DOUBLE ISSUE APRIL 11 / APRIL 18, 2022

# 100 Most Influential Companies APPLE, RIVIAN, PFIZER, DISNEY, TIKTOK, BALENCIAGA, OPENSEA, UNITED, SPOTIFY & 91 MORE







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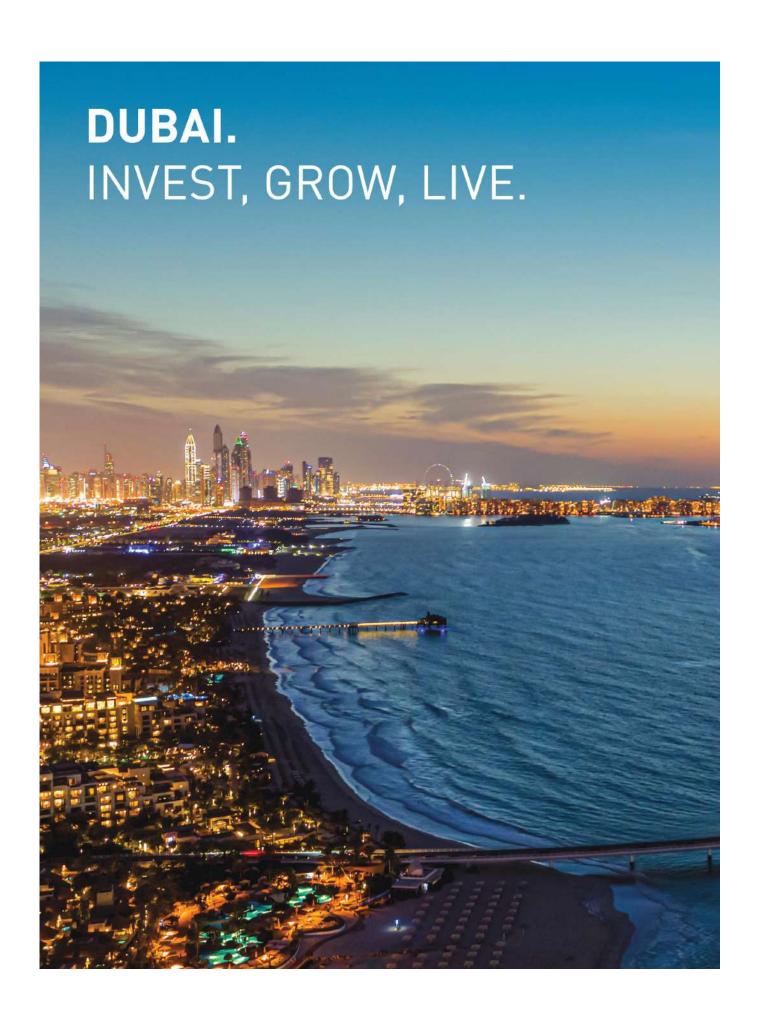
#### Most Influential Companies 2022

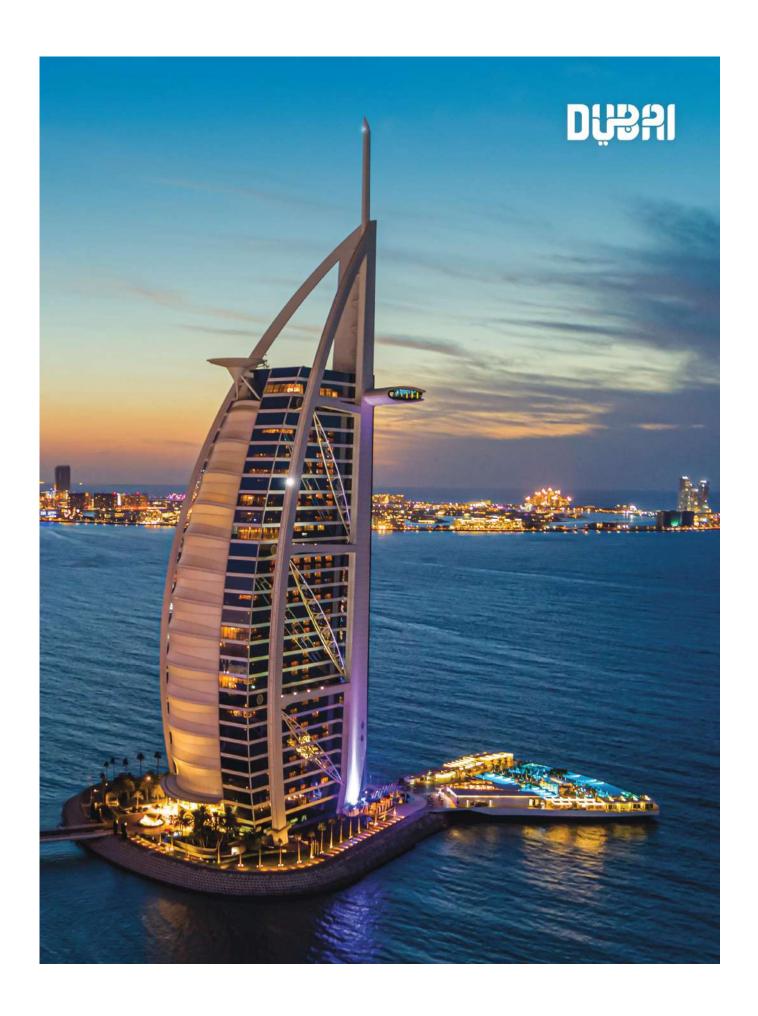
TIME's annual list of 100 businesses charting the future

#### 87 Time Off

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# 3

Business is a force not only in our economic lives, but also in our collective future

# Companies that shape the world

ONE YEAR AGO, WE LAUNCHED TIME BUSINESS, A NEW FRANchise devoted to exploring the growing influence of business not only on our economic lives but also as a force shaping society and our collective future. Led by executive editor John Simons, we've chronicled everything from the future of work to how American shoppers broke the supply chain. We've brought you inside the C-suites with interviews of major figures in the business world through our weekly Leadership Brief, and inside the rise of crypto and NFTs through staff writer Andrew R. Chow's *Into the Metaverse* newsletter.

Along the way, business has grown from a very small portion of our coverage to about one-fifth of all the content we publish. That's as it should be. From the vaccines that are pulling the world out of the worst depths of the pandemic to the unprecedented withdrawal of Western companies from Russia as a tool of war, business has never had a greater impact. And certainly not always for the good, as reflected in Billy Perrigo's ongoing reporting on the all-too-frequent prioritization of profits over people in the tech world.

YOU CAN SEE all that on display in our second annual TIME100 Companies list, included in this issue and featuring the world's most influential businesses. Some, like pharmaceutical upstart Moderna and space-junk removal firm Astroscale, are pushing the boundaries of technology in new and potentially world-changing ways. Moderna is developing new mRNA vaccines for a host of pathogens, while Astroscale is developing technology to safely deorbit satellites after their useful lives are over.

Others, like United Airlines and Capital One, took bold steps and dared their rivals to follow: United was the first major U.S. airline to issue an employee vaccine mandate, while Capital One recently became the first of its peers to eradicate overdraft and insufficient-fund fees, which so often punish those with the least ability to pay them. Disrupters like Engine No. 1 and AMC, meanwhile, are changing the rules. As Vivienne Walt reports in this issue, Engine No. 1 is quickly becoming the premier activist firm of the climate-capitalism movement, while AMC's Adam Aron wrote the book—in real time—on how to respond to becoming a "meme stock," by courting younger, digitally savvy investors to keep the company afloat. Still others, like Alphabet and Ford, are titans whose sheer size and scope make them influential by nature.

"Taken together, these 100 companies—and the executives who run them—represent the firms and leaders who are charting an essential path forward," says senior editor Alex Fitzpatrick, who oversaw the list. As TIME's business coverage continues throughout the year, these are the companies we'll be watching most closely—and we suggest you do the same.



Edward Felsenthal, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF & CEO @EFELSENTHAL





Photograph by Hong Jang Hyun for TIME



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#### CONVERSATION



# What you said about ...

READERS WERE MOVED

by the 148-ft.-long image of 5-year-old Ukrainian refugee Valeriia, photographed in Lviv for the March 28/April 4 cover of TIME, a feat orchestrated by artist JR. "This is a 'WOW' cover," said John A. Gover of Rio Rancho, N.M. "Thank you so much for the inspiration for all Ukrainians," Kyivbased artist Irina Bashuk commented on JR's Instagram post of the cover. Hollywood, Fla., lawyer Khila Khani also commented on JR's post on Instagram: "You always find a way to highlight the best aspects of humanity." On Twitter, creative director Adam Levine described the artwork as "a beautiful example of public art, meeting performance art, meeting the moment."

There were also heartfelt comments from readers on TIME's other cover story-photographer Maxim Dondyuk's photo essay documenting the war in his home country, with accompanying text by TIME correspondent Simon Shuster. The story and photos "demonstrate the futility of war," emailed Margit Alm, in Eltham, Victoria, Australia. Twitter user Steve Johnson described the human toll shown in the photos as "horrific," and tweeted simply, "May peace come to Ukraine soon."

#### **TIME in Dubai**

At the first ever TIME100 Impact Awards and Gala, TIME honored individuals who have done extraordinary work to shape the future of their industries and the world at large. The awards ceremony, attended by 200 guests, was held on March 28 at Dubai's Museum of the Future—the venue's first marquee event. Read and watch full coverage of the event at time.com/impact

Right: Guests gather for an evening of dinner, speeches, and music











TIME100 Impact Award recipients include Bollywood star Deepika Padukone, above left; singer Ellie Goulding, left; philanthropist Tony Elumelu, top right; and artist and entrepreneur will.i.am, above, with actor and advocate Kat Graham

#### TALK TO US

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LAMA FAKIH, Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch, on how trade disruptions exacerbated by the war in Ukraine are affecting people in the region

460

The width, in sq. mi., of a massive ice shelf that collapsed in East Antarctica in an area previously thought to be stable in the face of climate change, scientists said March 25



47,000

The number of grocerystore workers in California who voted from March 21 onward to authorize their union to call a strike

## 'I just no longer felt comfortable with the programming at Fox.'

CHRIS WALLACE, in an interview with the New York *Tim*es published March 27, on his decision to leave the network

# 'I WAS OUT OF LINE AND I WAS WRONG'

WILL SMITH, in an Instagram post on March 28, apologizing for slapping presenter Chris Rock, who made a joke about the appearance of Smith's wife Jada Pinkett Smith at the Oscars ceremony on March 27

## 'There was no doubt to me that my dogs sitting unprotected in these conditions could lead to death.'

MILLE PORSILD, one of three mushers demoted in the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race for having sheltered their dogs during a windstorm, the AP reported on March 27

# \$850

The largest ever taxpayer contribution for a pro football facility, announced March 28 as part of a deal to help the Buffalo Bills build a \$1.4 billion stadium



## 'I can't be confident it is imminent.'

#### ROBERT MALLEY,

U.S. special envoy for Iran, on the prospect that world powers would reach a nuclear deal with Iran, on March 27

# The Brief



HE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION IS PREPARING for a possible new surge in COVID-19 cases and has already started the political blame game in case the response falls short.

The White House has called out Republicans in Congress for not authorizing new funds to make a fourth round of booster shots free and pay for therapeutics and other ways to reduce the impact of another surge in cases. "Our primary concern right now is that we're about to run out of funding," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said on March 21, warning Americans that they may have to pay for their next booster shots if more funding isn't passed. Two days later, White House coronavirus response coordinator Jeff Zients echoed: "The consequences of congressional inaction are severe, and they are immediate."

Republicans in Congress have refused President Joe Biden's request for \$15.6 billion more funding to make additional booster shots free and fund treatments, saying Congress has allocated enough to cover those expenses, and it's incumbent on states and agencies to spend what's already been passed.

Kristen Hawn, a Democratic strategist consulting in competitive House races, says that the politics around the pandemic have put the Biden White House in a tough spot. Polling shows that Americans are tired of the pandemic, but it's still up to the Biden Administration to be ready to provide help if there's another spike in infections. "It's a

predicament," Hawn says. To get funding from Congress, White House officials feel the need to build public pressure. "If another variant comes along, people are going to expect shots in arms; they're going to expect testing. Those things don't just happen," Hawn says.

THE WHITE HOUSE KNOWS that Biden's performance on COVID-19 is one of the few bright spots in the public's sagging perception of his presidency. And they want to keep it that way: 53% of Americans approve of Biden's handling of the pandemic, according to polling conducted in mid-March by the Associated Press/NORC Center for Public Affairs Research—well above the 43% who approved of Biden's job performance overall. "Biden's job rating on COVID is his strongest job rating," says John Anzalone, a Democratic pollster who has worked closely with Biden. "It's well above his overall job rating, and it shows people have a lot of confidence in him on that issue."

How voters see Biden's handling of future case surges could have an impact on whether Democrats are able

to beat predictions and keep control of the House in November's midterm races. Political operatives are watching closely to see where the country is on the pandemic when the next school year begins. "Where we are when kids go back to school is probably how things are going to be judged politically," says an adviser close to the Biden White House.

The White House published a document in early March called the "National COVID-19 Preparedness Plan." It includes efforts to boost U.S. vaccine production to 1 billion doses per year, fund the development of a single COVID-19 vaccine shot, distribute vaccines for children under 5 after the FDA approval, and increase U.S. production of test kits. "If we fail on this, we leave ourselves vulnerable if another wave of the virus hits," Biden said on March 30. "Congress needs to act now, please."

'Our primary concern right now is that we're about to run out of funding.'

-JEN PSAKI, WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

Periods after cases have dropped are when health officials should be able to increase vaccinations and buy up therapeutics and masks for the next surge. When Omicron cases led to record-setting deaths and hospitalizations in January, the Biden Administration was blamed for not doing enough to prepare, and for being late in making a sufficient quantity of free tests and high-quality masks available. If there are similar failures before a new surge, the Administration is making a case for the public to blame Congress.

There's reason to believe the U.S. could soon see another spike. Coronavirus cases in Britain, the Netherlands, and Germany are rising as a more

easily spread subvariant of Omicron, BA.2, takes hold. Epidemiologists in the U.S. have seen signs of the new version of the virus in Northeastern states.

The number of new reported COVID-19 cases in the U.S. has dropped by 97% from its daily average peak of 800,000 in mid-January. Restaurants, offices, and schools are open, and mask mandates have lifted across the country. More than 800 Americans are still dying from coronavirus infections every day. But Democrats have politically moved away from lockdowns and widespread mask mandates, and they likely aren't going back. Last June, Michigan's Gretchen Whitmer was one of the first Democratic governors to say that her state wasn't going back to lockdowns or sweeping mask mandates. That posture has since been adopted by many other Democratic leaders, including Biden, and is unlikely to change. The adviser close to the Biden White House says: "Democrats will be incredibly resistant to go back to anything other than, 'We have the tools to deal with this."



#### **Courting victory**

North Carolina's Armando Bacot goes up for a dunk during the Elite Eight round of March Madness in Philadelphia on March 27. UNC's victory knocked fan-favorite underdog St. Peter's out of the NCAA tournament, but not before St. Peter's made history by being the first ever No. 15 seed to advance that far. "I got a bunch of guys that just play basketball and have fun," St. Peter's coach Shaheen Holloway said in an interview. "That's all we do."

THE BULLETIN

### Caribbean tour raises questions on monarchy's role

PROTESTS DISRUPTED A TOUR OF FORMER British colonies in the Caribbean by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, Prince William and Kate Middleton. The tour began March 19 amid growing calls to cut formal ties with the Queen and a reckoning with the region's colonial past that includes calls for slavery reparations. Queen Elizabeth II is the monarch of 14 countries outside the U.K., including Canada, Australia, and Papua New Guinea, that are known as the Commonwealth realms.

TIMING Officially, the trip was meant to commemorate Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee, celebrating 70 years on the throne. But many observers say the trip was to persuade Belize, Jamaica, and the Bahamas to keep the Queen as head of state. On the second stop of their trip, Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness told the royals, "We intend to attain in short order ... our true ambitions as an independent, developed, prosperous country."

**TREND** In November, Barbados became the first country to remove the Queen as head of state since Mauritius in 1992. Dame Sandra Mason, the island's Governor-General since 2018, was named as President-elect of the nation. "The time has come to fully leave our colonial past behind," she said. Debates about abolishing the monarchy have rumbled on for decades in other Commonwealth realms.

LEGACY Although the Queen's role in Commonwealth realms is largely symbolic, attitudes toward the royal family are varied and complex. Some believe that keeping the Queen as head of state undermines independence, and only serves to perpetuate colonial subservience. "Imagine being given independence, and then to be told as an adult nation that the Queen still had a stake in Jamaica and that the island is not really free, it is still an infant colony," explains Jamaican-born British writer and academic Velma McClymont.

-ELOISE BARRY

**NEWS TICKER** 

#### Russian newspaper stops its run

Novaya Gazeta, the last remaining major independent newspaper in Russia, suspended operations on March 28. The newspaper, headed by 2021 Nobel laureate Dmitry Muratov, cited warnings from the government linked to a new law criminalizing "fake news" about the Ukraine conflict.

#### Fines for U.K. lockdown parties

London's Metropolitan

Police said it had issued 20 fines to individuals for breaking restrictions during parties at 10 Downing Street, Prime Minister Boris Johnson's residence, during COVID-19 lockdowns from 2020 to 2021. The police did not name those fined; Downing Street said Johnson was not among them.

#### Oligarch Abramovich 'poisoned'

Russian oligarch
Roman Abramovich
and two others
reportedly suffered
symptoms consistent
with poisoning after
attending peace talks
between Russia and
Ukraine in March.
The reports said all
recovered, and Russia
denied any links to
the incident.

#### NEWS TICKER

# Trump likely committed crimes: judge

A federal judge rfuled on March 28 that former President Donald Trump "more likely than not" committed felonies in his efforts to overturn the 2020 election.
U.S. District Judge David Carter made the judgment while ordering the release of emails from Trump ally John Eastman in a civil case.

#### DeSantis signs 'Don't Say Gay' bill into law

On March 28, Florida's Republican Governor Ron DeSantis signed legislation banning classroom instruction about sexual orientation or gender identity in kindergarten through third grade, or "in a manner that is not age-appropriate"which critics say could extend to higher grade levels. The law, which opponents dubbed the 'Don't Say Gay" bill, goes into effect July 1.

#### FDA approves 50+ COVID-19 booster

On March 29, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration authorized a fourth dose of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine to people ages 50 and up, at least four months after their previous booster. The move comes amid a wave of infections in Europe and the spread of the Omicron subvariant known as BA.2.

#### GOOD OUESTION

# How many planets have been found, and how many more are out there?

TIME WAS, THERE WERE ONLY NINE known planets in the entire universe—the gaggle of worlds that orbit our sun. That number was reduced to eight in 2006, when the International Astronomical Union busted Pluto down to a dwarf planet. But even before Pluto was pink-slipped, the planetary census far deeper in space began to grow, with the discovery, in 1992, of a planet orbiting a rapidly spinning pulsar; and later, in 1995, of a Jupiter-like planet orbiting a

sunlike star. Since then the planetary population has exploded, and, as NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory recently reported, the official total of known worlds beyond our own has now topped 5,000.

The majority of the discoveries were made by the Kepler space telescope. Launched in 2009, it hunted for planets using the socalled transit methodlooking for the slight dimming in light that occurs when an orbiting planet briefly blocks the light from the star. The dimming is fantastically subtle. Former Kepler mission director Natalie Batalha described it to TIME as the equivalent of removing a single light bulb from a board of 10,000 of them. And Kepler studied only a

tiny portion of the sky, encompassing just 150,000 stars. Still, in the 11 years it operated, it confirmed the existence of 2,709 exoplanets and has returned data still being studied about a possible 2,057 more.

The newer Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS), launched in 2018, also uses the transit method, but is equipped with multiple telescopic eyes, allowing it to scan the entire bowl of the sky. In just the

short time it's been operating, it has confirmed the existence of 203 more exoplanets and has spotted another possible 5,459 that astronomers are now investigating.

The transit method is not the only way to go looking for exoplanets. Other telescopes—both space-based and Earth-based—use what's known as the radial-velocity method. They study a star looking for the slight wobble caused by the gravity of a planet—or multiple planets—

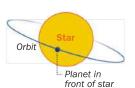
tugging on it as they orbit. The most celebrated multiplanet system to date is located just 39 light-years from Earth, where seven planets orbit the red dwarf known as Trappist-1.

The planets that have been discovered so far range in size and composition. There are so-called hot Jupiterswhich, as their name suggests, are gaseous worlds that orbit close to the fires of their parent planet. Others are smaller gas worlds, similar in size to Neptune. Still others the most promising ones are compact, rocky planets like Earth, some orbiting in the habitable zone of their star, a place where temperatures are not too

hot and not too cold for water, the sine qua non of life as we know it, to exist in a liquid state.

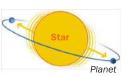
The mere fact that astronomers find planets pretty much everywhere they look has led them to conclude that virtually every star in the universe is orbited by at least one planet—making for trillions upon trillions of potential worlds. "Each one of them is a brand-new planet," said NASA astronomer Jessie Christiansen in a statement. "I get excited about every one because we don't know anything about them."—JEFFREY KLUGER

## HOW EXOPLANETS ARE DETECTED



#### **TRANSIT**

Stars are slightly dimmed as orbiting planets block their light



#### **WOBBLE**

As a planet orbits, its gravity tugs its parent star slightly



DIED

## **Madeleine Albright**

A barrier breaker

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT, THE TRAILBLAZING public servant who immigrated to the United States as a refugee and went on to become the first woman to ever serve as U.S. Secretary of State, died March 23 of cancer. She was 84. Albright, who was born Marie Jana Korbelova in Prague in 1937, and whose family fled both Nazis and communists, became an expert on foreign policy during a career that eventually brought her around the world as the highest-ranking woman in U.S. government history at the time.

Those who worked with Albright and chronicled her career remember her as an effective

'It had not occurred to me, frankly, that I would ever be in a position to break a glass ceiling.'

communicator who explained complex international issues with clarity, a "gatherer of people" who believed in fostering bipartisanship through conversation, a "no-nonsense" negotiator who often employed her eclectic pin collection to send diplomatic messages, and a feminist icon whose voice on global affairs long outlasted her years of public service.

ALBRIGHT WAS A CHAMPION of women's rights internationally and a vocal advocate for Democratic women in U.S. politics, famously warning that "there's a special place in hell for women who don't help other women"—a motto born out of the scrutiny she faced from women in her own life when she pursued graduate school while her children were still young.

In 1993, Albright—already an influential voice in the Democratic Party—was appointed U.S. ambassador to the U.N. by President Bill Clinton, and he was urged three years later to appoint her as Secretary of State after Warren Christopher stepped down. Former Maryland Senator Barbara Mikulski was among those calling for her appointment, and said Albright knew "both sides of the aisle, both sides of the dome—that they really admired her. They admired her brilliance. They admired her feistiness, and they admired her ability to communicate."

Albright was unanimously confirmed by the Senate on Jan. 22, 1997, and served in the role until 2001. As Secretary of State, she promoted the expansion of NATO, led the call for military intervention in Kosovo, negotiated with North Korean leader Kim Jong Il about nuclear weapons, and promoted the global advancement of women. But Albright also faced criticism for her response to some key foreign policy issues. Her recommendation, as U.N. ambassador, to withdraw peacekeeping forces from Rwanda, amid a crisis that turned into a genocide, has drawn intense scrutiny; she has described the decision as her "greatest regret."

After leaving office, Albright remained an engaged voice in policy debates until her death. "It had not occurred to me, frankly, that I would ever be in a position to break a glass ceiling—particularly a woman who's married and the mother of twins," she told TIME in 2016. "But the turning point did come."—KATIE REILLY

#### DIED

> Taylor Hawkins, Foo Fighters drummer, on March 25, at 50. > Stephen Wilhite, creator of the GIF animated image, on March 14, at 74.

#### BROKEN

Temperature records in Antarctica, as amid rapid climate change, a high of 11.3°F was hit on March 18, 70°F warmer than normal.

#### STEPPING AWAY

Bruce Willis, from acting, after being diagnosed with aphasia, which his family revealed on social media on March 30.

#### BARRED

Employees without beards, from working for the Afghan government, by the Taliban, from March 29, sources told Reuters.

#### AWARDED

\$14 million, to protesters injured in George Floyd demonstrations after a verdict March 25 that police used excessive force.

#### WON

Best Picture at the Oscars by **CODA**, about the hearing daughter of a deaf family, the first streaming film to snag the award.



WORLD

# Macron positions himself as the statesman of Europe

BY VIVIENNE WALT/PARIS

FOR A LEADER GIVEN TO DRAMATIC FLOURISHES, French President Emmanuel Macron announced his run for re-election with uncharacteristic humility. In a simple letter published in French newspapers in early March, he addressed his citizens: "I am seeking your trust again."

So began an odd campaign—if you can call it that. Macron's 11 rivals in the first-round vote on April 10 spent months sniping while Macron glided above the fray. The runoff on April 24 looks likely to be a rematch of 2017, with Macron against the far-right Marine Le Pen, and he seems set to hand her another defeat. "It seems over before it has even begun," *Le Monde* declared of the "phantom campaign."

His rocket ride to power five years ago stunned Europe and crushed France's mainstream Republican and Socialist parties. This time around, he's playing the President, not the candidate. Macron, 44, has appeared to watch the election from afar, too busy with crises like the war in Ukraine to focus on politics. He was even photographed unshaven in his ornate office, in jeans and a hoodie—widely seen as a nod to Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky, whose viral appearances get plenty of French airtime.

While Macron's popularity is up since Russia's invasion began, his far-right rivals have scrambled to explain their long support for Russian President Vladimir Putin; Le Pen, 53, pulped more than a million pamphlets showing her shaking Putin's hand. By contrast, Macron—who has the luck of France being the E.U.'s current rotating President—

'It seems over before it has even begun.'

SOLENN DE ROYER, JOURNALIST, IN LE MONDE ON MARCH 8 A campaign poster showing President Macron, on March 22

has assailed Putin and used his frequent talks with the Russian leader to cement his stature as statesman. That has also helped bolster his key argument: that Europe needs to reduce its dependence on Washington and cut its own path to power.

#### **BUT MACRON'S WARTIME ROLE**

can take him only so far. Even as voters look set to give him another term, many can barely conceal their distaste for a man they see as a know-it-all disconnected from hardship. After he raised fuel prices in 2018, hundreds of thousands of "yellow vest" activists protested for months. Emmanuel Rivière, head of international polling for Kantar Public in Paris, believes the pandemic saved Macron: the French leader committed billions of euros to supporting businesses, and rolled out a mammoth vaccine program. France bounced back, and now has its lowest unemployment rate in years.

But tough times could be coming. "There is a high level of detestation of Macron, which is unprecedented in France," says Marc Lazar, professor of political history at Sciences Po University in Paris. Those feelings could boil over as prices rise and a €171 billion deficit begins affecting daily lives. Macron quietly announced March 10 that he intended to raise the public-pension age from 62 to 65. Voters say inflation is their top concern, and many struggle to make ends meet. About 30% of voters intend to pick far-right names on April 10, while the far-left Jean-Luc Mélenchon grabs 14% for an outside shot at the runoff. All that portends trouble. "You have a big risk of a new social revolt," Lazar says.

Observers warn that Macron's phantom campaign could come back to haunt him. "The anger among the French has not been expressed in this election," says Antoine Bristielle, a public-opinion expert at the Fondation Jean-Jaurès in Paris. Instead, he says, "it will be expressed in the street in his next five years in office."



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### Russian businessman **Evgeny Chichvarkin** on how London became Londongrad

BY CHARLIE CAMPBELL

EVGENY CHICHVARKIN IS LOOKING AGITATED. He's just heard a whisper about some potential stock going cheap and so politely declines my suggestion we leave his bustling wineshop in London's tony Mayfair district in search of somewhere quieter to chat.

But Chichvarkin isn't dashing off in pursuit of another 1774 Jura vin jaune, which sells for a precise £72,553.80 (\$95,308) at Hedonism Wines, the store he set up in 2012 to be "the world's best wineshop." Instead, he is preparing to inspect a consignment of military fatigues and battle wear at a warehouse in the nearby town of Slough—worth some \$650,000, he tells me conspiratorially. "It belongs to a rich Russian who had his assets frozen and needs to sell. If it works out, I'll send it straight to the Ukrainian army."

Chichvarkin isn't your typical wine merchant. With his Salvador Dalí mustache, billowing pantaloons, gold tooth earring, and pink leather winkle pickers, the very idea of typical seems anathema to the 47-year-old entrepreneur, who has lived in London since fleeing his native Russia face down in the back of a car in 2008.

