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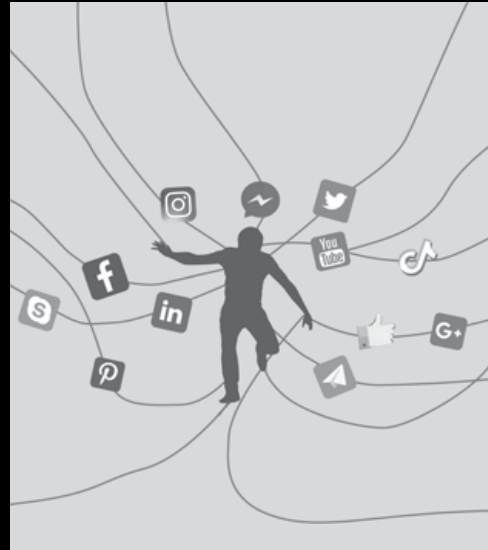
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"TANGLE OF TWEETS"

HELI SWENSSON



"Tangle of Tweets"

Cover Design by Heli Swensson.

Big surprise: The Twitter Files — the reports based on internal Twitter documents and messages that the company's new owner Elon Musk provided to journalists — have landed as a polarizing salvo in the culture war. Many inclined to distrust what they see as Big Tech's liberal leanings have cried vindication. The documents show in detail how Twitter made key content moderation decisions that disadvantaged Trump, conservatives, and people who broke with the public health consensus on Covid-19. They say the evidence proves that, again and again, Twitter intervened to squelch speech that the liberal establishment didn't like. Meanwhile, others — including most liberals and many mainstream journalists — are unimpressed. They say Twitter's policies here were already known and that the specific decisions in question — blocking a story they feared stemmed from a foreign hack, banning the account of President Trump after he incited an insurrection, and deboosting accounts spreading public health misinformation — generally seem at least defensible.

- Andrew Prokop

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WHY THE TWITTER FILES MATTER

A N D R E W P R O K O P

Big surprise: The Twitter Files — the reports based on internal Twitter documents and messages that the company’s new owner Elon Musk provided to journalists — have landed as a polarizing salvo in the culture war.

Many inclined to distrust what they see as Big Tech’s liberal leanings have cried vindication. The documents show in detail how Twitter made key content moderation decisions that disadvantaged Trump, conservatives, and people who broke with the public health consensus on Covid-19. They say the evidence proves that, again and again, Twitter intervened to squelch speech that the liberal establishment didn’t like.

Meanwhile, others — including most liberals and many mainstream journalists — are unimpressed. They say Twitter’s policies here were already known and that the specific decisions in question — blocking a story they feared stemmed from a foreign hack, banning the account of President Trump after he incited an insurrection, and deboosting accounts spreading public health misinformation — generally seem at least defensible.

The discourse has quickly become one of us versus them — perfect for Twitter. The journalists to whom Musk gave the documents — most prominently, Substackers Matt Taibbi and Bari Weiss — are outspoken, unsparing critics of what they believe is the “woke” liberal groupthink that pervades mainstream American media institutions, making them now effectively allies of the right in the culture war. Musk’s behavior since buying Twitter has made him a villain to the left, too.

So liberals have been inclined to view anything they say with deep skepticism, an instinct that was seemingly vindicated quickly after Taibbi posted his first report. He spotlighted an email stating that in October 2020 the Biden campaign had sent along requests to delete certain tweets, writing that an executive responded: “Handled.” Musk responded to this revelation with outrage: “If this isn’t a violation of the Constitution’s First Amendment, what is?” But internet archive sleuths soon established the deleted tweets were pornographic or nude images of Hunter Biden that violated Twitter’s ban on non-consensually posted sexual material, something Taibbi seemingly had not

known. “No, you do not have a Constitutional right to post Hunter Biden’s dick pic on Twitter,” the Bulwark’s Tim Miller wrote. Additionally, some fear that the documents are being selectively pruned to tell a preferred story that could lack context.

Still, it is worth evaluating the documents on their own merits to the extent we can, without a too-hasty dismissal of all Taibbi and Weiss’s arguments or a defense of Twitter’s old management regime. That regime is gone now, but while they were in place, Twitter was a powerful institution that had a major impact on politics, and its decisions deserve scrutiny — just as decisions made by Twitter’s new regime, or monarch, deserve scrutiny. Some of the previous management’s decisions, it seems to me, were wrong, and indeed arguably driven by liberal groupthink. Others I’m less certain about, but they’re at least worth discussing. So here are the main decisions being second-guessed.

Was Twitter Right to Block The New York Post Story About Hunter Biden’s Laptop?

Still, it is worth evaluating the documents on their own merits to the extent we can, without a too-hasty dismissal of all Taibbi and Weiss’s arguments or a defense of Twitter’s old management regime.

— Andrew Prokop

The first part of the Twitter Files, from Taibbi, focuses on Twitter’s October 2020 decision to outright ban links to the first New York Post story about Hunter Biden’s laptop. The ban lasted a little over one day before Twitter lifted it, but the recriminations have continued ever since.

Twitter’s justification was that the story violated its policy against posting “hacked materials.” However, the Post said the materials came from a laptop abandoned at a computer repair store, not a hack. There was widespread skepticism of this claim at the time, but there was no evidence for the hack supposition, and none has since emerged. So what was Twitter thinking?

One clue is in a message by Trust and Safety chief Yoel

Roth, who alludes to “the SEVERE risks here and lessons of 2016.” In 2016, there was an effort by the Russian government to interfere with the general election in a way that would hurt Hillary Clinton and Democrats’ prospects. As later documented in the Mueller report, this effort involved both a “troll farm” of Russian accounts masquerading as Americans to spread false or inflammatory information, and the “hack-and-leak” campaign in which leading Democrats’ emails were stolen and provided to WikiLeaks.

After Trump won, many leading figures in politics, tech, media, and law enforcement concluded that major social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook should have done more to stop this Russian interference effort and the spread of “misinformation” more generally (with some arguing that this was a problem regardless of electoral

impact, and others claiming that this helped or even caused Trump's victory). Law enforcement officials argued the Russian campaign was illegal and indicted about two dozen Russians believed to be involved in it. Social media companies began to take a more aggressive approach to curbing what they saw as misinformation, and as the 2020 election approached, they met regularly with FBI and other government officials to discuss the dangers of potential new foreign interference campaigns.

But several issues are being conflated here. Misinformation is (in theory) false information. Foreign propaganda is not necessarily false, but it is being spread by a foreign government with malicious intent (for example, to inflame America's divisions). Hacked material, though, is trickier in part because it often isn't misinformation — its power comes from its accuracy. Now, it is theoretically possible that false information could be mixed in with true information as part of a hacked document dump, so it's important to authenticate it to the extent possible. And even authentic information can often be ripped out of context to appear more damning than it really is. Still, Twitter was putting itself in the awkward position where it would be resolving to suppress information that could well be accurate, for the greater good of preventing foreign interference in an election.

More broadly, a blanket ban on hacked material doesn't seem particularly well thought through, since a fair amount of journalism is based on material that is illicitly obtained in some way (such as the Pentagon Papers). Every major media source wrote about the DNC and Podesta email leaks, as well as the leaked State Department cables, while entertainment journalists wrote about the Sony hack. Should all those stories be banned like the Post's was? A standard that Twitter won't host any sexual images of someone posted without their consent, or any personal information like someone's address, is a neutral one. Beyond that, determining what stolen or hacked information is newsworthy is inherently subjective. Should that judgment be left to social media companies?

Then there's the problem that Twitter jumped to the conclusion that this was a hack in the first place. I can see why they did — recent high-profile examples of mass personal info dumps like this were generally hacks. So if you had been anticipating a chance to "do over" 2016's hack scandal, here it seemed to be. But it was jumping to a conclusion. Additionally, the apparent belief of some employees that proactively censoring the story until there



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was more information about whether it was hacked info was a way to express “caution” seems dubious — fully banning a link to a media outlet from the platform was a sweeping measure.

So to me this seems a pretty clear case of overreach by Twitter. This wasn’t a “rigging” of the election (again, the ban was only in place for a little over a day). But the decision — born out of a blinkered focus on avoiding a repeat of 2016, rather than taking speech or press freedom or the different details of this situation into account — was the wrong call, in my view.

Was Twitter Right to Ban Trump?

Parts 3, 4, and 5 of the Twitter Files all focus on the company’s decision to ban President Trump’s account in the wake of the January 6, 2021, attack. They show that as pressure for the company to act against Trump rose from both outside voices and their own employees, Twitter leaders applied various standards in determining Trump’s account shouldn’t yet be banned, before making a rather abrupt switch in deciding to ban him on January 8, saying two tweets of his that day violated their “glorification of violence” policy and that Trump’s account presented a “risk of further incitement of violence.”

Weiss points out that, earlier in the day, Twitter staffers evaluated those new Trump tweets — one saying he wouldn’t attend the inauguration, another that “75,000,000 great American Patriots who voted for me” will “not be disrespected or treated unfairly in any way, shape or form!!!” — and concluded they did not violate policies against incitement of violence. Only later did top executives ask about other possible interpretations and begin discussing whether this was a coded “glorification of violence” interpretation. Weiss’s implication is that, under immense internal and external pressure, Twitter’s executives searched for a pretext to ban Trump, and found one. (The day before, Facebook had done something similar.)

Weiss also points out that this was the only time a sitting head of state was banned from the platform, and that Twitter previously allowed wide latitude to world leaders’ accounts, even those who posted hateful rhetoric or even direct calls to violence (though it’s not a surprise that social media companies would have different standards in different countries with very different political situations and that they might treat the company’s home country somewhat differently).

Even if you accept Trump was treated differently, the question is whether that different treatment was justified and called for considering what Trump had done: launched a months-long campaign of constant falsehoods aimed at pressuring Republicans to steal the election from Joe Biden, a campaign that eventually spiraled into real-world violence when a mob stormed the US Capitol. In the view of many, American democracy was at stake here — it was not yet clear whether Trump really would step aside, and many feared further violence — so social media companies had a responsibility to act rather than enable its destruction. (Roth said multiple Twitter employees had quoted Hannah Arendt’s *The Banality of Evil* to him, suggesting the

company’s blind adherence to process meant enabling something horrifying.)

