

The Fortnightly Rant

One Nation Under a Golden Calf

Super Tuesday gave voters just what everyone expected: a general election almost no one wants.

Vermont was the only state whose Republicans rejected the GOP's inevitable nominee. We can expect any day now to be hearing spurious tales about health hazards associated with maple syrup produced by illegal Cuban migrant workers on Communist communes.

In another outlying result, Nikki Haley trounced the former president in Washington, D.C. over the weekend, by a margin of nearly two-to-one. In doing so she handed her opponent a win, if he should choose to accept it: "I wouldn't take those 19 delegates if they came crawling out of The Swamp on their knees."

Meanwhile, on the Democratic side—to which we hasten in perverse emulation of profit-driven media outlets' knee-jerk pursuit of meaningless symmetry—a potential sign of weakness for the Biden campaign has emerged in American Samoa. Reports from Pago Pago say Jason Palmer got a decisive 56 percent of the vote, compared to a meagre 44 percent for incumbent Joe Biden.

The insignificance of this result is hard to overstate. As a territory, not a state, American Samoa will not cast an electoral vote. Its population of under 45,000 registered a turnout rate of two-tenths of one percent. These numbers are so small that one imagines a new field, quantum political science, might be required to understand it—were it not for the money.

We're hearing about American

Samoa because Jason Palmer—previously associated with "Microsoft, Kaplan Education, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the impact investor firm New Markets Venture Partners," according to ABC News—could afford to set \$500,000 on fire to scratch a political itch. Palmer spent \$11.11 for every citizen in Samoa. His 51 votes cost him \$9,803 each.

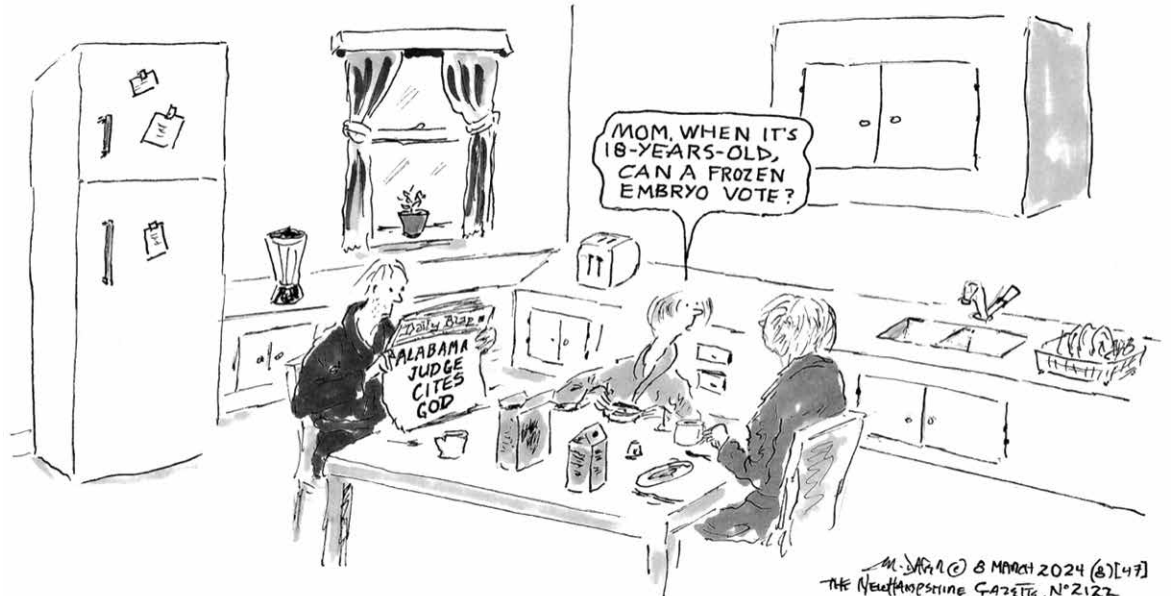
So, those 91 votes in Samoa are strangely reflective of the election, after all. Our allegedly secular priesthood, the U.S. Supreme Court carved a stone table in 2009 decreeing that money equals speech. That *Citizens United* decision was just an instance of the bully rubbing our noses in it.

The phrase "money talks" dates back to the 19th century, and has accurately reflected our politics ever since. In the Gilded Age, railroad barons and other industrialists did as they saw fit. The proper role of government functionaries was to protect their rights.

The wealthy knew very well they were in a minority—they'd spared no effort to make things that way. It was vitally important that most people had to worry about going hungry—otherwise how could the few make a profit?

Aside from a crash now and then, this system worked well for the better part of a century—for the beneficiaries. One golden egg followed another, until...

Oops. How are you going to keep 'em down in the factory, after you've closed it and sold their jobs to the Chinese Communist Party?



Tell 'em God's on your side.

It's as hard to believe as a horse head in bed, but the facts are undeniable. The plan is to stay in charge of the government, and on top of the economy, by convincing the most hyper-religious sector of the public to put an amoral, immoral, lying, cheating, treasonous, insurrectionist felon back in the White House.

And, once he's there, let them call the shots. Iran has its Guidance Patrol. Afghanistan has its Ministry for Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice. Why should Islamist fundamentalists have all the fun?

The Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 lays all this out in plain sight. Republicans are going to knock down the wall between church and state, and use its remnants to build a wall on the border, to make it easier to crap on the poor.

"But...but...but," you may sputter, in a froth of indignant confusion. "Not only is their candidate depraved himself, but every day we

hear about another MAGA fanatic getting arrested for a sex crime." That's the trouble with heathens. They underestimate the power of salvation and repentance.

This isn't just about imposing Christianity on everyone, regardless of race or creed—although, to be sure, it is about that. Just ask disgraced-but-forgiven former National Security Advisor and un-registered agent for Turkey Mike Flynn. He's going around delivering stump speeches to the faithful, saying things like this: "If we are going to have one nation under God which we must, we have to have one religion. One nation under God and one religion under God."

Speaking of one-track minds, the plan also revives Dick "Dick" Cheney's Unitary Executive Theory. Dolt #45 will ostensibly call the shots, but he'll only be a Potemkin dictator.

Being an oligarch means never having to face the consequences of

your depradations—and always having ample means to carry out your crazy schemes.

The postwar era represented a big change in the American economy: it was unusually kind to ordinary working families. People had homes in the 'burbs, cars in the driveways, and kids in colleges.

This was unacceptable to people who thought they deserved to have it better than everyone else. With a tiny fraction of the profits they "earned" from the sweat of others' brows, they established sheltered workshops full of professional apologists for capitalism. Their steady stream of one-sided, misguided, wrong-headed arguments, just plausible enough for the corporate media to swallow, habituated the public to—if they failed to convince the public of—a vast steaming heap of bad ideas.

We may be about to see them being put into practice on a scale that has hitherto been unimaginable.

The Alleged News®

Tell the Truth About Israel's Crimes Against Humanity

By Sonali Kolhatkar

Israeli forces killed more than a hundred Palestinians and wounded more than 700 on February 29, 2024 during a distribution of food aid in Gaza city, pushing the Palestinian death toll to 30,000 since October 7, 2023. The food aid massacre was straightforward in its deadliness as armed Israeli forces aimed weapons at desperate, hungry Palestinian civilians and killed many of them. It was also plausible within the context of who has firepower and who doesn't, and wholly consistent with Israeli atrocities, especially those committed since October 7, 2023.

