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"Those Kids Are No Longer Yours"

ANNA CAVELL
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After Kavanaugh

With the confirmation of Brett Kavanaugh, the Supreme Court of the United States is now a wholly realized threat not just to social and economic progress, but to equal justice under the law. Kavanaugh himself promised that would be the case at the conclusion of the confirmation charade orchestrated by Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell and Senate Judiciary Committee chairman Chuck Grassley. The nominee raged against “the left” and imagined that senators who had concerns about allegations of sexual abuse, his lies under oath, and his judicial record were part of “a calculated and orchestrated political hit, fueled with apparent pent-up anger about President Trump and the 2016 election.” Now that Kavanaugh has been seated, how can any of us forget the menacing message in his testimony: “What goes around comes around”?

These are more than the idle words of an out-of-control partisan. Because Kavanaugh could occupy the Court into 2093, they represent a chilling threat that must be addressed. If Democrats take charge of the House Judiciary Committee in November, they have a duty to examine testimony that former Supreme Court justice John Paul Stevens said rendered Kavanaugh unfit to serve on the high court, along with credible complaints about abuse and evidence that the new justice perjured himself under oath.

It is important for progressives to hold Kavanaugh to account, but that cannot be the end of it. There is a much broader need to come to grips with the challenges posed by a fully corrupted confirmation process and a fully compromised Court. The first response must be a clear-eyed and pragmatic focus on the midterm elections, which are now just weeks away. It is easy—and appropriate—to be angry with Senator Susan Collins, the faux moderate who has never voted against a Republican nominee for the Court. Unlike the sole dissenting Republican, Senator Lisa Murkowski, who described Dr. Christine Blasey Ford’s testimony as “very credible” and took seriously the message of Alaskans who said that Kavanaugh should not be confirmed, Collins provided essential cover for McConnell’s machinations in a shameful floor speech praising the nominee.

Yet Collins is not on the ballot this year. Other Republican senators who aggressively defended Kavanaugh are up for reelection, and several of them—particularly Dean Heller in Nevada and Ted Cruz in Texas—are vulnerable. The focus should be on those races, and on the reelection runs of red-state Democrats who, unlike West Virginia’s calculating Joe Manchin, cast votes of conscience against Trump’s nominee. When the critical test came, North Dakota’s Heidi Heitkamp, Missouri’s Claire McCaskill, and Indiana’s Joe Donnelly did the right thing. If they are reelected in November, the signal will be that standing strong against the president’s bully-boy politics is morally necessary and politically smart. Wins by Democrats in these races have the potential to flip the Senate and put the people who opposed Kavanaugh in charge of the confirmation process going forward. That would be sweet justice.

Shifting control of the Senate is vital, but that’s still an insufficient response; progressives must acknowledge the broader crisis and redouble their efforts to address it. Kavanaugh joins a right-wing activist majority on the Court that extends not from the will of the people but from our broken and dysfunctional politics. He is the fourth member of that majority to be nominated by a president who lost the popular vote. The genius of the American experiment has been its adaptability—much of it achieved by amendments to the Constitution that the founders knew would need to be changed. Yet the Electoral College lingers as the unreformed remnant of a period in which compromises between slaveholders and wealthy merchants were designed to thwart democracy. Advocates for constitutional amendments to get corporate money out of politics and to guarantee the right to vote—essential responses to the Court’s disastrous decisions...
in Citizens United v. FEC and Shelby County v. Holder—must add to their agenda the elimination of the Electoral College. They can also work for short-term fixes like the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact, in which states formally agree to cast their electoral votes for the winner of the popular ballot.

Progressives must also make structural reform of the courts a priority. A century ago, presidential contenders like Theodore Roosevelt and Robert La Follette proposed sweeping reforms of the federal judiciary, which was well understood as a reactionary threat. There were calls for legislation and constitutional amendments that would give Congress the power to defend laws that the Supreme Court sought to overturn, and to change the courts themselves with term limits for judges and provisions for the recall of errant jurists. President Franklin Roosevelt tried in the 1930s to expand the Supreme Court so that dinosaur justices appointed in the distant past could not block the New Deal. These calls for reform were dismissed as radical. But history often reminds us that the radicalism of one moment is the common sense of the next. That next moment has come. The awful corruptions of politics and process that put Brett Kavanaugh on the Supreme Court demand the immediate response of a new Senate and the longer-term response of a common-sense movement to reform the federal judiciary.

JOHN NICHOLS

My Word Count

Hope, then organize.

On September 30, 2016, Rachael and I celebrated one year of marriage and 11 years together by booking a hotel room in Los Angeles and going out for fancy Asian fusion. It was our first night away from our 4-month-old son, Carl. Rachael had a great new job as an English professor in Santa Barbara. My career as a progressive activist was going gangbusters. We had just bought a beautiful house and could see decades of happiness stretching out ahead of us. We were the luckiest people we knew.

The next morning, we had brunch with my oldest friend, a first-year medical resident. I mentioned to her that my left hand was feeling weak, and after playing with it for a few minutes, she told me I needed to see a neurologist.

The following Friday, at the ripe old age of 32, I was given my death sentence: The doctor told me I had ALS—amyotrophic lateral sclerosis—which would rapidly destroy all the connections between my brain and my muscles, leading to complete paralysis and death, likely in three to four years.

Three weeks later, our world was turned upside down a second time, when America elected a racist kleptocrat to the White House.

Like many people suddenly confronted with agonizing loss, I looked for answers in Buddhism. Pema Chödrön teaches us that when the ground disappears beneath your feet, the solution is not to flail around in a desperate attempt to find a handhold; it is to accept the law of gravity and find peace despite your velocity. Leave the mode of doing and enter the mode of being. Accept things as they are, rather than yearning for them to be otherwise.

Such radical acceptance is in tension with my identity as a movement builder. Activism is precisely about not accepting the tragedies of this world, but rather on insisting that we can reduce pain and prolong life. Social justice means creating a stable floor beneath our feet and then putting a safety net under that, to catch us if it suddenly vanishes: universal health insurance, affordable housing, unemployment benefits. Being part of a progressive political movement is about fighting back and building toward a better future. “Acceptance” is not part of our vocabulary.

The theologian Reinhold Niebuhr—whose most famous disciple, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., would become the patron saint of American organizers—sought to resolve this tension in his Serenity Prayer: asking for the serenity to accept what cannot be changed, the courage to change what can be, and the wisdom to know the difference.

I have tried to internalize this worldview. I am no longer ruffled by quotidian nonsense, or even by the onset of new symptoms, such as when, earlier this month, I stopped being able to feed myself. I have come to accept that my ALS is progressing faster than average, that my body is wasting away quickly, and that what I have today will soon be gone. But there is one thing that still overwhelms me: when I imagine the future life of Rachael and Carl, who is now 2. The weekend hikes, the afternoons on the basketball court, the evenings playing backgammon and doing homework, the mornings eating breakfast and laughing about the latest absurdity emanating from Washington, DC—these are the moments that I picture spending with them in an alternate universe. When this mental exercise brings me to tears, as it always does, I try to be at peace in my sorrow. But it is not easy.

Because of the weakness in my lips and tongue and my shortness of breath, becoming emotional makes it difficult for me to utter the words you are reading. My fingers have lost nearly all of their strength, so typing these words is impossible. Instead, I sit with my scribe, Aiyana, in my room. She now understands me better than anyone else, but even she has begun to ask me to repeat myself. Even when it is quiet. Even when we are sitting side by side.

For 20 years, since I was a freshman in high school, I have been writing newspaper op-eds and giving timed speeches—first on the debate team and at thespian festivals, later at press conferences and in community-organizing meetings. But never before have I felt so acutely the constraining force of my word-count limit. I know intuitively how many arguments I can fit into 800 words. I know

(continued on page 6)
Economist Jeffrey Sachs has been at the forefront of global economic policy for close to four decades. He’s helped countries transition from communism to capitalism—with varying degrees of success—and advised the United Nations on programs promoting sustainable economic growth and the alleviation of poverty. He’s also directed the Earth Institute at Columbia University and is the author of eight mass-market books on poverty, wealth, and sustainability. In his latest, A New Foreign Policy, he focuses on America’s international relations. Alongside an angry condemnation of Trumpism, Sachs offers a set of progressive policy solutions that he believes can put all people, not just Americans, first.

—Atossa Araxia Abrahamian

AAA: You’re an economist. Why foreign policy, and why now?
JS: Foreign policy is at a point of complete crisis with Trump’s deliberate attempt to smash international rules and to start a new Cold War with China. It’s an attempt at a fascist-like type of American exceptionalism, and it’s extraordinarily dangerous.

AAA: This notion of national sovereignty comes up over and over again in Trump’s speeches. What does sovereignty even mean today?
JS: Sovereignty, for Trump, is like a child having a tantrum saying, “You can’t tell me what to do.” He doesn’t care about or pay attention to America’s attacks on other countries, or the fact that we have the CIA and other military operations in many parts of the world, or that our greenhouse-gas emissions are contributing to the ongoing wreckage of the planet. Clearly, he’s a man who does not believe in rules. That’s applied to his personal life, and it applies to his ideas about sovereignty.

AAA: You compare Trump’s “short-termism” to the likes of Hugo Chávez. What does that look like in practice?
JS: I’ve been watching Latin American populists for a long time, and governments repeatedly go broke because they spend their reserves, then borrow heavily, and then they can’t repay. Trump has the [same] incapacity for delayed gratification. This is basically what he’s doing with the United States right now: He’s living on the high of a $2 trillion corporate-tax cut.

AAA: As an internationalist, is there any movement you’re excited about?
JS: In a moment of lucidity in 2015, 195 governments agreed on a framework of sustainable development and climate control. Those agreements are very fragile, because they’re under assault by Trump. Yet around the world, governments, civil society, academia, scientists, and businesses are trying to push toward sustainable development.

AAA: Another issue that requires global cooperation is the fight against tax havens. Where are we?
JS: We’re nowhere. Not only do we have $20–$30 trillion in these tax havens, but it’s our big banks that facilitate them. And it’s not like the money is actually in the Cayman Islands; the money is in electronic accounts in our banks. We can know where all that money is moving now—we just choose not to know.

AAA: The cliché is that as people get older, they start to lean to the right. That certainly doesn’t sound like it’s happened to you. Why?
JS: No! Our situation here is so far from what we should have. Things like Medicare for all, which is taken as this “Oh my God, how could this be done? How radical!” issue, is the standard in every other high-income country, including Canada. We’ve deviated so far from common sense.

AAA: What’s your advice for young political candidates today?
JS: My advice is to keep going for it, because the young candidates are telling the truth. There’s a lot of fearmongering, of course, from The Wall Street Journal, from Murdoch media, and every week Murdoch says, “Don’t be like Europe!” I go to Europe twice a month, and Europe is wonderful—especially northern Europe, which is prosperous, fair, technologically advanced, and with paid vacation time, family support, and all the other things that progressives are calling for right now.

Sovereignty, for Trump, is like a child having a tantrum saying, “You can’t tell me what to do.”

ILLUSTRATION BY ANDY FRIEDMAN
(continued from page 4) when my three minutes are up, even without looking at my watch. But now, facing my final months of speech, the questions that I was taught to ask in high school have taken on new meaning: What do I want to say? To whom? And how?

I spent six weeks this summer driving across the country in a wheelchair-accessible RV with a dozen comrades in pursuit of answers, not only to my personal queries but also to our national ones. What kind of a country will Carl’s generation inherit? And what will it take over these coming precious months to save our democracy?

In 20 states and the District of Columbia, we met citizen-activists who are grappling with these very same questions, pouring their entire being into crafting tolerable answers. Some, like me, are dying and are throwing themselves into this November’s elections because they know it may be their last chance. But many others with longer life expectancies are doing the same thing. It turns out that our collective time horizon is the same: We peer into the future and hope that our children’s children will grow up in a more just and equitable society.

In nearly every congressional district, voters say that their top concern is health care. The high cost, the lack of access, the bureaucratic headaches—I heard these complaints in small towns, big cities, and suburbs from coast to coast. But these complaints are symptomatic of a much more profound problem: Our democracy is broken, and it seems that we have lost the ability to solve our collective challenges. Everywhere we went, we met voters who had been disabused of the notion that our elected representatives are pursuing the public good, disabused of the quaint idea that our government is of the people, by the people, and for the people.

And yet, throughout our travels, this cynicism was being overcome by a different emotion—hope. All around the country, we met people who can see beyond this dark moment into the bright light of another world. For the first time in many decades, our national politics are being shaped not only by fear and hatred, but also by our dreams for a better world. Each month, more organizers, activists, candidates, and elected officials are talking about reshaping American society in a radically humane way. This vision encompasses both negative and positive rights: freedom from unjust incarceration, racist policing, inhumane immigration enforcement, economic exploitation, sexual violence, and political disenfranchisement; and a set of public policies that give us the freedom to thrive—debt-free education from pre-K through college, decent housing, the guarantee of a good job, clean energy, retirement security, and free and robust Medicare for all.