Chichvarkin was born in St. Petersburg, back when it was still Leningrad. He rose to become one of his nation's youngest billionaires, by founding cell-phone retailer Evroset in 1997, which swelled to 5,000 stores by 2007. But he fell afoul of local officials who accused Chichvarkin of kidnapping and extortion—charges he has always called bogus. Chichvarkin and his business partner sold Evroset for a reported cut-price \$400 million, and after successfully fighting extradition proceedings, he now lives in exile. In London, he has enjoyed a coda as businessman, restaurateur, and thorn in the side of Russian President Vladimir Putin, supporting democratic causes in Russia and its periphery by funding opposition parties and issuing scathing critiques.

"Russians are not Putin," he says, fixing me with piercing blue eyes. "He doesn't represent us. We didn't elect him. We don't support him."

Chichvarkin is a flamboyant, iconoclastic example of the Russian wealth that has flooded into Britain over the past two decades. The deluge of illicit cash scrubbed clean in the City of London has led to allegations that Putin's cronies have penetrated Britain's political, economic, and legal

#### QUICK FACTS

## Privileged upbringing

Chichvarkin's father was an Aeroflot pilot and his mother an economist for the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Trade.

#### Young money

He was Russia's richest man under 35, worth some \$1.6 billion in 2008.

#### Liberal leanings

He was a member of Russia's liberal democratic Right Cause political party before it disbanded in 2016.

#### **Global gourmand**

Chichvarkin is the owner of the Michelin starawarded Hide Restaurant in London's Piccadilly. systems, prompting tags like "Londongrad" and, Chichvarkin's personal favorite, "Moscow on Thames."

According to a 2022 report from Transparency International, Russians with Kremlin links or who have been accused of corruption own at least \$1.9 billion of British real estate. The U.K. parliamentary intelligence committee has dubbed London a "laundromat" for dirty Russian money.

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson declared, "We must go after the oligarchs." His government has sanctioned more than 1,000 individuals and businesses linked to Russia.

When it comes to support for Ukraine, Chichvarkin goes further than U.S. or E.U. leaders: he advocates for "immediately" sending NATO soldiers and enforcing a no-fly zone, as President Volodymyr Zelensky has repeatedly requested. But he says the punitive economic measures targeting supposed Kremlin allies are so broad as to amount to "discrimination."

"It's a dirty game," he says. "Javelin missiles and NATO troops can end the war. Not seizing a yacht in Monaco. That will only help a particular politician get re-elected."

BRITAIN'S PROSTITUTION of itself for Russian billions has deep roots. Following World War II, the U.K. was verging on bankruptcy until the City of London began cozying up to the Soviet Union, which didn't want to keep dollar reserves in American banks so instead chose British. These banks, in turn, began lending those "eurodollars" to one another in an unregulated market, which eventually spawned today's opaque offshore finance system. London boomed.

More recently, rich kleptocrats—lured by top-notch schools, a plaintiff-friendly defamation system, and so-called golden visas that allow applicants who invest £2 million in the U.K. to gain residency—have parked their private jets on British runways. Chichvarkin enjoys the luxurious fruits of London living as much as any of them, even crossing mallets with princes William and Harry on the polo circuit. He describes the Russian



diaspora as "probably the best ever" to have set up in the capital. "They predominantly follow the rules and laws," he says. "The only problem is Russian ex-wives lying in court!"

British lawmakers are suddenly waking up to the possibility that they sold Putin the rope with which to strangle their democracy. Since Johnson became Prime Minister in 2019, his party has accepted £2 million in Russian funding. In 2020, 14 members of his government received Russialinked donations.

Chichvarkin argues that sanctioning oligarchs will have little effect on Putin. "Sanctions must target Putin's wallet and his real friends," he says, "not people who made money and probably had to give half to Putin just to keep the other half."

'Russians are not Putin. He doesn't represent us.'

-EVGENY CHICHVARKIN

Oliver Bullough, author of Butler to the World: How Britain Helps the World's Worst People Launder Money, Commit Crimes, and Get Away With Anything, disagrees. "In general, if you are wealthy and your business is inside Russia, you are only in that position because you've come to an accommodation with the Kremlin," he says. "Otherwise, you would have had your business taken away."

Chichvarkin's dramatic flight from Russia is a case in point. He knows only too well the brutal machinations of Putin's "bulldogs," as he calls them. He maintains that his own mother, whose bloodied and bruised body was discovered in her Moscow apartment in April 2010, was murdered by state agents in an attempt to lure him home for her funeral. (The Kremlin denies involvement, and the official verdict was that she died of a heart attack.)

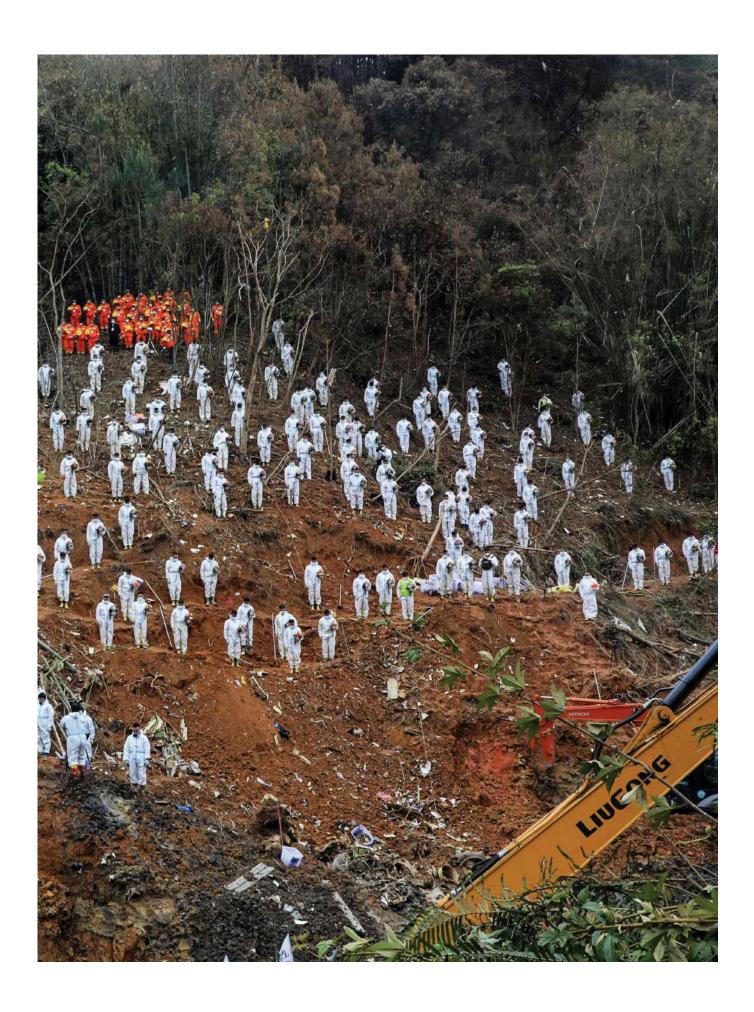
That has not cowed Chichvarkin. In March 2018, in the weeks before Putin's widely disputed re-election landslide, he stood outside the Russian embassy with a handful of fellow dissidents, denouncing his regime through a megaphone. Asked whether he fears for his own life, he shrugs: "I'm too tired to be afraid," he says. "I drive around with the sunroof open."

It's brio that chafes with an increasingly bleak reality. On the day we met, Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny—who narrowly escaped death after poisoning by suspected Kremlin agents in August 2020—had the sentence for his widely condemned corruption conviction increased to 13 years at a maximum-security prison.

"When Putin dies he will be free," says Chichvarkin, who has funded Navalny with over \$100,000 of donations since 2010. "Everybody's waiting for Putin to die. The possibility of freedom only comes after his death."

Is that the only hope for Russia? "Well, one of Putin's friends could bind him and bring him to the Hague," he chuckles. "Russian history is quite dark with a lot of very strange examples of changing power." It's such a slim glimmer that Chichvarkin falls silent. He twists his mustache contemplatively and eventually looks up. "Ukraine winning the war would help."









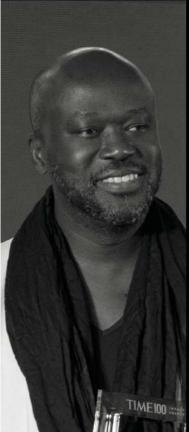
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# The View

NATION

# JUDGE JACKSON'S PRACTICED POISE

BY MIKKI KENDALL

Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson took a long pause. Senator Ted Cruz had displayed Ibram X. Kendi's book *Antiracist Baby* and asked her if she believed babies are racist. You could see her thinking about how to respond to the provocation, to show him the respect he wasn't showing her. She then calmly said she didn't think any child should be made to feel racist or less than.

INSIDE

THE HEAVY ECONOMIC TOLL OF "ZERO COVID" IN CHINA

HOW BIG TECH COMPANIES CAPITALIZE ON VIRAL SHAME

WHAT I WISH MORE PEOPLE HAD TOLD ME ABOUT PARENTING

The exchange was extraordinary in its circumstances—Jackson is the first Black woman to be nominated to the Supreme Court—but to Black women across the country, it was also familiar. An occasion that should have been a celebration of how far America has come since slavery ended was instead a reminder of how far we have to go.

Jackson is in many ways a perfect Supreme Court candidate. She's well educated with a stellar record both as an attorney and as a judge. There's nothing questionable in her personal life, no indications of ethical flaws. In fact, Senator Lindsey Graham, one of her most aggressive questioners, voted to confirm her to her current seat on the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals. Jackson has spent more time on the bench than Justice Amy Coney Barrett had when she was nominated, and unlike Justice Clarence Thomas or Justice Brett Kavanaugh, she has never been accused of sexual harassment or assault. (Both men have denied the allegations.)

Yet despite her résumé, Jackson has faced an onslaught of microaggressions, falsehoods, and demands for irrelevant information. From Tucker Carlson's obsession with her LSAT score to Cruz's contention that she must answer questions about the work of another Black scholar because she's on the board of a school where his book is taught, the attacks have not been your typical partisan fare. Senator Marsha Blackburn, for instance, insisted that Jackson's support of the 1619 Project, an effort to center our national narrative around slavery and its legacy, means she wants to teach kids that America is a fundamentally racist country. Meanwhile, other Senators pressed Jackson on her sentencing of sex offenders, suggesting this Black woman would be soft on crime and maybe even put children at risk.

IT WAS MADDENING to watch, yet I know that Jackson cannot express her frustrations outwardly. She's going to be expected to eat this indignity with a smile and never speak of it publicly. She knows, as does any Black woman in America, that if she gets upset or displays anger, she will be labeled an Angry Black Woman and all her



Jackson takes questions from the Senate Judiciary Committee on March 23

credentials and hard work won't matter.

Too many Americans have been conditioned to expect Black women to be less than them. This includes politicians who are supposed to represent everyone. They expect Black women to work hard, but not be too successful or to acknowledge what they've overcome in their pursuit of success. It's a view that harks back to Mammy, the stereotype of a happily disenfranchised Black woman devoted to caring for the family that enslaved her, no matter the personal cost, and to Jim Crow-era etiquette, which prescribed that Black people refrain from showing much emotion in public, and it's still present in workplaces today.

Black women are effectively expected to fill two roles at work: the one they were hired to do, and making their co-workers comfortable, at their own expense. It's not enough to be educated, accomplished, and professional. To navigate the obstacles created by racist stereotypes, they must also hide their emotions. They cannot be too talented or assertive, lest they be seen as a threat. Like Jackson, they must persevere in a no-win situation.

Politics will be held up as an excuse for the atrocious behaviors at these hearings, but one of the reasons so many Republican Senators turned to this toolbox of bigotry is they know there will be no consequences. Many of their constituents will laud this behavior, and even those who don't are likely to celebrate Jackson's strength and never consider what these hearings have cost her emotionally.

There is a saying in the Black American community that we must work twice as hard to get half as far. What we do not often say out loud is that for those of us who reach great heights, we have not only worked twice as hard, but we have also been hurt twice as much, and probably more. For Jackson to reach this place, she has had to weather a lifetime of this treatment and not let it stop her.

Pundits will continue to try to dehumanize her, despite having no idea what it feels like to walk this singular path to the highest court in the land as a Black woman. She is the first, she will not be the last, and as with all trailblazers, her impact will be seen in the Black girls and women who too will learn to share their feelings in private and present a calm, composed face in public. Senator Cory Booker told her, "It is so good to see you here." And it was. I just wish she were given the welcome she deserves.

Kendall is the author of Hood Feminism: Notes From the Women That a Movement Forgot THE RISK REPORT BY IAN BREMMER

# China's deepening showdown with COVID-19



IF VLADIMIR PUTIN hadn't ordered an invasion of Ukraine, the headline-making story right now would be the intensifying war be-

tween China and COVID-19. In Shanghai (pop. around 26 million), state officials announced on March 27 that the eastern half of the city would be locked down until April 1 for mass COVID-19 testing. When that's accomplished, the western half will be locked down until April 5. Health officials conduct tests across shut-down areas, and an infected resident can be forced into a quarantine facility.

Tens of millions in Jilin province and the tech-hub city of Shenzhen (pop. 17.5 million) have already been locked down. But the closure of Shanghai, the commercial and financial heart of the world's second largest economy, is the most drastic move yet taken as

part of the "zero COVID" policy, a plan designed to keep COVID-19 infection numbers as close to zero as possible. The plan has been successful in limiting the spread of the virus. China's leaders have reported fewer than 5,000 deaths over the course of the pandemic as the death toll in the U.S. nears 1 million. Even if China's official

numbers are suspect (and they are), the loss of life has surely been proportionally much closer to the levels reported in Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore, which, until recently, have also exercised ultra-strict COVID-control policies.

But zero COVID exacts a heavy economic toll. China's economic growth has been slowing for years as rising wages reduce incentives for foreign companies to use China as a manufacturing hub and as large-scale state investment in infrastructure and real estate development creates an oversupply of both. The pandemic and the war in Ukraine raised the costs that everyone, including China, must pay to import fuel, food, and other commodities. Shutting down half of Shanghai, even for a few days, will add to the burden.

THIS REALITY has forced an easing of some zero-COVID rules. Instead of being forced into overwhelmed hospitals, infected people with mild symptoms can now report to local quarantine facilities. The length of some quarantines has been reduced. But despite the economic damage already done, the massive lockdown in Shanghai demonstrates that China's government isn't ready to change course.

All this trouble comes at a politically sensitive moment. This fall, a Communist Party Congress is expected to ratify a landmark decision to award Xi Jinping a third term as China's leader. Since the pandemic erupted, Xi has tried to de-

COVID-19's

disruption

of Chinese

life will

get worse

before it

gets better

flect blame for COVID-19's origins and for the early censorship that allowed the virus to go global. He's made his case for the superiority of China's system by pointing to the political turmoil, economic fallout, and higher death toll in America and Europe.

But the Omicron variant has made life in China far more complicated. It's hit

the country hard because so few Chinese have been either infected with COVID-19 or jabbed with the more effective vaccines found in the U.S. and Europe.

Xi can hope that new treatments and the development of a domestically made mRNA vaccine will come sooner rather than later. But the risk is rising that COVID-19's disruption of Chinese life will get worse before it gets better—and that Xi will have to carefully manage the economic and political fallout to keep his long-term consolidation of political control on track.

SOCIETY

## RETHINKING THE OFFICE FOR MOMS

Nobody wants to go back to the office quite like white dudes. This doesn't mean all white dudes are pushing this return—or that everyone in this camp is white or a dude—but just over 30% of white men want to go back full time, compared with around 22% of women (Black and white) and 16% of Black men.

For working moms especially, remote work has brought a new level of flexibility and self-determination. And studies show flexible work can increase our sense of belonging—particularly for Black workers. But for two years, the office advocates have put us through the same "When can we get back?" conversation, ignoring the more important one: Is there an office that working moms would be excited to go to? If so, why aren't men fighting for it?

In a word: comfort. The office was designed for men who made the money while their wives took care of their home and family. Not only was the temperature set low to optimize for the warmth of their suits, the standard of "professionalism" was based on white-male sociality. It's no wonder I felt relieved to work remotely early in the pandemic.

Still, with two kids at home, I soon began to understand the urge to go back—but not to the office as we know it. We need a new kind of workplace built with moms in mind, one that gives workers control over their time, lets them work from home as needed, offers childcare support, and addresses biases.

Reimagining the workplace isn't about the end of comfort. If all goes well, for many, it will be the beginning.

—Reshma Saujani, author of Pay Up: The Future of Women and Work (and Why It's Different Than You Think)





Climate Is Everything
By Justin Worland
SENIOR CORRESPONDENT

ACROSS THE GLOBE, POLITICIANS are fuming about record-high gas prices and proposing a range of policy mechanisms to bring down costs, including cutting gas taxes and offering drivers rebates. These policies make political sense as everyday people suffer at the pump, but they help mask the true cost a gallon of gas imposes on society—from the risk of traffic accidents to the contribution to climate change. Calculating the damage is a fraught process, and economists don't necessarily agree

about all the variables. But one thing is definitely true: driving costs society much more than you're paying to do it.

These unpaid costs to society—what economists call externalities—are fairly easy to understand. Cars cause gridlock, which reduces productivity. Accidents kill tens of thousands in the U.S. each year. Cars generate air pollution and, as a result, contribute to health ailments like asthma and heart disease. Importantly, cars also emit carbon dioxide

Vehicles wait to refuel at a Costco in Seattle on March 9

and contribute to global climate change. The average U.S. passenger vehicle emits 4.6 metric tons of carbon dioxide annually, and transportation is responsible for nearly 30% of the country's greenhouse-gas emissions.

To find a precise estimate of the externalities associated with driving, I turned to a 2007 paper from Resources for the Future. The research group found that if you add up all the mileage-related externalities—namely congestion, accidents, and local air pollution—the cost comes to a whopping \$2.10 per gallon. Climate change contributes another 72¢ per gallon if you look at the group's estimates that are in line with current understanding of the effects of emissions. Add the two up and it's clear the cost of the externalities can total \$3 per gallon.

Of course, no politician is proposing a gas tax to account for all the damage driving causes. On average, state taxes add 31¢ to the cost of a gallon of gas while federal taxes add another 18.4¢, according to federal data. Nonetheless, the numbers offer an important dose of reality: without a radical policy change, drivers are getting a free ride.



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# The D.C. Brief By Philip Elliott WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT

It's entirely reasonable that most of Washington missed the development. After all, it's been a busy few weeks with a Supreme Court nomination, a war in Europe, and a lingering pandemic. But the March 21 breakdown in peace talks between Russia and Japan

## may demand D.C.'s attention if not properly managed.

You see, the Soviet Union and Japan never actually signed a peace treaty after World War II ended in 1945, much like how the U.S. still technically remains at war with North Korea even though active fighting ended in 1953. Moscow at the moment lacks the capacity to credibly fight a second front, but that doesn't mean the geopolitical trap isn't one that has D.C. worried.

Because technically post–World War II Japan isn't allowed to have a military and nominally relies on foreign might, the West could be drawn to Tokyo's defense if Moscow gets antsy for a distraction from its fight in Ukraine. Which means an errant Russian attack on Japan could force the U.S. into a live-fire war with U.S. forces in play. Russia repositioning its Pacific fleet is raising worries about the eventual need for U.S. involvement.



For more, sign up for TIME's politics newsletter at **time.com/theDCbrief**  THE LEADERSHIP BRIEF

### **New Seuss boss seeks** success in progress

BY MEGAN MCCLUSKEY

AFTER A RECORD-HIGH REVENUE year for Dr. Seuss Enterprises, the privately held company that oversees children's author Theodor Seuss Geisel's estate, Susan Brandt was promoted to president and CEO in January. Brandt, who has been with the company for 24 years, oversaw a surge in book sales after the company announced in March 2021 that it would no longer publish or license six of Seuss's books, including his first children's book, And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street (1937), because of racist

and offensive imagery. More recently, she's credited with spearheading ventures that fulfill Seuss's wish to spread his work across "all media throughout the world"—from an animated Netflix series

based on Green Eggs and Ham to a forthcoming trio of movies adapted from The Cat in the Hat and Oh, the Places You'll Go! to a

Seuss-themed NFT marketplace. Her efforts have kept the brand not only relevant, but also thriving.

Brandt spoke with TIME about the evolution of the Seuss brand.

#### What do you feel is your responsibility when it comes to managing such well-established and beloved intellectual property?

We're blessed with a property that has universal and timeless themes. As CEO or as any role in the company—it doesn't just lay at my feet—we're stewards of the DNA of this property. So while it's extremely relevant and important to translate the property into new and different mediums, our ultimate goal is to ensure that it's still a Dr. Seuss experience, whether you're going to

a museum, watching a television show, or entering the metaverse. We take that very seriously.

#### Can you explain how the company ultimately decided to discontinue six books?

This was not a decision that was made in a short period of time. We consulted with a panel of educators and experts on racial relations to make our decision about the best move forward.

How do you preserve an au-

thor's legacy while acknowledging that aspects of their work don't align with current cultural values? How we conduct our business did not change from before our announcement to after. We strive to ensure that our body of work reflects and includes our broad and diverse community. We support chil-

dren and families with messages of hope, inspiration, inclusion, and friendship.



be published due to offensive imagery

#### You worked with Seuss's widow Audrey Geisel for years. What was the most valuable lesson she taught you?

Audrey was the best. I miss her dearly. She was a very, very savvy businesswoman. Ultimately, she taught me that this is Dr. Seuss. It should be delightful. It should be fun. Everything we do should be good for families and kids in our communities. She also just taught me to laugh.



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NATION

# How Big Tech weaponizes shame

BY CATHY O'NEIL

SHAME IS A VISCERAL, INSTINCTUAL RESPONSE. WE react violently to shaming by others, either by feeling shame or by feeling outraged at the attempt. This human hard wiring, which historically salvaged our reputations and preserved our lives, is being hijacked and perverted by the big tech companies for profit. In the process, we are needlessly pitted against one another. It doesn't have to be like this. What I've learned—in part from very personal experience—is that shame comes in a number of forms, and the better we understand it, the better we can fight back.

Whereas shame is primarily a useful social mechanism that coerces its target into conforming with a shared norm, the kind of shaming that often goes viral on social media is a punching-down type of shame where the target cannot choose to conform even if they tried. That obese woman who fell over in her scooter at Walmart? Viral. That overdose victim? Shamed.

Shame's secondary goal is arguably more effective on social media, namely to broadcast the norm for

everyone to see. When we see yet another phone video of an outrageous public "Karen" situation, it can conceivably be seen as a learning situation for everyone else.

But what exactly are we learning? The ensuing viral shame is swift and overly simplistic, often leaving little context or right to due process. When we do hear further from the target, the shame tends to have backfired, leaving the alleged Karen defiant, finding community with equally defiant others. Finally, the underlying societal problem exposed by a Karen episode is left unaddressed: that white women hold outsize power over others, especially Black men, because of a historical bias in policing.

As poorly as shame plays out, it is exactly how the big tech companies have designed

it. I should know—I used to work as a data scientist in the world of online ads. I would decide who deserved an opportunity and who did not, based on who had spent money in the past and who hadn't.

Most online algorithms quantify and profile you, putting a number on how much you're worth, whether it's to sell you a luxury item or to prey upon you if they deem you vulnerable to gambling, predatory loans, or cryptocurrencies. In turn, the advertisers who find you figure out your weaknesses and deftly exploit them. When I realized I was helping build a terrible system, I got out.

**FOR SOCIAL MEDIA,** the data scientists are interested in only one thing: sustained attention. That's why online we are



We first need to share norms and even a sense of trust made to feel so very comfortable, surrounded by like-minded friends, perhaps thousands of them. It's big enough to feel like we're "in society," but of course it's actually quite small, a minute corner of the world. The ways we disagree with others outside our group are filtered straight to us, via algorithms, and the ways we agree with one another are likewise filtered away from us, making them essentially invisible.

That automated boosting of shame-based outrage triggers us, and we get habituated to performing acts of virtue signaling. We jump on the shame train to get our tiny little dopamine boosts for being outraged and for our righteousness. That we get accolades from our inner circle only serves to convince us once again that we're in the right and that people outside our circles are living in sick cults. This turns what should be a socially cohesive act into a mere performance, as we get stuck for hours on the platforms, tearing each

other down for the sake of increasing the profits of Big Tech.

What's particularly tragic about all of this is that the shame doesn't work at all: it is inherently misdirected. For shame to work, in the sense of persuading someone to behave, we first need to share norms and even a sense of trust, and second, the target of the shame needs to have the expectation that their better behavior will be noticed. Those precon-

ditions are rarely met online.

We have had differences of opinions for a long time; that's nothing new. By pitting us against one another in these endless shame spirals, Big Tech has successfully prevented us from building solidarity. The first step is for us to critically observe their manipulations and call them what they are: shame machines.

O'Neil is the author of The Shame Machine: Who Profits in the New Age of Humiliation



SOCIETY

### We should talk more about the good parts of parenting

BY LUCY HUBER

FROM THE MOMENT I ANNOUNCED I WAS PREGNANT, the comments started rolling in:

Hope you're ready to never sleep again.
All your hair is going to fall out.
Just wait until he's a toddler.
Just wait until he's a teenager!

Do you know what an episiotomy is?
They came from friends, from co-workers, from strangers who saw my belly. (OK, the last one was my doctor.)

At first they didn't bother me. But as the months went on, the comments did too. I've always liked kids, but from what I was hearing, the second you have your own, you find out "the truth": they drain you, demanding snacks at all hours, crying all night, breastfeeding too much, not breastfeeding enough, breaking heirlooms, forcing you to become an exhausted heap of a person who can't even drink a cup of coffee without a tiny human insisting on watching *Blippi* while picking their nose and wiping it on your unused diploma.

Was this what was going to happen to me?

For a long time, motherhood was glorified. When my mom was pregnant in the '8os, it never occurred to her that it would be hard because nobody talked about the challenges. She was surprised when we weren't the perfect children she'd imagined, children who slept through the night and were happy to sit quietly in a playpen until we were 5. Instead, when my mom took my brother for a preschool interview, he turned on all the outdoor spigots he could find and flooded the playground.

Now people try to avoid making it seem like it's all snuggly babies and well-behaved toddlers who would never purposely flood a Montessori vegetable garden. We finally started speaking up about issues that were being ignored, like postpartum depression. We allowed TV fathers to be emotional and stopped depicting mothers as rosy-cheeked June Cleavers. But maybe when it came to talking about

Sometimes after my son goes to sleep, I revisit the feeling of being with him like it's a drug parenthood, we overcorrected. We forgot to keep sharing the good stuff, in addition to the bad.

I HAD MY SON in May 2020, probably one of the worst times in history to have a baby. It could have been worse, of course—it wasn't on the Oregon Trail—but it wasn't great. For the first few months of his life, we couldn't see anyone. We showed him to friends and family by Zoom or by holding him up to a window. I wish they could have held him. I wish they could have held me. One night when he wouldn't stop crying, I drove to a parking lot and sobbed. I thought, This is exactly what everyone told me it would be like.

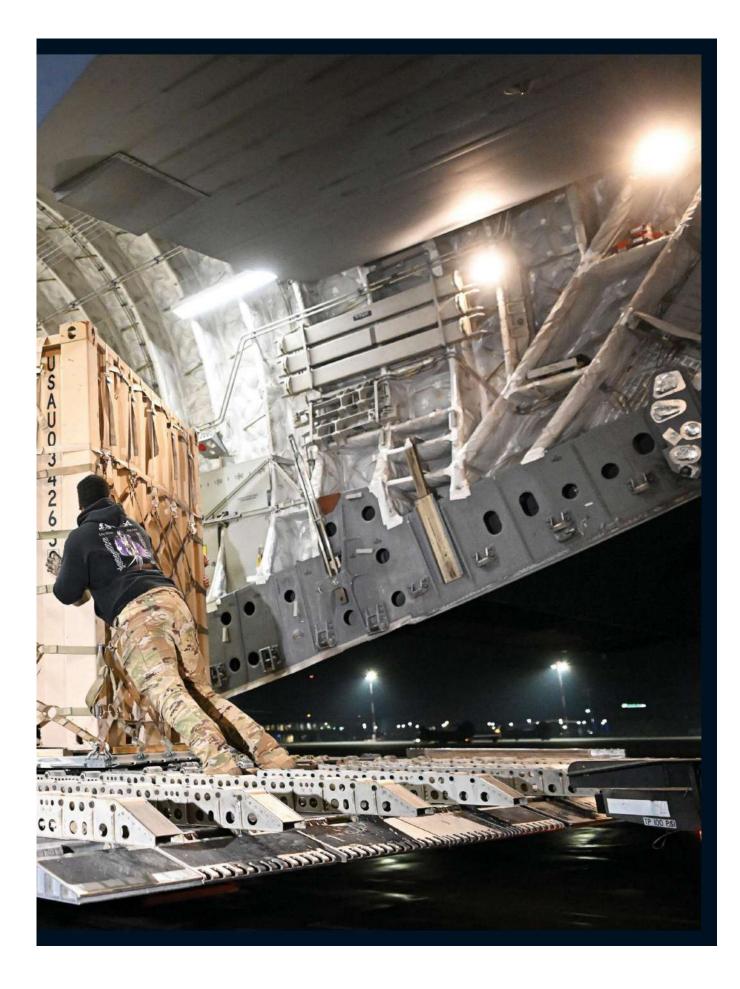
But even as a first-time parent of a pandemic baby, I've found there is so much good. Why didn't anyone warn me about the good? I don't mean good in the sense that my toddler is easy (he's not) or my parenting is perfect (last night, my son ate 30 tater tots and nothing else for dinner). But good unlike anything I knew before becoming a parent. Sometimes after my son goes to sleep, I revisit the feeling of being with him like it's a drug. I can release endorphins just by looking at a photo of him playing with a dump truck.