And yet, Western media headlines went out of their way to obscure and protect the perpetrators of this awful crime. CNN reported there was a "Carnage at Gaza food aid site amid Israeli gunfire," as if the victims had little to do with the gunfire. The outlet didn't even bother to mention Palestinians.

The *Washington Post* was worse, declaring that, "Chaotic aid delivery turns deadly as Israeli, Gazan

officials trade blame." The use of the word "chaotic" suggests things were out of everyone's control. And, either Israeli or Gazan authorities could be to blame.

The *New York Times* took a poetic approach, listing a series of events seemingly unconnected, with its headline, "As Hungry Gazans Crowd a Convoy, a Crush of Bodies, Israeli Gunshots and a Deadly Toll." If sentences had shoulders, this one practically shrugged in helpless ignorance at the curious mystery behind the massacre.

Some news outlets left Israelis and Palestinians out of the headline altogether to seemingly avoid placing blame. Reuters reported, "More than 100 killed while seeking aid in Gaza, overall death toll passes 30,000," and the supposedly liberal NBC News claimed, "Dozens killed in attack on crowd waiting for aid, Gaza health officials say." Even PBS couldn't bring itself to identify the perpetrators or victims with its headline, "More than 100 killed in Gaza while trying to get food from aid convoy."

The use of the passive voice, of language designed to obscure and give the perpetrator the benefit of the doubt, is a popular trick employed by major news outlets when reporting on Israeli atrocities. When contrasted with how the media reported Hamas' attack on Israelis in early October 2023 by using the active voice and clearly naming perpetrator and victim, it becomes even more embarrassingly apparent that Western corporate media have a powerful political allegiance to Israel in spite of claims of objectivity.

Take the *New York Times* as an example. In three reports on three separate days about the same October 7, 2023 incident, the paper's editors showed that they do indeed know how to write simple and straightforward headlines. "We Are at War," Netanyahu Says After Hamas Attacks Israel," (October 7th), "How the Hamas Attack on Israel Unfolded," (October 8th), and "Hamas Leaves Trail of Terror in Israel," (October 10th). There is use of the active voice and clear identification of perpetrator and victim.

There is a strong parallel between news coverage of Palestinian victims of Israel and Black and Brown victims of racism, white vigilantism, and policing in the U.S. In my 2023 book, *Rising Up: The Power of Narrative in Pursuing Racial Justice*, I analyzed the dominant narratives that media outlets perpetuate when covering race and racism. A failure to center the humanity of people of color has been a standard weakness in U.S. media coverage. The Pulitzer prize-winning journalist Wesley Lowery, in a scathing op-ed in the *New York Times* in July 2020 pointed out that, "the mainstream has allowed what it considers objective truth to be decided almost exclusively by white reporters and their mostly white bosses."

It's not surprising that white supremacy, which continues to infect newsrooms, finds common cause with pro-Israel bias. The state of Israel is built on ethnic and religious hierarchy. The added weight of the U.S. government's long-term political favoritism toward Israel means that we have been in a proxy war

against Palestinians. And so, U.S. newsrooms are loathe to identify Israel as an overt perpetrator of death, destruction, and genocide.

The media watchdog group, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), has for years pointed out the media's double standards on Israelis and Palestinians. Writing in early February, Julia Hollar analyzed the *New York Times's* and *Washington Post's* coverage of Israel's war on Gaza, showing exactly how pro-Israel both papers are and how both "leaned heavily toward a conversation dominated by Israeli interests and concerns."

While the recent Israeli massacre of Palestinians at the food aid distribution is merely one example of how news outlets skew their coverage, research shows that this is indicative of a broad trend. Studies of news media bias, including large-scale surveys conducted using artificial intelligence, point to a persistent anti-Palestinian strain across major outlets.

The Alleged News®
from page one

In that sense, not only is the U.S. in a proxy war against Palestinians, but is an active participant in perpetuating genocidal propaganda.

Thankfully the U.S. public is not having it. Hollar wrote in FAIR, "Clear calls for an unconditional ceasefire, while widespread in the real world, were vanishingly rare at the papers." It is striking that in spite of this clear attempt at skewing the debate, Americans are largely in favor of a ceasefire. Data for Progress's latest poll found "Around two-thirds of voters (67 percent)—including majorities of Democrats (77 percent), Independents (69 percent), and Republicans (56 percent)—support the U.S. calling for a permanent ceasefire and a de-escalation of violence in Gaza." The news media are shaped by, and shape public opinion. In the case of Israel's war on Gaza, media outlets appear to be starkly out of step with the American public.

Lowery wrote in his 2020 op-ed that in order for newsrooms to rise above dehumanizing bias, "it will take moral clarity, which will require both editors and reporters to stop doing things like reflexively hiding

behind euphemisms that obfuscate the truth, simply because we've always done it that way."

Just as changing demographics in the nation and its newsrooms have initiated a reckoning in how media outlets cover racial justice, there is a slow sea-change transpiring in media coverage of Palestinians. In December 2023, more than a thousand U.S. journalists signed on to an open letter calling for "moral clarity," urging their colleagues "to tell the full truth without fear or favor," and to "use precise terms that are well-defined by international human rights organizations, including 'apartheid,' 'ethnic cleansing,' and 'genocide.'"

Obscuring the criminality of elites and giving cover to genocide requires effort and a commitment to the power of elites. How much easier would it be to call a spade a spade and simply tell the truth?

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Sonali Kolhatkar is an award-winning multimedia journalist. She is the founder, host, and executive producer of "Rising Up With Sonali," a weekly television and radio show that airs on Free Speech TV and Pacifica stations. Her most recent book is Rising Up: The Power of Narrative in Pursuing Racial Justice (City Lights Books,



Though it was only the second day of March, last Saturday was warm enough for a bagpiper to roll up his sleeves and put passersby in the proper frame of mind for St. Patrick's day—just a week from this Sunday.

