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THE EDITORS

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Insurgent Triumph in NYC

The stunning victory in June by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a 28-year-old democratic socialist, over Representative Joseph Crowley, a 10-term incumbent and the heir apparent to House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi, has discombobulated the Democratic establishment and the mainstream media. "No one is safe," an unnamed and somewhat hyperbolic Democratic strategist announced to ABC News.

The media that largely ignored Ocasio-Cortez's unheralded, underfunded campaign now seem intent on misinterpreting it. On the right, she's portrayed as a radical extremist leading the Democrats over a cliff. "Red Alert," screamed the *New York Post* headline. "Young socialist upsets King of Queens," the paper continued, while proclaiming Ocasio-Cortez the "vanguard of the Democratic Party." *The Washington Post*'s Dana Milbank rushed to debunk rumors of a broader insurgency, asserting that Crowley lost "because of the changing demographics in his district." Pelosi echoed that point: "They made a choice in one district.… We have an array of genders, generations, geography, and the rest—opinion—in our caucus, and we're very proud of that."

Happily, Ocasio-Cortez, a volunteer for Bernie Sanders's 2016 presidential campaign who took three jobs to help her family fight off foreclosure after her father died of cancer during the financial crisis, was far more lucid about her victory. "We beat a machine with a movement," she said. "We're in the middle of a movement in this country.… That movement is going to come from voters.… It's not just one district."

Her stunning victory and those of other progressives should put to rest many of the misleading narratives of recent months. For example, she dismisses the tension between identity and ideology as a false choice. As she told *Nation* reporter Raina Lipsitz, "I can't name a single issue with roots in race that doesn't have economic implications, and I cannot think of a single economic issue that doesn't have racial implications. The idea that we have to separate them out and choose one is a con."

Ocasio-Cortez swamped Crowley with 57 percent of the vote in a district that is about 70 percent people of color. But some of her biggest margins came in Queens neighborhoods like Astoria and Sunnyside, among the whitest areas in the district, which are increasingly attracting young, creative types—who are also most inclined to support insurgent left candidates. As *Salon*'s Andrew O'Hehir concluded, "If she got Latino voters excited because she looked like them and spoke their language, she got Bernie Sanders voters excited for exactly the same reason."

Ocasio-Cortez points out that the focus on "identity" also discounts the hard work of her grassroots campaign. Crowley is head of the Queens Democratic machine, so powerful that he hadn't had a primary opponent in years, and he outspent her 10 to 1. She countered with small donations and shoe leather—a volunteer army who knocked on doors and leafleted at subways. That isn't easy, and it's a testament to Ocasio-Cortez's candidacy and campaign that she could overcome those barriers so decisively.

Her victory—and that of Ben Jealous for the Democratic nomination for governor of Maryland, as well as down-ballot candidates like Summer Lee and Sara Innamorato this past spring—also put the lie to the mainstream media's charge that the insurgency begun by Sanders was "flailing," unable to translate his popularity into victories in the primaries. In fact, more and more of the party's "mainstream" candidates are embracing elements of the Sanders agenda, particularly Medicare for All. And progressive challengers have fared remarkably well in primary battles. As Nebraska Democratic state chair Jane Kleeb, a board member of the Sanders spin-off group Our Revolution, noted: "We have about a 50 percent win record, which I think is a miracle given the fact that we usually endorse the underdog, or a woman, or a

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VOLUME 307, NUMBER 3,
July 30/August 6, 2018

The digital version of this issue is available to all subscribers July 5 at TheNation.com.

Editor's note: The two children pictured in "Lessons From the Opioid Epidemic" are models.

BY THE NUMBERS

22
States with a "fair share" provision for union collective-bargaining costs prior to the Supreme Court's *Janus* decision

3.5%
Estimated drop in the Democrats' 2016 vote share due to right-to-work laws, which decrease union turnout—enough to have cost Hillary Clinton both Washington State and Michigan

726K
Number of public-sector workers likely to leave their unions as a result of the *Janus* decision

35%
Amount by which Wisconsin's union membership declined after the state passed an anti-collective-bargaining law in 2011

$28M
Estimated amount the *Janus* decision will cost the National Education Association, the nation's largest teachers' union, which has a $367 million budget

—Sophie Kasakove

person who comes from a community of color." And, as any organizer will attest, the challengers who fall short are helping to build the movement and spread the agenda.

New York's 14th Congressional District is one of the most Democratic in the country, but Ocasio-Cortez's victory directly challenges the established party's encrusted ways, which favor candidates who can raise big money. The party's operatives still advise caution in promoting bold ideas like Medicare for All, which can alienate deep-pocketed donors. "The Democratic Party takes working-class communities for granted; they take people of color for granted," Ocasio-Cortez said. The party assumes "that we're going to turn out no matter how bland or half-stepping [their] proposals are."

Ocasio-Cortez ran not just against Trump but in favor of a strong progressive agenda: Medicare for All, tuition-free public college, a $15 minimum wage, a federal jobs guarantee, a green New Deal, abolition of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency, and more. As she told Stephen Colbert on *The Late Show* after her victory, "In a modern, moral, and wealthy society, no person in America should be too poor to live."

"We were so clear about our values," she added. "We were always naming what we wanted to accomplish." The contrast with Crowley wasn't merely about generation and identity; it was about clarity and boldness. She got that right, and the party and its candidates would do well to pay attention.

SCOTUS Is Political

And Democrats need to be honest about that.

For all the heists and scams of the Trump era, perhaps the greatest theft occurred before he even took office—and Mitch McConnell was the perpetrator. As Senator Elizabeth Warren noted recently, "They stole a Supreme Court seat, and they installed union-buster Neil Gorsuch on the bench. And now their investment is paying off."

Indeed it is. So far this year, the Supreme Court has delivered blow after blow to workers, culminating in the *Janus v. AFSCME* decision, which declared that public-sector workers do not have to pay "fair share" union fees to support collective-bargaining activities.

And this is only the beginning—especially with the recently announced retirement of Justice Anthony Kennedy. As Democratic contenders for the presidential race in 2020 stake out positions like a federal jobs guarantee and Medicare for All, the threat of a Supreme Court that could reverse progressive legislative accomplishments hangs like a dagger over the Democratic Party. The specter of Lochnerism (a term for the era in which conservative justices used specious constitutional justifications to achieve political ends) looms large.

When *Janus* was decided, President Trump was unafraid to declare on Twitter that it was a "Big loss for the coffers of the Democrats!" Speaking about the Supreme Court in such nakedly political terms may have horrified some Beltway insiders, but it's a truth that Democrats need to speak as well. And so far, many haven't.

COMMENT

My think tank, Data for Progress, has been studying the messaging on the Supreme Court from elected Democrats on social media and other channels. We found that Democratic senators tweet less frequently about the Court than Republicans do. In addition, when we examined tens of thousands of newsletters sent by members of Congress since mid-2009, which were compiled by political scientist Lindsey Cormack, we found that "Democrats are less likely to mention the Supreme Court than Republicans," according to Data for Progress's Jon Green. "And when they do mention the Court, it is more often to celebrate liberal decisions than it is to alert their subscribers when the Court has sided with conservatives. If this pattern is consistent across other channels of communication between the party and its voters, it could contribute to a misperception of the Court's ideological alignment among the Democratic base."

The threat of a Supreme Court that could reverse progressive accomplishments looms large.

As a result, Democratic voters largely view the Court as an apolitical, centrist institution. In my research, I've found that Democratic voters are more likely than Republicans to approve of the Court—and that 67 percent of Democrats view themselves as more liberal than the Court, while 82 percent of Republicans see themselves as more conservative. Perhaps most disturbingly, 28 percent of independents see themselves as more liberal than the Court, while 47 percent see themselves as more conservative.

But at least some Democrats are starting to get tough and speak real truths about the Roberts Court and what it aims to do. "Republicans and their billionaire buddies have pushed through judges like Justice Gorsuch to rig the system against workers," Senator Warren told me. "They can use a stolen Supreme Court seat to try to break the backs of unions and deliver punch after punch to working people—but we will fight back," she added.

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, who has been leading the charge for policies like a federal jobs guarantee and has co-sponsored legislation to implement Medicare for All and expand unions' bargaining rights, echoed that hard line. "Elections have consequences," Gillibrand said, "and those consequences have been severe on the future of our judicial system under President Trump, who is remaking the federal bench to be more hostile toward workers' rights and civil rights for generations to come."

David Faris, a professor of politics at Roosevelt University and the author of *It's Time to Fight Dirty: How Democrats Can Build a Lasting Majority in American Politics*, believes that Democrats should be talking like this. "It's so important to use the Court as a rallying tactic," he told me, "and as a way of helping people understand the legal bases of injustice, particularly as they relate to things like economic inequality and racial and gender injustice."

(continued on page 7)

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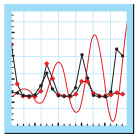


THE SCORE/BRYCE COVERT + MIKE KONCZAL

Service Not Included

In mid-June, Washington, DC, voters didn't just mark a ballot in a local-government primary. They also marked an important step forward for some of the district's most economically vulnerable workers: those who rely on tips. Residents approved a measure that, if implemented, would require tipped workers to be paid the minimum wage guaranteed to everyone else. In DC, that's $15 an hour by mid-2020.

District of Columbia voters are not the only ones who have sought this basic standard of economic fairness for waitstaff, hotel employees, manicurists, car-wash workers, and bartenders. Eight states—Alaska, California, Hawaii, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington—have a single minimum wage, whether workers earn tips or not. But in the rest of the country, tipped workers can be paid as little as $2.13 an hour, so long as their tips bring up their hourly wage to the federal minimum of $7.25. That makes tipped employees heavily dependent on gratuities to get by. For waitstaff and bartenders, tips make up more than half their income.

That sort of dependence has a damaging effect on workers' financial well-being. In states where tipped workers are paid only $2.13 an hour, nearly one in five waiters and bartenders lives in poverty; in states where they're assured the full minimum wage, about one in 10 does. Yet there's no discernible difference in poverty levels for non-tipped workers between these states; the lower wage appears to be the culprit.

Part of the problem is that while employers are supposed to make up the difference if hourly pay and tips fall below minimum wage, many simply don't. An audit of full-service restaurants conducted by the Department of Labor between 2010 and 2012 uncovered 1,170 violations of the rule and recouped $5.5 million in unpaid wages.

Some tipped workers have objected to requiring a higher base wage because they feel they earn a better living through tips. But a higher wage doesn't mean that customers won't tip—in fact, when there's wage equity, it appears that servers do indeed make more money. Tipped workers in states that require the full minimum wage earn 15 percent more per hour, factoring in both base pay and tips, than those in states that mandate $2.13 an hour. Nor has restaurant employment suffered in states that have abolished the lower tipped wage.

Beyond the financial hardships, tipping is a social convention that has led to social ills. When workers rely on tips to make ends meet, it renders them vulnerable to customers' whims. If they know a server relies on their favor for their gratuities, they know she's more likely to put up with their abuse. But workers in states that have abandoned the tipped wage experience sexual harassment at half the rate of those in states that allow them to be paid less. The greater economic security leads to greater physical and emotional security.

In most US states, tipped workers are guaranteed only a small fraction of the federal minimum wage.

Tipping also perpetuates discrimination. Studies show that customers of all races tip black waiters less than white ones, no matter the level of service; conversely, white servers make more in tips than any other racial group. Customers also tip beautiful women more than those thought unattractive.

The size of a gratuity has little to do with rewarding good service, accounting for less than a 3 percent difference in how much people tip. Instead, people's biases are in the driver's seat.

Unfortunately, the decision by DC voters to phase out the lower minimum for tipped workers isn't the end of the story. Many of the city's dining establishments—backed by big money from the restaurant industry—are vowing to stop the measure from ever taking effect.

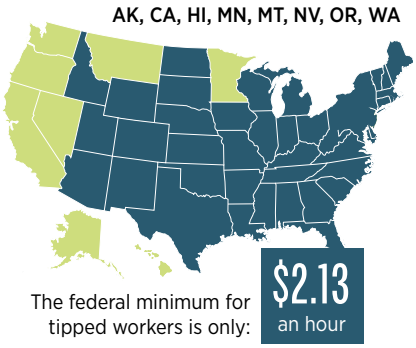
But similar changes could soon be on their way elsewhere. Organizers in Michigan put the same question on their ballot for November. Activists are pushing for the Massachusetts Legislature to increase the minimum wage for all workers in the state. And in New York, Governor Andrew Cuomo convened hearings on whether the state should do away with its lower tipped wage.

What such hearings would show is likely what eight states have already realized: The evidence is overwhelming. It's time to eighty-six the tipped minimum wage.

BRYCE COVERT

Tipped Workers Deserve the Full Minimum Wage

Eight states guarantee all workers the full minimum wage. The rest allow a lower rate for tipped employees.



The poverty rate for tipped restaurant workers is about half in "equal treatment" states.

And not relying on tips reduces sexual harassment.

Female restaurant workers in "equal treatment" states report 1/2 the number of incidents.

Source: Economic Policy Institute analysis of Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement microdata, 2013–15. ROC United report, 2014.

INFOGRAPHIC: TRACY MATSUE LOEFFELHOLZ

GLOBAL WARMING

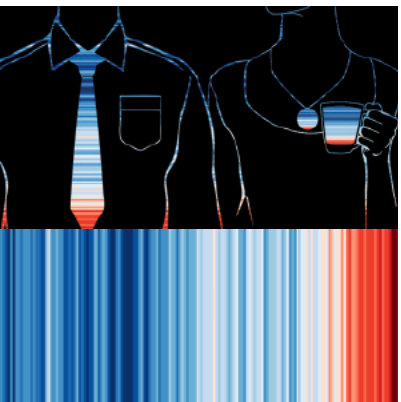
Say It With Stripes

Once again, the Trump administration has targeted a key climate-science agency for a new round of Orwellian rollbacks. A recent presentation for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration revealed that climate science has been scrubbed from NOAA's main research pillars and a new core value added, one very much in line with Trump's energy-"dominance" agenda: "To protect lives and property, empower the economy, and support homeland and national security."

In June, four Republican senators opened a new front in this war, calling for an investigation into the National Science Foundation's funding of a program to help meteorologists better educate viewers on climate science. Senators Ted Cruz, James Inhofe, Rand Paul, and James Lankford—all of whom count the fossil-fuel industry among their top donors—insisted that the NSF "seek[s] to influence political and social debate rather than conduct scientific research."

Many weather forecasters begged to differ. On the first day of summer, meteorologists across the country brandished neckties, necklaces, and coffee mugs with a striped, color-coded pattern symbolizing average global temperatures from 1850 to 2017. Blue stripes represented the cooler years, white stripes the more temperate ones. Not surprisingly, a cluster of bright red stripes blazed at the pattern's far end. That's because the past four years were the hottest ones on record—a message that only a climate-change denier could fail to understand.

—Emmalina Glinskis



Katha Pollitt

When They Go Low

From anti-choicers to Mitch McConnell, the right became uncivil long ago.

Stephanie Wilkinson, owner of the Red Hen restaurant in Lexington, Virginia, made a fatal mistake when she politely ushered White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders off the premises. Instead of basing her objection on the discomfort of her LGBTQ staffers, she should simply have said that serving Sanders was against her religion. She could have quoted Psalm 101:7: "No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house; no one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence." Or I Corinthians 15:33: "Evil communications corrupt good manners." If there's one thing the Bible has plenty of, it's fulminations against putting up with bad people doing bad things. Like lying to the American people about why thousands of children were being ripped from their parents with no plan to reunite them.

SUB JECT to DE BATE

Freedom of religion is the right's legal superpower. If your religion, as interpreted by you, says it's a sin to bake a cake for a same-sex wedding, or that you should humiliate a woman in front of her 7-year-old rather than fill her prescription to end a nonviable pregnancy, or that your employees shouldn't be able to get birth control through their health insurance because God told you it was really abortion even though science says it's not, the Supreme Court says: Go right ahead. Your right to act like an uninformed bigot trumps the rights of LGBTQ people and women and workers and anyone else who gets in the way of your own personal Jesus.

Religion gives you the freedom of speech denied to your opponents; the Court just struck down a California law requiring Christian "crisis pregnancy centers" to inform women of their right to an abortion, a legal procedure, even as states force doctors to read their patients scripts falsely claiming that abortion causes breast cancer, depression, and endless regret. Legislatures cannot force a CPC volunteer to go against her conscience, but they can definitely compel an actual doctor who has performed hundreds of procedures to go against hers.

Claiming that religion gives you the right to harm your fellow Americans probably works best if you're a Christian. Only Christians get to impose their religion on others. A Hindu wouldn't get very far with a lawsuit to shut down the beef industry. As for Islam, Muslims should be grateful to be allowed even to visit, although according to the Court's recent decision, the Muslim ban isn't really a ban on Muslims (see: Venezuela and North Korea), even if President Trump said over and over that that's exactly what it was. A single reference to Hitler by one civil-rights commissioner in the *Masterpiece Cakeshop* case was cause for the Supremes to overturn lower-court rulings against the Christian baker, but Trump's obsessive tweets against Muslims were irrelevant because he said other things, too.

