to move democratic processes further and further away from the people. The EU institutions are, by the way, an example of that.

We’ve been seeing that. Look at the WHO [World Health Organization]. They were trying to seize executive powers from the member states. They’re not accountable to us, they weren’t elected by us, and this is going on everywhere.

MR. JEKIELEK: Are you talking about the International Health Regulations and the treaty that’s coming?

MS. ANDERSON: An example, yes. We see this on so many levels of how

they’re trying to actually take away the people’s right to elect their representatives and hold the politicians accountable.

The internet is here. Come up with documentation. Any politician trying to gaslight you into thinking that he’s always been on your side, pull it up and say, “Oh, excuse me, is that what you said? Did you try to lock me in my home because I was dangerous?” Get an archive going so people will not forget what the so-called elected representatives did to the people.

MR. JEKIELEK: I’ve been thinking about this a lot. How do societies emerge out of communism? How do societies emerge out of totalitarianism? How do they emerge out of a situation where a very significant portion of the population became complicit in something that was bad?

It’s very hard for people to admit they were wrong. We don’t talk about these genetic vaccines and their impact on society, but a lot of people got involved believing they were doing the right thing and now may have to face the fact that something went horribly wrong, and they were a part of it. There’s resistance to that. How do we get out of this?

MS. ANDERSON: What people need to understand is as long as you give the government power over you, meaning as long as you buy into their fear mechanisms and as long as you fear them, they have power over you. Take that away from them. Just make it known. You say, “Yes, I understand you have a lot of power over me and you could put me in jail, I get that, but guess what? I don’t care. Go ahead and do it.”

Because every once in a while, there are things way more important than your fear. Trust me. Once we end up in a totalitarian regime and it’s full blown, given the technological means they have at their disposal today—we’re not talking about 30 years of

“Pretty soon it occurred to me that this had nothing to do with public health. It was always about breaking the people.”

GDR, 40 years of GDR, or 70 years of the Soviet Union, we’re talking about a very, very long time—that’s what you should fear. That and only that. Don’t fear your government, is pretty much what I’m trying to say.

MR. JEKIELEK: That can be hard for people, though.

MS. ANDERSON: I understand. I understand that people have a mortgage to pay, and they need to make ends meet every month. I get all of that.

MR. JEKIELEK: It’s fear of the government, but it’s also not wanting to go outside of your social group. I wonder if that’s not even a stronger mechanism, just having watched what happened over the past few years. That’s extremely difficult to do, to be the person that steps out. That’s why I’m so interested in people like yourself, because there weren’t a lot of people standing up on the floor in the EU talking like you did.

MS. ANDERSON: Democracy lives off of debate. If everyone is thinking the same thing, then something has gone horribly wrong. But there’s another mechanism that totalitarian regimes and dictatorships always implement. You single out a specific group, you scapegoat them, and the rest will not voice their opinion anymore because they don’t want to become those guys. Then you are complicit in what

is about to happen, and you are a bystander, and you are not doing anything to keep it from happening.

MR. JEKIELEK: Since we mentioned the truckers, what is your reaction to this new Rouleau Commission? This is the commission that was looking at whether the use of the Emergencies Act by the Trudeau government was justified. I’m paraphrasing here, but their findings were that it was justified.

MS. ANDERSON: It’s shocking that they came to that conclusion, because from what I saw, it was nowhere even close to being justified. The government was bashing citizens’ protests, taking away their rights to freedom of assembly, freezing their bank accounts, and literally labeling them as terrorists, which was the prerequisite for freezing their bank accounts. This is absurd, and now they came to the conclusion this was justified.

This is really a blueprint for all the governments around the world now. Whenever they fear the uprising of opposing citizens—which is the citizens’ right, by the way—they just invoke an emergency act. There you go, you no longer have any opposition.

MR. JEKIELEK: I’m curious about your opinion on 15-minute cities. It’s a new idea that we’re only beginning to hear about. I understand they’re coming to Europe now. There is legislation pushing in that direction already. ♦

MS. ANDERSON: Yes, it is. The digital green certificate, the COVID pass, was a test balloon to get people to have to produce some kind of a QR code, getting people used to that. Now, they're slamming us with these 15-minute cities. Make no mistake, it's not about your convenience. With the 15-minute cities, they will have to have those before they can lock you down, and that's what we were talking about here.

In Great Britain, some counties have already passed legislation. They will be able to impose a climate lockdown. That's the next step. In order to do that, they will have to have these 15-minute cities.

The next step will be [that] you are only allowed to leave your immediate area two or three times a year. But there's other people that may have more money, and they can actually buy your passes off of you. Guess what? The poor people will be left in these 15-minute neighborhoods, while the ones that are better off get to go wherever they want.

It will be a complete impoverishment and enslavement of all the people. I'm stating it so clearly because that's what it looks like to me.

MR. JEKIELEK: Just briefly explain what 15-minute city means.

MS. ANDERSON: A 15-minute city is basically a neighborhood where you can reach everything you need within a 15-minute foot walk: a doctor, grocery store, and so forth. The bare necessities will be provided within a 15-minute foot walk. However, if you fancy another store and it doesn't happen to be in your neighborhood, you won't be going to that store anymore. Like I said, total control is what we're talking about. They can decide you are no longer allowed to leave your 15-minute immediate area. They don't have to fence it in or anything. It will be done via digital ID.

There's pilot projects already going on in Bologna. There, it's called the Bologna Wallet. In Vienna, it's called the Vienna Token. It's voluntary for now, and if you do this, you get some tickets for a little less, like going to the theater. But soon, there will come a time when you don't have a choice anymore. They will tell you where you can go, what you can do, and what you cannot do.

