THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

"The object of the Monitor is to injure no man, but to bless all mankind."

– MARY BAKER EDDY

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CONTENTS

Going beyond black-and-white narratives

When my teenage daughters heard that we were running a story this week on families embracing landline phones, they had some clear instructions.

Make sure, they told me, to show that this trend is not just for "little kids whose parents don't want them to have actual phones."

After all, my 13-year-old has a cellphone – albeit one that doesn't let her go online or on social media. But one of her favorite gifts this past holiday season was a Flashback phone from the brand Tin Can – a pink replica of the 1980s landline once attached to the wall of my mother's kitchen. (Shoutout to Deputy National News Editor Chelsea Sheasley, who told me about Tin Can after she investigated it for her kids.)

Lydia loves this stationary phone. So do her friends. She loves the ring. She likes writing out her friends' and family members' phone numbers in pencil, on paper. She enjoys slamming the phone down in mock hang-up drama. And she seems to revel in the act of sitting in one place, twirling the cord and talking for hours – all of which would seem odd to me if I didn't remember doing the same when Nirvana wasn't retro.

By Stephanie Hanes
Print Editor

Why? The answer is all about fun, not fear.

Plenty has been written about the dangers of social media; indeed, as Victoria Hoffmann's story on page 38 mentions, a slew of lawsuits this year will detail those concerns in court. But along with a growing movement of parents mobilizing to protect their children, young people are themselves taking control of and interacting with tech in a way that feels right.

This might mean leaving smartphones behind and picking up a landline instead, because it turns out focus can be more enjoyable than distraction. Or it could mean using those smartphones for deeper purposes,such as videotaping protests or monitoring elections. Monitor journalists this week contributed from around the world for our story about residents fighting back against government efforts to block communication – an effort largely led by younger citizens.

Technology, like so many things, is complex. Which leads me to my girls' next instruction. (They don't appear to have qualms about telling me how to do my job.) "Please don't run another everything-is-bad-about-phones story," they said.

We won't. We know that stories become more interesting, nuanced, and compelling when we take a wider view and avoid predictable, overly simplistic narratives. Often, that means finding creativity and resilience, even on our most challenging subjects.▪

Immigration agents to receive body cameras

Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers in Minneapolis will wear body cameras while patrolling, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem announced this month. The practice will expand nationally, she said, "as funding is available."

The move comes amid outrage over the recent fatal shootings of two U.S. citizens by immigration agents – as well as an increasing number of claims that federal immigration agents have killed or injured people as part of their enforcement efforts.

In more than a dozen legal claims reviewed by the Monitor, dated June through December of last year, people said immigration personnel from ICE and the U.S. Border Patrol assaulted or detained them without cause. Claimants left these encounters with bruises, lacerations, and head injuries, the filings said. Almost a dozen people alleged that they were tackled or thrown to the ground. Multiple claimants said that federal personnel pushed their knees into detainees' faces, necks, or backs; one man said agents pepper-sprayed him before repeatedly punching him in the face and head. Most of these claimants are U.S. citizens or are in the country legally.

Firm numbers aren't available from the Department of Homeland Security, but in interviews with six immigration lawyers and civil rights groups, from Massachusetts to Virginia to California, all agreed that they have seen an increase in people accusing immigration agents of using excessive force during the past year.

Many of those complaints have been filed under the Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA), a 1946 statute that provides the only pathway for individuals to sue the federal government for personal injury.

Though few of the cases have won wide public attention, or been adjudicated yet, the lawyers say this increase in claims suggests that excessive use of force is a problem that extends far beyond Minnesota.

The incidents raise complex legal questions about who is liable when federal immigration agents injure members of the public. The federal government and its employees are generally shielded by sovereign immunity from being sued for official acts. That stands in contrast to local and state law enforcement.

"All of this really highlights the lack of federal accountability," says Patrick Jaicomo, a lawyer with the Institute for Justice, a libertarian public interest law firm. "That's a huge problem for a country that holds itself up as one that has a powerful Constitution that is supposed to rein in the worst government abuses."

The Trump administration has consistently defended its tactics. Top officials have argued that immigration officers use only the amount of force necessary to conduct their duties. The administration has also criticized Democrats for rhetoric that, in its view, unfairly demonizes federal law enforcement.

ICE agents "are great, patriotic, men and women, who have families, and who put on the uniform every day, and are following the nation's immigration laws," White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters Jan. 15. DHS has also maintained that its agents face frequent attacks, citing a 1,300% increase in assaults last year compared with 2024. Some news reports have disputed that figure, finding the increase to be closer to 25%.

Exact statistics on the number of FTCA claims filed since Presi-

dent Donald Trump took office are difficult to come by. No central database tracks them. ICE often details the number of FTCA claims it has handled in a given year in its annual reports and congressional budget justifications. But its most recent justification, from last year, does not contain the figures, and the agency has not released an annual report for 2025.

One man in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, alleged in a lawsuit that an ICE agent used a carotid choke hold – a potentially fatal technique that blocks breathing – to subdue him while he was sitting in his car. Homeland Security's policy on use of force prohibits such choke holds unless "deadly force is authorized." Lethal force is allowed only if the officer believes "the subject of such force poses an imminent threat of serious bodily injury" to another person. In a social media post about the incident, DHS did not cite a deadly threat and said the man was "faking" distress. An investigation by ProPublica found at least 40 instances of agents using similar choke holds.

ICE and DHS did not respond to requests for comment for this article. In a statement, the Justice Department said it would "vigorously defend" the president's immigration crackdown from "any number of meritless lawsuits."

– Cameron Pugh / Staff writer

Trump taps Kevin Warsh, a Fed insider and outsider, to lead central bank

With a falling dollar and soaring gold prices, President Trump last month nominated Kevin Warsh to head the Federal Reserve, America's central bank.

It's a key appointment, closely watched around the world. The chairman plays an inordinate role in shaping Fed policy, whether it's overseeing banks or setting interest rates for the country. And as the world's most powerful central bank, its moves on interest rates reverberate globally.

Soon after the announcement, the dollar rebounded, and gold fell as much as 8% to less than $5,000 per ounce.

Mr. Warsh, a former Fed governor, is widely viewed as more likely to stand up to presidential pressure than Mr. Trump's other potential nominees, including top Trump adviser Kevin Hassett, once considered the front-runner for the Fed position.

"Kevin Warsh is not as malleable as Kevin Hassett," says Jeffrey Sonnenfeld, president of the Chief Executive Leadership Institute at Yale University and author of an upcoming book, "Trump's Ten Commandments."

In some ways, Mr. Warsh represents a strange choice for Mr. Trump. For months, the president has publicly pressured the Fed to lower interest rates more quickly to boost growth. Mr. Warsh, often characterized as an inflation hawk, has historically criticized such efforts, preferring to ensure inflation stays in check by keeping rates high.

In a 2010 speech, while a Fed governor, Mr. Warsh emphasized the importance of the central bank's independence from political influence.

In other ways, however, Mr. Warsh, a New Yorker who graduated from Stanford University and then Harvard Law School, represents the kind of maverick outsider Mr. Trump might appreciate at the Fed. For example, he has recently argued that interest rates could fall further if his visions of big reforms for the Fed are implemented.

He is also skeptical of institutional overreach.

As a member of the board of governors during the financial crisis of 2008-09, for example, Mr. Warsh became a valuable aide to Ben Bernanke, then the Fed chair, who made bold and unconventional moves to keep the nation's banks from collapsing.

But Mr. Warsh grew increasingly critical of those moves, especially the Fed's large-scale purchases of federal government and agency debt, known as quantitative easing (QE). A few months after the Fed announced a second round of purchases, known as QE2, Mr. Warsh quit the Fed, having served less than half of his 14-year term.

The central bank has been slow to reduce its portfolio of federal debt. In Mr. Warsh's view, those holdings are distorting the market and should be radically reduced.

The Fed's policy "has been broken for quite a long time," he said last year. He criticized the current chairman, Jerome Powell, for allowing inflation to surge in 2021-22, calling it the "greatest mistake in macroeconomic policy in 45 years."

Mr. Powell's term ends in May. Mr. Warsh, if approved by the Senate, would succeed him.

– Laurent Belsie / Staff writer

Goodbye, granola bars. Hello, whole milk. How MAHA is reshaping school programs.

As the Trump administration forges ahead with its goal to "Make America Healthy Again," officials are aiming to reach U.S. children through the country's public schools, pushing through some already prickly resistance.

Last month, Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins flipped the traditional U.S. food pyramid upside down, shifting the primary focus from whole grains and nutrient-rich foods to protein (including red meat) and full-fat dairy – a move sure to have significant ripple effects on school cafeterias. A week later, President Trump signed the Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act, offering schools more flexibility in meal choices, including whole milk.

And last summer, Mr. Trump also signed an executive order reinstating the Presidential Fitness Test for students, shifting from health-focused metrics back to a more competitive standard.

The MAHA movement, framed as an effort to fight chronic disease, has won some bipartisan support for its focus on getting ultraprocessed foods – such as chips and hot dogs – out of schools. But it's also facing pushback. A number of lawmakers and health experts say some guidelines are scientifically and nutritionally misguided. (This past fall, 15 Democratic governors formed their own public health alliance to set independent standards on public health.) The fitness test also has its critics.

Still, even with headwinds, the Trump administration's new rules are set to move forward, with schools beginning to consider ways to adapt.

School lunches have taken center stage, as supporters argue that the nutritional benefits of more milk fat and protein intake – such

as from eggs and butter – in a balanced diet outweigh concerns about saturated fat.

Supporters say the new legislation also increases school and parent choices.

For example, under the act Mr. Trump signed, schools can serve whole or 2% milk and allow parents to send a note if their child needs a dairy milk alternative, rather than requiring a doctor's sign-off. Under the Obama administration, whole milk was phased out altogether in favor of lower-fat options.

Federal regulators are now stepping in to define "ultraprocessed foods," aiming to create a unified standard that moves beyond varied state regulations. Secretary Kennedy's guidelines call for reduced consumption of chips, candy, and other sugary foods. They also recommend reducing refined carbohydrates, such as white bread, flour tortillas, and crackers.

The new food pyramid has won endorsements from farmers in industries including beef and dairy, which have shown strong financial and political support for President Trump.

But moving from fried chicken nuggets to baked chicken cutlets, from congressional testimony to cafeteria lines, might not happen quickly. To apply guidelines and rules around school meals, the Agriculture Department will have to issue a proposed rule, accept public comment, consider feedback, and then draft a final rule. After that, states and schools will begin making the necessary adjustments. It will take time.

Many school districts, still implementing Biden administration directives that limit the use of sugar, are only now selecting food vendors for the 2026-2027 school year. So, the new pyramid guidelines are unlikely to impact lunch trays for months, if not longer.

But students might taste some differences sooner than that. Starting this fall, flavored milk can't have more than 10 grams of added sugar per 8 ounces. By the end of the 2027-2028 school year, added sugar cannot make up more than 10% of calories a week in breakfast and lunch programs. And schools must reduce sodium by 15% in lunches and 10% in breakfasts beginning July 1, 2027.

In early 2025, as the Trump administration slashed government spending, the USDA cut $660 million from the Local Food for Schools program, which had traditionally helped state agencies buy fresh, local food for school lunch programs. But Mara Fleishman, CEO of the Chef Ann Foundation, a nonprofit focused on school food reform, contends that, for MAHA to be successful, the current average reimbursement of $4.50 per lunch served must be increased.

"Moving districts to serve less processed food is what we're trying to do," she says. "But it requires support. It requires the right equipment. It requires funding."

– Ira Porter / Staff writer

In Costa Rica, crime will be top priority for new president

Costa Ricans elected tough-on-crime Laura Fernández as the country's president earlier this month.

She will take office as concerns rise in the Central American country over drug-related violence linked to trans-national gangs that have expanded across the region.