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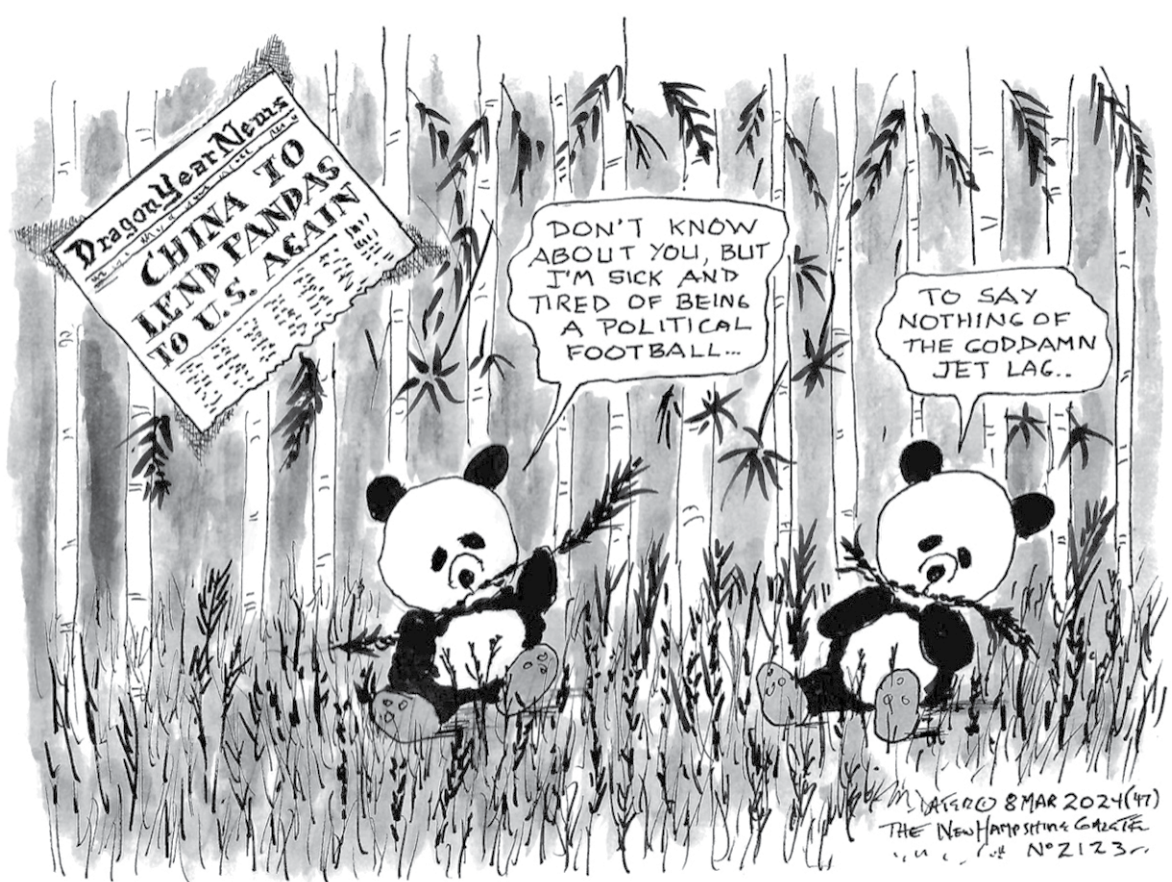
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2023). She is a writing fellow for the Economy for All project at the Independent Media Institute and the racial justice and civil liberties editor at Yes! Magazine. She serves as the co-director of the nonprofit solidarity organization the Afghan Women's Mission and is a co-author of Bleeding Afghanistan. She also sits on the board of directors of Justice Action Center, an immigrant rights organization. This article was produced by Economy for All, a project of the Independent Media Institute.

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Even "Mild" COVID-19 Can Lower IQ and Age Brains Seven Years
by Ziyad Al-Aly

From the very early days of the pandemic, brain fog emerged as a significant health condition that many experience after COVID-19.

Brain fog is a colloquial term that describes a state of mental sluggishness or lack of clarity and haziness that makes it difficult to concentrate, remember things and think clearly.

Fast-forward four years and there is now abundant evidence that being infected with SARS-CoV-2—the virus that causes COVID-19—can affect brain health in many ways.

In addition to brain fog,

COVID-19 can lead to an array of problems, including headaches, seizure disorders, strokes, sleep problems, and tingling and paralysis of the nerves, as well as several mental health disorders.

A large and growing body of evidence amassed throughout the pandemic details the many ways that COVID-19 leaves an indelible mark on the brain. But the specific pathways by which the virus does so are still being elucidated, and curative treatments are nonexistent.

Now, two new studies published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* shed further light on the profound toll of COVID-19 on cognitive health.

I am a physician scientist, and I have been devoted to studying long COVID since early patient reports about this condition—even before the term "long COVID" was coined. I have testified before the U.S. Senate as an expert witness on long COVID and have published extensively on this topic.

How COVID-19 leaves its mark on the brain

Here are some of the most important studies to date documenting how COVID-19 affects brain health:

- Large epidemiological analyses showed that people who had COVID-19 were at an increased risk of cognitive deficits, such as memory problems.
- Imaging studies done in people before and after their COVID-19 infections show shrinkage of brain volume and altered brain structure after infection.
- A study of people with mild to moderate COVID-19 showed significant prolonged inflammation of the brain and changes that are commensurate with seven years of brain aging.
- Severe COVID-19 that requires hospitalization or intensive care may result in cognitive deficits and other brain damage that are equivalent to 20 years of aging.
- Laboratory experiments in human and mouse brain organoids designed to emulate changes in the human brain showed that SARS-CoV-2 infection triggers the fusion of brain cells. This effectively short-circuits brain electrical activity and compromises function.
- Autopsy studies of people who had severe COVID-19 but died months later from other causes showed that the virus was still present in brain tissue. This provides

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Distribution Help Wanted in Exeter

Our volunteer distributor in Exeter will soon be facing higher than normal demands on his time. It's just a seasonal thing. He'll be back.

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evidence that contrary to its name, SARS-CoV-2 is not only a respiratory virus, but it can also enter the brain in some individuals. But whether the persistence of the virus in brain tissue is driving some of the brain problems seen in people who have had COVID-19 is not yet clear.

- Studies show that even when the virus is mild and exclusively confined to the lungs, it can still provoke inflammation in the brain and impair brain cells' ability to regenerate.

- COVID-19 can also disrupt the blood brain barrier, the shield that protects the nervous system—which is the control and command center of our bodies—making it “leaky.” Studies using imaging to assess the brains of people hospitalized with COVID-19 showed disrupted or leaky blood brain barriers in those who experienced brain fog.

- A large preliminary analysis pooling together data from 11 studies encompassing almost 1 million people with COVID-19 and more than 6 million uninfected individuals showed that COVID-19 increased the risk of development of new-onset dementia in people older

than 60 years of age.

Autopsies have revealed devastating damage in the brains of people who died with COVID-19.

Drops in IQ

Most recently, a new study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* assessed cognitive abilities such as memory, planning and spatial reasoning in nearly 113,000 people who had previously had COVID-19. The researchers found that those who had been infected had significant deficits in memory and executive task performance.

This decline was evident among those infected in the early phase of the pandemic and those infected when the delta and omicron variants were dominant. These findings show that the risk of cognitive decline did not abate as the pandemic virus evolved from the ancestral strain to omicron.

In the same study, those who had mild and resolved COVID-19 showed cognitive decline equivalent to a three-point loss of IQ. In comparison, those with unresolved persistent symptoms, such as people with persistent shortness of breath or fatigue, had a six-point loss in IQ.



The world being what it is, it's hardly surprising that people gather every Sunday in Market Square to register their opposition to injustice. These days, considering the U.S.-supported genocide being conducted against Palestinians, the Sunday protest, while necessary, is insufficient. On Saturday, March 2nd, local Palestinians and supporters joined a global effort to say "Hands Off Rafah—Ceasefire Now—Stop the Genocide."

Those who had been admitted to the intensive care unit for COVID-19 had a nine-point loss in IQ. Reinfection with the virus contributed an additional two-point loss in IQ, as compared with no reinfection.

