

# Legacy Of Jim Crow Still Affects Schools

By Derek W. Black

Associated Press

Nearly 70 years ago—in its 1954 *Brown v. Board* decision—the Supreme Court framed racial segregation as the cause of educational inequality. It did not, however, challenge the lengths to which states went to ensure the unequal funding of Black schools.

Before *Brown*, Southern states were using segregation to signify and tangibly reinforce second-class citizenship for Black people in the United States. The court in *Brown* deemed that segregation was inherently unequal. Even if the schools were “equalized” on all “tangible factors,” segregation remained a problem and physical integration was the cure, the Court concluded.

That framing rightly focused on segregation's immediate horror—excluding students from schools based on the color of their skin—but obscured an important fact. In addition to requiring school segregation, many

states also had long segregated school funding.

Some had used “racially distinct tax” policies that reserved separate funds for White and Black schools. Other states had moved school funding responsibility and control from state officials to local communities. Local officials could then ensure inequality without any specific law mandating it.

*Brown's* focus on physical segregation inadvertently left important and less obvious aspects of local funding inequality unchecked. Those practices still drive underfunding in predominantly poor and minority schools. Through the University of South Carolina School of Law's Constitutional Law Center, since 2021 we have been documenting the historical connection between segregation and states' reliance on local school funding. In our view, until states stop relying so heavily on local school funding, the equal educational opportunities that *Brown* first sought will remain out of reach for K-12 stu-

dents in the 21st century.

A large body of evidence shows “money matters.”

Increased spending improves college attendance rates, graduation rates and test scores. But, as a 2018 report revealed, school districts enrolling “the most students of color receive about \$1,800, or 13 percent, less per student” than districts serving the fewest students of color.

A more recent analysis further demonstrated that school funding cuts during the Great Recession disproportionately affected Black students and exacerbated achievement gaps.

Most school funding gaps have a simple explanation: Public school budgets rely heavily on local property taxes. Communities with low property values can tax themselves at much higher rates than others but still fail to generate anywhere near the same level of resources as other communities.

In fact, in 46 of 50 states,

(See **LEGACY**, P. 2)



**BETTER THAN IT WAS...** The rigid segregation is gone, but Jim Crow is still around in unequal funding for predominantly White, Black schools.

# Police Stops Of Blacks Filled With Fear

By Corey Williams and Aaron Morrison

Associated Press

The video seems clear: Patrick Lyoya disobeyed an officer during a traffic stop, tried to run, then wrestled with the officer over his Taser before the officer fatally shot him in Grand Rapids, Mich.

For a number of Black men and women, resisting arrest during encounters with police for minor traffic stops have been deadly. Experts say anxiety levels of the people stopped and even the officers involved can be

high, adding to the tension.

George Floyd's 2020 slaying by Minneapolis police Officer Derek Chauvin, the 2014 strangulation death of Eric Garner by a New York City officer and the shooting death of Michael Brown that same year by an officer in Ferguson, Mo., are among high-profile encounters that proved deadly for Black men.

A store employee called police, saying Floyd allegedly tried to pass a counterfeit \$20 bill. Police stopped Garner on suspicion of selling untaxed cigarettes. An officer confronted Brown and a companion as they walked to

Brown's home from a convenience store. Brown was shot after scuffling with the officer. All three men were unarmed.

“Because of the way police are commonly portrayed, there can be anxiety for young men of color when they are pulled over,” said Jason Johnson, president of the Law Enforcement Legal Defense Fund. “Am I going to get a ticket? Am I going to get arrested? They may believe they are going to be a victim of abuse. Many times they enter into these interactions thinking they are going to be a victim of brutality.”

In 2015, a White police officer

in Columbia, S.C., pulled over Walter Scott, a 50-year-old Black man, for a broken brake light. A bystander's video captured the two tumbling to the ground after the officer hit Scott with a Taser. The officer then shot Scott as he tried to run.

In Lyoya's case, some—including his family and their high-profile attorney, Ben Crump—have said the 26-year-old Congolese refugee was slain for having a license plate that did not belong to the vehicle. While that's why the officer stopped Lyoya, Johnson

(See **POLICE STOPS**, P. 2)



# Dowless, Key In N.C. Absentee Ballot Fraud Probe, Died Today

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Leslie McCrae Dowless Jr., the key player in a North Carolina absentee ballot fraud probe that led to a do-over congressional election, has died.

His daughter, Andrea Dowless Heverly, wrote that her father “passed away peacefully” Sunday morning, according to a social media post. He had been diagnosed with an advanced form of lung cancer and died at his daughter's home in Bladen County, his friend Jay DeLancy told The Associated Press in a brief interview. Dowless was in his mid-60s.

The political operative was set to go on trial this summer on more than a dozen state criminal counts related to absentee ballot activities for the 2016 general election and the 2018 primary and general elections. A half-dozen others were also charged.

Witnesses told state officials that Dowless, with help of his assistants, gathered hundreds of absentee ballots from Bladen County in 2018. Those workers testified they were directed to collect blank or incomplete ballots, forge signatures on them and even fill in votes for local candidates.



# NORTH CAROLINA CONDUCTS ALCOHOL ENFORCEMENT, 250 CHARGED

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Agents with North Carolina's Alcohol Law Enforcement Unit charged more than 250 people Friday night in a series of coordinated actions.

Officials said the charges included alcohol, drug, firearm, driving and gambling offenses.

In addition, police seized six firearms, including an AR-15 rifle illegally possessed by a convicted felon.

Also seized were 77 fake IDs and an illegal distillery, officials said.

Cities involved in the operation included Wilmington, Greenville, Durham, Greensboro, High Point, Charlotte, Boone, Conover, Wilkesboro, Lenoir, Fayetteville, Lumberton, Pembroke, Laurinburg, Lenoir, Biscoe, Yanceyville, Sylva, Cullowhee, and Dillsboro.

# 2 MEN ADMIT TO PEPPER-SPRAYING OFFICERS AT U.S. CAPITOL RIOT

WASHINGTON (AP)—Two New York men pleaded guilty Friday to discharging chemical spray at police officers inside the U.S. Capitol during the January 2021 insurrection.

Cody Mattice, 29, and James Mault, 30, each admitted to breaking through police barriers and entering the building during a trip to Washington they had planned for several days and prepared for by acquiring batons and pepper spray.

Under plea agreements with federal prosecutors, each faces between 37 and 46 months in prison after pleading guilty to felony charges. Each also will pay \$2,000 toward the cost of repairing the Capitol. Sentencing is scheduled for July 15.

Mattice and Mault, both from the Rochester area, were indicted in October after authorities said they appeared in photos and videos spraying a chemical agent toward police officers in a Capitol building hallway.

Mault was arrested in Fort Bragg, N.C., where he had been stationed with the U.S. Army. Mattice was arrested at his home in Hilton, N.Y.

