

Derek Chauvin Appeals Murder Verdict

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. (AP)—Former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin is appealing his conviction for murder in the killing of George Floyd, arguing that jurors were intimidated by the protests that followed and prejudiced by heavy pretrial publicity.

Chauvin asked the Minnesota Court of Appeals in a court filing Monday to reverse his conviction, reverse and remand for a new trial in a new venue, or order a resentencing.

Last June, Hennepin County Judge Peter Cahill sentenced Chauvin to 22½ years in prison after jurors found him guilty of second-degree murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter.

Floyd died on May 25, 2020, after Chauvin pinned the Black man to the ground with his knee on his neck for 9 minutes, 29 seconds. Floyd had been accused of passing a counterfeit \$20 bill at a convenience store. Three other fired officers face state trial this summer after being convicted in federal court earlier this year of violating Floyd's civil rights.

Chauvin's attorney, William Mohrman, laid out a number of challenges to his conviction,

including that the trial should not have been held in Hennepin County, where Floyd was killed.

"The overwhelming media coverage exposed the jurors—literally every day—to news demonizing Chauvin and glorifying Floyd which was more than sufficient to presume prejudice," the brief said.

In the months that followed Floyd's killing, protesters took to the streets in Minneapolis and around the country to protest police brutality and racism. Some of that unrest was violent.

Mohrman said several potential jurors expressed concerns during jury selection that if Chauvin was acquitted they would fear for their personal safety and worried about more violence. He said several of them said they were intimidated by the security measures implemented at the courthouse to protect trial participants from protesters.

The filing also cited the fatal shooting of Daunte Wright by a police officer in nearby Brooklyn Center that sparked more protests during Chauvin's trial. It says jurors should have been sequestered after selection to avoid being prejudiced by reports of that slaying. It also cited

a \$27 million settlement reached between the city and Floyd's family that was announced during jury selection, saying the timing of that prejudiced jurors in the case.

Mohrman cited several instances of alleged prosecutorial misconduct, claiming untimely sharing of evidence, failure to disclose and document dumping by the government.

The filing also says the judge did not apply the sentencing guidelines correctly and should not have included "abuse of a position of authority" as an aggravating sentencing factor for the former police officer.

Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison has 45 days to respond to Chauvin's brief.

The appeal came as the Minnesota Department of Human Rights released the results of a nearly two-year investigation launched after Floyd's slaying. It found the Minneapolis Police Department has engaged in a pattern of race discrimination for at least a decade, including stopping and arresting Black people at a higher rate than White people, using force more often on people of color and maintaining a culture where racist language is tolerated.



CHAUVIN PUTS ON HIS BEST "I'M AN INNOCENT MAN" FACE

School Falsified Enrollment

By Gary D. Robertson

Associated Press

Staff at a now-closed North Carolina charter school falsified enrollment numbers to obtain more than \$400,000 in state money that it wasn't entitled to, according to a state audit released Wednesday.

Auditors of Bridges Academy in Wilkes County also said the school misused almost \$79,000 in taxpayer funds to support a preschool, which also required tuition fees from parents of the children. Charter schools receive public funds and don't charge tuition to its K-12 students.

Findings from the investigation by State Auditor Beth Wood's office—the result of tips to its fraud and waste hotline—were referred to the local district attorney, as well as to the IRS and state Revenue Department. The school, which opened in 1997 and reported fewer than 200 students on average, closed last June during Wood's probe and is now in receivership for asset liquidation.

The investigative audit cited possible violations of state law and tax rules. The auditors also found the academy didn't prepare and submit required income forms for contract workers.

The court-ordered receiver—a Chapel Hill attorney—said in a response letter attached to the audit that he accepted the audit's primary findings.

In another letter, state schools Superintendent Catherine Truitt said the Department of Public Instruction agency would seek

repayment of what the audit called the misspent money, in keeping with the audit's recommendations. She also said DPI was updating student enrollment processes to detect and aim to prevent falsifications.