Focusing on the moment and immersing myself in the task at hand has been my salvation over the past two years. Peering into the future has been too dispiriting and too overwhelming. But there is so much to embrace in this very moment, so much work right here in front of us.

This was the message that I settled on somewhere between the cornfields of the Great Plains and the glistening waters of the Great Lakes: the notion that the cure to what ails American democracy is more American democracy; that our problems are created by people and that we can only solve them with people power; and that, as Rebecca Solnit teaches us, hope is not a lottery ticket that can deliver us out of despair, but a hammer for us to use in this national emergency—to break the glass, sound the alarm, and sprint into action.

What action? Voting is not nearly enough. This moment calls on us all to become organizers. To be heroes for our communities and future generations. To talk to our less political friends, neighbors, classmates, and co-workers, and to enlist them in this experiment we call American democracy. This is our Congress, our country, and our future for the making.

The past few weeks have borne witness to the potency of hopeful organizing. In the summer, the conventional wisdom in Washington held that Brett Kavanaugh was a sure bet to be confirmed to the Supreme Court. But in August, a handful of organizations began a campaign of civil disobedience to resist him, and in early September, as the Senate reconvened for what was supposed to be a smooth confirmation process, more than 200 brave women said no. They disrupted the hearings, focused the nation’s attention on the moral stakes of the nomination, and created space for bold Democratic senators to push Kavanaugh on his immoral ideology and dishonest testimony.

Meanwhile, over 123,000 American citizens pooled their small contributions into a $3.5 million war chest and joined activists in Maine to deliver a clear message to Senator Susan Collins: If you vote for Kavanaugh, it will cost you your job. Collins, Fox News, and Senator Ted Cruz of Texas complained that we were engaging in bribery. That is their ideology in a nutshell: Corporate donors can buy all the access and influence they want, but regular American citizens must remain silent. This response is as old as class hierarchy itself, because there is no more dangerous threat to the status quo than collective action by the masses.

In late September, Kavanaugh’s confirmation was thrown into doubt because Christine Blasey

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Ford testified that he had attempted to rape her in high school, and most Americans believed her. In an act of mass solidarity with Blasey Ford, thousands of survivors told their stories for the first time. The #MeToo movement has been building public consciousness for a year, and its legion of members were determined to prevent the Senate from repeating its embarrassing performance in 1991, when Anita Hill testified during the Clarence Thomas confirmation hearings. Hundreds of survivors and their allies boarded buses to DC; thousands more organized rallies and vigils in their hometowns. In Senate offices and elevators, on Facebook and around the dinner table, a mass movement of Americans insisted that we deserve so much more from our Supreme Court and our Congress.

Some of us even entertained the fantasy that we might be able to run out the clock until a new Congress convenes in January and possibly save this Supreme Court seat. One can hope. And then organize. And sometimes that struggle will pay off.

Sometimes, though, our struggle is not enough. ALS destroys my body, no matter how many medicines I take or exercises I do. Sometimes, oftentimes, white supremacy, violent misogyny, and rapacious capitalism rip apart our families and destroy lives, regardless of how well we organize. And sometimes, oftentimes, our stories are not powerful enough. Despite our best efforts, Brett Kavanaugh has been confirmed, and will do lasting damage to America and its people.

Yet it is in these moments of defeat that hopeful, collective struggle retains its greatest power. I can transcend my dying body by hitching my future to yours. We can transcend the darkness of this moment by joining the struggles of past and future freedom fighters. That is how, when we reach the end of our lives and look back on these heady moments, we will find peace in the knowledge that we did our best.

There is a seeming paradox embedded in the third part of Niebuhr’s prayer, because the wisdom to know the difference between what we can and cannot change can only be earned through struggle. Neuroscientists seek a cure for ALS because they do not accept its inevitability. Organizers rage against the machines of capitalism with that same determination. It is only by refusing to accept the complacency of previous generations that the impossible becomes reality. For me, Niebuhr’s prayer is most true if rearranged: Collective courage must come first, wisdom second, and serenity only at the very end.

Ady Barkan works at the Center for Popular Democracy and the Be a Hero Project.
**FEBRUARY 2019**

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Kai Wright

**White Men’s Tantrums**

*They’re frustrated by the prospect of their power eroding.*

Hell hath no fury like a white man scorned. If you take nothing else from the Senate’s confirmation of Brett Kavanaugh, take that much. Know that the angry hysteries of Lindsey Graham and Charles Grassley and Orrin Hatch were a continuation of the long, howling tantrum that began when Donald Trump descended from his tower in 2015. It is the same frustrated rage that spews out of Fox News nightly, and that erupted into deadly violence in Charlottesville. It is the frightened cry of power when shocked to find itself suddenly unsure. “I’m a single white male from South Carolina, and I’ve been told I should shut up,” Graham whined the day after the Senate hearings. “But I will not shut up.” No, he will not.

Hopefully, though, this mounting white-male rage will help more of us understand the true political battle we are in. We are not a nation divided by partisanship—not firstly, at least. The Susan Collines of the world would like us to believe as much, because it’s a safer fight for them. It allows them to remain adjacent to white supremacy without any real cost, to enjoy its privileges without owning its brutality. But the Maine senator, who cast one of the deciding votes in Kavanaugh’s favor, is not alone in this lie.

From the left to the right, we have for decades masked our disagreements with the paralyzing euphemisms of partisanship. We’ve told ourselves that our most bitter conflict is “conservative” versus “liberal,” “free enterprise” versus “big government.” Maybe now we are finally ready to be honest about the real point of contention: We are, as we have always been, a nation divided on the topic of white-male power. It’s easy to get confused by the crosscurrents of misogyny and racism and xenophobia, to think they’re discrete issues rather than the interlocking tools of white men’s minority rule. We don’t have a ready language for the caste system in which we live. But whatever you call it (for me, it’s all in the garbage fire of white supremacy), Kavanaugh’s ascendance is a reminder of how it functions. White-male power has long relied on the veneer of democracy and law to preserve its control.

Take the Supreme Court. Many critics have charged that Senate Republicans damaged the Court’s legitimacy by forcing Kavanaugh onto it. Sure, but legitimacy has never been a big concern when white-male power is under threat. Was the Court legitimate when, as far back as the 1870s, it kept the federal government from enforcing the rights of newly free black Southerners? Surely it had lost its credibility by 1896, when it explicitly welcomed Jim Crow with the implausible argument that separate can be equal. There was actually a brief period in the middle of the 20th century when the Court challenged the white-male monopoly on power. But by the 1980s, enraged white men had begun the work of fixing that “hiccup” (to borrow Senator Dean Heller’s characterization of the multiple sexual-assault allegations against our new high-court justice).

This project succeeded long before a snarling Kavanaugh refused to be questioned about his behavior. We are talking, after all, about the same institution that in the past 20 years has declared corporations human, refused to guarantee women equal pay, and gutted the Voting Rights Act based on the straight-faced assertion that racism no longer impacts elections.

Or take the Senate itself—an institution that was literally designed to protect white supremacy from the threat of democracy. You’ll always find bipartisan agreement on one thing about the Senate: the myth of its deliberative grandeur. This cant was among the most insufferable parts of the Kavanaugh spectacle—and again, Lindsey Graham was a standout. After refusing to be silenced by a credible account of attempted rape, the single white man from South Carolina proceeded to wax nostalgic about the good old days, when Democrat Joe Biden could put aside Republican Strom Thurmond’s vile, openly racist politics because, in Graham’s phrasing, Joe liked the old guy. Why let a little white supremacy get in the way of collegiality? We’re all white men here!

Or they were, until very recently—which is actually what’s upsetting the Senate’s decorum. And thank goodness; it’s long past time those men get uncomfortable.
In all of American history, only 2.7 percent of our congressional representatives have been women. Only 10 black people have ever served in the Senate. We went nearly a century with zero black senators. A black woman didn’t enter the chamber until 1993; just one more has come since then. Nor has there ever been a Republican woman on the Senate Judiciary Committee. “It’s a lot of work,” chairman Grassley offered as a reason for this fact. “Maybe they don’t want to do it.”

Somehow it escaped Grassley that his Democratic counterpart, Dianne Feinstein, is a woman, and that she is joined by three more women on the Democratic side of the aisle. Or maybe he’s just trying really hard to forget, because, like Donald Trump Jr., he’s frightened.

Don Jr. says he’s worried for his multimillionaire sons, that it’s a scary time to be a (white) man. Throughout the confirmation process, an array of Republican senators repeated this odd concern. At first, I marveled at how little it takes to make a powerful white man feel like he’s in danger. But then I realized: They’re correct—we absolutely are a threat to them.

They’ve looked around and rightly noticed how many of us do not draw our power from proximity to them. In the Obama era, they watched the Dreamers discard the white man’s idea of citizenship and demand a fundamentally new conversation about immigrant rights. They watched black people build a movement on an irrefutable statement of self-worth, one that requires no white person’s approval to be true and potent. And now they are watching as millions of women refuse to carry the shame of their male predators.

So no wonder these white men thrash and howl with defensive rage. Good. Let them be afraid. Because it’s true: We are coming for them, and for their power, too.

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SNAPSHOT / DANIEL COLE

Splat!

Pro-independence demonstrators throw paint at police in Barcelona, Spain, on September 29. Catalan separatists clashed with security forces prior to the first anniversary of the Spanish region’s illegal referendum on secession.

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THE FBI/WHITE HOUSE SUPPLEMENTAL BACKGROUND CHECK ON BRETT KAVANAUGH

If the Federal Bureau had been no more thorough Than that when it was in charge,
All the federal pens would have cellblocks left empty,
And Dillinger’d still be at large.
"THOSE KIDS ARE NO LONGER YOURS" How parents in Uganda lose their babies to adoptive families in America.

by ANNA CAVELL
The Nation.

It takes an entire day, and costs a small fortune, for Florence Babirye to get from her home in the Ugandan village of Kasolwe to the Kayunga police station. First there’s a motorbike taxi from the village to the nearest bus stop, then a bus to Kamuli town, a Nile crossing by ferry, and a long walk. At the police station, she inquires again about her daughter, and her niece and nephew, who have been taken away to America. But the answer she gets is always the same: The children are no longer yours.

In her picturesque village, where chickens scratch among the flower beds and generations live side by side, Florence shared the responsibility for bringing up her kids with her sisters, Jenipher Rubuga and Mariam Nakiranda; extended families tend to be very involved in raising children in Uganda. The three sisters had a total of 16 kids, who moved freely between their homes in neighboring villages. But in 2012, Mariam’s husband died, and she moved to work in the town of Mpunge, in Mukono district, several hours away by bus. Florence’s long hours at a restaurant made it difficult to look after her 4-year-old daughter, Rose Patience, so when Mariam offered to take her in, Florence readily agreed.

When Rose first went to stay with Mariam, Florence didn’t own a phone, so she kept tabs on her daughter via friends and relatives. Through this grapevine, Florence heard that Mariam had met a pastor who said he could find a sponsor to cover Rose’s fees at a boarding school where he served as a director. The three sisters had often talked about wanting a better education for their children. Once she heard about her sister’s decision, Jenipher decided to entrust her two toddlers, Fatiya and Kirya, to Mariam so they could be educated, too.

At first, Florence and Jenipher were happy with the arrangement: With only their older children to look after, they could work the hours they needed. They believed that their three little ones had been placed at a boarding school in Entebbe, an hour from the Ugandan capital of Kampala. It seemed like a stroke of luck.

But as the months passed with no word from their kids, Florence and Jenipher grew worried. Finally, after more than a year, the two sisters decided to go find their children. Although bus fare was normally prohibitively expensive for Florence, she and Jenipher made the trip to Mpunge and confronted Mariam, who refused to answer their questions. Instead, she gave them the phone number for the pastor, Rashid Luswa Kisegerwa. What the sisters soon discovered was that he was the director not of a boarding school, but of an orphanage called Bethel House. When Florence called Pastor Rashid, he told her, “Those kids are no longer yours; you ask Mariam about them,” and hung up the phone. She called back and was passed on to Kisegerwa’s wife, who called Florence stupid and shouted at her to “stop bothering us.”

Now the sisters were truly frightened. Mariam still refused to answer their questions. Florence and Jenipher went to the police to report their children missing. The police launched an investigation, and filed human-trafficking charges against Mariam.