Maybe that's why it's hard to tell people about the good. The best moments of parenting sound mundane but feel otherworldly: The first time my son heard "Jump in the Line" and I danced around the room while he laughed. Cuddling while watching Cars 3 (again), stroking his hair. Kicking a soccer ball as the sun sets and the whole world is me and him.

A few nights ago, my toddler went around and said, "Good night, I love you!" to all his trucks, our cats, his dad, and me. He'd never said "I love you" to me before. My heart felt like someone had grabbed it inside my rib cage and squeezed so hard the ventricles were about to burst. I'm glad we've become more honest about parenting. But now when my friends are about to become parents, I try to explain this: some moments you'll be so happy, you'll practically combust.

Huber is a freelance writer and an editor at McSweeney's





# T

THE WINE WAS TOO WARM FOR KRIStina Kvien, the top U.S. envoy to Ukraine, so she stood up to get some ice cubes from a waiter at the bar. It was close to midnight in eastern Poland, the 11th night of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and for Kvien it was the end of a long day of meetings with U.S. military brass, members of Congress, and senior Biden Administration officials. Her boss, Secretary of State Antony Blinken, had left the city of Rzeszow a few hours earlier after visiting the U.S. supply lines to Ukraine. Kvien had gone to see him off.

"It's been crazy here," she told me that night in the restaurant of a hotel in the city center, which has served as her team's headquarters since U.S. diplomats evacuated Ukraine. "A couple of days ago, I was sitting at this table with Sean Penn." The American actor, who was working on a film in Ukraine when the invasion started, had been forced to flee over the border, abandoning his car at the side of the road and walking into Poland with a flood of refugees. Kvien ran into him when he finally made it to the hotel. "It feels a bit like Casablanca," she says.

Spend a few days driving back and forth across this border, and the plot of that wartime classic comes readily to mind. The film premiered in 1942, less than a year after the attack on Pearl Harbor forced the U.S. to join World War II. Eighty years later, the U.S. again finds itself drawn into a major European war, and there is no better place to witness its involvement than on the plains of eastern Poland, where a flood of assistance from the U.S. and its allies has given Ukraine its best chance of surviving this war, and maybe even winning it. "All of us are deeply, deeply committed to this cause," says Kvien, who has been the top U.S. diplomat in Ukraine since the start of 2020. "We're here to help. We're part of it."

Since the end of February, dozens of U.S. military cargo planes have landed on airfields near the border, packed to the brim with weapons. According to the Pentagon, it's the largest authorized transfer of arms in history from the U.S. military to any foreign country. Huge convoys of humanitarian aid have also poured across the border, ferrying everything from diapers to bulletproof vests in eclectic modes of transport: a Belgian ambulance on loan to a playwright from Berlin; a minivan helmed by a Ukrainian commando; the jeep of a British car salesman, who had driven for days to join the fight as a volunteer, one of thousands coming on their own accord from the U.S. and Europe to help Ukraine defend itself.

My travels through this corridor made one thing clear: the U.S. is a part of this war, even if its troops are not pulling the triggers. There are no plans to send any American forces for combat operations in Ukraine, a red line that President Joe Biden drew again during his trip to Poland on March 25. But just about anything short of that line seems to be fair game for Biden, and that leaves the U.S. with plenty of options for making sure the costs of this war in blood and money become unbearable for Russia, its military, and its President.

As the humanitarian toll of the Russian onslaught intensifies, Biden has ratcheted up his rhetoric in ways that risk drawing the U.S. even deeper into a conflict with a nuclear power. After meeting with U.S. troops in eastern Poland on March 25, Biden called Vladimir Putin a "war criminal." In a speech the next day, he questioned whether the Russian leader can remain in power after all the suffering he has caused in Ukraine. Biden's primary focus throughout the trip, however, was on the aid the U.S. is providing to Ukraine to alleviate that suffering. "They need it now," he told officials coordinating that aid at the airport in Rzeszow. "They need it as rapidly as we can get it there."

**THAT AIRPORT,** about an hour's drive from the border with Ukraine, was also the spot where my journey began a few weeks earlier, following the river of aid toward supply hubs in western Ukraine for distribution to the war zone farther east.



The first stop along the way was the hotel in Rzeszow, an unlikely nerve center for the U.S. mission. Kvien, an alumnus of the U.S. Army War College, ended up here in early February, soon after U.S. intelligence concluded that a Russian invasion was imminent. Her priority at the time was to convince the Ukrainian government that the invasion was coming, and to help them get ready. That mission ran into a wall of denial from President Volodymyr Zelensky and virtually all





his aides. Their government did little to prepare. Ukraine did not call up reservists, warn civilians, stockpile food, or move weapons into position. That made the supply lines from Poland even more critical once the invasion began on Feb. 24.

In his declaration of war early that morning, Putin warned that any country interfering in the invasion would face a Russian response "unlike any you have seen in your history." Many analysts took this as a threat of nuclear A convoy of unmarked trucks carrying supplies for Ukraine passes through Korczowa, Poland, on March 17

escalation. A senior Russian diplomat later made the warning more explicit. "By pumping Ukraine with weapons," said the diplomat, Sergei Ryabkov, the U.S. is making "not just a dangerous move, but an action that turns the corresponding convoys into legitimate

targets." Such threats did not stop the U.S. from rushing aid across the border. In the first three weeks of the invasion, President Biden approved \$1 billion worth of military hardware for Ukraine, including five attack helicopters, 100 combat drones, thousands of antitank and antiaircraft missiles, and around 60 million rounds of ammunition.

U.S. troops from the 82nd Airborne have been deployed to eastern Poland, in part to ensure that Russia thinks



twice about threatening these supply lines. "You are sitting at the forward edge of freedom," General Mark Milley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the troops during a stop in eastern Poland in early March.

It was one of many visits that Kvien and her team have helped to manage from their new base in Rzeszow. Congressional delegations have cycled through town. Republican Mike Pence, the former Vice President, paid a visit to see the U.S. support for Ukraine in action. "We haven't taken a day off in about a month," Kvien told me at the hotel restaurant. "The days have started to run together."

THE HUMANITARIAN AID convoy began to gather the next morning in a small Polish town near the border with Ukraine. Its organizer was Yuri Tyra, a longtime adviser to President Zelensky. The two have been friends since Zelensky's early days as a comedian

President Biden with members of the 82nd Airborne Division in Poland on March 25

and actor. Beginning in 2014, when Russia launched its annexation of the Crimean peninsula, they have made a tradition of visiting soldiers on New Year's Eve, delivering treats and gear to raise morale.

The start of the broader war in late February caught Tyra in his bathing suit, relaxing with his family in Brazil. He had been so sure that the buildup of Russian troops at the border was a bluff that he had decided to go on vacation. When Tyra heard the news, he sent a text message to Zelensky: "Coming to help."

With that began a mad dash to gather supplies from all over Europe. A network of friends helped Tyra drum up support from community groups, churches, schools, and charity organizations. Truckloads of supplies soon began arriving at another friend's mechanic shop in a Polish village near the border. By the time Tyra got there on March 6—his wife, their daughter, and a suitcase full of their holiday clothes in tow—the shop was piled high with boxes. FROM FINLAND, FOR UKRAINE, read one of them. Another label, written in German, offered a meticulous list of the contents: 48 juice boxes, 10 bags of muesli, 40 pairs of socks.

More than a dozen volunteers had driven for days to bring it all to the border. One of them, Gennady Kurkin, was about to begin producing his play at a theater in New York City when the invasion started. When I asked about his motives for coming all the way from his home in Berlin, he countered with a question of his own: "How can anyone just carry on as normal when this is happening?" A few of the convoy runners had laid out a lunch of pickles,





bread, cookies, and coffee in the back of the shop. Kurkin scarfed down cold meatballs from a can.

Before long the trucks were fully loaded, about a dozen in all, and we set off in a line behind Tyra's car. He had given Kurkin and me an ambulance to drive, an old Belgian model that had been purchased and donated by volunteers in the Netherlands. They had stuffed the vehicle so full of medical supplies that we had trouble squeezing our backpacks inside.

The border with Ukraine was less than 15 miles away, but it took us seven hours to reach it. Coming out of Ukraine into Poland, the crossing was backed up with refugees, a vast column of women and children pulling roller suitcases and carrying pets under their arms. That was expected: more than a million of them had already fled the fighting. What surprised me was the traffic going in, a fleet of cars pushing into a war zone.

A former U.S. Army medic, David Plaster, trains civilians at a school gym in Lviv

Many of them were aid convoys. Others carried Ukrainians who had been abroad when the invasion started and were rushing to find their families. At one point, a line of more than a dozen identical green trucks eased around the traffic on their way into

'How can anyone just carry on as normal when this is happening?'

> —Gennady Kurkin, a volunteer from Berlin

Ukraine. One of Tyra's convoy runners saw me staring at the vehicles, which had no identifying markers. "Zbroi," he said in Ukrainian. Weapons.

IT WAS WELL past midnight when we reached the border crossing, a system of tents and cordons where refugees were waiting in the cold to get inside. At the customs booth, a Ukrainian official looked at my U.S. passport and asked in a tired voice, "Foreign fighter?"

By the time we got across, the nightly curfew was in effect, prohibiting the convoy from carrying on until morning. But a group of Ukrainian special forces troops had come to the border to receive the aid, and they offered to drive me the rest of the way to Lviv that night. They were all in their 20s, dressed in camouflage, and had been making runs back and forth to the border since the invasion started. "It's keeping us alive," said a 27-year-old named Viktor as we cruised through

the first Ukrainian checkpoint.

Since 2014, Viktor's unit has taken part in joint military exercises with NATO troops. The training has come in handy, he says, as have the weapons shipments from the U.S., especially the shoulder-mounted rockets capable of downing a plane or piercing the armor of a tank.

But their own vehicles, Viktor noted, had no armor. We were driving in a dented minivan, its back seat loaded with boxes of aid: a power generator, some clothes, and food. "We've lost a lot of our men already," he told me. "We're fighting well. But we're undersupplied. If you could get a message out there to the world, tell them we need a lot more armor."

FOR ABOUT EIGHT YEARS, David Plaster, a former medic in the U.S. Army, has worked as a coordinator for foreign fighters in Ukraine. Local veterans' groups took a liking to his firstaid seminars, usually delivered with a stream of off-color jokes. He made friends in Kyiv, learned the language, and started helping foreigners find suitable units to join. Those without combat training, he says, are better off heading home. "Nobody needs Americans roaming around in the war zone unsupervised," he told me. "But if they're capable, if they have the skills, they're welcome to help."

The tide of fighters from abroad has swelled considerably in the weeks since the Russian onslaught began. Within a week of the invasion, President Zelensky announced that 16,000 foreigners had volunteered to join what he called the new International Legion. Zelensky's office launched a website with step-by-step instructions for enlistment, starting with an interview at a local Ukrainian embassy or consulate anywhere in the world.

Working in coordination with Ukraine's armed forces, Plaster arranges for some of these foreign volunteers to teach locals the basic skills they need to defend themselves and stay alive, whether it's applying a tourniquet or handling a weapon. One afternoon in early March, he was at a giant wholesale market in Lviv, loading up a basket with bottles of shampoo,

deodorant, and hygiene wipes to distribute among the new arrivals from abroad. With him were a group of the foreign fighters. Three of them had just arrived, and in their rush to join the war they had neglected to bring some basics. An Australian sniper searched the aisles for nail clippers; they were sold out. On his way to the register, Plaster overheard two strangers with American accents and a shopping cart. "You here to join up?" he asked them. They looked us over, smiled, and confirmed that they had just arrived in Ukraine with plans to fight the Russians. Plaster gave them his number.

Some European leaders have tried to stop their citizens from going to the war zone to fight, especially if they are already actively serving in the military at home. "You should not go to Ukraine," U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson said in response to reports that dozens of elite British troops and veterans, including the son of a British parliamentarian, were taking up Zelensky's call to arms.

But most of the volunteers are ordinary civilians moved to help. Igor Gavrylko, who was working at a car dealership in western London when the invasion started, drove his Mitsubishi from there to Ukraine, linking up with Plaster on arrival. "I'll go wherever I'm needed here," Gavrylko told me.

We were at a well-appointed dormitory of a university near the city center. Plaster had arranged for a few dozen beds to be made available to new arrivals. His own room was already littered with pizza boxes, the minifridge stocked with beer. Many of the foreign fighters, he said, were being sent to a base in western Ukraine, about 10 miles from the border with Poland, for orientation. From there they would be deployed to the front. "You should go check it out," Plaster told me.

# 'I'll go wherever I'm needed.'

—**Igor Gavrylko,** a British car salesman who traveled to Ukraine to join the fight as a volunteer I never got the chance. A few days later, a barrage of Russian cruise missiles struck that base, killing dozens. A Ukrainian soldier I had met sent me photos from the scene, showing a collapsed building and massive craters in the ground. One foreign fighter who survived, a British citizen named Jeremy, told me that he had helped pull the bodies of his dead and wounded comrades from the rubble. The clear message was that no one was off-limits.

The town closest to the base was full of checkpoints when I passed through on the way back to Poland. They were manned by local volunteers, young men in civilian clothes standing among piles of sandbags, flying Ukrainian flags. One of them stepped forward with a red and white baton and signaled for me to stop. A few of his friends, unarmed, stood behind him with nervous smiles. He asked where I was from and where I was headed. The U.S., I said, going to Poland. The young man pondered this for a long moment. "Carry on," he said in Ukrainian. "And send them our thanks."

Two days later my flight out of Poland departed from the airport in Rzeszow, taxiing near the U.S. military planes that had come to deliver weapons for Ukraine. Even from the highway, the planes were visible through a barbed-wire fence, maneuvering around the tarmac like big green whales. On a field nearby stood a few surface-to-air missile batteries, pointing toward the sky to defend against a Russian attack.

The morning of my flight, several friends and strangers had written to me, asking whether we were on the brink of war between the U.S. and Russia. One asked via email for the probability of World War III breaking out within a month. I didn't know how to answer. If the U.S. is standing on such a precipice, it would look a lot like this airfield and the nearby border. No one can predict how Russia will respond to the lifeline the U.S. and its allies have created for Ukraine. But for the diplomats and convoy runners, the soldiers and volunteers who have kept the supplies flowing, the mission appears to be worth the risk. -With reporting by SIMMONE SHAH and JULIA ZORTHIAN/NEW YORK

### The Rear Front Line

WOMEN IN UKRAINE ARE MOBILIZING BEYOND THE BATTLEFIELD TO DEFEND THEIR COUNTRY

By Amie Ferris-Rotman/Lviv

On a chilly evening in mid-March, Myroslava Bodakovska is clearing out the trunk of her car. The 38-year-old Ukrainian travel agent has come to the main railway station in Lviv on a mission. Since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, the city near the Polish border has become a sanctuary for hundreds of thousands of fleeing Ukrainians.

Bodakovska has made about 20 trips a night to the station for weeks, ferrying women and children to shelters. "I go back and forth until the sun comes up. Then I go to bed."

When the invasion began, she was in nearby Poland receiving treatment for skin cancer. Ignoring medical advice to rest, she raced back to Ukraine to help. "I am now fighting two wars: with cancer, and with Russia," she says, arranging soft toys on her car's back seat for children to play with when they arrive.

Unlike men of fighting age, who are barred from leaving the country, women have been able to flee to safety. Even so, women still make up around 15% of Ukraine's army, meaning there are around 30,000 women currently facing Russia on the battlefield.

But that number doesn't reflect the full scope of their fight: the businesswoman storing medical supplies beside a fridge of freshly piped cakes in her patisserie; the wedding dressmaker switching



Volunteers take over a factory in Lviv to sew flak jackets for Ukrainian troops on March 8

out lace for camouflage; the schoolteacher running a hotline searching for relatives in besieged Mariupol.

Together, they pose an unanticipated challenge to Russian President Vladimir Putin, becoming the other line of defense in a war where solidarity and high morale appear to be thwarting Russia's plans for a swift victory. "He did not take us into account," says Liliya Chyzh, a pulmonologist who treats internally displaced women and children, free of charge, in Lviv.

The city has remained relatively safe but is jittery with war preparations. Government offices have been sandbagged, cultural treasures stored away, and techno clubs converted into temporary refuges and

soup kitchens. Art museums and restaurants are abuzz with women and men tapping at laptops, sorting through lists of tens of thousands of displaced Ukrainians needing accommodation and transport.

Everyone is a volunteer, and most of them are women. The scenes are reminiscent of World War II in the U.S. and Europe, including the Soviet Union, when women were instrumental to the war effort, working in weapons factories and taking up clerical jobs to free men to fight. Locals say Ukrainian fighters are able to draw motivation from nationwide efforts. For Russian soldiers, who are far from home and whose relatives are out of harm's way in Russia, the war can feel "impersonal," argues seamstress Natalia

Domashovets. "Every Ukrainian family is involved, and that's why we are strong, and that is also why we will win," she says, hemming a grenade vest.

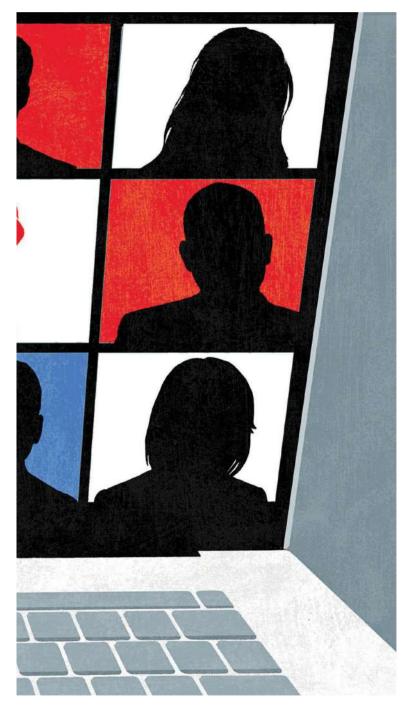
Around the country, women have also been trying to hold the Putin regime to account. A collective called Dattalion, made up of some 120 female volunteers, are using their smartphones to capture the atrocities committed by Russian soldiers, from executions to bombings of air-raid shelters. Since its inception on Feb. 27, Dattalion has verified around 1,500 videos. "I always knew how strong Ukrainian women were," its founder says, "but this has now been confirmed a thousand times over."

POLITICS

# THE FIGHT TO TAK



# E THE HILL



#### **Congressional staffers** want to unionize—and the moment may be ripe **By Abby Vesoulis**

CONGRESSIONAL STAFFERS SPEND LATE nights and weekends helping broker deals and write the laws that govern the U.S. Many do so on salaries so scant they qualify for the welfare benefits they help legislate. And they're sick of putting up with it.

On a Thursday afternoon in February, 11 Democratic House staffers convened, via Zoom, to discuss their plan to unionize both chambers of Congress for the first time in history. The staffers, who represent the still aspirational Congressional Workers Union (CWU), have two goals. The first is to get both the House and Senate to pass resolutions granting them legal protections to unionize. The second is to leverage the power unionization would provide to improve their lot. "It's a privilege to work here," says one staffer, "but it shouldn't be a privilege to earn a living

A recent analysis of 2020 data by Issue One, a nonprofit political-reform group, showed that 13% of Washingtonbased Congress staffers-roughly 1,200 people—earn less than \$42,610 annually. That's the amount, according to a Massachusetts Institute of Technology livingwage calculator, needed to cover bare-minimum essentials like rent and groceries in Washington, D.C., the fifth most expensive city in the nation. Young people who come from working-class families often can't afford to take such low-paying jobs-which hurts their own careers and exacerbates the lack of low-income and minority rep-

resentation in Congress.

While a handful of Hill staffers have been whispering about unionizing since December 2020, the effort lacked momentum. That changed in February, when top Democratic leaders, including President Joe Biden's White House, announced they would, in theory, back a unionized congressional workforce. Within weeks, CWU was flooded with interest from hundreds of staffers. "It had been snowballing pretty smoothly," says one CWU member, "until that week created an avalanche."

But the path forward is hardly easy. One problem is that CWU members face legal risk. While federal labor laws protect most U.S. employees' labor-organizing activities, Congress exempted itself from its own legislation, leaving Hill staffers without formal legal protections until the resolutions pass. Many fear being fired or blacklisted. (TIME has granted anonymity to these organizers.)

Another issue is that the unionizing effort creates a problem of political optics, particularly for Democrats. So far, the CWU movement has been dominated by Democratic staffers, and only Democratic lawmakers have expressed support for the effort. In a recent House hearing, Republican members dismissed the unionizing effort as "impractical" and a "solution in search of a problem." Democrats, who generally fundraise and campaign on pro-worker platforms, are perhaps particularly vulnerable to allegations of hypocrisy if they don't support their own staff's organizing.

But there are legitimate reasons lawmakers might be skeptical of a unionized Congress. The offices of Representatives and Senators don't function like normal businesses; each is provided a strict yearly allowance, which they use for most expenses, including district travel and paying aides. That model doesn't leave much wiggle room to boost salaries. Each lawmaker's office also operates independently, meaning that each must be unionized independently. A "unionized Congress" is, in reality, hundreds of discrete bargaining units.

CWU organizers say they aren't intimidated by the significant hurdles ahead. With public support for labor unions reaching a nearly 60-year high and the Great Resignation reorganizing Americans' priorities, now is the time to act, they say. Since congressional Democrats have failed thus far to pass any significant labor legislation—including Build Back Better, which included increased penalties for union busting—supporting the effort to unionize Congress offers lawmakers an opportunity to make good on their pro-labor campaign promises. If it can't act to legislatively protect U.S. workers, says a member of the CWU, "then the next thing that Congress can do to help the labor movement is to look at their own workers."

IT'S NO BIG SECRET in Washington that Hill staffers are underpaid and overworked. But the past two years have brought those conditions into even sharper focus. Grueling, COVID-19-related working conditions, combined with the terror of the Jan. 6 insurrection, galvanized a longsimmering desire for change. In the days after the attack, which forced hundreds of lawmakers and staffers to hide behind barricades or evacuate their offices, aides began reaching out to one another to discuss how to make their offices safer. Eventually, three young aides convened on a FaceTime call to talk about creating a formal union. One of them, a young woman who took the call in a Rayburn House Office Building bathroom stall to avoid eavesdroppers, remembers being so relieved to discover she was not alone that she cried after hanging up. "To be at a point today where we've come from these dark moments is so exciting," she says.

A year later, in early 2022, an Instagram account, @dear\_white\_staffers, which originated as a meme account bringing levity to the challenges of being a staffer of color in a predominantly white space, transformed into a Capitol Hill Gossip Girl of sorts: sharing anonymous, first-person accounts of lawmakers treating staff poorly to 80,000 followers and capturing the media spotlight. The posts, unaffiliated with the unionizing effort, were both hilarious and horrifying: multiple staffers claimed that they were required to "sign out" in order to leave their desks to use the restroom; another claimed their pay was docked for taking their child to the doctor. On Feb. 3, a reporter, citing the account, asked Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi if she'd support a congressional union. When Pelosi said yes, CWU organizers seized the moment.

Until then, their work had been underground, conducted via encrypted text and clandestine meetings, but on the night of Pelosi's remarks, organizers stayed up until 3 a.m. drafting press releases and creating social media accounts. Within days, both Senate majority leader Chuck Schumer and White House press secretary Jen Psaki expressed support. "None of us thought that this would happen at the pace that it is," says one organizer.

There are few useful road maps for what lies ahead. Starbucks workers' successful push to unionize seven individual cafés in the past year offers some guidance on how staffers might go about collectively organizing hundreds of independent offices. And Bernie Sanders staffers' successful push, in 2019, to unionize the Senator's 2020 presidential campaign is also instructive. But neither is a perfect analogy. Unlike Starbucks and campaign workers, even unionized Hill staffers are barred by federal law from work stoppages and picketing.

But Congress's uniqueness is also what makes the effort so critical, organizers say. Low pay and grueling hours aren't just dispiriting for individuals; they fuel the brain drain that has contributed to Congress's crippling lack of institutional knowledge. Staffers are incentivized to "become the lobbyists that the next staffer who has no institutional expertise has to rely on," says a CWU member. This cements government's "built-in reliance on lobbyists" to navigate complex policy issues. In 2021, House staffers left their jobs at the highest rate in at least two decades, according

\$38.730 Median salary of a Hill staff assistant in 2020

**55**% Increase in House staff attrition from

2020 to 2021 55

Number of House Democrats who voted for a bill bolstering labor protections to private-sector employees, but have not publicly supported the effort to unionize Congress





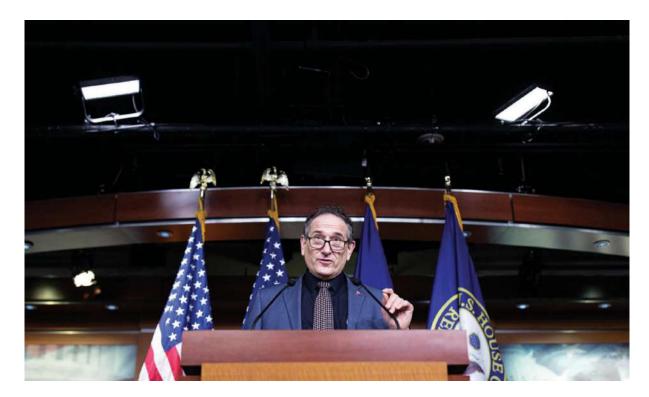
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to an analysis by data tracker LegiStorm. The attrition rate was 55% higher last year than in 2020.

Demanding working conditions and meager wages also mean that staff jobs generally go to "people who are privileged," says James Jones, author of the forthcoming book *The Last Plantation: Racism in the Halls of Congress.* A 2020 report from the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a Washington-based think tank, found that 89% of top Senate aides—chiefs of staff, policy chiefs, and communications directors—are white. On the House side, 81% are white.

That lack of racial diversity is bad for Congress's ability to create nuanced legislation, Jones says. But it's also bad for the rest of Washington, which relies on Congress "as a credentialing institution." "You spend a few years on Capitol Hill, but that experience gives you a license to work in many other elite workplaces, like the White House or the Supreme Court," Jones says. Early-career Hill roles paved the way for top political leaders Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell and Vice President Kamala Harris. In other words, organizers argue, making Congress a more decent place to work could pay dividends to American democracy.

IT'S AN IDEA that Representative Andy Levin, a Michigan Democrat with a deep résumé of labor organizing, embraces. "The staff came to me because they knew that I would understand that this isn't about us," he says, "and it isn't about what

headaches it might cause." On Feb. 9, he introduced the resolution to codify protections for House staffers to unionize; 165 of 222 House Democrats have signed on. It needs 217 votes to pass, but has yet to come up for a vote.

More frustrating than that delay, CWU staffers say, are the 55 House Democrats who voted to pass the Protecting the Right to Organize Act, a bill protecting private-sector union workers, but have yet to sign on to Levin's resolution. "I personally have experienced many times, people who say they are for the idea of workers having unions," says Levin, "but then when their own workers want a union, somehow, all of a sudden, it's not appropriate."

In the Senate, things are even less rosy. Senator Sherrod Brown said he planned to introduce a Senate resolution after Levin's House version, but he has not yet. It would have very little chance of passing the Senate's 60-vote threshold. Democratic Senator Joe Manchin has expressed skepticism about the workability of a unionized Senate staff.

As the resolutions stall, the staffers' ambitions have not. In March, Congress passed an appropriations bill increasing House members' office allowances by 21%—the largest bump since 1996. CWU members have since advised several staffers on how to advocate for salary increases tied to the boost—a small victory, but one that gives purpose. "I feel proud to be a Hill staffer," says one, "for the first time in a long time. Potentially ever." —With reporting by MARIAH ESPADA/WASHINGTON

Representative Andy Levin (D., Mich.) speaks during a news conference on congressional staff unionization efforts on Feb. 9 in Washington INTRODUCING
TIME'S NEWEST NEWSLETTER

# INTO THE MINISTRANCE:

YOUR GUIDE TO THE FUTURE OF THE INTERNET



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Winter had frozen over the
Apache-Sitgreaves National
Forests in late January 2019 when
Betty Nixon saw the dead stallion,
known to locals as Raven. His right
leg bone was shattered by a bullet,
and near him lay a red-coated
pregnant mare, Sparrow, who had
been shot in her belly and neck. Not
far away, behind a stand of junipers,
the mare's filly stood alone, lost.

As Nixon approached, the filly took off, racing past the dead bodies of Raven and her mother.