The two appeared at a joint hearing Friday before U.S. District Judge Beryl Howell, Mault in person and Mattice remotely. Both acknowledged exchanging text messages in the days prior to the insurrection, with Mault telling Mattice and others in a group to bring batons, knives, “ass-kicking boots” and protective clothing.

Once at the Capitol, Mault tried to convince police officers to join the rioters, assuring them they would still have jobs “after we kick the (expletive) out of everyone,” according to the plea agreement.

“What we're doing is right,” he told the officers, “or there wouldn't be this many... people here.”

In exchange for their guilty pleas, prosecutors agreed to drop additional felony charges.

(See **STATE BRIEFS**, P. 2)

# No Charges In Shooting Of Pedestrian

FAYETTEVILLE (AP)—An off-duty sheriff's deputy won't face charges for the fatal shooting of a Black pedestrian on a busy road earlier this year, a North Carolina prosecutor announced Thursday, saying the deputy had reason to fear bodily harm and to defend himself.

The North Carolina Conference of District Attorneys reviewed the shooting death of Jason Walker on Jan. 8 after the local district attorney recused himself from the case. In a letter Thursday, conference executive director Kimberly Overton Spahos wrote that it will not pursue charges against Jeffrey Hash, who was off duty from his job at

the Cumberland County Sheriff's Office at the time of the shooting.

The letter, citing evidence collected by the State Bureau of Investigation, said that Hash, who is White, stopped his personal vehicle in traffic about 30 feet from Walker when he saw him run into the road on Jan. 8 in Fayetteville. The prosecutors wrote that Walker ran forward, jumped on the hood of the truck, removed a windshield wiper and struck the windshield to the point of breaking it. Hash's wife and daughter were inside.

After shouting at Walker to stop, Hash then exited his truck and shot Walker four times after Walker lunged at him, according

to the letter.

“In this case, the evidence clearly supports the conclusion that Hash reasonably believed that he, his wife, and his child were in imminent danger of great bodily injury or death at the hands of Walker,” the letter said, adding that Walker had made a “violent assault upon the vehicle.”

The letter also noted that, in considering criminal charges, prosecutors had to determine whether they could prove beyond a reasonable doubt that a crime happened.

The prosecutors wrote “while it is possible that other alternatives were available to Hash,

the analysis is not and cannot be whether his actions were the only option or even the best option.”

The shooting prompted protests by demonstrators who questioned authorities' account of what happened.

An autopsy released in March found that Walker had wounds to his head, chest, back and thigh. The report noted that no alcohol or illegal drugs were found in his system.

The prosecutor's letter on Thursday said Walker was yelling, waving his hands and appeared to be agitated when he

(See **NO CHARGES**, P. 2)

# Black Man Is Nat'l Teacher Of The Year

By Mark Gillispie

Associated Press

OBERLIN, Ohio (AP)—It hardly seems a stretch to say Kurt Russell was born to be a history teacher.

Raised on his mother's stories about segregation and the civil rights movement in Alabama and influenced by teachers from his childhood, the 50-year-old Russell has spent the last 25 years teaching history and African-

American history at Oberlin High School outside Cleveland.

The Council of Chief State School Officers announced Tuesday that Russell is the organization's National Teacher of the Year for 2022. The group previ-

ously named him Ohio's teacher of the year.

“Kurt's extensive career shows the power of educators to shape the lives of students from the classroom to extracurricular activities to the basketball court,” CCSSO Chief Executive Officer Carissa Moffat Miller said in a statement.

Russell will spend the next year representing educators and serving as an ambassador for students and teachers across the country, the organization said.

His classroom journey to teaching began with his White kindergarten teacher, Francine Toss, who read a picture book about the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. as he and other students sat in a circle in her classroom.

“She had the audacity to introduce literature that was culturally relevant,” Russell said. “I thought, ‘Wow, that's a guy who looks like me.’”

The die was further cast for his future career as an eighth-grader when he walked into a math class taught by Larry Thomas, the first Black male teacher he had encountered. Russell said he was impressed by Thomas' demeanor and how he carried himself in the classroom.

“He was someone who looked like me in front of the classroom

(See **TEACHER OF YEAR**, P. 2)



KURT RUSSELL OF OBERLIN HIGH SCHOOL IS TEACHER OF THE YEAR

## STATE BRIEFS

Continued from page 1

## OFFICIALS: MARK MEADOWS WAS REGISTERED TO VOTE IN 3 STATES

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP)—Mark Meadows—a former chief of staff to President Donald Trump who was removed from North Carolina voter rolls earlier this month—is still a registered voter in two other states, according to officials and a published report.

Chris Whitmire, a spokesperson for the South Carolina Elections Commission, told The Associated Press the former Republican congressman and his wife registered as voters in the state in March.

“That’s when he became active,” Whitmire said, noting that neither Meadows had yet cast a vote in the state. “From our perspective, it just looks like any new South Carolina voter.”

The South Carolina registration was first reported by *The Washington Post*, which noted that Meadows had been a registered voter simultaneously in three states—the Carolinas and Virginia—until North Carolina removed him from its rolls earlier this month. Meadows remains a registered Virginia voter, the paper reported. An email sent by The Associated Press to the Virginia Department of Elections was not immediately returned Friday.

Mark and Debra Meadows bought a home on picturesque Lake Keowee for \$1.6 million in July, according to records for the property, which was listed on their South Carolina voter registration records.

The former North Carolina congressman appeared in South Carolina earlier this week with members of the state Legislature’s newly formed Freedom Caucus, an offshoot of a similar conservative group that Meadows helped found on the federal level while serving in the U.S. House.

A representative for Meadows declined to comment Friday on the South Carolina voter registration.

Public records indicate Meadows had been registered to vote in Virginia and North Carolina, where he listed a mobile home that he never owned—and may never have visited—weeks before casting an absentee 2020 presidential election ballot in the state. Trump, for whom Meadows was serving as chief of staff in Washington at the time, won the battleground state by just over 1 percentage point.

Last month, North Carolina Attorney General Josh Stein’s office asked the State Bureau of Investigation to investigate.

About a year after he registered in North Carolina, Meadows registered to vote in Alexandria, Va., just weeks before Virginia’s high-profile governor’s election last fall, the records indicate.

Meadows frequently raised the prospect of voter fraud before the 2020 presidential election—as polls showed Trump trailing now-President Joe Biden—and in the months after Trump’s loss, to suggest Biden was not the legitimate winner.

Judges, election officials in both parties and Trump’s own attorney general have concluded there was no evidence of widespread voter fraud in the 2020 election. Experts point to isolated incidents of intentional or unintentional violations of voter laws in every election.

Whitmire, the South Carolina elections spokesman, said that when he registered with South Carolina, Meadows should have notified any other jurisdictions of his new status.

Through the Electronic Registration Information Center, a consortium through which states exchange data about voter registration, Whitmire also said officials periodically pull voter lists and remove those who have more recently registered in a new state.