The resignation of Justice Anthony Kennedy ties together the firestorm over "incivility" and the increasingly reactionary and hyper-politicized Court. We would not be where we are today if Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell hadn't violated every civil norm—to say nothing of hundreds of years of precedent—and refused to allow President Obama even a hearing on his choice for the Court. The pretext for this outrageous power grab was sheer effrontery: Since when does a sitting president not get to nominate a justice? But it worked. Democrats fumed, but assumed Hillary Clinton would win the election and it would all come right in the end. Republicans stole the seat and put Neil Gorsuch in it. But at least everyone got to eat their dinner in peace.

And really, what could be more important than that? Just ask the *Washington Post* editorial board, which recently argued that no "special moment" justifies incivility. The politicization of daily life goes both ways, after all: "How hard is it to imagine, for example, people who strongly believe that abortion is murder deciding that judges or other officials who protect abortion rights should not be able to live peaceably with their families?" That argument would be a lot more persuasive were it not the case that Trump supporters, egged on by the president, have already breached every social norm in the book. Right-wing troll Milo Yiannopoulos texted reporters: "I can't wait for the vigilante squads to start gunning journal-

Your right to act like an uninformed bigot trumps the rights of everyone else who gets in the way of your own personal Jesus.

LEFT: TOP: MEDIA MATTERS / MELISSA JOSKOW; BOTTOM: CC 4.0 / ED HAWKINS; RIGHT: ANDY FRIEDMAN

ists down on sight." Two days after his provocation went public, someone did just that at Maryland's *Capital Gazette*, killing five. Now Milo says he was just kidding. A woman recently called a Mexican American doing yard work a rapist who should go back to Mexico (he was actually born here and works as a computer-systems administrator). For years, anti-abortion zealots have done their best to make normal life hell for red-state abortion providers and their patients: picketing their homes, sending—and sometimes fulfilling—death threats, leafleting neighbors, following their children about. Why do you think some clinics have to fly doctors in from out of state? When it comes to so-called pro-lifers, civility left the building a long time ago.

I understand completely why Wilkinson made Sanders leave. She couldn't have known how the incident would be blown up by the paranoid right and seized upon by a media obsessed with a "both sides do it" narrative. If you think all that matters is the midterms, it was probably not a wise thing to do, but who except obsessive politicos thinks like that? Do the Trumpies worry that their "Build that wall" chant might hurt the feelings of Mexican-American computer experts and lose some votes? No matter how vulgar, gross, threatening, cruel, illegal, or insane the right becomes, it's always the left that is warned against piping up too loudly. It's like the old Jewish joke: Three Jews stand before a firing squad. Each one is offered a blindfold. The first Jew takes a blindfold. The second Jew takes a blindfold. The third Jew refuses a blindfold. The second Jew elbows him and says, "Moshe, take the blindfold—don't make trouble."

Sshh, be polite, don't encourage them. When they go low, we go high! May I start you off with a cocktail, sir? The waiter will be around to take your order in a minute. ■

No matter how threatening, cruel, illegal, or insane the right becomes, it's always the left that is warned against piping up too loudly.

(continued from page 4)

Outside groups are gearing up to aid this mission. Demand Justice is prepared to run ads against Democratic senators who enable Trumpist judges. "Understanding and confronting this threat is an essential project for progressive policy-makers and activists," said Brian Fallon, the group's executive director, "or else all our ambitions to secure a $15 minimum wage, Medicare for All, and a jobs guarantee will be doomed from the start."

To the extent that the Roberts Court faces political pressure, it comes largely from the right, not the left. Roberts is viewed as a mostly apolitical actor calling judicial balls and strikes rather than as a partisan warrior. Democrats need to start providing real talk to their base about what's at stake. Thus far, they have been unusually quiet about what may end up being Trump's longest-lasting achievement.

SEAN McELWEE

Sean McElwee is a researcher and writer based in New York City and the co-founder of Data for Progress.

Calvin Trillin
Deadline Poet

'UNDER TRUMP THE GOP HAS BECOME A CULT'

—The Boston Globe

So why do they maintain their loyalty
Despite his lies, despite the fact that he
Acts like a child instead of an adult?
'Cause it's a cult.

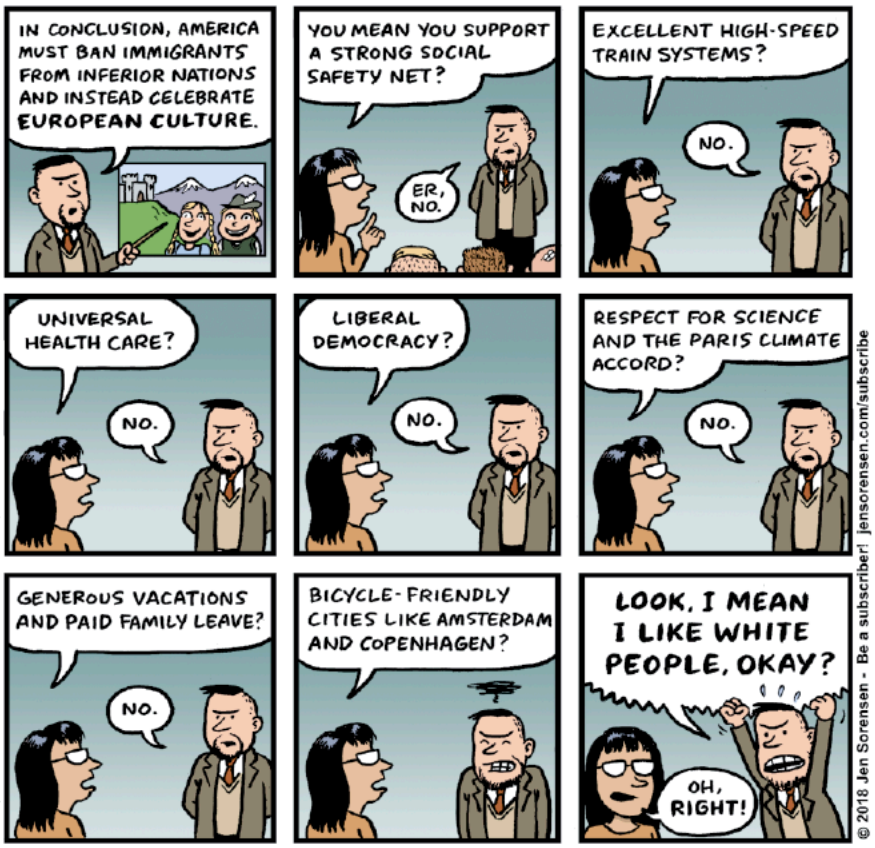
Why would his people always cheer for him
While he, in tweets that are profoundly dim,
Just flails around for allies to insult?
'Cause it's a cult.

His crude remarks imply we should unite
To keep out anyone who isn't white.
That language tends to make his troops exult,
'Cause it's a cult.

It seems impossible that they're not seeing
Their leader as a dreadful human being.
But most of them don't leave as a result,
'Cause it's a cult.

COMIX NATION

JEN SORENSEN



Anthony Kennedy's Legacy

He was, above all, a moderating force on the Supreme Court.

The first case I litigated before Justice Anthony Kennedy, who announced his retirement on June 27 after more than 30 years on the Supreme Court, was *Texas v. Johnson*, the 1989 case that established that the First Amendment protects flag-burning. Kennedy, a mild-mannered Reagan appointee, was no flag-burner. But he provided the crucial fifth vote to strike down Texas's law.

A few years later, I invited him to guest-teach my constitutional-law class at Georgetown. I said he could talk about anything; he chose the flag-burning case. But his real subject was judging. In his hour with the students, he not only stressed the importance of having an open mind, but exemplified it in his openness to the students themselves. Not all judges are like this; Justice Antonin Scalia was always absolutely certain about his views when speaking to students (or to anyone else, for that matter).

I remember arguing to a colleague, a noted gay-rights scholar, that this characteristic meant that Kennedy might be persuaded to vote in favor of other progressive causes. My colleague dismissed the idea, sure that Kennedy would play to type and vote consistently conservative.

Yet it was Kennedy who wrote every one of the Court's decisions protecting gay and lesbian rights, including pathbreaking decisions striking down a Colorado referendum that barred protection against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, and invalidating a Texas law making same-sex "sodomy" a crime. And most importantly, he wrote the majority opinions in *United States v. Windsor* and *Obergefell v. Hodges*, both 5–4 decisions extending constitutional protection to the marriage of same-sex couples. In these and other decisions, he saw in anti-LGBTQ measures a direct affront to the equal dignity of all persons.

COMMENT

Justice Kennedy's role in these cases is often overstated. The Court's recognition of gay rights, and especially marriage equality, was largely attributable to changes outside the Court—in the world at large and the American public in particular. And the champions of those changes were the individuals and organizations that fought for equal respect for gay and lesbian people and relationships for decades, in city-council meetings, corporate boardrooms, state courts and legislatures, ballot-initiative campaigns, and, of course, the streets. But Kennedy, an unlikely ally, was open to acknowledging that the world had changed.

To do so, Kennedy also had to be receptive to the concept of an evolving Constitution, not limited to the specific (and historically constrained) ideas of those who adopted it more than 200 years ago. As he wrote in *Obergefell*:

> The nature of injustice is that we may not always see it in our own times. The generations that wrote and ratified the Bill of Rights and the Fourteenth Amendment did not presume to know the extent of freedom in all of its dimensions, and so they entrusted to future generations a charter protecting the right of all persons to enjoy liberty as we learn its meaning. When new insight reveals discord between the Constitution's central protections and a received legal stricture, a claim to liberty must be addressed.

Still, Kennedy was a conservative. One study identified him as the 10th most conservative justice since 1937. On business cases, he almost always sided with corporations. He also cast crucial votes to gut the Voting Rights Act in *Shelby County v. Holder*, to strike down portions of the Affordable Care Act, to nullify campaign-finance restrictions on corporations in *Citizens United v. FEC*, and often to uphold states' immunity from individuals seeking remedies for violations of their rights. This term, he voted with the conservatives in all 14 of the Court's 5–4 decisions, including decisions upholding the Muslim ban and state voter purges and gravely undermining public-sector unions and workers' rights to pursue their grievances collectively in arbitration. And probably most consequentially, he voted down the line with the Republicans in *Bush v. Gore* to stop the recount and ensure George W. Bush's election in 2000—which in turn brought us the appointments of John Roberts and Samuel Alito.

Still, he was a conservative—the 10th most conservative justice since 1937.

But Kennedy's dual commitment to an open mind and an evolving Constitution meant that he not infrequently ruled in favor of liberty for the marginalized. He wrote historic opinions banning the death penalty and sentences of life without parole for juvenile offenders, and, in *Boumediene v. Bush*, extending habeas corpus to Guantánamo detainees—and the rule of law to the War on Terror.

Because he was open to persuasion, Kennedy could also change his mind—much to Justice Scalia's dismay. Despite having voted with the conservatives on a number of abortion-rights and affirmative-action cases, when directly confronted with the question of whether *Roe v. Wade* should be overruled or affirmative action ended, he voted with his liberal colleagues to reaffirm their proper place. In 1992, in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, he joined Justices Sandra Day O'Connor and David Souter in preserving *Roe v. Wade*, and thus abortion rights. And in 2016, in *Fisher v. University of Texas*, he voted with his liberal colleagues to preserve affirmative action, over dissents that would have declared it unconstitutional.

Kennedy was, above all, a moderating force. Largely because of his votes, the Court remained within the mainstream of American opinion. Chief Justice Roberts and Justices Alito, Clarence Thomas, and Neil Gorsuch are deeply and reliably conservative; they only rarely join their liberal counterparts in closely divided cases. If President Trump names another rigidly right-wing justice, the Court risks becoming an outlier, far more conservative than the country at large. And that would put in peril many rights that hang by a one-vote margin, including abortion rights, affirmative action, LGBTQ equality, and freedom from the establishment of religion. We should demand that any successor show the same open mind, the same moderating temperament, and the same sensitivity to equal dignity for all that Justice Kennedy displayed. DAVID COLE

David Cole, The Nation*'s legal-affairs correspondent, is the national legal director of the ACLU.*

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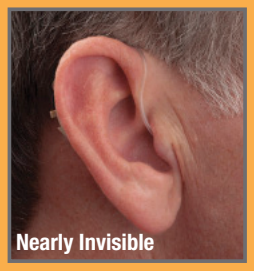

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LAND OF OZ

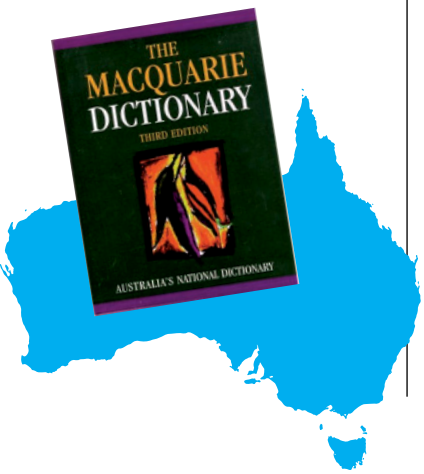
Speech Impediments

On June 14, key members of Australia's right-wing government suggested adopting an English-language requirement for migrants seeking permanent residency status. Though it's not yet clear how such a requirement would be enforced, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has proposed a test demanding "conversational" proficiency.

The announcement came just a few months after the Australian Senate rejected a previous proposal that would have required new citizens to pass a university-level English test, which sparked a backlash even among senators in the right-wing alliance.

It's hard to ignore the xenophobic undertones of the new proposal, which would narrow the pool of eligible immigrants while upholding a centuries-old imperial legacy. Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs Alan Tudge warned that an influx of people speaking other languages could lead to the development of "parallel communities," though he neglected to mention that Australia itself was built on the backs of indigenous peoples. (Nor did he acknowledge the near-eradication of Aboriginal languages over decades of British imperial rule.)

In the era of Brexit and Trump's Muslim bans, when white nationalism threatens to coalesce as the new normal, Australia has an opportunity to reckon with its imperial past. It falls to the country's leaders to decide on which side of history they will land. —Madeleine Han



Kai Wright

Abhorrent, but Not New

Trump has merely amplified policies and sentiments that were already in place.

The Trump era has created a new social ritual, a verbal tic added to any greeting, like a secret handshake to identify yourself as a part of the beleaguered opposition. If I ask someone how they're doing, the traditionally banal exchange now includes a status update on the person's emotional response to the fact of this presidency. E-mail greetings that wish me well invariably come with a caveat: "Well, as well as can be expected, given the state of the world." Life's normal pitfalls and disappointments get tangled up with Trump's reign and intensified as a result. Recently, a friend's partner broke off their relationship on the same day that Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy announced his retirement; it wasn't clear which piece of depressing news hit my friend with greater force.

I'll confess, I find all this ritualistic despondency insufferable. I hear in the repetition of grief a longing for a return to normalcy, a backward march to stability. I do not share this desire. And anyway, the Trump era isn't actually a deviation from the American norm; it is, rather, a culmination of all that we have tolerated as normal until now. So these are not times to endure, or even merely to resist in the hope that we can somehow reestablish our national equilibrium—I pray that we cannot find our way back to that deadly peace. These are times to destroy the old and build anew, and the old never falls without a painful fight.

We are all slowly grasping that Barack Obama was only partly correct when he insisted that America isn't a collection of red states and blue states. Fierce partisanship may not define us, but at least at the national level, it has long been a safe proxy for the real divide, which is a nation split into two camps: those who believe in white supremacy and those who don't. And in this moment, Donald Trump has asked us to finally answer the question: Is America a country defined by the pluralism declared in its founding documents, or by the segregation and racial terrorism that it has practiced since its inception?

There can remain no doubt that the president is a white supremacist. And I don't mean that in an unconscious, we're-all-sorta-racist way. He is actively working to maintain an American caste system in which white people of all economic strata are at the top, and as part of that effort he is waging a culture war to dehumanize nonwhite people. Occasionally, he'll just come out and say it: "shithole" countries, describing toddlers as murderous invaders, "catch and release," and the like. But Americans of all races and ethnicities are well trained in racial denialism, and that makes this a jarring moment. I sometimes wonder if all the ritualistic grief is just a collective mourning of racial innocence, the pain of awakening to a reality Trump won't let us ignore.

Take the past few weeks. The fact of brown and black children screaming out as they are ripped from their incarcerated parents has been a mundane fact of American life for centuries. Breaking up families of color is actually a staple of our public policy, one we have all long accepted as normal. We've accepted it to protect national security and fight crime, splitting up hundreds of thousands of black and brown families a year, even as state prison systems steadily cut back on services that once kept families connected despite incarceration. Never mind the tens of thousands of kids who are sitting in some form of lockup every night in America. We've accepted it in the name of public health, tearing babies from their mothers' arms in our punitive reactions to drug epidemics. We've even told ourselves we're doing it in the best interests of the family, with generations of paternalistic ideas about child welfare. Native American children are represented in foster care at nearly three times the rate of their population share.

> *I hear a longing for a return to normalcy, for a backward march to stability. I do not share this desire.*

Trump's cruelty at the border has called this particular form of racial terrorism into question. He sharpened a normal, racist policy tool into a pointed, racist weapon against would-be migrants—against America's changing demographics. The details are, for once, too abhorrent to ignore or explain away: deliberately separating families as a deterrent to migration; continuing to enforce the

TOP: ANDY FRIEDMAN

policy in the face of evidence that it does not work as a deterrent, that it just becomes a form of torture. This obviously demands resistance, and it surely depresses many of us—at least those whose families are at the tip of the spear.

