

Daly City Library & Recreation Services
Active Adult/Senior Services
presents



Current Events with Frank Damon

Doelger Senior Center has been fortunate to have Frank Damon leading both our Current Events and History discussion groups for the last 6 years. During this time of physical distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Frank is sharing his current events discussion topics online. Starting on Monday, January 4, 2021 at 1:30 pm Frank will offer Current Events discussion groups each Monday on ZOOM.

Daly City Active Adult/Senior Services invites you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Current Events with Frank Damon

Time: 1:30 pm – 2:30 pm every Monday

Join Zoom meeting with following link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87222786510?pwd=d0VucFhGYzhMMXVhSUNJTmdFWDNwdz09>

Meeting ID: 872 2278 6510

Passcode: 724368

Frank received his BA degree from the University of San Francisco with a dual major in Political Science and American History. He also earned his MA in Political Science and teaching credentials at USF. Over the course of his career, Frank taught in the San Mateo Union High School District and at Marin Catholic High School, Terra Nova High School, Golden Gate University, College of San Mateo, Skyline College and Canada College.

If you are interested in joining *Current Events with Frank Damon*, please go to www.dalycityseniors.org/current-events or contact Frank directly at frankdamon@my.smccd.edu.

Woman in the News

She is the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, also known as the CDC. She took this job in January 2021. After graduating from Johns Hopkins Medical School, She decided to specialize in the prevention of infectious diseases. She moved to Boston to work at Massachusetts General Hospital, and to teach at Harvard Medical School. As one of the top infectious disease experts in the U.S., She has been important in the fight against COVID-19. In a recent briefing, she pointed out that COVID-19 cases have begun rising again in many places around the country where precautionary measures are being relaxed. She said this rise is giving her a sense of “impending doom.” She appealed to people to hold on a little longer and keep practicing measures that prevent the spread of the disease until most people are vaccinated.



Who am I? (Dr. Rochelle Walensky.)

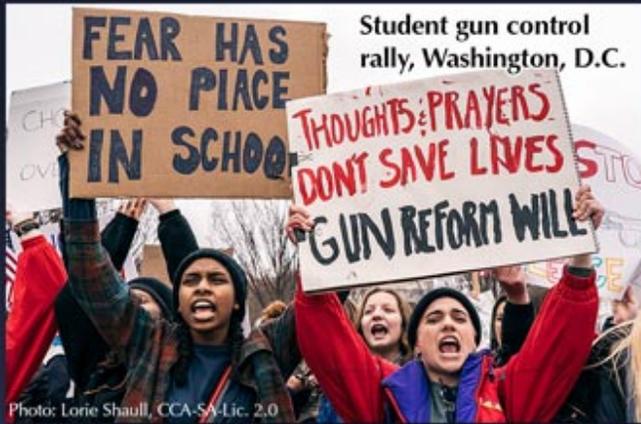
President Biden Proposes New Gun Control Measures

Just days after the tragic shootings in Georgia, a gunman killed ten people at a supermarket in Boulder, Colorado. These incidents have prompted many people, and politicians, to call for stricter gun control laws. In a recent speech, President Biden said, “I don’t need to wait another minute, let alone an hour, to take common-sense steps that will save lives in the future.” Do you agree with his sense of urgency?

Biden and other Democrats have proposed new gun control ideas on the federal level. One proposal would require universal background checks. This proposal would get rid of loopholes that currently allow people to buy guns online or at gun shows from unlicensed sellers without having to do a background check. Do you think gun purchasers should always have to undergo a background check?

Some politicians also want more oversight of gun merchants. Many Democrats, including the president, want to ban so-called “assault weapons” and high-capacity bullet cartridges. What are assault weapons? (Military-style guns that can fire many bullets per second.) Do you agree with this? These people argue that only military members and police officers should ever be allowed to carry assault weapons. And a fourth proposal says that more money should be spent on violence prevention. Democrats have passed gun control bills in the House of Representatives, but some are skeptical that the Senate would ever pass these laws.

President Biden proposes new gun control measures



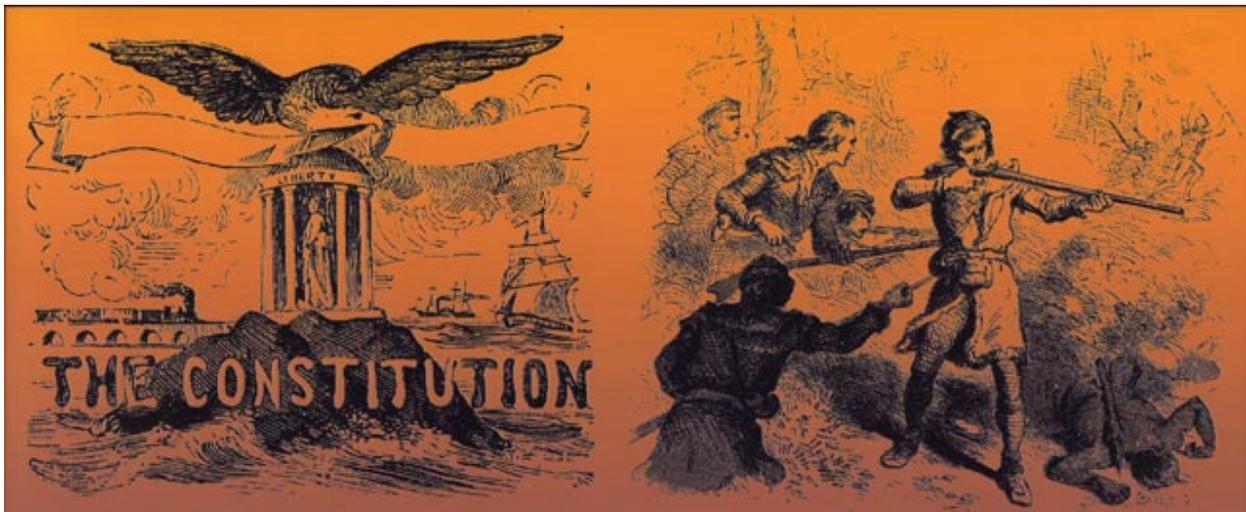
Ideas include:

- Increasing background checks
- More regulations for gun sales
- Banning assault weapons
- Investing in anti-violence programs



The debate over gun policy always comes back to the words below, taken from the Second Amendment to the Constitution. Due in part to its archaic terminology and punctuation, however, the intent of this amendment has been subject to interpretation. What is a militia? (A civilian army.) When the colonies fought for independence from Great Britain, they had to defend their independence without a substantial military. Ordinary citizens were called upon to defend the country, using their own weapons. The Second Amendment guaranteed their right to do this. Some gun-control supporters argue that today the Second Amendment should only apply to modern-day militia counterparts, such as police officers and military troops. Would you feel secure in a society in which only the military and police officers had guns?

They also point out that these words were written when “arms” meant the rifles and muskets of a frontier society, not semi-automatic assault rifles. Are these important considerations? However, the Supreme Court has ruled that the Second Amendment protects an individual right, not a collective right applying only to certain groups. They point to the phrase “the right of the people.” In no other part of the Constitution does that phrase refer only to a subset of Americans. However, the Court has agreed that the Second Amendment has limits. These limits can include a ban on fully automatic weapons, and bans on convicted felons owning weapons.