MR. JEKIELEK: You're a member of the European Parliament. But I get the sense you have suspicions about these larger institutions, like the European Parliament or the European Commission. What are your thoughts here?

MS. ANDERSON: If it was up to me, Germany would leave this hellhole today, not tomorrow.

MR. JEKIELEK: Why?

MS. ANDERSON: Because these institutions are not only undemocratic, they're anti-democratic. Look at the way the Parliament is elected. It's a gross violation of the principle of one man, one vote. Every German representative in the new Parliament has to get more than 850,000 votes for one seat. But a representative from Malta only needs 64,000 votes.

Then, you look at the institutions and how they work together. We are not a parliament. It's a disgrace to call it a parliament. We don't have budget control, for instance, which actually is a good thing. Because if we had budget control, then the national parliaments would have been stripped of that.

We don't pass any laws. We vote on resolutions, which are like letters we write to the EU Commission, "It would be nice if you could do this, that, or the other." Passing laws is done by the Council, which is composed of the members of the National Executive.

If the German government wanted

to pass a law and the German Parliament said, "No, we are not going there," story over, right? Not in this case. Now the respective minister just travels to Brussels, speaks with his colleagues, passes the law there, which then has to be implemented as an EU law in all of the member states. There goes your rule by the people.

So elected representatives of other countries get to pass legislation that the Germans will have to put into law and adhere to even though they never wanted it. That's why this entire EU institution is anti-democratic. It's just another step to a more elitist world.

MR. JEKIELEK: As we finish up, what are you working on now?

MS. ANDERSON: I am trying to expose their lies, whenever they come up with some kind of a legislation program. I just look at what they're telling the people and what they are actually doing to the people.

That's the only thing we can really do at this point, just to educate people on the lies. The governments and all of these so-called elected representatives feed them to buy into their sick narratives about some kind of agenda. Whether it's climate change, whether it's transgender, or whether this whole COVID madness, you see it everywhere.

We are working on this to see what we can do, because the WHO is not done yet with trying to seize these executive powers of the member states. I'm working with a few really good lawyers on that. But we need the people to back us up on this, because after all, we only do what the people want us to do. They need to do something—stand up, take to the streets, and let their governments know they will not put up with this anymore—then, the stronger we will be able to voice our opinion. ■

This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.

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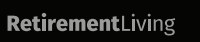
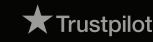


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Avoiding False Pride

Pride in accomplishments is natural, but temper it with humility

By Jeff Minick



“IT WAS PRIDE THAT changed angels into devils,” St. Augustine of Hippo once wrote, “it is humility that makes men as angels.”

Though Augustine was addressing theological matters, if we convert his thoughts into a secular metaphor, we can still find truth in them. Pride and arrogance in tyrants, for example, can make them demonic, as seen by the millions upon millions of casualties they inflicted in the 20th century.

We, too, may bring ruin to our own lives through excessive pride, called hubris by the Greeks, yet pride is a complicated creature and has another, more positive side. A carpenter I know takes quiet pride in the decks he builds. Parents of an acquaintance of mine are rightly proud of their children’s accomplishments.

Quite often, this pride walks hand in hand with humility, another knotty concept. In fact, of all our virtues, humility is perhaps the most misunderstood and the least emphasized. Search online for “humility definition,” and you’ll find an assortment of meanings, running from “freedom of pride” to “lack of pride” to perhaps the more accurate “a lack of false pride.” These variations are understandable, for they reflect our own confusion about humility.

In “What Is Humility & Why Is It Important?” Anna Katharina Schaffner does her readers a great service

Humility isn’t thinking less of yourself; it’s thinking of yourself less.

with a quick run-through of humility’s history and many benefits to the human person, and I encourage you to read it. Perhaps most importantly, at the beginning of her article, Schaffner notes that humility “appears to clash with our current valuation of self-worth and self-realization,” but she then adds this paragraph: “But humility has nothing to do with meekness or weakness. And neither does it mean being self-effacing or submissive. Humility is an attitude of spiritual modesty that comes from understanding our place in the larger order of things. It entails not taking our desires, successes, or failings too seriously.”

Here is a healthy view of humility that we see daily exercised all around us. Those parents I know who are so proud of their children’s achievements never say, “Yes, and it was all my doing.” While my friend the carpenter may take enormous satisfaction in the praise he receives for a job, he gives credit to his teachers and his skilled work crew.

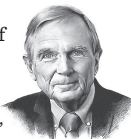
And if we do some more exploring online, we discover that humility is one of the most desirable traits in a leader. On any number of sites, we read of the strengths of humble

leaders: their willingness to listen to others and to share credit when good work is done, their measured take on their own talents and their ability to fill in the gaps with help from others, and perhaps most of all, their view of themselves as “servant leaders.” In this capacity, their wants and desires take second place to the objectives of a mission and the needs of others.

In “The Purpose-Driven Life,” pastor and author Rick Warren wrote, “Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less.” Then he added, “Humility is thinking more of others.” For this little-mentioned virtue not only performs wonders in the workplace, but can enhance marriage, home life, and relationships with family and friends. This modesty brightens the sheen of talent.

A final note: Humility ultimately derives from the Latin word *humus*, meaning “earth, ground.” If we adopt a humble spirit, keeping our egos out of the way while confidently bringing to bear our gifts and capabilities, all with the aim of performing at our best wherever we are, we may not become angels, but we will stay grounded. ■

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



A lesser-known route for cruising, the Elbe offers views of both famous cities and beautiful countryside.