The administration of her predecessor, Rodrigo Chaves Robles, has seen the most violent years in the country's recent history, with almost 700 homicides by September 2025, outpacing the average of 500 annual homicides between 2016 and 2022. Mr. Robles picked Ms. Fernández as his successor.

During her campaign, the conservative politician pledged to follow the example of El Salvador's Nayib Bukele, whose ironfisted crackdown has reduced crime but raised alarm over human rights abuses. Ms. Fernández's party also holds a majority in the country's legislature.

– Staff

Why Myanmar's 'sham' elections still matter to voters

In January, Myanmar held its first election since a 2021 military coup overthrew the civilian government led by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and plunged the country into civil war.

International election watchdogs have dismissed the election as a sham designed to legitimize continued military rule. Those allegations were bolstered when Myanmar's military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party declared a sweeping victory. Major opposition groups, barred from the ballot, called for a boycott, arguing that participation only entrenched a system built on coercion.

Kyaw Sai, a schoolteacher from Myanmar's Shan state, did not recognize a single name on the electronic voting machine. He pressed a button anyway. "I voted because I was afraid not to," he says.

Still, Mr. Kyaw Sai hopes the election might introduce at least a minimal check on power. That sentiment drives citizens to polling booths in autocracies around the world: elections, though imperfect, have to be better than nothing. "I don't believe this election will bring real democracy, but in a country like ours, even a small opening feels better than complete darkness."

That cautious hope contrasts sharply with Myanmar's broader reality. Since 2021, around 90,000 people have been killed in the country's civil war, and more than a million have been displaced.

Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi remains imprisoned, serving a combined sentence of more than three decades on charges that include alleged election fraud. She denies the accusations, which independent observers say lack credible evidence. Her party, the National League for Democracy, along with other major opposition groups, was barred from contesting the election.

In their place, the military cleared the way for parties aligned with its interests.

Voting was also largely confined to areas that are already under firm military control. Myanmar is currently divided between the military and a patchwork of resistance forces, including ethnic armed organizations and militias aligned with the ousted civilian leadership and its parallel administration, the National Unity Government. In December 2024, analysts estimated the junta controlled only about 21% of the country, while ethnic armed groups and resistance forces held more than 40%.

"The election is a political instrument to shore up the junta's position, not intended to actually increase representation," says Kim Jolliffe, an independent researcher who specializes in security and humanitarian affairs in Myanmar.

– Aakash Hassan / Contributor

Yale is offering free tuition to families making under $200K

Yale University announced that it would offer free tuition to students from families making less than $200,000 a year, following similar moves at schools such as Harvard, the University of Pennsylvania, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Students from families earning less than $100,000 will get completely free rides, including fees and room and board.

One year at Yale can cost more than $90,000.

Administrators at elite schools see this expansion in financial aid as a way to attract more diverse candidates, especially as courts have limited their ability to recruit on the basis of race.

"This strategic investment is central to our mission to educate exceptional students from all backgrounds," Yale Provost Scott Strobel said in a statement. "The benefits are evident as these talented students enrich the Yale campus and go on to serve their communities after graduation."

– Staff

Zimbabwe inflation fell below 10% for first time since 1997

Zimbabwe's inflation rate dropped below 10% for the first time since 1997, a time when the country made headlines for currency collapse and hyperinflation. (Inflation hit 89.7 sextillion percent there in 2008.)

The country introduced its newest currency, the ZiG (Zimbabwe gold), in April 2024. Partially backed by gold and foreign currency reserves, the ZiG initially lost value, but has climbed back along with the global spike in gold values.

As the currency gains strength, more Zimbabwean residents are using it, according to reports. The country's central bank reported earlier this year that the ZiG is used in 40% of daily transactions, compared with 30% around the same time in 2025. Ethiopia and Ghana have also recently wrangled inflation to under 10%.

– Staff

Scientists found fewer forever chemicals in some whales

Although the global production of PFAS, or "forever chemicals," is up, the levels of these substances in North Atlantic pilot whales have fallen by 60% in 30 years, according to a recent study by Harvard researchers. They studied whale tissue in collaboration with longtime research partners in the North Atlantic Ocean's Faroe Islands, according to the university.

Forever chemicals take decades, if not centuries, to break down naturally. Scientists have found them in ecosystems around the world. While regulations may have reduced the levels of older types of these chemicals, scientists caution that newer forever chemicals could be accumulating in ways we don't yet understand.

"Generally, the ocean is thought to be the terminal sink for human pollution on land. But we are not seeing substantial accumulation of the newest PFAS in the open ocean. So, where are they?" senior author Elsie Sunderland, the Fred Kavli Professor of Environmental Chemistry at Harvard's John A. Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, asked in a university interview. "While our results are good news for ocean contamination, it suggests newer PFAS may behave differently from the legacy ones. It underscores the need to place stronger regulations on ongoing PFAS production to mitigate future impacts."

– Staff

OUR WORLD

Train tracks across the Sahara

After braving the Saharan heat for two years, Chinese and Algerian construction workers have installed tracks for Africa's first heavy-freight desert railway in the continent's largest country. As part of China's Belt and Road Initiative, a China-owned construction group built 575 kilometers (358 miles) of the 950-kilometer railway – the largest infrastructure project by a Chinese firm in Algeria, according to Business Insider Africa. It will be used in part to connect Algeria's Gara Djebilet iron reserve with the rest of the country.

– Audrey Thibert / Staff writer

"I want to show the world what Africa is."

That's what American YouTube star Darren Watkins Jr., aka IShowSpeed, declared during his recent whistle-stop tour of the continent. In one frenetic month, the influencer's more than 50 million subscribers watched as he worked as a mascot at the Africa Cup of Nations final in Morocco, received a new name in Ghana, and raced a cheetah in South Africa. While some criticized the tour as a moneymaking gimmick, many praised the star for telling joyful stories about Africa.

– Ryan Lenora Brown / Special correspondent

"If you come after Canada, you are going to have the world coming after you, even more than Greenland."

Retired Canadian Maj. Gen. David Fraser told The Globe and Mail this in late January. U.S. President Donald Trump's remarks in 2025 about wanting to annex Canada prompted its military to draw up models of how it might respond. While defense officials believe the chances of an invasion are remote, the modeling is thought to be the first of its kind in more than a century.

– Sara Miller Llana / Deputy international editor

Now airing: Confessions of corruption

As Chinese leader Xi Jinping purges top generals – a move officially aimed at rooting out corruption – the propaganda apparatus has filled the airwaves with an anti-corruption documentary series. Similar to a U.S. true-crime television show, the series includes disgraced officials confessing to graft and voicing regret. In the third episode, former Hubei Province Communist Party Secretary Jiang Chaoliang says he allowed a businessman to pay for his children's education, buy his nanny an apartment, and, every Chinese New Year, give his mother 20,000 yuan (about $2,878) "in small bills for her mahjong games," according to a report on the series in the state-run Global Times.

– Ann Scott Tyson / Staff writer

MINNEAPOLIS

Native American activism rises in Minneapolis

Support for tribal members has surged among people across the Twin Cities, as Native Americans allege incidents of targeting.

By Sarah Matusek / Staff writer

Earlier in the day, this community room was smudged with burnt sage. Marcella Torrez says the act clears out negativity, leaving only goodness here.

In this Indigenous art gallery-turned-donation site, heaps of hand warmers and water bottles tower around her. Legal observers monitoring federal agents on the frigid Minneapolis streets, and other community members needing a boost, are welcome to partake. For walk-ins, there's a kettle of wild rice soup.

During an immigration enforcement surge to the Twin Cities, Ms. Torrez says she carries her ID from the Red Lake Nation in case of mistaken arrest. While she supports targeting foreigners in the United States who commit fraud, she also thinks the Trump administration is "using that as a cover-up, because they just want all the immigrants out." Meanwhile, U.S. citizens like her are afraid of being stopped and detained, mistaken for immigrants unlawfully here.

All Native Americans born in the United States are American citizens. Congress ensured their birthright citizenship through a law from 1924. Yet allegations from tribal leaders and community members of the targeting and arrest of Native Americans by federal immigration law enforcement – accusations echoed in several states – have amplified fears of racial profiling. Those concerns have made some hesitant to leave their homes, advocates say, while prompting a surge in community support like donations and neighborhood patrols.

In Minnesota, people of Indigenous descent have joined health care workers, clergy, local law enforcement, teachers, students, and postal workers in protesting the federal forces. Outrage escalated over the fatal shootings of two U.S. citizens by federal law enforcement.

The future of Operation Metro Surge, which officials say has deployed some 3,000 federal agents since December, is unclear as of late January. On Jan. 29 in Minneapolis, border czar Tom Homan said the deployment could "draw down" with better federal-local cooperation.

Yet Native American activism will continue, locals say. "We will be there till the end," notes Ms. Torrez, who works for the nonprofit Native American Community Development Institute.

Out on patrol

Beneath the icy sidewalks of South Minneapolis lies the homeland of the Dakota people. They ceded their territory to the U.S. government during the 1800s – a move scholars call coerced. A century later, a federal program uprooted Native American families, who were given modest funds to leave tribal land and live in cities like Minneapolis. By the late 1960s, the American Indian Movement was born here to advocate for community members, denouncing racial profiling and other alleged aggression by police.

In 2020, protests over the George Floyd murder by a local police officer here shook the city, turning violent at times. Native activists convened patrols to "prevent anybody from behaving badly by burning down buildings, breaking in, looting," says Robert Rice, who's owned Pow Wow Grounds, a Minneapolis coffee shop, since 2011.

"We've spent years building this community up, and we didn't want any of our buildings destroyed," says Mr. Rice. More than 35,000 Native Americans are estimated to live in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area.

While some businesses boarded up windows in 2020, Pow Wow Grounds stayed open. And during the current unrest, the café has again extended its hours, serving as a gathering spot for the Native American community. He reports serving some 300 gallons of free soup.

"I'm just here to make sure people are fed," says Mr. Rice, an enrolled member of the White Earth Nation. "I'm just a spoke on this wheel. And the wheel is the community."

Patrols that began during the American Indian Movement have revived. Khaloni Freemont, an enrolled member of the Omaha Tribe of Nebraska, says she's a fourth-generation AIM Patrol participant, now part of a group keeping watch for federal agents around businesses and schools.

"We try our best just to make sure everybody's safe," she says, standing outside the coffee shop with her red beret.

The 2020 riots made Vin Dionne, of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, realize how "disconnected we were," he says.

"We used to be split up ... and we would all fight and hate each other," says the co-founder of the Indigenous Protector Movement. But amid the unrest six years ago, "we all came together in a greater purpose ... as protectors and guardians of the community."

As fellow patrollers reunite now, says Mr. Dionne, "We're fighting with whistles." That sound signals the presence of federal agents.

Local businesses are taking other precautions. Since the killing of Renee Good by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer on Jan. 7, Pow Wow Grounds has kept its door locked, even during business hours.

"We're not going to allow ICE in our building," says Mr. Rice, at least not without a warrant signed by a judge. Since last year, however, ICE has told some officers that those judicial warrants – long considered a constitutional protection – aren't needed for arrests at homes, The Associated Press recently reported.

Fear of racial profiling by immigration officers is rampant in the

Twin Cities, including among Somali Americans who say they've been wrongfully detained. The concern about immigration enforcement extends nationwide, too, with many Americans carrying their U.S. passports when they leave the house.

Federal officials deny claims of racial profiling, saying some arrests result from people obstructing operations. The Supreme Court, in an emergency order last year, affirmed that characteristics like ethnicity, combined with other factors, could justify investigative stops.

"Our agents are properly trained to determine alienage and removability," said Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Tricia McLaughlin in a statement. "If and when we do encounter individuals subject to arrest, our law enforcement is trained to ask a series of well-determined questions."

Still, fear of arrest is leading Native locals to new precautions – like applying for tribal IDs.

Carrying tribal identification

One block east of the café, the Minneapolis American Indian Center also keeps its front door locked. Brian Joyce points out cameras throughout the community center and outside.