Second Amendment

A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

Here you see some statistics relating to gun ownership and gun violence in the U.S. What is the population of the U.S.? (About 328 million.) Although this is just five percent of the world's population, the U.S. has more than 40 percent of the civilian firearms. And, according to recent statistics, 30 percent of the world's public mass shootings take place in the U.S. Last year, the U.S. set a new record with at least 40,000 gun-related deaths. Were these all homicides? (No; most gun deaths are suicides.) But a high rate of gun ownership does not necessarily lead to a lot of gun deaths. The rate of gun ownership in Canada is 22 percent, compared with 30 percent in the U.S. But Canada has relatively few gun deaths. Many say this is due to its strict national gun laws. Only 12 percent of Canadians own handguns, and Canada banned the sale of assault-style weapons last year.

Gun control advocates also point to Australia as an example of a country that has greatly reduced gun homicides. That country experienced a mass shooting in 1996 that killed 35 people. Afterwards, the government made it illegal to own or sell assault weapons. They also instituted a mandatory gun buyback program. The government bought back all existing assault weapons and destroyed them. The country's gun homicide rate fell 59 percent in the first year alone. Does the U.S. have many national gun control laws? (No; most gun-related laws are set at the state or local level.)

The United States:

- Makes up 5 percent of the world's population
- Contains 40 percent of the world's civilian firearms
- Has 30 percent of the public mass shootings in the world
- Set a new record with at least 40,000 gun deaths in 2020



Pro-gun protester, Charlottesville, Virginia



Memorial for shooting victims, El Paso, Texas

Finland Named World's Happiest Country for Forth Year in a Row

Finland is number one in this year's World Happiness Report. This is the ninth year that the United Nations has done this report, and the fourth year in a row that Finland has been ranked #1. Why do you think the U.N. would be interested in learning and sharing information about which countries are happiest?

As you can see, all but one of the top ten happiest countries are in Northern Europe. Why do you think so many of the top ten countries are located in this part of the world? In all of the top ten countries, citizens and businesses pay relatively high taxes. Why, then, do you think they are so happy? Experts say these people are happier because their taxes pay for generous social safety nets, and all ten have some form of universal health care. Finland's population also has one of the best education systems in the world, as well as free higher education. Finland has also been able to develop new technology businesses to keep pace with the global economy. In years past, the report has also studied the happiness of immigrants in certain countries.

Finland has consistently ranked near the top of immigrant happiness as well. What do you think this shows about the Finnish people? The United States has never ranked higher than 11th place in the World Happiness Report. And although the U.S. still has the world's largest economy, this does not seem to correlate with its people's happiness. The U.S. has gone from 18th last year to 14th this year.



The World Happiness Report rankings are based on survey responses in six main categories. These categories are shown below. Do you know what “GDP per capita” means? (The country’s gross domestic product, or total value of the goods and services produced in a country in a year, divided by its population.) Overall wealth also helps to shore up a nation’s social support and healthy life expectancy. Do you think this is the main difference between Finland and bottom-ranked Afghanistan?

What differences do you see in the pictures here? It may seem obvious that richer countries are happier than poorer countries. Yet some of the richest countries in the world didn’t break the top 10 in the happiness ratings. Why do you think this is so? The other three rankings shown here are a lot more subjective. Equality and freedom are both big factors in happiness. People are less happy if they perceive that some people or groups in their society get more benefits and opportunities than others do. A society that values generosity also correlates very highly to happiness. Why do you think this is true? And people tend to give up hope when they know that their government, police force, or business world is corrupt. How would you define corruption? For example, Finland’s government is carefully balanced to protect citizens’ rights, whereas corruption in Afghanistan has increased significantly since the U.S. invasion in 2001.

World Happiness Report: Six key factors

- GDP per capita
- Social support
- Healthy life expectancy
- Freedom to make life choices
- Generosity
- Freedom from corruption



Helsinki, capital of top-ranked Finland



Kabul, capital of Afghanistan

Lacaton & Vassal Win 2021 Pritzker Prize

Some architects become famous by tearing down ugly old buildings, replacing them with shiny and fascinating new structures. But the French team of Anne Lacaton and Jean-Phillipe Vassal think this is a wasteful process. These architects work together to come up with ways to save and improve older buildings in Europe and West Africa by adding to them, instead of subtracting. From their words here, why do they do this? Why do you think they see the demolition of a building an act of violence? This unusual philosophy sets them apart — but it has also influenced many other builders. This influence will grow now that they have won the 2021 Pritzker Prize, often described as “the Nobel Prize in architecture.” Here, you see two of the projects that won them this honor. One is the house at Cap Ferret, along France’s western coast. Lacaton and Vassal did not want to disturb the natural pine forest in this area — so they simply built around the existing trees, incorporating them into the house’s design. Do you like this idea? Another project involved a tower block of apartments in Paris, so huge and hard to access that it was nicknamed “Alcatraz.” Many other builders would have destroyed the block, but Lacaton and Vassal added new features, such as huge windows and winter terraces. Shockingly, this was all accomplished while residents were still living in the apartments! Why do you think they did this? (Because moving, even temporarily, is a disruption.)

Lacaton & Vassal win 2021 Pritzker Prize

**Anne Lacaton and
Jean-Phillippe Vassal**



Photo: Laurent Chale

"Demolition is a waste of energy, a waste of material, and a waste of history. For us, it is an act of violence."

—The architects



Photo: Philippe Ruault

Tour Bois le Prêtre tower block, Paris

Cap Ferret House, French coast



Photo: Lacaton & Vassal



Cheetah Repopulation Effort Begins in India

For the first time in history, several nations are working together to move cheetahs from one continent to another. Since 2009, the Indian government has been creating a plan to reintroduce cheetahs into the wild. Does anyone know where cheetahs are found in the wild today? (Only Africa and Iran.)

A subspecies of the cheetah, known as the Asiatic cheetah, once lived across the Arabian Peninsula and in some parts of India. Unfortunately, the Indian cheetah population was hunted to extinction. The animal was declared extinct there in 1952. Now the Indian government is working with experts in Namibia and South Africa to bring the species to India's Kuno National Park. The current repopulation project has been in the works since 2009, but India's Supreme Court only approved the project last year. This isn't the first time India has tried to bring cheetahs back. In the 1970s, former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi tried to acquire a cheetah from Iran, but negotiations fell through before the project was completed. Why do you think this project has been important to India for so long? Animal experts are hopeful the cheetah repopulation effort will help other species and habitats in India.

Cheetah repopulation effort begins in India



“As a flagship species, the conservation of the cheetah will revive grasslands and its biomes and habitat.”

— Conservationist Dr. MK Ranjitsinh Jhala.

The cheetah is the fastest land animal on Earth. While hunting, an adult cheetah can maintain a regular rate of 40 miles per hour. In short bursts, they are capable of speeds of up to

75 miles per hour. These beautiful cats can accelerate from zero to 60 miles per hour within three seconds. Cheetahs have unusually large hearts and lungs that work together to circulate oxygen efficiently. At high speeds, the cheetah uses its tail as a means of steering, somewhat like a rudder.

Cheetahs are unusual in the cat family because they hunt during the day instead of at night. What do they hunt? (Gazelles, antelopes, rabbits.) Cheetahs' distinctive markings help camouflage them in tall, dry grasses as they sneak up on their prey. From the picture below, how effective is this camouflage? Once a cheetah bursts out of the grass, the chase usually lasts less than a minute. If they don't capture their prey quickly, cheetahs will usually give up. That is because they are built for speed rather than endurance, and get tired easily. Cheetahs also vocalize much like housecats: they hiss at danger, yowl with pain, and even purr. Unlike lions and tigers, however, cheetahs can't roar. Their beauty and other natural features make them status symbols as pets in some countries. This has fueled the illegal trafficking of cheetah cubs, which can fetch \$10,000 each. Sadly, most of these cubs die in transport.