But it's also one of many areas in which Trump's openly white-supremacist agenda offers America a clear option. We can resist and fight our way back to the old equilibrium that allowed less explicit versions of this same terror, or we can demand something new. Trump responded to the outcry over his family-separation policy by once again charging, falsely, that Democrats want "open borders." The Democratic leadership once again shouted back, accurately, that they want no such thing. But why not open borders? Why can't we have that debate in earnest? Why not challenge the fundamental ideas of our immigration system?

Short of that, never mind Trump's "zero-tolerance" policy: Let's ask why we're incarcerating people for the act of migration at all. We haven't always done it; we made the choice to begin prosecuting people for border crossing during the Clinton era, and we can just as easily choose to stop. The Trump era can bring about grief and longing for the stability of the past, or it can spur these kinds of questions about the white supremacy baked into so much of our policy and politics. There is no returning to the pre-Trump era, and that is good. The policies of that era were built in service to white supremacy, and they were never dismantled to reflect the plural society that has begun to emerge in my lifetime. We now have the opportunity to reckon with our history, but coming to terms with your past is never pleasant. It's ugly and painful. Best to accept that fact and get on with it. ■

We can fight our way back to the old equilibrium that allowed less explicit versions of this same terror, or we can demand something new.

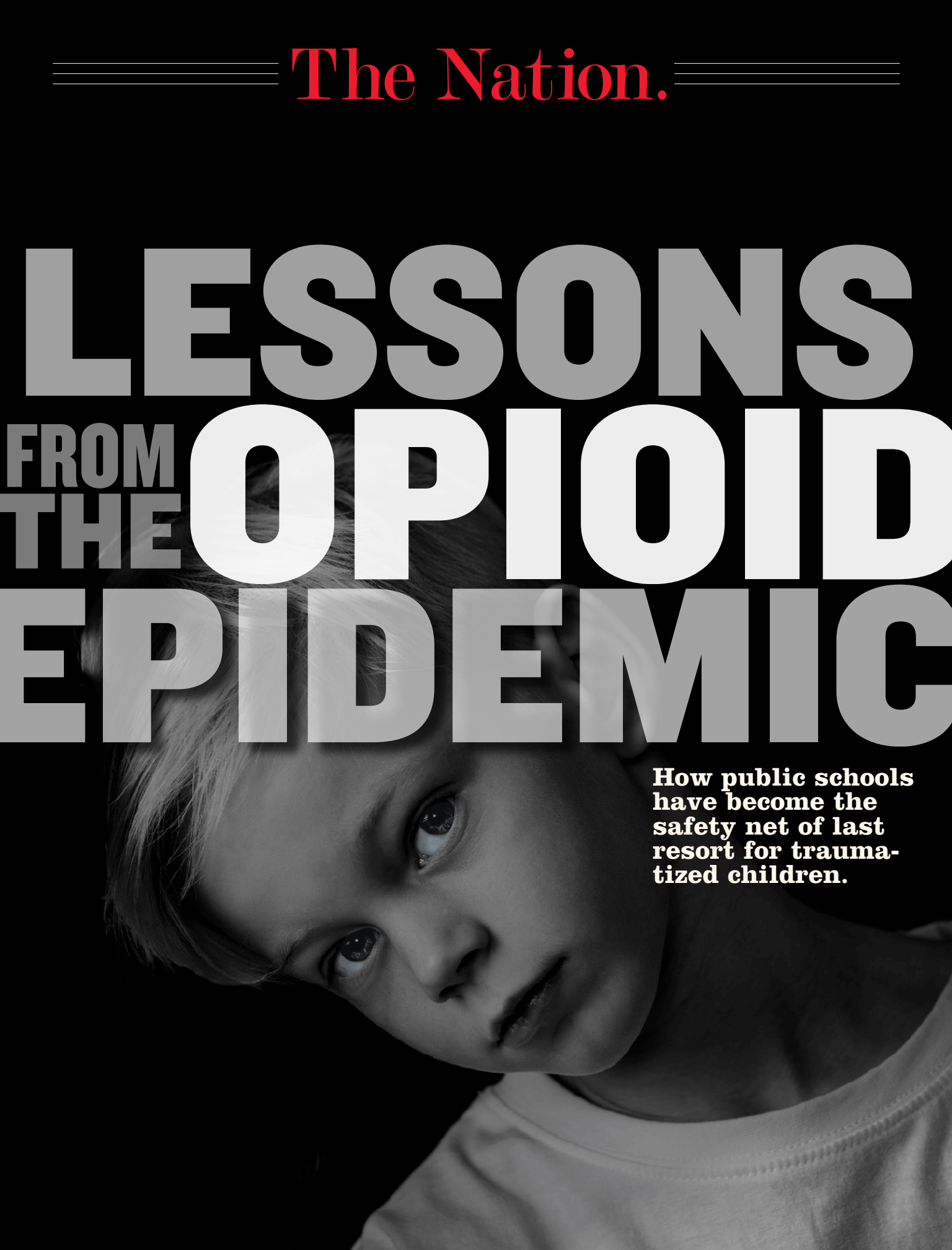
SNAPSHOT / ADNAN ABIDI

Lifelines

Residents of New Delhi fill their containers with drinking water from a municipal tanker in June. Tens of thousands of people have seen their daily water ration cut, leading to fights and numerous deaths in India's worst long-term water crisis in history.

The Nation.

LESSONS FROM THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC



How public schools have become the safety net of last resort for traumatized children.

by ZOË CARPENTER

ONE AFTERNOON IN MAY, SOME 20 SECOND GRADERS SAT IN PAIRS AROUND THEIR CLASSROOM in Ravenswood, West Virginia, playing an arithmetic game with dice. Trudy Humphreys, their teacher, sat to one side, with a student whose glasses protruded from her elfin face. "How's it going? What's been happening lately?" Humphreys asked as the girl counted on her fingers, adding up 11 and six. "My parents have finally been getting along," the child responded brightly. Carefully, she marked "17" on the paper in front of her.

When that game was over, Humphreys played with a serious, curly-headed boy who spoke in a voice so soft that I could barely hear his response when she asked how things were at home. It's a question she's been asking more often lately, as "home" has become a complicated subject for many of her students. The boy lives with an adoptive family after being removed from his birth parents; the girl once lived with her family under a bridge a few counties over.

Humphreys, who speaks in a high, gentle voice and rides motorcycles in her spare time, was once a student at Henry J. Kaiser Elementary School, or HJK. She's spent most of her 31 years of teaching at the school, too, which is named for the steel and aluminum magnate who, in the 1950s, brought thousands of jobs and a few decades of prosperity to the small community on the banks of the Ohio River. When Humphreys was growing up, Ravenswood was a placid town where everyone knew everyone, and your parents heard what happened at school before you got home. According to local legend, Ravenswood once held the Guinness world record for most churches per capita. People left their doors unlocked, and "You could walk into someone's house and not worry about what was in there," Humphreys recalled.

Once expected to employ more than 12,000 people, the facility that Kaiser built now has some 1,100 workers. The bloodletting began in 1981, when over 1,500 people were let go. Since then, as the aluminum industry has declined nationwide, Ravenswood—with a population of fewer than 4,000—has seen successive rounds of layoffs, plant closures, and union battles. More than 650 people lost their jobs when another local factory shuttered in 2009. Today, Ravenswood's main street is a short strip of fast-food restaurants, vacant storefronts, and dimly lit antique shops. Over a quarter of the residents live below the poverty line. HJK, which teaches about 370 students in pre-kindergarten through second grade, has more students living in poverty than any other school in the county; every student there gets free breakfast and lunch.

Along with the layoffs came drugs. Between 2006 and 2008, at least 16 teenagers and young adults in Jackson County, where Ravenswood is located, died from prescription-drug overdoses, their bodies found in parked cars and neighbors' yards. Amy Haskins, the administrator of the Jackson County Health Department and the director of the county's antidrug coalition, said those deaths were the first local sign of the nationwide wave of opioid addiction that now kills more Americans a year than car crashes. At one point, Haskins said, tiny Ravenswood had three "pill mills"—clinics and pharmacies that prescribed painkillers indiscriminately. "We went from having a pill problem to heroin to shake-and-bake meth, back to heroin, fentanyl, and now we are at crystal meth again," she said.

HJK's staff noticed that many of the students struggling in school were those whose family lives had been upended by addiction.

Few states have been harder hit by these combined crises than West Virginia. The state has the highest rate of death by overdose, and of babies born dependent on drugs, in the United States. Each individual case of addiction is like a stone dropping into water, sending countless ripples outward through the wider community, disrupting families and straining public institutions that in many cases have already been weakened by years of disinvestment. There are 6,300 children in the foster-care system in West Virginia; nearly half were separated from their parents because of substance misuse. The secretary of the state's Department of Health and Human Resources has said that his agency has run out of homes in which to place these kids.

A rising number of students at HJK have lost their par-

Good old days? Kaiser Aluminum workers produce the first aluminum in West Virginia's Ohio Valley.

RIGHT: WEST VIRGINIA STATE ARCHIVES / NILO OLIN COLLECTION

School days: Henry J. Kaiser Elementary School.

ents, either to the prison system, overdose, or the haze of addiction, and many carry complex emotional needs with them into the classroom. Two years ago, a quarter of the students in Humphreys's class of second graders were being raised by grandparents or in foster care. This year, at least eight teachers at the school have two or more children in their classrooms with a parent who has been incarcerated on drug charges. One kindergarten teacher is raising three young girls, including an infant, whose parents lost custody because of their drug use.

"The baggage they have—it's overwhelming," Humphreys said, referring to her students. She often finds herself acting as a counselor as much as a teacher; the quiet check-ins during the arithmetic game are just one of the strategies she's adopted to give certain students a bit of extra attention.

She and other teachers have noticed a marked uptick in behavioral problems—students who are defiant, who throw chairs and tip over tables or bolt from the classroom. More students are having trouble with concentration and with working memory—the ability to remember information in the short term and then apply it to various tasks. Sometimes, these kids fall into what the school's principal, Amber Hardman, described as a "gray area": They don't meet the criteria for a learning disability, and yet they aren't progressing academically alongside their peers.

"It's easy to connect the dots," Hardman told me when I visited the school in May. A native West Virginian, she has worked in high-poverty school districts throughout her 17 years as a teacher and administrator. While many kids in Ravenswood have the same basic needs as others she's worked with—they don't get enough to eat at home, for instance—the scale of the emotional outbursts and memory issues struck her as exceptional. Particularly in a small town, teachers often know a lot about their students' lives—and Hardman's staff noticed that many of the students struggling in school were those whose family lives had been upended by addiction.

Everyone I spoke with at HJK said they felt overwhelmed by the number of students affected by trauma.

Like many other areas roiled by the opioid epidemic, Jackson County has few public services for families struggling with substance use, or for children with mental-health needs. In the absence of other institutions, public schools find themselves filling some of the void. But the schools themselves are underresourced, and the teachers are overworked. Everyone I spoke with at HJK said they felt overwhelmed by the number of students affected by trauma. The school doesn't even have a full-time counselor. "I just feel kind of at a loss," said first-grade teacher Beverly Smith. She and several of her colleagues told me that this year has been the worst of several difficult years, with the extra pressures of the drug crisis piled on top of low teacher pay and limited school funding—all of which boiled over in February, when a statewide teachers' strike closed schools for nine days.

The addiction crisis has strengthened certain social bonds in the county, drawing parts of the community closer. Elderly adults are putting aside their retirement plans in order to raise children in need of a home; teachers stay late at work, devising new lessons. But it's also exposed the atrophy of public services across small-town America. "These kids are watching their parents die," said Jessica Wooten, a nurse practitioner who works in a local primary-care center. "How do we deal with that in a little rural health clinic? Because that's what we have here."

Media hype: Portrait of an exaggerated crisis.

Some Addicts Never Had a Chance to "Just Say No."

If you think drug addicts only hurt themselves, think again. Everyone is at risk of becoming a tragic victim of drug-related crime, violence and bodily harm. Even a newborn baby.

This year, an estimated 362,000 drug-damaged babies will be born in the United States. They enter this world craving illegal street drugs they know nothing about. It's an emotionally devastating addiction they inherit from their mothers.

And it is the cruelest form of abuse and neglect imaginable.

Underdeveloped, undernourished, crying, sweating and weighing only 2 to 3 pounds at birth, drugged babies suffer days of withdrawal treatment from prenatal exposure to drugs.

Some will die from blood poisoning, seizures or heart attacks. Many will be abandoned by their drug-addicted mothers. Most will have difficulty relating to their world, and will encounter severe psychological problems later on.

It is time to halt the horror. It is time to put an end to drug abuse.

Linda McClung didn't expect to raise more children. At 66, she'd hoped to retire from her job as the chief executive of a federal credit union. Maybe she'd run for the school board and be more involved at church. She and her husband could travel; he'd play more golf.

Instead, the McClungs are parenting three brothers whose mother has been in and out of prison for heroin possession and other charges. How the McClungs ended up caring for them is a tangled, drawn-out story, and a circumstance she chalks up to an act of God—one that has reconfigured her life. McClung is far from the only

person in her social circle raising someone else's children. She counts six families in her church in a similar situation; about 11 of the 57 children in the local Boy Scout troops have been separated from their parents.

Dylan, now 7, likes pancakes. He is wary of strangers and often has nightmares. He's afraid of taking baths; McClung believes something happened to him in a tub when he was a baby. Adam, now 8 and thin as a rail, is autistic. He's into duct tape and Legos, and he hates bugs. The two blond, blue-eyed boys both attend HJK, which is just down the hill from the McClungs' house in Ravenswood. Tyler is 13 and plays soccer and football and runs track. When I visited them at home, Tyler offered me a firm handshake before settling into the couch with the dog to play a video game. (The names of the boys have been changed to protect their privacy.)

On his first day of kindergarten at HJK, Dylan walked up to his teacher and said, "My mom's in jail." McClung told me, "We didn't realize he even thought about that." On Mother's Day this year, Dylan asked if he could bring his mom the potted flowers that their church was handing out. We'll plant them and give them to her when she's released, McClung promised him. The boys haven't seen their mother in more than two years. "We love them beyond belief, but they have definitely been affected" by the separation, McClung told me. "We do our best to give them the best. But no matter what we give them, we can't give them what a mom and dad who truly loved them could have given them."

Rebecca Wendell, a psychologist who comes to HJK a few days a week, described family separation as leaving students with a constant emotional hole, which often manifests itself in uncontrollable outbursts in the classroom. A small thing, such as a request from a teacher, can set a child off into a cascading tantrum. "It's almost like their brain is short-circuiting," she said. These children often can't calm down, and ultimately try to flee or hide under their desks, a behavior pattern that Wendell said is new. She sees other kids who are "at emotional war with themselves. They're told drugs are bad, but they see their parents using."

The McClungs are devoted guardians. Even so, they've had trouble finding support for the boys, simply because of a lack of services in the area. Adam is on a waiting list for occupational therapy; it's 27 months long. For students whose families can't find outside specialists, the schools are the only place where they might get counseling, and even that is limited. "A lot of our children need play therapy," Amber Hardman said. "There's no one who is doing that anywhere close. Those who do, leave. There's just not a lot of support in terms of any mental health." Hardman would also like to hire a full-time behavioral-support specialist, but even if she could get the money, she's not sure she could find someone qualified. (The county did recently secure funds for a new social worker who will be stationed at HJK, though shared with other schools in the district.)

Thanks to a series of tax cuts passed by the State Legislature since 2007, West Virginia has lost more than $425 million in tax revenue each year, according to the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy, leaving the state ill-prepared to respond to the added burden of the drug epidemic. West Virginia now spends 11 percent less in general funding per student than it did in 2008, and its teachers are among the lowest-paid in the country. During the 2017–18 school year, the majority of the state's school districts didn't have a full-time social worker, and seven of the 55 districts didn't have a full-time psychologist on staff.

Main drag: The view north in Ravenswood, West Virginia.

"A lot of our children need play therapy. There's no one who is doing that anywhere close.... There's just not a lot of support in terms of any mental health."

—Amber Hardman, principal

On one of the mornings I spent visiting the school, I headed to Dylan's first-grade classroom, which is at the end of one of HJK's three corridors. When I arrived, a few boys were clustered around the desk of their teacher, exploring a rock collection. A boy in a Batman T-shirt handed over a textured, whitish piece of coral. "It's a dinosaur foot!" he exclaimed. (His father, I learned later, is in prison.) Another gave me a lump of dull black rock; I realized later that it was coal.

The boys' teacher, Laurel Tanner, is a brash talker with long, dark hair, who grew up on the outskirts of Charleston, the state capital—"On the other side of the tracks, I guess you could put it"—in a place called Mud Suck. Her father was a moonshiner, like his father before him. "People don't get it. They don't see what these kids go through at home," she told me. "I understand them better than most because I lived it."

But empathizing with her students doesn't necessarily make her job less exhausting. "This is absolutely the hardest year I've ever had," she said during a quiet moment when her students were in another classroom. She has more students who are impulsive and emotional. "They can't stop moving," Tanner said. A typical interaction: "Sit down, honey, sit down. I told you two minutes ago—sit down. Honey, you're up again!" Other children disappear behind an opaque emotional curtain. A few students whose families have been affected by drug use have so much trouble focusing and retaining information that they've "flatlined" academically all year. "It's gotten progressively worse," Tanner said. "I think, 'Oh, they've got it.' No, they don't. They can't retain."