PHOTO BY SCANRAIL/GETTY IMAGES

Exploring the Fascinating Elbe River 72

SPRAWLING ACROSS 26 PRIVATE acres on Oyster Bay, this estate has impressive amenities and room for the entire family. **70**

SAID TO HAVE BEEN CONCOCTED by James Pimm at his London oyster bar in the 1800s, the fruity, gin-based Pimm’s No. 1 Cup is now a favorite cocktail the world over. **75**

TO AN AUTO ENTHUSIAST, cleaning every inch of the car can be an enjoyable ritual that has the added benefit of keeping it looking new. **76**

INSIDE

Centre Island Estate

Billy Joel's huge bayfront property

By Bill Lindsey



The 26-acre bayfront estate's focal point is the 20,000-square-foot main residence, currently under renovation.

MANY PURSUE THE DREAM OF becoming a music legend, but this magnificent bayfront estate is a good indication that a young man from Long Island with great piano and singing skills achieved his dream.

Set on a very private 26-acre parcel with 2,000 feet of frontage on New York's Oyster Bay Harbor, the property is ideal for large families who enjoy entertaining, as it includes a 20,000-square-foot, five-bedroom, six-full-bathroom, two-half-bathroom brick main house built in 1994, which is currently under-going renovation, as well as a four-bedroom gatehouse with a three-bedroom apartment, and a three-bedroom beach house.

Set behind majestic wrought-iron gates, the property is located on the end of a point for maximum privacy, with water on two sides giving it the look and feel of a park, surrounded by lush stands of mature trees and rolling lawns. The multilevel main house features cathe-

dral ceilings, wood flooring, an expansive kitchen with an enormous island/breakfast bar adjacent to a dining room and an open floorplan living room, an alfresco dining area overlooking the bay, a living room perfectly sized for a grand piano, a gym, a home office, a bowling alley, and an elevator. The bedrooms all feature private bathrooms as well as sliding glass doors to access the yards or a private terrace. There are a total of six fireplaces throughout to keep everyone toasty warm during the winter.

The two separate outbuildings—one near the gate, the other directly on the beach—ensure privacy for guests during their stay at the estate. Depending on the weather, the owners and guests have the choice of an indoor or outdoor pool, as well as a floating dock to explore the bay by boat. Other notable features include a four-car garage, a helipad for fast get-aways, and a boat ramp to launch and retrieve trailer-transported vessels. ■



OYSTER BAY HARBOR ESTATE
CENTRE ISLAND, N.Y.
\$49 MILLION

- 5 bedrooms, 6 full baths, 2 half baths
- 20,000 square feet
- 26 acres

KEY FEATURES

- Bowling alley
- Helipad
- 2 guesthouses
- Indoor and outdoor pools

AGENT

Bonnie Williamson
Sotheby's International Realty
631-427-6600



(Above) Perfectly suited for large families and entertaining, the home features an indoor bowling alley among a long list of amenities.



(Top Right) Set on a hill, the main residence looks out over the outdoor pool and helipad, a beachhouse, a boat ramp, floating docks, and Oyster Bay.

(Right) As this was Billy Joel's home, it's no surprise the expansive living room has plenty of room for a grand piano.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF TYLER SANDS/DANIEL GALE, SOTHEBY'S INTERNATIONAL REALTY

Sailing the Elbe

Float from Berlin to Prague on one of the most mysterious rivers in Europe



The Elbe Princesse, a river ship built and owned by CroisiEurope specifically to sail down the river.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CROISIEUROPE

By Tim Johnson

EUROPEAN RIVER CRUISES HAVE never been more popular. Across the continent, these long, low, luxurious ships ply some famous waterways. But the Elbe remains less known, which makes it a rare and special place to discover.

There's a certain cachet to sailing a river that most ships can't navigate, through beautiful countryside and ancient fortresses and famous cities—ones seen by very few river cruisers.

Discovering the Elbe

The Elbe River runs a little less than 700 miles from the Giant Mountains in the Czech Republic down through Germany to the North Sea. It's famously shallow, meaning that most major cruise lines don't offer itineraries here. But one—a French company called CroisiEurope—has built ships specifically tailored to this task. I rode the elegant Elbe Princesse for nine days from Berlin all the way down to Prague.

The Elbe was once a delineator of empires, between East and West. The Romans fought to push east as far as this river, and its flow later marked the outer edge of Charlemagne's power. For centuries, it's also been a key waterway for Central European trade, helping, for one, the Hanseatic League extend its economic influence all over Northern Europe in the late Middle Ages.

While it remains an important lifeblood for the communities built on its banks, the Elbe remains almost unknown to North American travelers. And that's probably because, while everyone knows its bookends—Berlin and Prague—few other cities along the way will ring a bell. The course winds through the former Eastern Europe and the northwestern reaches of Bohemia.

Riverboat

This made it a journey of discovery for me: My first visit to most of the ports along the way—a very exciting thing. Setting sail the next morning, we made our way across Lake Tegel, passing pleasant little islands, summer cottages lining the edges, and small marinas filled with sailboats, tucked in behind. The ship, which carries as many as 81 guests, slid easily across the water, with people on board snapping photos from the sun deck up top, or just lingering over one last coffee in the bright, Euro-stylish lounge.

On a visit to the wheelhouse, the Czech captain, David, explained how a ship this large can navigate waters that have long bedeviled sailors. "The depth, it chang-

The Elbe, at **724 miles** long, is a major river that spans four European nations.