"Everybody who wants to come in, we take a look at them first," says Mr. Joyce, a program director at the center and an enrolled member of the White Earth Nation. "We have reports of people getting kidnapped off the street, pulled into vans, harassed."

Vicki Alberts, a Spirit Lake Tribe spokesperson, drove down from North Dakota last month to help people apply for tribal IDs. She says more than 80 ID applications have been collected so far. Over 600 Spirit Lake tribal members live in Minnesota.

"Our tribal nations and leaders are doing their best to help put their tribal members at ease, because it's a really unprecedented time," she says.

One day in January, Idalis Shaw, a warehouse worker, sits for his ID photo. Brown people like him are intimidated to go to the corner store, he says. "You're scared a car is going to pull up in front of you, and masked men with guns are going to point them at you, and detain you."

No federal law requires U.S. citizens to carry ID at all times. While IDs issued by sovereign tribal nations don't always signify U.S. citizenship, they "should be enough" to rebut suspicion that the cardholder is here unlawfully, says Beth Margaret Wright, a senior staff attorney at the Native American Rights Fund, which provides legal assistance to Native Americans nationwide.

She recommends carrying identification, and that tribal nations consult directly with the Department of Homeland Security, which includes ICE. Some tribal nations are already in those consultations, explaining what those cards look like and how they're valid federal IDs, she adds.

Indigenous actor Elaine Miles told reporters last year that an ICE official in a Seattle suburb had called her ID "fake," though it was issued by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation in Oregon. Ms. McLaughlin of DHS says Ms. Miles wasn't arrested while ICE encountered her during a targeted traffic stop, and said the claim that ICE questioned the tribal ID is false.

DHS also has "not been able to verify" claims of its law enforcement arresting or encountering members of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, says Ms. McLaughlin. The tribal nation had amplified claims that some members were detained in the Minnesota surge.

Elsewhere, the Navajo Nation said it has received reports of "sometimes traumatizing" encounters with federal agents seeking unauthorized immigrants in the Southwest.

President Donald Trump in recent weeks appeared to condition support for a tribe, at least in part, on its embrace of immigration enforcement. Mr. Trump in December vetoed a bill that would expand a reserved area for the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida and said the tribe had "sought to obstruct reasonable immigration policies." The tribe has protested "Alligator Alcatraz" – a controversial immigrant detention site in Florida – and joined a lawsuit against the state and federal government alleging a lack of environmental review for the site.

"People always come out for each other"

Back at the gallery, Zach Pint walks in with packages of toilet paper and boxed pasta. He says his 10-year-old son proudly bagged up the donations. A tech worker from south of Minneapolis who is not Native American, Mr. Pint says he was moved to help people he considers targeted by the "police state we're living in." In Minnesota, he says, "People always come out for each other."

He hands off the goods to a smiling Ms. Torrez, who adds them to a pile. Outside, more locals with Indigenous roots stand around a firepit. Smoke singes the ice-cold air.

"We've been fighting immigration since 1400," one man says.

▪ *Victoria Hoffmann contributed research from Boston.*

NUMBERS IN THE NEWS

63

Percentage of U.S. adults who say they have volunteered their time to a religious or nonprofit organization within the past year. That is up 7 percentage points from a pandemic-era low in 2021.

7

Japanese American soldiers who were posthumously promoted to officer ranks, in late January, after their deaths eight decades ago while fighting for the U.S. during World War II. They were cadets, on track to become Army officers, when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor.

2

The number of Chinese pandas that left Tokyo's Ueno Zoo in late January. Twins Xiao Xiao and Lei Lei were the last Chinese pandas in Japan. Their departure leaves Japan with no pandas for the first time in 50 years and signals rising tensions between the two countries.

83

Countries that have ratified the High Seas Treaty, an international pact to safeguard marine life. The agreement, which became law in January, creates protected zones in international waters and requirements for new ocean industries.

7

Percentage increase in the share of Latin Americans who are religiously unaffiliated in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru over the past

decade. The percentage of adults who identify as Catholic in these countries has fallen by 15%, on average.

– Audrey Thibert / Staff writer

Sources: Pew Research Center, Gallup, The Associated Press, The New York Times

EDUCATION

AUSTIN, TEXAS

How a 'caring campus' is keeping students in college

Colleges of all types are adding services to help students meet basic needs. It's about enrollment math, but also about building community.

By Kelly Field / Contributor

The food pantry at Austin Community College's Highland campus was busy, with a steady stream of students stocking up on essentials. Many items had posted limits – one cabbage, two onions, three potatoes – but zucchini were in abundance. "Take more," the cashier urged the shoppers, some stopping in between classes.

And they did.

With 3 in 5 American undergraduates reporting food or housing insecurity, a new model of support has taken hold on college campuses. From Harvard University to Hostos Community College in New York City to the University of Minnesota, schools are offering food pantries, emergency grants, and transportation help. It is a matter of survival – for students and colleges.

It's also a significant expansion of colleges' traditional role.

"Some people look at these efforts and wonder, 'Why would a college provide this?'" says Marisa Vernon-White, vice president of enrollment management and student services at Lorain County Community College in Elyria, Ohio. "They ask, 'Isn't your job education and workforce training?'"

But Dr. Vernon-White and others say it's in colleges' best interest to see their roles more broadly. Students who lack resources – who have to skip meals or hunt for a place to sleep – often drop out, costing colleges millions in unrealized revenue at a time of declining enrollment and shrinking public funding.

Colleges that have committed to addressing students' basic needs report improvements in retention and narrower achievement gaps.

In the six years since Lorain County Community College opened an Advocacy and Resource Center, the share of students graduating on time has risen 15 percentage points, to roughly 40%.

How we got here

A college education has traditionally provided a golden ticket to the middle class, a stepping stone to higher pay, better job prospects, and a more secure future. But its price tag keeps rising. And student aid isn't keeping pace. Fifty years ago, the federal Pell Grant covered three-quarters of the cost of attending a four-year public college. Today, it covers less than a quarter.

The result: A growing number of students are struggling to afford food or housing, especially at community colleges, which serve 40% of undergraduates. About 14% of students report experiencing homelessness, according to a survey by The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs at Temple University in Philadelphia.

Such statistics have spurred colleges of all types – including elite schools trying to help break cycles of generational poverty – to create a range of basic support services. Some even help students apply for food stamps and other public benefits. It's partly about the math. But it's also about building community.

An early leader in the culture of care

Few college leaders have tackled student poverty as systemically as Russell Lowery-Hart, chancellor of Austin Community College, a large public college district with 11 locations across central Texas.

Before coming to Austin in 2023, Dr. Lowery-Hart was president of Amarillo College, a community college in the Texas Panhandle. There, he built a "Culture of Caring" that has been studied by researchers, replicated by colleges, and credited with raising Amarillo's graduation rate 13 percentage points during his tenure.

"Our students are an $88 emergency away from dropping out," Dr. Lowery-Hart said on Community College Podcast. "We have to help our students with their basic need barriers if we are going to help them with their learning and their degree completion."

Now, as Dr. Lowery-Hart takes his model to Austin Community College, a district with more than four times as many students as Amarillo, the movement he launched a decade ago feels more established and yet more vulnerable than ever.

These days, most colleges – public, private, two-year, and four-year alike – provide students with some basic needs support. Some – mostly wealthier four-year programs – also offer scholarships that help cover room and board.

In Congress and state legislatures, lawmakers from both political parties are raising alarms about student hunger and homelessness, and introducing legislation to expand basic needs support.

Yet many of the basic services colleges offer – running on an average budget of just $12,000 – are understaffed and underfunded. And future resources may become scarcer, as state legislatures, forced to shoulder more of the costs of public benefits programs such as Medicaid, scale back spending in other areas.

A vision of care

When Dr. Lowery-Hart first introduced his vision of love-centered leadership to Amarillo's general assembly in 2015, many faculty were skeptical, he recalls.

Back then, most college leaders were still in the dark about the scope and impact of homelessness and hunger on their campuses, says Katharine Broton, a researcher and professor studying basic needs insecurity at the University of Iowa. Some college presidents would even insist they didn't have hungry and homeless students.

"I had people say flat out, 'I don't believe it. I think students are lying," Ms. Broton says.

In 2015, she and her colleagues at the Wisconsin HOPE Lab, a predecessor to the Hope Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, published their first survey of basic needs insecurity among community college students. It helped awaken college leaders to the struggles many students were facing.

A decade later, most readily acknowledge that hunger and homelessness are big issues that affect student retention.

But not everyone is convinced that cash-strapped colleges should be responsible for solutions. Skeptics argue that colleges aren't set up to serve as social service agencies and caution about the costs

of "mission creep."

Pinning improvements in student outcomes on food and housing support programs is tricky; some of the growth seen at colleges like Lorain and Amarillo might be due to other factors. It's also possible that students who seek help are more motivated or resilient than those who don't, and thus more likely to persist in college, regardless of the support they receive.

Though some studies have found links between specific interventions and improvements in grades or retention, rigorous research on this topic is rare.

Still, both Dr. Vernon-White and Dr. Lowery-Hart say basic needs programs have helped reduce dropout rates at their schools.

Under Dr. Lowery-Hart's leadership at Amarillo, from 2014 to 2023, the on-time completion rate nearly doubled, moving from 15% to 28%. In 2019, the school projected a 16-to-1 return on its $300,000 investment in basic needs, counseling, and legal support, driven by higher retention rates and increased revenue.

Making it easier to seek help

But convincing students to use those supports isn't always easy.

For Luz Martinez, 46, it took hitting rock bottom before she sought help.

It was the winter of 2024, and Ms. Martinez was in her first year of a radiology technician program at Cañada College in Redwood City, California. Her mother had recently died, and she was sleeping in a friend's living room with her teenage daughter. She knew something had to change.

"My daughter was watching me struggle," she recalls, tearing up. "I didn't want her thinking 'That's just life.'"

Barely half of students who struggle with food and housing insecurity seek support, according to a recent Hope Center survey. Researchers attribute the low uptake to stigma, limited awareness of available services, and inconvenient hours and locations.

To normalize help-seeking, colleges like ACC's Highland campus are creating food pantries that resemble grocery stores, with baskets and checkout lines.

They're also establishing "basic needs centers" where students can access multiple services in one location, at more convenient times. Some, like Cañada College in California, are placing the support centers midcampus and encouraging students to stop by.

Ms. Martinez eventually made her way to that center, where a coach helped her apply for a housing scholarship and get her finances in order. She graduated last spring and passed her state licensing exam in the fall.

These days, Ms. Martinez is no longer spiraling down, she says. "I'm spiraling up."

Poverty at affluent colleges

Basic-needs insecurity affects students across all institution types. Still, it's often hidden at wealthier colleges, where studying and socializing are structured around expensive food and coffee, said Nathan Alleman, co-author of "Starving The Dream: Student Hunger and the Hidden Costs of Campus Affluence."

Though many schools offer food pantries, they tend to be tucked in a quiet corner of campus, says Sarah Madsen, assistant professor of higher education at the University of South Alabama and one of the book's co-authors. That's partly out of concern for student privacy, Dr. Madsen says, and partly because colleges want to project an image of affluence to prospective students.

Less selective schools are more likely to treat basic needs services as a selling point. At the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, for example, tour guides escort families to the Essential Needs Center, allowing them to see what student care looks like.

A tradition of caring for student well-being

The idea that colleges have a moral responsibility to care for the whole student didn't start with Dr. Lowery-Hart. Jesuit colleges have long been grounded in the values of *cura personalis* (meaning "care for the whole person" in Latin), says Zachary Reese, an assistant professor of psychology at the University of San Francisco.

As chancellor, Dr. Lowery-Hart has quadrupled the district's emergency aid budget and ensured that every campus has a food bank. He has hired students as secret shoppers to test campus services and tasked the school's faculty, staff, and students with designing ways to support students' basic needs.