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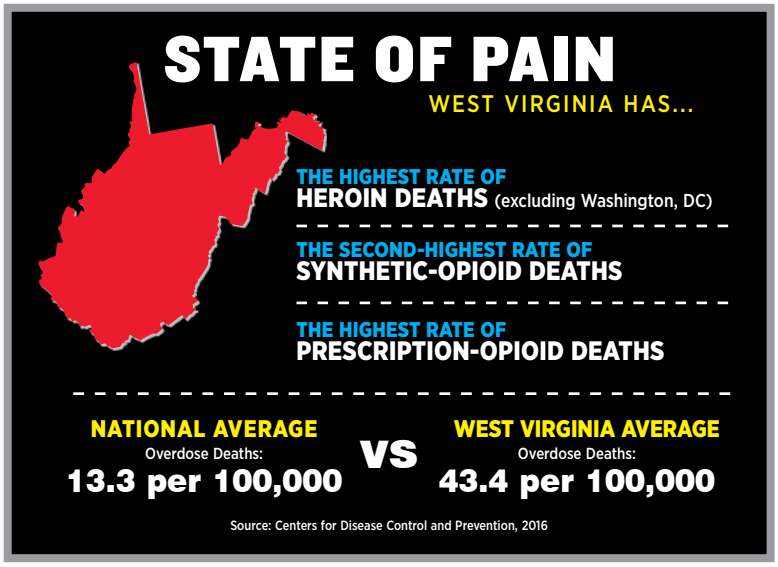

Later that morning, the students sat cross-legged on the floor, reading along with Tanner. Dylan sat in the front row, in a bright green T-shirt, his ears slightly pink. He watched his teacher intently, but rarely spoke the words aloud with the other students. Then Tanner read the story of Paul Bunyan and the popcorn blizzard, about a day so hot that the corn kernels exploded right off their cobs. She sent the students off to write their own tall tales. As the kids bent excitedly over their notebooks, I noticed Dylan sitting quietly alone at his desk, fiddling with a pencil. Eventually, he pulled out his journal and set it in front of him. A few minutes went by, and then it was time for recess. Dylan put the unopened notebook back in his desk and ran outside to join the others.

It occurred to me later that I might not have noticed Dylan at all if I hadn't known about his history. I thought of something McClung had said, about the way he and his brothers have been affected by the separation from their mother—that they feel it not just emotionally, but also socially. "You know which kids are affected by drugs, and sometimes it really affects how they're treated," McClung told me. I began to wonder whether the teachers' knowledge of their students' home life was ever stigmatizing rather than helpful. If the teachers weren't aware that a particular student had been removed from his home, or that he was born dependent on opioids, would his classroom behavior still seem exceptional and be taken as evidence of an epidemic?

In 1990, *The New York Times* reported that schools in inner cities across the country were facing an "onslaught" of as many as 4 million children "prenatally exposed to crack." Researchers, the article continued, "agree these children's neurological, emotional and learning problems will severely test teachers and schools, and many fear this is a test schools are doomed to fail." Two years later, another *Times* story referred to such students as "a different breed of pupils." Fears about the long-term impairment of "crack babies" proved to be overblown—poverty and associated factors like stress had far greater impacts on development—but they created a lasting stigma for African-American mothers as well as for their children, both in and out of the classroom.

"We had a lot of hysteria around a 'lost generation' from cocaine exposure, [and] the language around that just served to be stigmatizing."
—Dr. Stephen Patrick

Media and public officials have expressed more empathy toward people affected by the current wave of addiction. "Because the opioid crisis is perceived as a 'white problem' the response has generally been more humane than the response taken toward the crack crisis which was perceived as a 'black' problem," Pedro Noguera, a professor of education at UCLA, noted in an e-mail. Still, some discussions—with people in Ravenswood, and in the public sphere generally—about the rising number of babies born dependent on opioids carry echoes of the "crack baby" panic.

Between 2000 and 2012, the number of infants diagnosed with drug withdrawal at birth (officially known as neonatal abstinence syndrome, or NAS) increased fivefold. While those babies do require specialized care, the evidence for long-term developmental impacts is murky. "You're really asking the million-dollar question," said Marie Hayes, a professor at the University of Maine who studies the effects of prenatal opioid exposure, when I asked her how those children fared in the long run. "The short answer is that there are almost no uncontaminated studies"—meaning studies where the impact of opioids alone can be isolated from other factors, such as alcohol or tobacco use and poverty.

With so much unknown, many child-development experts caution against repeating history. "I think we really should be mindful of the lessons of the cocaine epidemic just a few decades ago," said Dr. Stephen Patrick, a neonatologist and professor at Vanderbilt University who cares for and studies opioid-exposed infants. "We had a lot of hysteria around a 'lost generation' from cocaine exposure, [and] the language around that just served to be stigmatizing and sensationalizing. When I look at where the literature is right now, what it suggests to me overall is there's likely some subtle findings, but it doesn't suggest to me that there's a massive issue there. Now, with that said, I think it's an area where we need better science."

This leaves educators with a fine line to walk. "Substance-exposed infants should be referred to early-intervention services," Patrick said, and school systems should be aware of and provide specialized services for children who need them, while "at the same time balancing the potential to stigmatize entire populations."

While the long-term impacts of prenatal exposure are unclear, there is solid evidence that childhood trauma can have a significant, negative impact on children's behavior and cognitive development, as well as their health in adulthood. In a landmark study published in 1998, researchers at Kaiser Permanente and the Centers for Disease Control found that a number of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) correlated with negative outcomes later in life. The adverse experiences included substance misuse at home, emotional and physical abuse, and domestic violence; children who experienced these factors were more likely to have chronic illness, depression, and substance-abuse problems as adults.

Research also indicates that trauma and chronic stress can change how a child's brain functions. Stress activates the most basic, primal parts of the brain, the areas that

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regulate "fight or flight" responses, while suppressing activity in areas responsible for higher-order cognition, such as reasoning and planning. "That part of the brain kind of languishes when you have toxic stress, because the more primitive parts of the brain are always turned on," explained Amanda Moreno, a professor at the Erikson Institute in Chicago who studies the connections between children's social and emotional well-being and learning. The fight-or-flight response "is effective for getting a child through that situation, but then the brain gets stuck in that mode and the child cannot do the kinds of things asked for at school, such as inhibiting knee-jerk reactions."

Saving lives: An EMT demonstrates how to administer naloxone to overdosing patients.

It isn't just "trauma with a capital T"—such as the incarceration or death of a parent—that can alter children's brains, Moreno continued; something as seemingly minor as never knowing exactly when you're going to be picked up from school, or by whom, can also have an effect over time. "When you're that child, you cannot project yourself into the future: 'When I get home, I'm going to have this snack, I'm going to do my homework in this space, and it's going to be safe and predictable,'" Moreno said. "It's not this obvious trauma; it's just that [these children] have less brain space to be able to focus on learning because they're focusing more on things like, 'Where am I going to be in the next five minutes? Who's going to care for me in the next hour?'"

The years between kindergarten and second grade are a particularly vulnerable time for kids: It's a period of developmental transition, when they start to exhibit more advanced, adult-like thinking. I asked Moreno whether the lapses in working memory that the teachers at HJK had observed in their students could be linked to trauma and chronic stress. "That would be extremely consistent with what we do know," she acknowledged. "Working memory is a big part of executive function."

Eric Hupp, a jocular, burly counselor who comes to HJK two half-days a week, said many of the students he talks to live in homes marked by unpredictability and stress. Hupp described "little Johnny," a pseudonym for a student: "He bounces at night from house to house, because his parents are using, you know, and it's a difficult situation. He's bouncing from house to house, and he comes in maybe unclean, maybe unfed.... At that point, the teacher has to be a social worker." Other kids have seen their parents being hauled out of the house by police in the early hours of the morning. "Fast-forward an hour, that kid is sitting in class. He doesn't care what the teacher has to say.... The only thing [he's] worried about is: 'What just happened to my dad and mom, and are they going to be there when I get home tonight?'"

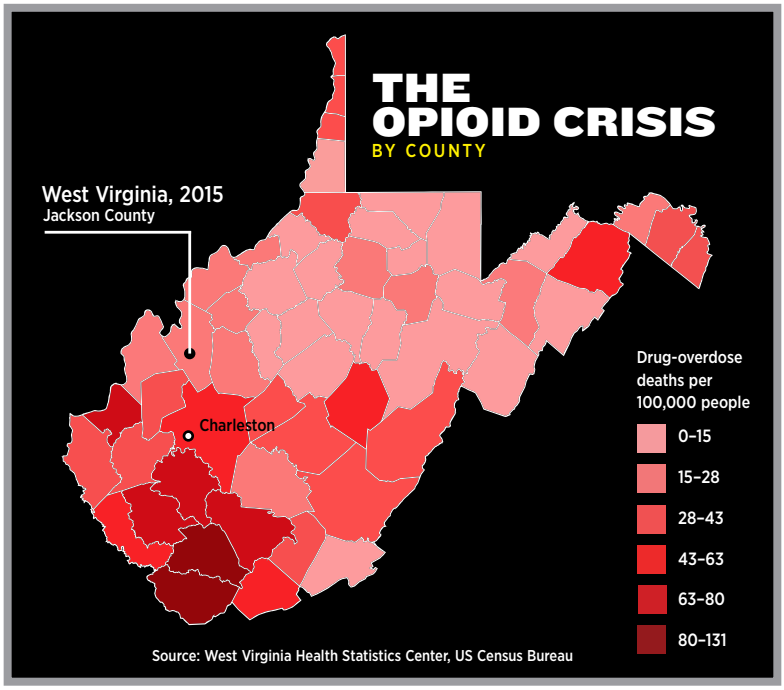
These issues are hardly unique to Ravenswood. Educators in places as far-flung as Cape Cod, Massachusetts, and Snohomish County in Washington State report that, as overdose rates and the number of students in foster care have grown in their communities, so have trauma-related behavioral and learning issues in the classroom. This situation has left schools scrambling to find funding for mental-health services. In New Hampshire, the Laconia school district turned to outside state and federal funding to hire social workers and establish grief groups in its elementary schools. "These kids are coming into our building experiencing so much ongoing and pervasive trauma in their lives that if we are not supporting them in that way, we really can never get to the educational part of school," said McKenzie Harrington-Bacote, the district's grants administrator. "Most districts who really need it don't have the money to support it, because they're impoverished communities."

"If we are not supporting them... we really can never get to the educational part of school."

—McKenzie Harrington-Bacote, school-district grants administrator

This has been a challenge for public schools in Allegany County in Western Maryland, which also has a growing number of students affected by addiction, according to district superintendent David Cox. Since the recession, the district has suffered budget cuts that Cox characterized as "devastating," and which led to the loss of about 240 full-time positions. This year, the district has had only a single behavioral specialist for 13 elementary schools. "It just makes teachers' jobs all the harder."

For HJK and many other schools in rural and suburban areas, the growing number of children bringing traumatic life experiences to the classroom is a brand-



TOP: AP PHOTO / CLAIRE GALOFARO

Mother and child: A new mom cradles her son during a visit at a treatment center for opioid-dependent newborns.

REUTERS / JONATHAN ERNST

new phenomenon. But many other schools, particularly in low-income urban neighborhoods, have for decades taught students experiencing not only the chronic stress associated with extreme poverty but also family dislocation due to mass incarceration, which disproportionately affects black families. One in four black children in the United States has a parent who has been incarcerated; children of color are also more likely than white children to be removed from their parents by Child Protective Services.

As the body of research linking chronic stress to cognitive and behavioral problems has grown, some schools have begun to adopt "trauma-informed" teaching methods that de-emphasize punitive discipline. "Really, what we're talking about is bringing an attachment-based perspective into the classroom," Moreno said, which essentially means making students feel safe and cared for.

A few years ago, a counselor helped Trudy Humphreys set up a corner of her classroom with a cozy beanbag chair and a saltwater fish tank. She sends students there "on vacation" when she senses their anxiety building. They can read, watch the orange- and black-striped fish, or just stare into space. Usually, within a few minutes, they're ready to rejoin their classmates. Humphreys said the method has reduced classroom misbehavior immensely. One little boy who had been known to throw chairs began taking himself "on vacation" almost every day without her prompting. He'd sit and, using a notebook she gave him, record the bad dreams that had been bothering him.

"I feel sometimes that our society sets our kids up for failure right away," Humphreys said one morning when I visited her classroom. Her adult son is in the process of becoming a foster parent with the intention to adopt, and she's been frustrated by the number of people who have warned him against taking in a child who's been exposed to drugs. "Everyone keeps saying, 'Oh, it's in their genes—if it's a drug baby, it's going to be on drugs when it grows up.'" She paused for several seconds. "Give them help," she said finally. "That's what we don't have enough of."

"We feel hopeless. We want to help this child learn to read, but they can't... because of the things beyond our control."

—Christy Archer, educator

Even if teachers wanted to wall themselves off from what's happening in their students' lives, it would likely be impossible. Almost everyone in Ravenswood has an intimate awareness of how badly drug addiction has torn the fabric of the community. Most staff members I spoke with at HJK said they had friends or family members who had struggled in recent years with substance use, or whose lives had been affected by it. One of Humphreys's former students recently died from an overdose, as did a relative; another of her family members is incarcerated on drug charges.

Many people talked about these friends and relatives with a mix of sorrow, frustration, compassion, and anger. In the break room one afternoon, I joined several teachers who were eating lunch and discussing how their students were being affected by their parents' drug use. Several spoke resentfully about adults who, they felt, chose drugs over their kids' well-being. Beverly Smith, the first-grade teacher, interjected: "After a while, it's not a choice."

Smith's son has been incarcerated twice on drug charges. "When he's in prison, I'm comfortable with that," she said. "He's his normal self.... He's my kid, not the drug addict I deal with at other times." But her son is out now, "floating" somewhere in the county, bouncing from house to house. She sees him sometimes on the road, hitchhiking, and stops to pick him up. She recognizes him by the way that he walks. It baffles her that he gets clean only to return to using. "I don't know how to explain it, because it doesn't make sense to me," she told me later. "You lay down there in that jail on the floor for 30 days, detoxing. What in the world would possess you to go back to that?"

Jackson County offers few resources to people trying to recover from substance-use disorders. Dr. Tyler Hill, who directs the emergency department at Jackson General Hospital in Ripley, said that he often has nowhere to direct people if they come to the ER seeking help, or when they're discharged after an overdose—and certainly nowhere affordable for people who are uninsured. "It's really sad," Hill said. "We get a few that actually, legitimately want help, and it's... well, it's either going to take days, or it's having to do it on an outpatient basis—and those patients are having to call around and do the legwork on their own." He described a recent weekend in which a man came into the ER on a Saturday looking for help with a heroin addiction. He'd been sober for a few days. The private rehab facility in the area was closed, so the hospital staff made an appointment for him for the following week. But by the time his appointment came, the man couldn't find a ride—and the

treatment center said they couldn't help him after all, because his insurance had expired.

Throughout the state, and in many other areas grappling with high rates of addiction, drug misuse is both related to and made more difficult to address by a flimsy mental-health infrastructure. West Virginia has regional facilities for mental-health care, but not all of them are accessible to remote, rural populations, and many don't offer appointments in the evenings. "With the loss of jobs, with a lot of the depression around here with the way the economy is, [and] with a lack of access to mental-health care, we're seeing a lot of self-medication," Hill said. The issue spirals in on itself: Even now that hiring has picked up in the area—in part due to a natural-gas pipeline being built through Jackson County—people whose drug use has resulted in felony convictions, or who can't pass a drug test, often can't get hired. Just as damaging as too little work can be too much work: "There's a big issue with people in the state who work themselves to death, until they have severe injuries that they need pain treatment for," said Jessica Wooten, the nurse practitioner. "If we can't give them narcotics, you know, there's not usually physical therapy, there's not a yoga class they can go to."

From foster care and health care to the schools, it's hard to name a public service that hasn't been stretched thin. Ravenswood's chief of police, Lance Morrison, says that the vast majority of the calls his department receives now are drug-related. His officers seized over $1 million worth of drugs in traffic stops in the past two years, often from drivers coming or going over the Ohio River. "It's like we're a caboose at the end of a train that's a mile long trying to catch the locomotive, honestly," Morrison said. "It's out of control—my budget's blown for overtime from drug busts."

In February, teachers across West Virginia—and then in Kentucky and Oklahoma—decided they'd had enough. Schools closed for nine days as educators went on strike, many of them flooding the State Capitol to protest rising health-care costs and poor pay. In Ravenswood, Amber Hardman and some of her staff spent those mornings going to certain students' homes with food to make sure that, even if they missed school meals, they wouldn't go hungry.

The strike didn't explicitly have anything to do with the opioid crisis. But a few of the teachers I spoke with said that having so many students with complicated emotional, behavioral, and cognitive needs did contribute to a greater feeling of being overworked and underappreciated. "We are stressed to the gills," said Christy Archer, who was working at the time as a reading and math intervention specialist. When she met with legislators at the Capitol, she was frustrated by the disinterest some of them responded with. (Archer, an animated, petite blonde, has been a Republican since she turned 18.)

"Do you know what we do every day?" she asked rhetorically, raising her arms. "Are you serious?" She went on: "The buildup of the frustration, the extra pain, the stress—we feel hopeless. We want to help this child learn to read, but they can't… because of the things beyond our control."