What this really boils down to is a larger clash of worldviews related to Trump, and to which institutions should or should not be trusted.

One worldview — accepted to varying degrees by liberals, anti-Trump conservatives, and significant portions of the tech and media industries — was that Trump’s presidency was an unprecedented threat to US democracy, that he was enabling a rise of hate toward minority groups that put lives at risk, that his constant lies amounted to an assault on the truth, and that a society-wide effort to resist him was necessary. “Business as usual” in media or tech companies is no longer tenable if you believe your country is sliding into authoritarianism, this argument goes. Journalists and tech workers shouldn’t be neutral toward the prospect of American democracy ending, they should instead take a values-based stand in defense of it — and in defense of truth itself.

The violence of January 6 heightened concerns of further violent turmoil and pushed more people into this camp. “I’ve been part of the ‘he’s the president, we can’t deactivate him’ crowd for 4 years now but even I have to say, I feel complicit allowing this to happen and I would like to see him deactivated immediately,” one Twitter employee wrote in the company’s Slack, according to NBC News.

In contrast, the journalists reporting on the Twitter Files, as well as Musk himself, have a starkly different interpretation of politics. They aren’t Trumpists (Taibbi is historically of the left, Weiss said she voted for Biden, Musk said he supports Ron DeSantis) but they’ve become united by a loathing for what they see as the liberal groupthink that has become hegemonic in much of the media and Silicon Valley, which they argue chills dissent and free speech, and often advances the interests of the Democratic Party. This includes “wokeness” and cancel culture but goes beyond those topics. For instance, they believe Trump got a raw deal in the Russia investigation — arguing many in the media, the Democratic Party, and the government either believed or willfully perpetrated what amounted to a false conspiracy theory that Trump was in cahoots with Vladimir Putin. Whatever they might believe about Trump’s flaws, their commentary shows that for some time they have been far more animated by what they see as the excesses of Trump’s opponents in the media, tech companies, and the government.

If you’re inclined to think Trump a singular threat that must be resisted — and you can point to the January 6 attacks as proof of your theory — then a major social media company banning him is more justifiable. But if you think the liberals at the social media company are themselves a major threat to speech, then the power they wielded in banning Trump may disquiet you.

Yet it should be noted that the phenomenon of controversial Twitter bannings occurring at top executives’ whims has not been solved under the Musk regime. Musk has already decided to suspend Kanye West’s account, keep a preexisting ban on Infowars host Alex Jones in

place, and ban an account tracking flight information for Musk's private jet (even though he said last month his "commitment to free speech" was so strong he would allow that account to keep posting).

Did Twitter — or The Biden Administration — Overreach In Efforts to Limit Covid-19 Misinformation?

The Twitter Files has not featured a full installment about Covid-19 yet, but Musk has promised, "It is coming bigtime." In part two of the series, though, Weiss showed that Stanford School of Medicine professor Jay Bhattacharya had been placed on a Twitter "Trends Blacklist" — preventing his tweets from showing up in trending topics searches.

After this, Bhattacharya tweeted that, during a



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visit to Twitter headquarters at Musk's invitation this week, employees told him he was placed on that blacklist the first day he joined Twitter, in August 2021 and that he believes it must have been because of this tweet:

The link there was to the Great Barrington Declaration, a controversial October 2020 open letter by Bhattacharya and two other professors arguing that only those people most vulnerable to the virus should continue to lock down and distance, while everyone else should "resume life as normal," which would result in them getting the virus and, hopefully, "herd immunity" in the population. Shortly afterward, 80 other public health experts responded with their own letter calling their herd immunity theory "a dangerous fallacy unsupported by scientific evidence."

When the Covid-19 pandemic broke out, Twitter again grappled with the topic of "misinformation." As with Trump (and with hate speech), Twitter executives likely believed lives could well hinge on their decisions. So by May 2020, the company announced it would remove or label tweets that "directly pose a risk to someone's health or well-being," such as encouragements that people disregard social distancing guidelines.

But the company essentially defined "misinformation" as whatever went against the public health establishment's current conventional wisdom. And as time passed, Covid quickly became another issue where conservatives and some journalists came to deeply distrust that establishment, viewing it as making mistakes and giving politically slanted guidance.

The situation took another turn when President Biden took office. By the summer of 2021, his administration

was trying to encourage widespread vaccine adoption in the hope the pandemic could be ended entirely. (The omicron variant, which sufficiently evaded vaccines to end that hope, was not yet circulating.) Toward that end, administration officials publicly demanded social companies do more to fight misinformation, and poured private pressure on the companies to delete certain specific accounts.

One of those accounts belonged to commentator Alex Berenson, who "has mischaracterized just about every detail regarding the vaccines to make the dubious case that most people would be better off avoiding them," according to the Atlantic's Derek Thompson. After Berenson was eventually banned, he sued and obtained records showing the White House had specifically asked Twitter why he hadn't been kicked off the platform yet. Another lawsuit against the administration, from Republican state attorneys general and other people who believed their speech was suppressed (including Bhattacharya), is also pending.

All that is to say that there is a thorny question here about whether the government should be trying to get individual people who have violated no laws banned from social media. And from the standpoint of 2022, when the US has adopted a return-to-normal policy without universal vaccination or the virus being suppressed, and when there's increased attention on whether school lockdowns harmed children, some reflection may be called for about what constitutes misinformation and what constitutes opinions people may have about policy in a free society.

Andrew Prokop writes for Vox and other publications.

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SOCIAL MEDIA FREEDOM CAUCUS TO INVESTIGATE THE SURVEILLANCE STATE

DANIEL BOGUSLAW

In the proposed rules package for the new 118th Congress, the Republican Party wants to create a subcommittee to investigate law enforcement and surveillance agencies.

The pledge to form the new committee on the “Weaponization of the Federal Government” is one of the concessions the far-right Freedom Caucus is demanding of Rep. Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., in exchange for supporting his bid to become speaker of the House. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., has cited it as a reason to support McCarthy.

Freedom Caucus members routinely rail against the FBI’s investigations of President Donald Trump and excessive domestic surveillance. The “Weaponization of the Federal Government” committee would give them power to investigate the purported abuses under the auspices of the Judiciary Committee. Freedom Caucus members said they want to model the new body after the Church Committee that ran investigations into intelligence abuses in the mid-1970s, leading to significant reforms.

Democratic members of the House were quick to condemn the comparison of the “Weaponization” subcommittee with the legacy of Sen. Frank Church, the Idaho Democrat who led on intelligence reforms. Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif., who lauded the original Church Committee, warned that the rebranded one could be a distraction from passing bipartisan legislation to rein in the very agencies Republicans are probing.

“To compare these is a total misunderstanding of what the Church Committee did,” Khanna said. “The question is, if we are going to focus on making sure the government isn’t engaged in surveillance, we should be engaged in passing the Internet Bill of Rights and engaged

in passing legislation that will prevent that surveillance. I don’t want a committee that will start casting political aspersions on law enforcement agencies.”

“I don’t think there is any potential merit because it’s already tainted.”

There will be little Democratic buy-in for the panel, according to interviews with minority party members, who cast the committee as one interested merely in embarrassing Democrats. “I don’t think there is any potential merit because it’s already tainted,” said Rep. Raul Grijalva, D-Ariz. “The preface to this has been all the comments the Republican majority in the House have made relative to the FBI, relative to spying on Trump, relative to going through our mail and conspiracy theories. It’s already tainted. It has no value. It’s not a Church commission. It’s more of a McCarthy commission” — a reference to the

notorious, and notoriously overzealous, investigations into communists run by Sen. Joseph McCarthy in the 1950s.

The proposed committee would effectively investigate the “deep state,” a term popularized by Trump devotees to refer to machinations of unelected security apparatuses, though the phrase traces its roots to left-wing civil liberties advocates, suggesting at least the potential for some trans-ideological collaboration. Republicans were once closely aligned with the FBI, but many turned against the federal law enforcement agency following its investigation into collusion between Russia and Trump’s 2020 campaign. In August, dozens of federal agents raided Trump’s Mar-a-

Lago estate and recovered classified documents taken from the White House. The former president and his supporters in Congress were enraged. In recent months, GOP lawmakers have also called for investigations into the FBI’s role in shaping social media discourse around revelations concerning Hunter Biden.

The outgoing chair of the Rules Committee, Rep. Jim McGovern, D-Mass., echoed the condemnation of comparisons between the new proposed committee and historical reform efforts: “I think it’s insulting to the Church Committee to compare this to that.”

The Church Committee oversaw sweeping investigations into agencies with vast surveillance powers including the CIA and FBI. The precursor to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, the Church Committee,

**There will be little
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who cast the committee
as one interested
merely in embarrassing
Democrats.**

— Daniel Boguslaw



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along with its House counterpart the Pike Committee, helped bring to light LSD experiments, propaganda campaigns overseen by the CIA against unwitting U.S. citizens, widespread domestic phone surveillance, and assassination plots against foreign leaders.

Despite Democrats' skepticism toward the "weaponization" committee, there are dozens of oversight issues where they could find common cause with Republicans. Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, recently revealed revelations about the FBI's mishandling of hundreds of sexual harassment complaints against employees. In October, the Department of Homeland Security's efforts to combat "disinformation" could potentially lead to influencing news stories unfavorable to the agency by affecting their distribution.

Rep. Lauren Boebert, R-Colo., one of the House GOP members holding out for concessions from McCarthy, refused three attempts for comment, despite her fellow Freedom Caucus members' eagerness to see the committee formed.

"We've got a lot of oversight to do, and I think there will be a lot of committees involved," said Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla., one of the most outspoken members challenging McCarthy for concessions. "This is probably a longer discussion. In the course of a hallway discussion,

I'm not sure I can break down the finer points." On Tuesday morning, McCarthy said that his opponents had demanded to lead the upcoming committee.

Greene, a Freedom Caucus member friendly to McCarthy's bid, was focused on the sole issue of securing her preferred speaker's leadership position. "I'm so excited about all those things, but we can't do them until 19 people decide to vote for Kevin McCarthy," she said.