## AUTOPSY SHOWS PATRICK LYOYA SHOT IN HEAD BY MICHIGAN COP

DETROIT, Mich. (AP)—An independent autopsy confirms that Patrick Lyoya was shot in the back of the head by a Michigan police officer while facedown on the ground, lawyers for the Black man’s family said Tuesday.

The finding by a former Detroit-area medical examiner matches what was seen last week on video released by the Grand Rapids police chief. The official autopsy report hasn’t been released to the public.

“There’s no question what killed this young man... It was a powerful bullet,” said Dr. Werner Spitz, holding a skull at a news conference to show where the bullet entered the head.

Spitz said he believes the gun was pressed against Lyoya’s head when the officer fired.

Lyoya was killed after a traffic stop in western Michigan on April 4. He and the White officer physically struggled on the ground before the 26-year-old refugee from Congo was shot.

Lyoya wasn’t armed. The officer was on top of him and can be heard on video demanding that he take his hand off a police Taser.

“We can confirm that Patrick Lyoya was shot in the back of his head,” attorney Ben Crump said. “That is now scientific evidence of this tragic killing and what his family believes was an execution.”

Crump, who has secured multimillion-dollar settlements for families of other Black men killed by police, said Lyoya could have lived until his early 80s—a “long and fruitful life.”

Spitz said he performed the autopsy last weekend at a Grand Rapids funeral home. The 95-year-old forensic pathologist participated in the assassination investigations of President John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr., among other high-profile cases.

Lyoya’s death has outraged his family as well as many people who have watched video of the confrontation with an officer.

The officer, whose name hasn’t been released, is heard saying during a traffic stop that the license plate didn’t match the car. Lyoya declined to get back into the vehicle as ordered, and a short foot chase ensued.

Crump said it appeared to be a “classic case” of racial profiling—“driving while Black.” He noted that the officer’s patrol car video shows him backing out of a driveway in a residential neighborhood to follow the car for a few blocks. In Michigan, license plates aren’t on the front of vehicles.

Attorney Ven Johnson said Lyoya was “resisting” the officer, not fighting him.

“You never see a fist, you never see a knife, no baseball bat, no gun, no nothin’,” Johnson said. “This was not a deadly force scenario. ... Never gave a warning: ‘Halt or I’m going to shoot you’, or other words that we can all imagine.”

## Legacy of Jim Crow Still...—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

local school funding schemes drive more resources to middle-income students than poor students. The local funding gap between districts mostly serving middle-income versus poor students in New Jersey, for example, is \$3,460 per pupil. While state and federal programs often send additional funds to poor students, they are insufficient to fully meet the additional needs of low-income students.

In *Brown v. Board*, the court glossed over the history of school segregation and its nuances. The court said it was impossible to “turn the clock back to 1868,” when the nation adopted the Fourteenth Amendment, or “even 1896,” when the court authorized segregation. Instead, it declared that “we must consider public education in the light of its full development and its present place in American life throughout the Nation.”

This pivot let the court tackle segregation on a slate scrubbed clean of history’s mess. But it also deprived the court of any serious consideration of Southern states’ complex and racially motivated system of local school funding.

Later court decisions did not even recognize that a problem with local funding might exist. To the contrary, they put a preference on local funding over remedying inequality. In

the 1973 case of San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez, the court rejected a challenge to the inequality local school funding causes, reasoning that “local control” over school funding was “vital to continued public support of the schools” and “of overriding importance from an educational standpoint as well.”

A year later, in *Milliken v. Bradley*, the Supreme Court blocked a desegregation remedy that would have spanned multiple districts. Finances and local autonomy were at the heart of the court’s rationale. It wrote, “No single tradition in public education is more deeply rooted than local control over the operation of schools.” In its view, desegregation between districts would destroy that tradition and create a host of problems regarding local school funding.

To be sure, those decisions did not preclude desegregation within individual districts. But the Court declared desegregation and school funding inequality that occurs between school districts—as opposed to within school districts—as largely beyond the reach of federal judicial power.

Our research reveals that during the South’s Reconstruction, Black people and progressive Whites saw state control as the

solution to inadequate and unequal education. They adopted policies to that effect, many of which were enshrined in state constitutions rather than laws reversible by the legislature.

Local communities were certainly important to the implementation of schools, but states like Texas and Virginia centralized school administration, school finance and a variety of other policies. Some states, such as South Carolina, placed the core issue of physical segregation under state control and prohibited it outright.

Then, during the Jim Crow era, localism became the tool to reverse this progress and equality. States increased reliance on local taxation, gave local White officials discretion over state funds, and constitutionally secured segregation. Some went so far as to craft color-coded funding systems where White taxes funded White schools exclusively.

Others, like South Carolina, achieved the same end by letting taxpayers select which of the segregated schools would receive their funds. Southern leaders openly linked local funding and control to the “wisdom” of segregation.

The development of Northern local school systems was historically distinct. Yet, even in some Northern states, racial antago-

nism and concerns over segregation prompted pushes for local decision-making. More generally, some Northern states followed a trajectory similar to Southern states: Illinois, for example, imposed a statewide property tax for White education with supplemental local funding before the Civil War. Ironically, though, it ultimately became one of the states most dependent on local funding.

While *Brown v. Board* declared school segregation itself unconstitutional, other related aspects of segregated schools—particularly the decentralization of school funding—continued unchecked after it. The longer those aspects remained, the more courts accepted them as a neutral aspect of delivering public education.

An important step in remedying entrenched school funding inequalities is to first recognize that they are rooted in the history of Jim Crow segregation. Another potential step is to return to the more centralized approach of Reconstruction—an approach that states during their progressive eras have long recognized.

And this step makes good constitutional sense, too. After all, every state constitution places the ultimate obligation to fund and deliver public education on states, not local governments.

## Police Stops of Blacks Filled—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

said, that’s not why Lyoya was killed.

“It’s one of the disconnects or misunderstandings between the police and the public,” Johnson said. “If you look a little bit deeper, that’s not what happened. (Lyoya) had a number of opportunities to comply with the officer’s directions. This use of deadly force had nothing to do with a traffic violation and everything to do with (Lyoya) actively resisting arrest.”

Lyoya’s actions led “down the path that ultimately ended in deadly force,” Johnson added.

Grand Rapids police on Wednesday released video of the April 4 stop, including from the officer’s vehicle and body camera, from a bystander’s cellphone and from a doorbell camera. The videos show the brief foot chase and a struggle as the White officer repeatedly tells Lyoya to stop. At one point, Lyoya has his hand on the officer’s stun gun, and the officer yells at him to let go.

The struggle ended when the officer shot Lyoya in the head as Lyoya was facedown, with the of-

ficer straddling him.

Scott Roberts, senior director of criminal justice and democracy campaigns at Color of Change, a national racial justice organization, said officers are often fearful given the dangers involved with making stops. But that doesn’t negate that Black motorists suffer for showing or expressing their justified fears in traffic stops, he said.