In Ravenswood, that hopelessness can feel immense. But it's not a mystery what the school needs, what parents and kids and the town need. Like so many other places in the United States, they need access to doctors and treatment centers, to jobs that don't leave them with broken bodies. They need funding for teachers, for classroom supplies, for counselors. "This little town has all the potential in the world," Hardman told me shortly before I left the school. "We just need help." ■

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RED-STATE RUMBLINGS

After nearly a decade of Republican anti-tax "experiments," are voters fed up with being the guinea pigs? by BRYCE COVERT

The Tea Party experiment of drastically cutting taxes in the hopes of sparking economic growth has blown up in lawmakers' faces.

Growing up in a poor family in northeast Oklahoma, Scott Helton decided what he wanted to be while still in high school. "I had a slew of really, really, really good teachers that loved me and took care of me like I was their own kid," said Helton, whose boyish face could still be mistaken for that of a student. He recalled one English teacher in particular who would stay late and talk to him. "That was the moment when I realized: 'I want to do this—forever. I want to do for kids what she's doing for me right now.'"

He also wanted to teach in his home state. Now, perhaps, that decision seems foolhardy.

When Helton started teaching high-school English 10 years ago, his biggest classes had about 20 students. This year, they had from 30 to 35 students, with one that nearly reached 40. And yet his classroom is designed for only 30 students. "If everybody's there on the same day, they're either sitting in stand-alone chairs, or they're going to lean against the wall, or they're going to sit on the ground," he said. Many of the desks are already broken.

To save money, Helton's school recently opted to use online textbooks instead of buying individual copies. But the school doesn't have enough computers, or even decent Wi-Fi, so he has to print the pages out. Yet there's not enough copy paper. "It's just this constant cycle," he said.

Helton is clear about what started the cycle: Oklahoma's rock-bottom education funding, the result of tax cuts that ate into the state's revenue. "This is year eight of the Fallin regime," he noted, referring to the current Republican governor, Mary Fallin, "and every year it's gotten worse and worse and worse."

Oklahoma isn't typically a big-spending state, even under Democratic governors. But until eight years ago, Democrats held most statewide offices and maintained some power in the Legislature. Then, in 2010, a number of Tea Party candidates were elected to office. The GOP increased its majorities in the Legislature and, after winning the governor's race, controlled the entire statehouse for the first time in Sooner history.

Oklahoma wasn't the only state that got a fresh coat of red paint. Republicans had full control of just 14 state legislatures in 2010, while Democrats held power in 27. After the November elections that year, Republicans held majority power in 25, including Oklahoma.

The newly empowered Republicans didn't sit on their hands; they got to work implementing an extreme anti-tax Tea Party agenda. But now the damage those decisions have wreaked is becoming abundantly clear—not just in underfunded schools and crumbling infrastructure, but in lagging economies and angry constituents. States are supposed to be the "laboratories of democracy," in the famous phrase of Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, putting new ideas to the test. But the Tea Party experiment of drastically cutting taxes in the hopes of sparking economic growth has blown up in lawmakers' faces.

Oklahoma legislators had already reduced income taxes back in the mid-2000s, and an amendment added to the state constitution in 1992 makes it all but impossible to raise taxes, requiring approval from a three-quarters supermajority of lawmakers. Lowering them requires only a simple majority.

But the politics after 2011 were different. "The Republicans swept," said David Blatt, executive director of the Oklahoma Policy Institute, a progressive think tank. "We never had a Republican governor with a Republican legislature."

State lawmakers came "out of the gate in 2011 with a pretty regressive, large-scale tax-cut plan," said Meg Wiehe, deputy director of the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy (ITEP), a nonprofit, tax-focused research group. Led by Governor Fallin, the Oklahoma GOP wanted to

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ILLUSTRATION BY DOUG CHAYKA

scrap the income tax entirely—a plan that was the brainchild of conservative economist Arthur Laffer, the self-described "father of supply-side economics."

The effort failed. But "after that, [Fallin] said, 'I need a tax cut,'" Blatt continued. "She forced the next tax cut through." In 2014, Fallin signed a reduction in the top income-tax bracket that went into effect two years later—which, combined with the cuts from the 2000s, has cost the state more than $1 billion in revenue per year, according to ITEP. "This tax cut will make Oklahoma a better place to do business, meaning more opportunities and jobs for Oklahoma families and more revenue for core government services," Fallin had promised. The state also slashed taxes on the oil and gas industry.

But when oil prices fell in 2014, the tax cuts exacerbated the fiscal pain in the deeply energy-dependent state. "Had they [not] cut income taxes again after the recession, they would have been somewhat better positioned to handle this energy bust," Wiehe said.

Deborah Hill, who retired two years ago after teaching science in the public-school system of Norman, Oklahoma, for three decades, said the double whammy of Fallin's election and the downturn in oil prices actually intensified the budget slashing. Sitting in the State Capitol in April wearing a sweatshirt that vowed to Outwit, Outlast, Outplay This Legislature, Hill lamented: "It's gone from a cut to a hemorrhage."

Oklahoma has faced budget gaps of several hundred million dollars for three years in a row. Education funding has taken an enormous hit, falling more than 28 percent between 2008 and 2018. (Without the income-tax cuts implemented between 2009 and 2016, there would have been $356 million more available in 2016.) Nearly a fifth of the state's school districts switched to a four-day week. Some have had to ration paper and cut classes like music and French. Teachers, who hadn't seen a raise in a decade, now have the second-lowest average salary in the nation.

Slash and burn: Mary Fallin, Oklahoma's Republican governor, made cutting state income taxes a top priority.

Hill and Helton were part of protests in Oklahoma City in early April, during a massive teacher walkout across the state. Classrooms closed for nine days, and in a state of fewer than 4 million people, as many as 80,000 gathered at the Capitol building.

Catherine Wilson, an Oklahoma native who also went on strike, has taught ninth-grade science classes in Norman's public schools for 12 years. When she started teaching, she had 22 kids to a class. Today, she teaches 30 students by herself in a lab space designed for 20, which creates safety hazards and keeps her from getting through the year's curriculum. More students means more work outside the classroom: "Date night" for Wilson and her husband consists of him watching Netflix while she grades papers.

Funding cuts have also meant that teachers are taking out the trash and vacuuming the floors, while students have to pay fees to participate in extracurricular activities like music and sports.

Wilson told me that her school's administration has been talking about cuts since 2006, but in "the last five to six years, it's really been noticeable." She and her colleagues had been talking about staging a walkout since 2016. "I'm really surprised that it's actually taken this long," she said.

Chuck Burks teaches advanced-placement high-school government classes in Moore, Oklahoma. "I point out to my kids a whole lot of times that, as Americans, we are really, really on top of cutting taxes," he said. "But a lot of people are kind of ignorant as to what those tax cuts…take away from.

"The thing that frustrates me about [the funding fight] is that it's so easy to fix," he added. "Restore the things you cut." The teachers want to see the income tax returned to its historical rate (it was 6.65 percent in 2004, compared with 5 percent today), as well as an increase in the taxes on oil and gas production (the state's are typically among the lowest in the country) and a broadening of the capital-gains tax (all property held in Oklahoma is currently exempt).

"We have cut taxes and we have provided tax breaks, and it hasn't really worked," Blatt said. "What we ended up discovering was that we were unable to pay our bills."

"What needs to happen is, our Legislature needs to properly fund our state, because that is their job."

—Cassie Pierce

Teachers weren't the only ones to suffer. Over the past three years, many state agencies have had their budgets slashed by 40 percent. Last year, the Health Department furloughed any employee making $35,000 or more, laid off 10 percent of its workforce, and cut nine child-abuse prevention programs. There aren't enough administrative employees to keep up with revoking the licenses of drunk drivers, while state troopers were warned last year not to fill their fuel tanks. State colleges have had to hike tuition; the waiting lists for government services have lengthened; and correctional facilities are "critically understaffed," according to the Oklahoma Policy Institute.

Striking teachers recognized the larger destruction. "What needs to happen is, our Legislature needs to properly fund our state, because that is their job," declared veteran fourth-grade science and social-studies teacher Cassie Pierce when she joined the demonstrations on the Capitol steps in April. She noted that while most states cut spending during the recession, many have attempted to make up the difference in the intervening years—but not hers. "We're not just [striking] for students and teachers; we're doing it for everyone in our state," Pierce said.

Gail DeLashaw has worked for Oklahoma for almost seven years and is currently a family-support worker with the Department of Human Services, making about $30,000 a year—nearly 60 percent less than the national average for her level of education. Her rent eats up nearly half of her take-home pay, and she drives a car that her grandmother left to her. "I've eaten a lot of ramen," DeLashaw said. "Twenty years ago, if they told me with an advanced degree I'd be living paycheck to paycheck, I'd have made different choices."

On top of that, the department has been eliminating positions, putting a strain on everyone who remains. DeLashaw went from a case load of 500 to 600 clients to 1,200. Everything is now done over the phone, even though face-to-face meetings allowed her to pick up on nonverbal information, like the holes in her clients' clothes or problems that they couldn't vocalize. "People didn't become social workers to sit behind computers all day," DeLashaw said. "I don't believe we can do the best of our jobs with the cuts they've made."

Shirley Mayhue works side hustles and clips coupons on top of her full-time job as a case manager in the Depart-

AP PHOTO / SUE OGROCKI

ment of Corrections. "I got approved this week to do Postmates," she told me. "I'm going to try to start doing Uber or Lyft." The people in her department haven't seen a pay raise in almost 12 years. Mayhue has been working for the state government for more than two decades; her 22-year-old son, who works at a fast-food restaurant, makes more than she does. She often has to choose between paying the fees for extracurricular activities for her kids and paying her bills. "I'm living on a wing and a prayer," she said.

"We're not leaving": Oklahoma teachers flooded the statehouse in April to demand more money for education and public services.

BRYCE COVERT

Oklahoma's statehouse wasn't the only one that changed after the Democrats took a midterm "shellacking" in 2010. In North Carolina, where Democrats had held the governorship and both houses of the Legislature since 1999, Republicans gained control of all three. Likewise, they took complete control in Maine, Ohio, and Wisconsin, installing Tea Party darlings like Paul LePage, John Kasich, and Scott Walker in the governor's mansion.

Not all of these states immediately slashed taxes. "It was kind of a slow buildup," Wiehe recalled. "By 2013, 2014, you really felt the red wave in the states." By then, they "either succeeded or tried in major ways to completely upend their tax systems."

Arizona, Indiana, and Ohio all reduced individual and business taxes after 2011. Maine enacted a slew of personal tax cuts skewed to the wealthy. North Carolina's new Republican triumvirate began reducing taxes after state elections in 2012—including big reductions in corporate and personal rates, the elimination of the estate tax, and a gradual move to a regressive flat tax—and today the state is bringing in $2.6 billion less in revenue. Republicans gained control of Kentucky's government in 2017, and this year made deep cuts to individual and corporate taxes. Wisconsin's Legislature has passed more than 50 tax cuts since Republicans took full control in 2011.

Governor Brownback promised that the cuts would be "a shot of adrenaline into the heart of the Kansas economy."

There's a reason that so many of these tax-cut plans looked similar. Laffer, the conservative economist, personally worked on the proposals in Kansas and North Carolina, on top of crafting the plan to do away with the income tax in Oklahoma. The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) and Americans for Prosperity, funded by the Koch brothers, also took advantage of newly sympathetic ears in Republican-controlled statehouses across the country, pushing an agenda of dramatically lowering taxes.

Of all the proposals, Kansas's was perhaps the boldest. Shortly after Sam Brownback became governor in 2011, the state consolidated its three tax brackets into two, sharply lowered rates, and then exempted "pass through" businesses, such as LLCs or S corporations, from paying any tax at all. The package included a "March to Zero" plan to gradually eliminate income and corporate taxes. Lawmakers reduced taxes again in 2013. Brownback promised that the cuts would be "a shot of adrenaline into the heart of the Kansas economy" and called them a "real live experiment."

"That adrenaline shot never came," Wiehe said.

A study by Jason DeBacker, an assistant professor of economics at the University of South Carolina, and three co-authors found no proof of increased economic growth. What they did find was an uptick in the creation of businesses that could take advantage of the new tax exemption—but even those were mostly already existing businesses that simply changed their corporate status to reap the rewards.

The "experiment" wound up costing Kansas $500 million in 2015 alone. By last summer, the state faced a $900 million budget shortfall. Its job growth has also lagged: While the country as a whole saw 9.4 percent growth be-

Kids over cuts: Oklahomans ringed the Capitol during April's teachers' strike.

tween 2012 and 2017, the state's rate was just 4.2 percent. The same has been true of Kansas's GDP, which grew 3.8 percent between 2013 and 2016, while the country's was up 7 percent. And the average annual growth rate for disposable income actually dropped, from 5.5 to 2.1 percent.

In the face of its budget shortfalls, the state cut services, infrastructure projects, and education—so much so that the State Supreme Court ruled in 2017 that K–12 funding had to be increased.

The promised economic boom never materialized in the other GOP-controlled states, either. According to an analysis by the Economic Policy Institute, Wisconsin's economy under Governor Walker underperformed neighboring Minnesota's "by virtually every available measure," including jobs, wages, and economic growth. In a study of Wisconsin and Kansas, Oklahoma State University economics professors Dan Rickman and Hongbo Wang found that, "[r]ather than spur growth…the experiments in fiscal austerity harmed the state economies." In a yet-to-be-published follow-up comparing states that cut taxes between 2011 and 2016 (Kansas, Wisconsin, Maine, and Ohio) with two that raised them (California and Minnesota), Rickman and Wang found that virtually all of the tax-cutting states saw things decline. Conversely, the economies of states that raised taxes either weren't hurt or showed improvement.

Doubling down: Governor Paul LePage and Maine Republicans have opted to further cut taxes rather than restore K–12 funding.

The "fairy-tale" promise of cutting taxes without decreasing revenue "just doesn't happen," Rickman noted. "Not even close."

As the country emerged from the Great Recession, some states decided to use their recovering revenues to restore education spending, but others chose to double down on tax cuts. By 2016, most states controlled by Democrats had restored their per-pupil spending, but only five of those in Republican hands had done likewise.

Arizona, Kansas, North Carolina, and Oklahoma are among the states that passed income-tax cuts rather than restore spending on classrooms, despite all four seeing huge drops in per-pupil spending over the past decade. Between 2008 and 2015, state K–12 funding fell noticeably, sometimes drastically: by nearly 37 percent in Arizona; nearly 16 percent in Oklahoma; just over 12 percent in North Carolina; nearly 11 percent in Wisconsin; 9 percent in Maine; almost 6 percent in Kentucky; and 1.4 percent in Ohio.

But this failure to invest appears to be fueling a backlash. In 2016, Kansas voters elected a wave of moderate Republicans, who then teamed up with Democrats to muster the two-thirds majorities in each house needed to roll back most of the tax cuts and override Brownback's vetoes.

"One of the best things about the teacher strikes—it shows the dots connecting."

—Meg Wiehe

In other states, the blowback has now hit the streets. Two years ago, Chuck Burks went to the Oklahoma Capitol to demonstrate in favor of more school funding. "We weren't pissed—we were still playing the nice sort of 'Help us out' sort of thing," he recalled. But the walkout in April "felt different."

Arizona, Kentucky, North Carolina, and West Virginia have also seen strikes this year. And, as in Oklahoma, teachers in other states fought not just for their own pay, but for more funding for all. "That's an amazingly righteous fight," said Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers.

It was also a victorious one. The last time the Oklahoma Legislature raised taxes was in 1990, after teachers went on strike for four days. This year's strike resulted in the first tax increase since then, which will fund average raises of $6,000 for teachers and $1,250 for support staff.

"We finally realized that if we're going to do the things that Oklahomans expect to provide a safe, healthy, prosperous state, we're going to have to raise taxes back up," Blatt said. "Even Republicans in Oklahoma realized that they had to raise taxes."

Teachers in other states secured similar victories: a 20 percent raise and $100 million in other funding in Arizona; record new school spending in Kentucky; and a 5 percent raise for all teachers and state employees in West Virginia. The strikes are "taking on these choices of the last 10 years…of tax cuts and austerity and privatization," Weingarten said.

It makes sense that the fight started with education. People notice when their children's schools are crumbling and their teachers keep leaving. "That's one of the best things about the teacher strikes—it shows the dots connecting…investment and the public services we all rely on," Wiehe said. "When you cut taxes for rich people primarily…you're really disinvesting in things that make states places where people want to live and work."

To those who demonstrated in the spring, the real proof of change will be the elections coming up later this fall. "Talk to us in November," said AP history teacher Melinda Parks, who was at the Oklahoma Capitol in April. It will "either be the nail in the coffin or the deal-breaker. Things will either just be as they are, or they'll change—and significantly." Oklahoma teachers and their supporters have vowed to vote out recalcitrant lawmakers, and many are even running for office themselves.

"I keep calling these things 'down payments,'" Weingarten said. "To make it a movement [for] enduring change, you have to win elections." ■

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Letters

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Shine That Spotlight

I must admit, when I first heard Cynthia Nixon was running for governor, I was not impressed and even thought it amusing. But after hearing her speak and reading about her, I have changed my mind: Cynthia Nixon *is* ready for the spotlight, and it would behoove the media to cover her with the seriousness she deserves ["Is Cynthia Nixon Ready for the Spotlight?" July 2/9]. I wish I could vote for her.