Generally the average IQ is about 100. An IQ above 130 indicates a highly gifted individual, while an IQ below 70 generally indicates a level of intellectual disability that may require significant societal support.

To put the finding of the *New England Journal of Medicine* study into perspective, I estimate that a three-point downward shift in IQ would increase the number of U.S. adults with an IQ less than 70 from 4.7 million to 7.5 million—an increase of 2.8 million adults with a level of cognitive impairment that requires significant societal support.

Another study in the same issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine* involved more than 100,000 Norwegians between March 2020 and April 2023. It documented worse memory function at several time points up to 36 months fol-

lowing a positive SARS-CoV-2 test.

Parsing the implications

Taken together, these studies show that COVID-19 poses a serious risk to brain health, even in mild cases, and the effects are now being revealed at the population level.

A recent analysis of the U.S. Current Population Survey showed that after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, an additional 1 million working-age Americans reported having “serious difficulty” remembering, concentrating or making decisions than at any time in the preceding 15 years. Most disconcertingly, this was mostly driven by younger adults between the ages of 18 to 44.

Data from the European Union shows a similar trend—in 2022, 15% of people in the EU reported memory and concentration issues.

Looking ahead, it will be critical to identify who is most at risk. A better understanding is also needed of how these trends might affect the educational attainment of children and young adults and the economic

productivity of working-age adults. And the extent to which these shifts will influence the epidemiology of dementia and Alzheimer's disease is also not clear.

The growing body of research now confirms that COVID-19 should be considered a virus with a significant impact on the brain. The implications are far-reaching, from individuals experiencing cognitive struggles to the potential impact on populations and the economy.

Lifting the fog on the true causes behind these cognitive impairments, including brain fog, will require years if not decades of concerted efforts by researchers across the globe. And unfortunately, nearly everyone is a test case in this unprecedented global undertaking.

Ziyad Al-Aly is Chief of R&D at the VA Health Care System and Clinical Epidemiologist at Washington University in St. Louis.

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The Alleged News®

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Murph's Fortnightly Quote

"Music was my refuge. I could crawl into the space between the notes and curl my back to loneliness."

— Maya Angelou (1928-2014)

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Genocide and the Horse Race
Dear Editors,
In your reply to my last letter you raised two points that I would like to address here.

Responding to my assertion that the *Gazette* was negligent in the frequency and scope of its coverage of the ongoing U.S.-supported Israeli genocide in Gaza, you said that the *Gazette* could not respond to reader requests as to what should be covered. What you neglected to explain was any rationale for giving short shrift to this historic development funded in great part by our tax dollars. Do you fear being labelled anti-semitic by the pro-Israel lobby? Or do you just think the genocide is something that, after being covered once or twice, is no longer that important? Is this how you would have covered the actions of Germany in the thirties? In evaluating your coverage in general it looks to me that, like the corrupt mainstream media, you're obsessed with the 2024 horse race between the Tweedledee and Tweedledum parties... a race whose winner will change nothing significant despite whatever promises are made.

Which brings me to the other part of your reply: you assert that Trump must at all costs be prevented from getting his hands on the government again. Why is that so? Is it because Trump, if elected, will plunge us into a proxy war against Russia, threatening the world with the specter of a nuclear holocaust? Or is it that Trump will be getting squarely behind the Israeli genocide campaign and pour billions of dollars into the efforts of a country run by religious bigots to destroy the people from whom they stole their land to found an Apartheid colonial settler state in the Middle East? Or perhaps Trump will destroy the last shreds of American democracy thus depriving the military industrial complex of its main rationale for murdering peoples abroad? Or maybe Trump will stand by and do nothing while the Supreme Court sets the clock back to the 16th century on women's rights and tramples voting rights?

You urge us to vote for the man dubbed "Genocide Joe" by today's an-

ti-war youth depicting him as a lesser evil than Trump. Are you going to hew to the lesser evil excuse even as everything collapses around us... as journalists like Assange are persecuted and even murdered along with the 13,600 children (to date) in Palestine with bipartisan agreement? When will you and other well meaning people on the left realize that "lesser evil" means pure evil (in this case Beelzebub vs. Satan)? When will you realize that working people need to form their own party... yesterday. And that channeling progressive workers and those fighting for the rights of Blacks, gays, trans people, Palestinians, indigenous people and women into the Democratic Party is why the status quo gets no better but becomes even worse year after year?

Sincerely,
Roger Rudenstein
Durham, N.H.
Roger:
You charge us with "giving short shrift" to the ongoing, U.S.-funded massacre of Palestinians. Given the difficulty of defining "full shrift," we'll just plead nolo contendere.

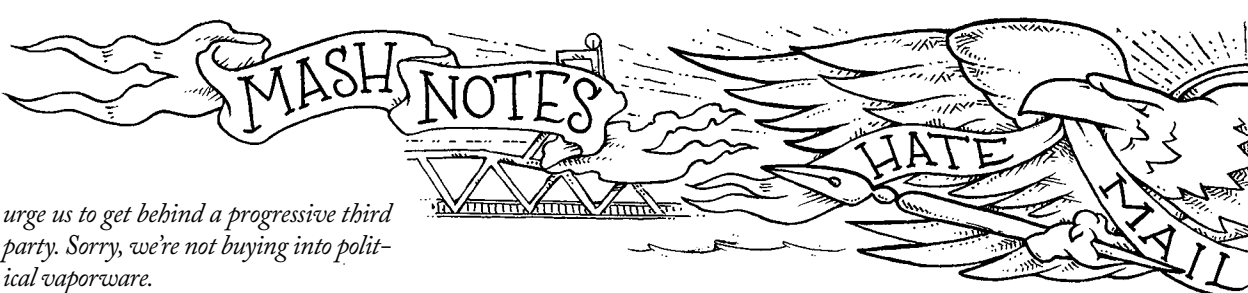
You ask if we fear being labeled anti-semitic by the pro-Israel lobby. No, but we do expect it.

Is reporting on genocide a "one and done" matter? Clearly not. You're welcome to attempt to hold us to whatever standard you set on that issue. Just be aware that we reject the fatuous Hollywood cliché, "failure is not an option."

Now let's get to the meat of it. You write of "the 2024 horse race between the Tweedledee and Tweedledum parties... a race whose winner will change nothing significant despite whatever promises are made."

We vehemently disagree. A cabal of plutocrats and theocrats are scheming to use the 2024 election as an opportunity to put democracy in chains. See the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025. The big money crew wants control, and they're using the religious right to get it. Things are bad enough already. If they pull this off, they'll get much worse, and the odds of a course correction will be lower than ever.

You seem exasperated at our apparent acceptance of the "lesser evil," i.e., Joe Biden and the Democratic Party, and



urge us to get behind a progressive third party. Sorry, we're not buying into political vaporware.

For the sake of argument, though, let's grant you a time machine. You formed a third party X years ago. Laudably, it's to the left of our current feckless Democratic Party. Congratulations! You just elected Donald Trump!

Why? Let's ask Wikipedia: "Duverger's law [which was arrived at some 60 years ago, from decades of empirical studies] holds that in political systems with only one winner (as in the U.S.), two main parties tend to emerge with minor parties typically splitting votes away from the most similar major party." The most similar major party being, of course, the Democrats.