Rep. Mike Quigley, D-Ill., a long-standing member of the House Intelligence Committee, cast doubt on the prospects for bipartisanship on the "Weaponization" committee. "It's an indication that this isn't going to be about accomplishing anything," he said of the Republicans' apparent partisanship. "I would predict there will be double-digit select committees and special new subs on existing committees. This is all about attacking and going on the offense and very little about what bills are we going to pass."

Quigley suggested that the "Weaponization" committee would set up a formal structure for the Republican Party's right flank to air its worst conspiratorial views. Quoting the late writer Hunter S. Thompson, Quigley joked, "When the going gets weird, the weird turn pro."

Daniel Boguslaw writes for *The Intercept* and other publications.



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SYMPATHY FOR THE ALGORITHM

BARRY EICHENGREEN

With hindsight, 2022 will be seen as the year when artificial intelligence gained street credibility. The release of ChatGPT by the San Francisco-based research laboratory OpenAI garnered great attention and raised even greater questions.

In just its first week, ChatGPT attracted more than a million users and was used to write computer programs, compose music, play games, and take the bar exam. Students discovered that it could write serviceable essays worthy of a B grade – as did teachers, albeit more slowly and to their considerable dismay. ChatGPT is far from perfect, much as B-quality student essays are far from perfect. The information it provides is only as reliable as the information available to it, which comes from the internet. How it uses that information depends on its training, which involves supervised learning, or, put another way, questions asked and answered by humans.

The weights that ChatGPT attaches to its possible answers are derived from reinforcement learning, where humans rate the response. ChatGPT's millions of users are asked to upvote or downvote the bot's responses each time they ask a question. In the same way useful feedback from an instructor can sometimes teach a B-quality student to write an A-quality essay, it's not impossible that ChatGPT will eventually get better grades. This rudimentary artificial intelligence forces us to rethink what tasks can be carried out with minimal human intervention. If an AI is capable of passing the bar exam, is there any reason it can't write a legal brief or give sound legal advice? If an AI can pass my wife's medical-licensing exam, is there any reason it can't provide a diagnosis or offer sound medical advice? An obvious implication is more rapid displacement from jobs, compared to past waves of automation, and more rapid

restructuring of surviving jobs. And the jobs that will be automated out of existence will not be limited to the low-skilled and low-paid.

Less obvious is who is safe from technological unemployment. What human traits, if any, will an AI be unable to simulate? Are those traits innate, or can they be taught?

The safest jobs will be those requiring empathy and originality. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings and emotions of others. It creates the interpersonal compassion and understanding that are fundamental to social interactions and emotional well-being. It is especially valuable in circumstances and periods of difficulty. That's why empathy is valued in religious leaders, caregivers, and grief counselors.

It is possible to imagine that, with the help of facial-recognition software, an AI can learn to

recognize the feelings of its interlocutors (that it can learn what is known as "cognitive empathy"). But it can't obviously *share* their feelings (it can't learn "affective empathy") in the same way that my wife, in her empathic moments, shares my feelings. Add that to the list of reasons why an AI can't replace my wife, my doctor, or my rabbi. There is no consensus about whether affective empathy can be cultivated and taught. Some argue that affective empathy is triggered by mirror neurons in the brain that can't be artificially stimulated or controlled. Empathy is just something we experience, not something we can learn. It follows that some of us are better wired than others

**What human traits,
if any,
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Are those traits
innate, or can they
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– Barry Eichengreen

to be caregivers and grief counselors.

Other researchers suggest that this emotional response can indeed be taught. There is even a training company for medical clinicians called Empathetics, Inc. If true, it may be possible that more people can be prepared for automation-safe jobs where affective empathy is required. But if humans can learn affective empathy, then why can't algorithms? The idea that jobs requiring affective empathy will remain safe from automation assumes that people can distinguish true empathy from the simulation. Originality means doing something that hasn't been done previously, for example, creating a painting, composition, or newspaper commentary wholly unlike what has come before. Originality is distinct from creativity, which involves combining pre-existing elements in novel ways.

Another OpenAI product, DALL•E, is able to

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generate sophisticated images from text descriptions (“a painting of an apple” or “the ‘Mona Lisa’ with a mustache”). This has created some consternation among artists. But are its responses, derived using a large dataset of text-and-image pairs, original artwork? It is questionable whether they are original in the sense of portraying an aesthetically pleasing image unlike any seen before, as opposed to combining existing visual elements associated with existing text. Artists who trade on originality may have nothing to fear, assuming of course that viewers can distinguish original artwork from the rest. Again, there is no consensus on whether originality is inborn or can be taught. The answer, most likely, is: a bit of both. How worried should we be? Type “Write an 800-word commentary on AI into ChatGPT and judge for yourself.

Barry Eichengreen writes for *Project Syndicate* and other publications.



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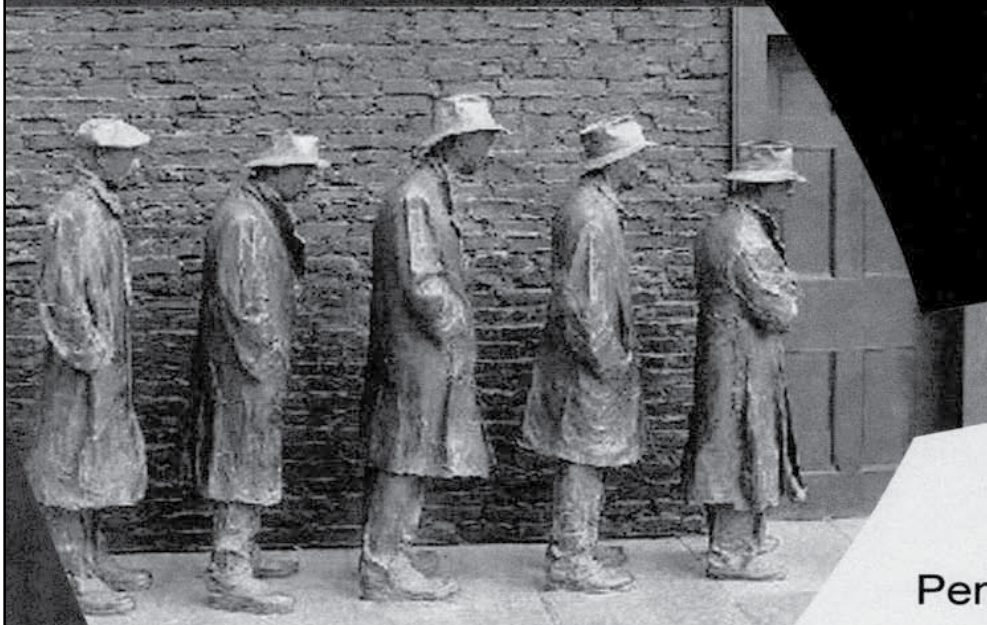
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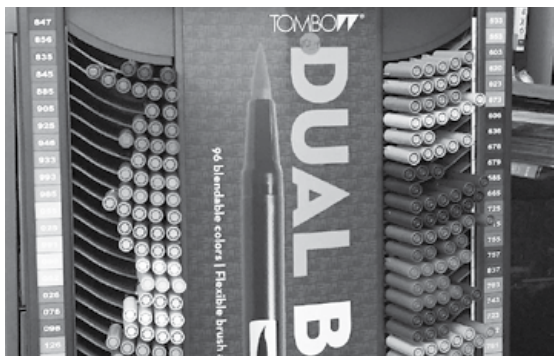
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DANGER OF FACIAL RECOGNITION

JESSICA CORBETT

Instead of enjoying a late Thanksgiving meal with his mother in Georgia, Randal Reid spent nearly a week in jail in November after he was falsely identified as a luxury purse thief by Louisiana authorities using facial recognition technology.

That's according to *NOLA.com*, which caught the attention of Fight for the Future, a digital rights group that has long advocated against law enforcement and private entities using such technology, partly because of its shortcomings and the risk of outcomes like this.

"So much wrong here," Fight for the Future said, sharing the story on Twitter. The group highlighted that many cops can use facial recognition systems without publicly disclosing it, and anyone's "life can be upended because of a machine's mistake."

Reid—a 28-year-old Black man misidentified as one of three people who allegedly stole over \$10,000 in Chanel and Louis Vuitton purses from a pair of shops via bogus credit card purchases—was pulled over by local police in Georgia's DeKalb County on November 25, while he was driving on Interstate 20 to meet up with his mother, *NOLA.com* reported.

"They told me I had a warrant out of Jefferson Parish. I said, 'What is Jefferson Parish?'" Reid recalled. "I have never been to Louisiana a day in my life. Then they told me it was for theft. So not only have I not been to Louisiana, I also don't steal."

Reid wasn't released from the DeKalb County jail until December 1. While behind bars, he worried about losing his job as a transportation analyst and being convicted of felonies that he did not commit.

"Not eating, not sleeping. I'm thinking about these charges. Not doing anything because I don't know what's really going on the whole time," he said. "They didn't even try to make the right ID."

Tommy Calogero, Reid's lawyer, told *NOLA.com* that Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office detectives "tacitly" admitted the misidentification and rescinded a July warrant. The news outlet noted that court records show a Baton Rouge Police Department detective "adopted JPSO's identification of Reid to secure an arrest warrant" for one of the thefts.

According to the report: Sheriff Joe Lopinto's office did not respond to several requests for information on Reid's arrest and release, the agency's use of facial recognition, or any safeguards around it. That office also denied a formal request for the July 18 arrest warrant for Reid and copies of policies or purchases related to facial recognition, citing an ongoing investigation.

Baton Rouge police also did not respond to questions about its warrant for Reid's arrest. The warrant, signed by 19th Judicial District Judge Eboni Rose, does not say how Lopinto's office identified Reid.

As Fight for the Future summarized: "Police blindly trusted a facial recognition scan to arrest a man in Georgia. He was wrongly imprisoned for a WEEK. Now (surprise, surprise) the cops are stonewalling the press about their failure."

Experts from the ACLU of Louisiana and the Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC) shared concerns with *NOLA.com* about police use of the technology—which, as research has shown, more frequently misidentifies people of color.

In response to reporting on Reid's experience, the national ACLU on Tuesday stressed the flaws of facial recognition tools and asserted that "law enforcement must drop this

dangerous technology—we shouldn't have to worry about being falsely arrested because an algorithm gets it wrong."