The ensuing court case revealed that Mariam had claimed to be the mother of her sisters’ children and signed them over to Pastor Rashid. He then facilitated their adoption in America, in partnership with a US-based agency. The children had left Uganda in December 2013—months before Florence and Jenipher knew that anything was wrong.

What happened to Florence and Jenipher is not uncommon—in Uganda or the many other countries plagued by fraudulent international adoptions. Unscrupulous brokers, weak institutions, and inadequate reforms have led hundreds, perhaps thousands, of children to be separated from their families in recent years.

In 2006, Trish Maskew—then president of Ethica Inc, a nonprofit advocacy group, and now chief of the adoption division at the US State Department—testified before Congress that international adoption is “one of the most unregulated industries in America today.” In countries as diverse as China, Sri Lanka, Guatemala, and, of course, Uganda, there are widespread reports of unlawful adoptions. The practice was so widespread in Uganda that, two years ago, the government amended the Children’s Act, which regulates adoption, to better protect local families. The amendment imposed a one-year, in-country fostering period to make it harder for foreigners to rapidly adopt Ugandan children. It also allowed the courts to cancel an adoption order that “was obtained through fraud or misrepresentation.”

But an investigation by the Investigative Fund and The Nation, which involved the review of hundreds of pages of court records and interviews with roughly 50 social workers, lawyers, judges, agents, and families, shows that the amended law has fallen far short of its goal. In 12 cases of international adoption from Uganda to the United States between 2010 and the present, we located the biological families of each of the children, all of whom said either that they’d been tricked into signing away their parental rights or that the paperwork had been forged. We also tracked down the children’s new adoptive homes in America.

The vast majority of these parents said they believed they were agreeing to let their children’s education be sponsored, only to learn later that they’d relinquished their parental rights by putting their mark on documents that they couldn’t read. Their stories illustrate how easy it is to create a “paper orphan” in Uganda for America’s adoption market, and how some US adoption agencies willingly ignore red flags.

The State Department’s data on international adoptions runs from fiscal years 1999 to 2017. Over that period, there were 271,833 international adoptions in America. The Nation maintains an archive with records of every adoption case in Uganda.
the United States, each at a cost of tens of thousands of dollars to the adoptive families. The top countries for adopted children were China (80,162), Russia (46,113), and Guatemala (29,806). Uganda sent more than 1,500 children to the United States over the same period.

It’s impossible to know how many Ugandan families have lost children to foreign adoption who might otherwise have wanted to raise them. Indeed, the very concept of “adoption” in the Western sense—one that involves the forfeiting of parental rights—is so alien that there’s no equivalent word for it in the local languages. It’s unheard of for family ties to be permanently severed.

Yet there is little recourse when a child is adopted against the biological family’s wishes. Once the child has left the country, the Ugandan government has no jurisdiction to intervene, even if the paperwork is later proved to be fraudulent. The US embassy in Kampala, which issues visas to adopted children, can delay the process or require a DNA test. But according to two consular officers who agreed to speak on condition of anonymity, if all the paperwork is in order, they have just two options.

“The only thing the consular section can do is mark the adoption as either approvable or non-approvable,” said one in-country officer. If they suspect fraud and mark the adoption as “non-approvable,” the visa application gets sent to the Department of Homeland Security’s regional office in Rome. “But almost none are rejected,” the officer added.

In the United States, too, the safeguards are inadequate. All US adoption agencies working internationally have long been regulated by the Council on Accreditation, a nonprofit based in New York City and overseen by the State Department. Made up largely of volunteers, the COA accredits 2,200 organizations and programs that, according to its website, serve more than 7 million people. In order to be accredited, agencies must prove that, according to its website, serve more than 7 million people. In order to be accredited, agencies must prove that they are financially sound and competent to evaluate prospective adoptive parents.

The chief executive officer of the COA, Richard Klarberg, acknowledges concerns about how US-based agencies work with partners in countries like Uganda. Klarberg, on why the US allows adoptions from countries with widespread fraud

Richard Klarberg, CEO of the nonprofit Council on Accreditation, says it doesn’t have the resources to investigate adoption fraud.

Out of the picture: Florence Babirye (left) and her sister Jenipher Rubuga look at photos of their children.

Richard Klarberg, CEO of the nonprofit Council on Accreditation, says it doesn’t have the resources to investigate adoption fraud.

“I have asked myself that question again and again, and it’s a puzzle to me.”

—Richard Klarberg

When asked why the United States continues to allow international adoptions from countries that are known to have problems with widespread fraud, Klarberg replied, “You’d have to ask the United States Department of State. I have asked myself that question again and again, and it’s a puzzle to me.”

The State Department declined to grant us an in-person interview, but in an e-mail, appeared to hold the accreditors responsible, noting that it has designated accrediting agencies to “monitor and oversee the activities” of adoption agencies. The State Department also recently appointed a new regulating body, the Florida-based Intercountry Adoption Accreditation and Maintenance Entity, which is charged with an “increased focus on monitoring and oversight of accredited adoption service providers.” An IAAME spokesperson said they hoped to improve on the COAs oversight by using paid staff rather than volunteers; still, in-country monitoring will occur “infrequently, if ever.”

Another Ugandan woman, Tabitha Abbo, has lost custody of not one but two sons to a family in the United States. In early 2017, she attended four hearings in Kampala’s High Court over the future of her younger son, Solomon Kasrye. Abbo did not have a lawyer, and she often could not understand what was being said: Court proceedings are generally conducted in English, which she cannot speak. On the opposing side of the hearings were Americans Laura and
Philip Hunker, the prospective adoptive parents.

Like many rural Ugandans, Abbo is poor and unable to read or write. Her native language is Dhopadhola, which is spoken only in the eastern part of the country. Abbo is slight of frame but muscular from farming maize and millet, and she’s strong of will—especially when it comes to her children. “I get so fierce that even a leopard is tame compared to me,” she said via a translator in July.

Before Solomon was Michael, Abbo’s first son, whose story is fairly typical of international adoptions in Uganda. According to Abbo, she heard that some white people had come to her community to look for needy children to sponsor. Her husband had left her, Michael was sickly, and her in-laws were unable to help. The sponsorship seemed like a golden opportunity, so she didn’t think twice about meeting with the foreigners, and registered Michael with an orphanage in Kampala called Abato–Journeys of the Heart

What she agreed to, Abbo said, was that the sponsors “are to take care of the child while he studies, until he is 18 years. And that they bring him to me at home here in Uganda every four years so that I see him.” The adoption case file, however, shows that she put her thumbprint to documents ceding all parental rights over Michael to the Hunkers.

Approximately three years after Michael was adopted, the couple heard that Abbo was pregnant again and decided they wanted to adopt this new child, too. Again, the situation was confusing to Abbo, as it began with what seemed to be well-intended financial support. She said the Hunkers sent her money for medical treatment and baby supplies, then paid for her to stay at a facility, Shared Hope for Orphans, where the Hunkers kept Solomon after they took him from Abbo, wasn’t even a registered orphanage.

As Abbo tells it, in September 2016, at a meeting in Kampala, a woman took Solomon away from her after she’d suffered a dizzy spell. “It was the other lady who got the child from my arms and gave him to the white person,” she said. “After that, I was taken away from there after I’d fainted.”

Laura Hunker denied this version of events in an e-mail, but she declined to give her own account of Solomon’s removal from his mother. She did say that Abbo was “not competent” and provided a letter from the Tororo District government claiming that Abbo’s mental state was “very poor.” However, a Ugandan government official told us that Hunker’s document had been “refuted,” pointing out that it was produced by a local council, not a hospital. In another e-mail, Hunker wrote that Abbo “continues to tell our family she consents to the adoption and has recently signed yet another consent to the adoption. The story you want to run is quite simply fabrication and lies.”

Later, Laura Hunker provided photos of Abbo thumbprinting a document in July in which she appears to consent to giving parental rights of Solomon to the Hunkers.
For her part, Abbo said she endorsed the agreement because the Hunkers’ lawyer told her it was necessary to provide medical care to Solomon, who was sick, and that the document wasn’t legally binding anyway.

Abbo said she didn’t see Solomon again until January 2017, when she was told by an agent for the Hunkers that she needed to go to court in Kampala. According to Abbo, since her child had been taken from her in “unclear circumstances,” she believed the court proceedings would return Solomon to her.

Four hearings followed, at which the judge, Moses Mukiibi, repeatedly asked Abbo if she would consent to Solomon’s adoption. Mukiibi twice adjourned the hearings, first because Abbo didn’t understand “the full implications of an adoption,” and second because she “does not wish to surrender her position or rights as the mother.” At the third hearing, Abbo is recorded as authorizing the adoption. In February 2017, at the fourth hearing, the Hunkers became the legal parents of her baby.

Mukiibi was also the judge in the cases of Florence and Jenipher’s children. In 2016, he presided over 20 cases of adoption and legal guardianship—an unusually high number given that, in mid-2013, he was moved from Family Court to the international-crimes division of the High Court and has since been, in his own words, “on the periphery of the family-division activities.” But that didn’t stop him from setting an important precedent soon after the Children’s Act amendment was passed in 2016; he ruled in that if a foreign family hadn’t lived in Uganda with their foster child for one year but rather sent money for the child’s care, that counted as “constructive fostering” and thus satisfied the one-year in-country requirement.

This legal reading puts him at odds with Stella Ogwan, the head of the child-welfare division in Uganda, who spearheaded the 2016 amendment. “The law is very clear,” she said. “You have to foster [in-country] for one year.” The notion of “constructive fostering” undermines the whole point of the amendment, Ogwan added, and does “a disservice to the biological families of these children.”

Journeys of the Heart, the Oregon-based adoption agency at the heart of Michael’s and Solomon’s cases, was involved in five of the 12 cases we investigated. An American adoptive family has said they found children lying in their own urine in Abato—Journeys of the Heart, the agency’s Kampala orphanage. The police even charged Barbara Ndibalekera, the woman who ran it between 2011 and 2013, with child neglect. After Ndibalekera was arrested and released on bond, she went underground. The police say she “absconded,” and that her file has subsequently gone missing.

In an interview at an undisclosed location, Ndibalekera said that it was her job to find children for adoption, regardless of whether they were orphans or not. She added that David Slansky, the director of the Oregon agency, put enormous pressure on her to bring children into Abato and would threaten to close down the center if the adoption pipeline slowed. Once she had a child in the orphanage, Ndibalekera would gather all of the paperwork that the court required to grant an adoption. If a child had been genuinely needy, this documentation would have already existed—for example, if a family couldn’t care for a child, then a probation officer would have written a report recommending that the child receive alternative care. But Ndibalekera admitted to paying money to officials to “facilitate” the production of these documents, something she alleges the American adoptive families were sometimes involved with.

Some wanted their things fast,” she said, adding that the Americans would tell her, “Barbara, if you need something, you tell me. If you need something to make this thing fast, you tell me.”

Despite repeated requests, Slansky declined to comment, so we went to his home in Hillsboro, Oregon. He denied pressuring Ndibalekera to find babies in order to satisfy the US demand, saying, “We supported her with the idea that we would find families in America for children.” He also initially denied that Journeys of the Heart processed adoptions from Uganda after the adoption law was amended in 2016. When confronted about Solomon’s case, he replied, “Well, I don’t think you’d find more than two or three.”

Florence’s and Jenipher’s kids all have new names now. After nearly five years in the United States, they have American accents, but they’re very curious about the land of their birth. Their new family said they believed the cousins were siblings when they adopted them and described them as “joined at the hip.” According to their American father, the children don’t know about the anguish of their parents back in Uganda, and he and his wife agreed to speak only on the condition of anonymity. They don’t want what happened to them happening to other families, but they’re also unwilling to give the children back.

The couple had used a New Mexico–based agency; the father told me that the process went smoothly. They said they had met Mariam in person, and they believed she was giving up her children “for poverty reasons.” They added that there were no concerns raised in court or at the US embassy, which typically checks birth certificates and which had interviewed Mariam. The embassy’s and the State Department’s press offices both declined to comment.

In 2016, three years after the adoption, the family said they heard from another adoptive family that Mariam wasn’t the mother of their kids. They reached out to Pastor Rashid, who they say told them, “You know, maybe she was taking care of the kids and took them to the orphanage, and they were even—
tually adopted, or maybe the real parents sold them to the orphanage, and the aunt was the middle person.”

Again, what actually occurred can’t be proven, but some paperwork was either inaccurate or absent from the file. The birth certificates, which would have named the parents, are missing. The probation officer’s report and the local chairperson’s letter, both a requirement for adoption from Uganda, incorrectly list Mariam as the children’s birth mother. The file includes an affidavit sworn by Mariam that she is the biological mother.