In addition to the probable loss of democracy, there's the question of the continued habitability of the only planet we've got. Between Trump's "Drill, Baby, Drill," and the GOP's indifference to climate catastrophe, we'd call that a significant issue.

The Editor

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U.S. Must Continue to Support Ukraine

To the Editor:
We left our homeland, Hungary, during the 1956 Revolution as five- and six-year-olds. At the time, Hungary was a satellite state of the Soviet Union. For various political reasons, our family faced a grim future, even possible arrest. But we had the good fortune to be sponsored by an American company and allowed to emigrate to the U.S.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Soviet Union and Western nations finally signed a peace treaty ending World War II. The signatories of that treaty, including Russia, agreed to national borders, including Ukraine's.

Now President Putin is claiming that Ukraine belongs to Russia, and has hinted those other countries, e.g., Poland and Hungary, might also belong to Russia. Ukraine has asked

NATO and the European Union for aid and weapons to defend its sovereignty. They are the ones fighting and dying. To date, both the US and Europe have committed billions of dollars for direct military aid to Kyiv. In addition, EU countries have taken in more than three million Ukrainian refugees, which have cost them over \$60 billion. The European NATO allies have also pledged additional billions in military and economic aid, but a bill to provide further U.S. military support is stalled in Congress, even though Ukraine is running short on ammunition.

Why is supporting Ukraine in the best interest of the United States? Thanks to countries like the U.S., Canada, Germany, the NATO alliance was created after World War II to ensure no more wars would occur in any NATO state. This alliance had been successful until 2014 when Russia unilaterally annexed Crimea, and two years ago invaded Ukraine.

However, since Russia is now also threatening NATO countries, the U.S. could be pulled into the conflict because of our commitment to defend any attacked NATO country. Our country's best interest is served by a strong NATO that avoids direct military intervention, and supports the brave Ukrainians who are also fighting for our common democratic values.

We sincerely ask all fair-minded Americans, Democrats, Republicans and Independents, to contact their Congressional representatives, and to insist that they support Ukraine.

Imre Somssich Ph.D, is a retired Research Group Leader of the Max Planck Institute for Plant Breeding in Cologne, Germany

Peter Somssich, Ph.D, is a retired physicist and material scientist and former NH State Representative living in Portsmouth, N.H.

"Think of the Extraterine Children"
Dear Editor:

For decades "pro-life" Republicans have claimed that life begins at conception. That position became an official legal determination when the Alabama Supreme Court decided that, in fact, life does begin at conception when it ruled that embryos are "extraterine children," and the accidental destruction of embryos is considered a wrongful death. This raises enormous political, social and legal issues now that Alabama has opened Pandora's Box.

There are probably many frozen embryos in Alabama awaiting a possible in vitro fertilization (IVF). Since these embryos are now considered "children" they must be either used for IVF or kept in a frozen state forever, since destroying them would be committing a wrongful death. This begs a number of serious questions. Does keeping an embryo, or a "child" according to Alabama, in a frozen state for an undetermined amount of time constitute child abuse? Are women in Alabama who use an intrauterine device (IUD) for contraception committing a wrongful death since the IUD prevents a fertilized egg (post-conception) from attaching to the uterus? Are these "children" entitled to any inheritance from their legal parents upon their deaths? Will these "children" be counted in the census of the State in which they reside and used to determine Congressional representation and for other purposes? Can their legal parents claim these "children" as dependents on their Alabama State income tax as they now claim their other "extraterine children"? I am sure there are other ethical and legal issues that now need to be answered.

You may think that the above ques-

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tions are ludicrous, however once you make a legal determination that an embryo is a “child” these questions become very much legitimate. Alabama has determined that an embryo is an “extrauterine child.” For that matter, every child born alive is considered an “extrauterine child” As such, both deserve the same rights and privileges according to Alabama. The absurdity of the Alabama decision along with the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision overturning *Roe v. Wade* has shown how radical the Republican party has become. Their position on women’s reproductive rights are very much in line with the Taliban, and they need to be held accountable for their extremism.

Rich DiPentima
Portsmouth, N.H.
Rich:
All this lunacy is Eisenhower’s fault. He, and Jimmy Carter. Eisenhower invited the camel to stick its nose under the tent in 1953, when he accepted Billy Graham’s invitation to The Fellowship’s National Prayer Breakfast. Then along came Jimmy Carter, with his born-again Christian heart on his sleeve. Welcome to Gilead.
The Editor

=====
Stand for Nature, Stand for Humans
To the Editor:
Something that my outdoor enthusiast friends and I talk about is the waning winters we are getting here in New Hampshire. The stark contrast between winters we have had for the past couple of years versus the winters we have historically had is remarkable. It has been all over the news that 2023 was the hottest year on record for our planet; it seems that we hear that every year now. In particular, I have noticed the stark lack of snowfall and true winter in our area. I love winter,

and I love the cold. As an avid xc [cross country] skier and concerned human on this planet, this matters to me a great deal. And I notice that, when we do get snow, the temperatures are so unstable that they often rise, and the snow quickly starts to disappear.

Perhaps living in another part of the country or world that does not experience such drastic changes in climate throughout the year, one may not notice as acutely how dramatically climate change is impacting our planet. But, in northern New England, I have noticed a huge shift. Winters are not as cold, or the cold isn’t as consistent throughout the winter. We have far less snow, which impacts a whole host of things in our ecosystem, least of which is our famous maple sugar production. And it’s not just our winters. Our summers have dramatically changed. Where we once would get maybe one week of hot humid weather with very pleasant dry, milder warm weather and cool nights we now have weeks and weeks of heat and humidity and warmer nights, which is deeply troubling to me.

We are clearly not doing enough as a species to keep our planet healthy, hospitable, and thriving for all living creatures. The flora and fauna in our communities do not have a say in what is happening to them. Therefore we, as people, need to defend and care for them. We can do so by legally recognizing that Nature has the right to exist, flourish, and naturally evolve. When we protect Nature, we also protect future generations of humans because we are Nature too.

Reach out to the N.H. Community Rights Network (NHCRN) to learn more at info@nhcommunityrights.org and visit us as www.nhcommunityrights.org.
Alexis Eynon

Thornton, N.H.
Alexis:
From the 1930s into the 1950s, our uncle Fred Hill and some friends would cut enough foot-thick blocks of ice from the pond to fill a sawdust-insulated ice house. All summer long, he and Esther used a literal icebox to keep their food cool. Then Public Service came in, with its poles and wires. That was the end of the ice cutting. Now climate change precludes any notion of bringing ice-cutting back.
That’s just a personal, sentimental, nostalgic sort of loss. What’s coming—in the absence of the sort of work you’re doing—will be universal and existential.
The Editor