The national ACLU has previously called on policymakers to end law enforcement use of facial recognition technology across the United States—including after the January 2020 wrongful arrest of Robert Williams, a Black man in Michigan misidentified as a shoplifting suspect.

"My daughters can't unsee me being handcuffed and put into a police car. But they can see me use this experience to bring some good into the world," Williams wrote in a June 2020 opinion piece. "I keep thinking about

**According to
the campaign,
"Industry-friendly and
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We need an
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— Jessica Corbett



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how lucky I was to have spent only one night in jail—as traumatizing as it was. Many Black people won't be so lucky. My family and I don't want to live with that fear. I don't want anyone to live with that fear."

Even before Williams' arrest, Fight for the Future and partners groups launched a "Ban Facial Recognition" campaign, which has tracked restrictions and known uses of the technology as well as enabled constituents to pressure lawmakers to ban it. Despite some progress in restricting or banning law enforcement's use of such tools at the local and state levels, the United States still lacks federal law on the topic.

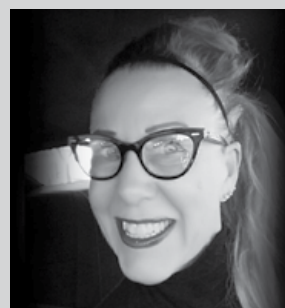
"Like nuclear or biological weapons, facial recognition poses a threat to human society and basic liberty that far outweighs any potential benefits," the campaign's website argues. "Silicon Valley lobbyists are disingenuously calling for light 'regulation' of facial recognition so they can continue to profit by rapidly spreading this surveillance dragnet. They're trying to avoid the real debate: whether technology this dangerous should even exist."

According to the campaign, "Industry-friendly and government-friendly oversight will not fix the dangers inherent in law enforcement's use of facial recognition: We need an all-out ban."

Jessica Corbett writes for *Common Dreams* and other publications.

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F I C T I O N GRANNY'S ORGONE ACCUMULATOR

J O H N O ' K A N E

The oblong box stands upright in the corner of the room, its shiny silver surface a provocation to the eyes streaming through the entrance. But it's much more than an optical sensation for the bodies congealing around the object, the proximity to it and the heightened expectation of what it might do for them piquing their sensoria with new vibrations. A nurse sits at a nearby table, back turned, poring over files of data on his laptop. As if he's feeling the vibes too, he swivels around in greeting and motions the group to the cubicles along the wall where other nurses await.

"Katrina, good to see you!" he quips. "You're first up today." He grabs his laptop and escorts her to a semi-private examining room, settling her in a soft leather recliner before mousing through several screens.

"I've been looking forward to it!"

"I see it's been two weeks since you last used the accumulator. You do seem a bit frazzled. Is that why you came today?"

"Well, not...really. I got a slow start on the day because some of us were up late talking away."

"Good to see you're socializing. Lisa was telling me about your group...some of your recent activities. All of you seem like you're adjusting well." Katrina's countenance gradually brightens.

"Step over here and let me update our records." He gives her a kind of mini-check-up, smiling as he registers the results. "Your temperature is normal." He weighs her as he wraps the blood pressure cloth around her arm. "Your blood pressure is that of a teenager. You've lost a few pounds since our last meeting. How's your diet?"

"I've been fasting and meditating regularly and...feel great...full of energy!"

"Your skin...it's very taut with a healthy tone...and you have fewer wrinkles. Your eye contact is more direct."

He turns to the computer screen and starts typing

in the blank space, touching the keys gracefully but quite rapidly, concluding with a smile. He pivots and peruses her.

"You're...shapelier. You look ten years younger than when you arrived here last January."

"I feel that much younger...sometimes like I *am* a teenager."

"That's our goal...youthing you so to speak...stopping or even reversing the aging process so you live well beyond your years. As you probably know, we're applying Helke Storm's revolutionary discoveries here."

"Yes...yes, I heard about that. I'm excited. I'm all for...living forever!"

"I'm not sure if we can be that successful yet!"

"One of my main goals is to experience the kind of orgasms I had when I was...not a teenager, then I didn't have the mental maturity and technical mastery...but, in

my mid-to-late twenties. That was when I was in my prime and why I wanna get into the box. Some amazing things happen to my body when I go in there. My friends say the same thing."

6 "The box has been a boon for our therapeutic strategies. A resident discovered one of the original models in her Granny's garage when she was going through her belongings after she passed. We're fortunate to have someone here who was able to work on it and get rid of the kinks, give it a techno-upgrade, make it a much more efficient machine than what your parents might've had access to.

"Well, *my* parents would've avoided one at all costs!"

"You're lucky to be part of our experiment. We're the future...maybe the last chance to perfect

humanity."

She sighs and looks aloft.

"I see here too that the tests we did on your memory came back. You show much improvement. Your surplus of energy is basting your brain cells."

"I seem to have more to talk about from my past and...I don't forget as much as I used to but...sometimes I don't recognize everything that pops up."

"Well...that's...normal when you're undergoing therapy. So...we'll keep monitoring you. But now, why don't you undress. I wanna check for physical changes."

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She lifts her loose-fitting top over her head as if she's alone in her room getting ready for bed and tosses it on the nearby chair, turning to face him squarely.

"Now, place your hands on top of your head." She does so willingly and smiles as she closes her eyes. He presses his fingers over her neck, working down to her armpits and then her breasts, giving them an especially thorough test.

"I love this part of the test," she sighs. "You have such great hands!"

"I've had lots of practice! Your breasts are firmer than last time...the exercises seem to be paying off. Now drop your slacks." She complies promptly. "You stopped wearing undergarments. Back to your old habits, I see."

"They make me feel...confined."

He slips down to her waist and goes to work, then drops to his knees and slides his hands up and down her legs like he's frisking her for a weapon. Glancing up at her he smiles, like she's passed an audition, and jumps up.

"Your muscle tone is improved. Your butt is firmer. You have less stomach fat. We have to put you up as the success of the month." He grabs a tape and measures her hips, waist, and then her breasts. "Yup...you *are* the success of the month. You've youthed yourself into the measurements to die for!"

"I'm so happy! Now I...I wanna...use what I got."

"It'll come...that's why you need to keep using our...substances." He urges her over to a table where there are several containers with different colored liquids...red, orange, purple and dark green. "Here...take a shot of each one of these. While they're taking effect and getting you ready for the box, rub some of our lotion on your body and...take two of these blue pills. We gave you an injection last time, but I don't think you need one this time."

She obeys graciously, looks around and smiles as she waits for results. "I feel something down here." She touches her groin on the right side. "It feels sensitive...and like something's growling. Wait! Now it's feeling kind of...numb. I can barely move my leg."

"What about your left side?" She touches her groin on the left side.

"It's...starting to feel numb too." She smiles and glances over her entire body like she's expecting other sensations."

"Give it a little more time before it settles."

She massages her breasts like she's a physical therapist, her countenance moistening. "They feel like they're getting harder...and larger."

"And your nipples seem to be getting longer."

She suddenly recoils like she's received a shock and stares at the nurse. "Parts of my body are...pulsing, like something's growing inside. Here, feel." She pulls his hand onto her left breast and moves it with abandon like she's positioning the target on a Ouija Board. "Feel it?"

He assumes the targeting. "Yes, that's normal. It means the meds are taking effect. Your body's muscles are strengthening...your organs are vitalizing."

"It almost seems like parts of my body are

becoming independent of each other. Is that possible?"

"Yes, that's a common observation. Your different components are in the process of forming a new whole."

She begins to breathe somewhat erratically but the nurse massages her shoulders. She takes a deep breath and smiles.

"Good...we're ready." He clasps her wrist and guides her from the room. She hustles to the box, stroking it in ecstasy.

"Katrina, is that you?" spouts Lisa who's passing through the door. Katrina's face is so flush with emotion that Lisa's identity momentarily eludes her. "I haven't seen you for a few weeks...I barely recognize you."

"Who...oh, yes, Lisa...it's...me." She takes a deep breath and rushes over to hug her. "Excuse me...I'm ready to go in and..." She abruptly turns away from Lisa and perfunctorily opens the door and enters the box like she's on the cusp of experiencing a vision. The nurse closes it and motions for a sentry to stand guard by the box.

"Comon, Lisa...follow me," says the nurse. "We haven't seen you for a while. What have you been up to?"

There's a room off the main room where several patients and staff are lounging on sofas and schmoozing. It's a kind of decompression space for those who've been in the box. And since there's no door between them, only about a twenty-foot-wide aperture, it's more like an extension of the main room. The loungers have a clear look at the box from within this space, so they're able to assist the guard if unexpected problems arise. And they're able to hear sounds inside because of the attached amplifier system. This reinforces the collective sensibility of this experience, encouraging each patient to learn from others and share their observations and constructive input.

"Katrina seems quite energized today," says Phebe as she finesses her creamy fingers on Malcolm's chest, moistening his muscles while trying to relax him. "Lately she's been in some special zone. It's like she's crossed some threshold."

"But sometimes she's almost a different person," quips Harry. "It's kind of scary. A few days ago she didn't even seem to know me."

"That's to be expected as she, and all of you, change."

Malcolm jerks up and breaks free from Phebe's clutches, rushing over to Clara. They embrace firmly and tenderly, showing no signs of separating. Phebe steps over and wedges herself between them, pulling Malcolm back to their roost where she proceeds to work muscles in his neck, momentarily paralyzing him.

"Here, drink this now," she says, giving him a small cup. He drinks it slowly and gradually regains his movement and composure. She continues to work his muscles, so he won't flare-up again, playing his groin to deflate his bulge. He now lays his head back, his eyes two glowing sockets. "Stay away from Clara for now!"

As she starts applying the lotion again, several piercing sounds erupt from the box, followed by spikes of anxious squeaks that keep repeating and then silence.

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Cassandra rushes toward the box as a sentry proceeds to open it, but Katrina's voice suspends their movements.

"I'm okay...I'm okay!" she screams. "Please... please don't interrupt me now. I've never experienced this kind of feeling in my body before."

The sentry closes the door and retreats.

"Like I said, Katrina's crossed into some special zone," says Phebe as she continues to work Malcolm's muscles.