The Elbe flows from the Czech Republic to Germany's North Sea.

"Elbe" means "river" or "river-bed" in High German.

Sanssouci Palace, the summer palace of Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, in Potsdam, near Berlin.



THIS PAGE FROM TOP: ILLUSTRATION BY THE EPOCH TIMES; LEONID ANDRONOV/SHUTTERSTOCK



Interior of the Elbe Princesse.

es all the time,” he explained, noting that while they use GPS, captains also communicate with one another to constantly update the river’s conditions.

He grew up here—his father also worked on the Elbe. And while he has also piloted ships on the Rhine and the Danube, he told me this river is a whole different beast. “It’s smaller,” he said. “You must always know exactly where you are.”

The ship’s paddle wheels were specially built for the Elbe, allowing this relatively large vessel to navigate in even 2 1/2 feet of water.

Leaving Berlin, we spent the rest of the voyage in territory that was, until 1989, behind the Iron Curtain. In Potsdam, we visited a handsome neighborhood once filled with dachas, and where apparatchiks spent pleasant vacations. We toured Sanssouci, a grand rococo palace built by Prussian King Frederick the Great, where works by masters including Caravaggio and Peter Paul Rubens still hang on the wall.

Plus, a stop at Cecilienhof, where we saw the exact spot where Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, U.S. President Harry Truman, and British Prime Minister Clement Attlee sat to carve up the postwar world.

Back on the ship, we passed under the famous “Bridge of Spies,” the site of Cold War prisoner exchanges.

The Princesse continued upriver, to cities that I’d only previously seen on a map or the pages

of a history book. In Wittenberg, I learned about the life of Martin Luther and his wife, Katharina—how they rented quarters to students, kept pigs, and made their own beer. We saw the door where he nailed his 95 Theses and the pulpit he preached from. “This is the mother church of the Reformation,” a guide explained.

In Dresden, I took a guided tour of the rambling, fascinating Zwinger, a palace, gardens, and museum complex. At the Königstein Fortress nearby, I walked the soaring walls of the “Saxon Bastille,” the views stretching over the tops of clouds.

The captain expertly piloted us through 17 locks, passing across the border into Bohemia. Mountains rose around us, and the river grew narrower—in some places, I swore I could reach out and touch both shores. Not long after, we awoke, safe and sound, moored on the Vltava River in the heart of the Czech capital.

Of the small handful of other cruise ships that navigate the Elbe, few, if any, go all the way to Prague. But from the Princesse, Old Town Square is just steps away. The city’s famous spires and towers were all around us, the Hrad castle complex staring imperiously down from a nearby promontory. The Elbe was truly an adventure. And now, a whole city awaited for me to explore. ■

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

If You Go

Fly: Berlin’s Brandenburg Airport Willy Brandt (BER) opened in late 2020. A handful of nonstops fly from North America.

Stay: The Hotel Bristol Berlin has long welcomed celebrities and heads of state.

Getting Around: CroisiEurope sails its nine-day voyage on the Elbe and Vltava with two ships, both specially built for shallow water: the Elbe Princesse and the Elbe Princesse II.

Take Note: Both Germany and the Czech Republic are within Europe’s borderless Schengen Area.

COURTESY OF CROISIEUROPE

ANATOMY OF A CLASSIC COCKTAIL: THE PIMM’S CUP

The quintessentially English drink makes for perfect summer sipping, whichever side of the pond you’re on

By Kevin Revolinski

KENT-BORN AND Edinburgh-educated, James Pimm had a background in theology, but he decided to open an oyster bar in London. In 1823, he created his namesake liqueur as a digestive, a blend of gin, quinine, and spices—a secret recipe, naturally, that remains closely held.

He didn’t start producing larger quantities of Pimm’s No. 1 Cup until nearly three decades later.

The “No. 1 Cup” in the name actually refers to the vessel out of which Pimm served the drink, but over the years, alternative recipes—made with scotch, brandy, rum, rye, vodka, and even tequila—took on Nos. 2 through 7. A Pimm’s Winter Cup—a spiced version of the brandy-based No. 3—appeared as well. The original, No. 6 (vodka), and the winterized version are still available.

Not to be confused with Pimm’s No. 1 Cup, the Pimm’s Cup cocktail is another animal entirely: a drink made with the liqueur.

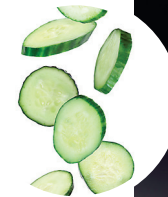
A mild liqueur at 25 percent ABV, Pimm’s No. 1 Cup gets even milder with its non-alcoholic mixers, making it a perfect summer sipper. (Those looking for a bit more punch might add a bit of gin.)

While an American bartender will mix the cocktail with ginger soda, across the pond, a British barman uses “lemonade.” Some translation is required here: This British “lemonade” is a fizzy lemon-flavored soda, often with no actual lemon

Pimm’s No. 1 Cup, a secret blend of gin, quinine, and spices, is the defining liqueur.



Cucumber is a must; from there, garnishes can be as wild or minimal as you like.



Old-school recipes call for muddling some borage in the drink.



PIMM’S CUP

- 2 ounces Pimm’s No. 1 Cup
- 4 to 6 ounces UK-style lemonade OR ginger ale with 1/2 ounce freshly squeezed lemon juice, to top
- A slice or spear of cucumber
- A sprig of mint or borage
- Orange or lemon slice or other fruit pieces (optional)
- A splash of gin (optional)

Pour Pimm’s and then the mixer over ice in a highball glass and stir gently. Garnish and serve.