=====
Trump’s Increasing Mental Instability
To the Editor:
In 2023 a jury ruled [former President Donald J.] Trump had sexually assaulted and defamed E. Jean Carroll. They awarded Ms. Carroll \$5 million. Instead of paying the bill, he launched into further attacks against Ms. Carroll. She filed a new defamation lawsuit against Trump. Trump could have kept his mouth shut and hoped for a similar verdict. Instead, he attacked the judge and Ms. Carroll. He muttered in court that the trial was a witch hunt and a con job. This time the jury awarded Ms. Carroll \$83.5 million which, for now, proved enough for Trump to stop attacking her.
In 2022 the State of New York sued Trump alleging he had fraudulently inflated the worth of his properties when seeking loans and deflating their worth when filing his taxes. In 2023, the judge ruled he, two of his sons and his company had committed fraud. Trump’s response was to attack the judge, the judge’s assistant and New York’s Attorney General. This was not a jury trial. The same judge would decide the penalties.
His sons listened to their lawyers and claimed they trusted the company’s accountant’s valuations of

the company’s properties when they signed off on them. His sons were penalized \$4 million each.
Trump ignored his lawyers. He testified the fraudulent evaluations of his properties were correct or even low. He continued his attacks on the judge, both outside and inside the court. His lawyers could not control him even after the judge pleaded with them to do so. He treated the trial as a campaign fundraiser instead of something with real consequences. The end result was a \$354.9 million penalty. With interest, the penalty could be \$450 million. Trump was also barred from any top job in a New York company for three years. He now has 30 days to pay the penalty, with interest, before he can appeal the ruling.

The 2016 Trump listened to his advisors and appointees. Sometimes he took their advice. The 2024 Trump does neither and to date it has cost him at least \$438.4 million. He continues to claim he has immunity to commit any crime and for any crime he has already committed. His actions show him to be a mentally unstable person. America cannot afford to have such an unstable person as president or in any public office.
Walter Hamilton
Portsmouth, N.H.
Walter:
At the rate his brain appears to be rotting, we can easily imagine Trump being reduced to a suet-like lump of incoherence. Sadly, his base might not notice or care.
The Editor

=====
Spare the Journalist
Dear *N.H. Gazette* Editor:
I am sending a postcard message to Pres. Biden. A postcard, so it doesn’t wait “to be opened.” All can read it along the way, too. Message: [Will] Julian Assange be extradited to the U.S. AND BE AT RISK OF EXECUTION?
[There is] No way a reporter of Iraq War fact [should] be at risk of execution! If exposing some of its [the war’s] facts is a risk to him, open an investigation into how we got into the Iraq War while G. W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Condoleezza Rice

are still alive. They, too, should be at risk of execution. They started the war with lies of WMD, weapons of mass destruction. Britain investigated then-P.M. Tony Blair’s role, his part in the the WMD lies, in their Chilcot Report (begun in 2009, published in 2016). [On our] side of the Atlantic, the lying to get us into war was never investigated. Time is now. If Assange’s life is at risk for getting truth to our U.S. public, let’s get the whole truth to our U.S. public. Spare the journalist.
Lynn Rudmin Chong
Sanbornton, N.H.
Lynn:
There’s nothing the Military-Industrial Complex hates more than a person who tells the truth.
The Editor

=====
The Supremes Are On Trump’s Team
Dear Editor:
The Republican dominated U.S. Supreme Court has placed the interests of Donald Trump ahead of the interests of the nation. They have decided to hear the appeal of the unanimous decision of the Appeals Court that stated that Mr. Trump did not have immunity for crimes committed while in office. The Appeals court decision was ironclad and totally rejected any legal or constitutional claims of presidential immunity.
The Supreme Court could have justifiably rejected to hear Trump’s appeal and let the lower court’s decision stand. If they had done so, it would have allowed the scheduled criminal trial involving Trump’s actions on January 6, 2021 to take place. However, the Supreme Court decided to take on the appeal.
Jack Smith, the Special Counsel leading the prosecution of Donald Trump, asked the Supreme Court on February 13th to act quickly to resolve the immunity claims case in order to allow justice to be done. However, the Supreme Court decided to hold oral arguments on the case the week of April 22nd. Why such a long delay in hearing arguments on such a monumental case? Why wait almost two months for arguments while we are

to next page

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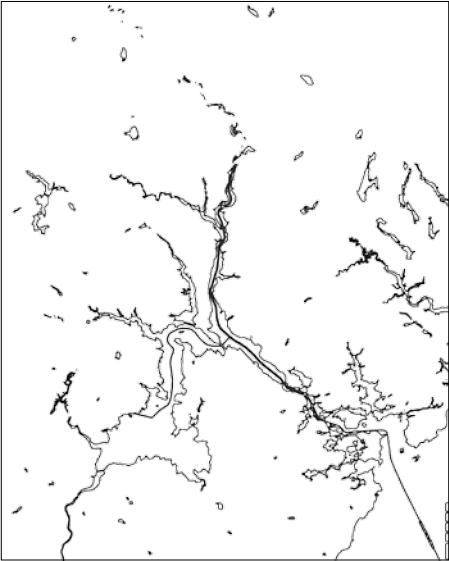
What do we choose to remember with memorial markers, buildings and community projects?

Origins Story

In 1623, David Thomson settled at Odiorne Point. 2023 celebrates 400th Anniversary

To learn more about memorials and what else we choose to remember go to PortsmouthGenome.org Join the conversation.
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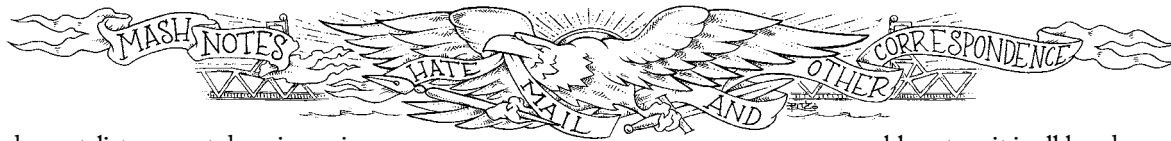
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Mash Notes, Hate Mail, &c.
from page five



the midst of a Presidential election season? The answer is unfortunately too clear. This Supreme Court is doing everything possible to help Donald Trump by causing unnecessary delays of his trial, hoping to run out the clock before the November election and handing Trump a get out of jail free card.

In contrast, in the 2000 presidential election case of *Bush v. Gore*, the Supreme Court held oral arguments on December 11th and announced its decision on December 12th. While many disagreed with the decision, at least a decision was rendered in a timely manner so the nation could move on, unlike the current Supreme Court which is delaying and denying justice to the American people in order to protect Donald Trump.

Rich DiPentima
Portsmouth, N.H.
Rich:

Maybe the Sainted Founders of Our Great Republic foresaw Donald Trump being born with a gold-plated "Get Out of Jail Free" card in his tiny, ketchup-smeared fist, and wrote certain provisions to that effect into the Constitution. Who can say? Perhaps only our black-robed Justices, using the magical Ouija Board supplied to them by the Head Federalist, Leonard Leo, can.

The Editor

All Hands On Deck!

To the Editor;

Recently, Tom Parker, Chief Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, justified the court's decision to designate frozen embryos as "extrauterine children" in biblical scripture. His commentary as well as the prevalence of Christian Nationalist rhetoric at the recent CPAC conference are examples of the pervasive influence of white evangelical and fundamentalist Christianity on MAGA Republican policy. Following their success in enacting Draconian anti-abortion laws after the Supreme Court's denial of abortion as a right, it is apparent that the fun-

damentalists are not done imposing Christian doctrine on secular issues.