Mother cheetah
and cubs

Photo: Charles J. Sharp, CC BY-SA 4.0

- The cheetah is the fastest land animal on Earth — it can run up to 75 miles per hour.
- Cheetahs hunt by day; their spots help conceal them in tall grasses.
- Cheetahs purr, yowl, and hiss like housecats

Atlanta Food Forest Provides Community with Free Fruits and Veggies

The photo here shows part of the Urban Food Forest in Browns Mill outside of Atlanta, Georgia. Food forests are agricultural spaces that combine trees and shrubs with crop plants like vegetables. This land management strategy is known as “agroforestry” and is intended to mimic how plants grow together in the wild.

The Food Forest in Browns Mill began in 2016, after a nonprofit group called the Conservation Fund bought over seven acres of land from a shut-down pecan farm. The Conservation Fund worked with the city of Atlanta and other groups to create a place where locals can access free, healthy, and sustainably grown produce. Today, the forest has over 2,500 different kinds of edible and medicinal plants available, including fruits, vegetables, nuts, mushrooms, and herbs. These plants grow under old pecan trees and alongside wild blackberry shrubs. For many people that live in cities, accessing affordable and healthy fresh food can be difficult. In Atlanta, one in four residents live in what is considered a “food desert.” What is a food desert? (An urban area with little access to fresh and affordable food options.)

In Browns Mill, the nearest grocery store to many residents is a 30-minute bus ride away. But organizations like the Browns Mill forest are working to make healthy foods easier to get. In the U.S., there are now around 70 free food forests across the country.



Atlanta food forest provides community with free fruits and veggies



Credit: Shannon Lee, The Conservation Fund Parks with Purpose Program

“It’s really a park for everyone. Every time I go there’s a community who respects and appreciates the fresh healthy foods.”
—Atlanta city councilwoman Carla Smith

The image is a composite graphic. At the top, a green banner contains the title "Atlanta food forest provides community with free fruits and veggies" in white text. Below the banner is a photograph of the Browns Mill food forest, showing several raised garden beds with various plants, surrounded by tall trees. In the upper right corner of the photo area, there is a map of Georgia with a red dot indicating the location of Browns Mill in Atlanta. The map also shows neighboring states: Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, and Florida. At the bottom of the graphic, a dark green background features a quote in white text: "It's really a park for everyone. Every time I go there's a community who respects and appreciates the fresh healthy foods." attributed to Atlanta city councilwoman Carla Smith. A small credit line "Credit: Shannon Lee, The Conservation Fund Parks with Purpose Program" is located just above the quote.

Country of the Week: Republic of the Congo

The Republic of the Congo is a Central African nation surrounded by Gabon, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and an exclave of Angola known as Cabinda. More than 5 million people live in this country. Much of the Republic of the Congo lies in the Congo Basin, a heavily forested area encompassing the Congo River, which is the second largest river in Africa.

Around 70 percent of the Republic of the Congo is covered in rainforests, which are fed by tributaries of the Congo River. These forests contain a lot of untapped mineral wealth that could benefit the country financially; but they are also home to many endangered species, including the western lowland gorilla, shown here. Mining could damage the natural habitats of these animals. Do you think the Republic of the Congo should start mining in its rainforests?

Brazzaville is the largest city in the Republic of the Congo as well as the capital. About 30 percent of the country's total population lives in Brazzaville. This city is the economic hub of the country, and it is a valuable shipping port. The economy of the Republic of the Congo is dependent on oil exports, and it is one of the biggest petroleum producers in Africa. In spite of this, more than 60 percent of the country's citizens live on less than \$3.50 a day. The president of the Republic of the Congo is Denis Sassou Nguesso—de-NEE sa-SOO en-GUESS-oo. He has been president for 37 of the last 42 years.

Country of the Week:
Republic of the Congo

Photo: Creative Studio, CC BY 3.0

Brazzaville

Photo: Bam15 - CC BY-SA 3.0

Congo Basin

Western lowland gorilla

Photo: Gorille utilisant un bâton pour sonder la profondeur d'un cours d'eau, CC BY 2.5

Denis Sassou Nguesso

The collage features the flag of the Republic of the Congo (green, yellow, and red diagonal stripes) in the top right. A map of Central Africa highlights the Republic of the Congo in red, with labels for Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Angola. The Atlantic Ocean is also labeled. An aerial photograph of Brazzaville shows the city along the Congo River. A photograph of a western lowland gorilla is shown using a stick to probe the water. A lush green rainforest scene is also included. A portrait of President Denis Sassou Nguesso is in the bottom right corner.

The Republic of the Congo was once part of the Kingdom of Kongo. In 1880, it was colonized by France. French companies exploited the country for its natural resources. They forced the native people to harvest rubber, ivory, and timber for no pay, and many died as a result. France also built many European-style buildings, including the Sacred Heart Cathedral, one of the oldest Catholic churches in Central Africa.

During World War Two, the Republic of the Congo was important to the French Resistance. What was the French Resistance? (A movement of French people who opposed the Nazis.) In 1944, French Resistance leaders met in the Congo for the Brazzaville Conference. The French promised to give more rights to their African colonies in exchange for their help defeating the Nazis. The Republic of the Congo became independent in 1960, and in 1969 it was renamed the People's Republic of the Congo and was established as a communist state. What communist symbols do you notice on the flag? (The color red, five-pointed star, hammer and plough.) The People's Republic of the Congo was allied with the Soviet Union during the Cold War. When the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, the People's Republic of the Congo dissolved too. In 1992, the country restored its original name. One famous fashion movement in the Republic of the Congo is called La Sape. Those who practice this are known as sapeurs. They wear European suits in bright colors.



This Week in History: Marian Anderson

Marian Anderson, who you see here, was a great opera singer. She was a contralto. Do you know what this means? (It is the lowest female voice.) But the range of her voice was so great that she could sing very low notes all the way up to high soprano notes. The great conductor Arturo Toscanini said, “a voice like hers only comes around once in a hundred years.” But this was not the only reason Marian Anderson was famous. On this week in 1939, she also became well known for breaking down barriers of racism.

Marian Anderson was born on February 27, 1897, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She began singing in church when she was just six years old. She tried to go to music school, but was told, “We don’t accept colored.” What did this mean? (That Black Americans could not go to that school.) Can you imagine growing up in a time when this was a common practice? Because of this, she didn’t study with a teacher until she was 17. Her family couldn’t afford the teaching fees, so her church and community helped pay for her lessons. Four years later, in 1925, she sang for the first time with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra — and became a star almost immediately. Soon, she was performing around the country and all over Europe. But even though Miss Anderson was a star, she still faced racism. In 1939, Miss Anderson planned to do a concert in Washington, D.C. The best place for a concert in that city was Constitution Hall. But the group that owned the hall, the Daughters of the American Revolution, or DAR, refused to let her perform there, simply because she was African American. This decision shocked the public. Eleanor Roosevelt, who was the first lady of the U.S. at that time, was so upset that she immediately resigned her membership in the DAR. Do you think this was a brave thing to do? What else do you know about Eleanor Roosevelt? Then Mrs. Roosevelt helped organize a free outdoor concert at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington. Why do you think they chose the Lincoln Memorial for this concert? (Perhaps because it has a huge mall that would hold a lot of people. Perhaps because Abraham Lincoln, the "Great Emancipator" symbolized freedom for Black Americans.)