An herbal gin-based liqueur, lemon soda, and a medley of garnishes create a refreshing, low-alcohol sipper.

involved—like 7 Up, but not as sweet. Look for something such as San Pellegrino Limonata or Schweppes Bitter Lemon. (Or opt for sparkling wine, and you’ll have a Pimm’s Royal Cup.)

All makers will agree on a slice or spear of cucumber, though some old-school recipes call for muddling a bit of the herb borage (starflower), which has a similar flavor. Garnishes allow some freewheeling, but be sure to get that cucumber in there, as well as mint or borage. Orange or lemon slices are optional; strawberry halves are nice.

The drink is a favorite at Wimbledon but also became a staple in New Orleans. The Impastato family, owners of the Napoleon House, made it popular in the 1950s, offering fine refreshment for the sweltering heat—and perhaps preferring their clients a little less drunk, too. The Napoleon House fills a 12-ounce glass with ice and adds a slighter 1 1/4 ounce of Pimm’s and 3 ounces of lemonade, topped with 7 Up and garnished with cucumber. ■

Kevin Revolinski is an avid traveler, craft beer enthusiast, and home-cooking fan. He’s based in Madison, Wis.

AUTO DETAILER

TECHNIQUES AND SECRETS

A car is a big investment, so take care of it by keeping it looking like new

By Bill Lindsey



Doing your own in-depth detailing ensures your car stays in top shape, and it can also be fun.

PHOTO BY SKT STUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK

A FRESHLY WASHED CAR seems to drive better than a dirty one, but to restore that new car feel, especially to a car several or many years old, a full inside-and-out cleaning is the way to go.

DIY detailing, which goes beyond simply washing it with a soapy sponge, is a great way not only to remove dirt, dust, and mud, but also to inspect every inch of the car, cleaning and looking for dents, rust spots, paint chips, and tire conditions that might otherwise not be noticed. Admiring the shiny car afterward lends a sense of accomplishment. If the weather cooperates and you're physically capable of spending an hour or so outside washing the car, give it a try.

Start by using the right tools and products, including two buckets, two car wash mitts, and a hose. The first step is to rinse off loose dirt, mud, and dust. Next, prepare a bucket of car washing soap. It's tempting to use dishwashing detergent, knowing it will create a lot of suds, but liquid dishwashing solutions have a relatively high pH level that is great at cleaning greasy pots and pans but can dry out paint over time, and it can degrade or even remove previously applied polish or wax. Detergents such as Dawn are actually used by pro detailers to strip off old polish or

Detail pros use a leaf blower to dry freshly washed cars to avoid causing accidental scratches.

wax before applying a fresh coating. Car wash solutions tend to be concentrated, so a little goes a long way; follow the directions for dilution. Fill a second bucket with water for rinsing the wash mitt between uses to avoid re-applying dirt to the car, possibly causing scratches.

Use two mitts—the first on only the paint and glass, and the second for the wheels, tires, wheel wells, and other unpainted surfaces. Do not use even a very soft brush to wash the car, as it could leave tiny scratches or swirl marks. Start by washing from the roof down to avoid having dirty water run over just-cleaned surfaces. Work in sections, rinsing the suds and grime off before moving to the next area. When the painted and glass areas are clean and rinsed, fluffy towels are a time-honored way to dry a car, although many detail pros use a leaf blower to dry freshly washed cars to avoid causing scratches from debris inadvertently snagged on a towel. ➔



Washing your own vehicle lets you know it was done right, lets you inspect every inch of it, and creates a sense of accomplishment.

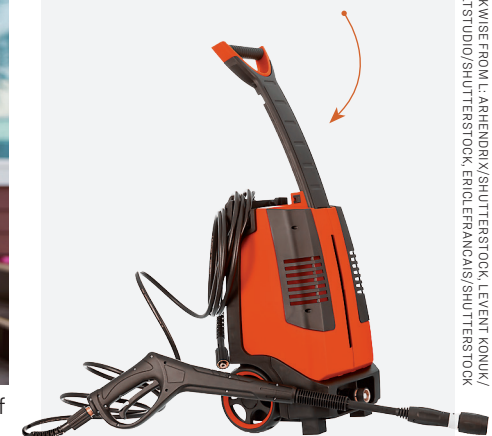
Pros use two sponges or wash mitts to wash cars, with one only for painted, chrome, and glass surfaces, and the other only for wheels, tires, and wheel wells.



A vacuum cleaner is a must for detailing the vehicle's interior, to remove dirt and dust from the floor, trunk, upholstery, and hard surfaces.



Pro detailers often use a pressure washer with a foam cannon for a very effective hands-free method of washing vehicles.



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If you can't wash the car at home, consider the local coin-operated car wash, using your own sponges or wash mitts to clean the exterior.

To clean the wheels, tires, and wheel wells, start by spraying a degreaser onto these surfaces, then use the wash mitt set aside for these areas to loosen dirt and grime, followed by a thorough rinsing. If the vehicle has black plastic or vinyl trim that has turned gray, apply a restorative product such as Mothers Back to Black.

With the exterior clean, the next focus is on the interior. A full-sized vacuum cleaner or shop vac with an upholstery attachment will quickly remove dirt, dust, and assorted debris from the floor, seats, and trunk. For SUVs, remember to vacuum the cargo area. There are a wide variety of protective sprays that can be applied to plastic or leather surfaces to restore a shine, including 303 All Surface Interior Cleaner. Remove the floor mats to be rinsed off, and use this time to clean out the glove compartment, door storage bins, and console of accumulated clutter. A glass cleaner will leave windows sparkling, and to get a "new car smell," hang a tree-shaped air freshener from the mirror, or use a spray-type fabric refresher.