The audit, which did not name

administrators at the K-8 school by name, said the academy's director and finance officer "concluded to submit falsified student enrollment records to DPI and to conceal the falsified records from

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



NORTH CAROLINA NATIONAL GUARD TO LEND SUPPORT TO UKRAINE

(AP)—The North Carolina National Guard will provide military equipment to Ukraine in its war with Russia, Gov. Roy Cooper said Thursday.

At the request of the U.S. Department of Defense, the N.C. Army National Guard is providing M-113 Armored Personnel Carriers as part of a larger U.S. support package to Ukraine, Cooper said in a news release.

The governor also has shared a list of state government support resources for military service members and their families as military personnel based in North Carolina are deployed because of the war.

In February, Cooper signed an executive order that directed state government agencies and departments to review all existing contracts and operations and to terminate any agreements or operations that directly benefit Russian entities.

AGENCY: MAN FATALLY SHOT BY OFFICER WAS HOMICIDE SUSPECT

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP)—A man fatally shot by a New Mexico State Police officer during an April 16 encounter along Interstate 40 was a North Carolina resident sought in a homicide in that state, the police agency said Thursday.

The shooting occurred near Prewitt during a struggle after the officer was dispatched to check on the welfare of a man seen slumped over a car's steering wheel, the agency said in a statement.

When contacted by the officer, Oliver Ashley Toledo Saldivar, 26, got out of the car and charged and tackled the officer, who then shot Saldivar, the statement said.

Saldivar was able to retrieve a gun from his jacket before the officer grabbed the gun and threw it away, the statement said.

A passing truck driver stopped and helped the officer subdue Saldivar, who died at the scene, the statement said.

When the incident occurred, the officer wasn't aware that Saldivar was a suspect in an April 12 homicide in Durham, the statement said.

NORTH CAROLINA MEN PLEAD GUILTY TO ROLES IN PONZI SCHEME

CHARLOTTE (AP)—Two people have entered guilty pleas after federal prosecutors accused them of orchestrating a \$4 million Ponzi scheme through a fake hedge fund, according to a news release.

Dena J. King, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina, said in a news release that Austin Delano Page, 26, of Grover, pleaded guilty to wire fraud on Wednesday. Brandon Alexander Teague, 26, of Belmont, North Carolina, pleaded guilty to securities fraud on Wednesday, King said.

According to plea documents and the plea hearings, from October 2020 to December 2021, Page and Teague were involved in an investment scheme that defrauded hundreds of investors of more than \$4 million. Some of the investors were either at or near retirement age, documents showed.

The defendants falsely represented to victims that Page and Teague were running a hedge fund in Kings Mountain that invested in various securities, including stock of well-known companies.

There was no hedge fund, and it didn't hold any securities licenses or registrations, according to prosecutors. Also, Page and Teague were not licensed to sell securities and did not have a background. In fact, prosecutors said, the men sold campers.

A sentencing hearing hasn't been scheduled.

EARLY IN-PERSON VOTING BEGINS IN NC FOR MAY 17 PRIMARY

(AP)—North Carolina residents can now cast ballots in person for the May 17 primary elections.

Election boards in all 100 counties opened early voting sites Thursday morning. People who are registered to vote or who apply at a site can vote.

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

Housing Squeezes Students

By Janie Har

Associated Press

BERKELEY, Calif. (AP)—UC Berkeley sophomore Terrell Thompson slept in his car for nearly two weeks at the start of the school year last fall, living out of a suitcase stashed in the trunk and texting dozens of landlords a day in a desperate search for a place to live.

The high-achieving student from a low-income household in Sacramento, Calif., was majoring in business administration at one of the most prestigious universities in the world. Yet, Thompson folded his 6-foot frame into the back seat of his Honda Accord at night, wondering how he would ever find a home in the exorbitantly expensive San Francisco Bay Area city.

"Academically it was hard, because I'm worried about finding housing and I'm worried about my clothes and I'm worried about getting my car broken into all the time," said the 19-year-old Thompson, who now lives in a studio apartment he found last September. "I was anxious 24/7."

College students across the U.S. are looking for housing for the 2022-23 school year and if 2021 was any indication, it won't be easy. Students at colleges

from California to Florida were denied on-campus housing last fall and found themselves sitting out the year at home or living in motel rooms or vehicles as surging rents and decades of failing to build sufficient student housing came to a head.