Three years later, Nixon has chronicled the shootings of at least 40 wild horses in this forest in northeastern Arizona, where several hundred of the Heber herd, named for the unincorporated town surrounded by the forest, roam. Each day she sets out on often miles-long treks, recording the live horses she sees and the ones she finds too late. The most recent shootings that anyone knows of were in late December, when three dead wild horses were found. So far, necropsies have yielded few clues.

"I just don't understand who would shoot a horse and leave it there," says Jeffrey Todd, a spokesperson for the U.S. Forest Service, Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests. "It's strange."

After the December killings, the Forest Service announced a \$10,000 reward for information leading to an arrest and conviction. Wild horses are federally protected, and killing one on public land is punishable by up to a year in jail and a \$2,000 fine, under the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971.

But in the 51 years since the law passed, it has proved difficult to enforce. Most killings or abuse of the animals occur in remote areas, far from public view, and the survivors can't describe their assailants. And some people might

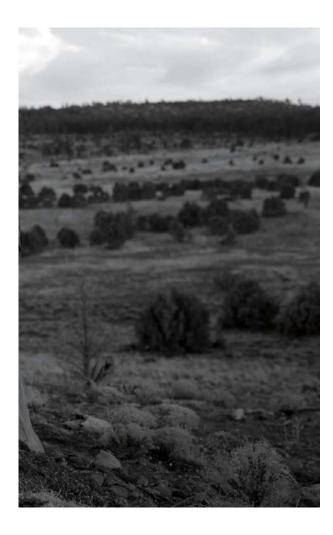
be reluctant to turn in a shooter as population growth, climate change, and success in replenishing wild-horse herds across the West heighten tensions between humans and beasts sharing the land.

Ranchers, hunters, horse advocates, and forest officials in Arizona have been struggling for years over how to manage the growing Heber herd, which Todd estimates could number up to 500. Now someone may have taken it upon themselves.

Defenders of the free-roaming horses say they play an important role in the ecosystem, breaking ice over water sources so they and other forest animals can drink in winter, and helping to trim down brush and grasses. Others say the horses are ecosystem invaders, little more than a misplaced symbol of freedom in the West.

"There's only so much food in the forest," says John Koleszar, a hunter and former president of the Arizona Deer Association and Arizona Sportsmen for Wildlife Conservation. He compares the situation to hosting a dinner party for eight guests with a turkey and a ham, and having 100 people show up. But Koleszar describes the killings as "appalling." "We don't in any way, shape, or form approve of that activity."

The debate has pitted neighbor against neighbor, in a setting cherished by all.



"Whether you're for the horses or against them," Nixon says, "these are horrific crimes, and they need to stop."

THE SUN CASTS a silver glow across tall, sleepy Ponderosa pines on a February morning as you near the forest, home to the officially designated territory of the Heber herd. Nixon grew up in Arizona, but became familiar with the wilderness area after she'd moved to Kansas and would drive to Apache Junction, Ariz., southwest of the forest, to visit her mother. The sound of the breeze in those towering trees, the solitude, and, perhaps more than anything else, the wildlife, drew Nixon, 66, to retire here in 2018 from suburban Kansas City. It didn't take long for her to discover the wild horses, which would appear silently and suddenly as she hiked in the woods.

"This is my sanctuary," says Nixon, who as a kid would gallop around on the playground, pretending to be a horse or on a horse. "I've been horse-crazy all my life. I love horses and just watching them."

Then the killings began: two stallions were shot in October 2018; a month later, two more horses were gunned down. Then, in January 2019, Nixon saw it up close for the first time with Raven and his mare after a friend told her of their deaths. According to Nixon's records, 14 horses were killed in the forest in 2019, 15 in 2020, and seven in 2021.

Nixon has documented 40 horse killings since 2018 in the forest

The moment she saw Raven and Sparrow, Nixon was determined to help find the killer.

"It's vicious cruelty. It's somebody that hates these horses with a vengeance," she says, noting that several slain horses were shot in the face. "Shooting something in the face is personal," Nixon says. "The shooter wants these horses to suffer."

**CONFLICT WITH WILDLIFE** is hardly new. Black bears, white sharks, wild horses, gray wolves, and other species nationwide are bumping up against human concerns that they're becoming intrusive and endangering humans and livestock. The clashes raise questions that resonate beyond the Arizona forests: What does it mean for an animal to be free, and can the law truly protect that freedom?

Karrigan S. Bork, acting professor of law at the University of California, Davis, who has written extensively about wildlife and the law, attributes rising tensions over wildlife incursions in large part to the wildfires, droughts, and storms nationwide that have dramatically changed animal and plant life. This has led to a rise in the view, toward some wild animals, of "how inconvenient they can be" to humans living off the battered land, Bork says. "It's creating more conflict; there are so many species we have to think about."

But nobody knows the motive for the Arizona killings, and attacks on wild horses and burros elsewhere have been blamed on everything from trigger-happy passersby to hunters using the smelly carcasses of slain horses to lure bears.

Koleszar says the killer is "misguided" or a "psychotic wacko." Nixon suspects the shootings are tied to the bigger debate over land use.

She compares what she's doing now to her years as an insurance-claims investigator, studying motorcycle, snowmobile, car, and ATV accidents, and examining scenes in which faces were burned off or bodies were hit by trains. Later, she specialized in medical-fraud rings, working with law enforcement to investigate organized crimes. She trained in evidence collection, background searches, and social media analysis.

Before that, Nixon was an Army intelligence officer, stationed at a listening post in West Berlin from 1982 to 1985, and trained to intercept radio and telephone communications of East German officials.

"These skill sets are ingrained in me, in my DNA," she says. Nixon and many locals have been critical of the Forest Service law enforcement's response, questioning why the horse shootings continue after more than three years.

"I do sympathize with their frustration," says James Alford, the special agent in charge of the Forest Service's southwestern region, but Alford says the challenges to fighting crime in a wilderness area covering more than 2 million acres might not be apparent to critics. "Sometimes the public thinks that all police work is an episode of *CSI* or an episode of *FBI*," he says. "We know that that's not reality."

Out here, there are no doorbell cameras, no buildings with video cameras trained on surrounding areas, and little human traffic of any kind, vehicular or pedestrian.

"Horses are shot in very remote areas with no witnesses. They can remain undiscovered for days or weeks. The horses could have walked miles from where they were initially shot," Alford says. "By the time we find the horses, sometimes they are in an advanced state of decomposition, or their carcasses could be scattered by predators or scavengers."

Alford says law-enforcement officers are patrolling the area and following up on all tips and leads they receive.

"There are members of the public and people within the communities—they know the persons responsible for committing these crimes—and with their help and with our thorough investigations, we're going to be able to solve these cases," he says.

All Nixon knows, though, is that what began as a relaxing retirement hobby of tracking the bands, or families, of wild horses has become a grim task of searching for dead ones and sharing information with law enforcement in hopes something cracks the case. She spends 40 to 50 hours a week driving and hiking the south-central part of the forest, where the

killings have occurred. She documents what she finds, keeping a photo and video library of all of her records on each horse and its band.

Despite the seeming tranquility, Nixon knows danger stalks the forest. She carries two guns, bear spray, and a knife, and she parks her pickup truck in a way that would enable her to get away quickly.

Even though she knows what's out there, each discovery, each new reminder of what's happening in the wild, is jarring.

While out walking on a quiet, chilly morning, Nixon suddenly stops. She looks down and points to the hip and pelvis bones of a stallion

known as Big Daddy, all that's left of the horse shot in the face in January 2019. A dead mare once lay next to him, and a second mare, Angel, was shot and crippled nearby. Forest officials later euthanized Angel.

The sinister scene hangs in the air. Then, the sun peeks through the tall pines. From her truck, Nixon spots two young male horses—bachelors she calls Fan and Draco—each with a black mane and tail. They bask in the light, swishing their tails.

Nixon knows she's always on the brink of heartbreak out here. The sight of ravens, a bald eagle, or, in the warmer months, a buzzard, makes her grow tense. Her mantra to calm down begins: One bird does not a dead horse make. One bird does not a dead horse make. Then her senses take over. "You can hear the birds eating the carcasses. You can hear the coyotes," Nixon says.

As she approaches, the birds always fly away. The scene has become all too familiar. And yet Nixon wants to be there. She wants to know who was killed and how. Another mantra echoes through her mind: Lord, if there's something for me to see, let me see it, and If there's something to hear, let me hear it.

On the morning of Jan. 7, 2021, Nixon and a friend were

driving around the forest when they saw birds hovering. "We knew something was dead," Nixon says. When they reached the site, they saw a blood bay mare by the side of the road. They knew her—she was part of a band led by a black stallion known as Midnight. The mare had been shot in the face; wildlife had been eating away at her back end. Midnight and a pregnant black mare were also there, dead. The bay mare's filly was crippled, her eyes blinking. A few hours later, a Forest Service official would shoot the filly to end her suffering.

When Nixon finds a dead horse, she photographs and records everything at the site, looks for shell casings and tracks left by feet or vehicles, and calls law enforcement. Nixon also takes down license-plate numbers of vehicles she sees as she drives along the forest roads. They could be potential witnesses to a crime.

"I'm hoping to be a deterrent to somebody that would come out here and shoot horses," Nixon tells me as we walk among tall weeds and trees. "If there is a dead horse out here, I want to be the first to find it. And I want to find it quickly, because if you don't find it within the first day or two, the evidence will be consumed."

CONQUISTADORES BROUGHT WILD HORSES,

originally known as mustangs, from Spain in the 1500s. Today's wild horses in Arizona may be descendants of the Spanish mustangs, but many have bred with ranch and farm horses.

The 1971 law to protect them and other wildhorse herds and burros grew out of a movement started by Velma "Wild Horse Annie" Bronn Johnston, a Nevadan who in the early 1950s became outraged at the rounding up and slaughter of horses for dog food and fertilizer. She launched a movement to protect the horses, whose numbers were declining, according to Wild Horse Country: The History, Myth, and

Future of the Mustang, by David Philipps.

'The shooter

wants these

horses

to suffer.'

BETTY NIXON

The law created herd-management areas for wild horses and burros where they were found on public lands in the West. Today, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service manage 230 wild-horse territories on about 30 million acres of public lands in 10 states, including Arizona. The BLM alone oversees about 86,000 wild horses—who can live into their 20s—and burros on public lands, more than triple the 27,000 the bureau says the land can sustain.

Forest officials say the Heber herd began with six mares and one stallion, but over the years has grown to several hundred. There is a Forest Service proposal to whittle the herd down to as few as 50 and no more than 104 horses, using contraceptives and removal of horses.

"We're looking to create a thriving ecological balance," says Tolani Francisco, the wild-horse and burro coordinator with the Forest Service's southwestern regional office in Albuquerque, N.M. "The horse is not the only animal out there."

The wild-horse shootings, like the horses themselves, have divided the community. Just the words *horse shootings* drive people into their respective corners, invoking



everything from Second Amendment rights to the mythological symbolism of horses. Most locals say they want the shootings to stop, but some

people have cheered the horses' deaths or accused defenders of the horses of falsely pointing fingers at cattle ranchers. Business owners worry about the impact on their livelihoods if people who visit the area to camp, hike, and fish are scared off by the shootings. Even some locals say they're scared of the forest now.

For ranchers, the outcome could mean the difference between economic survival and insolvency.

Nelson Shirley pays for a permit for his cattle to graze on the land, but says the horses have decimated some stretches. "I can't graze my cattle if I don't have that piece of habitat intact," he says. "If I'm going to have a ranch 50 years from now, it's got to support all the wildlife if it's going to be good for my cattle."

The Forest Service says its analysis shows that 104 horses is the most the Heber territory can handle to ensure enough food for all the animals grazing there. Nixon, though, fears that number is "not genetically viable" for a healthy herd; they'll start inbreeding, which leads to disease and abnormalities.

The skeletal remains of a 3-year-old filly found shot to death in January 2020 in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

**AS THE WEATHER** warms up, if history is any indication, the horse killings may subside for a while. Shootings generally happen in winter, when the area

population drops to about 3,000 from a summer high of 18,000, making it easier for an assailant to operate unnoticed.

Alford, with support from the Navajo County sheriff's office, says the investigation continues. And while Nixon has accused the Forest Service of being slow to respond to crime scenes and collect evidence, she and law-enforcement officials have no choice but to work together until the shootings are solved.

"Betty's helping us patrol the area," Alford says. "She's giving us more eyes out there to identify problems."

In the forest, Nixon continues her watch.

The sight of a horse sparring with another horse in play, or of a band relaxing in the sun, leaves her awestruck. When she spots a survivor orphaned in a shooting, Nixon marvels at its resilience. "All the survivors are my favorites to see," she says. "I'm watching them grow up. I love them all."

They include the palomino filly Little Orphan Annie, who ran off after Raven and her mother were killed in 2019.

In 2020, Little Orphan Annie had her own foal. Nixon named her Fawn.  $\hfill\Box$ 



IN 2017, KARUNA NUNDY WROTE AN OPEN LETTER TO INDIAN WOMEN, LAYING out the protections in the country's constitution if they are raped, assaulted, seeking an abortion, or demanding fair treatment from an employer. "I write to you today so you will know your power," she wrote. "The State must enforce your basic rights, but you are in charge of your flourishing. Promise me you'll back yourself when nobody else will."

"I was thinking about my niece, my friend, my cousin, my client," recalls the 45-year-old lawyer at the Supreme Court of India, sitting on her leafy green balcony in South Delhi in March. "What I wanted to say to them is that they deserve to be who they are, without having to fit into a box."

Her readers seemed to take that message to heart. A month after the letter was published in *Vogue India*, a 26-year-old woman in Delhi found Nundy's number online and called her. She told Nundy she had been raped by her husband every night since their arranged marriage two years earlier. "In India, people don't see it as rape if you're married," she tells TIME over the phone five years on, requesting anonymity to speak freely about her experiences. Facing immense pressure from her family to make things work, she felt she had two options: "Either to just end my life, or to revolt, something I'd never done before."

The woman didn't want to report her husband to the police or go to the courts, but she wanted to get out. Nundy agreed to help her. At the local police station, Nundy filed an affidavit stating the woman had left home of her own accord and did not want to be contacted by her family, in case they approached

the police to search for her. Then she accompanied the woman to the airport to ensure she got on a flight out of the city. "I couldn't believe Karuna Nundy listened to my story and helped me," the woman says. "I felt like a bird finally freed from her cage."

For Nundy, the experience made one thing clear: "The institution of marriage should not include the license to rape."

Right now, the law would disagree. Marital rape isn't a crime in India, one of three dozen countries-including Bangladesh, Iran, Nigeria, and Libya—where it's still legal for a man to have nonconsensual sex with his wife. This is despite a national survey published by the government in 2018 that found that 86% of the female sexual violence survivors surveyed had been assaulted by their former or current husband. The current laws criminalize any form of sexual assault and domestic violence but prevent the crime from being called "rape" if it's between a husband and wife—thereby reducing both severity and sentencing.

"To me, it's one of the problems in the law that goes to the heart of the worst patriarchy," Nundy said in court in January. "If you're legally not allowed to sexually assault, slap, molest, or kill

# A CRUSADE FOR JUSTICE

Karuna Nundy is fighting to criminalize marital rape in India

By Astha Rajvanshi/Delhi

◀ NUNDY, PHOTOGRAPHED OUTSIDE THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA, ON MARCH 3

PHOTOGRAPH BY PRARTHNA SINGH FOR TIME

your wife in the bedroom, why are you allowed to rape her?"

Nundy's work on these issues accelerated after the Nirbhaya case, the brutal gang rape and murder of a young woman on a public bus in Delhi that drew international headlines in 2012. She calls 2012 an "inflection point," the first time that people of all ages, genders, and sexualities came out on the streets against sexual violence and violence against women. "My city was the center of this national—and, to some extent, global-protest," she says, describing how that period transformed her. It felt as if "this is not just a woman's problem or a girl's problem. This is everybody's problem."

Nundy has since emerged as a leading voice for gender justice and freedom of speech, contributing to the reform of antirape laws and fighting cases against sexual harassment in the workplace. Now she's leading



WOMEN IN KOLKATA PROTEST AGAINST THE HIJAB BAN IN SCHOOLS ON FEB. 16

the fight to criminalize marital rape—a fight that began years ago. The first petition to do so was filed at the Delhi High Court in 2015 by a nonprofit called the RIT Foundation. More petitions followed in 2017, including one by the All India Democratic Women's Association, which Nundy is representing in court, along with three individuals, including a survivor of marital rape. The issue was only heard in court in January; most cases in India languish for several years without a hearing in court.

The judges are finally expected to deliver their verdict in the coming months on whether to close the legal loophole on rape within marriage. "That's the thing about law reform in India," Nundy says. "It takes a lot of persistence."

**NUNDY GREW UP** in the national capital of Delhi. She says she was raised in an "unboxed way," with an ambitious mother who wanted her to study at the best university, but had no set expectations about her vocation. "There was just this attitude that I needed to train myself in the best possible way and then contribute to society," she recalls.

At the age of 15, Nundy was stalked by a classmate in school and received rape threats. When her mother reported the incidents to the head teacher, their concerns were dismissed. It was a defining moment for Nundy. "Generations of women are raised by parents to believe they can do anything and then come face-to-face with sexual violence," she says. "Things haven't changed enough."

After graduating with a bachelor's degree in economics from St. Stephen's College in Delhi, Nundy spent a short period as a television reporter before applying to film school, influenced by her love of the work of Swedish director Ingmar Bergman. "The fact that I could be the director of my own story for a minute or two seemed interesting enough," she recalls, laughing.

She eventually found her calling at law school at Cambridge University and later completed a master's in law at Columbia University in New York. There she discovered critical race and gender theory and clerked for the District Judge Gabrielle Kirk McDonald, one of the few women to preside over the U.N.'s tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. Inspired by McDonald's success as a Black commercial and human-rights lawyer, Nundy set out to chart her own path. She worked for the U.N. as a global advocacy officer, assisting the

Secretary-General's report on conflict prevention before she felt it was time to return home and devote herself to public service. "I wanted to contribute to international human rights and constitutional law from India, where the impact could be more direct," she says.

However, it also meant that Nundy. 26 at the time, would be moving back in with her family after six years abroad. Ever the lawyer, she drew up an agreement that listed what was negotiable, like washing the dishes, as well as what wasn't: her independence. ("If we didn't agree, I'd live nearby.") Over the years, her mother was diagnosed with a rare disease called cardiac amyloidosis. Being home allowed Nundy to spend time with her mother and to take life at her own pace—journaling and going for long walks. "My mother loved the skies, and I think it puts me in touch with who I am," she says, looking up as she walks around her terrace during our interview.

These days, Nundy and her team of four lawyers work across 30 to 40 civil, commercial, and human-rights cases in India, while internationally, she serves on panels for media and freedom of speech at Columbia University and the International Bar Association, alongside David Neuberger and Amal Clooney. "She is a legal powerhouse," says Dario Milo, a South African media-law specialist and fellow expert at Columbia University. "Her impressive track

record in high-profile and impactful litigation in India speaks for itself."

Still, the Indian judiciary remains a man's world. Since its inception in 1950, the Supreme Court has had only 11 female judges out of 256, and the presence of female lawyers inside courts is still uncommon. Nundy deals with this by overpreparing—with a more robust legal strategy, by studying the argument style of her (predominantly male) counterparts, and by filing long, detailed briefs—just so there's no doubt she's "better than the next guy." Ultimately, her job is to be persuasive. "I'm always toeing this line of not being seen as too aggressive, and smiling at that key moment," she says.

Nundy's public profile, bolstered by an active social media presence, has made her a target of online trolling at a time when India's online spaces are especially rife with the harassment of women. In March 2021, the U.S.-based nonprofit Freedom House downgraded India from "free" to "partly free" after independent journalists, activists, and lawyers, especially women, faced in-

creasing threats.

Nundy has learned not to think twice about blocking her trolls. "Free speech doesn't mean you have a right to my attention," she says. Nundy remains guarded about her private life to protect her family, but also for self-preservation: "Women in the public arena are continually asked about our personal lives, and it dilutes the focus

on our work and ideas."

THE MARITAL-RAPE CASE will be heard at a time when the Indian state and courts are increasingly deciding what women can and can't do. In December, the government raised the legal age of marriage for women from 18 to 21 years, which some feminist activists argued could backfire-for instance, tightening the grip of parents on young women's personal lives. And in March, one court in the state of Karnataka upheld a government order banning Muslim girls from wearing headscarves inside schools, sparking protests. Even before the pandemic, Muslim girls were at greater risk of dropping out of education; since 2020, their enrollment has further declined. "Forcing a woman to take off a hijab is as patriarchal as making her wear one," Nundy says. "We can't afford to shut the door to girls in school."

While current laws define rape and consent clearly, the exception for rape within marriage has remained, despite increased campaigning in recent years. After the Nirbhaya case in 2012, a government-appointed committee made a set of recommendations, including the criminalizing of marital rape, to reform laws to prosecute rape. The government refused to address marital rape then, saying that there wasn't a "societal consensus" on the issue.

The exception for marital rape in India's law exists because of the Indian

#### 'TT GOES TO THE HEART OF THE WORST PATRIARCHY?'

—KARUNA NUNDY, ON THE LEGAL EXCEPTION FOR RAPE WITHIN MARRIAGE Penal Code, first enacted by British colonials in 1860. Matthew Hale, the chief justice of England from 1671 to 1676, originally argued that consent to marriage itself implied consent to sex, which, once given, could not be revoked. The U.K. and other British colonies have long since overruled this, but in India, the issue has been met with fierce debate.

According to the latest research from Pew, nearly 9 in 10 Indians, including women, agree with the notion that a wife must always obey her husband. In January, Nundy's efforts were virulently opposed by a small group of Indian men who launched a "marriage strike" on Twitter. A men's-rights group called the Save Indian Family Foundation encouraged men to boycott marriage altogether, saying that marital-rape laws could be misused and lead to false convictions.

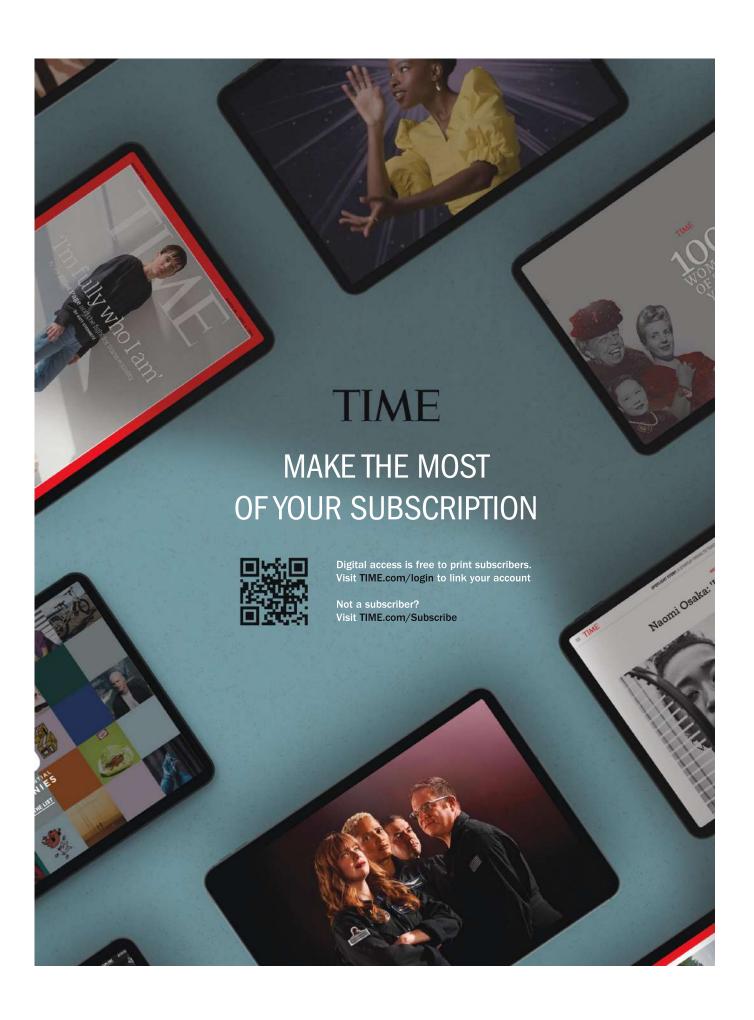
The Indian government seems to agree. Spokespeople did not respond to TIME's request for comment, but when similar pleas were filed in 2017, the government argued against making marital rape a crime because it could "destabilize the institution of marriage" and "become an easy tool for harassing husbands." The courts accepted this argument. In the latest

challenge, the judicial bench has once again asked the government for its view on the matter, and questioned if parallels can be drawn between cases of rape among a married couple and nonmarried individuals.

One-third of women globally face violence at the hands of a partner, according to the World Health Organization. And even in countries where marital rape is a crime, reporting and conviction rates remain low. But for Chitra Awasthi, founder of the RIT Foundation—which first petitioned the courts to criminalize marital rape in 2015—the goal of the petitions is not just to change the law. It's also to raise awareness. "There are many girls and women who didn't even know that marital rape was a form of abuse. They thought it was their fate," she says. "Even now, over and above any legal relief, it's important to make both men and women aware of the fact that there has to be consent in having sex with your partner."

Nundy remains hopeful that the law still has the power to change what society considers the norm. "The more [marital rape] is prosecuted, the more it will be deterred," she says. In court, she has argued that devaluing the ability of women to give consent has ripple effects in both directions. "You're taking away a woman's right to say a joyful yes," she said at the hearings.

For all the injustices she has fought in court, Nundy recognizes she's just at the midway point in her career—and in her life. "I'm in flux and still growing," she says. "But for the first time, I'm also thinking about what I want to leave behind." And rather than being driven by anger about these injustices, her primary motivation will always be love. "After the patriarchy beats you out of shape and cuts you down to size, love can make you whole again." — With reporting by ELOISE BARRY/LONDON



100

# MOST INFLUENTIAL COMPANIES

Which businesses and corporate leaders are shaping our future? That's the question at the heart of TIME100 Most Influential Companies, an annual list that highlights businesses making an extraordinary impact around the world. To assemble it, TIME solicits nominations across sectors including health care, entertainment, technology, and more from our global network of editors and correspondents, as well as from industry experts. Then we evaluate each on key factors, including relevance, impact, innovation, leadership, ambition, and success. The result is a diverse array of 100 businesses helping chart an essential path forward.

HYRE

# THE POP POWERHOUSE

BY RAISA BRUNER

THIS APRIL, LAS VEGAS MIGHT FEEL A LITTLE DIFFERent. For two weekends, the stars of South Korean supergroup BTS will play concerts to sold-out audiences at Allegiant Stadium, filling the city with tens of thousands of passionate fans of their brand of high-energy K-pop. It'll be a return to live-performance form for BTS, whose global touring schedule has been mostly stalled in the face of the pandemic. Despite the setbacks, the group has thrived. That ongoing success is a direct product of the shrewd management agency behind the world's most popular musical act. Initially founded as Big Hit Entertainment in 2005 by musical mastermind Bang Si-hyuk, the company listed publicly on the Korean exchange in 2020 as HYBE; it's valued at \$9.5 billion today. And while BTS takes the stage in Vegas, HYBE will also host auditions there, on the hunt for the next decade's stars.

HYBE is not just a record label or a management company. "HYBE's vision has always been ambitious-to the point of being presumptuous," says Bang over Zoom from its headquarters in Seoul. (It also has bases in the U.S. and Japan.) "Our vision is to become the world's leading entertainment lifestyle platform, with music as our foundation." A former artist himself, nicknamed Hitman for his surefire musical instincts, Bang is thoughtful and earnest in his answers—even as he is bold in his goals. These days, he prefers a behind-the-scenes role, and has handed over CEO duties to Jiwon Park while he remains the company's chairman. As HYBE has evolved, it has grown from a small artist incubator-Bang handpicked the seven performers of BTS from around Korea-into what he calls a "360-degree business," in the mode of brands like Disney that own and operate a catalog of intellectual properties (IPs). Over the past year, HYBE acquired U.S.-based media company Ithaca Holdings-which manages the likes of Justin Bieber, J Balvin, and Ariana Grande-for over \$1 billion, invested over \$420 million in a crypto venture,

and scaled up business in Japan and the U.S. It also runs Weverse, a fan-to-artist social media app with nearly 7 million monthly users. "We are in a stage where we have expanded the boundaries of our industry itself," Bang says.

HYBE consists of three sectors: artist IP, technology, and world building. BTS leaned on all of that infrastructure to find a new path to global dominance even in lockdown. "The idea was to release new music to console people and heal their minds through our music during these hard times, when it's difficult to physically meet and interact," BTS leader RM tells TIME. "The results were 'Dynamite,' 'Butter,' 'Permission to Dance.'" Each of these upbeat, dance-ready singles, released strategically over the course of two years, became record-breaking hits and solidified BTS's place in the pop firmament. BTS has been, Bang says, "the king of the K-pop scene for a very long time," but HYBE's newer acts, including ENHYPEN, TXT, and SEVENTEEN, are on the brink of breakout moments themselves. Plus, HYBE is prioritizing launching fresh talent out of Korea, Japan, and especially the U.S. "The essence of our company is IP-we are a music business company. We need to make our IPs bigger and also create more," Bang says.