Every detailing helps plan the next. For example, water spots the size of a quarter or larger indicate that it's time to apply either wax or polish to the painted surfaces.

Both provide protection and shine for paint, but a polish tends to last longer than wax, especially a polish containing PTFE polymers. These can be applied by hand or with a buffer, allowing them to haze before wiping them off. DIY ceramic coatings may seem like a good idea for long-lasting shine and protection, but many require specialized products for cleaning and need to be removed and reapplied every few years, which can be an involved process.

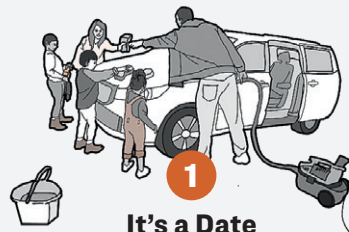
A spray-on polish that is easy to apply can provide only very short-lived results, so stick with traditional "wax on, wax off" products. Many car enthusiasts find detailing the car to be a "zen" experience during which they relax, but it can also be a fun family affair, too. ■



Polishing the car does more than keep it shiny; it also protects the paint and helps preserve the car's value.

ET
LIFESTYLE
KEEP IT CLEAN

How to make your car look new



1
It's a Date

Wash the car whenever it gets dirty, and otherwise at least every three months, subject to the weather.



2
Tools of the Trade

A car duster is a good way to remove dust or pollen without washing the exterior. Look for one made using cotton or microfiber "noodles" that trap and hold dust.



3
Not Just for Non-Stick Pans

Car polishes containing Teflon, also known as PTFE, are very effective at enhancing and protecting the shine of painted surfaces, as well as chrome surfaces. They provide similar results to ceramic coatings, but are much easier to maintain.

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PRACTICAL AND HELPFUL BICYCLE UPGRADES

A selection of gear to get you ready to pedal to new adventures

By Bill Lindsey



Teach Your Bike to Stay
KRYPTONITE NEW YORK FAHGETTABOUDIT MINI U-LOCK
\$158.95

Teach Your Bike to Stay KRYPTONITE NEW YORK FAHGETTABOUDIT MINI U-LOCK \$158.95 Don't worry about leaving your bike unattended while at work or shopping when it's secured by this 4 1/2-pound lock with a 10 out of 10 security rating. The 18 mm hardened steel shackle resists bolt cutters and prying, with the double deadbolt protected by a hardened steel sleeve. Three keys, including one with an LED light, are provided, and \$5,000 of antitheft protection is available.



Stay Hydrated
CAMELBAK ROGUE LIGHT 70 OZ.
\$85

Drinking plenty of water is essential for health, especially while doing arduous exercise such as riding a bike. This bottle holds an impressive 70 ounces of water comfortably secured like a backpack via a ventilated, no-sweat harness with chest straps to keep it from sliding around. The drinking tube can be positioned for easy access while riding, and it has an accessories pocket to hold keys, a phone, and other small items.



Never Get Lost
WAHOO ELEMNT ROOM V2 GPS BICYCLE COMPUTER
\$399.99

This GPS unit lets you explore new roads and bike trails without worrying about finding your way home. The screen displays the route, so you can track your progress and how fast and far you've ridden. It even lets you know when there are hills ahead, and with a route-sharing feature, you can share rides with friends, while live tracking lets you share your current location with other riders and the folks at home.



Music on the Go
JBL WIND 3
\$79.95

This tiny, waterproof sound machine lets you create and enjoy a custom soundtrack on your rides, and it attaches conveniently to the handlebars. The rechargeable battery provides more than two hours of FM radio or media from a device connected via the SD card, Bluetooth, or the AUX port. It can also be used for hands-free phone calls. The controls and LED display are easy to see and use while riding.

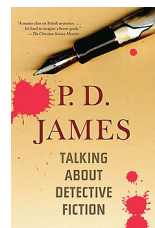


Bring It Back
ORTLIEB BACK-ROLLER CLASSIC PANNIERS
\$200

Attaching this waterproof pannier—or a set of two—to your bike's rear cargo deck adds enormous practicality. Now you can safely carry a laptop to and from the office and transport food home from the grocery store. If anything spills, simply rinse it out and let it dry. The easy-to-use attachment hardware and a shoulder strap make it easy to carry to the bike, clip it on, and get underway.

RECOMMENDED READING

This week, we feature the recently found memoirs of one of baseball's greats and a fascinating true story of a shipwrecked, mutinous crew.



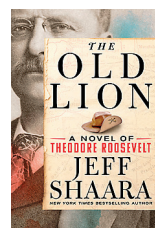
LITERARY CRITICISM

'Talking About Detective Fiction'

By P.D. James

Books about books are frequently self-referential. This one can hardly help it. P.D. James, who started writing detective fiction in the 1950s, is a giant in the field. Her background proves one strength of this history of mysteries. Few know the field as intimately; fewer write as entertainingly. She covers the field from its origins to the present. She discusses why people like or dislike the genre. It includes a short list of recommended reading of mystery fiction and writers. It's a treat for mystery fans.