For some colleges, the housing crunch was related to increased demand by students who had been stuck at home during the pandemic. For others, including many in California, the shortage reflects a deeper conflict between the colleges and homeowners who don't want new housing built for students who they say increase congestion and noise.

In March, the University of California, Berkeley, said it would have to cap student enrollment because of a lawsuit brought by irate neighbors over the school's growth. State lawmakers fast-tracked a fix to allow the campus to enroll as many students as planned for the 2022 fall semester, but the legislation does nothing to produce more housing.

Nationally, 43 percent of students at four-year universities experienced housing insecurity in 2020, up from 35 percent in 2019, according to an annual survey conducted by The Hope Center for College, Community, and

Justice at Temple University. Students reported being unable to pay utilities, rent or mortgage, living in overcrowded units, or moving in with others due to financial difficulties.

And for the first time since it began tracking basic needs in 2015, the survey found an equal percentage—14 percent—of students at both four-year and two-year colleges who had experienced homelessness in the last year, said Mark Huelsman, the center's director of policy and advocacy.

"This is a function of rents rising, the inability of communities and institutions to build enough housing for students and other costs of college going up that create a perfect storm for students," he said.

For some students, the lack of affordable housing could mean the difference between going to college or not. Others take on massive debt or live so precariously they miss out on all the extracurricular benefits of higher education.

Jonathan Dena, a first-generation college student from the Sacramento area, almost rejected UC Berkeley over the lack of housing, even though it

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

Black Doctors Hit With Discrimination Too

ATLANTA (AP) — Dr. Dare Adewumi was thrilled when he was hired to lead the neurosurgery practice at an Atlanta-area hospital near where he grew up. But he says he quickly faced racial discrimination that ultimately led to his firing and has prevented him from getting permanent work elsewhere.

His lawyers and other advocates say he's not alone, that Black doctors across the country commonly experience discrimination, ranging from microaggressions to career-threatening disciplinary actions. Biases, conscious or not, can become magnified in the fiercely competitive hospital environment, they say, and the underrepresentation of Black doctors can discourage them from speaking up.

"Too many of us are worried about retaliation, what happens when you say something," said Dr. Rachel Villanueva, president of the National Medical Association, which represents Black doctors. "We have scores of doctors that are sending us letters about these same discriminatory practices all the time and seeking our help as an association in fighting that."

According to the Association of American Medical Colleges, Black doctors made up just 5% of active physicians in the U.S. in 2018, the most recent data available. People who identify as Black alone represent 12.4% of the total U.S.



DR. DARE ADEWUMI

population, according to the 2020 U.S. census. For the 2021-2022 academic year, 8.1% of students enrolled in medical schools identified as Black alone. The medical school association and the National Medical Association in 2020 announced an initiative to address the scarcity of Black men in medicine — they made up only 2.9% of 2019-2020 enrolled students.

The American Medical Association, the country's largest, most influential doctors' group, is also trying to attract Black students to medicine, working with historically Black colleges and universities

and helping secure scholarships, president Dr. Gerald Harmon said.

"We're trying to put our money where our mouth is on this and our actions where our thoughts are," he said, acknowledging that, among other things, a shortage of Black physicians contributes to poorer health outcomes for Black patients.

Some Black doctors who believe they've been mistreated are speaking out. Adewumi, 39, filed a federal lawsuit in September against Wellstar Medical Group and Wellstar Health Systems alleging employment discrimination

based on race.

"If they don't like him, that's one thing, but you can't penalize someone — according to the law — based on race," his lawyer C.K. Hoffer said. "And that's the exact thing that happened to Dare. And that's what many, many highly skilled, highly trained, highly credentialed African American doctors are experiencing in this country."

Adewumi said some of his surgical decisions were questioned and he was placed on a performance review plan, steps he says were a pretext to push him out. He said he had a previously unblemished record and his white colleagues didn't face similar scrutiny.