Marian Anderson sings at the Lincoln Memorial



Photo: Robert S. Scurlock. Scurlock Studio Records, Archives Center, National Museum of American History

"I could not run away from the situation. I had become, whether I liked it or not, a symbol, representing my people. I had to appear."

—Marian Anderson



Photo: Carl Van Vechten collection, Library of Congress

What do you think Anderson is saying in the quote here?

The concert took place on April 9, 1939, which was Easter Sunday. Seventy-five thousand people came to hear Marian Anderson sing. It was the biggest crowd that had ever come to the Lincoln Memorial up to that time. Millions more listened to her on the radio. The concert was a triumph. Why do you think it became such an important symbol? What do you think it taught people about the way Black people were treated in the U.S.? Marian Anderson continued to perform around the world. In 1955, at the age of 57, she became the first Black American to sing with the Metropolitan Opera in New York. Marian Anderson didn't see herself as an activist. But she inspired civil rights leaders and performers who came after her. On August 28th, 1963, she performed again at the Lincoln Memorial; this time, it was in front of 250,000 people, as part of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Who else was involved in this important march? (Civil rights activists John Lewis, Diane Nash, Rosa Parks, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who gave his famous "I Have a Dream" speech at this event.) She received many honors during her long life, including the first Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1963. Marian Anderson died on April 8, 1993 at the age of 96.

Remembering When...

William Shatner, who just turned 90, stars in “Senior Moment.” One might think that William Shatner might slow down just a little bit. After all, he turned 90 years old on March 22nd. But this renaissance man is still going strong. His face and voice can be seen in commercials for many different services, products, and websites. Shatner continues to write science-fiction novels and non-fiction books about his life and career. And he even stars in a brand-new romantic comedy called, amusingly, “Senior Moment.” Does this sound like it might be fun to watch?

William Shatner was born in Montreal, Quebec, Canada in 1931. As a young man, he was involved in the early days of the Montreal Children’s Theater — where, according to another student, “He was fun and gorgeous, and he always played the prince.”

Remember When ...
**William Shatner
turns 90**

At the age
of 20 in 1951

As Captain James T. Kirk
on “Star Trek”

As Denny Crane in
“Boston Legal”

“I was built for
the long run,
not for the
short dash,
I guess.”

One of the pictures here shows him as a 20-year-old student at McGill University, where he studied economics. Can you see why people were drawn to him? After graduation, Shatner joined the Canadian National Repertory Theatre. One of his fellow actors there, Christopher Plummer, also went on to gain fame. As the 1950s wore on, Shatner alternated TV, stage, and movie roles, appearing in everything from “The Brothers Karamazov” to the Canadian version of “The Howdy Doody Show.” As the 1960s came around, he was verging on stardom; he became the toast of Broadway for “A Shot in the Dark,” where he co-starred with Julie Harris and Walter

Matthau. He also appeared on “The Twilight Zone” several times; one of these episodes was “Nightmare at 20,000 Feet,” in which he sees a gremlin on the wing of an airplane. Have you ever seen this famous episode? But despite his early acclaim and skill, William Shatner never quite turned into a movie star. Instead, he landed one of the most iconic TV roles of all time: Captain James Tiberius Kirk, commander of the Starship Enterprise on “its five-year mission to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations, to boldly go where no man has gone before.” Did you watch “Star Trek” during its first season in 1966?

As Captain Kirk, Shatner got to be funny, fearless, impetuous, and physical. His very human character played well off Mr. Spock, his Vulcan second-in command. Do you remember Leonard Nimoy as Mr. Spock? Kirk also got to romance young women from many different planetary systems. But after just three seasons, “Star Trek” was cancelled in 1969 due to declining ratings. It was later revived as an animated series, a movie franchise, and in several new configurations. Why has this show, which originally lasted just three seasons, been popular for so long?

The first Star Trek movie got Shatner’s career up and running again in 1979. He starred as the title character in the TV cop show “T.J. Hooker” in the 1980s, and also started working in commercials. His many advertisements brought him to the attention of the producers of the lawyer series “The Practice.” In 2004, he won an Emmy for playing erratic attorney Denny Crane on this series. The next year, he won a second Emmy for the same part on the spinoff show “Boston Legal.” Did you ever see this series?

During his life, William Shatner has been able to accomplish many other things. He has written science fiction novels and memoirs. He has a massive farm in Kentucky where he breeds and raises horses. He has released spoken-word albums, as well as an album that reached #1 on the blues charts in 2020. And he has appeared at many Star Trek-related conventions and events, even though he finds them slightly ridiculous. On March 26th, his new movie debuted on Netflix. In this movie, called “Senior Moment,” he plays a retired NASA pilot who falls in love with Caroline, played by 70-year-old Jean Smart. Would you like to see this movie? Shatner also wrote a book called “Live Long and...What I Learned along the Way.” His advice for living long is to stay active and say “yes” to opportunities.

Voting rights: Is Georgia's new law Jim Crow 2.0?

This was the week the Republican “effort to suppress the vote at all costs” became reality, said **Ruth Marcus** in *The Washington Post*. Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp, flanked by six white fellow Republicans and standing under a painting of a former slave plantation, signed Georgia’s SB-202, a 96-page package of laws designed to make it harder for Georgians—African-Americans in particular—to vote. Among other “shameful” measures, the bill restricts the use of mail-in ballots and ballot drop boxes, which Black Georgians used disproportionately in 2020, while requiring absentee voters to provide copies of state-issued ID that 200,000 voters, disproportionately Black, don’t possess. After the “terrible elections cycle” in 2020, explained Republican election official Alice O’Lenick, laws needed to be changed so “we at least have a shot at winning.” The law even criminalizes giving food or water to voters waiting in line, said **Zack Beauchamp** in *Vox.com*. Why? Hint: The hours-long voting lines in Georgia’s majority-Black urban centers are among the worst in the country. The new law even authorizes the state legislature—controlled by Republicans—to overrule county boards of election, “disqualifying voters and ballots as they see fit.” President Biden was not exaggerating this week when he slammed the law as “Jim Crow in the 21st century.”

To borrow Biden’s favorite phrase, “C’mon, man,” said *The Wall Street Journal* in an editorial. SB-202 actually preserves absentee balloting, but with an earlier application deadline and a voter-ID number replacing unreliable signature matching to verify each ballot. Drop boxes instituted because of the pandemic will be more tightly regulated, but will continue. How is it “Jim Crow 2.0” to give absentee voters more options than they had in 2019? As



Kemp signs the bill under plantation painting.

for the infamous “water ban,” said **Dan McLaughlin** in *NationalReview.com*, the law allows elections officials to provide food and water to waiting voters. What’s now banned are activists in union T-shirts or MAGA hats handing out Poland Spring or pizza as a form of subtle or overt electioneering.