The article reports on how Nixon has fresh ideas that she is not afraid to declare. She supports single-payer health care; real criminal-justice reform; an end to the school-to-prison pipeline; legalizing marijuana; and enacting all possible protections for immigrants. What could be more democratic than that?

My only criticism is that, in the end, the article kind of besmirches Nixon by claiming she has no real experience. Well, she might not have all the usual experience, but that may be a good thing. The key is that she's obviously smart enough to read and make a decision based on the facts presented to her. She will be the decision-maker: That's the important job someone in power holds, and she appears to be ready to make those important decisions.

Democrats have been doing the "same old, same old" forever, which is why I'm no longer a Democrat, and why Trump is in the White House. It's past time for a change in this country, and that's going to require someone who is not afraid, who is not part of the political machine. Cynthia Nixon appears to be that person. Terry Johnson
Baltimore

Governor Miranda?

Can't we have someone who isn't Andrew Cuomo and also has experience? ["Cynthia Nixon for Governor," July 2/9]. Do we have to choose between a failure and a TV star? This is why so many people don't vote. Saryta Rodriguez

The Never-Trump Canard

Per usual, Eric Alterman is totally on point in "Hypocrites Against Trump" [May 28]. The Republican "Never Trumpers" either fail to grasp or are too embarrassed to acknowledge that it was their own strident and divisive neoconservative politics that created the appetite for Trump among a percentage of Americans in the first place. But then, it's not at all surprising that the same political party that embraced Nixon, Reagan, Gingrich, Palin, Cruz, and Roy Moore would also fawn over a thoroughly unprincipled and unrepentant demagogue like Trump. Kenny Calvin
Chicago

Where Are the Women?

Every year when the VIDA Count comes out, tallying the gender imbalance in publishing, I hold my breath. Every year, this one included, I am disappointed by *The Nation*'s poor showing. What are you going to do to achieve better gender balance among your writers? Pam Goldman
Pittsburgh

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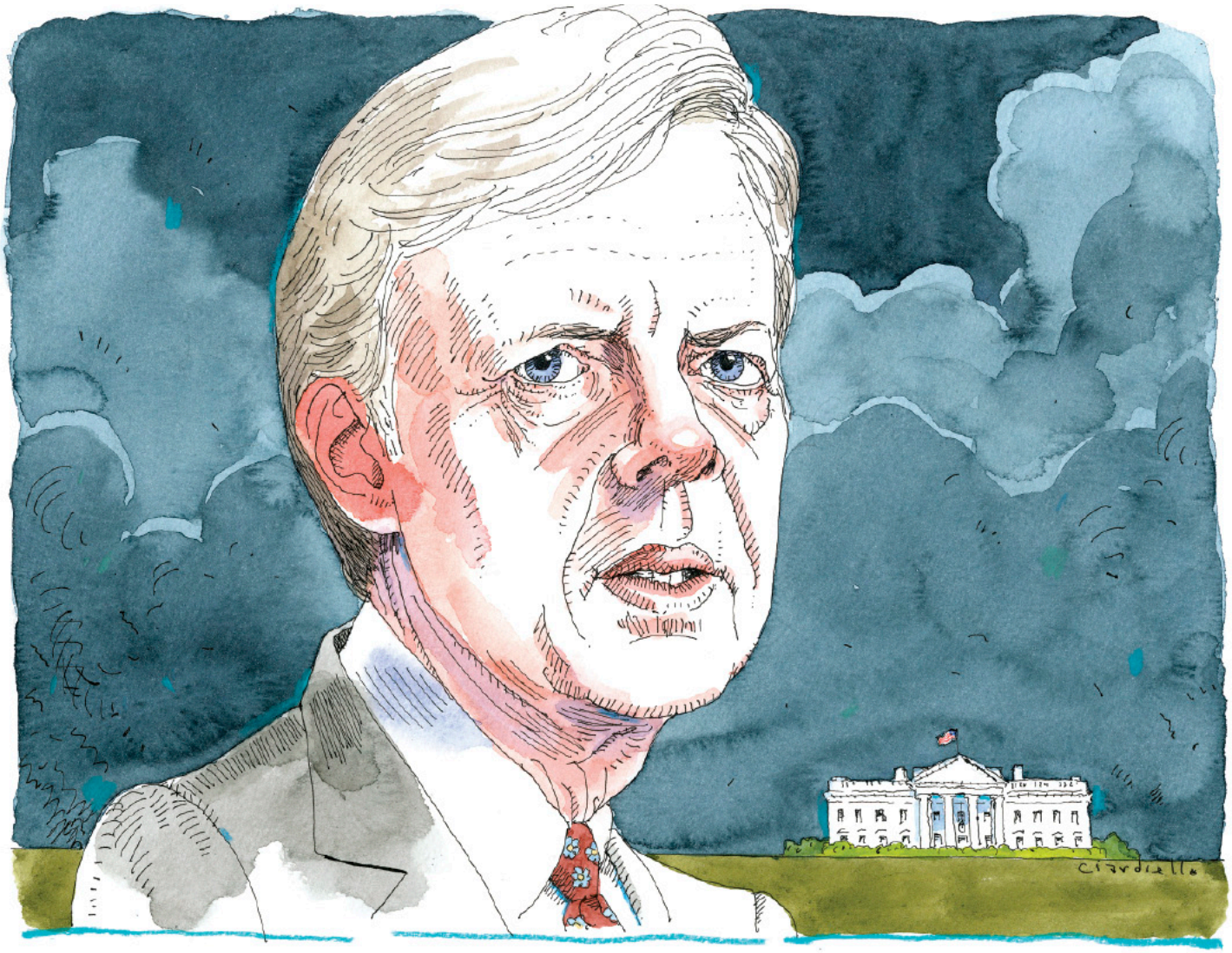


THE PRESIDENT WITHOUT A PARTY

The trials of Jimmy Carter

by MICHAEL KAZIN

Jimmy Carter was surely one of the unluckiest presidents in US history. He took office in 1977 with an economy racked by stagflation and dependent on imported oil; a foreign policy humbled by the debacle of the Vietnam War; a Democratic Party split between Northern liberals and Southern conservatives; and a country in the grip of rampant cynicism on the question of whether the federal government was able to solve any serious problem at all. Outside the White House, Carter also faced a growing political right united around Ronald Reagan, the former governor of California, and eager to pounce on any missteps or signs of weakness.

Even a shrewd politician would have found it difficult to successfully navigate these obstacles to accomplish big things and get himself reelected. Carter had captured the 1976 nomination and defeated President Gerald Ford by appealing deftly to the country's post-Watergate disgust with Washington "in-

President Carter
The White House Years
By Stuart E. Eizenstat
Thomas Dunne Books. 999 pp. $40

Michael Kazin teaches history at Georgetown University and is co-editor of Dissent. *His most recent book is* War Against War: The American Fight for Peace, 1914–1918.

ILLUSTRATION BY **JOE CIARDIELLO**

siders" (although he blew a huge lead in the polls and received barely half the popular vote). That year, neither major-party nominee raised much private money; each ran his campaign almost entirely on the funds provided by the millions of Americans who checked a donation box on their tax returns. What a world we have lost.

Once Carter moved into the White House, the erstwhile nuclear engineer and peanut producer proved to be an absolutely wretched politician. His campaign had promised "A government as good as its people," as enticingly hollow a specimen of soft populism as has ever been concocted. Yet he had no idea how to translate even that anodyne pledge into anything resembling an attractive set of policies or a governing coalition that would support and defend them.

Instead of a coherent strategy, Carter pursued a disparate set of projects, often with little popular backing, that he was sincerely convinced were necessary for the well-being of the nation and the world. Some of these were laudable, then and today. He granted amnesty to draft resisters and sought to conserve energy and protect wilderness areas. He promoted human rights and, despite resistance from conservative senators like Strom Thurmond and Jesse Helms, championed the treaties that would eventually turn over exclusive control of the Panama Canal to Panama. But other of his initiatives were either based on dubious logic—pursuing a balanced budget; deregulating the airline and trucking industries—or, in the case of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, did nothing to resolve the underlying issue at stake: the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. One also led to a globe-shaking fiasco: Carter's decision to stand by the shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, after the Iranian Revolution erupted continues to roil our domestic politics and our relations with the Muslim world. And when young Iranian insurgents seized the diplomats and citizens at the US embassy in Tehran and held many of them hostage for 444 days, they handed Republicans a strong weapon with which to bash the incumbent president as soft and helpless.

Carter made things worse by showing contempt for partisan differences. Arthur Schlesinger Jr. once scorned him as "the most conservative Democratic president since Grover Cleveland." The liberal historian was only half right: Carter did oppose the sweeping national health-insurance plan advanced by Senator Ted Kennedy, explaining that "I need to enhance an image of fiscal responsibility," and he peered at older social programs through an austerity-tinted lens. But he broke away decisively from his upbringing in the Jim Crow South by enforcing the Voting Rights Act and naming African Americans to high positions in his administration, among them the secretary of health, education, and welfare and the ambassador to the United Nations. No president before him had appointed more women to significant federal jobs, from cabinet secretaries to judges. Only one woman sat on a federal court when Carter entered the White House. By the time he left, he had appointed 40 more—including a pioneering advocate for women's rights named Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who would later become the second female justice to serve on the Supreme Court.

Stuart Eizenstat, who advised Carter on domestic affairs and remains his friend to this day, has made a mighty effort to document all these decisions and a great deal more. He hopes a narrative as thick and detailed as this one will persuade readers that Carter's single term as president was among "the most consequential in modern history." "Far from a failed presidency," Eizenstat writes, Carter "left behind concrete reforms and long-lasting benefits to the people of the United States as well as the international order." To support this redemptive mission, Eizenstat's publisher has coaxed blurbs from a roster of mostly retired heavies from both major parties: Alan Greenspan, Lawrence Summers, Robert Rubin, Paul Volcker, James Baker, and Henry Kissinger, among others. Madeleine Albright chimes in with a foreword praising Carter as "a great man…our country was lucky to have him as our leader."

Unlike the former secretary of state, however, Eizenstat isn't reluctant to criticize his hero from time to time. "To be truly effective," he writes on page 2, "a president cannot make a sharp break between the politics of his campaign and the politics of governing if he wants to nurture an effective national coalition. This," he continues, "Carter not only failed to achieve—he did not want to." Yet Eizenstat goes on to devote most of his very long book to describing how, despite this flaw, the brilliant man from Plains, Georgia, managed to make lasting changes that benefited the nation and the world.

Carter's flops still overwhelm the narrative, as they did for most of the Americans who lived through his term. Eizenstat attempts to bury the failures in apologetic context, arguing that Carter had inherited too many weighty problems for him to solve. But whatever the obstacles to a more successful outcome, a botched policy remains a botched policy. Eizenstat describes, for example, the three-year struggle to pass comprehensive energy legislation at a time when oil prices often spiked and Americans seemed at the mercy of OPEC (the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries). It was a task the president, quoting William James, had called the "moral equivalent of war." Less inspiringly, Carter scolded Americans for being addicted to "self-indulgence and consumption."

By the time his Energy Security Act passed in 1980, the president had squandered a good deal of political capital. With his approval rating hovering around 30 percent, Carter nevertheless managed to pass a bill that, as Eizenstat asserts, created "explicit incentives to produce clean alternative energy sources." However, few Americans were in the mood to celebrate—and at the behest of oil and coal producers, future administrations have been able to render those incentives as expendable as the president who, for his televised address, famously urged Americans to turn their thermostats down.

In recounting Carter's disastrous Iran policy, Eizenstat adopts a similar tone of Sisyphean exasperation. After the CIA helped restore the shah to power in a military coup in 1953, Iran had been America's closest partner in the Middle East. So how could Carter abandon someone who was "an increasingly unpopular autocratic leader but a strategically vital ally"? And who could have predicted that the shah would be toppled by a revolution led by theocrats? "One could fill an ocean with what the United States did not know about developments in Iran," Eizenstat laments.

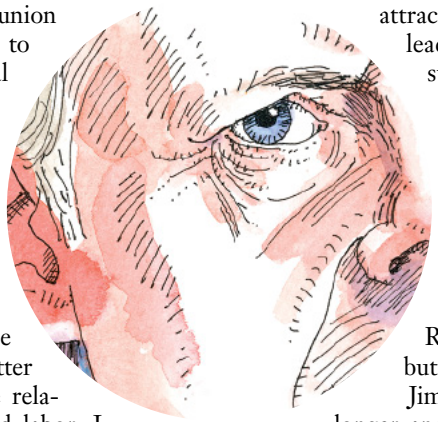
Like his big-shot blurbers, Eizenstat assumes that America's role in the world was essentially benign and remains so to this day. Yet millions of Iranians never forgot the role that the United States played in overthrowing the elected government of Mohammad Mossadegh, installing a police-state monarchy in its place. To Eizenstat, this is a mere historical detail that might have been successfully overcome if our spooks had not been so credulous. In the end, the author asserts, Carter did not "lose Iran"; the shah "lost his own country." But what about those officials in Washington who put him back on the throne in the first place, and then worked for decades to keep him there?

Eizenstat hasn't written a book that the sizable cohort of readers who rush to buy presidential biographies by the likes of Ron Chernow and Robert Dallek will probably find enjoyable. But political scholars will be grateful for his careful descriptions of how the administration's policies were made or unmade, advanced or defeated, as viewed from his perch in the White House. Insider accounts have their drawbacks, but reliable histories of the powerful cannot be written without them.

However, future authors will have to look elsewhere for explanations of Carter's most significant flaw: his failure to understand that he needed both a loyal political party and an energized partisan base to convert his good intentions into lasting results. When Carter took office, the Democratic majorities in both chambers of Congress were nearly as large as they had been during the heyday of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society in the mid-1960s. To be fair, Carter's party was severely divided; white conservatives from the South clashed with pro-labor liberals from the Northeast and Far West. Two years before the 1980 election, Ted Kennedy was already attacking him for attempting to trim the federal budget "at the expense of the elderly, the poor, the black, the sick, the cities, and the unemployed." Yet Carter somehow expected the quarreling Democrats to rally behind whatever he decided to do. Before Johnson's presidency was doomed by the Vietnam War and white backlash to his civil-rights policy, the former Senate majority leader had been a shrewd and effective party builder; Carter later confessed that he "was never comfortable" playing the same role.

Granted, few Democratic presidents have kept their base excited for long. Since its creation in the 1820s, the Democratic Party has nearly always represented a more heterogeneous constituency, demographically and ideologically, than its rivals. Only when the party's leaders have kept their various groups reasonably happy and in harness during and between national campaigns have Democrats dominated national politics. Andrew Jackson accomplished that feat back in the 1830s. Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt did it during their first terms and midway through their second ones. Lyndon Johnson repeated their success, but only until the Republicans made big gains in the midterm contest of 1966. Even Barack Obama wasn't able to persuade enough of the white liberals and people of color who'd flocked to the polls to elect him to turn out for the Democrats running for Congress and the state legislatures just two years later.

By his own admission, Carter never shared this partisan goal. He did nothing to galvanize the Democratic rank and file, even during his reelection campaign, and his ham-handed approach to organized labor was a particularly glaring flaw. Forty years ago, unions represented nearly a quarter of workers in the private sector (as opposed to less than 7 percent today), but the growth of manufacturing abroad and an offensive by anti-labor firms at home had caused their clout to wane. When the new president took office, union leaders made it clear to him that their main goal was for Congress to enact changes in the law that would make it easier for a majority of workers in a given workplace to unionize. Eizenstat himself told his boss, "It is difficult to overestimate the importance of this matter in terms of our future relationship with organized labor...I think it can help cement our relations for a good while." But Carter, who hailed from a right-to-work state, gave the idea a decidedly lukewarm reception: "Labor Law Reform? For what is that a euphemism?" he asked another aide.



The House did finally pass a compromise reform bill, but at the president's urging, the Senate put off its vote so the administration could focus on getting the Panama Canal treaties ratified. This gave corporate lobbyists time to mount a powerful campaign against the labor bill—and a filibuster killed it. During the 1980 primary campaign, leaders of the United Auto Workers and several other big unions expressed their disgust by endorsing Ted Kennedy instead of the president who'd let them down. Like every other serious challenge to a sitting president within his own party, it struck a mortal blow to the incumbent's chances of winning in November.

In one sense, Carter's political misfortunes may have been less his fault and more the playing out of a cyclical pattern in presidential history. As the Yale political scientist Stephen Skowronek has argued, Carter could not reconstruct a political order whose crumbling had been a prerequisite for his victory. The cynicism about the malfunctions and malfeasance of "big government" that, in part, had boosted Carter into power also hindered his ability to chart a new course that would not alienate key figures in his own party.

Carter, writes Skowronek, "found himself in a political no man's land." The New Deal system was falling apart, but no one knew how to patch it back together or build a new one. As president, John Quincy Adams and Herbert Hoover had been the victims of similar circumstances, although the orders they failed to preserve were quite different from Carter's. For such men, adds Skowronek, "the attractions of the loner-as-leader shine brightly. But such presidents have never been able to reorder national affairs. Once in office, they appear incompetent and in over their heads. Their disruptions characteristically drive the implosion. Reconstruction follows, but under other auspices."