VINTAGE, 2011, 208 PAGES



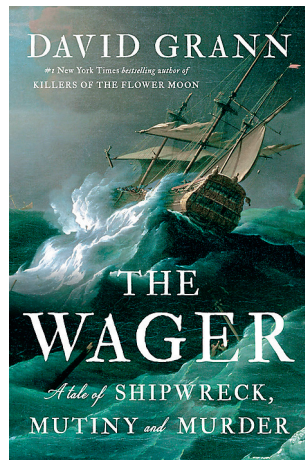
FICTION

'The Old Lion'

By Jeff Shaara

This novel follows Theodore Roosevelt from his boyhood days to his death, taking us first from his horrible childhood asthma to Harvard to the death of his young wife, Alice Lee, following childbirth. Particularly enlightening are his ranching days in the Dakota Badlands and fighting against the Spanish in Cuba. It's a fine introduction to Roosevelt for older teens and a grand tour of his life for the rest of us, albeit fictional. The inclusion of so many historical figures in the story just adds to the pleasure.

ST. MARTIN'S PRESS, 2023, 480 PAGES



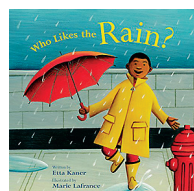
NONFICTION

'The Wager'

By David Grann

In 1740, a squadron of seven ships left Portsmouth, England, on a mission to capture a fabled Spanish galleon. "The Wager" is the story of one of those fated ships. It's a riveting tale on the high seas that carries readers along with a thrilling narrative. Masterfully written, it's a page-turner of the finest order as the book opens its sails on a perilous mission that leads to a shipwreck, harrowing survival, and cruel savagery. Mayhem, murder, and mutiny rule. Who survives to tell the tale?

DOUBLEDAY, 2023, 352 PAGES



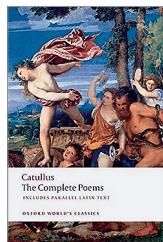
FOR KIDS

'Who Likes the Rain?'

By Etta Kaner and Marie Lafrance

Both a celebration of rain and an exploration of seemingly every aspect of it, "Who Likes the Rain?" asks questions and offers simple but thorough answers, considering ideas such as "why it thunders" and "where the water from the street goes." This book will surely bring extra excitement to a summer thunderstorm or rained-out beach day.

KIDS CAN PRESS, 2007, 32 PAGES



CLASSICS

'The Poems of Catullus'

Translated by Guy Lee

This epigrammatist and lyrical poet of ancient Rome ranged in his subjects and emotions from his rueful elegy lamenting the death of his brother to his tender, sarcastic, and angry observations of his mistress, whom he calls Lesbia. Born into the wealthy class in the last days of the Republic, Catullus often aimed invective-laden epigrams at real people. The Latin text and the translation of these 116 poems are included here, as is a rich analysis of the history and verse of Catullus.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2009, 224 PAGES



SPORTS

'Lou Gehrig'

By Alan D. Gaff

Lou Gehrig remains one of baseball's icons. His power at the plate and his ability to play through pain and injuries made him an unstoppable force—until he was diagnosed with ALS. But before the tragedy, sports agent Christy Walsh had Gehrig write articles about his life and the game. These would become his memoirs, but memoirs that would be lost for nearly a century until historian Alan D. Gaff discovered them. For fans of the game, this book is, much like its subject, a national treasure.

SIMON & SCHUSTER, 2020, 240 PAGES



Ian Kane
is a U.S. Army veteran, filmmaker, and author. He enjoys the great outdoors and volunteering.

ENTERTAINMENT

This week, we feature a true-to-life military drama of survival and an action thriller about a man on a mission to save a family from harm.

NEW RELEASE



'Extraction 2' (2023)

From top action producers Joe and Anthony Russo comes a powerful film that follows black ops warrior Tyler Rake (Chris Hemsworth) as he takes on yet another dangerous mission. This time, Rake and his team of mercenaries are tasked with saving a family from nefarious forces.

Although this star-studded thriller features plenty of exciting action sequences, it also gives audiences a better look at the person behind the tough-as-nails figure we know only as Tyler Rake. This gripping sequel is sure to shatter all expectations.

ACTION | THRILLER

Release Date: June 16, 2023
Director: Sam Hargrave
Starring: Chris Hemsworth, Olga Kurylenko, Golshifteh Farahani
Running Time: 2 hours, 2 minutes
MPAA Rating: R
Where to Watch: Theaters
★★★★★

A CLASSIC DICKENS TALE



'Oliver Twist' (1951)

This Charles Dickens adaptation follows young Oliver Twist (John Howard Davies) as he escapes a dismal life at an

orphanage but ends up working for evil money-dealer Fagin (Alec Guinness) and his band of young thieves. With an incredible cast, excellent pacing, immersive sets, and

DRAMA

Release Date: July 30, 1951
Director: David Lean
Starring: Robert Newton, Alec Guinness, Kay Walsh
Running Time: 1 hour, 45 minutes
Not Rated
Where to Watch: Amazon, HBO Max, Apple TV
★★★★★

INDIE PICK

'The Usual Suspects' (1995)

After an attempted heist in New York goes wrong, five disparate would-be thieves are rounded up and interrogated. It becomes apparent that each, at some point in their lives, ran afoul of a vicious underworld figure known only as Keyser Söze.

This excellent mystery features a storyline that seems convoluted at first, but its fascinating plot is deftly unveiled through the clever use of flashbacks. Powered by a strong



ensemble cast, this is one of those indie gems that will keep you guessing until its mind-boggling climax.