Political activism by fundamentalist Christians is not new. In the '70s, Jerry Falwell abandoned his mission of preparing believers for the Kingdom of God for activism in the service of conservative politics. His Moral Majority movement actively promoted Ronald Reagan's presidential candidacy among evangelical Christians and was a significant factor in his election. Falwell's Liberty University became a center of political activism for conservative Republicans until a series of scandals engulfed the university. As Falwell's Moral Majority fell apart, fundamentalist support for Republican policies was taken up by other actors such as Ralph Reed and Pat Robertson of the Christian Coalition. Their message was clearly political although it was always couched in religious rhetoric. Literally dozens of evangelical and fundamentalist ministers have established congregations where the primary mission is not the spiritual nurturing of their flock but the demonization of Democrats and coastal elites. For them, politics represents an apocalyptic struggle for existence against demonic forces.

That fundamentalists view their conflict with Progressives and coastal elites as an existential threat is not surprising. They believe they are in possession of absolute truth as revealed by God. The truth has been disclosed in holy scriptures that are inerrant; deviancy from doctrine is considered a sacrilege. As true believers in a revealed faith, fundamentalists find no bargaining ground in matters of values and morals. When disagreement over value issues such as abortion, gay marriage and gender rights emerge, it is a short trip for these absolutists to view the conflict as an existential threat to their faith. The most extreme representation of fundamentalist belief is Christian Nationalism. The adherents to this doctrine believe that as recipients

of God's truth, they cannot be held accountable to any secular authority. Furthermore, they believe that God has called Christians to exercise dominion over society and the church should hold authority over all other institutions. Christian Nationalism is an obvious threat to secular democracy; its similarity to radical Islam as practiced by ISIS and the Taliban is clear.

The greatest concentration of evangelicals and other fundamentalist sects is found in rural sections of the South and Midwest. These are the regions that have suffered the greatest damage due to globalization and technological change, losing millions of blue-collar manufacturing jobs while coastal cities prospered. During the same period, many agricultural and coal mining jobs also disappeared due to the implementation of new technologies. As the heartland suffered economic privation and uncertainty, residents perceived national power brokers as unconcerned with their plight and social elites as derisive of their rural lifestyle. The combination of threats to economic security combined with a perceived disregard for their fundamental religious values provided a toxic mix for evangelicals conditioned to believe they are heirs to God's kingdom. It represented not only economic insecurity but also an attack on identity and dignity that was guaranteed to produce resentment and backlash. Trump was well prepared to take advantage of the malaise.

Christian fundamentalists are not heirs to the Enlightenment tradition of reason and logical discourse. They are true believers who will not be convinced of error by critical discourse, preferring instead to rely on "revealed" theology. This predisposition has been made worse because they believe that their basic beliefs are under attack. They also provide the core of MAGA Republicans who continue to believe Trump's lies and support him in the face of his increasingly deranged statements and several indictments, and their support will not change. For all

reasonable voters, it is all hands-on-deck in '24.

Robert D. Russell, Ph.D.
Harrisburg, Pa.



Mr. A.D. Leonard, of Utica, N.Y., suffered severely from Liver and Kidney troubles, until he began taking Hood's Sarsaparilla, which effected a perfect cure.

It's Time to Say No to Israel

To the Editor:

The state of Israel was self-declared in 1948 following a genocidal assault on Palestine by a Zionist terrorist faction, well-armed by Western Powers. 500 villages were massacred and 750,000 Palestinians were driven off their lands and out of their homes. And periodically, over the past 75 years, Israel "mows the lawn," killing and maiming thousands, rampaging with tanks and bulldozers, and sending missiles and bombs to greet residents via jets and attack helicopters.

Meanwhile, Israel grabs more and more of the Palestinian territory. And now, the Israeli settlers want to further expand their illegal real estate and have it all! To acquire their ends means total annihilation, no water, no food, no electricity, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. Isn't it long past time that all nations stood up to Israeli intentions and said a resounding, NO, no more bombs, no more billions of tax dollars? The game is over. Get rid of Bibi Netanyahu and rejoin the world of responsible nations. Palestine is a perceived "existential threat" because Israel is an overbearing, intrusive actual threat to Palestinians and the entire Mid-

dle East.

Genevieve Harris-Fraser
Orange, Mass.

Safer Weather and Less-Drafty Homes
To the Editor:

"Extreme weather event" is something you hear a lot these days. Occasionally you may also hear about efforts to "adapt" or for "resiliency." But are we hearing about how to avoid these weather disasters in the first place?

The N.H. Legislature is considering bills that could make a real difference to weather outcomes. We can spend our time debating if climate change is real and if humans are to blame, or we could trust science and lower our carbon emissions and weather anxiety.

HB 1059 and SB373 would update building codes while **excluding** energy codes. Residents (owners and renters) will be purchasing an extra 10-20 percent for heating fuel, if these building codes pass as written. Senator Shaheen warns that N.H. won't qualify for a number of federal funds, including some workforce training, if we don't adopt current energy codes. Please ask your Representatives and municipal leaders to insist on adding an amendment to **include** up-to-date energy codes in HB 1059 and SB373.

Going further, SB437 would make it nearly impossible for any municipality to adopt more ambitious standards, by creating a daunting approval process. We usually applaud "local control," so why make it difficult when we could be helping Granite Staters reduce their fossil fuel dependence?

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Learn more at a free webinar sponsored by N.H. Healthcare Workers for Climate Action and N.H. Network: "Building Codes: Your health, your wallet, and energy efficiency," March 7, 4:00 - 5:00 p.m., registration at bit.ly/Building_codes.

Susan Richman
Durham, N.H.

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Why I'm Still Here

by W.D. Ehrhart

Back in the spring of 1973, I was about to graduate from college and trying to figure out what to do next. The Vietnam War, in which I had participated as a U.S. Marine, had been the bane of my life for more than eight years, and seemed as if it would never end. I hated Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, and I'd had enough of the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave, and I didn't want to be in this country any longer.

But I had only my Honorable Discharge and a Bachelor of Arts degree, no real work experience, certainly no career, and no foreign language skills. And I didn't want to kill myself. So what options did I have?

Back in the summer of 1969, between the Marines and college, I spent some time as a crewman on a small Irish freighter sailing between Liverpool and Dublin. The mostly Irish crew could care less about the American war in Vietnam. They were focused on "the Troubles" in Northern Ireland. It was the only time in eight years that I had been anything even vaguely resembling happy.

And so I decided I would go back to sea. I managed to get a job, first in the steward's department and then in the engine room, on an American oil tanker sailing off the West Coast. It was everything I'd hoped it would be. Good pay. Whales and porpoises. A giant Erector Set to amuse myself with. And no news. The entire Yom Kippur War was over before I even knew it had started.

Unfortunately, the U.S. Coast Guard and ARCO company officials raided our ship in Long Beach harbor one morning, and they took exception to some of the substances they found in my cabin. I was eventually exonerated in a federal maritime administrative law court, but

that ended my career as a merchant seaman. I was back on the beach and stuck with America again.