"I've worked so hard, done so much to get to this level, and all I really wanted to do was help sick people," he said. "And here I was having this taken away from me for no reason other than my skin color."

William Hill, an attorney for Wellstar, said the case is sealed so he's unable to speak about specifics.

"Wellstar does not discriminate. Dr. Adewumi has not been the subject of discrimination or unfair treatment. Patient care and safety are Wellstar's top priorities," Hill wrote in an email, noting that they have filed a motion to dismiss the

(See **BLACK DOCTORS**, P. 2)

School Falsified Enrollment—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Bridges Academy teachers and support staff.” They used a second student information system to hide the activity from a newly hired principal and others, according to the audit.

Records sent to DPI in September 2020 included 180 students, of which 72 were falsified, the auditors wrote, meaning “\$404,971

of state funds were not available for the education of legitimate students in North Carolina” in the 2020–21 school year.

It’s a misdemeanor for a school employee to knowingly and willfully create false attendance or other reports.

It wasn’t immediately clear whether authorities would pur-

chase. State charges could originate from the district attorney covering Wilkes County or from the Department of Revenue.

The director and finance officer also indicated to auditors that the process of inflating enrollment began several years earlier. Wood’s office recommended that DPI consider reviewing previ-

ous years’ records to see if other funding was obtained on falsified students. Truitt wrote that it wasn’t feasible due to several factors, including a May 31 deadline to submit financial claims against the academy.

The academy’s charter school funds were misused to support the preschool that opened in 2020 because business activities of

the preschool and charter school weren’t separated, according to the investigation. And it didn’t help that the board of Bridges Educational Foundation Inc.—which operated the school—adopted a 2020–21 preschool budget with an anticipated \$80,000 shortfall, the audit said.

Bridges Academy, located in the State Road community, ac-

cepted students from Surry, Wilkes, Yadkin and Alleghany counties.

The State Bureau of Investigation opened in March 2021 an investigation into allegations at the school. The school’s board announced the closing in early June, saying a consulting team it had brought in found irregularities in the school’s operations.

STATE BRIEFS

Continued from page 1

Party nominations for U.S. Senate and House, the legislature, judicial positions and county offices are at stake. There are also municipal races—many of them officially nonpartisan—in towns and cities where 2021 elections were delayed.

The early-voting period continues through the afternoon of May 14. Some counties will have early voting on preceding weekends.

An unaffiliated voter can choose to cast ballots in Democratic or Republican primaries, but not both. Registered Democrats and Republicans must vote in their party’s primary.

People who are already registered have other voting options. They can request a mail-in absentee ballot by May 10, or they can vote in person May 17.

SMOKIES ANNOUNCES SYNCHRONOUS FIREFLY VIEWING DATES, LOTTERY

GATLINBURG, Tenn. (AP)—The annual lottery to view the synchronous fireflies in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park opens on Friday.

Every year in late May to early June, thousands of visitors gather near the Elkmont Campground to observe the Photinus carolinus, a firefly species that flashes synchronously. Since 2006, access to the area has been limited during the eight days of predicted peak activity in order to reduce congestion and minimize the disturbance to the fireflies during their peak mating period.

This year, park scientists predict that period will be June 3–June 10, according to a park news release. Those wishing for a vehicle pass can enter the lottery by visiting www.recreation.gov and searching for “Great Smoky Mountains Firefly Viewing Lottery.” A total of 800 vehicle passes, 100 passes per night, will be issued.

All lottery applicants will be charged a \$1 application fee. Successful applicants will automatically be awarded parking passes and charged a \$24 reservation fee.

NORTH CAROLINA CONDUCTS ALCOHOL ENFORCEMENT, 250 CHARGED

(AP)—Agents with North Carolina’s Alcohol Law Enforcement Unit charged more than 250 people April 23 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.

BLACK BEAR PROVES PERFECT PEDESTRIAN IN DOWNTOWN ASHEVILLE

ASHEVILLE, N.C. (AP)—A smarter-than-average bear took a tourist jaunt through downtown Asheville—even taking care to use crosswalks at intersections—before police guided it back to nature.

Asheville Police say the call they received Thursday about a bear milling through downtown is the third such call they’ve received in the last three weeks.