The bill would “have been much worse” had an outcry not forced Republicans to water it down, said **Ed Kilgore** in *NYMag.com*. The proposed ban on Sunday “souls to the polls” voting, for example, was dropped. But we have a “rich record of public comments” affirming the law’s nefarious partisan intentions. Gov. Kemp justified the new law by citing “alarming issues with how the [2020] election was handled,” even though hand recounts, audits, and Republican elections officials found no evidence of fraud. The only “alarming issue” was that Democrats won, said **Steve Benen** in *MSNBC.com*, and the law’s “most ominous” provision has a cure for that. Partisan state legislators now have the power to intervene to reject ballots and make other critical elections decisions, making it possible for Georgia Republicans to legally do what Donald Trump demanded—simply “refuse to certify” a legitimately elected Democratic ticket.

Republicans don’t care if this all looks racist, said **Paul Waldman** in *The Washington Post*. In fact, they “want Democrats to accuse them of racism.” Why? Because it fires up their own voters, who are told hourly by Fox News and talk radio that accusations of racism are a weapon in the liberal plot to silence conservatives and subjugate white people. This paranoid narrative not only drives Republican voters to the polls—it distracts them “from asking what the GOP has actually done for them lately.”

Grading charter schools

Independent alternatives to public schools have sprung up across the nation. Are they succeeding?

What are charter schools?

They're publicly funded, independently run alternatives to traditional public schools. They have greater freedom than standard public schools to develop their own curricula and budgets, hire and fire teachers over performance, and set schedules and behavioral rules such as mandating uniforms. The "charter" in the name refers to a contract between the school and a state oversight body, or "authorizer." Since the first charter school opened in Minnesota in 1992, their numbers have boomed to more than 7,500 charter schools across 43 states and the District of Columbia. More than 3.3 million students now attend one—a number that's tripled since 2006. In some cities, including Detroit and New Orleans, a majority of public school students attend charter schools. The charter school movement remains highly controversial, but most experts agree that the best charters are producing phenomenal results. "There's a group at the top that are just remarkably successful in terms of helping students move forward," Margaret Raymond, the director of Stanford University's Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO), told *New York* magazine. "They're using resources in a dramatically different way."

Why are they controversial?

Teachers' unions and some progressives say that charter schools siphon off public education dollars, with lax oversight and very mixed results. Charter school advocates say they offer much-needed choice to parents and kids in poor neighborhoods with failing public schools, where many African-American and Hispanic students often lag white counterparts in wealthier districts by three or four grade levels. Charter schools also introduce free-market competition into education: They have to attract students, who only attend them by choice—and if the schools underperform, they can be shut down by states. Less hidebound by rules and tradition, charter schools are free to be "incubators of innovation," as charter school booster President Obama put it in 2012. Charter schools with the best track records—such as Success Academy, the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP), and Uncommon Schools—have longer school days, provide intensive tutoring, enforce order and discipline in classrooms, and promote high expectations for students, including that they will go on to college. There is no tenure protection for teachers, and if their students do not make the expected progress, they are fired.

How have charters performed?

There's no simple answer. "The charter track record can best be described as stunningly uneven," wrote the authors of the 2016 book *Charter Schools at*



Students at a KIPP charter school in Washington, D.C.

steadily improved as less-effective schools are weeded out. In some big cities, the advocates say, the charters' success is spectacular.

What's the proof?

In Boston, a team of researchers concluded that charter schools had reduced "the black-white reading gap in middle school by two-thirds." A 2015 CREDO study found urban charters gave their students the equivalent of 40 additional school days of learning in math and 28 additional days of learning in reading every year. After Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans made every public school a charter school. Since then, the graduation rate has grown by 9 percent, the number of students attending college has jumped 10 percent, and student math and reading scores have moved from the 22nd percentile nationally to the 37th. "It is very unusual to see programs and policies improve all of these outcomes," said researchers Douglas Harris and Matthew Larsen of Tulane University.

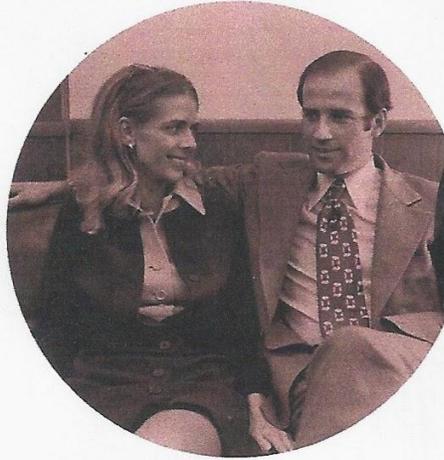
What is the future of charter schools?

Politically, the ground has shifted in recent years. While support among conservatives remains strong, progressive opposition has intensified out of fear that charters will undermine public education. That opposition hardened during the presidency of Donald Trump, whose education secretary, Betsy DeVos, was a staunch charter school advocate. In 2016, the NAACP called for a moratorium on the expansion of charters. In Los Angeles County, the board of education has called for a moratorium on new charters. In New York City, where 235 charter schools serve 123,000 students, Mayor Bill de Blasio has said he "hates" charters and is trying to restrict their growth. On the campaign stump, President Joe Biden declared himself "not a charter school fan," and in a 2018 poll, only 36 percent of Democrats supported charter schools. Sociologist Eve Ewing, who studies education, says the analysis of charter school performance "has become more of an ideological debate, split neatly into opposing factions, than it is a policy discussion informed by facts."

Virtual charters: An 'F'

The pandemic created a boom for the most controversial sector of charter education: virtual charter schools. Such schools account for a small segment of charter students, enrolling about 300,000 full-time students in the 2017-18 school year. But that number has spiked over the past year, as parents have sought alternatives for children shut out of traditional classrooms. K12 Inc., a major operator of virtual charter schools, saw its enrollment grow 57 percent, to 195,000; Connections Academy, which operates 46 schools across 29 states, reported 41 percent growth. That's unwelcome news for critics who say the virtual schools—many of which are run by for-profit operators—have been dismal performers, producing high student turnover, low scores and graduation rates, and accusations of fraud and profiteering. A CREDO study of online charter students' performance between 2008 and 2013 found they lost 72 days of learning in reading compared with students in traditional public schools—and a staggering 180 days in math. "It is literally as if the kid did not go to school for an entire year," said CREDO director Margaret Raymond.

HOW JOE'S FAMILY COMPARES (AND CONTRASTS) WITH JFK'S FAMOUS DYNASTY.



As an admirer of John F. Kennedy, Joe Biden closely followed his political career from the House of Representatives to the Senate and, ultimately, the White House. Although they were raised hundreds of miles apart—with very different pedigrees—the two hotshot Democrats and their tight-knit families have much in common.

Name Game

The Biden and Kennedy patriarchs were both named Joseph, which they passed on to their firstborn sons (JFK's brother was killed in World War II). The fathers were also businessmen, although Kennedy was considerably more successful, with ventures from Hollywood to Wall Street.

The Boston Connection

The Kennedys originally hailed from Brookline, Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston. Coincidentally, the Bidens briefly lived in the state capital following the end of WWII, when Joe was a toddler.

Keeping the Faith

Their shared Catholic religion was the backbone of both families—and it set them apart in politics. In 1907, Biden's maternal great-grandfather, Sen. Edward Francis Blewitt, became one of the first Irish Catholics to hold state office in Pennsylvania. Fifty-plus years later, JFK became the first Catholic president. In 2009, Biden became the first Catholic VP and, come January, he'll officially be the second Catholic commander in chief.

Grandfather Figures

Growing up, JFK and Biden learned about politics from listening to their maternal grandfathers' conversations.

Family Affair

Although two decades apart, when JFK and Biden ran for the Senate, both campaigns were staffed by their parents and siblings.