Fast forward to January 1991. George Herbert Hoover Walker Bush had just upgraded Desert Shield to Desert Storm, and the United States military was about to embark on another stupid war, this one to reward the Emir of Kuwait for stealing Iraqi oil by putting him back on his gold-plated toilet. I wasn't at all surprised by what the U.S. government was doing, but I was mightily dismayed that the American people were so willing to send their children off to another bumfuck war so soon after the fiasco of Vietnam.

At that point, I remembered a few years earlier when the prime minister of New Zealand said that he was opposed to his country becoming non-nuclear, but he had gone along with it because it's what the people of New Zealand wanted. And I thought about living in a country where the government actually did what the people wanted, and I wrote to the embassy of New Zealand in Washington, D.C., and discovered that both teachers (me) and computer programmers (my wife) were on their list of desirable immigrants. I said to my wife, "Let's go."

She said, "Let me get this straight. You want me to drop the life I've built, leave behind everyone I know, and go to a country where I've never been, and where I will know no one but you?"

I had to admit that she had a point. And that was the end of that plan.

Fast forward again to the present day. The U.S. has barely survived four chaotic and insane years with a narcissistic, infantile, sexist, homophobic, racist, ignorant, criminal grifter in the White House. The current occupant of the White House is a reasonably decent (for a politician)

but uninspiring old man who has no business running for president at his age. And the narcissistic, infantile, sexist, homophobic, racist, ignorant, criminal grifter is poised to be returned to the White House by a substantial portion of the electorate that is—forgive me—little better, certainly no smarter, than the man they are so keen on.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court is now controlled by "Justices" who wouldn't know an ethics violation or a conflict of interest from a jelly donut, and who are about as impartial as Taylor Swift at a Kansas City Chiefs football game. Congress is about as dysfunctional as a toilet with a clogged soil pipe. The one person still in the race for the Republican presidential nomination is called a "moderate," even though she is opposed to a woman's right to control her own body, the Paris Climate Accord, and Obamacare, and wants to build the wall on our border with Mexico, and deport illegal immigrants en masse.

And if that weren't enough, we are living in a Wild West shooting gallery where there are more firearms in the hands of private citizens than there are hands to hold all those firearms while the odds of repealing the 2nd Amendment are right up there with legalization of incest and child pornography.

The problem today is that any country I might be interested in emigrating to doesn't want me—not at the age of 75—unless I show up with a lot of \$\$\$\$\$. And I mean a whole lot of \$\$\$\$\$. Hundreds of thousands of dollars. Enough to make sure I don't become a burden on the social safety systems that natural-born citizens of Canada, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand have been paying into all of their lives.

I have friends who emigrated—for free—to Ireland a few years ago,

but his grandmother was born in Ireland so he gets to be an Irish citizen, and his wife gets to come along because she's his wife. My closest European relative is an Italian great-grandfather, which doesn't get me an Italian passport. And besides, I don't speak Italian.

And how the heck am I supposed to leave behind all my friends and all my connections built over a lifetime, and start again in a strange community in a foreign country, even if I had the \$\$\$\$\$ to do it, and even if they do speak English? I don't even do Zoom or Skype, and at my age I'm not likely to start now.

So it looks like I'm stuck in the Disunited States of America for what is left of my life. I'm trying to make the best of it. Today was a beautiful day, and I joined several hundred like-minded citizens on a silent walk for a ceasefire in Gaza. And I write essays like this one that don't really change anything because mostly the people who read what I write already think pretty much like I do, but writing it down keeps my head from exploding.

And maybe Dolt .45 won't become Dolt .47 after all, and I won't end up in a concentration camp for political dissidents, or shot to death by a Proud Boy wielding an AR-15 in my local CVS drugstore, and my future and the future of my country won't turn out to be as bleak as I'm imagining it will be. At times like this, I find comfort in Emily Dickinson's poem: "Hope' is the thing with feathers— / That perches in the soul— / And sings the tune without the words— / And never stops— at all—"

—==—

W. D. Ehrhart is a retired Master Teacher of History & English, and author of a Vietnam War memoir trilogy published by McFarland & Co.

—==—

What If There Was a Natural Substitute for Plastic? There Is!

by Jim Hightower

In 1863, humorist Artemus Ward wrote a satire on hucksterism, making up a tale of Abe Lincoln being asked to endorse a piece of quackery about spiritualism. Not wanting to offend, the Lincoln character slyly offers non-committal praise: "Well for people who like that kind of thing, I think that is just about the kind of thing they'd like."

But sometimes a product really needs no hype—like this new one I've learned about that's damn-near magical! It's a non-polluting, affordable, natural, job-creating, alternative to plastic stuff. No, seriously—come back here—this is real!

The only fib in my pitch is the word "new." Actually, this product is ancient. It's cork, used for thousands of years by Persians, Egyptians, Greeks, and others to make shoes, fishing gear, etc. But now, it's a sustainable, regenerative material that all sorts of enterprising outfits are using for home construction, clothing, electric cars, spacecraft... and more.

Maybe like me, you've pulled many a wine cork without thinking where does this thing come from? Trees! In particular, the bark of evergreen, Mediterranean cork tree that live for some 200 years. But how sad to cut them down for wine stoppers! No, no—the bark is carefully harvested by skilled workers... then it grows back over about nine years and can be harvested again... and again, creating steady income for small farms. The tree is climate friendly, drought-tolerant, and fire resistant, and the cork itself is renewable, reusable, and biodegradable. Even cork dust is used to produce energy.

Before we let corporate profiteers turn Earth (and us) into a throw-away plastic dump, let's recognize that nature is the greatest technologist ever. So maybe cooperating with her can be more beneficial than constantly trying to overpower and trash her.

—==—

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The Alleged News®

from page three

Portsmouth Democratic Roundtable March 12, 2024

After two years of hibernation, the monthly Portsmouth Democratic Roundtable resumes on 2nd Tuesday of each month, from 6:30-8:00 p.m. at a local restaurant in Portsmouth. The next Roundtable will be on March 12th. Call or contact Peter Somssich for the location.

The Roundtable is an opportunity to socialize with Democrats and other friends without any agenda or rigid structure. It is an opportunity for new residents of Portsmouth to meet those involved in the Portsmouth Democrats and learn of opportunities to get involved, suggest new ideas, or be supportive of planned initiatives. Contact Peter Somssich at (603) 436-5382 (No texts, please.) or peter.somssich@gmail.com.

RiverRun Book of the Fortnight

It finally dawned on us that we could ask Tom Holbrook, of RiverRun Bookstore on Daniel Street, to regularly recommend a book for our readers. Ever accomodating, he agreed. Let's begin:

I Have Some Questions for You, by Rebecca Makkai. New in paperback, this clever novel, set at a New Hampshire boarding school, deals with memory, cancel culture, and our broken justice system.

RiverRun has been a great help to us since back in its Commercial Alley days. Our volunteers pick up papers there, and deliver them to scores of locations around town, and places more far-flung. We can never repay Tom and the gang at RiverRun for their kindness over the decades—but you, dear reader, can. Just visit riverrunbookstore.com/ Patreon, and sign up for a monthly membership. You'll be supporting a great bookstore, and this paper, too.



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