Jimmy Carter has lived a longer and better life than most ex-presidents. He has done useful and honest work around the world and taken progressive stands on issues ranging from same-sex marriage to torture to gun control. But his political ineptitude while in office helped enable an icon of conservatism to take power and speed up a transformation of government from which we are still struggling to escape. One can only hope, and work, for the day when the despicable entertainer who now resides in the White House will suffer the same electoral drubbing that his flawed but decent predecessor did in 1980. The next reconstruction cannot come soon enough. ■

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE, 1964 (GETTY)

AT THE LIVING HEART

Translating Aimé Césaire

by DAVID B. HOBBS

Aimé Césaire was one of the foremost French poets of the 20th century. He was also one of the foremost leftists on his home island of Martinique and in the French National Assembly. Upon his death in 2008, he was honored with a state funeral attended by then-President Nicolas Sarkozy—ironic, considering Césaire's refusal to meet with him in 2005, after the passage of a bill compelling French history teachers to emphasize the "positive aspects" of French colonialism.

David B. Hobbs is a writer and academic, and is the editor of 21 Poems *by George Oppen.*

In 2013, the centenary of Césaire's birth was marked by academic conferences and new scholarly editions of his work. His words still have enormous power outside the classroom as well—at the Festival d'Avignon that year, for instance, the playwright Dieudonné Niangouna revealed that while he was imprisoned during the Second Congo War and forbidden from speaking or reading French, he hid lines from Césaire's long poem, *Cahier d'un Retour au Pays Natal*, on the inside of his shirt.

Although Césaire published eight books of poetry and several plays, his artistic legacy continues to be defined by *Cahier*. First appearing in 1939, in the avant-garde magazine *Volontés*, this modernist epic narrates an unfolding personal and political crisis: Its speaker is returning to the Antilles from France with an intense awareness of how colonialism has not only damaged his home but also infiltrated his sense of history, geography, and language.

Since 2013, three English translations of this book-length poem have become widely available. Initially published in the aftermath of the explosive protests and unrest in France in May 1968, John Berger and Anna Bos-

tock's version was the first English translation of Césaire to appear in the United Kingdom; it was reissued by Archipelago Books shortly after Césaire's centenary. In September 2017, Clayton Eshleman and A. James Arnold released their bilingual volume *The Complete Poetry of Aimé Césaire*, based on Arnold's definitive French editions and drawing on Eshleman's experience of translating Césaire for more than 50 years. Shortly thereafter, in November 2017, a new translation appeared from N. Gregson Davis, a professor of ancient Greek and Latin poetry at Duke University who grew up in Antigua.

Academic publishing can be sluggish and strange, so it's hard to assign any specific intentionality to this series of Césaire volumes. Nonetheless, the appearance of so much Césaire at the same time is significant—the opportunity for a wider American appreciation of the poet seems to have finally arrived. Which translation of *Cahier* shapes that appreciation, however, will depend on the way it speaks to our present as much as it accurately reflects Césaire's past.

As translated by Arnold and Eshleman, the poem begins:

> At the end of the small hours burgeoning with frail coves the hungry Antilles, the Antilles pitted with smallpox, the Antilles dynamited by alcohol, stranded in the mud of this bay, in the dust of this town sinisterly stranded.

The circular, despairing description of the Caribbean island in poetic prose establishes the tone and technique for *Cahier*'s first 21 sections, which describe an enervated landscape seen and felt "at the end of the small hours," Arnold and Eshleman's translation of "*au bout du petit matin*," an Antillean Creole expression for the low-lit time between night and morning. The stability created by this repeated phrase establishes a feeling of both relief and uncertainty when the poem breaks from the pattern by introducing its estranged first-person speaker. This unnamed voice emerges in the act of depicting his return. The shift from descriptions of place to narrative actions is translated as follows by Davis:

> To leave. My heart murmured with pronounced altruism. To leave… I would arrive suave and young in this land of mine and I would say to this land whose mud is an ingredient of my flesh: "I have wandered for a long time and I am coming home to the abandoned ghastliness of your sores."
> I would come to this land of mine and I would say to it: Embrace me without fear…

Return to My Native Land
By Aimé Césaire
Translated by John Berger and Anna Bostock
Archipelago. 80 pp. $16

Journal of a Homecoming
By Aimé Césaire
Translated by N. Gregson Davis
Introduction, Commentary, Notes by F. Abiola Irele
Duke University Press. 232 pp. $22.95

The Complete Poetry of Aimé Césaire
Translated by A. James Arnold and Clayton Eshleman
Wesleyan University Press. 962 pp. $50

From here, the poem stages a series of explorations of black colonial life—as an embodied experience, as a historicized orientation to power, and as an opportunity for radical, transnational collectivity. In this last mode, as translated by Berger and Bostock, Césaire develops a voice of rhapsodic demolition:

> we sing of poisonous flowers
> bursting in meadows of fury;
> skies of love struck by clots of blood;
> epileptic mornings; the white
> burning of abyssal sands, the sinking
> of wrecked ships in the middle of
> nights rent by
> the smell of wild beasts.
>
> What can I do?
>
> I must begin.
>
> Begin what?
>
> The only thing in the world that's
> worth beginning:
> The End of the World, no less.

Hardly a nihilist, Césaire is expressing the extent of antiblack violence and the awesome capaciousness required to help reestablish his nation's culture and independence. There is a sense that these "songs" need to be sung, but also an anticipatory liberation from the need to sing them.

Césaire's sense of a productive anger provides an alternative to today's digitally enabled pronouncements of resistance, which are easier than ever to make and (unsurprisingly) seem less effective. His poetry offers a model of artistic and political opposition that equips people with more than stress and anxiety. *Cahier* has planetary goals; it deepens shallow notions of identity and suggests that a subjectivity informed by powerlessness can be useful for understanding, and overturning, power. The conditions of black colonial subjectivity, more than any specific person's experience of it, are Césaire's central focus, even as the poem parallels aspects of the poet's own life.

This is what Suzanne Césaire means by suggesting, in her essay "1943: Surrealism and Us," that her husband's poetry was surrealist because it marked "an activity which assigns itself the goal of exploring and expressing systematically the forbidden zones of the human mind, in order to neutralize them." It is in this spirit of exploring trauma that Césaire ends the poem with a quiet revolt, occurring in montage amid what some have called the original site of antiblack violence, translated here by Davis:

> The nigger cargo that was sitting
> down
> is unexpectedly standing upright
> upright in the hold
> upright in the cabins
> upright on the bridge
> upright in the wind
> upright under the sun
> upright in the blood
> upright
> and
> free

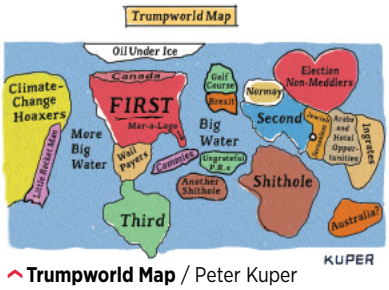
In form and content, *Cahier* is a challenging poem, which makes it easy to understand why it has lacked a wider popular appreciation—and why it is increasingly important for poets and scholars to help spread its visibility. Reading across the three translations of *Cahier* quoted above may overrepresent the poem's shifts in tone, but their differences reveal the many facets of Césaire's political and poetic commitments across his career as much as they speak to a given translator's skill.

These differences begin, appropriately enough, with the word *cahier*. Eshleman and Arnold opt to translate the poem's title directly, as *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*, whereas Davis renders it as *Journal of a Homecoming*. Davis explains that he selected "journal" because it "is etymologically related to the French words *jour* [day] and *journal* [newspaper]," though it also has the benefit of leaning closer to common speech. Berger and Bostock dispense with *cahier* entirely, titling their version *Return*

OppArt

Artistic Dispatches From the Front Lines of Resistance

Phantoms / Edel Rodriguez



Trumpworld Map / Peter Kuper

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to My Native Land and explaining that their choices were guided by a desire to preserve the poem's "thinking content…[which is] both political and poetic."

Although framing the poem as a written thing seems as important as stressing the "return" to a "native land," Berger and Bostock's statement points to a crucial split in the reception of Césaire's work—during his lifetime and since. There is a tendency to treat his development as a poet as distinct from his political work; this notion has given rise to two starkly opposed impressions of Césaire, each coinciding with a different version of *Cahier*, which he revised continually throughout the 17 years between 1939 and 1956—and even later. On the one hand, there's the Europhilic, moderate, and youthful Césaire, whose 1939 *Cahier* anticipates his own return to Martinique in the face of an impending global war; on the other, there's the mature, political firebrand, whose 1956 revision appeared the same year he addressed the First International Congress of Black Writers and publicly resigned from the French Communist Party, although without renouncing communism or Marxism. To be sure, by revising the poem at all, Césaire himself played a role in shaping this interpretation.

But according to Gary Wilder, author of *Freedom Time*, a recent study of Césaire and the Senegalese poet Léopold Senghor, "anyone who looks closely at his life, political acts, and range of writings will quickly see that Césaire defies easy characterization, that he disrupts conventional oppositions." Indeed, Césaire's best-known political text, *Discourse on Colonialism*, features many of the same rhetorical maneuvers we find in his poetry, and his appreciation of political change was at least partly aesthetic, describing the very word "decolonization" as "beautiful" and defining poetry as "that process which through word, image, myth, love and humor establishes me at the living heart of myself and of the world."

Some of this "humor" comes from Césaire's mordant descriptions of that world, as in Eshleman and Arnold's translation of *Cahier*:

> And we are standing now, my country
> and I, hair in the wind, my hand puny
> in its enormous fist and the strength
> is not in us, but above us, in a voice
> that drills the night and the hearing
> like the penetrance of an apocalyptic
> wasp.
> And the voice proclaims that for centuries Europe has force-fed us with
> lies and bloated us with pestilence,
> for it is not true that the work of man
> is done

And yet the shifts between the 1939 and 1956 versions might be more accurately described as adjustments in tempo and rhythm rather than political allegiance. The later version reads more quickly and with more frequent syncopation; it contains nearly twice as many sections, though these are just as often due to rearrangement as they are to the inclusion of new material. This allows a greater concentration on individual terms and images, though it loses some of the nuance that comes from moments when the speaker appears to doubt himself. For example, this section—originally three lines that conclude a long passage about being illuminated by racial pride, and three more lines marked off as their own section—becomes, in the 1956 version, a balanced resolution, with three negative and three positive statements (translated here by Davis):

> My negritude is not a stone, its
> deafness heaved
> against the clamor of day
> my negritude is not a film of dead
> water on the dead eye
> of earth
> my negritude is neither a tower nor
> a cathedral
> it delves into the red flesh of the soil
> it delves into the burning flesh of
> the sky
> it digs through the dark accretions
> that weigh down its righteous
> patience

The repetitive description of what something is not—a definition by refusal—is one of Césaire's most distinctive techniques, and it's integral to what Wilder has described as Césaire's "radically literalist practices." By employing a surprising range of references, Césaire points to the alternative possibilities latent within the language of oppression. When Césaire insists on what his "negritude is not," we need to understand it not only as a gesture of self-definition, but also as an enactment of insurgent precision at a time when the operation of power would prefer rhetorical pliancy.

Defining "negritude" outside of this passage, however, is more difficult, and yet it brings us closer to understanding how these new translations can illuminate current debates in black ontology and cultural criticism. Coined by Césaire in an article for *L'Étudiant Noir*

(*The Black Student*), "negritude" refers to an aesthetic and political movement that Césaire initiated with Senghor and the French Guianese poet Léon Damas while the three were studying in Paris in the mid-1930s. They were responding to colonialism and Eurocentric notions of culture by articulating a global black experience and venerating the black body. They were influenced less by the writing of Claude McKay and Langston Hughes than by the Harlem Renaissance's example of a defiantly racial literary movement, one that not only allowed but encouraged self-definition. In a lecture from the late 1970s, Césaire described the origins of "negritude" thus: "in the darkness of the great silence, a voice was raising up, with no interpreter, no alteration, and no complacency, a violent and staccato voice, and it said for the first time: 'I, Nègre.'"

Césaire began writing *Cahier* around the same time that he coined the term, and it plays a pivotal role in his general technique. By crafting new terms out of a dominant language, Césaire turns individual words and phrases into sites of resistance—the poem ends with "*verrition*," variously translated as "sweeping stillness" (Davis), "seized swirl" (Berger and Bostock), or "immobile veerition" (Eshleman and Arnold), but with all of these translations losing the Latinate suggestion of "spring" (*ver*).

The invention of "negritude" sidesteps the more likely choice *négrité* to capture the allusions to "attitude" and "study" (from *étude*), which enhance the term's use in *Cahier*, not only as a term of self-definition, but as a vector for solidarity (or the lack thereof). The word appears at the halfway point of both the '39 and '56 versions, when the poem's speaker sees an enormous and impoverished man on a streetcar, catalogs his apparent misery, and finds him "COMICAL AND UGLY," echoing Charles Baudelaire's description of a tortured albatross. Here Césaire confronts the worst of his inherited prejudices. And it is also, crucially, where Césaire begins to pick apart an aspect of a specific person ("*un nègre*") rather than as a self-contained yet generalized concept ("negritude"). Eshleman and Arnold translate the passage this way:

> One evening on the streetcar facing me, a nigger.
>
> A nigger big as a pongo trying to make himself small on the streetcar bench. He was trying to leave behind on this grimy bench his gigantic legs and his trembling ravenous boxer hands. And everything had left him, was leaving him. His nose which looked like a drifting peninsula and even his negritude discolored as a result of tireless tawing. And the tawer was Poverty.

Eshleman and Arnold believe that "the original goal of Césaire's negritude project was spiritual," and therefore render this passage as though the streetcar rider's "negritude" is something along the lines of an aura. Berger and Bostock substitute the word "Negro," perhaps an anodyne choice at the time of their translation.

Davis's translation is more sensitive to the underlying "challenge of how to render in English the noun *nègre*," which, he says, has "pejorative reverberations." Davis writes that he's chosen "to vary my rendition of the word *nègre* in my English version according to the thematic context, on the grounds that the intensity of its charge is nuanced and varied throughout *Cahier*." He reserves using "nigger" for sequences explicitly connected to the dehumanizing violence of the slave trade, or those that dramatize the psychological impact of the speaker's time in Europe.

In reference to the man on the bench, Davis refers to a "black man" and his "blackness," intensifying the visual connection to the process of lightening and curing leather and making the bodily impact of the man's immiseration clear. Nevertheless, Davis is clear about what meaning Césaire is trying to communicate: "His physical appearance and his whole demeanor are deliberately exaggerated, presented in terms of a caricature that conforms to the standard portrait of the black man in the eyes of the white." More important, whereas the other translators turn to slurs to destabilize the reader with sudden eruptions of hate, Davis coaxes this passage (and the poem as a whole) toward a consciousness that is shared by the poem's speaker and the man on the streetcar, and that bridges their vastly different life experiences.

Césaire himself gave "negritude" a mutable definition, one that is guided by a sense that there is something that is shared, necessarily and meaningfully, by all black people. The legacy of this position on racial essentialism and exceptionalism has been taken in many directions. For Césaire, it was an important stance against European fascism—when the head censor in Vichy France prevented Césaire and his fellow editors from publishing their literary journal *Tropiques* on the grounds that it was racist, they responded: "'Racists,' yes. Racism like that of Toussaint Louverture, Claude McKay, and Langston Hughes—against the racism like that of Drumont and Hitler." In

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THE Nation.

a 2008 interview with the journal *Callaloo*, Césaire described one particularly bracing deviant application: "One day I shuddered when I learned that Mobutu was interested in Négritude. He calls it authenticity, doesn't he? My hair stood on end!"

The ambiguity found in negritude's sense of "authenticity" is at the core of the interpretation of Césaire's writing that is now best known in America. While Frantz Fanon was a student of Césaire's at Martinique's Lycée Schoelcher, and later an aide for Césaire's first mayoral campaign in Fort-de-France, he was known to recite passages of *Cahier* from memory. (Césaire held that office from 1945 until 2001.) In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), Fanon's theoretical analysis of antiblack prejudice and its effects, he offers a less admiring position: Fanon's book includes frequent disparaging references to the poem, which he takes as evidence of a naive and self-denying belief that "the world will open up as borders are broken." Later in the book, Fanon interpolates that moment of recognition on the streetcar in *Cahier* by inserting himself in the role of the enormous man on the bench. A white child fearfully announces his presence to an attending mother:

> In the train, it was a question of being aware of my body, no longer in the third person but in triple.... I was taking up room. I approached the Other...and the Other, evasive, hostile, but not opaque, transparent and absent, vanished. Nausea....
>
> "Look, a Negro! Maman, a Negro!"
>
> "Ssh! You'll make him angry. Don't pay attention to him, monsieur, he doesn't realize you're just as civilized as we are."

This moment of forced identification denies Fanon his own sense of being, and as the chapter goes on, he invokes the "my negritude" sequence as an example of further denial:

> While I, in a paroxysm of experience and rage, was proclaiming [Césaire's lines], he reminded me that my negritude was nothing but a weak stage. Truthfully, I'm telling you, I sensed my shoulders slipping from this world, and my feet no longer felt the caress of the ground. Without a black past, without a black future, it was impossible for me to live my blackness.

Over the past decade, Fanon and his disagreement with Césaire have become centrally important to the theoretical movement known as "Afro-pessimism." Led by Frank B. Wilderson III and Jared Sexton, two professors at the University of California, Irvine, the Afro-pessimists define themselves as "theorists of Black positionality who share Fanon's insistence that, though Blacks are indeed sentient beings, the structure of the entire world's semantic field—regardless of cultural and national discrepancies—'leaving,' as Fanon would say, 'existence by the wayside'—is sutured by anti-Black solidarity." (Though Wilderson and Sexton write for a mainly academic audience, Ta-Nehisi Coates, among others, gives voice to aspects of their thinking for a wider audience.) For Wilderson, Afro-pessimism takes blackness to be primarily "a structural position of noncommunicability" rather than a "variously and unconsciously interpellated identity." That is to say, blackness is created through the denial of self-definition rather than in any experience or quality that precedes that denial or exists beyond it.