Where HYBE has differentiated itself is in investing in technology that makes it possible to stream concerts virtually and own the artist-fan relationship, from ticketing to merchandise shops to live artist broadcasts, shows, and message boards. Weverse, where fans can go for all things related to HYBE artists, is what Bang calls a "great innovation." HYBE also recently acquired VLIVE, a tech platform that allows for live video streaming to audiences.

That technology, RM says, carried the group through the disappointment of canceled tours and kept their fans engaged. "During the pandemic, the company put together online concerts and has been building the fan communities [around the world]," adds BTS member



#### TIME100 COMPANIES LEADERS

Suga. The group's virtual concerts, streamed to over a million paying ticketholders worldwide, broke records for live viewership. It was HYBE that owned and operated the virtual platform for them to perform, and HYBE, in which the members of BTS are shareholders, that reaped the rewards. VLIVE is currently being integrated into "Weverse 2.0," set to release in the first half of this year.

But Bang recognizes that one innovation isn't enough. "The market is constantly telling us to come up with something new already,' he says. So he did. One of 2022's rising market trends in music is the sale of NFTs-nonfungible tokens that exist on the blockchain-of songs and other assets, like tradable photocards of artists. In late 2021, Bang announced HYBE would pursue building an NFT exchange of its own as a joint venture with fintech company Dunamu. But fan backlash was quick, with concerns about such tokens' environmental impact. "All I'd like to say to fans is, as of now, we haven't announced anything," Bang now says. The point of the proprietary exchange, he says, is to have greater control over how NFTs are created and distributed-and to address fans' concerns directly with "policies and technical measures" that would better reflect their priorities. He is cryptic for now, but seems bullish on the future of NFTs for his artists. "We have some interesting projects in the works," he says, adding that the result may persuade skeptics who are now saying, "These guys don't understand why we hate this."

THE NFT QUESTION is just one piece in Bang's vision of a new, better-functioning business model for artists. One of the primary challenges in the global music industry is the tension between artists, labels, and streaming platforms for fractional payouts. Bang's method of evading that minefield is to diversify HYBE artists' income streams. "While contemplating questions like: 'How can we satisfy fans and expand the artist's reach, and at the same time create a longer life span for music through narrative structure?' we came up with a new model last year," Bang says.

It's called the "Original Story Business," through which HYBE is

It's called the "Original Story Business," through which HYBE is developing everything from animated cartoons to Korean-language educational materials that all connect to the music, message, and personalities of HYBE artists. So far, the company has announced three projects in collaboration with Naver Webtoon, with at least three more to come this year.

"Our company structure is so unique," Bang says; it's able to capture revenue from multiple points. That's a contrast to many other labels. "The music industry is losing quite a lot in the value chain. I feel the music industry should be making a lot more money and their value as a service should be recognized more," he says, referring to the artists' work. "Mr. Bang and HYBE have always prioritized the essentials—the music," says BTS member J-Hope.

Meanwhile, HYBE's model has already irrevocably altered the global music landscape. "In a lot of cases people just do things because that's the way things have been. I have a hard time accepting that," Bang says. "And so in running a company, I always try to focus on: Why are we doing this?"

For BTS, that meant ignoring the limitations placed on earlier K-pop groups and establishing themselves as the princes of global pop. For HYBE, it means evolving as a music agency, a tech innovator, and a creative powerhouse all at once. Bang, like BTS, has always dreamed big. So why is he doing this? Well, why not?

KAMI

#### INVESTING IN TEACHERS

During the pandemic, education-technology firm Kami—which lets teachers share learning resources, conduct virtual classes, provide feedback, and more—offered its products for free to its 32 million teachers and students in 180 countries, despite having no other revenue source. That move has paid off as districts made decisions later on about how to spend their money; Deloitte named Kami New Zealand's fastest-growing business last year following a nearly 1,200% revenue increase. —Jared Lindzon

**CURALEAF** 

#### **GROWTH MODEL**

Cannabis producer and distributor Curaleaf—which over the past year raked in over \$1 billion in revenue for the first time, expanded to eight European countries, nearly doubled production capacity, and launched 147 products—is now the world's largest company by revenue in the quickly growing industry. Executive chairman Boris Jordan argues that cannabis' appeal as a health, wellness, and recreational product could lead the market to eclipse even that of the \$1.5 trillion global alcohol industry. —Tara Law



ALASKA AIRLINES

#### CLEANING UP AIR TRAVEL

In part to reach its commitment of going net zero by 2040, Alaska Airlines became the first carrier to implement Flyways, Al software that plots more efficient routes. Over the course of a year, Flyways helped Alaska cut flight times and save 1.6 million gallons of fuel. While the airline's climate targets are ambitious—Alaska burns 750 million gallons of fuel a year—addressing climate change has become a key focus for CEO Ben Minicucci and the Seattle-based carrier.

—Alana Semuels

SY ALASKA AIR GROUP; NEXTDOOR: CHRISTOPHER GOODNEY—BLOOMBERG/GETTY IMAGES; IMPOSSIBLE FOODS: BUSINESS WIRE/AP

**EV CONNECT** 

#### CHARGING THE FUTURE

EV Connect, which runs 60,000 charging stations for electric vehicles (EVs) across the U.S. and Canada, makes it easy for hotels, hospitals, schools, and more to offer charging solutions. It manages hardware installation, customer service, and driver support on the back end, while its tech platform makes it easy for brands and public services to integrate chargers into their existing apps and services. The company powered over 22 million electric miles over the past year—the equivalent of more than half a million gallons of gasoline. —J.L.

**UPWORK** 

#### FINDING FLEXIBILITY

Amid the Great Resignation, millions of workers have fled their jobs in search of flexibility and agency. Upwork, an online marketplace that connects clients with freelancers for a fee, is helping such workers discover new opportunities, as well as giving employers a way to find talent. The company recently launched new features for users on both sides of the hiring table, including Project Catalog (which lists prepackaged opportunities with defined scopes and rates) and Talent Scout (which curates the cream of the applicant crop for hiring managers and HR). Upwork now boasts nearly 800,000 clients, a 22% year-over-year increase. —A.V.H.

CALM

#### MENTAL HEALTH AT HAND

Tranquility has been hard to come by these days—which helps explain the meteoric rise of Calm, a mindfulness app that saw downloads double over the course of the pandemic. Calm, which now has 4 million paid subscribers and a \$2 billion valuation, has also been working with corporate partners to expand access to its Calm Business program, through which 10 million workers now have free access to the app as a mental-health benefit. "We're in the middle of a global mental-health crisis," says communications director Alexia Marchetti, "so Calm is focused on helping ... as many people as possible." —Mariah Espada



# Prompting kindness

In response to criticism that it was failing to curb racist content, neighborhood social networking platform Nextdoor and CEO Sarah Friar last year launched a system that scans posts for red flags and encourages users to reconsider before publishing something problematic. The feature builds upon Nextdoor's Kindness Reminder feature, which similarly nudges users if it detects negative language or other signs of a heated conversation. Nextdoor says people shown such prompts edit or withhold their content about a third of the time, making them a promising solution for any social media company struggling with toxicity. -Alison Van Houten HOM

#### AIRPORT GLOW-UP

Redesigning a terminal at one of the busiest U.S. airports, all while millions of passengers come and go, is no easy feat. But that's what architecture firm HOK managed to do at New York City's LaGuardia Terminal B, which fully reopened this year. The revamped space has a more traveler-friendly vibe all around, an eye-catching LED water fountain, and sky bridges between "islands." "The metaphor is that New York is a city of islands and bridges," says HOK president Carl Galioto of the new terminal, which recently won a UNESCO architecture and design award, making it the gold standard for airport design moving forward. —Alex Fitzpatrick



**IMPOSSIBLE FOODS** 

#### **MEATLESS FUTURES**

Impossible Foods blitzed the alt-meat market with myriad new products this past year, including Impossible Pork, Impossible Meathalls, Impossible Sausage, and more. That variety should help the \$4 billion firm maintain its impressive growth (retail revenue jumped 85% year-over-year in 2021). But as investors have cooled on rival Beyond Meat, Impossible may find itself rethinking the IPO it's reportedly planning. —Guadalupe Gonzalez

ORSTED

#### HARNESSING WIND

The offshore wind industry has exploded into a multibillion-dollar global business critical to the world's energy transition, but the U.S. has hardly built any cleanenergy turbines off its shores. Danish energy firm Orsted is changing that, in part by developing what is so far only the second major U.S. offshore wind project, South Fork Wind, off the coast of Long Island, New York, with construction starting in February. The company is also planning a slew of other projects up and down the East Coast, and it's bringing dozens of U.S. workers to train in Europe to help build them.

—Alejandro de la Garza

#### PLAYING THE HITS

Spotify's 400 million users can't listen to Neil Young. But they can get *The Joe Rogan Experience*, an exclusive podcast whose host's COVID-19 beliefs and use of racial slurs caused an uproar this winter. Some artists (like Young) and users left amid the outrage. Yet Spotify beat Apple as the top podcast provider in 2021, added audiobooks, and gained nearly 30 million subscribers during the pandemic. "Canceling voices is a slippery slope," CEO **Daniel Ek** wrote in a memo amid calls to end Spotify's deal with Rogan; he then announced a \$100 million investment on content from "marginalized groups." —*Raisa Bruner* 

NYKAA

#### INDIA'S BEAUTY BEHEMOTH

Ten years after being founded by entrepreneur **Falguni Nayar** with the goal of inspiring Indian women, Nykaa has evolved into one of India's largest cosmetics and lifestyle brands.

Nearly 10 million people shop there, and a November IPO raised \$700 million at a \$13 billion valuation—turning Nayar, the CEO, into India's richest self-made businesswoman. Expansion and marketing led to a 23% drop in net profits in the nine months to December, but revenue grew 65% year-over-year to \$376 million. —Juliette Pearse



PATAGONIA

#### TAKING A STAND

Outdoors retailer Patagonia has doubled down on its long-standing political activism in recent months, donating \$1 million to fight restrictive voting-rights laws in Georgia, for example, and ceasing sales at a Wyoming ski resort after the owners sponsored a conservative fundraiser. At the same time, CEO Ryan Gellert criticized counterparts who he feels aren't doing enough to combat climate change. That Patagonia's sales exceed \$1 billion demonstrates such corporate activism can be very good for business. —Simmone Shah



## BALENCIAGA Shaking up a legacy

Thanks to creative director Demna Gvasalia, luxury powerhouse Balenciaga is not only reflecting the cultural zeitgeist, it's also driving it. The Georgian designer known simply as Demna last year showed the fashion house's first couture collection in 50 years, and broke convention by producing virtual Fortnite apparel and a real-life Simpsons collection. Gvasalia's disruptive approach to design—by turns tongue-in-cheek and abrasive—has shaken up the fashion industry, attracted influential devotees and collaborators like Kim Kardashian and Kanye West (who enlisted Gyasalia to collaborate on his Donda shows and a Yeezy Gap x Balenciaga project), and resulted in revenue to the tune of nearly \$2 billion. Gyasalia's recent show in Paris which took place just days after Russia's invasion of Ukraine and featured models trudging through snow with large bagsdemonstrated the former Georgian refugee's ability to quickly synthesize and respond to world events through fashion. -Cady Lang

SONY

#### ENTERTAINING THE WORLD

If there was ever any doubt that Sony is a global entertainment behemoth, the past few months have erased it. Spider-Man: No Way Home, a joint Sony Pictures-Disney mash-up that came out in December, featuring three different Spider-Men from three different universes, grossed \$1.9 billion worldwide and had the second biggest U.S. opening weekend ever. Meanwhile, supply-chain issues mean the company's gaming wing can't make enough PlayStation 5 consoles to meet the huge global demand, but analysts still expect sales to handily outstrip those of chief rival Xbox this year. —Eliana Dockterman

REDDIT

#### R/GOINGPUBLIC

Once freewheeling "internet homepage" Reddit has grown up, with 100,000 active communities serving 50 million daily visitors. "People come to Reddit with intention and find spaces for camaraderie and conversations that can spark change that extends beyond the online and into real life," says CEO **Steve Huffman.** Reddit, which also served as the catalyst for last year's "meme stock" investment craze, now hopes to cash in—last valued at \$10 billion, it filed to go public this year even as it struggles to fight hate speech. —A.R.C.

REVOLUT

#### REFUGEE ACCOUNTS

Revolut—Britain's biggest financialtechnology startup, worth \$33 billionhas captured global attention amid Russia's war in Ukraine by allowing refugees from the region to sign up for accounts without the usual documentation, like proof of European citizenship. "We felt it was imperative to help those most affected by providing a service that gives them easy, quick access to their money," says co-founder and CTO Vlad Yatsenko, whose company offers money transfers, prepaid cards, and currency swaps. While drawing widespread praise, the gesture has failed to paper over high staff turnover amid accusations of a cutthroat corporate culture, not to mention a balance sheet that remains firmly in the red.

—Charlie Campbell



SOTHEBY'S

## Auctioning digital gems

The 278-year-old auction house sold a record \$7.3 billion worth of art in 2021, thanks in part to its willingness to plunge into the hot nonfungible token (NFT) business. Most of Sotheby's sales still involve more familiar forms of art, like works by Botticelli or Banksy, but \$100 million in NFTs were sold at Sotheby's auctions last year, from cartoon monkeys known as Bored Apes to the source code of the World Wide Web. While Christie's and other auction houses also showed interest in this new tech, Sotheby's became the first major auction house to open a virtual gallery in the metaverse, helping it stand out from rivals as a technological revolution upends centuries-old norms of bidding and selling.

-Andrew R. Chow

DOORDASH

#### **DELIVERING RELIEF**

At the end of 2021, more than 25 million people were using DoorDash to order from over 550,000 merchants, totaling nearly \$30 billion in transactions and representing a 23% annual increase. Business success aside, DoorDash and its CEO **Tony Xu** have been working to help resurrect the flailing restaurant industry and feed the hungry: over the past year, it launched an accelerator for minority-owned businesses, established a \$1 million Restaurant Disaster Relief Fund, and facilitated over 1 million food-bank deliveries. —Jared Lindzon



WALGREENS

#### BEYOND PRESCRIPTIONS

To administer the 60 million COVID-19 vaccinations and 26 million tests that Walgreens has given to date, the company had to revamp its technology, worker training, and community outreach. Now those investments are accelerating the pharmacy's next move: to provide in-store screenings, health counseling, and other holistic health care services. Under CEO **Rosalind Brewer**, Walgreens is also on track to open 200 primary-care practices by 2023, and it plans to have 1,000 locations by 2027—over half of which will be in medically underserved communities.

-Emily Barone

AIRBNB

#### OFFERING SHELTER

When the Taliban's rapid takeover of Afghanistan led tens of thousands of residents to flee the country last year, lodging rental company Airbnb stepped up to provide temporary shelter to more than 20,000 refugees via nonprofit Airbnb.org. Now, as Russia's invasion of Ukraine triggers yet another refugee crisis, Airbnb and CEO **Brian Chesky** are redoubling those efforts by offering free short-term housing to as many as 100,000 people fleeing the violence. Many hosts, meanwhile, have also been opening their doors. —*Alex Fitzpatrick* 

# HE EVERYTHING MPAN

BY JOHN SIMONS/SEATTLE

ANDY JASSY, WHO SPEAKS IN QUIET TONES AND MOVES through Amazon's Seattle headquarters in jeans, untucked button-downs, and sneakers, appears to be the polar opposite of his predecessor, who over the years transformed into a larger-than-life billionaire. But now it's Jassy who's nevertheless managing an ever expanding empire.

With a \$1.7 trillion valuation and a global workforce of 1.6 million, Amazon's reach is nothing short of colossal. It delivers next-day provisions to your doorstep and serves up millions of daily video streams that will soon include live NFL games and a new Lord of the Rings series. Amazon Web Services—the biggest cloud-computing provider on the planet-powers myriad other companies, including its biggest streaming competitor, Netflix. And then there's Amazon's global logistics business, its brick-and-mortar stores (including Whole Foods), and a telemedicine service-not to mention Amazon Games and Amazon Music.

What's next? Where does it stop? Does Amazon make sense as a single company? Jassy, 54, has been grappling with these questions since taking over as chief executive last summer. Where some may see a chaotic conglomeration of dissimilar businesses, Jassy-Jeff Bezos' handpicked successor—says he sees one company, unified by a single purpose, with no end to its potential expansion. "There are businesses that we just haven't started yet that have, I think, a real opportunity to change what's possible," says Jassy, who recently spoke to TIME about what drives him-and Amazon-to keep reaching.

#### What's it like taking over for such an iconic founder and leader? And how are you able to put your own stamp on how the company is run?

I have an incredible amount of respect for Jeff, but I haven't thought of this opportunity in the context of following an icon or needing to put a stamp on the CEO role. In the context in which I started in the role, we were

in the middle of a global pandemic, and whatever role we thought Amazon played in the world pretty significantly changed, with respect to getting PPE, to getting food, clothing, all sorts of items people needed to be comfortable. We grew two to three times faster than we expected because so many things were shut down. We built a fulfillment-center footprint over the first 25 years of Amazon that we had to double in 24 months. So, you don't expect to do that and you don't plan to do that.

#### The company touches our lives in so many ways, and you're in so many businesses. How do you define what Amazon is right now?

We exist to make customers' lives better, and we think about it as needing to relentlessly invent to make that so. When I arrived at Amazon in 1997, we sold books. But it was clear from the start that we had the opportunity to help customers accomplish a lot more than just finding and discovering great books. If there's a customer experience that, if we fixed it, could be a large, meaningful business for the company, we will pursue it. Even if it has very little to do with our existing businesses.

#### OK, but how are you able to manage such a big, sprawling company?

We operate in a decentralized fashion where there's a lot of autonomy and a lot of ownership. It starts with having great leaders. And then I think a big piece of a company scaling-not just in size, but across a lot of geographies and customer experiences-has to do with the culture inside the company. You can't flip a switch and have that happen.

#### How do you get speed out of a big organization like this?

Speed is not preordained. It's very much a leadership decision and a cultural decision. There are a few ways



that you can speed [up]. The first is if you organize in a decentralized fashion where businesses don't have to constantly be coordinating with one another.

The second thing is making sure that you identify which are the one-way-door decisions and which are the two-way-door decisions. The two-way-door decisions mean that if you get it wrong, you can walk back through that door and just stop doing it. And there are many more two-way-door decisions than there are one-way-door decisions. The one-way-door decisions are: if you get this wrong, it is either impossible or very difficult to walk back. Those you have to go a little slower on, but those are much fewer of the decisions that you make.

In a decentralized culture, let the team know that they have the green light to go quickly on two-way-door decisions. And then for the few one-way-door decisions, find a way to make those decisions fast too.

You've talked in the past about how this relentless focus on the customer means that sometimes Amazon isn't focused on competitors. But there are competitors of yours who sometimes have complaints about how Amazon behaves in the marketplace, for instance, by reproducing products and selling them to consumers at cheaper prices. How do you square that with your principles?

We have a marketplace with about 2 million sellers, many of whom are small, medium-sized businesses. If we look at the feedback we get, it's much more positive than it is negative. We've tried to be thoughtful in the areas that we choose to have private-label items, and they're typically the ones that our customers are really pushing us to have additional selection and lower cost. But by and large, I think we have a very healthy relationship with our sellers. I think they feel like their businesses are more success-

'I haven't thought of this in the context of following an icon.' ful and larger because of their presence on Amazon. However, we are far from done improving the lives of our sellers. And we always take whatever feedback we get to heart.

Something I ask almost everyone in your position these days is about this

growing trend in C-suites and boardrooms toward "conscious capitalism." Is this something you think about as you continue to develop Amazon's company culture?

It's a different world today than it was five, 10, 20 years ago. Employees expect their companies to have opinions on a broad array of issues that in the past they probably didn't expect their companies to have opinions on. I think it's healthy.

As you become a larger company with a larger presence in the communities in which you operate, as you scale, I think you have a bigger responsibility to be aware of what your presence is and to find ways to give back. That's something that we feel strongly about. "Are we doing enough? Are we giving back enough? Are we doing enough given our scale?" to be true to this leadership principle. I don't think that's going away anytime soon.



#### PFIZER REDUCING RISK

After playing a critical role in curbing COVID-19 disease with its vaccine, Pfizer and CEO **Albert Bourla** late last year introduced an oral antiviral therapy to treat those at highest risk of severe illness. The two-drug combination is the first pill-based coronavirus treatment in the U.S., and can reduce the risk of hospitalization or death by up to 89%. Demand for Paxlovid, which has received emergency-use authorization from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, will likely increase under the White House's plan to broaden access to such therapies with its Test to Treat initiative. —Alice Park



UPS
SHIPPING SUCCESS

UPS is easy to like: the lion's share of its drivers are unionized, and nearly half of its board of directors and 33% of its C-suite are women. The company led the industry in on-time delivery in 2021, moving more packages than ever while posting \$13 billion in profit. To achieve this, it raised prices and turned away lower-yield businesses, rather than trying to build capacity that may not be needed down the road. "The COVID-19 crisis became a great crystallizer," says CEO Carol B. Tomé, who, after 24 years at Home Depot, came out of retirement to head UPS just weeks before the pandemic hit. "We honed our purpose. We strategized. We reorganized. We prioritized." —Alana Semuels

#### **CAPITAL ONE**

#### FEWER FEES

In December, Capital One became the first major U.S. bank to announce that it was completely eliminating overdraft and insufficient-fund fees, which accounted for \$150 million of Capital One's \$30.4 billion in revenue last year. Such fees typically run around \$25 to \$35 each but cost Americans over \$15 billion in total annually. They can be particularly devastating for families living on the financial edge, who frequently get dinged with these fees yet are least likely to have the means to pay them. After Capital One's trendsetting moveand amid regulatory pressure—other top U.S. banks, including Bank of America, Wells Fargo, and Citigroup, announced plans to follow suit. -Nik Popli

#### UNITED AIRLINES

#### **LEADING** THE FLEET

As COVID-19 cases spiked in the U.S. last summer, United Airlines took the bold step of requiring its workers to get vaccinated, even before the Biden Administration mandated such rules. While some employees scoffed at the mandate, 99.7% got their shots, and only one coronavirusrelated death has been reported among that group. Many of United's rivals have followed suit. "Some are mad at me still," says CEO Scott Kirby. "But they're alive." Kirby is also pursuing greener flying; United recently flew a 737 Max from Chicago to Washington with one engine running on cooking oil and grease to promote alternative fuels.

–Don Steinberg

#### MAERSK

#### **GREENER SHIPPING**

Shipping is responsible for 3% of global greenhouse-gas emissions, emitting close to 1 billion metric tons of CO2 annually. To clean things up, Danish shipping giant Maersk is working with renewables firm European Energy to kick-start large-scale production of sustainably produced carbon-neutral e-methanol. Maersk plans to launch the first container ship using carbon-neutral fuel next year, and is building 12 larger liners that run on green methanol too. It also recently accelerated its netzero emissions goal to 2040, up from the industry standard of at least 50% by 2050 compared to 2008. —Alison Van Houten



#### Silicon Valley standout

Alphabet nearly doubled its annual revenue last vear despite mounting regulatory pressure, thanks to both its continued dominance of online advertising and its investment in artificial intelligence (AI). Five years after CEO Sundar Pichai announced a wholesale embrace of AI. the tech giant is now using such technology "to tackle some of humanity's most pressing challenges," he says. For example, Alphabet helps users reduce their carbon footprint by providing eco-friendly routes in Maps, emissions data in Google Flights, and home-energy-use data with Nest thermostats.

—Jared Lindzon

#### **Better banking**

Latin America's traditional banking system is notoriously expensive, bureaucratic, and inaccessible, leaving an estimated 45% of adults across the region unbanked. Under CEO David Vélez, fintech and banking disrupter Nubank is leading the charge to change that by making it easier than ever for people to access the banking system via their mobile devices. It has the backing of influential investors including Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway, and grew its customer base by 62% last year to almost 54 million. Nubank also made its stock-market debut in December via a \$2.8 billion IPO that lifted its market capitalization to over \$50 billion, cementing its credentials as the world's most valuable digital-only bank.

—Juliette Pearse

#### **ELECTRIFYING EVERYTHING**

Cars, SUVs, pickups, and other light-duty trucks account for over half of all U.S. transportation emissions, making electric vehicles (EVs) key to mitigating climate change. But it's not enough to just offer EVs—people have to actually want them. Ford's approach, under CEO Jim Farley: electrify some of its most popular models. like the F-150, long America's best-selling pickup. And it's working-demand for the all-electric F-150 Lightning helped push Ford's market value over \$100 billion for the first time in January. "Ford is going allout to lead the EV revolution," says executive chair Bill Ford. - Kyla Mandel

#### BYD CO. LTD.

#### **CHARGING UP CHINA**

While U.S. automakers like Tesla are making gains in China's EV market, the Shenzhen-based BYD Co. Ltd. is becoming a domestic power player in its own right. Under CEO Wang Chuanfu, the company sold almost 600,000 all-electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles in China—the world's largest auto market—last year, a 232% annual increase. BYD's EVs can also be found everywhere from Brazil to Australia. The company, backed by Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway, moreover provides a range of other environmentally friendly solutions in more than 50 countries and regions, from electric buses, forklifts, and sanitation vehicles to rail systems and batteries. -Amv Gunia

#### **IBM**

#### Taking climate into account

IBM and CEO Arvind Krishna have been using their expertise in artificial intelligence to help other companies navigate the climate crisis. For instance, its new Environmental Intelligence Suite offers AIpowered dashboards, maps, and alerts that help companies in industries like agriculture and aviation prepare for storms or measure their own emissions. IBM also recently acquired Envizi, a software firm that measures environmental impacts across supply chains. "It's about making sure we can use sustainability information to impact day-to-day operations," says Kareem Yusuf, general manager of IBM AI Applications.

—Don Steinberg



## Mainstreaming the metaverse

Appearing as a cartoon avatar in an October keynote, then Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg made two huge announcements: his company would rename itself Meta, and it would focus from that point forward on building the "metaverse," a virtual realm that believers say heralds the future of the internet. The move immediately mainstreamed the concept, pressured rivals like Microsoft and Google to trumpet similar efforts, and sparked an investment frenzy in companies working on anything perceived as even remotely metaverseadjacent. But investors have since cooled on the idea, and Apple's ad-targeting clampdown didn't help either—by March 2022, Meta's value was nearly half of the \$1 trillion peak it hit in June 2021. Moreover, concerns remained about whistle-blower Frances Haugen's revelations that the company knew more than it had previously revealed about Facebook's detrimental effects on users' mental health and global democracy. —Billy Perrigo

# ETA: MICHAEL NAGLE—BLOOMBERG/GETTY IMAGES; APPLE: MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ—AP; NVIDIA:

#### MICROSOFT

#### **GAME ON**

Xbox maker Microsoft stunned gamers in January by announcing plans to acquire Activision/Blizzard, publisher of *Call of Duty* and *Overwatch*. The company says the nearly \$70 billion deal would help it serve the world's 3 billion gamers. However, the planned tie-up, which sparked a wave of similar moves across the \$200 billion gaming industry, has invited regulatory scrutiny. More broadly, CEO **Satya Nadella**'s Microsoft has been on a hot streak, beating expectations with \$51.7 billion in revenue in the most recent quarter. —*E.B.* 



#### APPLE

#### FLEXING ITS MUSCLES

Apple and CEO **Tim Cook** last year took the momentous step of allowing users to block advertising companies from tracking their app use, a technique used for ad targeting. Apple marketed the change as a win for user privacy—and users appear to agree, with most opting out. Many antisurveillance activists welcomed the development, but others noted that it underlined Apple's huge power. And in earnings calls after the changes, ad-dependent tech giants like Meta and Snap blamed Apple's move for "headwinds" that resulted in tens of billions of dollars in losses. —*B.P.* 

#### WALMART

#### **INVESTING IN WORKERS**

Amid a red-hot labor market, Walmart last summer expanded its education program to cover full college tuition for associates, promising nearly \$1 billion over five years. (Target swiftly unveiled a similar program.) Walmart hopes employees will pursue degrees in fields like cybersecurity and supply-chain management, then work in related roles for the chain. The retail giant is also giving more part-timers full-time jobs and has raised its average hourly wage to \$16.40, though its minimum still lags behind competitors'. —D.S.

#### NVIDIA

## Powering tech's evolution

Under CEO Jensen Huang, chipmaker **NVIDIA's processors** have quietly become essential to everything from cryptocurrency mining and NFTs to self-driving cars. Although the \$600 billion chip titan failed to achieve market domination this year it abandoned a planned \$40 billion acquisition of British rival Arm over potential antitrust concerns-its investments in AI and experimental technology are undoubtedly shaping the future. NVIDIA's processors will eventually render human effort obsolete in many sectors, predicts executive vice president Jay Puri: "Anything that moves will be autonomous."