For their part, the adoptive parents believe the entire system is “a cesspool of nasty” and in desperate need of reform. “We set out to do what’s right and ended up being child traffickers,” the father said. “That’s a real adjustment to make mentally.”

The adoptive mother said that she empathizes with Florence and Jenipher: “My heart breaks every time I think about this whole situation… I have the power in my hands to change that, but yet I don’t because it would destroy the children… And I’m going to protect them like any mom would.”

Florence and Jenipher are now at the mercy of the adoptive parents. Meanwhile, Rose Patience’s birth father has accused Florence of “selling” their daughter and refuses to let her see their other three kids. According to Florence, one fraudulent adoption has cost her four children. She says she “can never be happy” again.

There is, however, some hope for Abbo, Solomon’s mother. Although the Hunkers are now the boy’s legal parents, as well as his brother Michael’s, Solomon hasn’t left Uganda yet. A May 18 post on the Hunkers’ “Bring Solomon Home” Facebook page reads: “An out of control USA embassy employee gave false information to the Minister of Gender [the department responsible for children] in Uganda. As a result, our beautiful son was removed from his foster home and...placed in a government-run orphanage.” (The post has since been taken down.)

Ogwan at Uganda’s child-welfare division said that the government took Solomon, not because of a US embassy employee but because Abbo filed a complaint. For now, the Ugandan government has physical custody of Solomon. Officials are investigating his case and will determine whether the adoption order might be reversible because of “fraud or misrepresentation,” pursuant to the amended Children’s Act.

In July of this year, after more than a year and a half apart from her child, Abbo was permitted a visit with Solomon. But their reunion was difficult to watch. Solomon didn’t recognize Abbo, and he clung to the woman who runs the institution where the meeting took place. In their short time together, Abbo tried to build enough of a connection to be able to hold him, but when she picked Solomon up, he screamed. She said afterward that she was so upset by his reaction that she “wanted to cry, but knew that would only scare him more.”

We interviewed Abbo for this story five times and asked, again and again, if she’d consented to Solomon’s adoption. After their brief reunion, she said, “If I wanted him to go, wouldn’t he have gone by now?”

Anna Cavell is a journalist based in East Africa.

This article was reported in partnership with the Investigative Fund at the Nation Institute.
SHOWDOWN NEAR THE OK CORRAL

by SASHA ABRAMSKY

CONTESTANTS

DEMOCRAT
Ann Kirkpatrick

REPUBLICAN
Lea Marquez Peterson

Who will prevail in the slugfest for this key Arizona swing district?

for the
2ND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

on NOV. 6TH
N A DARK KARAOKE BAR, THE INTERIOR DULL BY DEEP-RED NEON LIGHTING, THE WALLS COVERED WITH TACKY posters featuring busty women advertising cars and beer, the GOP precinct captains for Arizona’s Cochise County met to discuss politics. The primaries had taken place a couple of weeks earlier, and now, in mid-September, they were strategizing their dash to the election finish line in November—in this case, the fight for the Second Congressional District, a key toss-up race in the struggle to determine which party will control Congress. This year, moderate Democrat Ann Kirkpatrick faces off against Republican Lea Marquez Peterson for the seat vacated by Martha McSally, who is now the GOP candidate in the race to replace retiring Senator Jeff Flake.

The bar was a last-minute substitute for the party headquarters just next door, in a run-down strip mall in the conservative military town of Sierra Vista, a scrubby desert community loaded with gun stores and military-surplus marts. The GOP headquarters, in what could be considered a metaphor for the party as a whole during a season of nonstop Trump scandals, had recently suffered storm damage and was temporarily out of commission.

Most of the precinct captains were old, and all of them were white. One or two were wearing MAGA caps. They looked like small-town grandparents—in Hawaiian shirts and visors, with some using walkers and at least one with a mobile oxygen tank. The captains came to talk about pushing back against what they saw as Democratic tax-and-spend measures (especially the efforts by Red for Ed, a pro-teachers campaign to channel more money into the state’s crumbling public-school system); to tout the country’s economic achievements under Trump; to urge tougher immigration enforcement (the local sheriff, Mark Dannels, told them how his officers were going after drug smugglers in the region and how he’d visited Washington to meet with Trump and Vice President Mike Pence to tout tougher policing in the borderlands); and, above all, to push for funding a border wall to stop what they saw as a wave of violent crime surging north from Mexico.

“We won’t be getting an influx of jobs until we get a wall,” said GOP county chair Sue Mitchell, a bespectacled, genial-looking elderly lady. “A bigger wall than we have—because people from the rest of the country won’t want to come here, because they hear these awful things. Ranch families find illegals in their homes; they get murdered by these people,” Mitchell warned darkly. “Illegal aliens are doing awful things to our citizens.”

The atmosphere was a stark contrast with the Democratic Party gathering, one congressional district to the west, hosted the previous evening by progressive Congressman Raúl Grijalva in a large social club in south Tucson. That event was a Solidly multiracial affair, filled with hundreds of people from all age groups and dominated by speakers—such as gubernatorial candidate David Garcia—talking about a new dawn, a new set of moral and political priorities, for Arizona. There was a mariachi band playing under white bunting and tables filled with materials on Red for Ed, information on local environmental initiatives, and placards urging the defense of Medicare.

One of those present, a teacher named Margaret Chaney who assists educators in developing resources for African-American and Mexican-American students, spoke with me about cuts to the state’s school budget. “It’s been 10, 12 years of withholding funds, and people are getting really sick of it,” she said. Like many of her colleagues, Chaney has taken to the streets in protest and has begun knocking on doors, speaking to fellow Arizonans about the need to invest adequately in education. As with recent campaigns by educators in West Virginia, Kentucky, and other anti-union states, the teachers’ movement in Arizona has acquired legs. Political observers believe it could make a big difference this November. “We’re hoping to keep the momentum going,” Chaney explained, “so the people who are not for public education are no longer making decisions for public education.”

Grijalva has a towering reputation among liberals. For many years, he has co-chaired the Congressional Progressive Caucus, turning it into one of the most influential of Democratic caucuses. It is the CPC that, for the better part of a decade, has authored the “People’s Budget,” an annual reimagining of federal spending priorities that has provided grist for those supporting things like Medicare for All, more investment in affordable housing, and more money to tackle climate change.

Grijalva says that many of the most extreme policies now being carried out by Trump were developed by Arizona state legislators. “Arizona has been the petri dish for a decade and a half,” he tells me, sitting on a metal folding chair outside the social club, seemingly impervious to the fierce late-afternoon heat. He names SB 1070 (the draconian 2010 anti-immigrant state law...
that was partially struck down by the Supreme Court in 2012), as well as tax cuts, for-profit schools, and policies affecting the environment. “The public has a better grasp of what’s at stake,” he continues. “They’ve been experimented upon. The Koch brothers’ influence here is huge. Our state’s been through all of it. So voters are more engaged now. Trump was the added fuel. There are newer voters, younger voters—voters of color have come to the forefront.”

Democrats are hoping that Grijalva’s political clout, combined with voter fury at the chaos and cruelty of the Trump administration, can be brought to bear in the race for CD 2, an area that includes the liberal precincts of Tucson as well as a huge and conservative rural hinterland that snakes east along the US-Mexican border for nearly 100 miles.

Of all the competitive congressional districts in the country, few have produced the sort of knife-edge results seen in the Second Congressional District over the past two election cycles. According to The New York Times, it is one of 10 open seats previously held by a Republican that Democrats believe they have a particularly strong chance of taking.

The district is nearly 8,000 square miles—much larger than the entire state of Connecticut. Much of it is red-rock desert and psychedelically patterned cactus forest; near the border, under limestone mountains 300 million years old, are extraordinary cave complexes. Within CD 2’s borders are deeply conservative ranching, military, and retiree communities such as Benson and Wilcox—the backbone of Arizona’s Joe Arpaio-loving Tea Party base—as well as the reliably liberal Tucson neighborhoods and the historic mining-town-cum-art-colony of Bisbee.

At one point early in the 20th century, at the height of its copper-mining wealth, Bisbee claimed to be the largest city between St. Louis and San Francisco. These days it’s down to 5,500, and its residents include artists, jewelry makers, and an assortment of alternative-lifestylers. Sitting in one of Bisbee’s several first-rate coffee shops, Mayor Dave Smith, a Marine veteran, onetime police officer, and recovering Republican—he didn’t leave the party, he says wryly; the party left him—talks about the annual gay-pride parade, the town’s early adoption of a gay-marriage/civil-union ordinance, and its strong environmental ethos. It is, he acknowledges, an island of blue in a sea of red.

A half-hour’s drive north, the Wild West’s most legendary town, Tombstone, hosts hundreds of thousands of tourists annually who come to see re-creations of the shoot-out at the OK Corral, drink in historic saloons like Big Nose Kate’s, and gawk at the homes of legends like Wyatt Earp.

Nowadays Tombstone, which shot to fame for its silver lode in the late 1870s, is a quiet place, the Wild West bluster doled out in small, manicured quantities, its streets and old-time saloons empty by 9 PM. A lot of retirees live here, explains city historian Don Taylor, a beefy man in jeans, pointed cowboy boots, and a salmon-colored shirt. “They’re primarily conservative. They’re on board with the Republicans.”

The Minutemen, a militia that patrolled the borderlands for years, started in Tombstone. Generally, Taylor says, residents support the idea of a border wall, without necessarily thinking through the implications of what it will do to the local economy. As for the policy of separating undocumented families, Taylor believes that many residents are uncomfortable enough about it that they don’t want to discuss it, but not so uncomfortable that it threatens their allegiance to the GOP. “It’s almost like, ‘If we don’t talk about it, it’ll go away,’” he says. Democrats see an opening here, pushing a moral message in the hope that it will ultimately peel off a number of these more sensitive Republican voters.

“My biggest question for the Republican candidate,” says Tucson City Councilor Regina Romero, a Democrat, “is will she, or does she, agree with the Trump policy of separating families and putting kids in detention? If she’s standing in the party of Trump, is that what she believes in? This election is different. People really want to put a check on Trump and the Republican Party.”

In rock-solid Republican towns like Benson, the main street these days is lined with posters for “conservative Republican” candidates for the State Senate and House. What one doesn’t see anymore, however, are the once-ubiquitous Trump and MAGA signs.

“This is a strongly Republican town. But I know there are a lot of people willing to cross party lines,” says Najayyah Many Horses, office manager for Benson’s Chamber of Commerce and president of the local food pantry—which these days, even with low unemployment, serves 800 people a week, she estimates. There is, Many Horse adds, a weariness in the air about the chaos surrounding the Trump administration. “People are saying, ‘What is the best for us? What is the best way to go?’ Of late, I’ve heard that sentiment more often than not, including from some businesses. At some point, as my grandma used to say, every pot has to stand on its own bottom.”
The perennial power struggle between Tucson and the smaller communities to its east in many ways mirrors the urban/rural divide at the core of modern American politics. Martha McSally, a conservative Republican with a shallow legislative record, won the seat in 2014, but her margin of victory was a nail-biting 167 votes. In 2016, with the tailwinds of incumbency behind her, she coasted to re-election—but at the same time, her district produced a five-point margin for Hillary Clinton over Donald Trump.

Now McSally’s seat is open again, because—to the relief of establishment figures like Republican Governor Doug Ducey—she beat out former Maricopa County sheriff Joe Arpaio and another far-right candidate in the GOP primary race to replace Senator Flake. Running in her place in CD 2, Lea Marquez Peterson is a political novice whose main qualifications are her years as a businesswoman who heads Tucson’s Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the fact that she isn’t Brandon Martin—her firebrand “constitutional conservative” primary challenger, who argued, among other things, that the United States should withdraw from the United Nations. Marquez Peterson, who declined to be interviewed for this article, is also a local—and the attack ads have branded her opponent, Ann Kirkpatrick, a Democratic moderate who once represented a district in north Arizona, as a carpetbagger. (In fact, Kirkpatrick, who was born and raised on the White Mountain Apache Reservation, where her mom was an elementary-school teacher, has spent much of her adult life in the Tucson area.)

For Republican state senator and majority whip Gail Griffin, who is based in Cochise County, Marquez Peterson’s qualifications, along with what she insists is solid support among the party’s base for Trump, ought to do the trick. “Lea has a business background; she knows the people, wants to make the district productive,” Griffin argues. Plus, she adds, “Trump is an asset. He’s getting things done; the economy is picking up. The promises he’s made, he’s accomplishing. The border wall is a biggie. They’ve cut down illegal immigration. Trump may use stronger words than many of us like, but he’s proven he loves the country and cares about the people.”

Not surprisingly, Democrats disagree with Griffin’s assessment. They believe that, while Marquez Peterson is more palatable to independents than Martin would have been, this will be outweighed by the distaste for Trump among independent and swing voters and the desire for a Congress that will rein in an out-of-control president.