But there has been a complementary response from other theorists, who turn to the

Border

Things different over there
the words for them different
the things themselves

all the same

she put her flesh
in the mouth of a coyote
so that he would take her

a cross

to mark the place
where someone
died trying

two white sticks

the ghost of cactus
and the clouds
back and forth

over our heads

an edge of thinking
beyond which we don't go
to save face

which is burning

the other country so close
one good arm
could break a window

SARAH PEMBERTON STRONG

places where these sutures of antiblackness seem to be drawn the tightest and yet find reason for optimism. In her book *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, Christina Sharpe looks to the hold of the slave ship to recover a sense of relationality, turning "hold" itself into community responsibility and witnessing. "How are we beholden to and beholders of each other in ways that change across time and place and space and yet remain?" she asks. Similarly optimistic, Nahum Dimitri Chandler uses jazz poetics in his book *X—The Problem of the Negro as a Problem for Thought* to insist on variability within black subjectivity without denying its existence as a discrete and specific mode of being, drawing on prefixes like "ana-" ("up, back") and "para-" ("beside, adjacent to") to show how seemingly binary experiential logics can be modified, adjusted, and riffed on to become more sensitive to specific lives.

Perhaps the most prominent of these optimists, the poet and scholar Fred Moten turns directly to Fanon's writing on Césaire. In particular, Moten is interested in Fanon's frustration with Césaire's use of pidgin and words of his own coinage: "The new speech, which animates Césaire's poetry as well as Fanon's invocation of Césaire in the interest of disavowing the new speech, is where we discover, again and again, the various and unrecoverable natality that we share." Connecting Fanon's quarrel with Césaire to Hannah Arendt's belief that all human activity, and especially political activity, carries the promise of new creation—a promise latent in the unrepeatable nature of each person's birth, hence "natality"—Moten helps us to see the new dimensions that this debate has acquired over time. Césaire was self-consciously preoccupied with making something new in art and politics alike, but reading his poetry today (with a stronger sense of the historical specificity of his writing) provides the present with the kind of historical investigation of blackness that Fanon felt was unavailable. But more important, the fact that Césaire did so through the materiality of language indicates blackness's power for a new "communicability" not rooted in an essentialized idea of race, but in new methods of critiquing the cultural machinery that essentializes. For Césaire, new words hold the promise of new worlds. Poetry isn't the only expressive mode where this kind of language work can happen, but it still is the best.

With its careful attention to the historicization of the terms of antiblackness, as well as its rich sense of Césaire's manipulation of those terms, Davis's *Journal* provides the best access to *Cahier*. There are reasons to seek out the other translations: Berger and Bostock's is a fascinating historical document and, with its lack of critical apparatus, feels more like reading and less like study. Eshleman and Arnold have provided a durable entryway into Césaire's entire poetic career, and if *Cahier* is less well-known than it should be, his brief lyrics are even more so. But Davis's *Journal* provides the most powerful articulation of Césaire's "new speech," along with the necessary contextualizing tools to recognize and appreciate this power. In doing so, Davis has not merely translated a great work of modernist poetry and an essential document in postcolonial history; he has created a present-day source of timely dissent. ■

How-To

If you got hiv, say aids. If you a girl,
say you're pregnant—nobody gonna lower
themselves to listen for the kick. People
passing fast. Splay your legs, cock a knee
funny. It's the littlest shames they're likely
to comprehend. Don't say homeless, they know
you is. What they don't know is what opens
a wallet, what stops em from counting
what they drop. If you're young say younger.
Old say older. If you're crippled don't
flaunt it. Let em think they're good enough
Christians to notice. Don't say you pray,
say you sin. It's about who they believe
they is. You hardly even there.

ANDERS CARLSON-WEE

BORN FROM AN OCEAN WAVE

The evolution of Monsieur Periné

by JULYSSA LOPEZ

By the time the Bogotá-based band Monsieur Periné bounced onstage to accept the 2015 Latin Grammy Award for Best New Artist, they had already established themselves as a jaunty brigade of theatrical vaudevillians, intent on channeling the rollicking charms of 1930s swing and Latin jazz into eager, chipper tunes for the present day. A carefree jubilance enlivened their first two albums and acquainted listeners with the bubbly vocalist Catalina García, the guitarist Nicolás Junca, and the multi-instrumentalist Santiago Prieto. The leaders of the nostalgic ensemble often appeared more interested in jiving to their own beat than chasing trends, like a bunch of quirky theater kids doing the Lindy on prom night.

For a moment, it seemed like mainstream Latin music might fully embrace the vintage sensibilities championed by Monsieur Periné. The night they won their Latin Grammy, acoustic indie darling Natalia Lafourcade had scored five trophies with her folksy, back-to-the-roots album *Hasta la Raíz*. But reggaeton had been hungrily staking its claim on Latin pop, and urban artists—including J Balvin and Maluma, also from Colombia—were taking over the global charts. After last year's viral hit "Despacito" vaulted reggaeton higher on the international stage, it was hard to pinpoint the next step for Monsieur Periné, an eccentric band that professed a love of musicians like Lucho Bermúdez, the Colombian composer known for infusing his country's music with the resonance of big-band jazz, and Django Reinhardt, the self-taught Romany guitarist who went on to pioneer "gypsy jazz" in 1930s France.

Luckily, Monsieur Periné had already been thinking about their trajectory. Their first album, the independently released *Hecho a Mano*, was their most overt nod to old-timey nightclub traditions. On it, they mixed Colombian rhythms with elements of swing, which French bands like Paris Combo had revived in the late '90s. Monsieur Periné dubbed their musical cocktail *suín a la colombiana*, or swing Colombian-style, performed with their trademark brand of smiley perkiness. On early songs like "Sabor a Mí," García's vocals would ring out gleefully, as though she were beaming her way through each verse. At their live shows, the band would throw on rainbow-bright outfits that resembled traditional Colombian folk costumes—a constant wink to the fact that these were young musicians reinterpreting a romantic version of the past.

Monsieur Periné's music attracted the attention of producer Eduardo José Cabra, who, under the stage name Visitante, is one-half of the reggaeton duo Calle 13. Cabra produced the band's 2015 release *Caja de Música*, which includes songs with Rubén Albarrán, the lead singer of the decades-old Mexican rock band Café Tacuba, and Dominican breakout artist Vicente García, and pushed Monsieur Periné into poppier territory.

For their third album, Monsieur Periné faced a decision: They could return to more *suín a la colombiana* or continue with their pop evolution. On *Encanto Tropical*, released on May 18, they've chosen the latter path. The album is their first on a major label, Sony Music Latin, and boasts the band's signature retro touch while also offering sleeker, more commercially minded production choices. When the first single, "Bailar Contigo," came out in April, one could hear a shift toward the contemporary through the zippy synth line that punctuated the song's subdued bossa nova melody. The throb of a *tambor alegre* recalled the spirit of popular Afro-Colombian dance beats. More telling,

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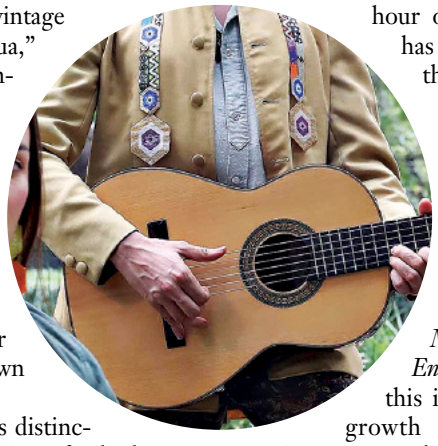
MONSIEUR PERINÉ (AP IMAGES / BERENICE FREGOSO)

perhaps, is that the track was co-written by "Despacito" producer Mauricio Rengifo.

Still, Monsieur Periné have been balancing their new sounds delicately. "La Sombra" features Mexican singer Leonel García from Sin Bandera, a duo that became wildly famous in the early 2000s. But instead of appropriating the massive, R&B-tinged radio hits that Sin Bandera is known for, Monsieur Periné splay García's smooth vocals on a dark, unquestionably vintage bolero. On "La Tregua," Argentine singer Vicentico of the rock band Los Fabulosos Cadillacs croons over a syncopated *cumbia* beat that feels rickety with age. Monsieur Periné make sure to build pop elements into their existing universe, rather than changing their own approach completely.



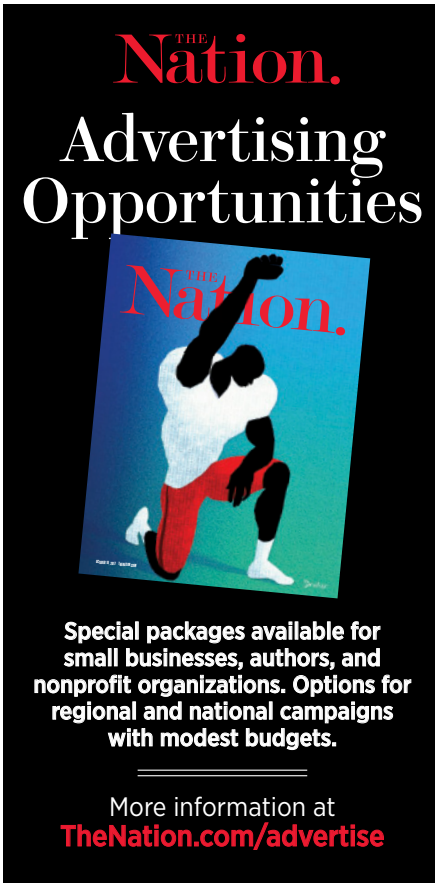
It helps that García's distinctive soprano, which NPR perfectly described as "waif-like," works well with a variety of singing styles. Her youthful tone could sell bubblegum pop as successfully as cabaret covers. She often recalls the charismatic Mexican vocalist Julieta Venegas, who actually helped the band write "Veneno" on this album. García tests out a folksy style over the melancholy bandonion arrangements on "Guayaba y Flores," and she sings over a flurry of Andean flutes on the *vallenato*-influenced "Tarde."

A noticeable maturation has taken place lyrically as well. Monsieur Periné's early repertoire included lots of wide-eyed songs about love and loss. On this project, they've thought about new narratives to share, and they've settled on introspective verses that celebrate their Colombian heritage and tropical landscapes. In an interview with the regional Colombian newspaper *El País*, García explained that *Encanto Tropical* aims to "question the cliché of the tropics' being palm trees and the beach" and to "take people on a profound journey through new tropical dimensions." The album's eponymous opener starts with a choir of euphoric birds, which paves the way for García to dive into a poetic ode about her home: "I was born from an ocean wave / Corals and flowers dressed my skin / In my hair the aroma left behind from coffee plantations / Perfumed the sky of my native land."

The price to be paid here is that the band have lost a bit of their swing step. In some places, this is a good thing: Monsieur Periné's theatrics and upbeat imitations could sometimes result in a cuteness that diverted attention from their impressive musicality. Campiness exists only in traces here, namely on "Veneno," a track that, with its chorus about love bites, feels overly sweet and impish. Later, an interlude called "La Hora Sublime del Bolero" takes the form of an old radio ad, announcing that "the hour of the sublime bolero" has begun. It's kitschy, but the song that follows is "Me Vas a Hacer Falta," a bolero brought to the modern day through Prieto, who is an emotionally adept singer in his own right.

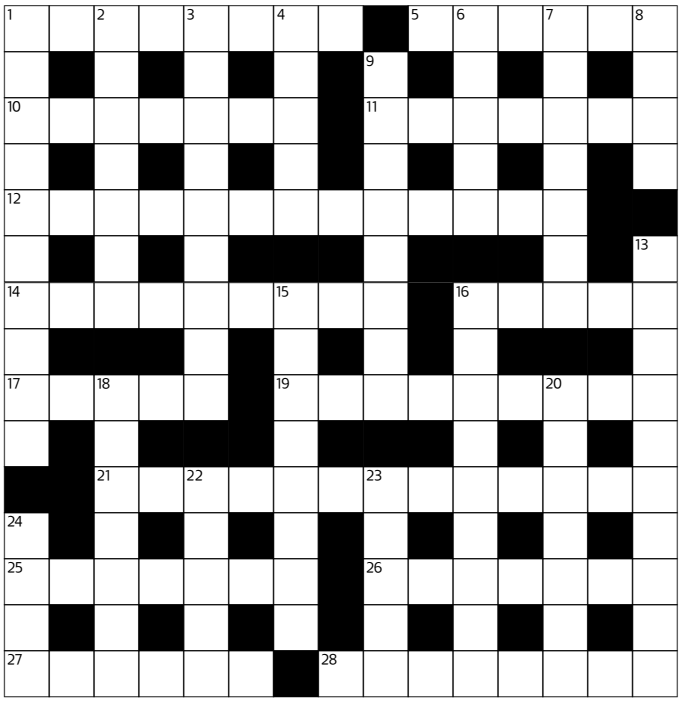
Still, some of the pizzazz of *Hecho a Mano* is missing from *Encanto Tropical*. Part of this is simply the inevitable growth of artists—Monsieur Periné is no longer made up of animated college-age kids earnestly performing their favorite foot-stomping tunes at weddings and social events. The music on this album isn't the same excited love letter to Django Reinhardt, bursting with the trills of intricate guitar arpeggios and the high whine of vibrating brass. Now in their 30s, the musicians of Monsieur Periné have finessed a sound that is undoubtedly elegant, but also a more comfortable fit with Latin pop genres. Fans meeting the band at this stage should revisit the raw, unbridled energy of their debut to understand their full evolution and appreciate their start as renegade swing kids.

Even if *Encanto Tropical* is a more restrained proposal, it's still striking enough to be an antidote to the sameness that often overtakes Latin pop music. The final song, "Vámonos," opens with the rustic twang of Brazilian cavaquinho guitars and then soars into a chorus about a faraway journey. The lyrics tell the story of displaced Colombians who had to leave the countryside amid civil war, and the writing is reminiscent of South American folk songs that summon natural imagery and vast landscapes. As García sings over a melody inspired by bambuco, a style of campesino dance music, she beckons listeners to come away with her. It's an evocative way to end the album, showing that even while embracing a new conventionality, Monsieur Periné are still intent on transporting listeners to another place and time. ■



Puzzle No. 3471

JOSHUA KOSMAN AND HENRI PICCIOTTO



ACROSS

1 Like a small percentage of Beatles songs, I say (2,6)

5 Engrave X's on train (6)

10 Admire Baroque scepter (7)

11 • Chicago squad
• captures
• alien (7)

12 This much is certain: Bundy the serial killer comes back around within range, with lethal weapons (5,3,5)

14 Star performer to lead one elderly relative (3,6)

16 Trick Georgia into a dance (5)

17 Seethed from expression of uncertainty in banking system (5)

19 Metaphorical jumping site of Spooner's nosy supporter (6,3)

21 One who hopes to marry a millionThompsone? (7,6)

25 Red lips belonging to prisoner (7)

26 Where to study a colony with a deranged frat man (3,4)

27 Willing to backpedal about grand musical style (6)

28 Extremely tired of standing in the rain, perhaps holding a sign (8)

DOWN

1 Totally unstimulated argument among a group of directors, we hear (5,5)

2 Old-fashioned fixture of poetry contest in space (3,4)

3 Caught some business expenses, including rent at first (9)

4 Entered metal enthusiast's exclamation (3,2)

6 Pair of librarians, going inside, spell "DNA," say (5)

7 Don't change this boy's hat (7)

8 The Spanish toreador's facade vanished (4)

9 Rewritten a bit: your passing notice? (8)

13 Roman adult vandalized a place for cleaning (10)

15 Well-to-do chap with no end of suffering after a loud illness (8)

16 Big bird carrying rough-cut wire, for instance (9)

18 Screwing up breakfast item? Good (7)

20 Angel, for example—the source of an eruption on the 6th of September in gym class (3,4)

22 A hint of recrimination in lieu of thanks for an aficionado of 27, possibly (5)

23 Delete *Times* editorial's opening (5)

24 Behead statuette, leaving a mark (4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3470

ACROSS **1** anag. (&lit.) **9** rev. hidden **10** UN-[it/TI]-E **11** HAL(V)E **12** STAN + DINGO **13** TH(RUST)ING **15** anag. **17** rev. hidden **19** anag. **21** INF([d]ORM)ANT **24** S + EI + KO (rev.) **26** H + ENNA (rev.) **27** IN + TUITION **28** letter bank

DOWN **1** S(T)ASH **2** OVERL([w]ORD)S (*solver* anag.) **3** MIT (rev.) + TENS (anag.) **4** DR(EG)S **5** NO(STAL + GI)C (*con* rev., *last* anag.) **6** anag. **7** S + ATIN (anag.) **8** TEN OR S-[i/A]-X **13** T(WIL[l])IGHT **14** I'M IT + ATIVE (rev.) **16** PET R-[a/I]-DISH **18** NIR(VAN)A (*I ran* anag.) **20** MISS + [l]ION **22** FUN + DS **23** TOTE + M **25** OW + NUP (rev.)

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