-Eloise Barry



#### DISNEY

#### RELAXING RESTRICTIONS

In February, Disney ended masking and distancing requirements at its theme parks, even before relaxed guidance from U.S. public-health officials. Given Disney's prominence in the hospitality industry—the company's parks business made \$2.5 billion in operating income last quarter—the move set the tone for other hotels and theme parks. Meanwhile, Disney and CEO **Bob Chapek** have been criticized for what detractors called a tepid response to a controversial Florida bill that blocks educators from teaching young students about LGBTQ+ issues. —*Nik Popli* 



#### NETFLIX

#### EXPANDING VIEWERS' HORIZONS

Facing sluggish growth—it added 18 million subscribers last year, compared with 2020's 37 million, amid the rise of rivals like Disney+ and Amazon Prime Video—Netflix turned abroad for an answer. It found it in hits like South Korea's Squid Game and France's Lupin, which have resurrected the streamer's fortunes and proved to a skeptical Hollywood that Americans will watch subtitled content. Foreign filmmakers as well as subscribers stand to be enriched.

—Eliana Dockterman

#### NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

#### **BIG RETURNS**

It's not easy to get two-thirds of the U.S. population to do the same thing at the same time. But that happened on Feb. 13, when 208 million Americans tuned in to Super Bowl LVI. The country's most valuable sports league, the National Football League attracted 18.2 million fans to stadiums in 2021; its games represented 75 of the 100 most watched U.S. broadcasts—and the league just signed a new \$113 billion TV contract. Football is just a game, but commissioner Roger Goodell's NFL makes it a big one.

-Jeffrey Kluger

#### **ENGINE NO. 1**

# HE CLIMATE APITALIST

IT WAS AN IRRESISTIBLE DAVID AND GOLIATH TALE: last May, a handful of activist investors from a tiny San Francisco investment firm named Engine No. 1 took on the \$350 billion behemoth ExxonMobil—and won. Barely 18 months old, the firm spent just \$12.5 million pushing climate action at Exxon, and won three seats for its candidates on its board of directors-a victory that stunned the financial industry and shook Big Oil.

Leading Engine No. 1's campaign was CEO Jennifer Grancio, who had spent years as an executive at Black-Rock, the world's biggest asset-management company. For weeks before the meeting, Grancio lobbied Exxon's major shareholders, arguing that the company would face serious financial problems without far-reaching environmental change. The shareholders were convinced, voting in independent board members to help shake up Exxon.

Nearly a year on, Engine No. 1 is nowhere near done. It is now pushing for a raft of changes in the biggest public companies, and mobilizing regular investors to do the same. TIME recently sat down with Grancio to discuss the firm's splashy business moves and what comes next.

#### Was Engine No. 1's ExxonMobil campaign a one-off? Or do you have other oil majors on your radar?

With Exxon, we made a rational economic argument that the company had some work to do so that it wasn't so dependent on long-dated fossil-fuel projects. We were able to lead other asset managers to follow us, to vote to drive change at Exxon.

That's created an opportunity for us to work behind the scenes with many other companies in the oil and gas, agriculture, and transportation sectors. We're having very constructive conversations with a number of firms on how they're running their businesses over time, to help them think about the same economic argument that we did with Exxon.

#### Are you seeing success with that strategy at other companies?

As we have gotten into conversation with companies, we are bringing a level of analysis to the CEOs that they're finding helpful. In the case of Exxon, change needed to happen, and it wasn't happening. So we thought it required a proxy campaign.

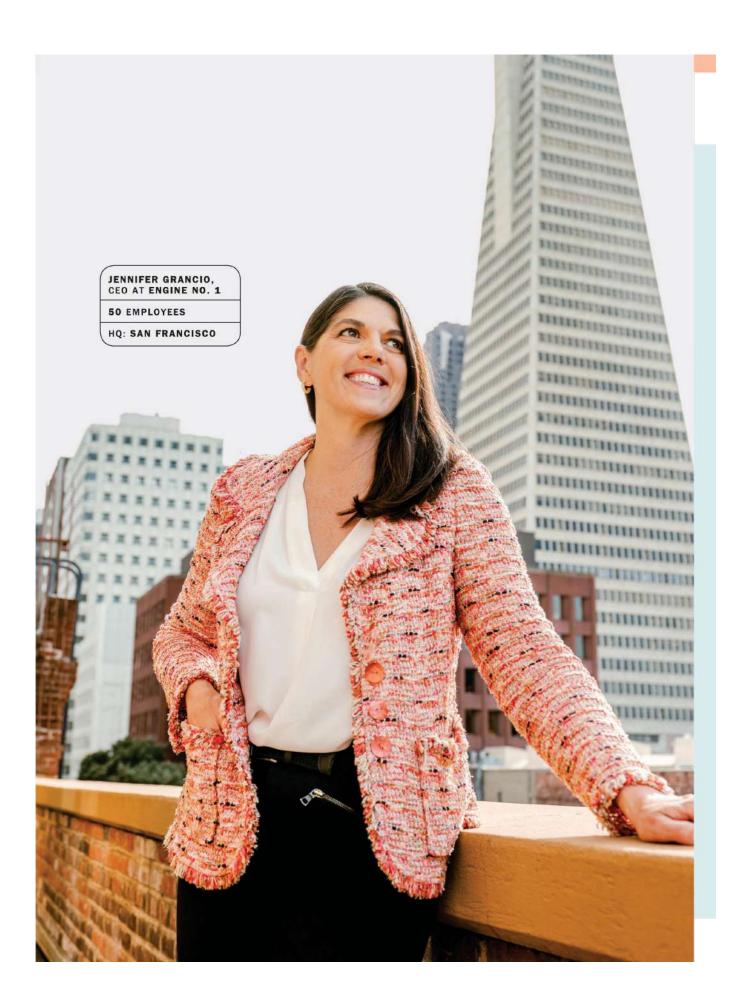
Then take GM. GM is held in all of our three funds. It's a case where we have a good board and a good CEO [Mary Barra], and they're trying to drive change.

#### There are hundreds of shareholder resolutions, and only a tiny number ever get voted on, and an even tinier amount actually pass. What's wrong with this whole system?

These are public companies. We investors own the companies. You have a right to vote and hold the company accountable. Many investors don't even realize they own a right to vote in these companies. We need to use the votes, and put pressure on the rest of the [financial-services] industry to make sure that people are using these votes, on these environmental and social issues.

People have been holding these large companies in our portfolios for decades, and have a vote every single year, and can actually drive quite a lot of accountability and change if they use the vote. We think that that's an opportunity. Some of the proposals are more perfunctory, in many cases not controversial, or a big opportunity to drive change or accountability. But then there is a subset, which are trying to tackle governance or social or climate issues.

We're always going to be aggressive on how we use our vote. We're going to publish them in real time, and try to put pressure on the industry to come along with us.



Many investors and climate activists would say you should not be investing in fossil-fuel companies at all. That's the track taken by big pension funds like CalPERS (California Public Employees' Retirement System).

Our point of view is these are public companies, and we own the public companies. If we care about workers and wages on the social side, and if we care about environmental impact, we should be holding these companies and working with them very aggressively as investors to get them to the right outcome. Many of the funds that have divested, we've had conversations with over the last year. I won't say who. Some of them are thinking maybe that was not the best strategy to have divested, because now they don't have any control over what is going on at these companies.

The financial-services industry is extremely low on women leaders. It's been an issue on Wall Street for a long time. Does being a woman shape your perspective?

Look, I think the industry has a long way to go. As leaders of these companies, it's really our responsibility to find people from all different backgrounds. Gender is one issue, but there are all kinds of diversity that's incredibly additive.

We have a fair number of women in senior leadership positions, and we have diversity across experience in private funds and experience in public markets. I think as we're working with big asset owners and wealthy individuals, they want to see that diversity reflected in the people they do business with.

'You have a right to vote and hold the company accountable.'

Engine No. 1 has pushed for more diversity at Tesla, and won a shareholder resolution on that. From the outside, it doesn't seem like much has changed at Tesla, though.

We came out as an advocate for disclosure in the workplace of gender and race. That creates data; that cre-

ates transparency. For us as investors, we can then understand: Are they making improvements? What is actually going on? That's very important for all companies, particularly for a company that gets credit for doing the right thing by climate.

In the case of Tesla, we used our vote. There was enough momentum on that proposal that it passed, which helps all of us as investors to track what they're doing, and whether they're making progress.

Engine No. 1 focuses on ESG—environment, social, and governance—issues. But it seems you're most focused on the E. You're right, we are known for climate. On the social side, you will see when we vote this year that we're voting in many cases for disclosure of race and gender, and workplace metrics that are not widely disclosed. We do a lot of research with a big network of academics. We have a point of view that the way you treat your workers or the diversity of the workforce affects company performance. We don't have a product specifically out on that yet. But you will see and hear more from us about that over time. It's a priority. It's just that the data is a little further behind.

Edited and condensed for clarity

#### **SPINLAUNCH**

#### TWIRLING TO SPACE

SpinLaunch is developing a new, cleaner method of launching satellites into space: its vacuum-sealed centrifuge spins a payload, then hurls it into the sky. Once at altitude, a traditional engine ignites, propelling the object into orbit. Because the payload is already airborne when the engine lights, the process requires far less fuel than typical launches. The company, led by CEO Jonathan Yaney, had its first suborbital flight in November, and plans to conduct up to 30 more over the next few months. —Jeffrey Kluger

#### **NSO GROUP**

#### HAWKING SPYWARE

A consortium of media organizations revealed last year that people around the world were the targets of surveillance enabled by software from Israeli company NSO Group. The spyware, called Pegasus, could steal personal data from targets' apps, hijack audio from microphones, and secretly activate phone cameras. NSO said the software was meant to be used by governments for combatting terror and crime, but some have reportedly used it to target political dissidents, activists, and even the wife of murdered journalist Jamal Khashoggi, which NSO denies. —*Billy Perrigo* 



#### AMC ENTERTAINMENT HOLDINGS

#### **MEME-STOCK MASTERY**

As theater chain AMC struggled amid the pandemic, internet-savvy investors last year turned the company into a "meme stock," making it popular despite shaky fundamentals. By gobbling up shares, those traders boosted AMC's price, squeezing traditional investors betting against the firm. CEO **Adam Aron** sold more stock to raise money and courted the meme-stock crowd via Twitter, thereby helping the company survive. "It's pleasing to be their champion," Aron says of the meme stockers, "because Wall Street has in the past thumbed its nose at these people." —Alex Fitzpatrick



### Intimates for every body type

SKIMS, founded three years ago by celebrity mega-influencer Kim Kardashian as a disruptive "shapewear" startup, is now reinventing intimate apparel with an eye toward body-type inclusivity. Its sizes range from XXS through XXXXXL, and its garments are capable of stretching to twice their original size. An affordable price point—the average SKIMS panty ranges from \$14 to \$24—plus advertising campaigns featuring celebs like Kate Moss, Addison Rae, Paris Hilton, and more have turned the lineup into a big hit, helping the company reach a \$3.2 billion-plus valuation this year (that's double last year's figure). The company also recently launched a swimwear collection, as well as collaborations with Fendi and Team USA. SKIMS' secret, says co-founder Jens Grede, is a willingness to blow up the existing plan and shift to something new. "We are constantly looking for creative destructions," he says. "How do we replace our business with something that is even more innovative for our customer?"

—Jenna Caldwell

#### **PAXFUL**

#### CRYPTO FOR ALL

Cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin, advocates argue, make it easier for people in emerging economies to buy, spend, and move money, even without access to traditional financial infrastructure. Paxful, a peer-to-peer cryptocurrency-exchange platform with 6 million users globally, is helping make that possible. Users can freely transact in crypto with anyone across the world, and the company recently launched crypto education centers in Nigeria and El Salvador with the goal of financially empowering local communities. "When used as a means of exchange, Bitcoin can bridge economies and expand opportunities for the billions of unbanked," says CEO Ray Youssef.

-Jared Lindzon

#### TWIGA FOODS

#### **CHEAPER STAPLES**

The typical Kenyan household spends more than half its disposable income on groceries, largely because inefficient supply chains lead to high prices. Kenyan e-commerce outlet Twiga Foods has a solution: it lets retailers place orders via mobile device and grants them 48 hours of interest-free credit, giving them time to sell what they order to customers before the bill comes due. "This means our clients can buy what their customers want, not just the goods they can afford," says CEO and co-founder Peter Njonjo. To further cut costs, Twiga is now growing some of its fastest-selling productsincluding onions, tomatoes, and watermelons-itself. -Aryn Baker

#### тікток

#### VIRAL SENSATION

More than 1 billion people now use TikTok for bite-size entertainment and more, making it the biggest existing threat to the longtime titans of the social media world. TikTok eclipsed YouTube's average U.S. watch time last year, and it had more U.S. downloads during the first half of 2021 than rivals Instagram and Snapchat. Responding to criticism, TikTok in the past year developed an incubator for Black creators, announced additional teen safety features, and launched SoundOn, a service to help music creators monetize their labor. Recently, it has become a source of unfiltered-and often inaccurate-news about Ukraine. Its next challenge: wartime content moderation. - Raisa Bruner



# A cleaner way around cities

Motorcycle taxis are the easiest and cheapest way to get around Kenya's capital of Nairobi, but the ubiquitous boda bodas, as locals call them, are a major polluter. Kenyan-Swedish startup Opibus is setting out to create a cleaner transportation option with a fleet of made-in-Kenya electric motorcycle taxis. It has deployed 160 prototypes and launched a successful pilot program with Uber. After raising November 2021 funding round, Opibus, led by CEO Filip Gardler, is poised to scale up to mass manufacturing, with an anticipated 3,000 vehicles ready for sale on the local market by the end of the year at a price on par with that of conventional

#### THRIVE MARKET

#### HEALTHIER Grocery Delivery

With the Amazonification of Whole Foods under way, upstart online grocer Thrive Market—which has 1.2 million subscribers (nearly double 2020's number) paying \$60 annually to order nonperishables and frozen foods direct to their doorsteps-spies an opportunity to become the new go-to destination for well-curated healthy foods. In part, Thrive's goal is to make it easier for people in underserved areas to access high-quality staples, says co-founder and CEO Nick Green. Sustainability is a major focus too; orders are delivered via ground and frozen items are insulated with recycled denim, not Styrofoam. -A.F.

#### SUPERGOOP!

#### **SAVING YOUR SKIN**

Supergoop! has managed to cut through the noise of the multibillion-dollar skincare industry with a simple idea: SPF protection should be a fundamental part of everyone's daily routine. While 84% of people don't wear SPF on a daily basis, 75% of Supergoop! users wear its products every day. Also key to the brand's success: a recognition that all of us have different skin-care needs. "It's not about one type of person or lifestyle or gender or skin tone," says CEO Amanda Baldwin. "It's about everyone." In December, investment firm Blackstone took a majority stake that reportedly valued the company at \$600 million to \$700 million. —Megan McCluskey

#### DIVVY HOMES

#### HOME-BUYING HELPER

Buying a home may be the American Dream, but many first-time buyers lack the funds (or the credit score) to get a traditional mortgage. That's where Divvy Homes comes in. Through its rent-to-buy program, aspiring homeowners can pay a 1% to 2% down payment, and Divvy will pay for the rest of the home. Clients then pay monthly rent to Divvy-but unlike with traditional renting, a portion of each payment goes toward building equity. About half of Divvy's clients build enough equity to buy their homes within three years. "Our mission is to make homeownership accessible," says CEO Adena Hefets. —Leslie Dickstein

#### **GOTO GROUP**

#### AN INDONESIAN GIANT

GoTo Group, an Indonesian "superapp" with 100 million users offering everything from ride hailing, shopping, and entertainment to payments and financial services, is set to expand even more this year. That's thanks to a planned \$1.26 billion IPO this April that's expected to value the company at nearly \$29 billion. Formed last year in a blockbuster merger, GoTo Group previously raised more than \$1.3 billion in November from investors looking to ride the wave of Southeast Asia's rapidly growing digital economy, which is expected to double to \$360 billion by 2025. —Juliette Pearse

#### SHEIN

#### **FASTER FASHION**

With estimated global sales of over \$10 billion and more app downloads than Amazon in the U.S., fast-fashion upstart Shein has become a rare example of a Chinese retailer making a worldwide name for itself. The company's secret sauce: it uses Al to identify hot new trends, produces garments quickly (it lists 6,000 new items a day, compared with around 10,000 a year for rival Zara), and taps TikTok influencers to promote its wares. But the company is accused of copying other makers' designs, and its suppliers have been scrutinized for alleged labor violations. In turn, Shein says it audits and enforces a "code of conduct" for all suppliers. —Chad de Guzman



#### GOODR

#### MAKING MEDICINE AFFORDABLE

Doug Hirsch's realization that his \$500 prescription cost only \$250 elsewhere led him to create GoodRx, which offers digital coupons for prescription drugs. "We've tried to inject market forces into a business that traditionally hasn't had them," says co-founder and co-CEO Hirsch. GoodRx, which makes money via online advertising, says it has saved its users \$35 billion since 2011, while revenue topped \$200 million for the first time in the most recent quarter—success that underscores Americans' struggle to get affordable medicine. —Don Steinberg

#### THE PINKFONG COMPANY

#### THE EARWORM MACHINE

"Baby Shark," which this January became the first YouTube video to be viewed more than 10 billion times, is more than just a catchy song—it's a big business for its creator, South Korea's Pinkfong Company. Paramount announced in February that a feature-length Baby Shark movie is in the works, and an animated series for preschoolers that launched on Nickelodeon last spring is now headed into Season 2. The company has also started selling Baby Shark NFTs, expanding its merchandising efforts into the digital realm. —Chad de Guzman

#### CONTEMPORARY AMPEREX TECHNOLOGY CO. LTD. (CATL)

#### **BRILLIANT BATTERIES**

Amid concerns that the limited supply of raw materials like lithium needed to produce EV batteries won't be able to meet rising demand, Chinese battery behemoth CATL in July unveiled a sodium-ion battery, the material for which can be cheaply extracted from seawater. The company, which is the world's largest supplier of EV batteries and works with automakers like Tesla and Volkswagen, plans to begin mass production by 2023. —Amy Gunia



#### STARRY

#### Cheaper broadband

The U.S. has made strides in closing the broadband gap, but millions still lack adequate home internet access because of high costs, credit requirements, and more. A potential solution from homewireless startup Starry and CEO Chet Kanojia: Starry Connect, an affordable offering for low-income city residents. More than 55,000 public and affordable housing units in Boston, New York City, Denver, and elsewhere have access, no credit checks are required, and federal subsidies can cover the cost. -Alex Fitzpatrick





#### TOO GOOD TO GO

#### Reducing food waste

As much as a third of the world's food—accounting for up to 10% of global greenhouse emissions—is discarded every year, even as millions go hungry. Too Good To Go and CEO **Mette Lykke** aim to slash that number by enabling their 54 million app users in 17 countries to order unsold or soon-to-expire food from grocery stores and restaurants for a third of the usual cost. The company's success—it has saved 124 million meals from landfills since 2016, and revenue jumped 87%, to \$73.6 million, last year—also underscores the struggle many people face to afford basic necessities.

—Juliette Pearse

#### SONDER

#### **READY FOR DEPARTURE**

As the travel and hospitality industry seeks to rebound post-Omicron, Sonder, a tech-forward short-term rental provider that leases and manages 18,100 units in 35 cities across 10 countries, stands to take off. Guests of the uniquely designed, locally inspired spaces manage their entire stay through the company's app, from booking to check-in, fresh towels to dinner reservations. "Sonder is building the hospitality brand of tomorrow," says CEO and co-founder Francis Davidson. Sonder made its debut on the Nasdaq and secured \$400 million in new capital last year, and it increased revenue by more than 150% in each of its last three quarters. —Jared Lindzon

#### RIVIAN

# ELECTRIC DREAMS

BY EBEN SHAPIRO

THERE IS A DECENT CHANCE RIVIAN DELIVERS ON THE enormous expectations it faces. Or it might not. The California automotive startup, which aspires to be the Patagonia of electric vehicles (EVs)—rugged, hip, simpatico to consumers willing to pay a premium to buy from a company that emits a halo of eco-friendliness—is at a critical juncture.

The person trying to make it all work is lifelong car geek Robert "RJ" Scaringe, who spent much of his childhood tinkering on cars in a neighbor's garage. "I had hoods under my bed, windshields in my closet, and engine parts on my desk," he says. His vision of stylish electric pickup trucks, SUVs, and commercial delivery vans has attracted over 180,000 orders and heavyweight backers including Amazon and Ford. Scaringe, a 39-year-old with a Ph.D. in mechanical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is now leading Rivian's "ramp up," the make-it-or-break-it phase where the company has to prove it can produce a steady stream of vehicles from its assembly lines in Normal, Ill., and eventually a newly announced factory near Atlanta.

Rivian spent the winter trying to tame a litany of challenges facing many manufacturers right now: supplychain shortages, COVID-19 outbreaks shutting down its plant (nearly a quarter of its workers were out in January), and even the weather (it lost critical production days to epic snowstorms). Add to that the general market jitters, and Rivian's valuation has dropped to roughly \$40 billion as of late March from its gravity-defying \$153 billion following its November IPO. (That offering, one of the biggest of 2021, made Scaringe's stake worth well over \$1 billion, although the value of his holdings has fallen in recent months.)

Despite the taxing past six months—and the fact that so far, only a thousand or so Rivian vehicles are rolling on public roads—there is little doubt that Rivian has been hugely influential in pushing the auto industry to adopt a more widespread embrace of EVs. To date, the most popular EVs have largely been sedans and crossovers from Tesla, General Motors, and others. But Americans love big

cars; the top three selling vehicles in the U.S. last year were all pickups. That Rivian has racked up 83,000 preorders for its R1T pickup even before it proves it can build them en masse has accelerated mainstream automakers' push to electrify their best-selling behemoths, with Ford and GM both racing to get electrified versions of their pickups to market. (At one point, Rivian lent Ford a prototype of an electric pickup its team made using Rivian's electrified platform with an F-150 body. The jerry-built vehicle's performance helped convince Ford of EV pickups' potential.)

Rivian has all the components of a buzzy tech startup: a lofty mission statement ("Keep the world adventurous forever") that captures its world-saving mission to create a carbon-neutral transportation business, a big valuation, and a big piggy bank, with more than \$18 billion in cash. But it also posts big losses (\$4.7 billion last year), and it does not expect to be profitable in the "foreseeable future," according to its prospectus. Moreover, with great valuation comes great scrutiny, particularly if you are entering the same lane as Tesla CEO and outspoken social media presence Elon Musk. "Don't want to be unreasonable, but maybe they should be required to deliver at least one vehicle per billion dollars of valuation "before" the IPO?" Musk tweeted last August.

RIVIAN'S GROWING PAINS exceed Muskian snark. Of greater import, Ford has decided to proceed as a full-blown competitor to Rivian rather than as a production partner, as it once contemplated. Ford is a formidable player in Rivian's main business lines, with 200,000 preorders for its F-150 Lightning, the newly unveiled electric version of what's long been the best-selling vehicle in the U.S. And in a splashy video introducing Ford's electrified Transit van, CEO Jim Farley took a not-so-veiled shot at Rivian, highlighting Ford's extensive manufacturing experience and its large service network: "If things go wrong, we have your back, because we have 1,800 commercial vehicle centers in the U.S. and transit centers scattered all over Europe. Newcomers in the space won't be able to deliver that kind of support until,



well, maybe ever." Still, the two CEOs have a regular check-in.

Ford declined to comment on its relationship with Rivian. But when the companies abandoned their joint development plan last year, Farley told *Automotive News*, "We have growing confidence in our ability to win in the electric space. When you compare today with when we originally made that investment, so much has changed." For his part, Scaringe is frustrated with the media's portrayal of the EV world as a zero-sum game and rejects the narrative that "Rivian can only be successful if Ford is unsuccessful." He says that the world needs to produce 1 billion new EVs in the next 10 to 15 years as a matter of climate urgency. "There is no way one company could produce all those vehicles," he says.

Scaringe is now trying to make it all work under the gaze of one of the corporate world's most exacting partners: Amazon, which has both invested in Rivian and ordered 100,000 electric delivery vehicles from the company. (In its most recent earnings report, Amazon included a pretax gain of \$11.8 billion from its Rivian stake.) Last year, Amazon executive chairman Jeff Bezos tweeted that Scaringe is "One of the greatest entrepreneurs I've ever met," but then

added, "Now, RJ, where are our vans?!"

Scaringe laughs when asked about the pressure from his bald booster. "He's a funny guy," says Scaringe, in his trademark low-key, almost placid, manner. "He has a sense of humor." Bezos declined to comment, but seems to be a genuine Rivian fanboy—Scaringe says Bezos recently sent him a note ordering more Rivian pickups for his own use. "We've done some off-roading together. He really enjoys the capability."

Rivian executives freely admit that they are in a decisive moment. In March, the company disclosed that it has produced only 1,410 vehicles in 2022 and 2,425 vehicles since the start of production last year. Scaringe revealed new details to TIME about the extent to which Rivian is going to get production on track. The most surprising: it has been sending teams to suppliers to help them address problems. Rivian's pickup, says Scaringe, consists of over 2,000 components from over 400 suppliers. "If you're missing a single fastener, it can stop the line. If we are waiting for a part, we will do whatever we can to help," he says. "It's common for us to send some of our teams to act as a SWAT team. There were some times where there were pretty meaningful numbers of people who would go to a supplier."

But Rivian's latest stumble was over its own feet. In early March, the company informed its customers—many of whom have been waiting three years for their vehicle—that prices were rising by as much as 20%, putting the cost of some pickup configurations near \$100,000. A flurry of cancellations followed, and the company quickly backpedaled and said the price increases would apply only to new orders. But the misstep knocked billions off Rivian's market

cap and underscored the company's growing pains.

Scaringe, a father of three, is most animated when describing his kids' reactions to his trucks' most unusual features (among many: a bird-chirping sound effect when you lock the doors, recorded in Yosemite National Park; a drain at the bottom of the spare-tire space, so you can fill it with ice and beverages.) One of Scaringe's kids favors the "gear tunnel," a storage area good for skis, fishing poles—or crawling through, if you are small enough. Another is enamored of the flashlight that pops out of the door like a James Bond gadget. Scaringe excitedly holds up a matchbox-style toy Rivian he had just received. He's eager to bring it home.

#### WYZE

#### SMARTER HOMES

Henry Ford didn't invent the automobile, but he did make the technology more affordable, ushering in a new age of mobility. That's what Wyze aims to do for smart-home gadgets. It added 30 new products to its lineup this year, including security cameras, video doorbells, smart thermostats, and more, many of which cost under \$50. Wyze's 6 million users control more than 15 million devices, and the company's lineup regularly beats more expensive rivals for industry awards. "We believe that quality smarthome technology should be accessible to everyone," says CEO **Yun Zhang.** 

-Jared Lindzon

#### GUILD EDUCATION

# Unlocking opportunity

Guild Education is trying to build a more equitable workforce by connecting workers to courses that help them excel. Over 310,000 employees at companies like Walmart, Disney, and Chipotle used Guild for education, coaching, or career support in 2021, with student growth up 60% since early 2021. Guild learners, mostly people of color and first-generation college students, see higher wage increases and more promotions than peers, and graduate debt-freetheir employers pay universities, which in turn pay Guild. "If we solve the challenges for those diverse populations," says Guild CEO Rachel Carlson, "we build a more diverse America that has a chance at the middle class." -Katie Reilly

# CLIMEWORNS, IMPINARD SCRADE—LAIF, REDUX, FEANOI, RACHEL MONRAI—BLOOMINGDALE S CENTURY CIT/GETTT IMAGES

#### MODERNA

#### IMPROVING ACCESS

Biotech firm Moderna recently announced that it would never enforce the patent on its COVID-19 vaccine in 92 countries currently receiving the shots through a global program. It's the first major pharmaceutical company to announce such a move, which critics say came later than it should have and which opens the door to wide-scale global production. Under CEO **Stéphane Bancel**, Moderna is also developing mRNA vaccines targeting 15 pathogens that are more common in the developing world, as well as longtime public-health threats such as influenza and RSV. —Alice Park



#### CLIMEWORKS

#### CAPTURING CARBON

On a grassy plain in Iceland in September, a gigantic machine began sucking carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere. The project, built by Swiss company Climeworks, is the world's largest direct-air carboncapture plant—though it traps only about 4,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year, equivalent to the yearly emissions of about 850 cars. Some experts say carbon-removal technology, still in its infancy, distracts from proven solutions. But others, including Climeworks co-director and co-founder Jan Wurzbacher, argue it can help reduce warming. —Alejandro de la Garza

#### NOTRAFFIC

#### **SMARTER STREETS**

NoTraffic wants to change a century-old technology: traffic lights. Its system uses AI and cloud-connected radar to improve the flow of cars, buses, bikers, and pedestrians at urban intersections. AIready operating in Arizona and California, NoTraffic raised \$17.5 million last July to help it expand into Europe and Asia. Its tech can cut wait times in half, trim carbon emissions, and reduce the number of cars running red lights. Another goal? "Letting people spend a few more minutes every day with their loved ones ... or get home in a safer way," says co-founder and CEO **Tal Kreisler.** — *Kyla Mandel* 



#### PEANUT

### A community for women

When Michelle Ken**nedy** was expecting her first child, she couldn't find the support she needed via online searches and Facebook groups. So she created Peanut, a social network now boasting 2.5 million users and a nearly triple growth in daily active users over the last year, which offers a space for women to learn from one another. First intended for expecting mothers like Kennedy, Peanut now has groups catering to women across all life stages—including, most recently, those going through menopause. "Ultimately, I want three women all in the same family, each in a different generation, to use Peanut and have a reason to be there," says the CEO. —Mariah Espada

#### LARNA

#### **PURCHASING POWER**

A few years ago, only a handful of online stores would have listed Klarna as a payment option. Today, the buy-now-paylater company is a fixture alongside digital-payment titans like Mastercard and itself a giant, valued at \$45.6 billion. Over the past year, it has extended its reach to 45 countries, launched a physical Visa card in the U.S., and increased net operating income by 38% to \$1.6 billion. The U.S. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, however, is probing Klarna and similar firms over concerns about consumer debt: the company is cooperating.