“The swing voters tend to be Republican women,” Kirkpatrick says. “And that’s a natural constituency for me—my mom was a Republican, my dad a Democrat.”

Kirkpatrick acknowledges that many rural voters instinctively like Trump. “I know the Trump voter; I went to high school with them,” she says. “They’re good people. They were promised a good life, and life’s been a struggle. They saw Trump as an agent of change.”

But they don’t like the tax cuts he signed into law. Elder Arizona voters, she says, fear that those cuts will be paid for by raiding their Social Security and Medicare benefits. Arizonans also worry that their education system is in crisis. “Our teachers went on strike for the first time. They marched. We were part of that—I was a teacher in Tucson. My mom was a teacher. This is personal to us.”

With just weeks to go until the election, Democratic political operatives are enthused by what they’re seeing in the district: a surge of engagement; high voter-registration numbers, especially among students in town; record Democratic Party primary turnouts in the Tucson precincts this August; enthusiasm for change fueled by the teachers’ walkout earlier this year; and the staying power of the Red for Ed campaign in the state and the district in the months since the walkout. The latest polling backs this up, with one by The New York Times showing Kirkpatrick ahead by as much as 11 points.
Tish James claimed the democratic nomination for New York attorney general in late September with a call to arms. The first black woman nominated by a major party for statewide office in New York explained that her campaign is about much more than filling another ballot line in another election. “Most importantly,” James said, it is “about that man in the White House, who can’t go a day without threatening our fundamental rights, can’t go a day without threatening the rights of immigrants, can’t go a day without dividing us.” James told a cheering crowd in Brooklyn that she is seeking one of the most potent law-enforcement posts in the nation in order to erect “a wall of constitutional protection that never crumbles”—a wall stronger than anything Donald Trump has proposed.

That’s no idle promise. State attorneys general have the tools to challenge edicts from the White House, as was powerfully illustrated just days after Trump’s inauguration, when Attorney General Bob Ferguson of Washington State upended the new president’s Muslim ban with a legal challenge that identified the executive order as unlawful and unconstitutional. Since Trump took office in January 2017, Democratic attorneys general have resisted his administration’s assaults on everything from immigrant and labor rights to legal marijuana—just as Republican AGs have aligned with the administration’s schemes to undermine the Affordable Care Act and promote judicial nominees like Brett Kavanaugh.

The nation’s state attorneys general have come to be understood both as forces unto themselves and as members of multistate coalitions that can affect national policy. As the chief law-enforcement officer on the state level—30 of whom will be elected this fall—they have the authority to safeguard the environment, protect consumers, shield employees from workplace abuses, defend immigrants, and fight for the rights of women and members of the LGBTQ community. They can put criminal-justice reform on the agenda, demand accountability from the Catholic Church, preserve voting rights, and assure that the meetings of state and local boards are open and their records accessible. The power of these positions, which has been utilized more aggressively in recent years, has made attorney-general races some of the most high-stakes contests in an incredibly high-stakes election year. In an era characterized by gridlock and dysfunction at all levels of
government, attorneys general get things done.

Nevada State Senate majority leader Aaron Ford—now a Democratic nominee for attorney general who has pledged to fight for background checks on gun buyers in a state that was traumatized by last year’s Las Vegas massacre—is right when he argues, “Some people refer to [the office] as a quote-unquote ‘down-ballot race.’ I think it’s separate and apart from the ballot, because it serves as a check on other agencies.”

The old days when attorney-general races were seen as local contests between county prosecutors who might eventually aspire to judgeships are over. These days, state attorneys general have become governors, senators, even president. The Senate Judiciary Committee is full of them: Kamala Harris (D-CA) is a former attorney general, as are Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), and John Cornyn (R-TX), a key conservative on the committee. Likewise, many of the breakthrough Democratic winners in recent election cycles have been former AGs: Tom Udall in New Mexico, Heidi Heitkamp in North Dakota, and Catherine Cortez Masto in Nevada.

But attorneys general do not have to be elected to the Senate to play on the national stage. They have the authority to challenge federal policies and alter the course of presidencies. Members of Congress recognize that power: Last year, a rising Democratic star in the House, Xavier Becerra, quit to take over from Harris as California’s attorney general. This year, former Congressional Progressive Caucus co-chair Keith Ellison is the Democratic nominee for attorney general in Minnesota. (Ellison was accused by a former girlfriend of domestic abuse days before he won the state’s August primary; an attorney hired by the Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party recently concluded that the allegations could not be substantiated, but they remain a focus of his Republican rival’s campaign.) And, of course, Trump’s disgraced and now-discarded Environmental Protection Agency administrator, Scott Pruitt, came to the president’s attention for his performance as Oklahoma’s attorney general.

“We’re in this very unique moment in history when the courts and the lawyers matter more than ever,” says veteran prosecutor January Contreras, the co-founder of Arizona Legal Women and Youth Services (ALWAYS), a pioneering nonprofit group that advocates on behalf of children and young adults who have survived trauma, homelessness, and sex trafficking. “The laws and the courts,” Contreras adds, “are where we’re going to stop the worst from happening.”

Special-interest donors recognize the power of attorneys general. That’s why, according to an assessment of this year’s AG races by The Hill, the two parties and their allies “will spend more than $100 million on the contests, two or three times more than has ever been spent on attorneys general races before.” This record-shattering spending spree is expected to target states like Colorado, Florida, Michigan, Nevada, Ohio, and Wisconsin, where the races for attorney-general seats currently held by Republicans are all toss-ups, according to an analysis earlier this year from Governing, the nonpartisan journal of state politics and governance. “In a neutral environment, this would suggest the Democrats could expect to gain a couple of seats,” the journal observed. “But if there’s a Democratic wave, the party might win even more than that, perhaps enough to turn an overall Republican lead in AG seats into a Democratic one.”

The wave elections of 2010 and 2014 put Republicans in a dominant position in the nation’s statehouses, and that domination extended to the attorney-general’s office. Twenty-seven of the 50 state attorneys general are
Republican; 21 are Democrats (Alaska’s attorney general is an independent, and Hawaii’s serves in a nonpartisan capacity). Of the 30 state AG positions that are up for grabs this year, 18 are currently in Republican hands, while 12 are held by Democrats.

Strong Democratic contenders—such as former federal prosecutor Josh Kaul, a voting-rights advocate who is mounting an aggressive challenge to Brad Schimel, the scandal-plagued attorney general of Wisconsin; or Michigan civil-rights lawyer Dana Nessel, a top litigator on LGBTQ issues who helped get a court to strike down Michigan’s same-sex-marriage ban over a year before the Supreme Court intervened—are well positioned to win AG seats currently held by Republicans. Nessel has run a strikingly effective campaign that uses the headlines of the moment to focus attention on the authority of the office she seeks. In a video featuring stories about powerful men who have sexually abused women, the candidate says, “When you’re choosing Michigan’s next attorney general, ask yourself this: Who can you trust most not to show you their penis in a professional setting? Is it the candidate who doesn’t have a penis? I’d say so.” Then she doubles down on the point: “I will not sexually harass my staff, and I won’t tolerate it in your workplace either. I won’t walk around in a half-open bathrobe, and I’ll continue to take all sex crimes seriously, just like I did as a prosecutor.”

Another thing that Nessel and the other Democratic attorney-general candidates around the country say they won’t do is attack powerful state AGs. University of T exas law professor Justin Nelson, who once clerked for Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor and is challenging Republican Attorney General Ken Paxton in the Lone Star State, has highlighted Paxton’s lawsuit to overturn the ACA’s protections for people with preexisting conditions. “I will withdraw Texas from this lawsuit on the very first day in office,” Nelson vows.

Nelson is running an uphill race in Texas, but he’s viable at least in part because the incumbent is under felony indictment for securities fraud. “Ken Paxton will lie, cheat, and steal to remain in power and line his pockets,” says the challenger. “His indictment is a disgrace to the Office of the Attorney General and the state of Texas. Texans deserve an attorney general dedicated to enforcing the law, not breaking the law.”

Restoring the rule of law at the state level is one thing. But attorneys general also have the authority to address wrongdoing by presidents, and that authority is especially significant when the New York AG is going after a billionaire president who made his name and his money in New York City. That’s why it’s so significant that Tish James is promising to “follow the money, because we believe that [Trump] has engaged in a pattern and practice of money laundering—laundering the money from foreign governments here in New York State, and particularly related to his real-estate holdings.” As a former assistant attorney general and a veteran elected official, James understands the awesome power of the AG’s office, and she knows that power has already been aimed at Trump by former state attorney general Eric Schneiderman and interim attorney general Barbara Underwood. She is confident that she can use that power to hold the most powerful man in the world to account—so much so that James says: “It’s important that everyone understand that the days of Donald Trump are coming to an end.”

That’s a bold prediction from a candidate who proudly identifies herself as “still just a girl from Brooklyn.” But the power that attorneys general wield is real, and if the voters choose to rest that power in the hands of James and other Democrats like her, it could be the most consequential result of the November 6 election.
WEDDINGS, BIRTHDAYS, ANNIVERSARIES, OR JUST BECAUSE

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Letters

Inequality, Inc.
I was much impressed by Atossa Araxia Abrahamian’s “The Inequality Industry” [Oct. 8/15]. While understandably not as objective as a peer-reviewed journal article, it came close. I read it as “wisdom in black and white.”

Frank Dixon
Madison, va.

Overruling the Court

Regarding Richard Kim’s editorial “Court Reform, Anyone?” [Oct. 8/15]: It says right in the Declaration of Independence that when the government isn’t working for the people, they have the right, the duty, and the obligation to change the “forms to which they have become accustomed” and organize a government that better suits the people’s needs. And that’s what they did after waging a nine-year war.

The Declaration was the first step; the Constitution was the second. Yet when the rules for the Supreme Court were written, people didn’t live as long and retired earlier. These rules need to be reorganized to better suit the needs of people who live longer and retire later. After all, that’s what the Republicans are doing: reorganizing our inherited system of government to better suit the needs of the greedy and gluttonous, the few, the wealthy, the self-righteous.

Reorganize now!

Nancy Lindsay

A Flaming Outrage

I very much appreciated the article “Worse Than Lead?” by Jamie Kitman [Sept. 10/17]. After reading it, I tried to find out if my couch cushions had been treated with flame retardants, but there was no information. Is there a requirement to notify people of their use? My other questions: Where is the action component in your great work? How can we stop these dangerous chemicals?

Jane Moosbrucker
Acton, Mass.

Jamie Kitman Replies

Unfortunately, in many cases, there is no way to know for certain whether a product contains flame retardants. Manufacturers are not required to disclose this information, and most companies don’t do so willingly. In California, upholstered furniture is now required to display a label revealing the presence of these chemicals.

And yes, advocacy is crucial. Consumers need to ask for products without added chemical flame retardants. Manufacturers care even more about what consumers want than what the chemical companies or regulators want. So they need to hear from shoppers, loud and clear. Ask online and at brick-and-mortar retailers whether a product has flame retardants. Ask for the manufacturers’ websites to be more transparent and for clear labels on their products. Additionally, consider making a contribution to one of the organizations that make up the Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families coalition. These groups are getting state laws passed, filing lawsuits, testing products for toxic chemicals, and pressuring companies to make their products safer.

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Nyack, N.Y.
If you’re old enough to read this,” wrote the great blue-collar poet Philip Levine in 1990, "you know what work is.” What could be more obvious and more concrete than work? It’s your cubicle, your backache, your boss. Good or bad, it needs little explanation. Even to talk about it too much off the clock is to be a bore. It’s just there. Per the infamous American small-talk formulation, it’s simply what one does.

Over recent years, however, the definition of work has become more complicated, as a host of debates have flared up around it. What kinds of activity deserve recognition and reward, and what kinds do not? Which forms of labor create value, and which ones absorb it? Socialist feminists have long insisted that housework is work and should be paid, and a new generation of feminists have extended this insight: When women are expected to console and cheerlead in everyday life, isn’t this a kind of unpaid work? It’s certainly draining. The logic of this argument, in turn, travels from informal caregiving to the official caring industries: Why is it a teacher’s job to buy supplies for her students, instead of the responsibility of the employer? And

Gabriel Winant is a historian writing a book on care work and the Rust Belt.
why must a nurse exhaust herself on the job to make up for corner-cutting management decisions?

Nor are the only contested categories of work related to care labor. One finds such arguments across American society. Interns still labor in a gray zone of quasi-volunteer traineeship as much as employment. Universities claim that graduate students don’t do work, while a burgeoning campus union movement declares otherwise. Ober insists that its drivers are small-business people, not employees, as do 10 to 20 percent of other employers in America. Environmentalists call for recognition of the “services” provided by the ecosystem; some even argue that we need to acknowledge what political theorist Alyssa Battistoni calls the “work of nature.”