“Looking at police culture, there is just this pushback on the notion that policing is rooted in White supremacy and has been a tool of White supremacy,” Roberts said. “And so there is a kind of denial of why Black people would have that fear. You’ve already criminalized the person when you’re making a pre-textual stop. Your assumption is going to be that this is only a confirmation of their guilt, that fear.”

Roberts added that these dynamics have increasingly led cities, prosecutors and police to enact policies that deemphasize or end stops for minor infractions.

Skin color and experiences could skew how all parties interpret interactions and confronta-

tions between Black Americans and White officers, said Paul Bergman, professor emeritus of law at UCLA.

“Cultural narratives may lead White officers as well as Black officers to anticipate trouble when the person they are stopping is Black,” he said.

In Lyoya’s case, “was he more likely to be pulled over because he was Black?” Bergman asked. “If he wasn’t Black, would this be more of a minor infraction and would the police officer think he had better things to do?”

The situation escalated when Lyoya didn’t produce a driver’s license and tried to run. That likely raised the officer’s suspicions, Bergman said.

But Lyoya also might have believed his best option was to flee, he said.

“Maybe he’s thinking to just escape a situation that’s threatening,” Bergman added. “Lawfully, you’re expected to comply with lawful demands. The place to argue if you think it’s unlawful is later. We’re expected to fight those arguments out in courts and not in the street.”

## Black Man Is Nat’l Teacher—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

who all the kids enjoyed,” Russell said. “This seemed like a profession that I could enjoy. It just changed my life.”

His parents, Jerry and Retta Russell, who grew up attending segregated schools in Alabama, moved to Oberlin in the late 1960s, his father for construction work and his mother to escape the vestiges of the Jim Crow south.

His mother as a high school student in Linden, Ala., marched with the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., who came to Linden at the invitation of the Rev. Ralph Abernathy, King’s close friend and collaborator in the civil rights movement. Students left school that day to join the march.

“That’s how I fell in love with history, by hearing those stories,” Russell said.

Russell obtained his “dream job” of teaching in Oberlin, the city where he grew up, after graduating from the College

of Wooster in 1994. He helped develop an African-American history course at Oberlin High School in his first year there.

In addition to teaching two other general history classes, Russell and a music teacher have developed a class called Black Music in the African Diaspora that covers the blues, jazz and R&B.

He credited the school administration for supporting the creation of the class. “They could have said, ‘No. We don’t need that right now,’” Russell said.

Oberlin High School Principal Brent Betts lauded Russell’s work.

Russell also is the boys basketball coach at Oberlin. His team finished the season with a 16-6 record and a conference championship. Betts said Russell sees the development of young men as more important than developing basketball players.

“One of the greatest things

about Kurt Russell is the classroom culture he’s created,” Betts said. “He’s created a culture where everybody has a voice and students feel comfortable sharing their opinions.”

Russell has high expectations and demands academic rigor, Betts said.

“He does not allow them to settle for less,” Betts said. “They talk about tough subjects.”

Asked about critical race theory, an academic framework about systemic racism decried by conservative politicians and commentators, Russell called it a “dog whistle.”

“I always tell individuals I do not teach controversial courses,” Russell said. “I teach different courses. There’s nothing controversial about teaching about women’s rights or the gay rights movement.”

Russell led a discussion during his African-American history class last week tracing seminal events leading to civil rights

movement. He started with the Scottsboro Boys, nine Black teens who were falsely accused of raping two White women in the 1930s in Alabama, to Emmett Till, a 14-year-old Black teen brutally murdered in Mississippi by two White men in 1955 after being accused of flirting with a White woman.

Students were then asked to form groups to list the four most important rights of Americans. Russell energetically guided the discussion, with all the students agreeing that access to the ballot box is a crucial right.

When Russell asked whether convicted murderers should have the right to vote, the students weren’t able to reach a consensus before the dismissal bell rang. When asked about the question afterward, Russell said murderers don’t have that right but he wanted to put the question before his students to consider it.

“That’s a tough one,” he said with a smile.

## McCrory, Budd Still Close In Senate Fundraising

By Gary D. Robertson

Associated Press

U.S. Senate hopeful Ted Budd is benefitting from President Donald Trump’s endorsement and a super

PAC’s commitment to flood airwaves and mailboxes to help him as the May 17 Republican primary approaches. But rival and former Gov. Pat McCrory still has managed to stick close to Budd when

it comes to head-to-head fundraising.

Campaign finance reports for the first quarter show McCrory, the former governor, and current U.S. House member Budd collecting essentially the same level of contributions and other funds.

McCrory’s campaign said it raised \$1.13 million through March 31, compared to \$1.125 million raised by Budd., according to reports due Friday with the Federal Election Commission. McCrory also reported having more cash in his campaign coffers entering April—\$2.2 million compared to \$1.9 million for Budd.

Since early 2021—before either candidate had entered the race—Budd has raised slightly more overall, FEC reports show. Budd has raised \$4.24 million compared to \$4.16 million for McCrory. Budd’s overall total contains \$275,000 that he loaned his campaign.

McCrory—with a high name recognition from his time as governor from 2013 through in 2016—

had outraised Budd in the second quarter of 2021. As word of Trump’s June 2021 endorsement spread, Budd and McCrory’s numbers were about even in the third quarter, and Budd outraised McCrory by about \$220,000 in the fourth quarter.

The candidates’ fundraising may shrink in comparison to Club for Growth Action, a super PAC that has said it plans to spend \$14 million on activity in the North Carolina primary, praising Budd and attacking McCrory. An FEC filing by the group said it had already incurred \$4.7 million in independent expenditures in the race through February. The super PAC and Budd’s campaign are barred from coordinating activities.

Among other Republican Senate hopefuls, former Rep. Mark Walker’s campaign totals remain well behind those of Budd and McCrory. He was also outraised in the first quarter by first-time political candidate Marjorie Eastman of Cary, FEC reports show.

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# Business & Finance

## Program Helps Foundations Fund Black-Led Nonprofits

By Jim Rendon

Chronicle of Philanthropy

A new effort to help grantmakers change the way they work so they can better support Black-led nonprofits was announced Monday. Abundance is a collaboration between three Chicago-area grantmakers, Chicago Beyond, the Grand Victoria Foundation, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

Abundance is not a pledge, but rather a program for grantmakers. The foundations are in the process of hiring a director for Abundance and have given the group an annual budget of \$400,000 for three years. Much about the way it works will be determined by the director, but the idea is to provide a forum for grantmakers to learn from one another about how to change their practices so they are more effectively supporting Black-led groups, which are often small, locally focused, and historically underfunded.

"When we think about the actual change that needs to happen, it requires more than a signature and a promise," says Liz Dozier, CEO of Chicago Beyond. "The promise has to be undergirded by some type of actual commitment and then action."