—Eloise Barry

#### GRAMMARLY

#### WRITING WITH CLARITY

More than 30 million people use Grammarly daily to improve their written communications. The Al-powered tools not only help with spelling and grammar, but also improve writing quality, consistency, clarity, and efficiency. The software seamlessly integrates with internet browsers, Microsoft Office, and, most recently, desktops, enabling users to communicate confidently no matter where they're writing. "Grammarly is pioneering the future of Al-driven communication at a time when it's never been more critical-or challengingto get communication right," says CEO Brad Hoover. The company became one of the top 10 most valuable U.S. startups last year after closing a \$200 million financing round at a \$13 billion valuation. - J.L.

#### **MODULATE**

#### SHUTTING DOWN ABUSE

Verbal abuse often ruins otherwise great online multiplayer games. Modulate has a solution in the form of ToxMod, a first-of-its-kind platform that uses artificial intelligence to detect sexism, racism, or other forms of abuse in games, and alert human moderators, who can issue warnings or ban offenders. The goal, says co-founder and chief technology officer **Carter Huffman**, is to make games "safer and more inclusive." ToxMod is already in use in major titles like Rec Room, which began deploying the tech for its 37 million users last year. —Alex Fitzpatrick

#### **PIGEONLY**

#### CONNECTING FAMILIES

High costs and inadequate phone services can make it difficult for incarcerated people and their loved ones to keep in touch. Pigeonly, which enables users to look up an inmate and then helps them set up a prison phone account, offers rates of just 6¢ a minute, compared with an average of \$1 per minute for most U.S. prisons and jails. The company, which operates in over 70 U.S. and international jurisdictions, is at the forefront of global efforts to humanely reform prison and jail systems. —Josiah Bates



#### FLEXPORT

#### UNTANGLING THE SUPPLY CHAIN

When California's Port of Long Beach was bottlenecked last year, Flexport CEO **Ryan Petersen** tweeted his proposed solution: empty containers needed to be stacked higher to clear room. (They later were.) Petersen's shipment-tracking firm solves similar problems for customers daily, and to great success: Flexport made \$3.3 billion in revenue last year amid the supply-chain crisis, up 154%. More recently, Flexport raised over \$19.5 million to deliver goods for Ukrainian refugees.

—Guadalupe Gonzalez



#### JORO

## Tracking your emissions

After struggling to monitor her carbon footprint, Sanchali Pal developed an app to automatically estimate her emissions based on her credit-card spending. The app, named Joro after the earth goddess of Norse mythology, went live in April 2020, and since then it has helped its users track, reduce, and offset the emissions of everything they buy; in 2021, Joro's users reduced their emissions by 21%. "If everyone did that, then reaching net zero by 2050 suddenly seems a lot more achievable," says Pal, Joro's CEO and founder. Pal recognizes that to achieve real climate progress, companies and governments will have to make changes too, but she's hopeful that Joro's data demonstrates people's demand for carbon reduction.

—Aryn Baker

# ORT: ILLUSTRATION BY LAURIE AVON FOR TIME; COURTESY SEQUOIA; COURTESY FADING WEST DEVELOPMENT; COURTESY ALLBIRDS

#### RENDEVER

#### A NEW USE FOR VR

Seniors have spent the past two years suffering from two pandemics: one caused by COVID-19, another by the social isolation intended to reduce the virus's spread. Rendever offers a hightech solution for the latter: using virtual reality, it creates shared experiences for seniors, meant to combat isolation and loneliness (which are associated with health risks like dementia and stroke) as well as improve physical fitness. Rendever's tech, which is in use in over 400 nursing homes across the U.S., Canada, and Australia, is "changing the lives of participants all over the world for the better," says co-founder and CEO Kyle Rand. —Jared Lindzon

#### ATHLETIC BREWING CO.

#### A BETTER ALT-BEER

With the "sober curious" trend in full swing, you've probably heard a story like CEO Bill Shufelt's: he quit drinking to be healthier and was unimpressed by the nonalcoholic beverage options available to him. Shufelt, however, vowed to create better ones. Unlike many of its zero-proof competitors, the resulting company—nonalcoholic beer brand Athletic Brewing Co.-is actually competing with booze giants. Founded in 2017, Athletic Brewing sold more than 100,000 barrels of beer last year (up from 37,500 in 2020) and was named 2021's craft brewery of the year by trade publication Brewbound. The brand also donates 3% of its annual sales to charities like the Yosemite Conservancy, which in 2021 worked out to more than \$1 million.

#### —Jamie Ducharme

#### **MILK WITHOUT COWS**

PERFECT DAY

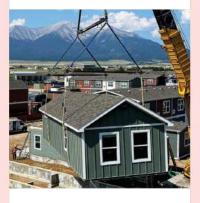
While most animal-milk alternatives have their own unique tastes and textures, Perfect Day has devised a way of "teaching" microflora to produce milk whey protein, resulting in dairyidentical products with no cows involved. The process, which uses precision fermentation and genetically modified fungi, consumes less water, and results in fewer emissions compared with traditional dairy farming. Under CEO Ryan Pandya, the company has partnered with major brands like Starbucks and General Mills. and is making everything from cream cheese and ice cream to cake mixes and protein powder. -J.L.

#### **FADING WEST DEVELOPMENT**

#### BUILDING On a budget

America's housing inventory has plunged to its lowest level in at least 20 years; the country is now short by nearly 7 million units. Entrepreneur Charlie **Chupp**'s solution: factory-built housing firm Fading West Development, which can build a modular three-bedroom home four to five times faster than a builder can finish a traditional stick-built house. Fading West delivers prebuilt homes 95% complete, thereby reducing costs (its homes are at least 25% cheaper than similar homes on the market). The goal, says CEO Chupp, is "to create attainable housing" for those who are suffering "the brunt of the housing shortage."

—Abby Vesoulis



#### FLOCK FREIGHT

#### SHARING SPACE

Companies sometimes need to ship less than a full truckload's worth of stuff. But rather than sending shipments on partially filled vehicles, Flock Freight's platform enables multiple clients to share space on one truck, which means cheaper prices and fewer emissions. "We've got to do our part to save the world," says founder and CEO **Oren Zaslansky**, who counts Volvo among his clients. What's good for the planet appears to be good for business: Flock Freight gained unicorn status in October by raising \$215 million at a \$1.3 billion valuation. —G.G.



#### ALLBIRDS

#### **SELLING SUSTAINABILITY**

Allbirds founders **Tim Brown** and **Joey Zwillinger** created their best-known shoe—a minimalist merino wool runner—back in 2016, hoping to disrupt the synthetics-reliant sneaker industry. Since then, the certified B Corp has proven that sustainability sells: a November IPO valued the company at \$4 billion, and it posted nearly \$100 million in fourth-quarter sales (a 23% jump). A new design Allbirds recently launched in partnership with Adidas, meanwhile, releases less than a quarter of the greenhouse gases during production than a typical running shoe. —*Cady Lang* 

#### SOFI

#### **NEW BANK ON THE BLOCK**

After making a name for itself via student-loan refinancing, financial-technology darling SoFi last year launched a bevy of new offerings, including a credit card, an auto-loan-refinancing tool, IPO investing options, and more. It also became the first full-service financial-technology startup to receive a formal U.S. banking license, a big step on the way to becoming a fully fledged major bank. "We're changing what banking is and feels like," says CEO **Anthony Noto.** "And we won't stop until we're one of the top 10 financial institutions in the country." —J.L.

#### KALING INTERNATIONAL

# INNY ISINESS

BY ELIANA DOCKTERMAN

WOMEN WANT TO BE MINDY KALING'S BEST FRIEND. This is an actual problem in her life. Fans approach her in airports to solicit not just a photo but also companionship. Maybe it's her candid memoirs, in which she talks about everything from being the first woman and person of color in the writers' room of The Office to anxieties about what people write about her online. Maybe it's that they see themselves in the characters she's written on The Mindy Project or Never Have I Ever. Maybe they want to prove to this unabashedly ambitious person with great comic timing that they're smart and funny too.

Kaling is gracious about it, but her calendar is full. Plus, she's an unrepentant workaholic. "I never leave my house," she says. That's not entirely true. She did in March to meet me for lunch in West Hollywood after giving notes on episodes of her various shows since 5:15 a.m., when she heard her 4-year-old daughter stirring in the other room. And she is considering doing so again for a friend's screening that evening—though she will likely stay in to do another pass on the Legally Blonde 3 script. "She can outline an entire season of television on the back of an envelope in the time it takes someone else to come up with one joke," says B.J. Novak, her former Office co-writer and close friend.

After 17 years in front of the camera, Kaling, 42, is relieved to work behind the scenes. "I used to spend so much time, especially as a performer, on how to be more likable, be cool, be maternal, to seem smart and approachable," she says. Focusing on story has allowed Kaling to "strip away ego" and do the best writing of her career: she launched her own production company, Kaling International, in 2012, with the goal of telling stories about the inner lives of women of color that have long been missing from TV.

By her own estimation, her most recent series, the Netflix high school comedy Never Have I Ever and HBO Max romp The Sex Lives of College Girls, are her biggest critical and commercial hits to date. In 2020, more than

40 million households watched the first season of Never Have I Ever, which centers on an Indian American teen juggling hormones, family life, and AP classes. And the bawdy yet sweet Sex Lives of College Girls, which follows four college roommates, is one of the most successful series from HBO Max.

Kaling International employs exactly four people and yet somehow it is working on nearly two dozen projects. By contrast, the production companies Kaling cites as her inspiration, Reese Witherspoon's Hello Sunshine and Shonda Rhimes' Shondaland, each employs dozens. Kaling picked her company's name because it made her laugh to think one day it could be "considered a huge corporation, like Shell Oil." Kaling looks you in the eye when she cracks a joke. But when she's earnest, she averts her gaze. "I'm very ambitious and would love for this company to be like [Oprah's] Harpo. Now I'm like, 'Oh, is this funny?"" she says, looking toward the crowd of Hollywood types entering the restaurant. "Or is this really what I want?"

KALING WAS HIRED to The Office through an NBC program that incentivized showrunners to diversify their writers' rooms by paying for the salary of one BIPOC writer. "It terrified me that they were interviewing another person of color or another woman because I'd be like, 'OK, I'm going to get fired," she says. "I had a lot of growing up to do in terms of not operating from a fear of getting replaced." She wrote more episodes than anyone else in the show's history before she departed after the eighth season to launch her namesake sitcom. Her career went into overdrive as she wrote several memoirs and the feature Late Night, all while starring in ensembles like A Wrinkle in Time, Ocean's Eight, and The Morning Show.

Founding the production company cemented her transition from rising star to queenmaker. When Kaling posted a casting call for an Indian teen to play the lead in



MINDY KALING, CEO AT KALING INTERNATIONAL

FOUR EMPLOYEES

HQ: LOS ANGELES

Never Have I Ever, 15,000 people responded. She chose Maitreyi Ramakrishnan, catapulting her to fame. "I transitioned from being somebody whose primary concern was keeping the show on the air to someone who was like, 'I'm also a mentor,'" Kaling says.

Kaling could have stopped by making history on *The Office*, says Ramakrishnan: "But then she said, 'I'm going to create a whole Mindy-verse of diverse characters." Kaling populates the writers' rooms and crews with young women of color for the sake of authenticity. There's been a push in Hollywood to diversify writers' rooms, one that Kaling theorizes is mostly motivated by fear. "It's pretty brazen if you have an all-white staff these days, and I think the execs are savvy enough to know that's not a good look," she says.

Yet Kaling admits to fretting over producing too many shows about Asian women. "I'm a dark-skinned Indian woman, and I always had friend groups that were diverse. I had never seen that done on TV," she says. "You think, 'Oh man, that feels really niche.' What I found is that my two biggest hits were these two shows about cliques of young, diverse women. People find universality in those situations. I will never underestimate audiences again."

KALING INTERNATIONAL IS DEVELOPING projects about subjects other than teen girls in part to prove its range, including a comedy about a female L.A. Lakers executive, adaptations of the books *Good in Bed* and *Gold Diggers*, a Scooby-Doo spin-off centered on Velma, and an Indian wedding movie starring Priyanka Chopra Jonas. But Kaling chafes at the implication that stories about women's emotional drama are indulgent. "Women are conditioned to think about female content as tinged with shame, whereas a guy will just be like, 'I freaking love Middle-earth,'" she says. "I love Lord of the Rings too, but that's never categorized as a guilty pleasure. My shows are, even by the women who are fans of them."

Still, Kaling believes writing about BIPOC women gives her an advantage over other TV shows. Despite *The Office*'s enduring

#### 'I will never underestimate audiences again.'

popularity—it was the most popular streamed show in 2020—Kaling doesn't think anyone would greenlight the series today because networks are "squeamish." She believes it's obvious that the sometimes racist, sexist, homophobic Michael Scott is not an aspirational figure.

"One of the great things about writing comedies with women of color is that the characters are not oppressors," she says. "They're largely people who have been oppressed. So they can say much more."

Kaling admits she should be more worried about crossing a line with her jokes in a moment when many comedians are wringing their hands over those strictures. But she approaches writing with the same brazen confidence as everything else she does. At the end of our interview, Kaling thanks me for not asking her whether she experiences impostor syndrome, a question she apparently gets a lot. "I don't see anyone asking Mike Schur or Aaron Sorkin if they have impostor syndrome," she says, of her male counterparts. "I worked at *The Office* for eight years doing 24 episodes a year. If I had impostor syndrome after that training, I'd be pathologically underconfident." — With reporting by JULIA ZORTHIAN

#### **GREEN MOUNTAIN POWER**

#### **KEEPING THE LIGHTS ON**

The future of energy resilience is now on display in Panton, Vt., where local utility Green Mountain Power last summer activated an innovative renewable-powered "microgrid" designed to keep the town's lights on even if power is cut off from the company's main network by, say, a falling tree's knocking down a power line. Other utilities around the country in states like California are pursuing similar projects as they brace for worsening storms, wildfires, and other climate threats. The goal, says Green Mountain Power head of innovation Josh Castonguay, is to develop systems to help make communities more resilient; the company is also working with residents to install backup home batteries to ensure a steady supply of power.

--- Alejandro de la Garza

#### **BICYCLE HEALTH**

#### DEMOCRATIZING RECOVERY

More than 78,000 Americans died of opioid overdoses last year, while more than 40% of U.S. counties lack a single opioid use disorder (OUD) practitioner. Bicycle Health, which delivers OUD treatment via telemedicine, attempts to fill that void virtually. It offers medication management, support groups, at-home drug testing, and more for \$199 per month. Bicycle's revenue grew 600% year-over-year in 2021, and is nearing \$10 million; the company has treated 14,000 patients since early 2019.

—Leslie Dickstein

#### **OPENSEA**

#### FUELING THE NFT FRENZY

With over \$14 billion in transactions in 2021—646 times the previous year's total—OpenSea has cemented its status as the world's most popular marketplace for nonfungible tokens (NFTs), the blockchain-based technology that makes it possible to claim ownership over digital art, data, and more. "Beyond art and creative work, the use cases for NFTs are expanding to event ticketing, gaming, music, and fashion," says CEO and co-founder Devin Finzer. "It's possible that one day, nearly everything we own will be accounted for on the blockchain." OpenSea's meteoric riseit now has more than 1 million usershasn't been entirely smooth; it's working, for instance, to clamp down on people selling other artists' intellectual property.

#### **REC ROOM**

#### A VIRTUAL PLAYGROUND

With nearly every tech exec suddenly talking about the metaverse, Rec Room has been thrust into the limelight. Thirtyseven million players use the company's social virtual reality app to create and share a huge variety of games and other digital experiences, making it one of the biggest, most varied, and earliest examples of what's possible in the metaverse. "The platform has become a place where people can come together to form meaningful connections, build communities, and share their creativity," says CEO and co-founder Nick Fajt.

#### **TOGETHER LABS**

#### **METAVERSE MONEY**

Social platform IMVU has long been a big player in the metaverse game, with 7 million monthly users. Last year, parent company Together Labs took things a step further with the launch of VCOIN, a blockchain-based cryptocurrency that users can spend within IMVU or convert to real-world money. VCOIN, the only active cryptocurrency for which the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission has issued a no-action letter (giving it legal stability), creates the "building blocks" for other metaverses to establish their own future cryptocurrencies, says Together Labs CEO Daren Tsui. — J.Z.

#### THE SANDBOX

#### A DIGITAL LAND GRAB

Real estate is almost always a hot investment-even, it seems, in the metaverse of the Sandbox, a blockchainbased virtual world that has sold at least \$2 billion of digital "land." Of the Sandbox's 2.1 million users. 19,000-a number that's up 375% yearover-year--- "own a piece of that new world and are contributing to building it," says co-founder Sebastien Borget. Big brands and celebs are getting in on the action too: in February, Gucci bought Sandbox land for an undisclosed sum to build an interactive shopping experience, while Snoop Dogg sold thousands of playable avatars for about \$475 a pop.

—Simmone Shah

#### —J.L.

# **MARIANA MATUS**

#### **BIOBOT ANALYTICS**

#### **Tracking COVID-19**

Despite cutting-edge vaccines and treatments, one of the most effective ways to stay on top of COVID-19 surges relies on a decidedly basic entity: human waste. Biobot, co-founded by Massachusetts Institute of Technology biologist Mariana Matus and urbanstudies researcher Newsha Ghaeli, is the first company to analyze human waste—which can provide an early warning of an impending spike in COVID-19 cases—on a commercial basis. Its technology, which can detect pathogens as well as other substances of interest (like opioids), is now in use at more than 700 sewage sites serving more than 100 million people.

—Alice Park

#### OXFORD NANOPORE **TECHNOLOGIES**

#### TAKING GENETICS MOBILE

Genomic sequencing—the process of identifying the genetic makeup of a given organism—traditionally requires bulky, expensive lab equipment. Not so with Oxford Nanopore Technologies' sequencers, some of which cost as little as \$1,000 (affordable, as these things go) and are small enough to slip into a pocket. The devices allow for fast results in nearly all settings, making them a key tool in the fight to identify and stop the spread of new COVID-19 variants. They may be especially impactful in the developing world, where sequencing efforts are often hamstrung by limited access to technology and other resources.

—Jamie Ducharme

#### IONQ GOING QUANTUM

Quantum computing stands to revolutionize industries from medicine to energy and beyond, but setting up such systems can be complicated and costly. IonQ is addressing that problem by offering clients access to quantum computing as a service, compatible with existing cloud providers. It's currently working on research with partners like Goldman Sachs and GE Research, and in October the company, under CEO Peter Chapman, became the world's first publicly traded quantum-computing firm via a \$2 billion IPO. -J.L.

#### **REDWOOD MATERIALS**

#### **CLEANER EVS**

Fifteen years after co-founding Tesla, **JB Straubel** launched Redwood Materials to reduce the environmental damage of battery production by using recycled components and shortening supply chains. All told, it'll soon be able to reduce the carbon footprint of the average EV battery by more than 40%. In the past five years, the \$3.7 billion company has become the largest U.S. recycler of lithium-ion batteries, and has deals with major companies in the electric-vehicle space, like Ford and Panasonic.

—Alejandro de la Garza



#### TREK BICYCLE

#### **PUSHING CHANGE**

Bicycles are plenty eco-friendly, but building and shipping them still exacts a toll. Trek Bicycle in July became the world's first major bicycle manufacturer to quantify that toll, publishing a sustainability report that found that producing and shipping each bike emits the same amount of carbon energy as an average car driving 430 miles. It now plans to reduce its reliance on air freight, use more sustainable materials, and consolidate shipments. The company's hope, says president **John Burke**, is that "other companies in the bike business can do the same thing." —*Nik Popli* 

#### **BLOCPOWER**

#### **ELECTRIFYING CITIES**

When Ithaca, N.Y., decided last year to embark on the unprecedented project of decarbonizing all 6,000 buildings in town, it turned to BlocPower, a climate startup that retrofits buildings in low-income neighborhoods with solar panels, electric heat pumps, and other emission-reducing tech. "We can turn a building into a Tesla and make it all electric," says CEO **Donnel Baird**, who counts Goldman Sachs and the Microsoft Climate Innovation Fund among his company's backers. If it's successful—the goal is a 40% emissions reduction—other cities will likely follow suit. —Don Steinberg



#### FOLX HEALTH

#### **INCLUSIVE HEALTH CARE**

Most LGBTQ+ Americans have experienced health care discrimination, and many are unable to access the medical services they require. Telemedicine provider FOLX Health, which specializes in LGBTQ+ health and wellness and is run by CEO **Liana Douillet Guzmán,** aims to fix those issues. The company's plans, which start at \$59 per month and are available in 33 states, include everything from primary care to medication management, with prescriptions delivered discreetly to maintain users' privacy. —*Mariah Espada* 

#### **OPENAI**

#### **PUSHING AI FORWARD**

Cutting-edge artificial-intelligence firm OpenAl recently unveiled two new neural networks, DALL-E and CLIP, which generate images and categorize visual input, respectively, based on natural language. When prompted with "avocado chair," for example, DALL-E designed fruit-inspired seats, some with pit-shaped pillows. Unlike deep learning models that "learn" by analyzing simple data, DALL-E and CLIP grapple with sophisticated concepts lacking obvious answers. "[They have] a richer understanding of the world," says OpenAl SVP Mira Murati. —Alison Van Houten

#### BE ROOTED

#### STATIONERY PROGRESS

When Jasmin Foster founded her inclusivity-focused stationery brand Be Rooted in early 2020, she hoped to create a space for women of color to see themselves in a place they hadn't been before. Just one year later, Be Rooted became the first and only Black-owned stationery brand for sale at retail giant Target. With a lineup of colorful journals, planners, and writing instruments all designed by Black and brown artists and featuring a range of skin tones and hair stylings, Be Rooted is bringing a little more creative diversity into the world.

—N.P.

#### **ASTROSCALE**

#### TRAPPING SPACE JUNK

Low earth orbit is a mess, with a belt of debris presenting a risk of collision with spacecraft. Tokyo-based Astroscale is developing technology to collect the junk and send it on an incineration plunge through the atmosphere. Last year, the company launched a two-part satellite that separated and reconnected by magnets, demonstrating a debris-gathering technique. The company wants future satellites to carry magnetic docking ports to allow for collection. Astroscale's vision, says CEO **Nobu Okada**, is "to make space sustainable." —Jeffrey Kluger

#### WONDERSCHOOL

#### CHILDCARE HELP

At a time when roughly half the U.S. lives in a childcare desert, Wonderschool wants to make it easier to find care. The company works with childcare programs in 32 states, helping them start in-home programs and assisting with billing, enrollment, and curriculum for a cut of their revenue. Solving the childcare crisis is a tall order; Wonderschool CEO **Chris Bennett** acknowledges more government aid is needed because the costs exceed what most parents can pay. But he hopes this is a start: "We want every child to have quality childcare within five minutes of their home." —Katie Reilly



#### AXIOM SPACE

#### STAR TOURIST

The travel industry is extending to low earth orbit, thanks in part to Houston-based Axiom Space, which aims to fly paying customers for stays of up to eight days aboard the International Space Station (ISS). The company also recently inked deals with NASA to build up to four new ISS modules, with the first launching as early as 2024. Before the ISS is retired in 2030, Axiom's modules will separate, becoming their own private station.

—J.K.



by LOREAL

with RIGHT







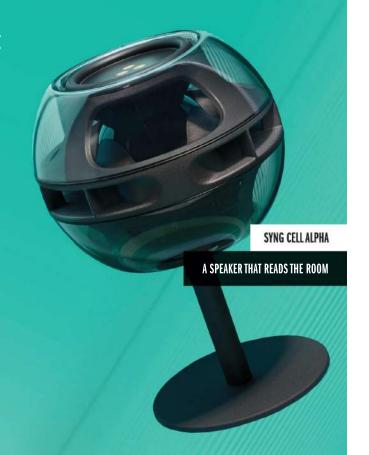


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# Time Off



CRIME SHOWS ABOUND—BUT FEW SOLVE THE MYSTERY OF HUMAN NUANCE

DAVID HYDE PIERCE BRINGS NEW LIFE TO PAUL CHILD IN JULIA ALINE MORPHS THE LIFE OF CÉLINE DION INTO A SURREAL SPECTACLE

N MARCH 2019, THREE MONTHS BEFORE THE PUBlication of Ocean Vuong's novel *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, he called his agent from the hallway of a Hartford, Conn., hospital. "There's no way I can go on tour," he said. "My mother has cancer. It's over."

The first time his mother Hong had gone to the emergency room with terrible back pain, he wasn't with her. The hospital sent her home with an adhesive heat patch. Vuong, who lives in Northampton, Mass., with his partner Peter, went to see her and took her back to the ER; this time, doctors ran tests and returned with a diagnosis: Stage IV breast cancer. It was in her spine, the marrow of her bones.

"When she went herself, she got a heat pad. When I came, with English, she went to the oncology ward," Vuong, 33, tells me. In his voice I hear pain, but no shock: he and his mother experienced many similar moments after arriving in the U.S. as refugees in 1990. "I thought, Here we are again: I have to speak for you. I have to speak for your pain. I have to verbalize your humanity. Because it's not a given. Which is the central problem with how we value Asian American women."

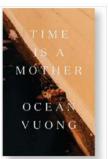
Even as a celebrated poet and author, Vuong knows he can rely on the privilege of being seen and heard only in certain settings. When he went to get his university ID at UMass Amherst, where he teaches, a white woman asked if he spoke English. "She could have looked in my file and seen that I'm an English professor," he says, sounding almost amused. "But I'm not legible until my career makes me legible. When I walk into an event, I am Ocean Vuong doing a reading—I bypass some of the coded veils that Asian Americans are made invisible by, but only in that context. It's an insulated privilege that doesn't extend to other Asian Americans ... to people like my mother, working in a nail salon."

After his mother's diagnosis, he says, "it all just fell away": the tour, the publicity, what the novel would mean for his career. "Who's Ocean Vuong? I don't know. Nobody knows, in the hospital ward. None of the powerful sentences do anything when your mother is dying a few feet away from you."

That June, with his mother's cancer temporarily held at bay by hormone therapy, Vuong was able to tour after all. *On Earth* was an instant New York *Times* best seller. The writer Rebecca Solnit recalls a rapt crowd at an event they did together. "Afterward, a young Asian American woman said to me, 'Until Ocean, no one was telling our story.' He knew what the audience needed."

When Vuong was interviewed by Seth Meyers, his mother watched from home, calling him in tears afterward because he'd spoken in Vietnamese at the end. But by September, her cancer had spread, and she was having trouble breathing. She died on Nov. 2.

... stop writing about your mother they said but I can never take out the rose it blooms back as my own pink mouth ...



'It felt like sorcery, a portal to another world that she didn't understand.'

OCEAN VUONG

Vuong worked on his new poetry collection Time Is a Mother while mourning, in a world consumed by the advancing pandemic-"I was grieving, the world was grieving, and the only thing I really had was to go back to poems." The collection bears witness to love, loss, and trauma in a way that may feel especially resonant to readers right now; it reads as a search for meaning and truth in a life remade by grief. He tells me that it is the only book he's written that he is proud of, because he compromised nothing. He thinks that has something to do with losing his mother.

"All the things I'd written, it was all to try to take care of her. I went to school for her, I worked for her—she was the source," he says. "When that was taken away, I didn't have anything else to answer to. And so I finally wrote for myself."

**VUONG WAS 2** when his family fled Vietnam; some of his earliest memories are from their back apartment in a townhouse on Franklin Avenue in Hartford. He can recall everything about those rooms, the sounds and the bodies that filled them, the bedroom he shared with six others. "We had so little," he says, "but I felt safe back then, because I was always surrounded by Vietnamese voices."