Along the way, he's discovered that leading a system comes with more resources – and more bureaucracy.

But Dr. Lowery-Hart remains optimistic. In the two years since he arrived at ACC, the share of students who stay enrolled between fall and spring semesters has climbed by 23%. And he's confident that the caring campus movement will continue to grow, despite its challenges.

After all, "It doesn't just make moral sense" for colleges to invest in their students' basic needs, Dr. Lowery-Hart says, "it makes financial sense, too."

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THE EXPLAINER

When can federal law enforcement use force, and how is it investigated? 3 questions answered.

Fatal shootings of two U.S. citizens in Minneapolis put spotlight on policies and constraints.

By Henry Gass and Victoria Hoffmann / Staff writers

The deaths of Renee Good and Alex Pretti in Minneapolis have raised questions around the constraints on the use of lethal force by federal law enforcement officers in an American city and how fatal shootings are investigated.

On Jan. 7, Jonathan Ross – an officer with Immigration and Customs Enforcement – shot Ms. Good through the window of her car as she started driving away. On Jan. 24, officials with Customs and Border Protection shot Mr. Pretti after tackling him as he filmed their actions with his cellphone. The government has said those involved in the shootings acted in self-defense.

The shootings, recorded in real time by bystanders on their

cellphones, spread quickly on social media. The videos appear to contradict statements from Trump administration officials that the two U.S. citizens engaged in acts of "domestic terrorism," and sparked protests in cities across the country.

President Donald Trump dispatched his "border czar," Tom Homan, to Minneapolis in late January to de-escalate tensions. On Jan. 29, Mr. Homan raised the possibility of a drawdown of federal law enforcement, based on stronger immigration enforcement cooperation with local authorities. He noted that federal agents who don't uphold standards of "integrity, professionalism, and compassion" will be "dealt with." That followed calls from an increasing number of Republican lawmakers for impartial investigations into the two incidents.

Q: When is the use of lethal force acceptable, and when is it not?

The use of lethal force – by state, federal, or local officers – is governed by the Fourth Amendment, which protects individuals from unreasonable searches and seizures. U.S. Supreme Court rulings have defined the use of lethal force as "seizure," meaning it can be legally justified in certain circumstances.

Two Supreme Court cases defined that standard. Tennessee v. Garner (1985) set the precedent that an officer may not use deadly force on a suspect who is fleeing, unless the officer is under a direct threat.

Building upon the precedent, Graham v. Connor (1989) held that an officer's actions are assessed based on "objective reasonableness," considering what an officer's most reasonable judgment would be in the moment without the benefit of hindsight.

Justice Department guidelines for its officers state that they "may use force only when no reasonably effective, safe, and feasible alternative appears to exist and may use only the level of force that a reasonable officer on the scene would use under the same or similar circumstances." (All federal law enforcement agencies were required beginning in 2022 to adopt guidelines that match or exceed DOJ policy.)

The use of deadly force requires that the officer is facing a threat to their life in that specific moment, not merely weighing the potential of a future threat, attempting to flee, or engaging in a verbal altercation, according to Brandon Garrett, a professor at Duke University School of Law.

Cases in which lethal force is deemed unusual occur if the officer violates safety protocol, such as not identifying themselves as law enforcement, using force against a fleeing suspect, firing warning shots, or placing themselves directly in harm's way. Using lethal force is reliant upon an officer's assessment of whether a subject will cause legitimate harm.

In the two Minneapolis cases, administration officials have argued that the officers did face imminent threats. Ms. Good was behind the wheel of a car and had started driving. Mr. Pretti had been lawfully carrying a concealed handgun, which made him more of a threat to the CBP officers, administration officials have argued.

"You can't walk in with guns," President Trump said Jan. 27.

But if a law enforcement officer is feeling threatened, there are still steps that they're supposed to take before using lethal force.

"Lots of people have cars. Lots of people are allowed to have firearms in this country. Just because the person has a weapon does not mean that they pose a deadly threat to you," says Professor Garrett. "You absolutely are supposed to use verbal warnings and assess whether the person actually poses a deadly [threat]. ... It can't just be preventative."

Q: Are there differences in the application of lethal force between federal and local law enforcement agencies?

While all law enforcement officers are subject to the Fourth Amendment, accountability and training policies vary by agency. It's unclear, however – given events in Minneapolis so far – how those policies vary and the extent to which they're being followed.

At a City Council meeting in West St. Paul, police Chief Brian Sturgeon told his constituents that ICE has "a different playbook."

"They have a playbook that I am not trained in," he added. "They have a playbook that we disagree with on some aspects."

On paper, guidelines set by the Department of Homeland Security – which houses both ICE and CBP – reinforce the Supreme Court's "reasonableness" precedent.

"Courts allow for the fact that [law enforcement officers] are often forced to make split-second judgments, in circumstances that are tense, uncertain, and rapidly evolving," states the DHS' policy outline that was last updated in 2023.

An officer, the outline adds, "shall only use the force that is objectively reasonable in light of the facts ... at the time force is applied."

The latest revisions instruct that each DHS officer undergoes both de-escalation and use-of-force training annually. Agents are instructed to employ tactics that "promote" the safety of both officers and individuals, making decisions that "minimize risk." Officers are also instructed to "avoid intentionally placing themselves in positions in which they have no alternative to using deadly force."

Two CBP agents who opened fire on Mr. Pretti were placed on leave. It's unclear whether Mr. Ross has faced any internal discipline.

Q: How is a fatal shooting by a federal law enforcement officer supposed to be investigated?

States can prosecute federal officers, but under limited conditions. The supremacy clause of the Constitution holds that federal law preempts state laws when the two conflict. However, if a federal officer is found to be acting outside the bounds of their duties, state authorities can proceed with an investigation and, potentially, a prosecution, according to the State Democracy Research Initiative at the University of Wisconsin Law School. In practice, it has been difficult for state prosecutors to bring charges against federal officers or agents.

In cases like the Minnesota shootings, investigations are typically carried out by state and federal agencies, experts say. However, Justice Department officials kicked state agencies out of the investigation into Ms. Good's death. After Mr. Pretti's shooting, state officials took unusual legal measures to secure evidence from the scene. The Justice Department has reportedly asked Homeland Security Investigations, a branch of ICE, to lead the Pretti investigation, with the FBI assisting, in another departure from protocol. Minnesota lawmakers have raised concerns that federal investigations will not be fair and impartial.

It's unclear if the officers involved will face criminal prosecution or a civil lawsuit, but a thorough and independent investigation is important not just for determining potential legal consequences, but for the law enforcement profession in general, legal experts say.

"All uses of force by any federal officers, or any agency, have to be documented and investigated," Professor Garrett says.

"They're also supposed to do a postmortem to figure out how to prevent it from happening again," he adds. ▪

ABEOKUTA, NIGERIA

Solomon Ekundayo gave a river a voice. The next generation is listening.

This Nigerian educator embraces the power of environmental literacy to mobilize young people.

By Ogar Monday / Contributor

Ugonna Nkemjika is reading aloud from a storybook as a classroom of rapt children follows along. When she turns the page to an illustration of a river clogged with plastic bottles, a student's hand shoots up.

"Yes, Blessing?" Ms. Nkemjika says to the girl.

"Is this our river?" the girl replies.

Ms. Nkemjika nods, and the room falls silent. The students, who attend Catholic Comprehensive High School on the outskirts of Abeokuta in Nigeria's southwestern Ogun state, have crossed the Ogun River countless times. Some have fetched water from the river; others have watched fishers cast their nets into it. Yet for many of the students, this is the first time they are being asked to reckon with the peril their river is in – and how they can help.

Ms. Nkemjika is a volunteer with Project Conserve Ogun River (COR). "The Loud Cry of Ogun River," the book open on the students' desks, seeks to explain the river's decline in terms children can absorb. Solomon Ekundayo, who founded Project COR and wrote the book, believes training adults to protect their natural resources is vital but that teaching children will yield results for generations to come.

"When children learn about conservation, they carry it home," Mr. Ekundayo says. "They question their parents. They challenge what feels normal. Over time, that knowledge becomes culture."

"More plastic than fish"

The Ogun is Nigeria's fifth-longest river. It stretches nearly 480 kilometers (298 miles), beginning in Oyo state and running through the Ogun region before emptying into the Atlantic Ocean via the Lagos Lagoon. In addition to fishing, residents use the river for irrigating crops, drinking, and bathing.

As a child, Mr. Ekundayo regularly crossed the Ogun River with his mother, watching fishers ply their trade and kids play along its banks. But his understanding of conservation did not come until much later, after he began studying geology at Ahmadu Bello University and embarked on an externship involving freshwater conservation. As part of the program, supported by the National Geographic Society and The Nature Conservancy, he was asked to study a river system, and thought immediately of home.

But when he returned to the Ogun River, he barely recognized it. The water was darker and filled with plastic waste and untreated sewage. Fishing activity had plummeted, and in some areas, the stench alone kept people away.

"I saw more plastic than fish," Mr. Ekundayo recalls.

Studies show contaminants in the Ogun River often exceed safe limits, endangering the health of riverside communities. Aquatic life has been degraded, and the river's natural ability to regulate flooding has been weakened.

"Rivers contaminated with untreated sewage and industrial waste become vectors for disease," says M Isho Check, a public health expert based in Abuja. "This is worse for children."

In late 2022, Mr. Ekundayo launched Project COR. From the outset, he thought that river cleanups alone would not be enough. The deeper challenge, he believed, was environmental literacy.

"People don't connect dumping waste into the river with illness or flooding," he says. "No one ever explained it to them in a way they can understand."

So Mr. Ekundayo turned to storytelling. He drafted the text for "The Loud Cry of Ogun River" and worked with Project COR volunteers to illustrate it. Throughout the book, the river speaks.

"I used to breathe the fresh air of mother nature," the river says in the expanded online version. "There is so much joy in being wanted."

Child-friendly word puzzles reinforce key ideas, and concepts such as biodiversity are broken down into simple language. The book also weaves in Yoruba proverbs to pass conservation lessons on "in a familiar cultural way," Mr. Ekundayo says. At the end, the book contains a pledge for students to sign, committing to environmental protection.

Saviour Iwezue, founder of Team Illuminate, an organization that is raising an army of young environmentalists across Nigeria, agrees with Project COR's approach. She says many environmental campaigns fail because they overlook how behavior is formed.

"Children should not be seen only as future leaders, but as also capable of influencing what happens around them today," Ms. Iwezue explains.

"If you want sustainable change, you change values," she adds. "And values are most malleable in childhood."

Teachers in Ogun state have noticed changes in students' attitudes toward the river, thanks to Mr. Ekundayo's book.

"Explaining [conservation and sustainability] used to be difficult because the children couldn't easily relate," says Ashade Adepeju, a teacher at Catholic Comprehensive High School. "Now they point at the illustrations and say, 'That's our bridge!' or 'My father fishes there!'"

Teenager Adebayo Firefunmi says he used to throw plastic pouches of water, commonly sold by Nigerian street vendors, into the river after drinking them. "Everyone did it," he says. "But when I learned what plastic does to the river, I felt bad."

Now, he says, he discards trash responsibly and reminds his friends about the "three Rs of reduce, reuse, and recycle," when he sees them littering.

The community conversation

Project COR's efforts include the wider community, too. The group's volunteers have run campaigns to get residents to stop dumping waste into the river, and have set up informal dump sites that are easily accessible by shoppers at the popular riverside market. The group also has supported school environmental clubs and youth volunteer groups, many led by students who now organize cleanups themselves.

Mr. Ekundayo still crosses the Ogun River regularly. The fairly clear water he saw in his childhood hasn't returned, but there is progress. On his most recent visit, he noticed something he hadn't seen in years: fish swimming freely among the spindly reeds that hug the riverbank.