Naming an activity as work gives it standing. Through work, we gain entry into the powers of citizenship, the ability to participate in democratic life as valued, autonomous, and self-determining beings; recognized labor brings us into collective life. The question of what counts as work is therefore not a technical issue, but a question of who is valued, who bears rights, and who must be heard. It is, in this sense, ineluctably a political question and a question of power. Far from being determined by the market alone, the mutating definition of work tracks long-term historical changes and political struggles. If it’s difficult to maintain this perspective about our jobs as we go about them, it’s because work so often seems to be the same thing hour after hour, shift after shift, year after year: another day, another dollar. But in a larger historical context, it becomes possible to discern the constant churn in both work itself and our ideas about it.

Capturing this churn is the difficult task that historian Andrea Komlosy attempts in her new book Work: The Last 1,000 Years. Echoing David Graeber’s widely read 2011 tome Debit: The First 5,000 Years—which sought to give an account of borrowing’s place in human history in the immediate aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis—Komlosy attempts the monumental task of writing a large-scale global history of labor adequate to the growing instability in how we define and participate in work. Altogether, it must be said, her task is probably even harder than Graeber’s. In one form or another, almost everybody in every society works, so there’s a lot of history to convey in a slender 272 pages.

Komlosy begins by clearing the ground. “The term ‘work,’” she explains, “encompasses both market-oriented and subsistence activities; it includes human activity for the sake of survival and also the satisfaction of desires for luxury or status, as well as activities for the sake of cultural representation or demonstrations of power and faith.” Within this wide category, two extraordinary changes stand out over the last millennium: the increasingly widespread distinction between work and home in space, and between labor and leisure in time. The gradual and uneven emergence of these distinctions gives Work its main narrative arc; Komlosy argues that these separations help mark our modern age. The innumerable points in history when these distinctions blur or collapse also give us a sense of how arbitrary they are.

In Europe, two traditions—the Greek and the Judeo-Christian, which eventually intermingled in the vast post-Roman world—gave shape to premodern ideas of work and defined the relationship between work and home and between labor and leisure. The Greek tradition, the product of a slave society, saw work as an unambiguous curse, fundamentally incompatible with freedom and citizenship—and therefore relegated to those considered outside the polis. The Judeo-Christian tradition upheld the possibility of redemption through labor, recasting idleness as sinful, not civic. The interplay between the two gave the West its ambiguous cultural inheritance on this question: a notion of work that could encompass both mass enslavement and the pathway to salvation; something absolutely alien to dignified and autonomous selfhood, yet also central to it. This inner tension has shaped the gradual separation of work from the worlds of home and leisure.

While Komlosy, an Austrian historian, keeps Central Europe at the heart of her narrative, she is quick to acknowledge the exclusions that might serve as a counterpoint. In many parts of the world outside Europe, “indigenous languages knew no generalized concept of work. Instead, specific names were developed for activities like hunting, farming, fishing or preparing food.” In those cases where a general concept of work did exist, it named only the harshest tasks of survival. The brute force of empire changed this, imposing what Komlosy calls “a general, market-oriented concept of work.” European conquest thus remade daily life around the world, devaluing “the reciprocal, the immediate and the gratuitous,” which had once defined many forms of human activity in the past.

Much of Komlosy’s writing about the evolving understanding of labor is illustrated with excellent examples of linguistic differences. Across European languages, she points out, there exists a structural distinction roughly equivalent to what we’d recognize in English as that between “labor” and “work”—the former traditionally more toil-some, the latter signifying not just effort but also the redemption of a realized product. German makes the split between arbeit and werk; French, between travail and oeuvre. In one telling etymology, she points out that travail (and its Spanish and Portuguese cousins, trabaja and trabajo) comes from the Latin tripalium, a three-pronged stake used to torture slaves in ancient Rome. Oeuvre, on the other hand, along with the Latin opus and the Italian opera, speaks for itself. Chinese, meanwhile, offers a linguistic split between gongren and dagong that has its own history and significance. The terms today distinguish between work secured under the Maoist social contract and viewed as free and unalienated, and the more precarious labor of workers sprung loose from the decollectivization of agriculture, who were understood to be “uneducated, uncouth, uprooted, dangerous and volatile, subject to constant supervision and harassment by authorities and employers alike.”

Such dualisms aren’t stable; they change with history. As the sociologist Richard Biernacki has shown, even in relatively similar societies like England and Germany, quite different meanings of “labor” emerged during the rise of capitalism, thanks to their different paths toward industrialization. Because rural English households produced a considerable volume of commodities in the early years of capitalism—spinning wool, for example—the value of labor inhered and was measured in the product that was manufactured, such as yards of yarn. This idea outlasted the demise of household production. British factory workers also thought of their labor as embodied in the things they made; the wage was the price the employer paid the workers for the yarn they produced. Exploitation was something that happened in the course of unequal exchange in the market, rather than during the production.
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process. In Germany, on the other hand, there was no extended period of widespread rural domestic commodity production. As a result, German workers conceived of their labor not in terms of its material output, but rather as an abstraction, _arbeitsskraft_ ("labor power"), that was measured in time. For them, exploitation occurred in production itself, not in the process of sale.

This cultural difference led to differently designed factories and different methods of management. It also helped produce different kinds of workers’ movements and, ultimately, the different political orientations of the British Labour and German Social Democratic parties. In Germany, where _arbeit_ rules, working-class politics generated the world’s first mass Marxist party, one that officially embraced a revolutionary break with capitalism. On the other hand, in Britain, the land of _work_, working-class politics produced the reformist socialism of Labour, and in the United States—well, the less said, the better. Indeed, in its original German, Komlosy’s book is not titled _Werk_—the most obvious and direct translation—but rather, _Arbeit_. (It is also striking how recent efforts to name the imposition of extra burdens on women and people of color in daily life stress the word _labor_, as in “emotional labor,” rather than the more positive connotations of _work_.)

Linguistic comparison is one way to grasp the historical proliferation of categories for imagining work. But there are many others—paid and unpaid, free and unfree, secure and insecure, to name a few. The distinction between independent and dependent workers, for example, was central in the development of US political culture in the 19th century. Emerging from the onset of industrialization and the threat that it posed to the autonomy of artisans and yeoman farmers, this distinction ultimately formed the ideological basis of the Republican Party and the mass opposition to slavery in the North. It was also one of the tributaries feeding the idea that women, African Americans, and Asian immigrants were not “producers” but rather quasi-slave dependents of various kinds, and thus not worthy of direct inclusion in the social contract. As the historian Rudi Bätzell noted in a 2014 essay on the xenophobic California Workingmen’s Party, party advocates argued that Chinese workers did not belong in the US labor market because they were “content to be mere machines driven by their employ-

ers.” The thousands who crossed the Pacific to dig gold from the hills, build railroads over the Sierra Nevada, and harvest the fields of California were, by this alchemy, not workers. The wave of pogroms against Chinese laborers surrounding the first federal immigration restriction, which specifically targeted these workers, indicates the stakes in the question of whose work counts.

If the first half of _Work_ is spent teasing out these kinds of linguistic and categorical distinctions and some of their historical grounding, Komlosy sets out in the second half to make good on the book’s subtitle: “The Last 1,000 Years.” Her approach is to take global cross sections in the years 1250, 1500, 1700, 1800, 1900, and the present. In 1250, Europe was a remote agrarian backwater, connected by Indian Ocean and Silk Road trade routes, and by Mongol military might, to the more urbanized societies of the Middle East and Asia. Baghdad had 1 million people in 1250; Hangzhou, at least 650,000. Meanwhile, Europe’s largest cities—Venice, Milan, Genoa, Naples, and Paris—all hovered under 100,000. Across Eurasia, the household was the main organ of production, whether on feudal estates, in farming for tax or tribute collection, or in handicraft labor. When Asian unification under the Mongols began to disintegrate, sped by the apocalypse of the Black Death, the maritime expansion of Western Europe began. In that region, the serfs rebelled and, because of the labor shortage following the plague, were able to gain some real leverage, eventually leading to their emancipation. The lords of Prussia, Poland, and Russia, meanwhile, imposed a coercive “second serfdom” on their peasantry, compelling them to produce commodities for export to the merchants of Britain and the Netherlands. A similar process occurred on a vaster and more brutal scale along Africa’s Atlantic Coast and in the Americas, where the arrival of European ships brought extermination and enslavement. By the time Komlosy arrives at the period around 1500, we are given a remarkable triptych of how work was understood and practiced in much of the world: the “simultaneous emergence of wage labour, forced labour (corvée) and slavery.”

The rise of global European empires forged new connections among different types of work around the world. British merchants now bought cotton grown in the countryside of India and spun into yarn or woven into cloth by peasant households that could survive on low wages thanks to subsistence agriculture. Gradually, these producers became dependent on mercantile credit and thus increasingly subordinated to mercantile power, leading to intensifying exploitation in the global periphery—the rise of large-scale plantation slavery being the clearest example. These conditions, Komlosy argues, also prepared the way for the Industrial Revolution.

In the late-18th and 19th centuries in Western Europe, production left the household and began to undergo mechanization. Vast streams of people, sprung loose from the land, now wandered their countries and the globe in search of employment, remaking home and community alike. “The rise of centralized energy supplies moved work—and the workers—into the factory halls,” Komlosy explains. “Work remaining to be done in the households underwent an ideological reinterpretation: now it was considered reproduction, women’s work and motherly obligation, relegated to the private realm.”

In the American context, as historian Jeanne Boydston argues in her classic _Home and Work_, this moment marked a shift from a “gender division of labor” to a “gendered definition of labor.” Where men once did some kinds of work (say, in the fields) and women did others (for example, sewing clothes), early industrialization rewrote these rules: What women did ceased to be understood as work at all. The private sphere became a space of intimacy rather than production. Women’s work, no matter how onerous, went unacknowledged and vanished from view as work.

The interlocking triad of global labor—waged, coerced, or enslaved—persisted through this period. Raw materials for new factories were produced by plantation slave labor; European factories soon displaced the sites of production found in Asia, leading to a process of large-scale deindustrialization on that continent, particularly in India. Even as slavery was rolled back, other forms of coerced and indentured labor arose to replace it. By the turn of the 20th
century, the world economy had become integrated to an unprecedented degree, but on unequal terms. Workers in the parts of the world relegated to peripheral status still labored under only semi-free conditions; they combined “modern” wage labor with other forms of agrarian and household-based survival strategies.

Whatever its material effects, European hegemony over the world of labor recast the image of work—and with it, the global hierarchy itself. Even though only a minority of Europe’s population was enlisted in “gainful employment,” industrial production became the totem of modernity, all other forms of work a racialized symptom of “backwardness.” “As soon as legal standards were set for what kinds of work would receive what wage,” Komlosy tells us, and “what sorts of protection were entailed or which insurance benefits included, individuals had an ideal type against which to measure their own situation... To what were they still entitled? Who else were they expected to provide for?”

The unemployed had to answer similar questions: “to whom must one attach oneself for security and sustenance, both now and in the future?” Workers’ movements and workers’ states also became focused on finding in work the unfulfilled promise of the liberal order—the notion that equality could be established once formal democracy penetrated the economy and created an “industrial democracy.” In this way, much of the political world for much of the 20th century seemed to speak with one voice when it came to politics and work: Productivity was the point of entry into full membership in a society, whether socialist or capitalist.

Such ideas about employment ruled throughout the lifetimes of our parents and grandparents. They persist into our own, but they are now increasingly at odds with our lived reality. The relocation of industrial production to the Global South did not bring the old social contract with it. Because production spread under the sign of the neoliberal regime of trade and investment, it created insecurity within both the Northern and Southern hemispheres. “Hard and precarious working conditions, low wages, extreme exploitation and bans on trade union activity were accepted as the price of entry,” Komlosy writes of the newly industrialized nations. In the Global North, employment underwent its own profound fragmentation: falling wages, insecure terms, worsening conditions.

Komlosy seems to anticipate an inversion of the global order, as the late industrializers of the Global South surpass the old industrial core, reducing the Northern Hemisphere to a peripheral supplier, as Britain did to India two centuries ago. But this scenario seems unlikely. The current world order rests on the military and financial power of Western imperialist states and economies—and as demonstrated by the wave of protectionism emerging in much of the Global North, these countries are unlikely to give up their place amiable. Even if Komlosy’s prediction doesn’t come to pass, however, the fragmentation of work in the Northern Hemisphere has tremendous political implications. A social contract with formalized gainful employment at its center, we learn in Work, is a recent and historically fleeting phenomenon. Now that it is in a state of disarray, the political system that emerged parallel to it is also decaying. Liberal democracy gave millions of workers the vote, free speech, housing, health care, pensions, unions, civil rights, and national self-determination because of their ability to halt the gears of production. Now that so many cashiered workers have lost their leverage, the liberal world order itself appears to be at risk of coming to an end.