Brotherly Bond

For nearly all of Biden's 36 years in the Senate, he served alongside his hero's youngest brother, Edward "Ted" Kennedy (Massachusetts), who became a close friend.

Irish Roots

Not only can both families trace their lineage back to Ireland—they emigrated just one

month apart. In April 1849, JFK's maternal great-grandfather, Thomas Fitzgerald, arrived in America amid the devastating Irish potato famine and settled in Boston (paternal great-grandfather Patrick Kennedy came over during the same period). Biden's paternal great-grandfather Owen reached New York in May 1849, followed by his maternal ancestors, the Finnegans, the next year.

Going Strong

When Biden thinks of what his father always told him—"It's not about whether you get knocked down but how quickly you get up"—JFK's resilient family comes to mind. "The Kennedys, no matter what hit them, they got back up."

BIDEN PROMISES NEW PRIORITIES FOR THE COUNTRY AFTER DONALD TRUMP'S FOUR YEARS IN OFFICE.

Health Care

As president, Biden will protect the Affordable Care Act ("Obamacare"). And he intends to build upon it by providing more choices, reducing health care costs, allowing tax credits to lower premiums, and extending coverage for working Americans.

Immigration

According to Biden, Trump's immigration policies were "grounded in fear and racism rather than fact." As president, he will immediately reverse the practice of separating families at the border, rescind the ban on travel from

some Muslim-majority countries, allow DREAMers to remain in the country, end the siphoning of federal dollars to build "The Wall" and monitor ICE to ensure humane treatment.

Gun Violence

To end the epidemic (with respect to the Second Amendment), Biden will work to successfully ban assault weapons (just as he did in 1994), require background checks for all gun sales and end the online sale of firearms and ammunitions. His attorney general will have 100 days to deliver

recommendations for restructuring justice department agencies to most effectively enforce gun laws.

LGBTQ Issues

Within his first 100 days, a top legislative priority is reenacting the Equality Act, which prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, especially in the workforce and military. Regarding gay and transgender youth, Biden aims to protect them from harassment at school and eliminate the demographic's high rate of homelessness and suicide.

Education

Biden will replace Betsy DeVos as secretary of education. He pledges to support teachers with the pay they deserve, ensure no child's future is determined by their family's income, ZIP code or race, and make two years of community college tuition-free (as well as more than halve payments on undergrad student loans).

Climate Change

"In exactly 77 days, a Biden Administration will rejoin" the Paris Climate Agreement, Biden tweeted on Nov. 4. He will also convene a summit with major carbon-emitting nations and lock in agreements to reduce emissions in aviation and air shipping. In the U.S., his Clean Energy Revolution will strive for a 100 percent clean-energy economy and net-zero emissions by 2050.

Military Families

Biden will relaunch Joining Forces, his wife's military initiative, and prioritize improving education for military children and resources for spouses, particularly employment opportunities.



LOVE OVER HATE

The LGBTQ community is important to Biden, who visited a memorial for the Pulse nightclub shooting with Obama.

Accused murderer of George Floyd goes on trial

What happened

Jurors heard competing accounts this week of why George Floyd died at the hands of Minneapolis police, as the trial began of Derek Chauvin, the former officer who stands accused of murdering Floyd in a racially charged death that triggered massive demonstrations and a national reckoning over systemic racism. Prosecutors replayed the infamous cellphone video that showed Chauvin impassively kneeling on Floyd's neck for 9 minutes and 29 seconds, as the Black 46-year-old—arrested for allegedly using a counterfeit \$20 bill to buy cigarettes—pleaded, “I can’t breathe,” and distraught onlookers begged Chauvin to stop. The cause of death was clear, prosecutor Jerry Blackwell told jurors: Chauvin choked the life out of him. “You can believe your eyes,” he said. “It’s homicide, it’s a murder.” Chauvin’s defense attorney, Eric Nelson, told jurors not to rely on the video, saying it fails to reveal a more complicated reality. He said Floyd, who had fentanyl and methamphetamine in his system, died from a mix of intoxication, heart disease, and hypertension, aggravated by adrenaline from the struggle. “The evidence is far greater than 9 minutes and 29 seconds,” said Nelson.

Prosecutors called several witnesses to the stand, including Darnella Frazier, who filmed the viral video. Frazier, 18, wept as she recalled Floyd “begging for his life” and the “cold look” on Chauvin’s face. She spoke of wrestling with guilt for not doing more to save Floyd—who, she said, could have been her father or brother. “We all knew it wasn’t right,” she said. A city firefighter tearfully recounted offering medical assistance to Floyd and being rebuffed by one of Chauvin’s three partners. “I was desperate to help,” she said. “There was a man being killed.”

Security was tight for one of the most closely watched trials in decades, with the Minneapolis courthouse ringed by metal fencing, concrete barriers, and National Guard troops. Ben Crump, a lawyer for Floyd’s family, cast the trial as a test of whether police who wrongfully kill Black men in America can be held accountable. “The whole world is watching,” Crump said.

What the editorials said

“After the speeches, the hashtags, the marches,” this trial will judge one man’s guilt or innocence, said the New York *Daily News*. The facts seem clear: Despite Floyd’s drug intake and his health issues, the “autopsies leave no doubt” that Chauvin’s depraved actions asphyxiated George Floyd. “We pray he pays a steep price.”



Chauvin, right, with lawyer Eric Nelson in court

The trial is “another test of just how much Black lives matter in this country,” said *The Baltimore Sun*. Time and again, police officers who’ve killed African-Americans have walked away despite “damning evidence.” Think of Breonna Taylor, Tamir Rice, Michael Brown, Eric Garner. “All died at the hands of police. No one was held accountable in court.” We can only hope this time the jury will send a “loud and clear” message that police who use excessive force “will face the consequences.”

What the columnists said

What’s on trial here is a belief system that “started long before Floyd was murdered,” said LZ Granderson in the *Los Angeles Times*. For centuries, Black America has watched police and our justice system “use every tool imaginable to try to prove that our lives do not matter.” Compare how Floyd was treated over a \$20 bill to how police treated the white insurrectionists who stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6. That’s why even with Chauvin’s brutality caught on video, “many of us are worried that won’t be enough.”

Those who expect a murder conviction should be “forewarned,” said retired FBI agent James Gagliano in the *New York Post*. Chauvin’s actions were “repugnant and, yes, criminal.” But Floyd’s drug use and heart condition—which the county medical examiner said may have contributed to his death—complicate matters, and proving that Chauvin *intended* to kill Floyd may be impossible. He’s more likely to be convicted of manslaughter—recklessly endangering Floyd’s life.

Let’s remember that “Chauvin is the man on trial, not Floyd,” said Eugene Robinson in *The Washington Post*. His casual kneeling on Floyd’s neck “looks like a performance”—a demonstration of the police’s domination over the African-American neighborhood they were assigned to protect. That is “the essence of the problem with police violence in this country.”