He began learning English when he went to kindergarten. In fourth grade, he wrote his first poem, which he was accused of plagiarizing—his teacher didn't believe he could have written it. But after that, he noticed, the teacher began to pay attention to him, occasionally helping him type his assignments on the school computer. "I learned that putting the DNA of my mind on paper had garnered this white man's respect," he recalls. "I felt incredibly dangerous and powerful."

... reader I've plagiarized my life to give you the best of me ...

Vuong tells me he became a writer because he is "full of limitations." He proceeds to list them: he panics easily; he is dyslexic; he finds





paperwork and "the minutiae of life" challenging; he struggled with drug addiction. He believes some of these are responses to trauma, lived and inherited. Another "limitation"? "I can't fake it," he laughs. That's why he left the international marketing program at Pace University in New York City, where he had enrolled in the hope of earning money to help his mother—"a position so many immigrant children are in—we defer our dreams to do the practical thing." He dropped out once he realized that he was learning "how to lie for corporations." "If my heart isn't in something, I can't do it, you know? Maybe that's why I don't have many drafts—by the time I get to the blank page, my heart is already there. That's a limitation, in a way, but that's also how I got here."

Ashamed to return home empty-handed, Vuong worked in a café, slept on friends' couches, spent his free hours at the New York Public Library, and enrolled at Brooklyn College to study literature. Poems presented at open-mic nights found their way into early chapbooks. He landed prestigious fellowships and earned an MFA at New York University; published a critically acclaimed poetry collection,

Vuong and his mother at Elizabeth Park in Hartford, Conn., circa 1992

Night Sky With Exit Wounds; won a Whiting Award and a MacArthur "genius" grant. Vuong calls his career "serendipitous at every turn," but it's also clear that there were many points when he could have given up on his writing and didn't.

His work could sometimes be "a touchy subject" with his family, who couldn't fully grasp his life as a poet. He suspects that his mother, who was illiterate, didn't try to read because the struggle might make the distance between herself and her son more explicit. But when he would visit her and read—not his own poems, just a magazine he'd brought with him—she would tell everyone to hush: "Ocean's reading."

"It felt like sorcery, a portal to another world—to success, power—that she didn't understand," he says. "She didn't ask me about it, but she was like, OK, good: Do this, read your books, forever. As long as you're sustaining yourself. You're the first to be able to do this."

When she attended his readings, she would never look at him; she

would position her chair so that she could watch the audience watching her son. "She read them while I was reading my work, and then she would say, 'I understand now. I don't know what you're saying, but I can see how their faces change when you speak. I can feel how it's landing in the world." His voice takes on a hint of the wonder his mother must have felt. "I realized this is something she taught me. As a woman of color, an Asian woman, in the world, she taught me how to be vigilant. How people's faces, posture, tone, could be read. She taught me how to make everything legible when language was not."

**VUONG BEGAN WRITING** the poem he calls "the spine" of Time Is a Mother, "Dear Rose," after finishing the third draft of his novel, partly because it felt important to him to return to poetry. "I thought: What would happen if I tried to rewrite the novel as a poem? I've never believed that you write a book and then you're done. I've always felt that our themes are inexhaustible, and our work is to keep building architectures for these obsessions. Who's to say that one novel, or 35 poems in Night Sky, could exhaust these big questions about love, trauma, migration, American identity, American grief, American history?"

A version of "Dear Rose"—his mother's name means pink or rose—appeared in *Harper's* in 2017, two years before her death. In *Time Is a Mother*, it lives again, with different opening lines:

Let me begin again now that you're gone Ma if you're reading this then you irvived

your life into this one ...

At one point, I share that I also recently lost my mother to cancer, and I know it cannot be easy for him to talk with me about this. He immediately offers his sympathy, noting that we are both "immigrants in this new land of grief." To his mind, death is "the closest thing we have to a universal," and so our love for those we've lost is also a form of common ground.

He isn't new to grief—before his mother died, he lost friends to the opioid epidemic; he lost his uncle to suicide; he lost his grandmother. Writing about "the private deaths," as he calls them, is an extension of the work he's always done: considering the aftermath of trauma, war, displacement, mass death. "As an Asian American coming out of diasporas, you know this: when you look at Vietnamese conflicts, Korean conflicts, you see a lot of corpses that look like yourself," he tells me. "The negotiation with death as self-knowledge is something a lot of Asian writers and writers of color encounter. And so grief might actually be the mode in which I write-not all my poems are mournful, but they're haunted by the inevitability of death, and so the urgency and even the joys that come out of them are through the knowledge of our own end. On good days, that's also how I live," he adds with a small smile, "though sometimes I forget that."

"He's willing to write about difficult things with vulnerability, and with attention to not only expressing what a thing is—whether it's grief or loss or addiction or displacement—but how it feels, and also what a way forward can look like," says author Bryan Washington. "As a queer author of color, I can speak to how difficult that is to do, and how in many ways there is incentive not to do that."

The author Tommy Orange is likewise an admirer. "The beauty of what Ocean does with language is what gets me first," he says, "the marriage of his use of language with the reckoning of an American identity ... the wisdom and compassion in his work matches his craft, and I think that's rare."

**VUONG TELLS ME** that he is proud of this book because he wrote it freely, expansively, honoring all his curiosities and ambitions. "There's more humor, more witticism. There are more registers," he says. "This book is all of me—I'm fully here. That feels kind of like a death in itself, as well as a celebration ... Have I stopped growing? Is this my plateau?"



But soon we're talking about his teaching, his writing practice, new things he wants to try. He's showing me his favorite Japanese notebook and explaining why he writes by hand: "If you want to write a sentence, you'll arrive much faster with a computer. With the hand, by the time you get to the end of a sentence, or maybe somewhere in the middle, you find yourself hovering-and now there are detours; other ideas come to you. Where else can you go? There's much more you can discover." I suggest that his growth probably hasn't plateaued if he's still pushing, pursuing new discoveries in every sentence, and he nods: "That's the hope."

After he won the Whiting, he thought: *I'm going to buy my mother a house*. Though he can no longer make a physical home for her, he's always thinking about family, chosen and otherwise, and what it means to build a life around them. He tells me

that he and Peter just bought a house in Massachusetts, with room for a crowd: "My brother can move in. When he has kids, they can live there. When my aunt gets old, she can live there. Our friends-most of whom are artists, queer folks of color-can come and just recover." It strikes me as a kind of callback to the community that let him couch-surf when he was a broke young poet, but it's clear he's thinking back further than that, to his early childhood surrounded by family, including his mother, speaking in his mother tongue. "I think I still hope for that in some way," he says. "What do I want my family to look like? What do I want to build in my life with the resources I have? I'd like to build places where people I love can be comfortable and OK. This is what my life has taught me."

Chung is the author of the memoir All You Can Ever Know

#### More mustreads coming in April

#### BY ANGELA HAUPT

#### THE CANDY HOUSE By Jennifer Egan

Egan's 2010 novel A Visit
From the Goon Squad hooked
readers with its imagination
and intellect and won a
Pulitzer Prize. Now, more than
a decade later, many of its
characters return in The Candy
House, which centers on a
new technology, "Own Your
Unconscious," that allows
people to save and share all
their memories. (April 5)



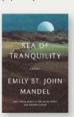
#### OF BLOOD AND SWEAT By Clyde W. Ford

Black Americans have long helped white people get-and stay-wealthy, but instead of their fair share, they've received brutality in return. That's the central argument that Ford, a psychotherapist and the author of Think Black, makes in this deeply researched book. He illustrates the many ways Black labor has been essential to agriculture, politics, medicine, law enforcement, and more, and makes clear that reparations are still due. (April 5)

#### LET'S NOT DO THAT AGAIN

By Grant Ginder

Nancy Harrison is running for Senate, and her biggest obstacles are her adult children, Greta and Nick. Greta is making headlines for hurling a champagne bottle through a Paris restaurant window during a political riot. Nick, who's floundering in his own way while writing a musical based on the works of Joan Didion, accompanies his mother to France to bring Greta home and save the campaign. (April 5)



#### SEA OF TRANQUILITY By Emily St. John Mandel

Sea of Tranquility introduces readers to Olive, the author of a best-selling pandemic novel—a rather meta plot point, given that Mandel herself is the author of the hugely popular pandemic novel Station Eleven. We get to know Olive by jumping from a Vancouver forest in 1912 to the lunar colony she inhabits in 2203. (April 5)



#### TRUE BIZ

By Sara Novic

Novic's second novel takes place at a school for the deaf, where the lives of a headmistress and two students intersect. One of the teens, Charlie, is forced by her parents to get a cochlear implant, a controversial device that helps some deaf people perceive sounds. Her hearing family never allowed her to learn American Sign Language—which is starkly opposite to the experience her classmate

Austin had growing up with deaf parents. When Charlie and Austin go missing, the community is tested. (April 5)



#### **MEMPHIS**

By Tara M. Stringfellow

Stringfellow's moving debut novel follows three generations of a Southern Black family from the 1930s through the early 2000s. When Joan is 10, she, her mother, and her sister flee her violent father and take refuge at a family home in Memphis. It's the same place where, 50 years earlier, Joan's grandfather was lynched after becoming the city's first Black detective. Stringfellow jumps between years and voices to reveal how we pass down trauma and love. (April 5)



#### CONSTRUCTING A NERVOUS SYSTEM

By Margo Jefferson

Pulitzer Prize—winning critic
Jefferson reflects on some of
her most intimate memories.
She combines memoir and
criticism by examining how
Black artists such as Ella
Fitzgerald, lke Turner, Nat King
Cole, and Bud Powell helped
shape her, and how they
impacted race and class more
broadly. (April 12)

#### SISTERS OF MOKAMA

By Jyoti Thottam

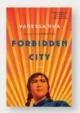
Sisters of Mokama is the inspiring story of six Kentucky

nuns who built a hospital in a destitute part of India in 1947, when diseases like cholera were running rampant. Soon, the nuns opened a nursing school—and the mother of Thottam (a journalist who once worked at TIME) was one of the women who studied there. (April 12)

#### THE TROUBLE WITH HAPPINESS

By Tove Ditlevsen, translated by Michael Favala Goldman

Danish writer Ditlevsen died in 1976, but her legacy endures with this collection of short stories. As its title suggests, this isn't a happy read; it focuses mostly on relationship turmoil. The stories are unsettling but beautifully crafted. (April 19)



#### FORBIDDEN CITY

By Vanessa Hua

In 1960s China, during the violent Cultural Revolution, a fictional teen named Mei is recruited by the Communist Party and drawn into the inner life of the chairman leading the upheaval, becoming his confidant and romantic partner. But when Mei is assigned an important mission, she grows disillusioned, and must make wrenching decisions. (April 19)

#### I'LL SHOW MYSELF OUT By Jessi Klein

Klein delivers a welcome laugh for parents just beginning to emerge from the dumpster fire otherwise known as pandemic parenting. In her second essay collection, the *Inside Amy Schumer* writer grapples with the humiliations and possibilities of midlife and motherhood. (*April 26*)



ESSAY

# Picking the worthy crime show out of a lineup

BY JUDY BERMAN

CRIME MAY NOT PAY, BUT CRIME shows sure do. Especially right now. While the genre has been popular since the midcentury heyday of *Perry Mason* and *Dragnet*, recently it seems as though every TV trend has a kernel of crime at its core: Scammer shows. Mafia sagas. Domestic thrillers. Truecrime documentaries and docudramas. Many of Netflix's biggest global hits—South Korea's *Squid Game*, Spain's *Money Heist*, France's *Lupin*, the U.S.'s *Inventing Anna*—speak the international language of crime.

Procedural franchises, from Law & Order to NCIS, have long been the category's most reliable moneymakers. Yet since the era of The Sopranos and The Wire, pay-TV platforms have been cranking out prestige crime dramas nonstop. Typically a serialized epic with a hefty budget and a recognizable ensemble cast, this kind of show cuts across subgenres, striving for psychological realism and timely social commentary. As the deluge continues, it's worth asking: What makes a great crime show in 2022?

Three series that fit loosely into the prestige crime mold are set to debut in early April. British dramedy The Outlaws follows seven low-level offenders rehabbing a derelict building for community service. Tokyo Vice adapts the memoir of a U.S. journalist who covered the Japanese capital's criminal demimonde in the late 1990s. And 61st Street centers on a lethally mismanaged drug bust on Chicago's South Side. From an aesthetic standpoint, all of these shows are solidly made; the production values are high and the backdrops realistic. What separates them is how much attention each one invests in the human personalities onscreen.

THE MOST TRADITIONAL of the bunch, AMC's 61st Street—like The Wire, American Crime, and The Night Of before it—frames its story as a microcosm of a broken criminaljustice system. Courtney B. Vance stars as an aging public defender with a bad prostate and a creeping suspicion that he's wasted his life fighting

⟨In The Outlaws, low-level criminals find common ground

courts that will always be indifferent to his poor, predominantly Black clients. The show, which premieres on April 10, takes a panoramic view of the sting, inhabiting the perspectives of politicians, gang members, parents, good kids in a rough neighborhood, and clean and dirty cops. People speak more as representatives of groups than as individuals. "Look at me," an officer tells a Black teenager. "You see a blue life that doesn't matter, right?"

Created by Peter Moffat, of *The Night Of* and Showtime's overwrought crime drama *Your Honor*, it's the kind of show that might've broken ground in the early years of the Black Lives Matter movement. Certainly, its themes remain relevant. But its mix of generic hand-wringing over injustice and coincidence-heavy thought-experiment plotting has been done too many times to make much of an impact.

Tokyo Vice, a bilingual action drama arriving April 7 on HBO Max, at least offers a novel setting rendered in pilot director Michael Mann's signature neon-noir style. Ansel Elgort plays Jake Adelstein, the first foreigner ever hired as a reporter by Japan's most widely read newspaper, Yomiuri Shimbun. Assigned to the police beat, he stumbles upon a tantalizing connection between two violent deaths. As an outsider, he's too conspicuous to blend in, but too cocky and naive about the norms that govern interactions among cops, the media, and various vakuza factions to stop digging when his colleagues might judge it prudent.

A Japanese co-production that's keenly aware of cultural stereotypes on both sides of the Pacific, *Tokyo Vice* mostly avoids the exoticizing gaze that afflicts so many Western portraits of the city. But even if you put aside the sexual misconduct allegations that continue to follow Elgort (the most serious of which he has denied), it's strange to see the preternaturally detached *Baby Driver* star try to play a scrappy upstart journalist. In an overabundant genre where story lines tend to follow the familiar

beats of an investigation, viewers have to care about the hero. And that's tough when his inner life is given minimal attention.

IT STANDS TO REASON, then, that the most promising of the three titles is The Outlaws, a joint BBC/Amazon project coming to Prime Video on April 1 that thrives on its idiosyncratic characters. The show is a spiritual successor to Orange Is the New Black and The Breakfast Club, in that it throws together people who have nothing in common but their shared punishment—and it's refreshingly self-aware about that. "Everyone's a type," teen shoplifter and selfdescribed "studious Asian good girl" Rani (Rhianne Barreto) points out in the premiere. "You've got your right-wing blowhard, left-wing militant, celebutante, shifty old-timer." (The latter, fresh out of prison and eager to make amends with his rightly resentful daughter, is played by a surprisingly subdued Christopher Walken.) Rani's "bad boy" love interest and a nerdy loner round out the crew.

Slowly, in *Orange*-style flashbacks, everyone's story comes out. And even as it pushes forward the plot with genre standbys like gangsters and bags of cash, the show fosters unexpected bonds that stretch the characters' understanding of themselves and one another. This can be hokey, but mostly it's humane, merging the experiences of people from different backgrounds without thoughtlessly equating them.

As far as I'm concerned—even now that franchises reign and episodic budgets can stretch into the tens of millions—it's always the characters that separate a competently made show from one that's actually worth watching. And that applies to crime just as much as it does to any other genre. What would The Sopranos be without Tony, or The Wire without Omar? It's easy to draw in viewers with grit and suspense, or with a premise purpose-built to dramatize contemporary political divisions. More difficult, but increasingly crucial as crime shows multiply, is crafting characters and performances with enough depth to keep us coming back.

#### **OUICK TALK**

#### **DAVID HYDE PIERCE**

On playing the husband of famed TV chef and cookbook author Julia Child on HBO Max's Julia

How familiar were you with Paul and Julia Child's story before filming? I knew nothing about Paul—it was great to dig into his life because he was an endlessly fascinating, complicated man. He was a self-taught painter, a fine furniture maker, an exquisite photographer. And he had his own life in the diplomatic corps. To be obliged to investigate all these pursuits in order to prepare—it was a gift.

Paul represents a departure from a 1960s culture that pressured men to be breadwinners and fulfill other traditional ideals of masculinity. You see that contrast with his father-in-law (James Cromwell), who expects Julia to marry someone "manly." You have this guy who is in some ways very close to Niles Crane, the character I played on Frasier-very sophisticated, knew about wine, knew about food. But he also took on challenges. He had a terrible fear of heights. He went to work on a ship, and when there was a huge storm tossing the ship around, he decided to climb to the top of the mast in hopes it would cure his fear. In fact, it made it worse. Every time he met with resistance, he seemed to just double down.

People familiar with the Childs' story know them as strong, loving partners. But the show still depicts their more complicated moments. There's no such thing as a couple that doesn't fight. The challenge was to imagine situations where there may have been conflict. That's really important, because it shows the depth and strength of the relationship.

Julia had you reunite with your Frasier castmate Bebe Neuwirth, who plays Julia's friend Avis DeVoto. You have a fun, prickly dynamic. What was it like working with her again? We've known each other from New York theater circles for years. There's nothing better than getting to play an antagonistic scene with someone you really love. You trust each other and can just go to town. And there's a wonderful jealousy she and Paul each have about their relationship with Julia.

You've long said you're opposed to the idea of participating in a Frasier reboot. But with the trend of reboots continuing at full steam, is there anything that would bring you back? I hope it happens. In terms of my own involvement, I'm not going to talk about another woman while I'm involved with this one.

-Mahita Gajanan





Lemercier as Aline: the show, and her heart, will go on

MOVIES

#### A cornpone biopic grabs the mic with gusto

BY STEPHANIE ZACHAREK

EVEN WHEN MUSIC BIOPICS WIN Oscars—as the 2018 Freddie Mercury saga Bohemian Rhapsody did-they're still a hard sell with the public these days. Maybe we've had it with stories of ordinary kids who spin their gifts into superstar gold, or with compone conventions like watching an insomniac singer plink out a future hit at the piano. But whether you love or loathe music-biopic clichés, you've never seen anything like Aline, an unauthorized account of the life of Canadian superstar Céline Dion. So broadly sketched it's more a puppet show than a movie, so swollen with sentimentality that it makes the most histrionic Dion ballad seem restrained, so weird in the way it digitally morphs the face and body of a 50-something actor into a sort of AI adolescent. Aline isn't going to win any prizes in the subtlety department. But it's also compulsively, stupidly watchable.

Valérie Lemercier—who also

directed and co-wrote the film-stars as Aline Dieu, the millionth or so child born to a simple couple in a tiny house in Quebec, perpetually nestled among snowdrifts. Aline can sing, and how! At age 12-played by a digitally blurred and shrunken Lemercier, like a hobbit imported from Middleearth—she's taken on by a manager, Guy-Claude (Sylvain Marcel), who helps her believe in herself. When a rude stagehand mocks Aline's notso-pretty face before a performance, Guy-Claude rushes to her side to assure her she's the best and most beautiful of them all. He persuades Aline's protective mother Sylvette (Danielle Fichaud) that her daughter's alarmingly pointy canines must be fixed for showbiz reasons. Teenage Aline, with no friends her own age, falls hard for Guy-Claude; a few years later, their story becomes a romance for the ages. Meanwhile, her career explodes, leading her to the holy grail of music stardom: a Las Vegas residency.

Did Dion's life go down exactly like this? Does it matter? All biopics are works of invention, and if this one is sillier than most, its tinselly excesses at least give it go-for-broke conviction. Aline Dieu, mon dieu! She'll make a believer out of you.

MOVIES

#### HOW NOW, SAD COW?

As more people adopt plantbased diets for health or environmental reasons, or both, a new documentary suggests a third motivation: the belief that animals have souls. Cow, from English director Andrea Arnold (Fish Tank, American Honey), follows the life of a cow on a Kent dairy farm for roughly four years. Arnold's star, Luma, gives birth to a calf in the film's opening: it pops out in a burst of slime. unsure what to make of its first minutes in the world even as our heroine licks it clean, preparing it for whatever might come next.

The answer—if that calf is lucky, which it may not be-is a life of routine and service, of being hooked up daily to a multiarmed milking apparatus, with only infrequent, well-earned frolics in the grass. Luma is a comely black-and-white creature with Maybelline lashes and a freckle near her eye. At first, you're not sure you'll be able to pick her out of the herd. Before long, you're attuned to her every movement. In one remarkable sequence, she challenges the camera to a long stare-down, and wins.

Arnold's documentary, her first, is a work of somber and sometimes harsh beauty, a fine companion piece to Viktor Kosakovskiy's gorgeous 2020 swine song Gunda. Cow doesn't sentimentalize its subject, but does something better: it sees her with respect and clarity. Although we can never really know what animals are thinking, maybe it's enough to know that they are. —S.Z.



Luma may break your heart

ARI

# The artist eL Seed takes calligraphy to the streets

#### BY NICOLA CHILTON

THE DUBAI-BASED ARTIST EL SEED, WHO DRAWS upon Arabic calligraphy's looping and curved shapes to create mesmerizing and often massive installations of wood, metal, glass, and more, believes words are powerful—and that's why he incorporates them into his work. One of his most recent works, for example, took the form of a giant colorful installation of painted fabric across the rooftops of the Nepali village of Giranchaur, which was leveled by an earthquake back in 2015 and rebuilt mostly by local women. "There is nothing between us, nothing at all," read the Arabic script on the piece, which quoted Nepali poet and activist Yogmaya Neupane. "Your eyes have tears, just like my own."

Seven years after opening his Dubai studio, eL Seed, whose projects have appeared everywhere from the favelas of Rio de Janeiro to the Korean demilitarized zone, is at the forefront of that city's vibrant and growing arts community. "What I like about this place is the diversity, and seeing people from different communities, ethnicities, and religions being able to practice and live on their own terms, but in respect of everybody else," he says. His public works can be spotted throughout the city; what he considers his most iconic piece in Dubai, *Declaration*, is a bright pink sculpture outside the Dubai Opera ripe for public engagement. "I invite people to climb on the structure, to walk through it, under it," says the artist.

Born 40 years ago in France to Tunisian parents, eL Seed—a pseudonym referencing the 17th century French tragicomedy *Le Cid*, itself based on an Arabic word, *sayyid*, meaning master—painted his first wall in a Parisian suburb as a teenager in 1998. "A woman saw me from a balcony and was screaming like crazy saying, 'I'm gonna call your mum right now!' I was looking at her like, What's wrong?" he says. "The wall is gray, I bought the paint, I painted an art piece on the wall, I'm making the neighborhood more beautiful."

HIS PROFESSIONAL ART CAREER didn't begin until a decade later when, while working as a business consultant in Montreal, he painted his first piece of Arabic calligraphy as public art. "I felt something was missing from my life. I was dying inside, and I just wanted to paint," he says. "I had this impression that something had been in me



Artist eL Seed in his Dubai studio on Feb. 17 for years and it was just waiting for me to express it," he says. Two years later—on the day before his daughter, now 11, was born—eL Seed quit his day job to dedicate himself to art full time.

Beginning in 2013, eL Seed took up a one-year residency at Dubai's Tashkeel contemporary art and design center at the invitation of founder and director Sheikha Lateefa bint Maktoum bin Rashid Al Maktoum, a member of Dubai's ruling family. It was apparent he would "make work with an impact," says Sheikha Lateefa.

Key to eL Seed's approach, says Sheikha Lateefa, is his thoughtfulness regarding the communities in which he's working. "He is the inventor of the idea, but then uses communities to actually think through what he is making and how it is produced." Indeed, eL Seed says he understands, when making large-scale public art projects, it's essential to get into the mindset that you're working for those who live there, rather than creating whatever you'd like. "You give this feeling of ownership to people, and that's what I love," he says.

TIME's Destination Dubai series is presented by DUBAN
See the video at time.com/DestinationDubai

#### Michelle Yeoh The actor talks about her new movie set in the multiverse, her inspiration for this new role, and how to feel limitless

You're starring in Everything Everywhere All At Once, a title that might also describe your career lately. You just appeared in Shang-Chi, are currently filming American Born Chinese, and have other projects. But the movie is about a laundromat owner who discovers alternate realities and amazing skills. It's a good thing, right? Who would have thought, at my age, to be busier than ever? I'm very, very lucky.

I loved the film. What drew you to this project? When was the last time you saw a woman like this become a superhero? So I immediately said, "I need to meet these two directors Dan Kwan and Daniel Scheinert]." They had me with their passion, the clarity of the story that they were telling. They have very strong women in their lives, basically their mothers, which made sense when it came together. I signed on after I understood where they were coming from. They told me, "Well, you know, Michelle, if you refused to do this movie, we would have to go back and rewrite the whole script again." In their craziness, they really believed in me.

How did you prepare to embody Evelyn? Every time I take on a new role, I have to give her history; I have to know where she's coming from. Because Evelyn is a real character and she deserves her story to be told in its entirety, I kept a diary of Evelyn Wang [starting from] when she left China with the man she loved, much to the dismay of her parents, and her father disowning her because she didn't do what he wanted. She had the American Dream, like a lot of immigrants do, because they are in search of a better life. Hoping for one thing, which was what Evelyn did, they started their laundromat, they started a family, and maybe it's all coming together. But then it's hard. Not everybody is

Did you ever find it hard to keep up with all the different worlds in the multiverse?

There were moments in which I was blessed because as Evelyn Wang, I could look as confused as she is! It was an important journey for the audience as well, because you have no clue what's going on the minute you get dragged into that janitor's closet with this crazy woman—your brain sort of fractures with her.



able to keep it together; not everybody is able to be successful at what they set out to be.

We don't always see films centered around difficult middleaged women, much less sci-fi action comedies like this one. How did you feel taking on a layered character like Evelyn? I love the beauty that she becomes a superhero, that she's allowed to be a superhero. All of us have the superpower in us when we are able to show kindness, because that is a great superpower that will enable us to help the people around us, especially those we love, to find acceptance in ourselves in whatever we're doing.

What does it feel like to have this absurdist comedic role that also uses all your skills as an action star at this time in your career? If after 30-something-odd years being in the business, I can still surprise you, that means I am doing something right. As an actor, that's what you want to do—the last thing you want to do is to be stereotyped or typecast or put in a box. When I approached Evelyn, I was like, "I do not want to be recognized as Michelle Yeoh; I do not want you to see Michelle in any form."

At the beginning, Evelyn feels really limited in her life, but by the end, she realizes that the only limitations are the ones she has been putting on herself. Was there anything that you could relate to within feeling limited or limitless? If you don't feel like you're capable, if you don't think you're capable, then you won't be capable. Because the first person that says no is you—you've already said no. So how are you going to be able to do anything?

—CADY LANG



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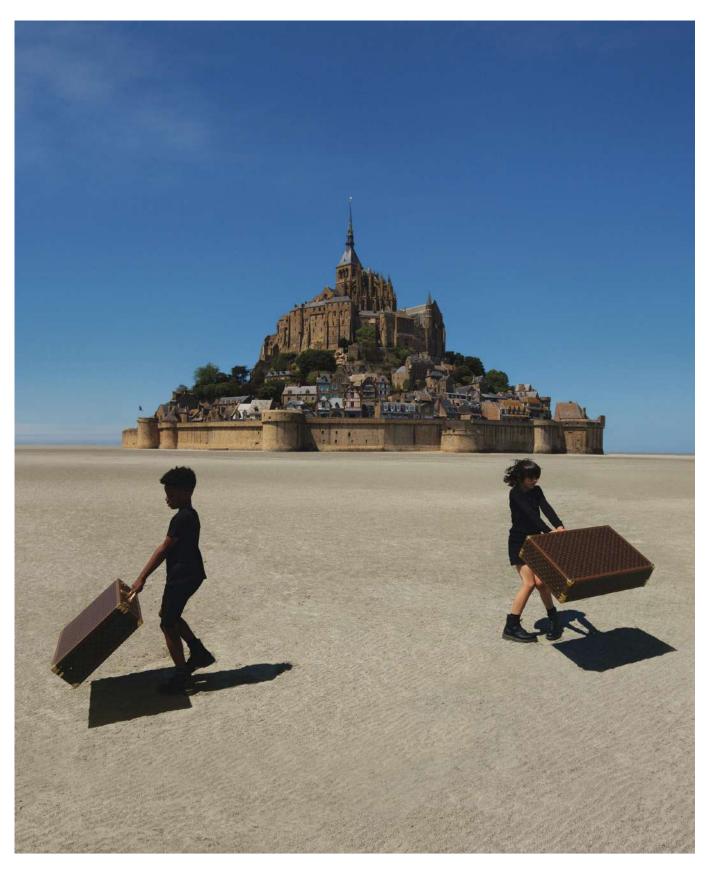
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