"It felt like hope returning to the river," he says, smiling. ■

REPORTERS ON THE JOB


Sophie Hills

WASHINGTON

Reporters often face split-second decisions about how to engage. On Jan. 24, I watched a group of people brave frigid weather to hold a prayer vigil outside the headquarters of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. As they prayed, my phone buzzed. Alex Pretti had been killed in Minneapolis. Should I tell someone? At a political rally, I would have asked for reactions. But that day, it felt intrusive. I hovered at the periphery as the group recited the Hail Mary. Afterward, I talked to a man who knew that Mr. Pretti had been shot. As tears ran down his cheeks from the cold, he explained that he has been arrested before for nonviolent civil disobedience. His intent, he told me, was to "uphold those laws which support human life." ■


Anna Mulrine Grobe

BRUSSELS

I have a soft spot in my heart for Stars and Stripes. The newspaper published the first piece I wrote when I was in 12th grade, living on a U.S. military base in Germany. Years later, in December 2011, I met the newspaper's editor-in-chief, Erik Slavin, when we were in Iraq to witness the end of America's war there. I had covered the war since 2006 – from a makeshift Marine Corps base in an old factory near Fallujah, to the lush province of Diyala that became known for roadside bombings, to a palace in Baghdad converted into a U.S. military guesthouse. I flew on the U.S. military's last plane out of Iraq. Back home in Brussels, I caught up with Erik for a Monitor story about changes facing the newspaper. ■


Scott Peterson

LONDON

Despite my passport from the United States – the "Great Satan," in Iran's official lexicon – I have made 45 reporting trips to Iran over the past 30 years and wrote a book about the ever-fascinating Islamic Republic.

But my latest Iran visa requests? One was ready just as Israel began bombing Iran in June. In January, another request was overtaken by nationwide protests that grew into a regime challenge and unprecedented crackdown.

Like many foreign correspondents, I have had to report on turbulent events in Iran from the outside. Fortunately, three decades of reporting experience inside the country means I can call Iranians I trust from the outside – in my case, London – to hear firsthand their tales of the tumult. ■


Dominique Soguel

UKRAINE

It is hard to ignore the bitter cold and frequent power cuts on a recent reporting trip in Ukraine. Batteries deplete rapidly, cars break down, and we eat meals while wrapped in blankets and hug hot water bottles to sleep. What we endure is peanuts compared with the soldier freezing in a trench or the family caring for their own without reliable power. Behind every warm handshake, every brave smile, there is the pain of loss: loved ones killed in war, and anecdotes of near-death experiences from a drone or missile strike, or mine. But amid the loss and fatigue, what stands out is an enduring resilience, a strong sense of purpose, and the instinct to hold on and help each other. ■

ON THE COVER

What happens when the internet goes dark?

Recent blackouts in Iran, Uganda, and beyond highlight a new front emerging in conflicts around the world: the fight to stay online.
Though governments hold most of the power, people are finding ways to push back.

BY RYAN LENORA BROWN AND WHITNEY EULICH
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and AAKASH HASSAN / SPECIAL CONTRIBUTORS

JOHANNESBURG; MEXICO CITY; LONDON; CARACAS, VENEZUELA; KAMPALA, UGANDA; AND DELHI

After the Jan. 3 ouster of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, paramilitary groups loyal to the deposed leader's political movement began randomly stopping people on the streets of the capital, Caracas.

They were searching for a type of contraband notoriously common in Venezuela – a virtual private network, or VPN. Often installed as software on a cellphone, a VPN masks a user's location, allowing that person to bypass government restrictions that keep large swaths of the internet blocked here.

"It's a clear indicator of someone looking for information beyond what the government tells [them] is true," explains Iria Puyosa, a senior research fellow at the Atlantic Council's Democracy+Tech Initiative, who has lived and worked in Venezuela.

Venezuela's paranoia about what its citizens might find – and share – online is not unique. In 2024, the most recent year for which data is available, there were 296 internet shutdowns in 54 countries, according to the watchdog Access Now. Most were implemented by the country's government or at authorities' behest.

Experts agree these blackouts are becoming more frequent. But in recent weeks, as shutdowns have rocked countries from Uganda to Iran, a parallel trend is also clear: Citizens are fighting back.

The digital front

For now, anyway, the state still has the edge.

"Internet shutdowns are an expression of power difference," explains Tony Roberts, co-editor of "Internet Shutdowns in Africa: Technology, Rights and Power." "They can only be carried out by

powerful people, on people with less power."

In nearly every country, the state either directly controls telecommunications infrastructure or regulates the private companies that do. That gives them almost unrestricted power to decide when the internet stays on, and when it goes off.

On Jan. 8, as 11 days of protests in Iran morphed into widespread calls for regime change, its government decided to flip the switch. At 8:30 p.m. local time, internet access plunged from nearly 100% connectivity into a total blackout, according to NetBlocks, which monitors internet freedom.

Under the cover of this digital darkness, Iran's security forces moved in, massacring protesters. By the last week of January, 6,126 Iranians had been confirmed dead, with 17,091 possible additional fatalities still "under investigation," according to the Washington-based Human Rights Activists News Agency, which has tabulated accurate casualty numbers in the past.

Just days after the internet went off in Iran, Uganda's government announced it was also pulling the plug. On Jan. 13, two days before the country's presidential election, the Uganda Communications Commission ordered all mobile operators to shut off service. In a letter, the commission thanked operators for "upholding national stability."

But many observers saw a more nefarious aim, to sever the online ties between opposition candidate Robert Kyagulanyi – better known as Bobi Wine – and his Generation Z base.

A former pop star with a flair for online self-promotion, Mr. Wine along with his team has long used the internet to rally supporters in a context where, offline, opposition members are routinely harassed, beaten, and arrested.

Young Ugandans aren't the only ones using the internet to mobilize. In 2025, Gen Z demonstrators used the internet to rattle the gates of power in Nepal, Morocco, Madagascar, Kenya, Togo, Georgia, and Peru, among others. Anger was fomented in Facebook groups, and Discord servers spilled into the streets. Crackdowns were fast, deadly, and often aided by the virtual tear gas of internet restrictions.

"Gen Z's fluency with digital tools has certainly reshaped how contemporary protest movements organize, mobilize, and communicate," says Tomiwa Ilori, a senior researcher in the technology, rights, and investigations division of Human Rights Watch.

He says that while it is far from the only factor contributing to the rise of internet shutdowns, young protesters have helped governments understand the internet as "critical infrastructure for activism. That perception has made internet shutdowns more attractive."

Cost of a blackout

Some effects of internet shutdowns are obvious. In Iran, for instance, the slow return of connectivity in recent days has been accompanied by a torrent of photos and videos showing what the regime was able to do when no one was watching.

"Now that things are coming back on, people are scrambling to put together the puzzle pieces of the truth," explains Mahsa Alimardani, associate director of the Technology Threats and Opportunities program at the New York-based human rights organization Witness.

Other effects of these blackouts are less immediately evident. In 2025, VPN industry watchdog Top10VPN estimated that internet blackouts cost the countries that implemented them a collective $19.7 billion. These economic hits come in a variety of forms. During Uganda's recent shutdown, for instance, people who keep their money in virtual wallets found themselves suddenly unable to buy food or take a motorcycle taxi to work.

Meanwhile, in India, Nasir Mir still lives with the consequences of a 2019 internet shutdown in the Kashmiri city of Srinagar, where he ran a courier service. When he was suddenly unable to organize deliveries online, his business collapsed. Since then, he has sworn off online work. "It felt like too much of a risk," he says. "I lost confidence in running a business that depends on the internet."

There was a personal toll, too.

As the blackout stretched on, Mr. Mir couldn't speak to his brothers in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and the siblings couldn't reach him or their mother in Kashmir. For months, neither group knew if the other were safe.

"My mother cried nearly every day," he says.

Shifting playing field

As internet censorship and shutdowns become more frequent, citizens are fighting back.

The classic tool is a VPN, like the ones used by many Venezuelans. When governments block access to particular corners of the internet – such as social media services – VPNs allow netizens to play a game of internet whack-a-mole, disappearing from local servers and popping up virtually somewhere else in the world.

But when the entire internet goes down, so do VPNs. For a long time, that left most information seekers with one decidedly low-tech option. "I kept myself informed by standing at my window," explains J.V., a resident of Caracas, describing how he followed the aftermath of Venezuela's 2024 election. The Monitor is not using his full name for his security, as government repression has increased in the wake of Mr. Maduro's capture.

Now, offline messaging services like Bitchat, which operates over Bluetooth, and satellite internet services like Elon Musk's Starlink provide more modern alternatives.

During the Iranian protests, this was a "game changer," Ms. Alimardani explains. A few days into the internet blackout, Starlink began providing services free of charge inside Iran, even though the service is illegal. Activists say the government succeeded in disrupting Starlink signals for the first 24 to 48 hours of the crackdown, which they believe was carried out with technology from Russia. But there are about 50,000 smuggled units operating inside the country, and they were able to beam out images showing scenes of overwhelmed morgues and police firing live rounds into crowds of demonstrators.

But satellite internet isn't a free-for-all. For instance, in India, which has the dubious distinction of being the country with the most internet shutdowns in the world, government regulators have dragged their feet in negotiations to allow Starlink to operate there. "Security requirements" top the list of sticking points, says Apar Gupta, co-founder of the Internet Freedom Foundation, an Indian advocacy group. In other words, Delhi wants to know that Starlink will comply with its internet shut-off orders, he says.

Services like Starlink also have their own gatekeepers. For example, while Mr. Musk's company was quick to make services free to Iranian protesters, the world's richest man was silent on the Ugandan government's suspension of Starlink ahead of the election there.

If Starlink devices make it into India and Uganda, the company doesn't need government permission to turn them on. But for Mr. Musk, the business costs of angering these governments might

outweigh the benefits of providing Starlink service.

"What we have seen is that this tool remains under the control and whims of owners and those who influence them from one hand, and local governments who are finding ways to jam this service from the other," wrote Hanna Kreitem, director of internet technology and development at the Internet Society, an advocacy organization, via a messaging app.

Still, at least some of those doing the jamming appear worried about the future. In late January, Abolhassan Firouzabadi, the former secretary of Iran's Supreme Council of Cyberspace, told Iranian media that his government's ability to control protests by turning off the web had a clear expiration date – "one or two more years."

"Unfortunately, internet shutdowns will soon be obsolete," he said. ▪

Off like a light switch

On the eve of elections, the Ugandan government turned off the internet. Journalists kept working.

KAMPALA, UGANDA

At exactly 6 p.m. on Jan. 13, two days before Uganda's presidential and parliamentary elections, the internet turned off like a light switch.

I was expecting the blackout. The government of President Yoweri Museveni, who has ruled Uganda for the past four decades, also suspended web services during the last elections in 2021 and blocked social media in 2016.

But although I was prepared for the internet to go off, the reality of it was startling. I felt as though I were looking at the world around me through a veil of fog, only able to see as far as my hands in front of me. As a journalist, I was suddenly unable to do research or file stories. On a personal level, I was cut off from family and friends outside Uganda.

I'd simply have to find a way to do my job.

An eerie quiet

The next morning, I headed to one place I thought I might still be able to get online, a Kampala hotel frequented by government elites. I was nervous. A young white woman in jeans and a T-shirt, I was a conspicuous presence. I worried I was being watched. I responded to emails from my editors and then left as quickly as I could.

When the polls opened on the morning of Jan. 15, the internet still hadn't returned. Armored tanks rolled down streets usually lined with cars and fruit vendors. Neighborhoods that typically buzzed with "good morning" greetings and the sermons of roadside preachers were so quiet that I could hear the trill of birdsong.

On the back of a motorbike, I rushed down roads littered with purple jacaranda flowers and torn-up pieces of campaign posters. At polling stations, I scribbled quotes into my notebook before feeding them to editors over a shaky phone line.