"No doubt about that!" blurts Clara. "But I'm not so sure it's a good one. Those sounds...I've never heard anything like them. Sure she isn't being tortured?"

"Isn't pain the result of extreme pleasure?" queries Lionel.

"Yeah," follows Jane, "didn't Reich say something like that?"

"Sure," adds Hank. "That was in the film we saw last week... 'Mysteries of...the...Organism.' I think that was the title."

"Well, we'll see when she comes out," retorts Phebe. "Maybe she'll surprise us this time!"

Clara vaults toward Malcolm like a sentient tropism, hugging him from behind.

"Clara...please let me finish with Malcolm," shouts Phebe. "Settle down until we're all ready. Nurse, give Clara an injection!"

Clara stares at Phebe blankly like she doesn't understand, but gushes with smiling abandon and proceeds to hug everyone in turn, dodging the nurse's pursuit. As if passing a contagious impulse, each one Clara touches zigs and zags into the arms of another. Meanwhile, Malcolm

becomes agitated and pulls away from Phebe's strokes, poised to charge after Clara. Phebe manages to pull him back and keep him deflated. The nurse calls for back-up as she finally corrals Clara in the process of being mounted by Harry. Several sentries arrive and separate everyone. Soon they're following Phebe's clinical applications and becoming more relaxed.

"Time's up, Katrina," rings the sentry's voice. "Time's up."

Lorenzo cranes toward the box but sees no one exiting. "Katrina...your time's up," the sentry repeats again. Lorenzo hustles to the box. "Katrina, are you okay?"

He waits for a response, but none is forthcoming, and grasps the handle, pulling it slowly open. Katrina is sitting in the chair, her head cast slightly downward as if she's meditating. She has a muted but poised smile on her lips like she's experiencing some special insight. Lorenzo steps toward her but she doesn't flinch, as if she's not aware of the space circumscribing her.

"Katrina...Katrina, are you...ready to leave?" asks Lorenzo, waving his hands in front of her face. She nods slightly but says nothing and returns to form. Lorenzo steps alongside her and beckons the sentry for assistance. They lift her limp frame and carry her to the decompression space, depositing her on a sofa while two nurses rush over to make sure she's okay.

"Take her temperature," spouts Lorenzo. "Her body seems very warm."

Remaining in her meditative state, she submits to their actions like she's vaguely aware of what they're doing. "Katrina, are you with us?" queries one of the



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nurses. Katrina flinches slightly but maintains her confident composure. "I guess she's with...someone else!"

"This is what the accumulator does...can do, if the visitor is fully engaged," spouts Cassandra who's just escorted Lisa to the box. "Katrina is very serious...she trains with the commitment of a true believer, a..."

"...she seems like she's---pardon my unofficial comment---blown a gasket," responds the nurse.

"She's relieved pressure for sure...but that's the goal, what the machine is designed to do after the energy accumulates."

"That almost happened to me a few weeks ago," interjects Karla, fresh from her successful decompression. "I came close. Remember, Katrina?" Katrina raises her head and lets in fall back on her shoulders but doesn't acknowledge Karla, who peers quizzically at Cassandra. Katrina's eyes are closed but the look on her face is ruminant.

"Pushing the boundaries in the box should be a learned activity, an experience transferable to situations in everyday life. The key is processing the energy efficiently."

"Katrina's been doing a lot of transferring lately too," adds Jane. "She's been hanging around with Lisa. She told me about some of her friends."

"Lisa's friends! Yes, they're...very friendly!" Katrina drops her head and rises from the sofa like she's just woken from a refreshing nap and sashays over to a space on one of the sofas. Many of the others, now decompressed, slip over and surround her, curious about what she's been through. They ogle her like she's an apparition in the process of achieving perfect corporeal form.

"What happened to you in there, Katrina?" asks Lionel.

"Yes...what did you do to get those...sounds?" follows Malcolm, who appears ready to spring forth but casts a quick glance at Phebe who's been closely monitoring him.

Apparently oblivious to the questions, she contentedly rises and proceeds to hug everyone passionately, her expenditure of energy soon setting in motion a vigorous reciprocity. This threatens to evolve into a pulsing organism. Lorenzo and Cassandra manage to separate everyone but the rays of energy transiting between them constitute a kind of electrical grid that seems to keep recharging their interests. Suddenly a sentry appears who kisses the fluctuating body parts with a video camera, and the members willingly pose for the lens. The resulting self-awareness dissolves the organism and each one returns to the gallery around Katrina. The sentry disappears.

"The sounds just...happened. I...recall getting this feeling throughout my body. I started to get flashes and I couldn't remain still. It was like something was growing inside me and getting larger and larger until it had to escape from my body and...it seemed to, suddenly, and I was...empty, like my insides were thrust outside of me and...my lower body started throbbing and eventually became numb and...that's all I remember."

"How did you get that?" asks Clara. "I always

become very anxious in there and come out excited but...nothing after that."

"That's similar to what happens to me," adds Hank. "But I often stay excited for most of the day after, sometimes a few days."

"You guys need to get together with Katrina and learn how she prepares for the box," avers Phebe.

"You need to rub off on us, Katrina," says Malcolm, springing in her direction, inflated. Phebe clutches him around the waist before he reaches her, returning him gracefully to his roost. Katrina smiles, her mannerisms suggesting she's primed to follow him.

"I just...stick to the workout and take the pills and keep lubricated and..."

"...you're a beautiful person, Katrina," interjects Jane. "Just like when we were living together in the canals in...sometime around 1980, I think. Everybody wanted to touch you and..."

"...when was that? I sorta remember something like that but...did we live together?"

"I remember seeing you guys back then," peals Lionel. "You used to come down to the beach with a buncha people...beautiful people...and stretch out on the sand and party all night."

"I remember being there!" spouts Harry, like these details have suddenly ratcheted his attention and triggered memories. "I was strolling by the Lafayette Café and someone came up and hugged me and brought me onto the sand where lots of people were in a circle and playing instruments and..."

"...I was in that circle!" says Malcolm. "I remember you...nodding to Katrina...running through the surf and collapsing on a sand mound near us. A crowd gathered around you...and you stripped for us."

"I remember you stripping, Katrina," adds Clara. "I'm not sure it was that time, but I remember your gatherings on the beach. I met a mate there...Cornell. We stayed together for three or four years."

"Cornell was a good friend of mine!" interjects Hank. "That must've been you he always brought to the Sidewalk Café Bar. We had these great intellectual discussions and lots of people hung out. Fights would sometimes break out and..."

"...that...was me! That was you? That's why we broke up!"

Katrina has been following the group's reactions with a seamless, vibrant smile, like she's privy to all the memories and emotions dredging up. But Clara's remarks momentarily shroud her aura, leaving a puzzled expression, her eyes flickering the desire for a recharge. The resulting glances seem to accomplish this, and a smile re-forms, though initially it's a truncated variant of her original until she gets her flow back.

"Here we are, all together and...we were all kind of together back then too!" quips Jane in a frenzied, high-pitched voice. "This is synchronicity!"

"Maybe our signs overlap!" follows Karla, reaching over and hugging Katrina.

"We're being all we can be!" snaps Harry. "We're

beautiful people.”

“This is so...spiritual!” continues Malcolm.

“Yes!” exclaims Clara. “We’re all part of the godhead.”

“Yes...I feel like...” Katrina can’t finish her thought. She starts to emit a string of giddy sounds which sputter to silence. Her head drops down. Phebe rushes over, followed by Cassandra and Lorenzo. They prop her head up and appraise her expression. A sentry appears and gives her an injection as Cassandra proceeds to massage her muscles with a lubricant. Each member of the group gathers around her, turning slowly toward each other for confirmation of...something, a sign that this is only her batteries running down. Their exchanges are anxious darts that careen into an expressionless void.



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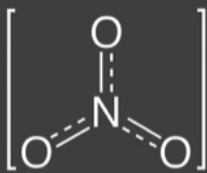
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F O O D LAB GROWN FOOD

B O B H O L M E S

Diners at the swanky Atelier Crenn restaurant in San Francisco expect to be served something unusual. After all, the venue boasts three Michelin stars and is widely considered to be one of the world's top restaurants.

But if all goes according to plan, there will soon be a new dish on the menu that truly is remarkable: chicken that was never part of a living bird.

That peculiar piece of meat — likely to be the first of its kind ever sold in the US — comes from a radical sort of food technology now in development, in which meat is produced by culturing muscle cells in vast tanks of nutrients. A similar effort — to culture mammary cells — is also underway and may soon yield real milk without cows.

The company behind Crenn's chicken, California-based Upside Foods, got a thumbs-up in November 2022 from the US Food and Drug Administration, which said it had no concerns about the safety of the technology. (The company's manufacturing facility still requires a certificate of inspection from the US Department of Agriculture.)

This cellular agriculture, as some of its proponents call it, faces formidable technical obstacles before it can ever be more than a curiosity. But if it does reach the mainstream, it offers the prospect of a cruelty-free source of meat and dairy — potentially with a smaller environmental footprint than conventional animal products.

Conceptually, cellular agriculture is straightforward. Technicians take a small tissue sample from a chicken, cow, or other animal. From that, they isolate individual cells that go into a bioreactor — basically a big vat of nutrient solution — where the cells multiply manyfold and, eventually, mature into muscle, fat or connective tissue that can be harvested for people to eat.

Products in which these cells are jumbled together, as in ground meat, are easiest to make, and that's what most cellular meat companies are developing, at least initially. But Upside has a more ambitious goal: to create chicken

with whole muscle fibers. "We've figured out ways to produce that textural experience," says Eric Schulze, Upside's vice president of product and regulation. He declines to explain exactly how they do it.

The process takes two to three weeks from start to finish, regardless of whether they are making chicken or beef. That's much faster than the 8 to 10 weeks required to raise a fryer chicken, or the 18 to 36 months needed for a cow. "We're doing a cow's worth of meat in 21 days or less," says Schulze.

One cellular meat product is already available commercially, though not in the US. In Singapore, a few restaurants and street vendors now offer a chicken nugget that contains a mix of cellular meat and plant-based ingredients. The product sells for about the same price as organic, farm-raised chicken, but the true cost of production is higher. "We're selling it at a loss, for sure,"

says Vitor Espírito Santo, senior director of cellular agriculture at Good Meat, the US-based company producing the nugget.