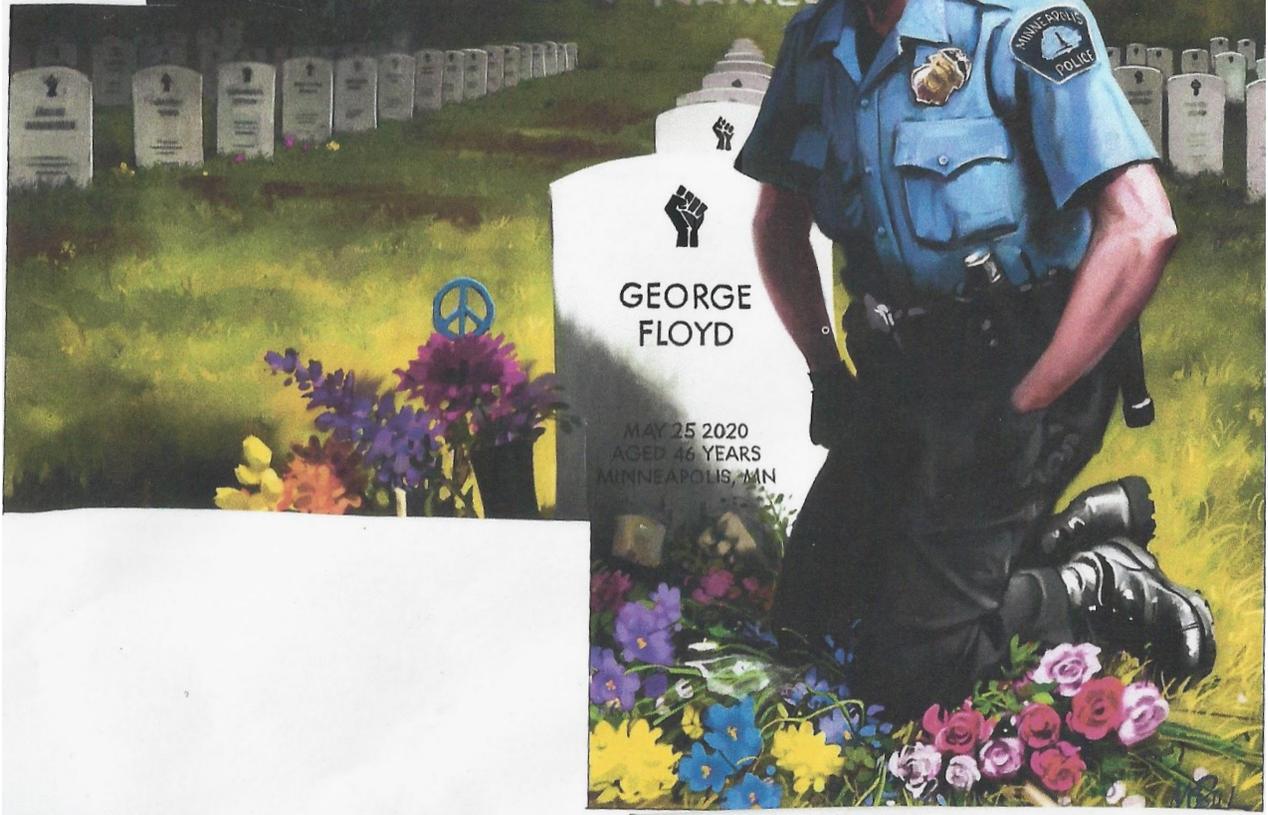
The video is damning, said former prosecutor Elie Honig in *CNN.com*, but “anybody who tells you they know for sure what any jury will do has never tried a case.” Juries are made up of human beings, “and we humans are nothing if not mercurial.” The uncertainty doubles in any case involving the police—“multiply it again when the case involves race.” Now we’ll see if the jury can find its way through this thicket to justice. “The stakes—for the entire country—are enormous.”

What next?

A ruling by Judge Peter Cahill means jurors will see a “dramatic” video of a previous Floyd arrest that could tip them “toward acquittal,” said Paul Butler in *The Washington Post*. In the 2019 incident, a resisting Floyd was pulled from his car, handcuffed, and hospitalized, after being treated by paramedics who said “his blood pressure was so high that he was at risk for a stroke or heart attack.” Initially, Cahill refused to allow the video into evidence, saying it could bias jurors against Floyd, but he recently reversed himself. Chauvin attorney Eric Nelson “has yet to say whether his client will testify,” said Andrés Martínez and Tim Arango in *The New York Times*. But legal experts say “it may be the best opportunity to dampen the impact of the video.” Jurors “need to hear from Chauvin and begin to empathize with him,” said Craig Futterman, a professor at the University of Chicago law school. That “will be much more difficult without speaking to the jury.”

Justice on trial

Former Officer Derek Chauvin's attempt to deny responsibility for George Floyd's death



After huge 2020 turnout, GOP moves to restrict voting

By Sanya Mansoor

MOMENTS AFTER GOVERNOR BRIAN KEMP signed a sweeping overhaul of Georgia's election law, state representative Park Cannon, a Democrat, knocked on the door of his office. Kemp was making an announcement inside, and law-enforcement officials told Cannon to stop. She continued, and was swiftly dragged down a corridor of the state capitol by two Georgia State Patrol officers. "All we asked is for her to be able to see [Kemp] sign a bill that is signing our rights away," state representative Erica Thomas, a Democrat who watched Cannon's arrest, said in a video posted on Instagram. "And you arrested her."

What Kemp was signing on March 25 was among the first in a spate of new restrictions on voting, igniting a political battle over the future of voting rights in the country. Republicans in Georgia say the new law is necessary to preserve "election integrity," restore public confidence in voting and root out fraud that election officials say exists almost entirely in the minds of losing candidates. (Georgia secretary of state Brad Raffensperger has repeatedly said there was no widespread fraud in the state's elections.)

The law strengthens voter-ID requirements for absentee ballots and imposes new limits on drop boxes, offering food or drink to voters in line, and more. Democrats and voting-rights advocates say this amounts to a thinly veiled attempt to suppress turnout after last year's elections, and will make it harder for Black and other minority voters—as well as poor and disabled Georgians—to cast ballots. They call it a blueprint for a broader strategy to roll back voting rights in GOP-controlled state legislatures across the country.

"It's sick and un-American what they're doing, and it cannot stand," President Joe Biden said of the Republican efforts to restrict voting in dozens of states. Describing the new Georgia law's likely disproportionate impact on minority voters as "Jim Crow in the 21st century," he said the Justice Department is "taking a look" at what the federal government can do to blunt the law, and urged Congress to pass a Democrat-sponsored voting-rights bill currently before the Senate. Democratic lawyer Marc Elias, the Georgia NAACP and voting-rights groups have already filed lawsuits challenging the law.

IT'S NOT A COINCIDENCE that Georgia is at the center of this fight. Voting-rights advocates in the state have worked for years to get out the vote among underrepresented

communities. Their campaign helped drive record turnout in recent elections. It also coincided with a major electoral defeat for Republicans: Biden flipped the state blue, for the first time in decades, and two Democratic newcomers unseated the state's incumbent GOP Senators in subsequent runoff elections.

But Georgia is not the only state where Republicans, in the wake of 2020's record turnout, are moving to restrict voting. As of Feb. 19, lawmakers were pushing 253 bills that could restrict voter access in 43 states, according to the Brennan Center for Justice, a nonprofit researching democracy. (There are also several hundred bills that seek to increase voting access,

and legislatures in New Jersey and Kentucky have recently passed measures expanding early voting.) Many of the restrictive proposals target early and mail voting in other battleground states, like Arizona, Florida and Texas.

Some of these efforts fall in line with broader conservative messaging. The Heritage Foundation recommends states improve "election integrity" by pushing policies to root out fraud, particularly through strict voter-ID requirements. The Republican State Leadership Committee—the GOP's election arm for state-legislature and secretary-of-state races—is coordinating what it calls a national effort to "make it easier to vote and harder to cheat."