My fellow journalists and I helped one another as much as we could: sharing tips and information, speculating about where we might be able to get online, and calling to ensure colleagues had returned home safely. I felt bolstered by this support, but it did not take away fear entirely.

"Freedom comes with responsibility"

In the days that followed, there were rumors of arrests and deaths, but without the internet, there was little way to verify anything I heard. Normally, I would be able to scour social media posts and videos. I could not do that now.

Uncertainty continued to mount. When the camp of opposition candidate Robert Kyagulanyi – better known as Bobi Wine – claimed that he had been abducted in an army helicopter, colleagues and I telephoned each other, trying to piece together what had really happened. Then the story abruptly changed. Mr. Wine said his house had been raided, and he had gone into hiding.

Weeks later, his exact location remained unclear.

On Jan. 17, two days after the vote, the result was announced. Mr. Museveni had handily won a seventh term.

The next day, the internet returned. But at a press conference soon after, Uganda Communications Commission Executive Director George William Nyombi Thembo announced that social media would remain restricted.

"Freedom comes with responsibility," he warned.

I left the press conference still thinking over his words. My phone was not working unless I used a Wi-Fi connection, and even then, the network was weak. I headed back home to check my messages, thinking about just how fragile my link to the internet was, and with it, the world beyond Uganda – and how quickly it could be taken away.

– Sophie Neiman / Contributor

EDITORIALS

The audacity of Trump's choice for Fed chief

The U.S. Senate will soon grill Kevin Warsh as President Donald Trump's nominee to head up the nation's central bank starting in May. The position is one of the most powerful in Washington. The Federal Reserve, with its mandate from Congress to ensure stable prices and full employment, helps steer both the American and world economies, mainly by setting interest rates.

Given that the Senate easily approved the former Wall Street lawyer two decades ago to sit on the bank's board – as the Fed's youngest-ever governor – it might not probe him hard on one of his most intriguing yet disputed ideas. Yet, it should.

Mr. Warsh maintains that Americans – in their curiosity, ingenuity, freedom, equality, and collaboration – are as important as the Fed in keeping inflation low. How? Their dynamism and their adaptability to failure can keep economic productivity at such a high level that it will sustain wage growth and act as a disinflationary force.

During his adult life, Mr. Warsh has seen the internet and computers, then mobile phones, and now artificial intelligence help drive efficiency in private business. He says the Fed should focus more on keeping interest rates low for smaller companies to drive such innovation.

His optimism about AI's potential is not widely shared. Its effects in destroying and creating jobs have yet to be seen. He admits

the productivity gains will be uneven. But the United States is still ahead of China in adopting and perfecting AI, he says, allowing it to ride a "productivity wave" for the next five years.

AI is special, he claims, because it has reduced the cost of curiosity to zero. The ease of finding and formulating ideas with AI will speed up discoveries in industry and science.

"What country is most likely to benefit most from the cost of curiosity being zero and the fruits of knowledge being as large as ever? I think it's the United States," Mr. Warsh told the financial technology company Aven.

Breaking an inflationary mindset requires that individuals be curious and inventive in finding solutions. As he said in a 2009 speech during his last tenure at the Fed, "I have not lost confidence in the inherent innovation, creativity, and dynamism in the U.S. economy. Nor have I lost confidence in the inherent good sense of our citizens." ▪

Small nations bond amid big-power politics

Canada's recent call for "middle powers" to act together amid big-power politics has reverberated around the world. Yet, for many small nations, the imperative for cooperation has been gaining momentum for years.

In most cases, the initial impulse is economic growth. Southeast Asian nations, for example, recently discussed a unified visa system for visitors. "Seamless access," the Philippines' tourism chief said, will help the region "benefit from each other's tourism flows." Getting to this point has taken decades of trust-building, through strengthening diplomatic and trade links.

Elsewhere, initiatives in the Caribbean and in West Africa have sought to reduce barriers to regional movement of goods and people. These blocs are also establishing a shared security, often bolstered by cultural or kinship ties. This, in turn, has enabled coordinated responses to emergencies – such as the severe 2017 hurricane season or the thwarting of an attempted coup in a member country.

Lately, four Caribbean nations have opted to bring their total population of 1 million people closer. Last October, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines instituted free movement for citizens to live, work, and receive government services within all four countries.

In a global climate of tighter borders and immigration clampdowns, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace describes the Caribbean move as a "contrasting vision" of regulating human mobility – approaching it as a driver of development and prosperity, rather than as a drain on resources.

This model of integration, however, is rooted in more than economic factors. As one regional official told The Guardian, it underscores deep bonds. "We are virtually the same people. We have no historical animosities ... and we are very similar culturally," he said.

And in a region that experiences extreme weather, to quote Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, joint action "is not naive multilateralism. ... It's building coalitions that work, issue by issue, with partners who share enough common ground to act together."

In an address to the citizens of Barbados, Prime Minister Mia Mottley emphasized the "dignity of small states" in creating alliances that work for them. Of the decision to ease border restrictions, she said, "It is measured. It is managed. It is ours.

"My friends," Ms. Mottley added, "in a world where many are building walls, the Caribbean must build bridges. ... We must not allow fear and insecurity to define us." ▪

A better civic future for America's past

Americans are preparing to mark the 250th anniversary of the United States this year. It's an opportunity for self-reflection and potential unity – around a remarkable story of national achievement, and a recognition of all that still needs doing to fully realize the country's founding ideals.

Two-thirds of Americans, the Pew Research Center reports, believe it is extremely or very important to publicly discuss the country's historical strengths and successes – as well as flaws and failures. Yet, people still disagree on how to tell that history. The Trump administration, for example, has issued directives to federal parks and museums to remove signage that it views as not in "alignment with shared national values." The city of Philadelphia has filed a lawsuit against the Interior Department for removing exhibits referencing slavery at a former residence of George Washington. The city deems this "an effort to whitewash American history." The exhibits were controversial in 2010 when they opened during the Obama administration.

At the same time, according to a report by the center-left Progressive Policy Institute, recent historical scholarship has tended to present "a one-sided and unrelentingly negative portrait" of the U.S., examining its "moral failings but nothing about its virtues." Studying nearly 100 articles published in American Quarterly, a journal of the American Studies Association, the report found that 80% were critical of the U.S., 20% were neutral – and not one was positive.

Ideally, the researchers said, scholars should "seek to capture the whole of America: the challenges alongside the heroism; the slavery and segregation, but also freedoms and values that gave rise to the civil rights movement; ... economic inequality with an understanding of how the country came to have the world's most vibrant economy."

Their observation echoes counsel offered by President Barack Obama in 2015 during a speech honoring civil rights marchers in Selma, Alabama. "To deny ... hard-won progress – our progress," Mr. Obama said, "would be to rob us of our own agency ... to do what we can to make America better."

Attaining a balanced reckoning with U.S. history calls for a willingness to consider varied perspectives, especially from those whose stories and contributions have been ignored. But it would also need to avoid what one historian has described as "reading the present into the past" – judging (and condemning) history and historical figures by present-day norms and standards.

Ultimately, coalescing around a shared history is about a civic purpose that goes beyond academic debate or disciplines. As late sociologist James Loewen observed, "We aren't just learning about the past to satisfy our curiosity – we are learning about the past to do our jobs as Americans." ▪

A student of the open road

For this globe-trotter, travel is about the experiences – the more off the beaten track, the better.

When I ask others about their travels, they normally respond with a list of sights and activities: the Eiffel Tower, a boat ride on the Thames, the Grand Canyon. I always listen respectfully and with quiet appreciation, while realizing that I seem to be wired differently. I love to travel, but I don't do so to complete a checklist. Rather, I venture out to see what I can learn about myself.

For example, after I recently returned from Central America, someone asked me what I had seen. I don't think I gave them the answer they were looking for when I replied, "I missed a critical bus to a port city, so I hitchhiked with a man hauling garbage in his pickup. And I had to ride with the garbage. The experience taught me to remember to be grateful for favors offered."

My friend's indulgent smile conveyed the message, "Oh, you poor man."

But I'm not a poor man. If anything, I'm a student of the open road, where I've learned that most people are helpful, kind, and curious about travelers. I've also learned that necessity sometimes prods me to do something a bit out of character.

I realize that hitchhiking abroad (or at home) might appear risky to many people. And I suppose there is always an element of risk and unpredictability when engaging with strangers in strange lands. Having said this, there are also subtler ways than hitchhiking to experience self-revelation when traveling. Take cuisine, for example.

Some years ago, I went to a remote village in Honduras that rarely received outsiders. My 15-year-old son accompanied me. The poverty was striking, but so was the sense of community – the entire village came out singing as we arrived. Then they slew and cooked a chicken, which they set down before us. Knowing that I was a vegetarian, my son smiled and said, "So what are you going to do now, Dad?" The answer was clear: Eat the chicken. It wasn't particularly easy to compromise my vegetarian principles. But faced with a gift of food so freely given, from people who had greater need of the chicken than I did, I dispensed with my orthodoxy and ate as the villagers looked on, nodding their approval.

I also think of my first visit to Iceland, where I went to spend a summer working on a farm. No one in the family spoke English, and my Icelandic was limited to a few pleasantries. But one can get a tremendous amount of mileage out of "thank you" ("*takk*") and a smile. I discovered that this was the quickest way to endear people to me, and me to them.

The upshot is that I have never returned from a trip in which I didn't learn something new about myself, or where I didn't fortify a quality (flexibility, compromise, risk-taking) that needed reemphasizing.

On a recent outing with a dear friend, who shares the same travel sensibilities, I learned about my friend's backpacking trip through France and Belgium. I listened patiently to his thoughtful reflections, and then I asked, "How do you think you grew as a person as a result of this experience?"

He looked at me and said, "Thank you for that."

What ensued was a conversation meager in travelogue details, but rich with information about how the trip had yielded insights into my friend's life path, his ability to think on his feet, and his interactions with the people he met.

There is wonder in viewing travel as an exercise in self-discovery. I have been at it for a long time, and there is still so much of the world to explore.

Now, where did I put that atlas?

– Robert Klose

POETRY

WAITING

At first, the sparrows living in the Charles de Gaulle
departures terminal are hard to spot,
perched high in the long translucent dome.
As you buy a gift box of macarons
for someone at home, you hear their song,
but you can't tell where the sound is coming from.
Then a flutter catches your eye, and you see one
short flight between high white beams,
then another, then you can't believe how many.
What are they all doing in here?
You survey the scene – hundreds
of tired travelers with long layovers
lean their heads on their chairbacks
and stare absently upward,
eating macarons and watching the birds,
waiting for their time to fly away.

– Michael R. McDonough

A CHRISTIAN SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE

Life's green pastures

Sometimes, it can feel as though life is moving from event to event – some good, some bad. It might even seem that good and evil are a necessary balance for life to move forward – or that evil is overcoming the good.

But Christian Science reveals something different: a change in how we can view the world and our lives. In "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures," Mary Baker Eddy writes, "When we realize that Life is Spirit, never in nor of matter, this understanding will expand into self-completeness, finding all in God, good, and needing no other consciousness" (p. 264). Here, Life and Spirit are synonyms of God, universal good.

Psalm 23 begins, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." The psalm goes on to describe God blessing us with abundance, peace among enemies, and even safe passage through the "valley of the shadow of death" – or release from the fear of death.

Mrs. Eddy writes: "Though the way is dark in mortal sense, divine Life and Love illumine it, destroy the unrest of mortal thought, the fear of death, and the supposed reality of error. Christian Science, contradicting sense, maketh the valley to bud and blossom as the rose" (Science and Health, p. 596).

Life and Love are that good Shepherd who cares for us all so beautifully and illumines the way, showing us that we need not fear. But we might not always feel aware of this loving ever-presence. How do we get to these "green pastures" described by the psalmist? In the Bible, God says, "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19). We can choose to acknowledge that God is Life. I think of making that choice as letting my consciousness be governed by God.