But the cost should come down once the company expands to larger scale, Santo says. "Everything we do right now is more expensive because we are using a 1,200-liter bioreactor. Once we are producing in 250,000 liters, it will be competitive with conventional meat." The company is now working on gaining approval in the US.

Meat isn't the only animal product that can come from cell cultures. Several companies are working to produce milk by culturing mammary cells and collecting the milk they secrete. For example, Opalia, a Montreal-based company, grows mammary cells on the surface of a three-dimensional, branched structure that

resembles the lobules of a real udder, says CEO Jennifer Côté. The cells secrete milk into the structure's lobules, where it can be collected and drawn off. Some other companies, such as North Carolina-based BioMilq, are using a similar technology with human mammary cells to produce human breast milk. None are yet on the market.

In some ways, the process for making milk is easier than producing meat because the cells themselves don't need to be harvested and replaced. "The cells we use can stay alive for multiple months on end," says Côté. That means the company can concentrate on developing

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— Bob Holmes

cells that secrete a lot of milk, rather than ones that divide rapidly. Moreover, she adds, because the cells themselves are not part of the product, Opalia can genetically modify its cells without the milk itself being a GMO product.

Proponents hope that cellular meat and milk can eventually offer several big advantages over the conventional versions. By cutting animals out of the process, cultured products do away with most of the animal-welfare issues that beset modern factory farms. Meat and milk that come from clean culture facilities instead of manure-laden farmyards should also be less likely to carry food-borne diseases, says Elliot Swartz, lead scientist for cultivated meat technology at the Good Food Institute, a Washington DC-based nonprofit organization supporting alternatives to

meat.

Enthusiasts also claim that cell-based products should be more sustainable than conventional animal products because farmers will no longer need to feed, water and house entire animals just to harvest their muscles. It's hard to know whether this benefit will pan out in reality since the technology is still under development. Only a few studies have tried to estimate the environmental impact of cell-based meat, and all have made huge assumptions about what future technologies will look like.

One thing seems clear, however. Cell-based meat relies heavily on electricity for tasks like heating or cooling culture tanks and pumping cells from place to place. If that electricity comes from renewables, the overall carbon

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footprint of cell-based meat will be much less than if it comes from fossil fuels, says Swartz.

Assuming a relatively green electric grid, though, one careful study of cell-based meat's potential, by the Dutch consulting company CE Delft, suggests that its environmental footprint is likely to be roughly the same as that of conventional pork or poultry — among the greener conventional meats, by most reckonings — and far less than that of beef.

So far, however, companies and academic researchers have only taken baby steps toward cellular agriculture. If the industry is ever to grow big enough to change the face of global agriculture, it would need to overcome several major hurdles, says David Block, a chemical engineer at the University of California, Davis, who works on the technology behind cultured meat.

One of the biggest challenges, most experts agree, is finding an inexpensive way to supply the nutrients and growth factors the growing cells need. Existing culture media are far too costly and often depend on calves' blood for molecules such as fibroblast growth factor and insulin-like growth factor 1, which are essential for cell growth and maintenance. Researchers are hoping that relatively unprocessed sources like plant or yeast extract can eventually provide most of the nutrients and vitamins they need, and that they can find a cheaper way to produce the growth factors.

As a step in that direction, Dutch researchers have developed a growth medium using no serum — just off-the-shelf chemicals — to which they add more than a dozen growth factors and other nutrients. Their new medium allowed cow muscle cells to grow almost as well as on calf serum, they reported recently.

Scaling up from research-sized cultures to big commercial operations — an essential step to keeping costs down — may also present problems. The larger the bioreactor, the more difficult it is to ensure that waste products like ammonia are removed, says Ricardo San Martin, a chemical engineer who directs the Alternative Meats Lab at the University of California, Berkeley. Even merely stirring extremely large bioreactors can subject the cells to damaging shear forces, he notes.

The nutrient-supply problem gets even tougher for

whole-muscle meats such as steaks or whole chicken breasts. In the animal, such thick slabs of muscle have networks of blood vessels snaking through them, so that every muscle cell is close to a blood supply. Many researchers in the field think replicating that 3D structure in culture poses serious challenges that have yet to be overcome. "I don't think we are close to growing a steak, and I don't see it in the next 10 or 15 years," says San Martin.

Still, proponents remain optimistic that those problems will be settled soon. "Technologically, we're not concerned," says Schulze. "With enough time and scientific ingenuity, somebody, somewhere, will find a way to make this work. The cost is the main issue for everyone."

But cost remains a big stumbling block. The first lab-grown burger patty, produced by a Dutch team in 2013, cost an estimated 250,000 euros (about \$330,000). And while costs have fallen since then, they remain much higher than for conventional meat. In a study that has not yet been peer-reviewed, Block and his colleagues estimated that producing a ground-beef product in a 42,000-liter bioreactor — almost twice as big as the largest in use today for mammalian cells — would cost about \$13.80 per pound. To bring the cost down under \$6 per pound, only a little pricier than conventional ground beef, would require a much larger, 260,000-liter bioreactor.


But cultured meat may not have to match the price of ground beef or chicken to be commercially viable. Some consumers will probably pay higher prices to avoid the ethical and environmental costs of conventional meat, just as they do today for plant-based meat substitutes like Impossible and Beyond Meat. And some conventional products such as caviar, foie gras or bluefin tuna are so expensive that cultured versions could probably be cost-competitive pretty soon, says Swartz. That would give manufacturers a way to bring in some profits even as they work to bring costs down further.

Another intermediate step could be to use cultured meats to enhance the flavor of plant-based products, as Good Meat is doing now with the part-cultured-meat, part-plant-based meat patties they sell in Singapore. Manufacturers could also add cultured animal fat cells to give a meatier flavor to a plant-based product. "You only need maybe 5 percent animal fat to achieve that," says Swartz.



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Such hybrid products, he thinks, are likely to be the dominant role for cellular meat in the next decade.

Similar first steps could help cultured-milk companies generate revenue before they can match cow's milk in price. Breast milk offers enough advantages over infant formula, says Swartz, that many consumers are likely to pay high prices for cultured human milk from BioMilq and other companies. "There are a variety of proteins and fatty acids and sugars that are simply not there if you don't have breast milk," says Nurit Argov-Argaman, a lactation physiologist at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Argov-Argaman is also chief scientist at Wilk, an Israeli company that is culturing human breast cells to extract high-value components such as fatty acids and lactoferrin, a protein

essential to iron uptake, to enrich infant formula.

A few of these cell-cultured meat and milk products should make it to supermarket shelves within the next few years, experts say. But as promising as these first steps are, no one really knows whether cellular meat and milk will eventually grab a significant share of the global market for animal-based foods.

"There are certainly immense challenges — no one's denying that," says Schulze. "But our plan is to work on that as an industry. It's effectively a space race for food. The difference here is we will attempt to rationally solve these challenges one by one in a reasonable time frame — and do it safely, of course, since it's food."

Bob Holmes writes for *Knowable Magazine*.



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C. J. POLYCHRONIOU

Since 2021, prices have surged dramatically across countries and inflation has become a global challenge. Global central banks delivered historic rate hikes in 2022 in order to tame inflation and continued doing so even when inflation was falling, thereby risking a global recession.

Indeed, for the past five months, average inflation in the U.S. has been at 2.4%. Across Europe, inflation has also been dropping. In Spain, for instance, consumer prices rose 5.8% in December, down from 6.8% in the previous month. The December figure represented the fifth consecutive month of declining inflation in Spain. Yet, the European Central Bank—which like the U.S. Federal Reserve has also set the target rate for inflation at the arbitrary number of 2% per year—plans to continue raising interest rates “significantly further” as it deems that inflation “remains far too high and is projected to stay above the target for too long.”

Meanwhile, both the U.S. and European economies are expected to enter a recession in 2023. For what it’s worth, the head of the IMF expects a full one-third of the world to slide into recession this year.

What has been causing the upward trends in inflation and why do central banks around the world keep raising interest rates, a policy which will slow economic growth and result in lower wage increases and fewer jobs? Several factors are at play in causing a surge in prices, which include the Covid-19 pandemic, geopolitics, and corporate mark-ups and profit margins, while pure capitalist logic and interests explain why central banks are raising interest rates to fight inflation.

These were some of the conclusions reached by the progressive economists who participated in an international conference on “Global Inflation Today” organized by the renowned Political Economy Research Institute (PERI) at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and held from December 2-3, 2022.

To start with, a co-authored paper by Robert Pollin (Distinguished Professor of Economics

10 – 15 percent.”

These are significant findings which raise serious questions about the goals of macro policy. Indeed, if inflation-targeting policy is not conducive to promoting economic growth, what is its primary aim? Citing the work of scholars who have done extensive research around this question, such as Gerald Epstein (Professor of Economics and Co-Director of PERI at UMass Amherst) and others, Pollin and Bouazza suggest that corporate profitability is the primary aim of inflation-targeting policy. “Protecting the wealth of the wealthy” is the reason why the Fed has taken aggressive steps to tame inflation by raising interest rates, Epstein pointed out in a recent joint interview with Pollin.

Needless to say, the mainstream economic paradigm keeps silent on such matters, and one will never find answers in it on the most important processes that affect the workings of the real world and on the issues that are of paramount importance to the lives of working people.

To be sure, mainstream economics failed miserably in addressing the financial crisis of 2007-08, so why would it be any different now when it

comes to making sense of the rising inflation of the past 18 months?

With regard to the actual causes of inflation in 2021-22, a paper co-authored by Asha Banerjee and Josh Bivens of the Economic Policy Institute identifies the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine as key factors in the inflationary surge of the past 18 months or so but argues that profit mark-ups added immensely to inflationary pressures over the same period. Of equal importance here is that the authors present more than sufficient evidence to counter the mainstream economic perspective that lays the blame for the rise of inflation in the U.S. on the American Rescue Plan.