The MacArthur Foundation will provide funding and support as needed, says John Palfrey, the foundation's president. Palfrey says he was drawn to the program in part because of MacArthur's recent efforts to include justice as a part of its decision making in all of its grantmaking. He hopes the foundation's involvement will show others in philanthropy that a big global foundation can also participate in this effort.

"The Abundance movement to my mind is going from the promise that we've been talking about to the practice, and being really intentional and clear and accountable about our grantmaking," Palfrey says. "None of these things easily happen overnight."

Abundance is trying to address longstanding problems in philanthropy, says Liza Mueller, vice president of thought leadership and knowledge at Echoing Green, an organization that invests in and provides support for leaders of emerging social enterprises. Echoing Green conducted research that found groups run by leaders of color receive less money from foundations than those run by Whites and that the money they do receive is more likely to have restrictions on it.

Mueller says that right now, grantmakers are interested in giving to groups led by people of color, in large part because of the demands for racial equity in 2020. But their own internal practices sometimes prevent them from doing that effectively. She says Echoing Green has been approached by corporations and foundations that want to give to Black-led nonprofits. They generally want to fund larger groups that have a long history. Mueller says that because of the historical underinvestment in these organizations, few meet those criteria.

"Once you start to put those kinds of parameters on the things that you want to fund, the pool gets just smaller and smaller with every restriction you put into place," she says. "It seems really great in the beginning because you're making the commitment, you're making this pledge, but then once we get to the end, it's very challenging to find the right matches."

Palfrey has seen similar limitations among grantmakers that have led to inequitable funding. "Big philanthropy does need to change its parameters," he says. "We do need to work in ways that will change the course of history and in ways that are different than we have in the past. And some of that is finding ways to resource organizations at earlier stages."

Dozier of Chicago Beyond and Sharon Bush, the president of the Grand Victoria Foundation, were inspired to start Abundance after reading an editorial in a local

business newspaper that called on racial-justice protesters to pipe down, otherwise they would lose support from the civic and business communities.

"It felt very inhumane," Bush says.

Philanthropy, she says, was also part of the problem. "We often have these ways of thinking about Black communities as problems to be solved as opposed to people that we will love, like any other groups of people," she says. "What would we do if we decided to support them differently?"

Bush and Dozier wanted to find ways to get more grantmakers interested in supporting Black-led nonprofits with multi-year grants, to understand the challenges Black-led groups faced and to help such groups grow in a way that can be sustained.

They were also aware that in the wake of the murder of George Floyd, there was an opportunity. Grantmakers were interested in supporting Black-led groups in a way they never had been before. And, says Dozier, they were also aware that opportunity wouldn't last forever.

The goal is to bring together a group of foundations that want to learn about how to include more Black-led groups in their grantmaking and ultimately get more funding out the door to them.

"It's about how do we fundamentally change practice and our own understanding of how bias creeps into our practices," Dozier says. "It really is not some scripted thing, but rather truly trying to learn together to do better."

There are no funding targets—the group is simply asking grantmakers that join Abundance give more to Black-led groups. The group plans to track that funding, although Bush and Dozier couldn't say for certain whether those figures will be public.

Abundance plans to reach out to foundations that are curious but may not yet be engaged rather than just those already successfully funding Black-led groups. That would not increase



SHARON BUSH, PRESIDENT OF THE GRAND VICTORIA FOUNDATION

the amount of money available to these groups.

Bush and Dozier say the incoming director will have his or her own ideas about how to bring foundations into the effort, but they both expect that a certain amount of phone calling and basic outreach will be necessary.

The involvement of the \$7 billion MacArthur Foundation may help, Mueller from Echoing Green says. "I think it really sends a signal to the field," she says. "We need more household-name institutions to make these

kinds of partnerships and make these kinds of campaigns, because that is a really important factor for how change happens in the field."

Foundations that join should be prepared to really engage and learn, Dozier says.

"We're not just telling people to go do this thing," she says. Instead, she says, participating grant makers will be part of a community "where all are welcome to join and begin to explore practices and try things and mess up and work together to ad-

vance the cause and to act."

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## Foes Blast Ga. Electric Car Plant

MONROE, Ga. (AP)—Opponents trying to derail a \$5 billion, 7,500-job electric truck plant in Georgia dominated a state meeting this week that was meant to gather suggestions on how to design the plant to mitigate any impact on the environment.

The state assumed oversight over the Rivian Automotive project after opponents overwhelmed Morgan County planning and zoning officials. The plant was announced by the company and Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp in December, and is the biggest single industrial project in state history. The first meeting of one of the oversight committees was Monday in the city of Monroe.

The Irvine, Calif.-based electric vehicle manufacturer announced last year that it would build the facility on a 2,000-acre site in Morgan and Walton counties about 45 miles east of Atlanta along Interstate 20. It plans to produce up to 400,000 vehicles a year there. Rivian, which also has a plant in Normal, Ill., said it hopes to break ground as early as this summer and begin production in 2024.

The state panel, led by John Eunice, deputy director for the state Environmental Protection Division, did not get much cooperation from a hostile crowd that gathered at Athens Technical College in Monroe, news outlets reported. Opposition to the plant has been heavy from Rutledge-area residents who say the plant will spoil their rural quality of life.

Residents criticized the meeting

as a sham, saying it's impossible to make meaningful suggestions when there's not yet a plant design and saying the state is only working to get the plant built.

"I was sitting at home and I saw my governor get on TV and say Rivian, 2,000-acre plant, coming to Rutledge, Georgia and it's a done deal," said Pam Jones.

Many speakers Monday voiced concerns about possible well-water contamination, light pollution, and the disruption of wildlife habitats and farmland for heavy industry.

"I don't understand why you are sitting on that side of the table, which is the Rivian side of the table and why you're not sitting over here asking Rivian and Gov. Kemp to explain this environmental project and how it's a disaster," said Edwin Snell of Oconee County.

A Rivian executive was present via video conference but did not speak during the hearing.

A spokesperson for Rivian said the meeting was a valuable opportunity for the company to gather input and that the company is committed to sharing details of their plans for the site once they are complete and "meet our own high design and environmental standards."

## Small Biz In Need Of A Loan Find Banks Are Stingy

NEW YORK (AP) — Small businesses still have the pandemic and now high inflation to grapple with — and they're finding it's tough to get a loan to help with the daily grind.

A recently released survey from the Federal Reserve shows how the pandemic has altered the financial landscape for small business. About 85% experienced financial difficulties in 2021, up nearly 20 percentage points from 2019. Back then, more than half of owners who sought a loan were looking to expand; last year, the majority of applicants needed funds just to cover every day operating expenses.

Meanwhile, inflation is the highest in decades, with raw materials and finished goods soaring in price and workers demanding higher

wages. The Federal Reserve is raising interest rates in response, which means the cost of borrowing money is going up.