I proved this one summer. I was having a problem with my eyes, and I could not see clearly. But I knew, because I had had many healings through Christian Science in the past, that my best prayer was to understand God better.

I sat at my desk studying the synonyms of God that are found throughout the Bible and Science and Health: Principle, Mind, Soul, Spirit, Life, Truth and Love. I was especially pondering God as Truth and Life – which include the truth of God's ever-present action and the sanctity of life in God, untouchable by disease or death.

Just then, my very big but still young dog twisted in play on the landing outside my open door and fell 15 feet to the cement below. He didn't move. As I ran down the stairs to be by him, my thought was that God provided his life, and it could not be taken away. Science and Health says: "Let neither fear nor doubt overshadow your clear sense and calm trust, that the recognition of life harmonious – as Life eternally is – can destroy any painful sense of, or belief in, that which Life is not" (p. 495).

You could say that I chose Life rather than accident or inharmony. I knelt by my dog, still focusing on the presence of Life. Then, suddenly, the dog ran off to play. There was no limping, just Life expressed. He was unaffected by the fall. The issue with my eyes was also soon healed because of this prayer.

God, divine Life, is eternally with us. And as we choose its blessings, we find we live in the abundance and safety of those green pastures.

– Kit Cornell Kurtz

CULTURE

Remember landline phones? Parents want them back.

Amid growing concerns about the effects of screen time on their children, some parents are reintroducing the communal simplicity of the household phone.

By Victoria Hoffmann / Staff writer

The adage "everything old is new again" rings true in Nicole Hope's home. And a child's eager footsteps thump across the floor in a race to grab a phone – a landline phone – before that ringing stops.

To Ms. Hope, mother of 6-year-old Sophia, as well as 4-year-old Ryder, it is a scene both nostalgic and cutting edge.

She and her husband had wanted to find a way for their children to reach them in case of an emergency.

But like many parents, they knew about a growing body of research connecting smartphones and social media to a slew of risks for children and teens. So Ms. Hope was excited when she stumbled upon a product called Tin Can, a plug-in, Ethernet-connected phone for kids that comes in two models: a 1980s version called the "Flashback," and a tin can design resembling old mock telephones.

She clicked purchase. And in doing so, she joined a growing number of families across the United States who are not only pushing back against the proliferation of screens in family life, but are finding that going analogue – or, at least, analogue-ish – brings with it a good amount of novelty and fun.

"It's funny to hear a landline phone ringing," says Ms. Hope. "It's the sounds I grew up with."

She is delighted by her daughter's joyful reaction when the ring sound trills across the house – probably once a day. She notices that Sophia is building communication skills from having to pick up a receiver without knowing who will be on the other end. It's fun to hear her daughter chat away with family and friends from the central, plugged-in location.

Still, she and other parents acknowledge that the initial motivation for their interest in this sort of "retro" technology was a growing concern.

The case against children's use of smartphones

Over the past years, there has been a growing movement among pediatricians, advocates, and policymakers to alert parents to the dangers that come with smartphone use – particularly social media.

In 2024, the social psychologist and author Jonathan Haidt published his book, "The Anxious Generation," in which he argues that smartphones are causing a mental health crisis among youth – in large part because they have replaced play and other previously "normal" childhood activities. It quickly shot to the top of The New York Times bestseller list.

"The loss of free play and the rise of continual adult supervision deprived children of what they needed most to overcome the normal fears and anxieties of childhood: the chance to explore, test and expand their limits, build close friendships through shared adventure, and learn how to judge risks for themselves," writes Mr. Haidt on his website. Soon, he began what he called "The Anxious Generation Movement" to "dismantle the phone-based childhood and revitalize play, independence, and responsibility in the real world."

In the U.S., schools and state governments have started to implement phone-free policies in classrooms. Late last year, Australia implemented the first nationwide legislation to ban social media for children under age 16.

And last month, the first in a wave of lawsuits against social media companies began in Los Angeles, in which plaintiffs argue that the technology behind social media is not only harmful to young people, but is intentionally developed to be addictive.

The defendants, including executives at Facebook, YouTube, and Google, have denied that claim.

All of this has created a quandary for parents – including Chet Kittleson, CEO of Tin Can, who recalls feeling "sandwiched" between his children's desire for independence and knowing the potential harms that come with cellphones for younger children.

He knew that a number of companies sell parental monitoring for cellphones. Pinwheel and Gabb phones, for instance, cannot go online or on social media, while other brands allow for tight parental monitoring of online content. The Troomi phone has an AI feature that keeps children from content and interactions that

may be harmful.

But none of these products solve the problem of distraction: Instead of playing with each other, kids are tempted to turn to their devices and interact through screens.

More than nostalgia

Mr. Kittleson's eureka moment came from a school pickup conversation with other parents, who raised similar concerns regarding purchasing phones for their children.

"I had this insight, which was, when we [parents] were kids, our first social network was the landline. Our kids don't have that one," Mr. Kittleson says. "I think in that conversation I basically spelled out what Tin Can has become."

Eventually, in September 2024, he and his co-founders, Graeme Davies and Max Blumen, got to designing and then launching their prototype. Their product looks and sounds like a retro phone, but operates through the internet. It can call other Tin Can phones for free, or parents can buy a $10-per-month plan to be able to call other numbers.

When Tin Can launched, Mr. Kittleson was dubbed the "Tin Can Man" around his neighborhood. For the first batch of local purchases, he personally installed the phones in houses around his neighborhood and quickly realized that his team "had something special." Mr. Kittleson remembers in one home, a woman had cried, overjoyed by the reminder of past times.

"She was like, it just reminds me of simpler times, we're in this world that feels very ... heavy," he says. "And this just makes me feel like I'm back at home, safe, and calling and talking to my friends."

Other parents have gone even more old-school, reinstalling actual landlines and convincing their friends to do the same.

While new technologies and laws can regulate youth's interactions with phones and screens, "old-school" approaches from parents still work, says Ellen Wartella, a retired professor from Northwestern University who studies media and technology's influence on youth development.

This resurgence of older technologies also fosters an understanding of technological history, Dr. Wartella says. By engaging with devices like the landline, children can develop a deeper appreciation for newer technologies, creating a richer context for their experiences.

In a Maryland home, Amy Driscoll, mother to Emmett and Marie, has long been wary of introducing her children to technology. She tries to be "intentional and thoughtful" about the ways she incorporates technology into her children's lives. She has asked her children to reflect on how their use of technology made them feel.

"I think with anything, moderation is key," she says. "We try to teach them that, [it's] like you can't have that much dessert. You're gonna feel sick."

At the tail end of summer, Ms. Driscoll and a small group of parents came together with the idea of purchasing landlines for their children. Their goal: to allow their children to have a sense of independence and limit their use of screened technology. By the holiday season, Ms. Driscoll said most of their neighbors had installed the lines.

"The other day, my daughter just chatted with a neighbor friend for like an hour," Ms. Driscoll says. "It was so cute, like what are they chatting about? It's just this wonderful sense of freedom." ▪

A mind broadened and a life enriched by books

Lucy Mangan extols print over audio, buying over borrowing, and rereading over one-and-done.

By Malcolm Forbes / Contributor

"I am primarily a words person," Lucy Mangan writes. "If a picture is worth a thousand of them, I always thought, I'll happily do the reading." The British journalist and author of "Bookish: How Reading Shapes Our Lives" has been happily reading since she was a child. She admits to practicing *tsundoku*, a Japanese term for the act of buying books and letting them pile up. She owns 10,000 – and counting. All have been acquired for one purpose only: pure, personal pleasure.

Mangan's 2018 "Bookworm" was an affectionate account of her early years and her childhood reading, which included visits to the likes of Narnia, Wonderland, and Willy Wonka's chocolate factory. "Bookish" picks up where that volume left off and follows a similar structure. Here she charts her journey from her teens into adulthood, and reveals which books guided and shaped her along the way. It's an insightful and witty journey, and a paean to the enduring rewards we glean from good books.

Mangan begins with her awkward adolescence in the 1980s. Aware of her misfit status in and out of school, she carries on as normal by losing herself in formative and immersive books. She marvels at Maeve Binchy's novels about friends and family that put women center stage. She is captivated by Josephine Tey's detective novels, which blend mystery with psychological shrewdness. But then her teacher introduces her to "Pride and Prejudice" and from that moment she wholeheartedly embraces Jane Austen, "an introvert's writer."

Gradually, Mangan turns to books that take her out of her comfort zone. She finds Alice Walker's "The Color Purple" "unflinching and gruelling in a way I didn't know it was possible to be." She devours Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale" in one night and greets the new dawn "feeling harrowed, exhilarated and altogether as if my mind had been sandblasted by every one of its 300-odd pages."

As a student of English literature at Cambridge University, Mangan flounders. However, she encounters like-minded souls who help her realize she is not alone, nor is she an oddball, for loving books. After her studies, she makes a wrong turn into a law career before breaking into journalism. Books accompany her during this phase and at other milestones in her adult life. She relishes the escapist thrills of Lee Child's Jack Reacher adventures while recovering from childbirth. She derives solace from romantic novels in the aftermath of her father's death. Only her wedding day sees her behaving differently from the norm, the occasion making "stupidly, unexpectedly and unavoidably large inroads into good reading time," she writes dryly.

"Bookish" is a moreish box of delights. Mangan is out to show, not show off – to share her favorite books, sing their praises, and explain what they mean to her. She expounds on the merits of

rereading over the "once-and-done" approach (she found George Orwell's "Nineteen Eighty-Four" "terrifying in entirely new ways" when revisiting it recently) or simply experiencing "the absolute joy and security" of returning to a faithful old friend.

Mangan argues persuasively that the printed page trumps audiobooks, that buying books is preferable to borrowing them, and that adults should read children's books. And most crucial of all, she declares that no reader should ever be ashamed of what they read.

"Book snobbery is amongst the most dismal of all the snobberies," she writes.

Mangan is an omnivorous reader, and we gladly follow her as she highlights books of all genres, from historical sagas to dystopian fiction to young adult literature. Some of her opinions are refreshing (she champions "underdog" Brontë sister Anne over the more acclaimed Charlotte and Emily), just as some of her revelations are surprising. Mangan admits that while Agatha Christie may well be the world's bestselling novelist, she has never read her.

Two aspects in particular keep us turning the pages. One is the enthusiasm Mangan exhibits at regular junctures for all things book-related: browsing in bookstores (including a hidden gem in Cambridge, England, called the Haunted Bookshop); preparing for an imagined future "bookpocalypse"; and securing a room of her own and turning it into her personal library-sanctuary. She thrills to discover new authors who have produced umpteen books.

The second is Mangan's steady supply of humor, some of it self-deprecating, all of it sharp. There is one deftly depicted comic moment when her new husband suggests they combine their libraries. "It wouldn't be merging our collections," Mangan points out. "It would be breaking mine up. I just don't think we're that close," Mangan tells him, before informing us: "I agreed to have a baby instead."

Part memoir, part good-book guide, "Bookish" is also a rallying cry. "If we stop reading, if we stop putting ourselves in other people's shoes," Mangan writes, "then we cut ourselves off from inward avenues of growth, exploration, adventure."

This charming and entertaining book shows how reading has broadened a mind and enriched a life. ▪

Q&A with Howard Bryant, author of 'Kings and Pawns: Jackie Robinson and Paul Robeson in America'

It's hard to imagine *that Jackie Robinson's contributions to baseball – and more important, to civil rights – would ever be forgotten. And yet, the contributions of a comparable civil rights giant, Paul Robeson, have largely been removed from our collective consciousness.*

Author Howard Bryant juxtaposes the politics and power of these two men in his latest book, "Kings and Pawns: Jackie Robinson and Paul Robeson in America." Their testimonies before the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1949 are a huge point of reference in the book, along with other flash points from their professional and political careers.