But while the 1990s apotheosis of liberalism did not bring history’s end, neither, one suspects, will its failure end older forms of exploitation and struggles for emancipation. New formations of ruling and working classes will continue to emerge and develop new strategies for survival, transforming the state in the process. The rise of the financial elite, the displacement of industrial workers, and the absorption of millions of women into the labor market in the late decades of the 20th century created a new working class in the service sector—one that has tentatively begun to counterattack in recent years through living-wage and $15-minimum-wage campaigns aimed at the lower levels of American government, and through campaigns by downwardly mobile professionals. But such efforts still seem meager in the face of the scale of workers’ defeats in recent decades. The decline of industrial employment, center-left politics, and organized labor raises a dire question: Must we now try to imagine a struggle against inequality and exploitation that doesn’t have wage labor at its center? And what would that mean?

On the further precincts of the left, this idea is now taken for granted. Anti-capitalist politics no longer means a struggle between classes at the point of production, but consists instead of occupations, riots, blockades, sabotage, communal mutual aid, and perhaps insurrection. The wreckage of the organized-labor movement and the collapse of its political representation, in other words, has lent credibility to the voices that could never invest hope in trade unions or electoral politics.

But this approach can seem speculative or

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Extinction

When you are gone they will read your footprints, if they still read, as they might a poem about love—wandering in circles, here and there obscured, washed out in places by weather, sudden landslide. Keep walking, pilgrim. This is your great tale.

DAVID BAKER
adventurist. Unfortunately, other strategies for rejuvenating workers’ power often appear little different. A common refrain in the more labor-oriented sectors of the left is that the logistics industry offers potent leverage: If you shut down the port at Long Beach, or the warehouses in the Inland Empire that process goods from the Pacific, or the Amazon distribution centers, or the UPS Worldport in Kentucky, you could squeeze the whole economy. Workers in these sectors could then heroically fight for all workers and win important gains across the board. But while logistics workers have won important incremental gains (higher wages, safer conditions, limits on piece-rate payment, reclassification of independent contractors), we have yet to see anything that suggests they could achieve the kind of systemic leverage that is often hoped for.

Liberals, for their part, are busy writing up proposed legislative changes for when the Democrats regain control of government. These are all to the good, but they seem as utopian as general strikes at the moment. The last two times that Democrats had supermajority control of Congress (first in the late ’70s, and again in 2009–10), they failed to pass such reforms despite lobbying campaigns by labor. Now such control seems far off indeed without a mobilized working class, which is unlikely without legal reform—a political catch-22. And even if this does happen, one dreads to think what the Supreme Court would do.

A popular formulation on the left in recent years is the phrase “diversity of tactics.” If ever a movement called for such diversity, it is labor in 2018. While the landscape is bleak, we have in fact seen surprising successes in the last decade—successes that have drawn on a broad range of approaches. Early mobilizations in response to post-2008 austerity, such as the Wisconsin Capitol occupation of 2011 and the Chicago teachers’ strike of 2012, blended elements of traditional workplace action and movement politics. Both of these efforts also flowed into (alas, unsuccessful) electoral campaigns against Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker and Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel. Yet the Chicago movement, which includes the Chicago Teachers Union but extends beyond it, did win a number of lower-profile elections and also sustained an ongoing confrontation with Emanuel’s administration over a range of issues less immediately related to employment, including schools, policing, housing, and taxation.

Working-class politics in our time has yet to develop a flexibility or radicalism adequate to the reality we face. Some members of the working class are employed, and some are not. Some have leverage and even organization at their workplaces, but most do not. Some are enfranchised politically; others are excluded. The enfranchised and the organized can multiply their power and enable the more dispersed workers around them to exert more strength, but only if they find ways to forge shared interests and identities. It is here that the definition of “work” matters. What makes such an expansive approach possible is a vision of the working class—and of work itself—that incorporates the insights of the feminist, environmentalist, anti-racist, and disability-rights traditions. Work is not only those forms of labor defined by capital. It can be valuable without aiding in capital’s accumulation, and it exists in many spheres of social life that often go unrecognized.

The teachers’ strikes of 2018, which insisted on the social value of care work to a larger working-class community, suggest some of the possibilities in this vision for compelling political change. And these movements have succeeded where many of their predecessors have failed, by foregrounding the historical mutability of work and the working class—as the West Virginia teachers did by citing the precedent of the state’s coal wars. The working class changes, and with it, so does our network of interdependencies and mutual obligations.

In one of the few striking turns of phrase in Work, Komlosy describes the final stage of her history—our own time—as “the desertification of reciprocity.” Capitalist development has eradicated the preexisting communal ways of organizing our mutual obligations—creating a desert and calling it a market. At the same time, however, capitalist societies have created their own complex networks of collective reliance. Some of these are organized through markets; others, such as social insurance and public education, through the state. Interdependency has not gone away, in other words, but there are many ways of organizing it, and not all are egalitarian or mutual—“reciprocal,” to use Komlosy’s term. A central challenge for the left, therefore, must be not only to rethink how we understand the working class, but also to consider how we can remake these interdependencies so that they bind us together in solidarity and mutuality. How can we defend and expand our reciprocal obligations and destroy the unequal ones? How can we make the capitalist desert we’ve inherited into a common garden?

This task is almost unimaginably immense. Yet the constituency for such a struggle is also vast, and it can be found in organized teachers and nurses, defiant graduate students and Uber drivers, domestic workers and incarcerated people. While the definition of work may be historically protean and politically contested, everyone nonetheless knows what it is, because everyone participates in systems of reciprocity and mutual reliance, and because everyone is working in one way or another. To win elections, save schools and hospitals, interrupt port operations, confront and close down police departments and immigration authorities: Each of these requires work and workers of all kinds, and none of these will succeed without the others. Each is too isolated on its own.

In another poem, “Fear and Fame,” Philip Levine tells the story of a metalworker taking his break. Clad in armor-like suit, the poet’s protagonist “climbs” back into the world “with a message from the kingdom of fire.” He showers, changes clothes, eats a sandwich made by his aunt, straps on his watch, and “reassume[s] his nickname.” Then, once he’s finished, he puts back on “the costume of his trade” and returns to his task, “stiffened by the knowledge that to descend and rise up from the other world merely once in eight hours is half what it takes to be known among women and men.”

Capitalism has made work “the other world,” a time and place away from life itself. But work is also the way we are bonded to one another, constituting the field of mutual reliance that defines the modern world and makes it a livable place. No matter how it’s named, described, or governed, the question of work is always ultimately how it’s governed and mutual reliance, and because everyone is working in one way or another. To win elections, save schools and hospitals, interrupt port operations, confront and close down police departments and immigration authorities: Each of these requires work and workers of all kinds, and none of these will succeed without the others. Each is too isolated on its own.

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If anyone is entitled to misgivings about the pernicious world of publishing, it’s Helen DeWitt, the long-suffering veteran of a by-now-well-known bevy of artistic successes and commercial failures. *The Last Samurai*, an exuberantly experimental novel about a child prodigy and his brilliant but depressive mother, made a triumphant debut at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 1999, but its publication was fraught. DeWitt fought to retain her idiosyncratic typesetting, faced off with a belligerent copy editor, and saw few profits in the wake of financial disputes with her publisher. Worse still, the imprint responsible for *The Last Samurai* folded in 2005. Though the book commanded a dedicated cult following, it went out of print until New Directions reissued it 11 years later.

DeWitt’s second book, *Lightning Rods*, must have seemed like an easier sell. A trenchant, ever-timely satire about sexual politics in the office, it follows an opportunistic entrepreneur who supplies companies with prostitutes, supposedly as a means of alleviating tensions in the workplace. But *Lightning Rods* proved surprisingly difficult to place. DeWitt completed it in 1999—yet did not find a home for it until 2010. In the intervening years, her agent rescinded his offer of representation, and she responded by threatening to jump off a cliff. It wasn’t the only time the vicissitudes of publishing drove DeWitt to desperate measures: When one of her many attempts at negotiating a deal on her own fell through, she took a sedative and stuck her head into a plastic bag.

The art of Helen DeWitt

**LOOK AT THIS!**

The Nation.

**Some Trick**

*Thirteen Stories*  
By Helen DeWitt  
New Directions. 224 pp. $22.95

Becca Rothfeld is a PhD candidate in philosophy at Harvard.

Becca Rothfeld is a PhD candidate in philosophy at Harvard.
The 13 darkly comic stories that comprise Some Trick, her latest book, are primarily about artists and intellectuals as despairing as DeWitt herself. Over and over again, she pits her characters against the callous apparatus of artistic bureaucracy: Authors are jilted by greasy agents, painters are exploited by greasy gallerists, and musicians are manipulated by greedy managers.

In “Climbers,” the centerpiece and highlight of the book, a reclusive Dutch author named Peter Dijkstra recoils from literary fame. He balks at sending his writing to agents, who demote prose to “pages,” and dreads the transformation of his handwritten manuscript into a digital document. “Once the thing was typed,” he reflects, “it was up for grabs,” apt for mangling and misinterpretation. He wonders if there is any way of exposing his words to the world without warping them in the process.

I think we have reason to hope so. Despite Dijkstra’s qualms, he goes on writing—and his acolytes go on reading him with care and compassion. Perhaps DeWitt will enjoy a similar reception. Some Trick, at least, is more than mere “pages.”

DeWitt is famous for her ebulliently multilingual prose—which is unsurprising, given her itinerant childhood and rigorous schooling. She was born in Maryland in 1957, but her father was a member of the Foreign Service who would be posted to Brazil, Colombia, and Ecuador. Later, first as an undergraduate at Smith College and then as a DPhil candidate in classics at Oxford, DeWitt had the opportunity to hone her Latin and Greek.

Her perfunctory eclecticism drives The Last Samurai, which contains excerpts from grammar textbooks, snippets of Japanese and Greek, and outbursts in the idioms of math and music. A work of breathless erudition, the novel whirs from art history to aerodynamics without braking or breaking stride. It follows Sibylla, a fanatically cerebral single mother struggling to educate her son Ludo, a genius who devoured the Odyssey in the ancient Greek at the age of 4. Because Sibylla detests Ludo’s father, a slick travel writer with an unctuously overwrought style, she conscripts Akira Kurosawa’s Seven Samurai to serve as a male role model for the child. After all, she reasons, the film features seven honorable men and even, implicitly, Kurosawa himself—enough father figures for a small village.

Sibylla suffers from a terrible, choking depression, which is alleviated not by the platitudes of counseling but by grammatical quirks and complexities, strange tense constructions, and demanding declensions. One glance at a textbook about the Semitic languages revives her: “Just the three words ‘excepting the Phoenician’ were better than hours of the kind of help you can get on a helpline,” she reports.

But if language is Sibylla’s salvation, it’s also the source of her sorrow. Any single passage, any single book, any single expression in any single language, serves only to remind her of every other passage, book, and language—of the whole heap of human knowledge that continues to tantalize and elude her. Her hopelessness is only compounded by her dull slog of a day job: She works as a typist, transcribing magazines with names like Cartworld and The Poodle Breeder for a digital archive. While she types, she worries that “once you start explaining there is no end to it.” Meanwhile, Ludo interrupts incessantly, barging in to ask how much more of the Odyssey he has to read before he can start studying Japanese: “HOW MUCH MORE? HOW MUCH MORE? HOW, MUCH, MORE?” We could pose the same explosive question to Sibylla, who is both sustained and imperiled by her exhausting and exhausting curiosity. Better, perhaps, complete muteness than such painfully partial speech.

Many of DeWitt’s characters in Some Trick remain unable to accept inapt locations or imperfect representations; they cannot reconcile themselves to the limitations of the glib language imposed on them by the publishing industry. In “My Heart Belongs to Bertie,” Peter, a mathematics professor and the author of a successful book of “robot tales,” has trouble communicating with his “hotshot literary agent.” The success of Peter’s first book is not enough to console him when his agent and editor force him to remove references to eπ, a constant in the famously elegant formula used to efficiently represent the movement around a circle, from his new manuscript. “He said, It would mean a lot to me to work with someone who admired Bertrand Russell. He said, It would really mean a lot to me.” But Jim, the hotshot agent in question, isn’t interested in Peter’s fervent attempts to explain binomial distribution. “I don’t really get it all,” he explains, “but I don’t need to get it.”