Even in normal times, it can be tough for small businesses to get loans from traditional banks because they lack the assets and credit histories of bigger companies. During the pandemic, banks have been stingier, outside of COVID-related programs. Two years in, loan applicants are more likely to get turned down or to receive less money than they asked for compared to before COVID-19.

When the building she leased in went up for sale, Letha Pugh knew she would need to relocate her business. So, she decided to buy and renovate her own building.

Pugh, co-founder of Bake Me Happy, a gluten-free bakery in Co-

lumbus, Ohio, applied for a Small Business Administration loan last July. But the process, involving a Community Development Financial Institution and a local bank, First Merchants Bank, dragged on.

Pugh worried that another buyer would swoop in with cash and buy the building she was under contract for. Finally, in January, she got approval for a loan of \$780,000.

While Pugh is glad everything worked out, the episode shows how difficult and stressful it can be for a small business to get financing.

"One night I got off the phone and just started bawling because I was so frustrated, all of these things were happening, not because of me, but because of the bureaucracy and red tape," she said.

and if I get pulled over on the way home and I'm ever asked if I have any drugs in the car, now I'm allowed to say 'Only this,'" Barrows said, holding up the canister of marijuana flower he had just purchased. Possession of cannabis is now legal in New Jersey, although driving under the influence is still prohibited.

Barrows, 60, joined a steady stream of other novelty seekers, longtime marijuana users

and medical patients at RISE in Bloomfield, near the state's biggest city, Newark, and not far from New York City.

With soul music blaring, free doughnuts in the parking lot, a steel drum and a balloon arch at the entrance, New Jersey's cannabis kickoff for people 21 and older had the feel of a fair more than a store opening.

Hagan Seeley, 23, said he had just found out a day earlier that

recreational sales were starting and decided to see what the scene looked like. He was impressed with the venue, decorated with an old train station-style tote board and long wooden tables featuring products under glass globes.

"It feels right. It feels safe. It feels like everything you'd want it to be rather than anything you could get anywhere else," Seeley said.

The start of the recreational market comes a week after Democratic Gov. Phil Murphy announced that state regulators had cleared the way for recreational sales at seven "alternative treatment centers" that had already offered medical cannabis. The seven centers operate 13 facilities across the state.

Murphy, who has long backed recreational marijuana legalization and signed the bill that set up the marketplace, appeared at ZenLeaf in Elizabeth for its first day of recreational sales. The governor said he wouldn't be trying any marijuana, saying earlier this week it's not his "thing," and that he prefers Scotch. Murphy said he would be pushing for a "federal fix" for marijuana as well, though it was unclear whether he was referring to recreational legalization, national decriminalization or something else.

Hadi Battice, 47, is a Navy veteran and medical marijuana

card holder for his post-traumatic stress disorder. He's a regular at ZenLeaf and said he's never seen the location as busy as it was Thursday.

New Jersey's recreational cannabis law gives priority status to people of color for dispensary licenses, a fact that will help knock down "brick walls" people faced for years during the war on drugs, Battice said. "It's about time that minorities, people of color, Black people, brown people actually have a chance to get into the business."

Charles Pfeiffer stood in line for about 2.5 hours and said he believed he was the first recreational customer to make a purchase at the ZenLeaf location. He cheered loudly and pumped his hands in the air when he was let into the shop.

He bought cannabis flower and candy for about \$140 and joked about how quickly he'd need to return to buy more.

"I'll be back tomorrow," he said. "I'm kidding, probably within a week."

ZenLeaf employee Destiny Pimentel said she came to realize the "benefits of responsible cannabis use" after her older brother died. "When I consume cannabis I am not as anxious and I can focus," she said. She's committed to showing people it's possible to use cannabis and have a successful

career, she added.

New Jersey is among 18 states, plus the District of Columbia, with legalized recreational marijuana markets. Thirty-seven states, including New Jersey, have legalized medical marijuana.

New Jersey is first among its closest neighbors to begin recreational sales.

New York is moving forward with a recreational market but sales are not expected to start until the end of the year, state officials have said.

Neighboring Pennsylvania has medical cannabis but not recreational. Legislation to permit recreational marijuana in Delaware was defeated in March.

Ben Kovler, of Green Thumb Industries, which operates the Bloomfield dispensary, was at the opening Thursday. He said he expects demand to grow since news of the start of sales had only been known by the public for a week.

"It's a moment in time in American history where prohibition 2.0 is lifted," he said before the opening.

To get regulatory approval, the facilities told regulators they would not interrupt access for medical marijuana patients.

Ziad Ghanem, of TerrAscend, said the centers would initially have a "narrower menu" for recreational users in order to accommodate patients.



SOME CUSTOMERS WAITED 2½ HOURS IN LINE FOR THEIR TURN

# Opinion



## With Humanity On The Brink, Should We Trust Deterrence Theory, Or Disarmament?

By Kevin Martin

Peace Action Education Fund

On Monday, the Pentagon announced the U.S. will soon begin training the Ukrainian military in using howitzer artillery in an unnamed country. Presumably this will be in a NATO member state. If Russian intelligence found out where, might it attack to stop the howitzers from being deployed against Russian forces in Ukraine? Almost assuredly not, as that would trigger a wider war, invoking NATO's self-defense provision, which would be catastrophic for Russia.

So, while the urgent focus should be on diplomatic negotiations to end this senseless war, arming Ukraine to defend itself in the meantime tacitly rests on conventional deterrence theory, assuming Russia will be deterred from certain aggressive actions, not wanting to risk a war with the NATO alliance.

But do we really know where Russia's "red lines" are? Russian President Vladimir Putin may soon be desperate, or at least under serious pressure. The war isn't going as easily as he thought it would, tens of thousands of Russians have been jailed for protesting his abomination, and maybe some in his inner circle might think it time to usher him out of the Kremlin, to a foreign country that would take him and his money.

The risk of miscalculation and escalation in wartime is high. Deterrence theory, which is little discussed, depends on not just knowing the military capabilities of the adversary, but estimating his mindset, especially how he will react to unpredictable circumstances.

So, as the U.S. and the West provide weapons and other forms of defense or intelligence support to Ukraine, military and civilian leaders must guesstimate what Russia's response will be. To not do so, or to rely on the mistaken notion of escalation dominance, that our military superiority would allow us to prevail at any level the conflict might escalate to, would be reckless. (Russia appears to have made this mistake in its attack on Ukraine, though hopefully we won't find out, as further escalation could be catastrophic.)

For now, confidence may be relatively high that Russia will not risk a wider war with NATO and the U.S. However, Putin made a thinly veiled nuclear threat early on in the conflict, and a French official reciprocated. And Russia's nuclear policies include possible first-strike use of short range, tactical nuclear weapons.