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– C. J. Polychroniou

and Co-Director of PERI at UMass Amherst) and Hanae Bouazza shows convincingly that there is no justification why the Federal Reserve and other central banks aim for an inflation target of 2%. Indeed, their research finds “no consistent evidence supporting the conclusion that economies at any income level will achieve significant GDP benefit when they maintain inflation within low single digits, i.e., between the 0 – 2.5 percent inflation range.” Not only that, but the “evidence... suggests that, in general, economies are more likely to achieve higher GDP growth rates in association with inflation ranges in the range of 2.5 – 5 percent, 5 – 10 percent and, for the most part,

Indeed, the data they present, on both the domestic and international fronts, does not support the claim that too much fiscal spending overheated the economies, fueling runaway inflation.


Another paper presented at the PERI conference, co-authored by C. P. Chandrasekhar and Jayati Ghosh, on how low-and middle-income countries can respond to inflation, also argues that there are more important factors than the pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine behind the current inflation crisis. The sharp rise in global prices of food and fuel, Chandrasekhar and Ghosh contend, was driven by

"profiteering, price expectations, and associated speculation." They show, for instance, that while there were sharp spikes in the prices of food and fuel between February and July 2022, "the supplies of oil and gas to Europe remained largely unaffected."


The analyses on inflation and its causes, as well as the actual aims of inflation-targeting policy, made by all the presenters at the PERI conference (which included many leading progressive economists such as William Spriggs, Gerald Epstein, Thomas Ferguson, Nancy Folbre, James K. Galbraith, Servaas Storm, and Isabella Weber, among others)

can be described as a *Progressive Political Economy Guide to Inflation*. Indeed, they show how powerful heterodox economic approaches are in disclosing the real forces driving inflation and the actual reasons for central banks sharply raising interest rates. And, by extension, they also reveal the flaws and limitations of mainstream economics, which is in dire need of a major overhaul.

C.J. Polychroniou is a political economist/political scientist. His latest book is *The Precipice: Neoliberalism, the Pandemic, and the Urgent Need for Social Change* (A collection of interviews with Noam Chomsky; Haymarket Books, 2021).



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CONGRESS'S RECENT RETIREMENT BILL EXPLAINED

BEN WERSCHKUL

Nestled inside the \$1.7 trillion government spending bill, which has passed Congress and is headed to President Biden's desk for a signature, is a suite of significant reforms to the private retirement system.

The changes to come will push businesses to get more of their employees enrolled in savings plans and also give current retirees a break. The bill also has provisions that help people saddled with student loans, military spouses, and part-time workers who are eager to save for retirement.

Many of the changes — totaling \$53 billion — begin next year with supporters hoping it will help avert what many call a burgeoning retirement savings crisis in the U.S., especially among poorer Americans who are too often left out of the system altogether.

"This is historic," House Ways and Means Chairman Rep. Richard Neal (D-MA) said, adding that the new rules will help provide Americans with "considerable independence down the road."

Neal was one of many lawmakers behind the bill alongside figures like Rep. Kevin Brady (R-TX), Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR), Sen. Mike Crapo (R-ID), and others. The bill was finalized over two years of debate across multiple congressional committees in what all sides are hailing as a model of bipartisanship.

"As the economy deals with the effects of the worst inflation in nearly 40 years, working families need all the help they can get when it

comes to saving for the next chapter in their lives and we are now one step closer to making that possible," Sen Rob Portman (R-OH) added this week.

Here are a few of the key provisions from the bill.

Breaks for Current Savers

The bill is a follow up to 2019's SECURE Act, which represented the first major retirement legislation since 2006.

One closely watched provision will change the age when people must start taking mandatory distributions from their private retirement plans. The SECURE Act

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returns.**

— Ben Werschkul

increased the so-called RMDs from age 70 to its current level of 72. Now, the requirement will rise again to 73 starting on Jan. 1, 2023, and then up to 75 in 2033.

The new rules reflect the fact that Americans are living longer and increasing the age allows them to hold their money tax free for longer and keep earning returns.

Some want Congress to go even further in the years ahead. Rep. Brady said in 2020, during an event simulcast on Yahoo Finance, that "my

goal is to get rid of it completely."

The bill also increases the so-called "catch-up" contributions that are allowed for older savers who are behind on savings and want to put extra money away in their final working years. Those provisions will kick in in 2024.

Provisions to Get More People to Save

Another giant swath of the bill includes a variety of attempts to prod businesses to get more people enrolled into retirement plans. The key provision, according to many lawmakers, is the new rule around automatic enrollment.

It is the first section of the bill and will mandate businesses to automatically sign up new employees for the employer-sponsored retirement plan (if one is offered) as part of the onboarding process. The rule would take effect in 2025 and would apply to businesses that offer a 401(k) or 403(b) plan.

New hires could opt out, but the default would be savings. Studies have shown that employers with auto-enrollment retirement plans have much higher rates of participation.

"We've decided to begin with automatic enrollment and make it difficult to opt out," Rep. Neal said. "I think automatic enrollment is a big deal for eligible participants."

There are also a host of sections in the bill focused on small businesses, which have a harder time offering retirement plans because of their size. These employers will offer access to startup tax credits and new inducements to pool their resources into multi-employer plans in the years ahead.

The bill also aims to help part-time employees at companies of all sizes. These employees often have to wait three years before they can enroll in a retirement plan. The new rules lessen the wait to two years beginning in 2025.

All told, Chris Littlefield, the

president of retirement and income solutions at Principal, estimates that “SECURE 2.0 will help generate approximately \$40 billion in retirement savings for new participants over the next 10 years.”

Novel Ideas Around

Also in the bill is a provision for treating student loans as deferrals for the purpose of retirement savings. What that means in practice is that student loans and retirement savings will now effectively be linked if an employer chooses to offer the benefit. Beginning in 2024, an employee could pay their student loan, but in the process earn a “match” from their employer with that money heading into a 401(k) or 403(b) or SIMPLE IRA account.

There is also a similar idea in the bill around linking retirement and emergency savings. Employers could offer their employees an option of putting money into an emergency fund alongside their retirement account. Employees would be able to save up to \$2,500 in an emergency fund — which they can tap anytime — with extra savings and possible matches going toward retirement.

Another part of the bill would make it easier for people to access their existing retirement plans for emergencies without paying the

onerous tax penalties that often come with withdrawing early. The bill provides an “exception for certain distributions used for emergency expenses,” according to a summary of the legislation.

“I’ve heard from so many people who had to raid savings meant for the future, not to mention countless others who have never had access to an employer-sponsored retirement plan,” Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA), the chair of the Senate’s HELP committee, said this week. “That’s why these reforms are so important.”

As for the big picture, “there’s some folks that have been left on the sidelines of the retirement savings game,” American Council of Life Insurers Vice President Kathleen Coulombe said recently. She represents one of many outside groups that helped push the bill over the finish line.

“It really seeks to help a lot of these vulnerable populations,” she said.

Other Notable Parts of the Soon-to-be Law

Other changes coming soon include updates to the SAVERS credit to make it more generous and increase awareness of the benefit. The credit allows certain lower-income workers

to get additional tax breaks when they save for retirement.

Another provision aims to make it easier for military spouses who sometimes are not employed long enough to be eligible to save to quickly join a workplace savings plan when they enter or re-enter the workforce. The provision also offers a tax credit of up to \$500 to help these spouses jumpstart their savings.

Another top-line provision would create a national “lost and found” database run by the Department of Labor for retirement accounts. Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) pushed this provision alongside Sen. Steve Daines (R-MT), and she said this week that the provision will “make it easier for Americans to keep track of their retirement savings and for employers to connect their former employees with the accounts they have left behind.”

What the bill won’t address is the challenge of Social Security, which could run low on funds as early as 2034. But lawmakers have long been wary of any changes to Social Security itself, often referred to as “the third rail of American politics.”

Ben Werschkul is a Washington correspondent for Yahoo Finance.

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INEQUALITY EVERY BILLIONAIRE IS A POLICY FAILURE

JAKE JOHNSON

As the world's corporate and political elite convened in Davos, Switzerland for the first winter World Economic Forum in three years, an analysis published Monday by Oxfam International found that the global rich have captured nearly two-thirds of all wealth generated since 2020—a period marked by a devastating pandemic, worsening costs of living crises, and continued fallout from the climate emergency.

In a new report titled *Survival of the Richest*, Oxfam shows that the top 1% worldwide grabbed \$26 trillion of the \$42 trillion in new wealth created, close to twice as much as the bottom 99% of the global population.

Billionaires, in particular, have seen their wealth explode since 2020, adding around \$1.7 million to their net worth for every \$1 in wealth gained by a person in the bottom 90% of the global income distribution. According to Oxfam, billionaires' fortunes have grown by an average of \$2.7 billion per day since 2020.

Meanwhile, nearly 2 billion workers across the globe likely saw inflation rise at a faster pace than their wages, resulting in a real pay cut that has increased poverty, hunger, and other hardships.

"While ordinary people are making daily sacrifices on essentials like food, the super-rich have outdone even their wildest dreams," said Gabriela Bucher, executive director of Oxfam International. "Just two years in, this decade is shaping up to be the best yet for billionaires—a roaring '20s boom for the world's richest."

Oxfam's report also spotlights how corporations have taken advantage of crises such as

pandemic-induced supply chain woes and Russia's war on Ukraine to drive up prices for consumers around the world, making it more difficult for billions of people to afford basic necessities.

The analysis finds that at least 95 food and energy corporations more than doubled their profits in 2022, bringing in \$306 billion in windfall profits and dishing out 84% of it to their shareholders.

"The Walton dynasty, which owns half of Walmart, received \$8.5

**According to Oxfam,
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— Jake Johnson

billion over the last year," Oxfam notes. "Indian billionaire Gautam Adani, owner of major energy corporations, has seen this wealth soar by \$42 billion (46%) in 2022 alone. Excess corporate profits have driven at least half of inflation in Australia, the U.S., and the U.K."

To combat skyrocketing inequality produced by excess corporate profits and the disproportionate wealth gains of the ultra-rich—who also contribute far more to the climate crisis than the rest of humanity—Oxfam argues that governments around the world should institute "a systemic and wide-ranging increase in taxation" targeting billionaires who often pay astonishingly low tax rates.

The new report cites the

example of Tesla CEO Elon Musk, who—according to Internal Revenue Service documents obtained by ProPublica—paid a true tax rate of just over 3% between 2014 and 2018.