The only people who do get it are Peter’s best friends, a group of imaginary robots that have been visiting him since his youth. Their visits ceased “somewhere during the protracted battles over eπ,” and Peter misses them acutely: He finds it “a comfort to talk to a robot, in which rationality carries no stigma.”

Peter faces pressures that recur throughout Some Trick. In “Brutto,” we meet an unnamed artist struggling to sell her difficult, experimental paintings. When a well-known Italian gallerist visits her studio, he fixation on the work that matters to her but on a suit she made as an apprentice at a dressmaker’s. He finds the garment fascinatingly ugly—“brutto”—and invites her to show 20 such suits in an exhibition devoted to the “hatred of the body.” The artist tries to explain that she no longer sews, but the gallerist replies that her paintings “don’t interest me.”

So the artist makes more suits. She submits again when the gallerist insists that she display canisters of her piss, shit, sweat, and menstrual blood alongside the suits. “The thing about being an artist,” she grimly reflects, “is that from the minute you go to art school you realize there is this need to be canny. There is this need to make a name for yourself. There is this need to deal with the people who have the power.” At the end of the story, she adopts the gallerist’s approach of her own volition: Her entry for the prestigious Turner Prize consists of a suit and a jar of spermacidal jelly, an homage to her spiritual sterilization.

One of the few fonts of purity in the corrupt world of Some Trick is the aforementioned Peter Dijkstra. In “Climbers,” two New York writers visiting Amsterdam buy Dutch editions of Dijkstra’s books and gape at the words they cannot understand. “Neither of them,” DeWitt writes, “was stupid enough to tell anyone, even close friends, because you never know who will say something to someone and then it is out in the world.”

Later, when they receive Dijkstra’s work-in-progress by mail, they want to savor its...
aftertaste before they revert to talking—but their agent, Ralph, hovers over them, anxious to hear their opinions. “If Ralph had not been there they would have gone on passing the notebook and file cards back and forth in silent wonder,” DeWitt laments. “Or maybe one would have said, ‘Look at this,’ and the other would have said, ‘Look at this.’” But “Ralph went on being there,” and the writers are wrenched into speech. Yet from Dijkstra himself, we hear nothing. He is another writer who remains stubbornly silent: Nowhere in Some Trick do we learn what his writing is like.

Almost all of the writers in the dejected world of “Climbers” harbor fantasies of integrity that they lack the courage to realize. One of Ralph’s clients, confronted with the prospect of using authors’ blurbs in praise her book, shudders to think that people Ralph knew “had read her book and sent quotable quotes and now her book would be plastered with names of people whose work she despised”—but she “knew she had to be in New York, and she knew Ralph had to do the things he was doing for her.” Another reflects that if she’d only remained in the Istanbul airport after missing her flight, she could have written a book “as unencumbered and directionless as a room of white plastic tables”; a third, whose book Ralph also plasters with breezy blurbs, should have stayed in Berlin, where she could have eaten “breakfast at Daimler’s every day among the gleaming classic cars until she had written a book as fast and sleek and gleaming as a Daimler.” And a fourth

had found a place in Cappadocia where the people lived in caves, and later, beached in New York, found it independently singled out in the PD [Peter Dijkstra] novel. Why had he left? He would go to Cappadocia and live in a room in a hotel in a cave until he had written a book of cavedwellers in a windwashed land.

Reading this implausible end to the story, we already know we should doubt it. Far likelier our novelist, like many of his peers, will remain beached in embattled New York. Some Trick is understandably despondent and often crisply acerbic, but it rarely tips over into bitterness. DeWitt is a hot-blooded intellectual, and her contagious passion for the life of the mind can redeem even the bleakest lamentations. Many of the characters in her collection sell out, but many more would rather consign themselves to poverty than compromise their work. The upshot is idealistic, even if the message is far from uplifting.

The collection’s twinned Peters—Peter Dijkstra and Peter of robot fame—both reject the promise of cheap celebrity. Robot Peter quite literally walks out on his meeting with Jim. He goes out for a cigarette, finds himself able to commune with his beloved robots again, and wanders off, forgetting all about his book deal. Peter Dijkstra, who also feels “comfortable among the robots,” leaves a barrage of e-mails from New York unanswered. He steps into a parallel street, lights a parallel cigarette, and goes off “in search of a beer or maybe a Sachertorte or a schnitzel.”

In another story in the book, “In Which Nick Buys a Harley for 16K Having Once Been Young,” yet a third Pete comes into focus, and he too opts for integrity. Pete the famous musician resents his manager, who encourages him to play the same uninspired songs over and over again, as well as his fans, who don’t even notice that his music has become safe and anodyne. So he abandons his band mid-tour and finds that “there was still that quietness in the world,” still an unsullied silence for him to return to.

DeWitt’s characters often opt for quietness over the deadening distortions of sound. But when they do speak, they do so with an intensity so pronounced that it embarrasses us. One of Dijkstra’s biggest fans effuses for an uncomfortably long time at a too-cool publishing party, insisting that, if the author took off with all his belongings, all his furniture and clothing, all his diaries and personal memorabilia, he would be more than happy to cede them. The fan gushes:

So the thing of it is, that Peter Dijkstra does not have it in his power to betray me, if he thinks something of mine can help with his new book he can just have it. Not only is he not letting me down, this has been a fantasy ever since I was a kid. I don’t care about the things, it just makes me happy to be a part of this. So when I say a writer is a genius, what I mean is, there is nothing I won’t do for him. It’s really simple.

In the world of Some Trick, the best words are so acute they lacerate: They do not pander, and they make no concessions to facile legibility. The best words, that is, are arduous. They hurt, but they elevate. Reading them, we feel as Dijkstra’s fans do: that there is nothing we wouldn’t do for their author.
Evolution is a tenuous metaphor for artistic growth, but it’s a good one for describing the kinds of progress that occur under pressure, when a certain natural selection takes place between the useful and the irrelevant. This kind of growth is thrilling to watch, not only because those developments are so terrifyingly high-wire, but because they can reveal so much.

Oil of Every Pearl’s Un-Insides, the debut solo album by Sophie Xeon, the Los Angeles–based singer, songwriter, and producer who records under the starkly capitalized mononym SOPHIE, shows the artist experiencing this kind of metamorphosis before our very eyes. On Oil, we follow Xeon to a more rarefied place than she’s been before; while her earlier releases as an affiliate of the electronic collective PC Music were prismatic—all Day-Glo obfuscation—Xeon’s latest effort is clear, crystalline, and beautiful. From the first track—“It’s Okay to Cry,” which dropped last October—it’s apparent that what went into the album came out of Xeon’s intense conversations with herself:

I don’t mean to reproach you by saying this
I know that scares you
All of the big occasions you might have missed
No, I accept you
And I don’t even need to know your reasons
It’s okay, it’s okay, it’s okay...
I hope you don’t take this the wrong way
But I think your inside is your best side.

It’s as though she’s having a conversation with a mirror, one that doesn’t include declarations of who’s the fairest of them all. The video for “It’s Okay to Cry” is simple: Xeon, appearing like a marble bust with a shock of orange hair, sings in front of a series of changing skies. It’s the first song the artist has released where she’s singing with her own voice; her previous releases—loosies collected and bundled into the compilation Product in 2015—were more about SOPHIE as a pop project than as an artist. 2013’s “Bipp,” Xeon’s first big hit, boasted all of her trademark sounds, though it obscured the artist’s presence in favor of the song’s kinetic propulsion. It was a breakthrough production, and it made Xeon’s name. Oil, however, manages the same trick without playing hide-and-seek.

A couple of months after the release of “It’s Okay to Cry,” the famously interview-shy Xeon agreed to speak with the writer Michelle Lhooq for Teen Vogue and explained the transformation she hopes to document in the album. “‘It’s Okay to Cry’ served a pivotal role in helping many realize that she is transgender,” Lhooq wrote. “When I ask why she’d chosen this moment to reveal herself, both literally and metaphorically, SOPHIE replies, ‘I don’t really agree with the term “coming out”…. I’m just going with what feels honest.’”

Xeon’s honesty in Oil is what gives the album its verve. On “Faceshopping,” one of the standout tracks, SOPHIE’s lyrics discuss her relationship with her face, flip-
ping the words and their meanings around, as if to try them out or spin them in a different direction. “My face is the front of shop / My face is the real shop front / My shop is the face I front / I'm real when I shop my face,” sings vocalist Cecil Believe, before the lyrics get more granular: “Artificial bloom / Hydroponic skin / Chemical release / Synthesize the real / Plastic surgery / Social dialect / Positive results / Documents of life.” Xeon’s doing alchemy here—not just with who she is but also with how she sounds.

Oil also suggests where Xeon is headed. “Pretending,” for example, is gloomier than her previous efforts, a murky song of transformation and rebirth. The synths slide over one another in a primordial ooze, documenting something like an embryonic transformation. In “Is It Cold in the Water?” the arpeggiated synths speed up this sense of change, rising to a point of anxious urgency. “Jewelry,” Mock observes: “My favorite images are the ones where someone who isn’t supposed to be there—who’s like in a space, a space where we were not ever welcomed—which is a statement against the empty places we make and remake ourselves—its real strength lies in how it showcases Xeon’s growth as a musician. She’s moved away in ways that people didn’t expect her to move. In “Orlando,” the album’s first track, Hynes recalls being beaten up by his classmates for being different, for not quite fitting the black masculine archetype that they believed every man had to uphold: After school, sucker-punched down Down and out First kiss was the floor First kiss was the floor But, God, it won’t make a difference if you don’t get up.

At the end of the song, Mock’s voice returns and brings us back into a slightly more enlightened present. “You know, an insult that we often put onto a lot of folk… ‘Oh, you’re doing too much,’” she says, over a swelling high hat. “So like, a couple years ago, I was like: ‘You know what? My resolution, my eternal resolution, will be… to do too much.’” Trying too hard, doing too much, being too loud, too ambitious, too obvious, too insistent—for Hynes and Mock, this is exactly what the world needs more of. And for the rest of the album, the pair try to do exactly that, with Hynes bringing in other voices from the music industry to help him tell his story. It’s a departure from his previous work, which provided a more solitary portrait of the artist. Now we find him surrounded by collaborators: Puff Daddy, Tei Shi, ASAP Rocky, Project Pat, and Ian Isiah, among others.

The Puff Daddy and Tei Shi collaboration is particularly captivating: Hynes’s voice and music fade into the background, acting as a canvas upon which Puffy and Tei Shi can paint. Their addition is welcome, but the painting they produce with Hynes is, admittedly, not all that different from the one he made on the 2013 release Cupid Deluxe and on Freetown Sound, recorded between 2014 and 2016. And that’s part of the problem: For all of Negro Swan’s messages and fanfare, the beauty of the music itself has, after four Blood Orange albums from Hynes, worn a little thin. While the album is designed to be listened through many, many times, his lyrics are buried beneath layer upon layer of obfuscation—and you sometimes end up feeling like you’ve heard it all before.

To ask Hynes to change that would be to ask him to abandon his trademark style, the thing that made him famous as a musician and as a musical collaborator. Even so, there is a small change here. And isn’t that what life’s about?
**ACROSS**

1 Poet with nothing to indicate one agricultural staple and another (4,7)

7 Engineer posted about ultimate component of network computer (7)

8 Killer caching on-time check (7)

10 Clean dollop of cream in tart (5)

11 Follow end of conversation in Filipino language (3,5)

13 In Old English, writes identical password (4,6)

14 Flip the middle of final law exam (4)

16 Approach conscientious objector near Maine (4)

18 Currency I scrutinize for religious man (10)

20 Determined to take back failure with native of Western mountains (8)

22 Bone somewhat inverted outside center of joint (5)

24 Marker with minimal movement of tail for dog (4-3)

25 I therefore drink something found in a physics lab (7)

26 Minnesota Republicans introducing a particular female, say (6,5)

**DOWN**

1 Riding wild horse off the boat (7)

2 Seat broken by chance* (8)

3 Evoke piece involving hat (4)

4 Celebrating Pacino and intending to host hundreds (10)

5 Gossip, verily, embracing the New Testament (5)

6 Fields of grass, as mowed haphazardly (7)

7 Throws a club at the last of Thin Mints (11)

9 Singer nearby can blast (11)

10 Quotation from Socrates: “Crito, I require a writing desk” (10)

15 An old-fashioned way to listen to music from instrument found around court jester’s rear (8)

17 Stein hugs Laurel Ford (7)

19 Show disapproval, in case it arrives at the very end (7)

21 Relish part of litter from California city (3,2)

23 Young wosan? (4)

28**down**

**SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3478**

Kosman & Picciotto explain what they’re up to at thenation.com/article/solving-nations-cryptic-crosswords/.

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