When the thousands of nuclear weapons of both sides (including not just the U.S. and Russian arsenals, but also those of France and Britain, and the estimated hundred or so U.S. nuclear warheads on bombers in Germany, Belgium, The Netherlands, Italy and Turkey as part of NATO's "nuclear sharing") are considered, can we afford to rely on very imprecise notions of what will or won't deter Russia from taking this or that action? Or, can we be absolutely sure the US or NATO allies won't miscalculate, over-react or dangerously escalate tensions in response to something Moscow initiates?

Humanity should not be held hostage to uncertain, speculative considerations of what exactly will deter nuclear-armed rivals from taking steps that could escalate to Armageddon.

The focus should be to end this awful war immediately. Officials of the U.S., UN, Ukraine, Russia, China or whomever might contribute to diplomatic negotiations to save lives need to make this their top priority. Every day this war continues is a pointless tragedy, especially as the likely outcome is already known—Ukraine will not join NATO (though Finland might, certainly not what Russia calculated), Russia will likely keep Crimea, and some form of independence will be formalized for the two self-proclaimed republics in the Donbas region.

Steps to address nuclear dangers all around are also urgent. De-escalation by Washington and Moscow, to reduce any chance of the use of even "smaller" nuclear weapons, could not only lessen that potential, but might even contribute to ending the war.

Immediately, the U.S. and Russia should declare No First Use policies, not just in the current war, but overall, with each country stating it would never be the first to use nuclear weapons in any conflict. They could challenge the other seven nuclear weapons states (Britain, China, France, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea) to do the same. Simultaneously, the US and Russia could take all nuclear weapons off high-alert status.

Further steps are needed, including ending the sole authority for a U.S. president, or any executive of a nuclear weapons state, to decide to launch nuclear weapons. Harvard Professor Elaine Scarry's book *Thermonuclear Monarchy: Choosing Between Democracy and Doom*, makes the simple but compelling case that allowing one person (currently all men in the Nuclear Nine) to initiate a nuclear war that could end most if not all life on Earth makes a mockery of whatever notions of democracy we think we have attained. In the U.S., there is a proposal to end such sole authority for the president, requiring a Congressional declaration of war before a president could launch nukes.

All the nuclear weapons states, starting with Russia and the U.S., are in the initial stages of overhauling and upgrading their entire nuclear arsenals, the exact opposite of what they should be doing, reducing and eliminating them. At a time of a global pandemic in the U.S. alone, this nuclear weapons forever scheme will likely cost \$2 trillion of our tax money over the next three decades —to "modernize" nuclear arsenals is the height of irresponsibility. Let's cancel these handouts to the weapons contractors and put the vast resources to better use.

The U.S. and Russia could lead in this regard, either negotiating new arms reduction treaties or making unilateral, reciprocal reductions, as Presidents George H. W. Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev did in 1991.

Lastly, in what seems like another world but is in fact now supported by 86 countries, the Nuclear Nine should join the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Negotiated in 2017 without the support of the nuclear states, the treaty will have its first official meeting of states party to the treaty (and others may attend as observers) in Vienna, Austria in June. The treaty was negotiated not just by nation-states, but also with the participation of civil society organizations.

Taking this path will not likely be quick and easy, and there could be twists and turns and forks along the way. But the current war in Ukraine, status quo of relying on shaky notions of deterrence theory, and upgrading nuclear arsenals instead of reducing and eliminating them, is surely a road to oblivion.

Kevin Martin, syndicated by PeaceVoice, is President of Peace Action Education Fund, the country's largest grassroots peace and disarmament organization with more than 200,000 supporters nationwide.

## Humanity: Evolving In Spite Of Itself

By Robert C. Koehler

PeaceVoice

As wars rage, as cruelty shatters lives across the planet—as nuclear Armageddon remains a viable option for all of us—I think it's time to claim some stunning awareness in this regard.

The human race is evolving in spite of itself—evolving beyond war, beyond empire, beyond dominance and conquest, and toward an uncertain but collective future. Indeed, I think most of us already know this, but only at a level so deep, so vague it feels like nothing more than "hope."

There's also another problem. Much of our world remains organized in a totally opposite way: committed, as Richard Falk puts it in his 2013 book, *(Re)Imagining Humane Global Governance*, to national policies "shaped by unimaginative thinking trapped within a militarist box." Another way to put this would be: a de facto commitment to human suicide.

As long as there's no serious, organized alternative to war, this is what we're going to get, which, in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, seems suddenly clearer than it's been since, oh, 1962 (remember the Cuban missile crisis?). As long as global order, global security, is allegedly maintained with bombs and bullets and bully-swagger—and various nuclear-armed enemies occasionally challenge one another for the right to control particular swaths of the planet—we're hostage to an insanity we seem to have bequeathed ourselves.

What is power? This strikes me as the key question, and untangling ourselves from the wrong answer is the beginning of the creation of real peace.

When we think of power, the word itself commands that we carve the concept into something isolated and wieldable: a sword, a gun, a scepter. Power means power over. There is no basic concept of power—no word for power in the English language—that also means collaboration, collective participation: people working together, individually empowered at the same time that they are part of a larger whole.

Even when we examine the dark side of power—as in, power corrupts—the examination seems to hover as a warning rather than open up to larger awareness. Consider, for instance, this 2017 article in *The Atlantic* by Jerry Useem, titled (fasten your seatbelts!) "Power Causes Brain Damage," which discusses a concept called "hubris syndrome."

The article's essential point is that people who gain a significant amount of power over others lose the ability to empathize with—or mime, as the article puts it—people in general, the lesser mortals who must follow the boss's orders. This inability, it turns out, is serious. It isolates the powerful into their own stereotypes and egotistical certainties, which lessens their ability to make good, or even rational, decisions.

The idea is that we're naturally connected and subconsciously "mimic" others: We laugh when others laugh, tense up when others grow tense. It's not faking an emotion to fit in; it's participating in—feeling—the collective emotion that fills the room. "It helps trigger



the same feelings those others are experiencing and provides a window into where they are coming from," Useem writes. But: Powerful people "stop simulating the experience of others," leading to what is called an "empathy deficit," which saps the powerful of most, or maybe all, of their social skill, leaving them, even as they generate endless obeisance, socially isolated souls.

The conclusion to be drawn here is that what is commonly thought of as power—power over others, a.k.a., dominance—isn't power at all. It's an illusion of power that weakens, and perhaps destroys, those who hold it.

So does this hold true beyond the personal level—at the geopolitical level? Among countries? Well, a "country" is a created, collective entity, and may well be bound to the concept of us vs. them: intoxicated by the need for armed self-defense and, occasionally, armed conquest. Richard Falk calls this "hard power": dominance maintained by force and, when necessary, massacre.

Is something else possible—e.g., "a world order premised on non-violent geopolitics"? Falk calls this "soft power"—the power of working together, respecting and valuing rather than fearing one another. The way I have put it over the years is power with others rather than power over them.

And Falk makes a startling observation about how the world has changed since, in essence, the end of World War II. "Throughout the colonial era, and until the mid-twentieth century, hard power was generally effective and efficient," he notes. Heavily armed European nations tramped across the rest of the planet, claiming ownership where they felt they could.