By comparison, Oxfam observes, "Aber Christine, a flour vendor in Uganda, makes \$80 a month and pays a tax rate of 40%."

The aid group's report makes clear that Musk is hardly alone among billionaires in reaping massive wealth gains—much of it unrealized stock appreciation—while paying little tax.

"Every billionaire is a policy failure," the report says. "The very existence of booming billionaires and record profits, while most people face austerity, rising poverty, and a cost-of-living crisis, is evidence of an economic system that fails to deliver for humanity. For too long, governments, international financial institutions, and elites have misled the world with a fictional story about trickle-down economics, in which low tax and high gains for a few would ultimately benefit us all. It is a story without any basis in truth."

It's unclear whether the Davos summit—dominated by individuals and corporations committed to preserving and growing their wealth—

will feature discussion of anything close to the tax policy that Oxfam recommends. Specifically, the group calls on policymakers to "permanently increase taxes on the richest 1%... to a minimum of 60% of their income from both labor and capital, with higher rates for multi-millionaires and billionaires."

Oxfam also urges governments to "tax the wealth of the richest 1% at rates high enough to significantly reduce the numbers and wealth of the richest people and redistribute these resources. This includes implementing inheritance, property, and land taxes, as well as net wealth taxes."

Taxation is not mentioned in an overview of the World Economic Forum's central topics.

In a statement, Bucher said that “taxing the super-rich and big corporations is the door out of today’s overlapping crises.”

“It’s time we demolish the

convenient myth that tax cuts for the richest result in their wealth somehow ‘trickling down’ to everyone else,” said Bucher. “Forty years of tax cuts for the super-rich have shown that a

rising tide doesn’t lift all ships—just the superyachts.”

Jake Johnson writes for *Common Dreams*, *Huffpost*, and other publications.

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BARBARA KINGSOLVER: MAKING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE

DAVE KELLAWAY

Barbara Kingsolver is one of the best living writers of the socially engaged novel. She is a feminist, an ecologist, and very critical of big business and the military-industrial complex. Unlike many novelists writing today, she tells the lives of working people in an empathetic and political way. She follows in the footsteps of writers like Charles Dickens, Emile Zola, Elizabeth Gaskell, John Steinbeck, and Toni Morrison.

Inspired by a visit to Bleak House, a house where Dickens lived near Broadstairs, Kent, and had written David Copperfield, she decided to “outsource” her plot of *Demon Copperhead* and many characters to Dickens’ masterpiece. She also adopted its structure: longish with short chapters, with hooks at the end of each to nudge you into the next chapter. It is narrated like “Copperfield” in the first person by Demon. Even the names she uses for her characters are a call-out to the ones in David Copperfield.

The novel tells the story of Copperhead from birth until adulthood. Born an orphan to a single mother who is an addict, we follow the ups and downs (a lot of downs!) of his life. In the Appalachian region of Virginia, we live with the terrible inadequacies of the US foster and adoption systems. It is a brutal for-profit system in which social workers can become legal guardians without even knowing the children’s names. Foster parents come forward to pick up the social welfare check and/or to make use of cheap child

labor. Kingsolver might show us the misery, but it is not misery porn. She shows the solidarity and goodness of what mainstream Americans often call the “hillbillies” or “trailer trash.” Demon finally finds a good placement where he feels better and becomes a successful high school football star. Then injury strikes and he has to deal with the medication...

“You’re born with nothing you die with nothing but it’s amazing how much you lose in between.” — from *Demon Copperhead*

Kingsolver has lived in the areas where her books are situated, and her training as a biologist and her ecological commitment, lead her

**“You’re born
with nothing
you die
with nothing
but it’s amazing
how much you lose
in between.”
— from *Demon Copperhead***

— Dave Kellaway

to be stunningly precise and beautifully vivid about the local natural environment. In the head of Demon this is contrasted sharply with the numbness and concrete ugliness of the city. His dream in the book is to see the ocean.

In her BBC interview, the author says she was astonished when she researched the data regarding adoption and opioid addiction in that region. In some counties, 30 to 40% of children are not being raised by their biological parents. Of course, this is linked to the high opioid addiction rates, which mean many parents have

died early. Kingsolver, through the story of one character, shows the way profitable corporations promote their drugs, feeding off the problems of a deprived population. There is even a resale market where people who can get prescriptions for more than they need sell them on to the long lines of people waiting to get their drugs from the semi-corrupt doctor surgeries.

A black teacher in Demon’s high school is used by the writer to fill in the political and economic forces behind this crisis. We learn about how the mining companies moved in, taking away their land, and then moved out, leaving little but a damaged environment behind.

There was also some resistance and even some unity in the struggle with the black community at one stage.

Demon reflects on how his community is seen: “Show me that universe on TV or the movies. Mountain people, country, and farm people, we are nowhere to hell. It’s a situation being invisible. You can get to the point of needing to make the loudest possible noise just to see if you are still alive.”

The writer takes you into another world, but it is not just superficial observation and emotional connection. You learn about the class forces and economic factors that create it. According to Kingsolver in this interview, there is continuity between the social conditions of

19th-century England and modern-day America, such as child labor for poor children or alcohol and drug addiction. She makes socio-economic forces implicit, as she says:

“I write about big scary things but through character and story and craft.”

Kingsolver has been criticized for being overly political and dealing with big issues. She feels that this is often really about questioning a woman’s right to tell this sort of story. We had the same experience with visual artists. For centuries, women were permitted to paint still-

lives or portraits, but history painting with the big topics was out of bounds. As Kingsolver says, “men are raised to have ambition and women are accused of it.”

In other books, she has treated the issues of feminist growth and ecology, in *Flight Behavior*; or Christian missionary projects and colonialism in, *The Poisonwood Bible*. Her writing can also span historical periods. In *Lacuna*, she links the events of the US depression, McCarthyism, and the last days of Trotsky in Mexico with Frieda Kahlo and Diego Rivera. In *Unsheltered*, the book goes back and forth between the lived experiences of the same house. Today, a woman struggles with the US’s broken health system. In the 19th century, a teacher is caught up in conflicts around Darwinism. Kingsolver’s first novel, *The Bean Trees*, took up the issue of so-called “illegal” Central American migrants fleeing torture and repression along with the story of a working-class single mother struggling to make her way.

Her commitment to action on ecology has resulted in non-fiction works. One book, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life*, recounts the life of her own family as they go back to live on a farm in Virginia and grow their own food. She has written short stories and poetry as well as op-ed pieces. She is one of a minority of writers who deal seriously with rural communities.

Kingsolver was heavily criticized for an opinion piece in the Los Angeles Times for criticizing the US bombing of Afghanistan in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers. She received all sorts of threats and denunciations. She wrote:


“We’ve answered one terrorist act with another, raining death on the most war-scarred, terrified populace that ever crept to a doorway and looked out. (...) I feel like I’m standing on a playground where the little boys are all screaming at each other, ‘He started it!’ and throwing rocks that keep taking out another eye,

another tooth. I keep looking around for somebody’s mother to come on the scene saying, ‘Boys! Boys! Who started it cannot possibly be the issue here. People are getting hurt.’”

One of her most successful books, *Lacuna*, which won the Orange Prize for fiction, was partially written in response to that episode. She wanted to show how falsehoods could damage or destroy people and how powerful regimes can use them for political ends. Her comments could aptly describe the Trump or Johnson style of politics, where the truth is in short supply:


“It’s a fact of our culture that the loudest mouths get the most airplay, and the loudmouths are saying now that in times of crisis it is treasonous to question our leaders. Nonsense. That kind of thinking let fascism grow out of the international depression of the 1930s.”— *The Scottish Herald*, 2009

Dave Kellaway is a contributor to *International Viewpoint*. This interview was originally conducted on Open Book Radio, 11/4/2022.



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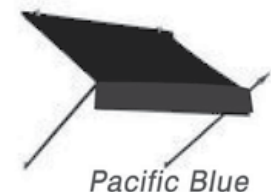
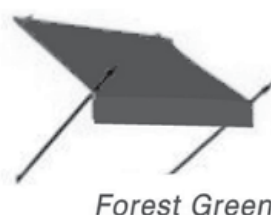
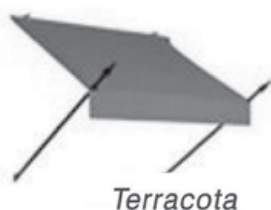


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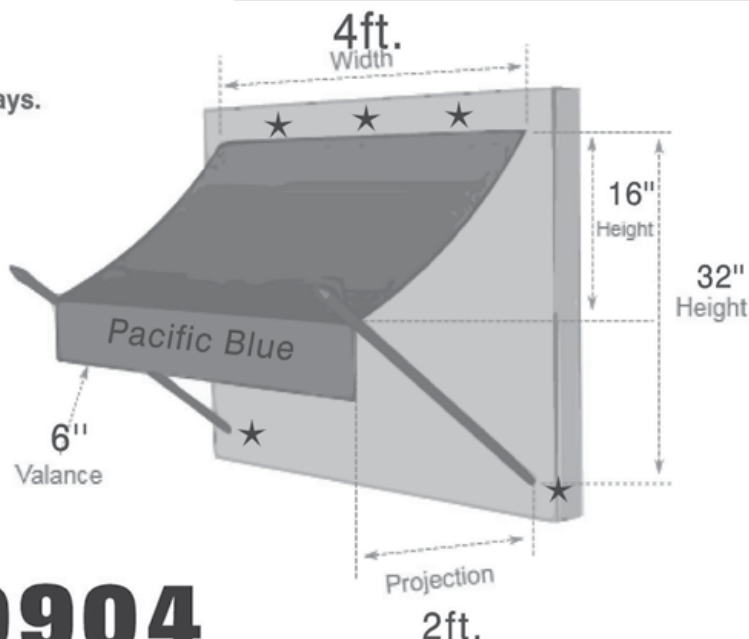
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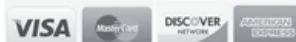
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A photograph of a sunny beach promenade. In the foreground, a person in a blue shirt and light pants walks away from the camera on a wide, light-colored paved path. To the right, several bicycles are parked in a rack. The background is filled with tall palm trees under a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. A low concrete wall and a building are visible on the right side.

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