CRIME | DRAMA | MYSTERY

Release Date: Aug. 16, 1995
Director: Bryan Singer
Starring: Kevin Spacey, Gabriel Byrne, Chazz Palminteri
Running Time: 1 hour, 46 minutes
MPAA Rating: R
Where to Watch: Amazon, Hoopla, Redbox
★★★★★

A GRIPPING, TRUE-TO-LIFE MILITARY STORY

'The Outpost' (2020)

Deep in an Afghan mountain valley sits the isolated Combat Outpost Keating, where a small unit of U.S. Army soldiers is stationed. One fateful morning, hundreds of Taliban fighters assault the base, and the soldiers must rely on each other and their training if they are to survive against overwhelming odds.

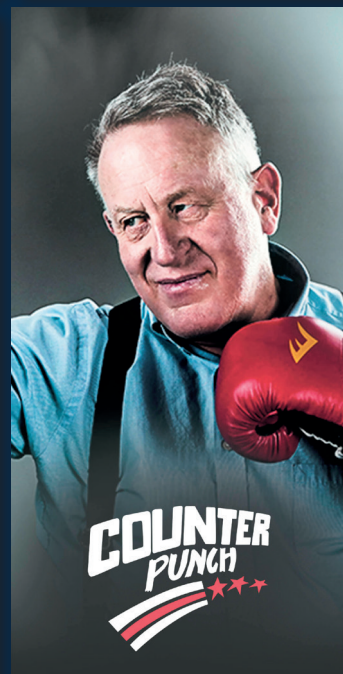
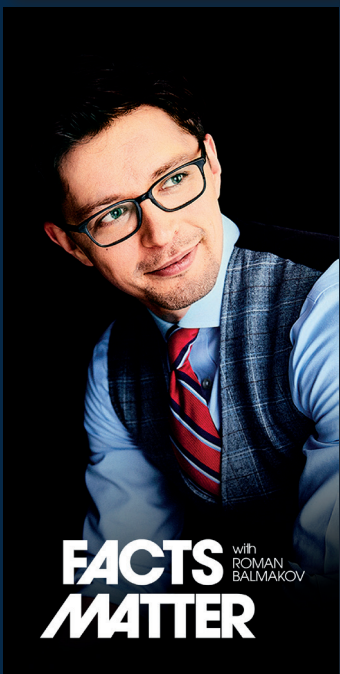
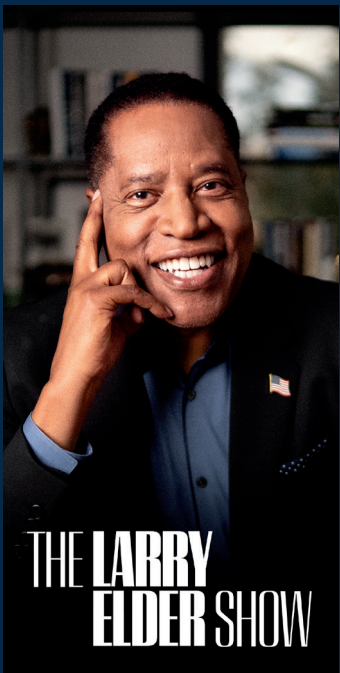
The film is one of the most accurate depictions of modern soldier life I've seen in a Hollywood



production. From the gritty banter to the day-to-day minutiae, this is an excellent wartime drama.

ACTION | DRAMA | HISTORY

Release Date: July 3, 2020
Director: Rod Lurie
Starring: Scott Eastwood, Caleb Landry Jones, Orlando Bloom
Running Time: 2 hours, 3 minutes
MPAA Rating: R
Where to Watch: Redbox, Vudu, Apple TV
★★★★★



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Show You Care

Essential 'get well' etiquette

At some point, friends, family, and co-workers may become ill or even need to be hospitalized. Here are some suggestions to help cheer them up and show that they are in your thoughts.

By Bill Lindsey

1 We're All Family

When immediate family members aren't feeling well, it's important to be there for them in person when possible, or in spirit when distances or other factors leave you unable to visit. Whether the malady is minor or serious, reaching out can make the sick person's discomfiture a bit more bearable. In-person visits are usually well-received, but if that can't be arranged, pick up the phone and call—don't just send a text.



5 Time Doesn't Always Fly

To a normally active person stuck at home with the flu or hospitalized for even a minor ailment, the hours and days can seem to drag by as if stuck in molasses. If you know that person's interests, deliver relevant books or periodicals, or consider bringing a tablet he or she can use to browse and thus stay connected to the world and happily occupied. Remember to include a charging cord!

2 Boost Spirits

Providing pleasant distractions can be an ideal way to help lift the spirits of someone on the mend. If he or she can receive visitors and is open to you dropping by, by all means do so. But remember, if the person is in a hospital, step out of the room if any nurses or doctors stop by while you are there to provide your friend with privacy. Keep the stay brief; it's better to drop by often for quick visits than to linger overly long.

3 Appropriate Co-worker Care

There's never a good reason to ignore a co-worker who isn't feeling well or is in the hospital. Even if you don't have a close relationship with him or her, get together with other co-workers and send flowers and a "get well" card, or send a video via social media wishing the person a speedy recovery. If your boss is sick, call to check in and to see whether you can do anything at the office in his or her stead.

4 Respect Privacy

It's important to recognize that not everyone sick at home or in the hospital wants visitors, so don't show up unannounced. If he or she is convalescing at home, send a card or even a prepaid pizza if you know his or her favorite toppings. Some folks prefer to stay a bit shut off when they are not at their best, but that just means you need to be creative in finding ways to let them know you hope they feel better soon.

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Vanessa Morrison, medical records clerk

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Gail F. Sauve, homemaker

“It is straightforward, rather than a lot of speculation or pontificating.”

Jan Hamilton, retired professional

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Creed Haymond, surgeon

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Jim Edwards, retired

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