DOWN VOTING

FLORIDA

Republicans are considering banning ballot drop boxes and adding limits to vote-by-mail.

TEXAS

Republicans have put forth new proposals that would restrict the hours when counties could offer early voting.

ARIZONA

Republicans are pushing bills that would remove infrequent voters from an early-voting list and shorten the state's early voting period.

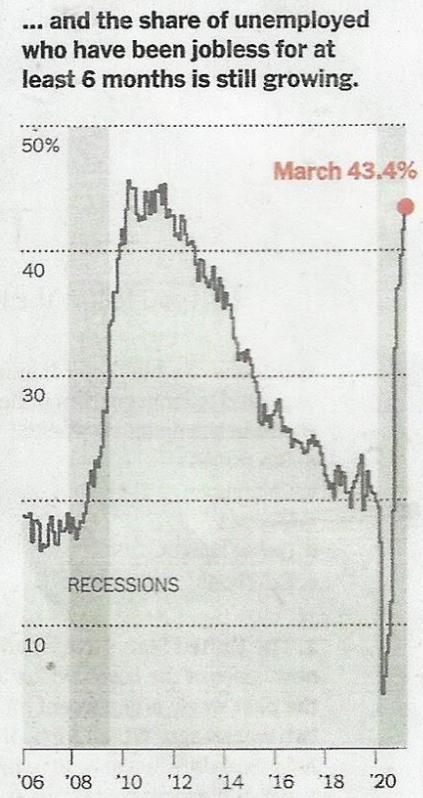
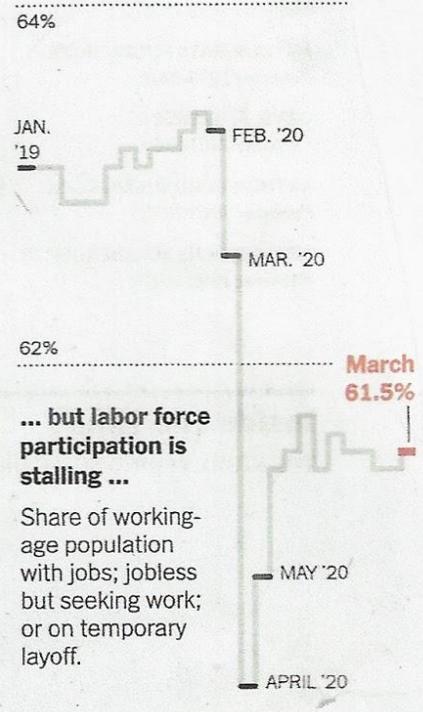
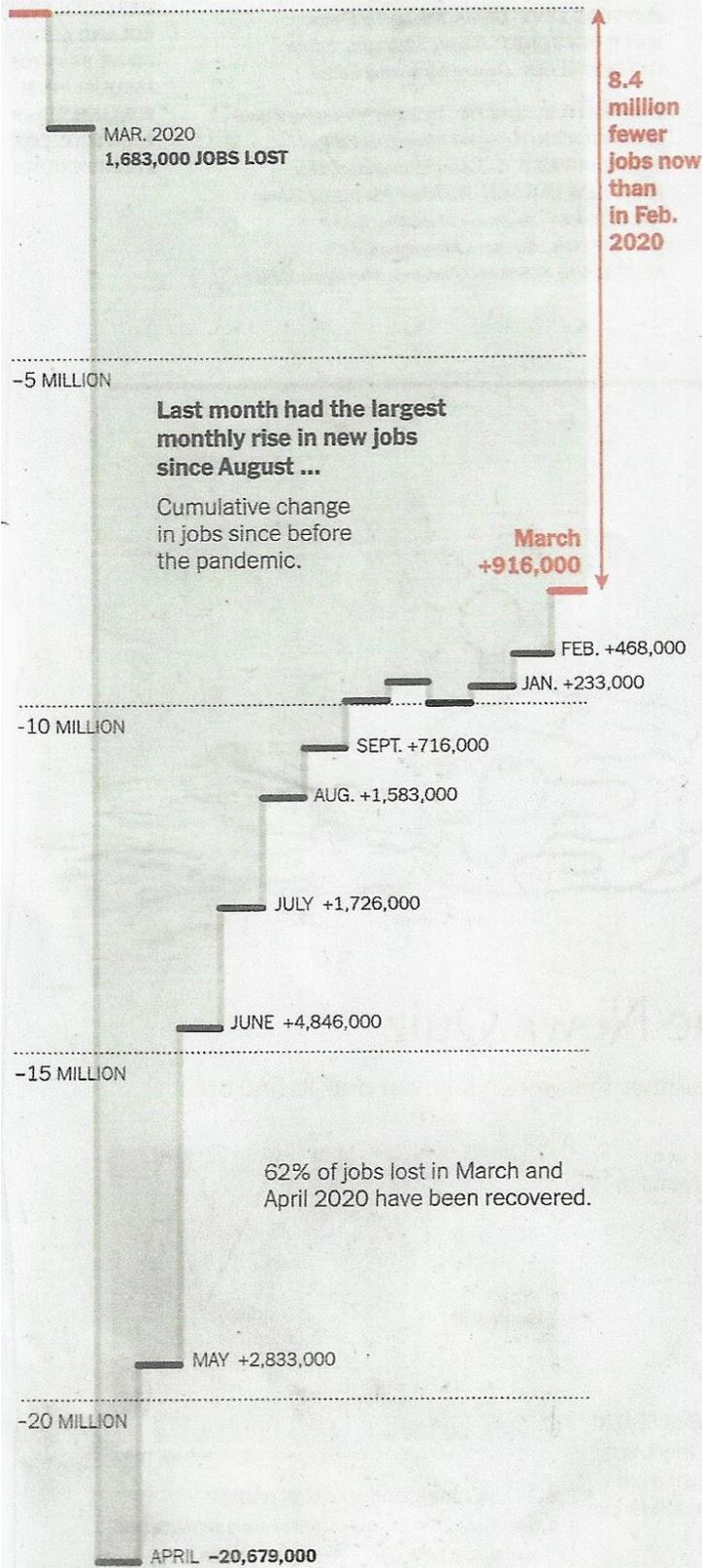
DEMOCRATS IN STATE LEGISLATURES across the country are looking to Congress for ways to fight back. A comprehensive voting bill—including requirements for states to automatically register eligible voters, restore voting rights of formerly incarcerated citizens and allow no-excuse absentee balloting, among dozens of other measures—passed the House on March 3. But the bill is unlikely to pass the divided Senate, where it would require 60 votes, without filibuster reform. And even then, it's not yet clear whether all 50 Democratic votes in the upper chamber are on board.

Carol Anderson, chair of African-American studies at Emory University in Atlanta and author of *One Person, No Vote*, says the U.S. has been here before. She compares the Georgia law and other proposed bills around the country to attempts in the late 19th century to disenfranchise Black voters that relied on "an array of policies that were designed and that worked together."

"If the poll tax didn't get you, the literacy test would," Anderson says. "If the literacy test didn't get you, then the good-character clause would. It's a web." — *With reporting by* BRIAN BENNETT/WASHINGTON

A Big Step Forward in Jobs, but a Full Recovery Could Take Time

Feb. 2020: Total of 153 million U.S. jobs



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics | Note: Data is seasonally adjusted.