But then something changed, beginning with India's struggle for independence from Great Britain: "Every anticolonial war in the latter half of the twentieth century," Falk writes, "was eventually won by the militarily weaker side, which prevailed in the end despite suffering disproportionate losses along its way to victory."

Their resistance was often nonviolent which "included gaining complete international control of the high moral ground."

This is not a pretty story. The hard power didn't let up; it simply lost, e.g.: "The United States completely controlled land, air, and sea throughout the Vietnam war, winning every battle, and yet eventually losing the war," Falk writes, "killing as many as 4 million Vietnamese on the road to the failure of its military intervention."

And despite its military dominance, despite the harm it inflicted, the U.S. has done nothing but lose wars for the last three quarters of a century. It created hell on Earth for millions of people; it just didn't get it right.

It has also failed to learn any lessons from its losses. The United States has refused to abandon its commitment to pointless militarism, as reflected every year in its grotesquely expanding military budgets.

But change is happening nonetheless. Soft power—power with one another—is our future . . . if we have any future at all.

Robert Koehler (koehlerc@gmail.com), syndicated by PeaceVoice, is a Chicago award-winning journalist and editor. He is the author of *Courage Grows Strong at the Wound*.



## Why Elon Musk Shouldn't Buy Twitter

By Thomas L. Knapp

William Lloyd Garrison Center

When Elon Musk bought the single largest stake in Twitter, then announced plans to acquire the whole company instead of just accepting a seat on its board, the response varied:

Hosannas from many on the "right" who feel like they don't get a fair shake from Twitter's moderation/ban policies.

Wails of anguish from many on the establishment "left" (not the real left—that would be us libertarians) who've become accustomed to an echo chamber which "protects" them from THE BAD PEOPLE and their heterodox political views.

Perhaps the craziest take on the prospect came from former U.S. Labor Secretary Robert Reich, who opined in *The Guardian* that Musk's "libertarian vision of an 'uncontrolled' Internet" is "the dream of every dictator, strongman, demagogue and modern-day robber baron on Earth."

You know, the dictators, strongmen, etc. who shut down social media which won't censor for them, and sometimes even attempt to shut down Internet access entirely if the peasants revolt.

Twitter's board got busy passing a "poison pill" policy to prevent Musk's takeover. Meanwhile, Musk says he's secured \$46.5 billion in financing to make it happen.

My question isn't whether Musk should be "allowed" to buy Twitter (he should, if its shareholders are willing to sell). It's why he would want to shell out that kind of money for an old and busted platform with likely insoluble problems, when he could build something better, and likely more successful, for a fraction of the cost.

In many ways, Twitter is an ideal platform for seeing only what you want to see. You can block users whose posts you don't want to read. You can screen who's allowed to follow you. If you really hate some particular point of view, you can easily build yourself a "silo" to mostly hide that point of view from yourself.

Given those facts, Twitter's content moderation policy SHOULD be "grow up, wear a cup, and learn to use the block button instead of whining to us."

Instead, the company has developed a policy—and worse, an entrenched culture—of user content micromanagement apparently based on the slogan "for the love of God, won't someone PLEASE think of the Karens?"

If Musk buys Twitter, he'll inherit not just that policy but a workforce who've shown themselves willing, even eager, to enforce it. How many will quit or have to be fired to revive the platform after years of declining user numbers?

Instead of spending \$46 billion on Twitter, Musk should spend \$4.6 billion: \$1 billion on initial infrastructure, \$1 billion hiring a work force that's on board with doing things his way, \$1 billion on promotion, and a \$1.6 billion bonus to me for suggesting this.

He'd probably sign up 10 million users on day one and average a million a day for the first year. Especially if SpaceX launches and Tesla events stream exclusively on Muskrat (that name suggestion should bump my bonus up to \$2 billion).

And all of us (well, except for Twitter) would be better off for more competition in the social media marketplace.

Thomas L. Knapp (Twitter: @thomaslknapp) is director and senior news analyst at the William Lloyd Garrison Center for Libertarian Advocacy Journalism (thegarrisoncenter.org). He lives and works in north central Florida.



## Happy Tax Day

By Tom H. Hastings

Portland State University

Yes, it's That Day.

Show of hands—who loves paying their federal taxes? No one?

OK, let's hear why not. Warning: I'm going to fact-check you.

Rancher: My taxes go to support welfare mothers and I work for a living. It's not fair.

Fact-check: First, thank you for your hard work. In truth, however, just eight percent of our income taxes go to the social safety net for people in poverty and many of the recipients are poor rural working folks. And let's be fair, farm subsidies, including cattle ranchers, could be considered another form of welfare, that is, pay for no work in many cases, given out in massive amounts above and beyond any other administration by Trump, seemingly to consolidate support from rural voters.

Senior citizen: My taxes go to support education but my kids are all adults. Why should my taxes support other people's kids?

Young single person with no kids: My objection exactly!

Married couple without children: We decided not to have kids, so this is our protest too.

Fact-check: Fair enough. I suppose we could eliminate education from the federal budget. That would lower your income taxes by approximately three percent. While we are at it, perhaps we should eliminate the portion of the taxes that go to things many people never use? There are millions of Americans who oppose vaccines, so perhaps no funding for them. Millions of Americans do not fly, so why make them pay for the Federal Aviation Administration's \$18 billion? We could go on...

Veteran: I served, so why should I pay taxes when others didn't serve?

Fact-check: Good question. We do have to acknowledge that the military budget is huge, by far the largest government agency funded by our income taxes, with about 22 percent of your tax dollars paying for the current military and another 15 percent paying for a combination of the national debt due to military spending and veterans' benefits. And others serve as well, wouldn't you agree? The dangers you faced were terrible, as shown by the 18,571 active duty military who died between 2006–2021. Domestically, those numbers are only rivaled by delivery drivers, although in terms of fatalities per 100,000 workers, loggers have a far more dangerous job than military members or police.

Jeff Bezos: I don't personally pay taxes, hahahaha.

Fact-check: Yeah, the rest of us underwrite your lavish lifestyle. Across the board, the very wealthy pay just 8.2 percent income taxes, but Jeff, we know you're trying to humble brag about your amazing scam, so we looked into it and you paid a bit less than one percent tax rate, not zero. Of course the average taxpayer, whose income actually decreased during the last portion of the Trump years, is stuck at around 14 percent, nearly double what most rich people pay.

Right-to-Lifer: I object to my taxes being used to slaughter babies.

Fact-check: Well, again, fair point. In this case, to remedy that objection, we would need to eliminate the Pentagon budget. The civilians, including babies, killed by U.S. military actions in the Global War on Terror amount to at least 387,000 people, and that doesn't count the civilians killed by other militaries we subsidize and supply, such as Saudi Arabia and Israel.

OK, I know everyone's happy now! Get back to work!