"For me, I think that every book, not just my books, but every book, builds on each other," Mr. Bryant says. "In my case, when I was working on 'The Heritage,' the introduction of that book notes Robeson. How many times have I read 'Jackie Robinson testified against Paul Robeson' and kept on reading," he adds. "That's kind of a big deal."

The analysis in "Kings and Pawns" doesn't just challenge how society views sports, politics, and civil rights. It also compares anti-communism and anti-labor sentiments of the Cold War to current events.

The Monitor spoke with Mr. Bryant over the phone. The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Q: Why was it important to draw parallels between the Cold War and the current political landscape?

It's one of the things we have to do, and it's our job as writers and authors to do it. We use terms like fascism, authoritarianism, Red Scare. If we're using these terms, we have to investigate them. While I was working on this book, the parallels became more and more obvious.

When you look at what is taking place, specifically the assault on education, it's the same playbook that took place between 1945 and 1957. The list of people who were called "un-American." In 1949, Life magazine ran a spread of people that they thought were dangerous, and of course, they were all on the political left. It had Langston Hughes and Albert Einstein, and all of these great people were called un-American.

You see the closing of the borders in immigration, especially to countries that are populated by Black and brown people. It's the same thing as the national Security Act of 1950. It's the same language that Joseph McCarthy used. "The enemy of the people," or "the enemy within," turning American citizens against each other. And today, the same rhetoric turning the government and turning law enforcement against its own people, we saw what happened in Minnesota with Renee Good. So much of that playbook is just being reenacted right now.

Q: How did two Black giants, Robinson and Robeson, end up pitted against one another? And what does it tell us about race-based politics?

One of the things that I wanted to do with this book was to take it away from Black people in the sense that whenever we deal with Black issues, we always separate them from national issues. When we talk about the Cold War and McCarthyism, nobody ever talks about African Americans in general. They just leave civil rights to us. But Black people were directly involved and directly affected by what was happening in the Cold War. And those politics took Jackie Robinson – his name, his celebrity, and his success – to position him against the man who was the most famous Black American in the world at one point, Paul Robeson.

Robeson wasn't just an athlete or an entertainer. He was known from China to India, to all of the countries in Africa – truly a world-renowned figure. One of the things that I always say is, and it's contemporary to today, the Black person who is willing to publicly criticize another Black person, will have a job for life. If you have been positioned to be a pit bull against your own people, there will always be a use for you.

What was really important about trying to untangle this project was why Jackie, to that point, was not political. So why is he testifying in front of one of the most notorious government bodies in American history? The answer, of course, is [Brooklyn Dodgers general manager] Branch Rickey. Robinson felt obligated to this man who gave him the opportunity to integrate baseball.

Q: Why has history forgotten about Paul Robeson?

I think back to when I was growing up, and who was considered heroic and who wasn't. You had Martin Luther King Jr. As a Bostonian, we knew Crispus Attucks. But Malcolm X was a villain. The Black Panthers were villains. Paul Robeson was a villain.

When I went to college in Philadelphia at Temple University in the late '80s, Robeson had only been dead a decade. His aura was still around.

I talked to Spike Lee about this. I told Spike, "You are the single most important person in the restoration of Malcolm X." Paul Robeson has been framed by white Cold War politics, and also Black Cold War politics too, because the NAACP didn't do him any favors, and neither did a lot of the Black establishment. But Robeson deserves to be reclaimed. This is a great man we're talking about. This is a man who in the 1930s believed in universal health care and predicted the Vietnam War. This is a man who understood that Black liberation was not gonna come through the capitalist system, not because white people weren't good people, but because the numbers were just so overwhelmingly against Black people.

Now look at what people are talking about. They're talking about wealth distribution, and then Zohran Mamdani was elected mayor in New York City, because everyone understands. What do we talk about now? We're talking about affordability. And everyone knows these numbers don't add up, and if they don't add up for white people, they certainly are not gonna add up for Black people.

Q: What do you want people to take away from the book?

I mentioned Moses Fleetwood Walker, who predated Robeson and Robinson, at the end of the book to bring everything full circle. It shows that Black people have always had the same questions. What does it take? What do we have to do? Is there anything we can do?

Walker came to the same conclusion that Marcus Garvey did, that W.E.B. Du Bois did. Think about Du Bois, probably the greatest Black intellectual in this country's history. He was born in 1868 and died in 1963. Look at everybody he overlapped – Muhammad Ali, Malcolm X, Jackie Robinson, Harriet Tubman, Ida B. Wells, Frederick Douglass.

I really wanted to center how different themes inform the work that I do. The work builds on itself, you start connecting all of these dots, and you realize that there are just pockets and pockets that need explanation.

– Ken Makin / Cultural commentator

'Even before my birth, cotton formed me'

Cristina Rivera Garza's 'Autobiography of Cotton' reclaims her grandparents' past – and her own.

By Joan Gaylord / Contributor

"We can't go to Estacíon Camarón because Estacíon Camarón doesn't exist, but we go there anyhow."

So writes Cristina Rivera Garza in "Autobiography of Cotton," translated by Christina MacSweeney. Garza's eloquent and beautifully written book is not quite a memoir, a novel, or a work of history, though it contains elements of all three. By imagining the lives of her Mexican grandparents amid a cotton pickers' strike in the 1930s, she builds a story that is not just about Mexican history, but also about laborers everywhere demanding fair wages and humane treatment.

Nearly a century after the strike, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Rivera Garza travels to Estacíon Camarón, a town in northern Mexico that borders the United States. She seeks remnants of the once-thriving community and evidence of the labor action, which involved communist activist José Revueltas. His experiences inspired his 1943 novel, "Human Mourning." Rivera Garza knew that two laborers, José María Rivera Doñez and Petra Peña Martínez, had also been involved in the strike. Though she never met them, they were her paternal grandparents. She doesn't know whether her grandparents and Revueltas ever met, but there is evidence that they were all there at the same time. She considers that her grandparents could have been two of the workers whose images provoked his remarkable novel.

The book opens with a fictionalized account of Revueltas' arrival at the site of the labor uprising among cotton workers. Though Rivera Garza takes liberties with details of the events, her decision to fill out the narrative with the thoughts and emotions of the characters feels authentic. Her astute observations threaded throughout also render it a sociological critique. The book substantiates labor practices that have recurred throughout history, actions that often produce great wealth for a few, while negatively impacting the culture and the environment that the majority depends upon.

Cotton cultivation was of great importance to Mexican industry. The uprising that Revueltas came to support involved about 5,000 men and their families who picketed at the Don Martín Dam, the source of irrigation for the cotton fields. The workers struck against former landowners J. Américo Ferrara and Otilio Gómez Rodríguez, who were paying starvation wages to field-workers and migrant pickers. Revueltas and several of the organizers were rounded up and jailed, even though their right to unionize was protected under the Mexican Constitution. Law enforcement was on the side of the former landowners, who also controlled the local magistrates.

The strike continued after the arrests, but heavy rains overwhelmed the dam and the fields were inundated. A drought followed. The people, who had very little to begin with, left. The dream of farming their own parcel of land, which had been promised by the federal government, was dead. "No one wanted to stay on a dry land without rain beside a useless river and an unusable, cracked dam," Rivera Garza writes.

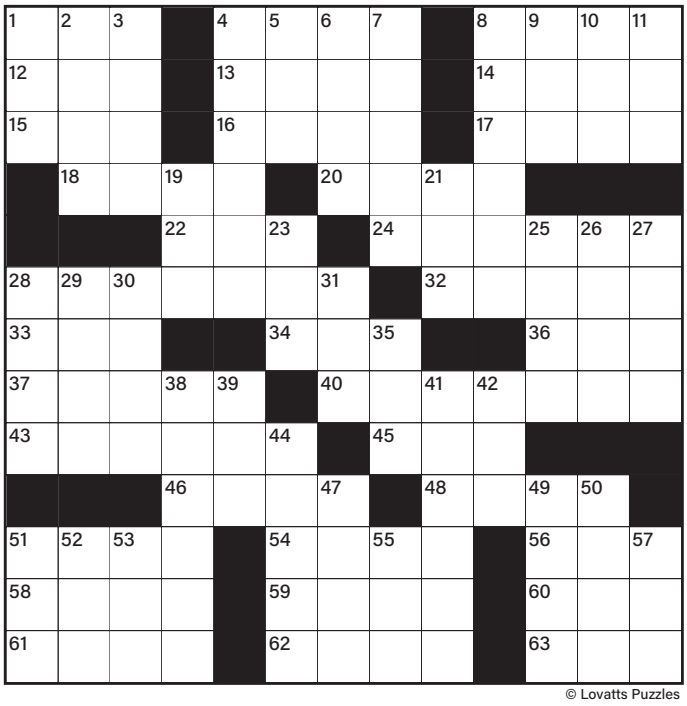
Today, Estacíon Camarón evinces none of its agricultural past. The stories of the people who once fought for fair wages and a better life are lost, and few people remaining in the area even know what happened here.

The powerful industrialists won the battle against the impoverished strikers, and they also controlled the story that has come down through the decades. Rivera Garza was frustrated by the lack of documents about the strike. Ironically, it was the telegrams exchanged among government officials attempting to suppress the labor actions that enabled her to confirm the uprising.

And if Revueltas had not come to the region and had not written "Human Mourning," a key eyewitness account would not have existed.

Rivera Garza amplifies the vital efforts of the residents, though scant proof of their lives endures. Her own existence, though, is proof of the existence of those who contributed to this pivotal era. She writes: "Even before my birth, cotton formed me." ▪

Crossword



ACROSS

1. Coke bottle cover

4. Horse's gait

8. Utter unclearly

12. Symbol of sagacity

13. One of a Roman septet

14. Noble man

15. Buzzer?

16. Opposite of include

17. Figure on a Monopoly card

18. ___ Punk ("One More Time" duo)

20. Pullover shirt

22. "Awesome!"

24. Serving as a subject

28. American poet Ralph Waldo ___

32. Patsy's pal on TV's "Absolutely Fabulous"

33. Writer's block?

34. It's easy to swallow

36. Court strategy

37. Optimal

40. Swinehulls

43. Perfumed the air

45. Course goal

46. Simple ear ornament

48. Whalers' sightings

51. Sabot, e.g.

54. Fuzzy-skinned fruit

56. Crew's control?

58. Gardener's need

59. Vibrancy

60. ___-surf (Google your own name, e.g.)

61. Minute invaders

62. Go a cappella

63. Episcopacy

DOWN

1. Corn core

2. Floored

3. It is subject to bargaining

4. Wedding album contents

5. Scope

6. Football foul

7. John of "Crocodile Rock"

8. Veil

9. Brandon, Bruce, or Brenda

10. Large planter

11. It befalls fallen fruit

19. Tit-tat connector

21. Former Texas Rangers pitcher Kameron

23. Start of a triple jump

25. Baby Moses river

26. Any day now

27. Popular pooches

28. Considerable work

29. Netted

30. First family's residence

31. Tot's time out

35. One behind Gladys Knight

38. Pluses

39. Tennis umpire's cry

41. Open-mouthed

42. Backing

44. Kahanamoku and Ellington

47. East Timor's capital

49. Female fauna

50. Leaves on the spice rack

51. Fancy tub

52. It might have a clutch

53. Mare's tidbit

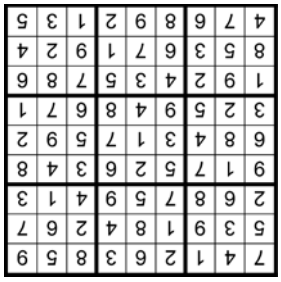
55. Unhealthy looking

57. Egg mass

Sudoku difficulty: ★☆☆☆

			2		3			9
	3	9			4	2	6	
	6						1	
9					6			8
6	8				7	5	9	2
			9	4			7	
1			4	3	5		8	6
	5	3		7				
4		6		9			3	

Crossword and Sudoku solutions



How to do Sudoku

Fill in the grid so the numbers 1 through 9 appear just once in each column, row, and three-by-three block.