Video posted by the police department on their Facebook page Friday shows the bear waiting at a crosswalk and looking both ways before crossing the intersection. In another clip he climbs a tree in a small park space.

Officers guided the bear, which was wearing a tracking collar, back into a wooded area.

APOLLO 16 MOONWALKER REFLECTS ON MISSION’S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (AP)—Charlie Duke is part of a tiny fraternity that’s getting even smaller: People who walked on the moon.

Duke, 86, visited his Apollo 16 spaceship on Wednesday at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center to mark the 50th anniversary of his one and only trip to the lunar surface. Only four of the 12 U.S. astronauts who walked on the moon are still alive, and Duke stays busy with speaking engagements.

Duke said he still has vivid memories from the journey, which was the next-to-last U.S. mission to land on the moon. His face lit up during an interview recalling his initial thoughts upon stepping off the lunar lander on to the dusty surface.

“I mean, ‘I’m on the moon!’ I can’t believe it. Even today it’s an exciting thought,” the North Carolina native said.

The late John Young was first out of the lander and walked on the moon with Duke, while Ken Mattingly orbited the moon in the command module, nicknamed “Casper.”

Duke said after Apollo ended, the U.S. focused on the space shuttle program, the space station and remote missions into deep space, and he doesn’t hold it against NASA for failing to return to the moon. But he is looking forward to NASA’s upcoming flight to the moon with its new Space Launch System rocket that’s at the core of the Artemis program.

Housing Squeezes Students—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

was his “dream program.” He found a studio at the heavily subsidized Rochdale Apartments for under \$1,300 a month, but he might have to move because the bare-bones units may close for a seismic renovation.

Dena, 29, wants to continue living within walking distance of campus for a robust college experience.

But the urban studies major and student government housing commission officer said “it’s kind of scary” how high rents are near campus. Online listings showed a newer one-bedroom for one person at \$3,700, as well as a 240-square foot bedroom for two people sharing a bathroom for nearly \$1,700 per person a month.

“If I go to school in Berkeley, I would love to live in Berkeley,” he said.

Nationally, rents have increased 17 percent since March 2020, said Chris Salviati, senior economist with Apartment List, but the increase has been higher in some popular college towns. Chapel Hill, N.C., saw a 24 percent jump in rents and Tempe, Arizona, saw a 31 percent hike.

In some cases, the rental increases have been exacerbated by a lack of on-campus housing.

Last fall, demand for on-campus housing was so high that the University of Tampa offered incoming freshmen a break on tuition if they deferred until fall 2022. Rent in the Florida city has skyrocketed nearly 30 percent from a year ago, according to Apartment List.

Rent in Knoxville has soared 36 percent since March 2020, and it could get worse after the University of Tennessee announced

a new lottery system for its dorms this fall, saying it needs to prioritize housing for a larger freshman class.

Even two-year community colleges, which have not traditionally provided dorms, are rethinking student needs as the cost of housing rises.

Last October, Long Beach City College launched a pilot program to provide up to 15 homeless students space in an enclosed parking garage. They sleep in their cars and have access to bathrooms and showers, electrical outlets and internet while they work with counselors to find permanent housing.

Uduak-Joe Ntuk, president of the college’s Board of Trustees, hesitated when asked if the program will be renewed.

“I want to say no, but I think we will,” he said. “We’re going to have new students come fall semester this year that are going to be in a similar situation, and for us to do nothing is untenable.”

California prides itself on its robust higher education system, but has struggled with housing at its four-year colleges. Berkeley is notoriously difficult, with cut-throat competition for the few affordable apartments within walking distance to campus.

“I definitely was not prepared to be this stressed about housing every year,” said Jennifer Lopez, 21, a UC Berkeley senior from Cudahy, in southeastern Los Angeles County, and the first in her family to attend college.

She imagined she would spend all four years on campus in dorms, but found herself in a scramble for a safe, affordable place to sleep. The urban studies major currently splits an attic



space in what is technically a one-bedroom apartment shared by four undergraduates, one of whom sleeps in the dining room.

The total monthly rent is nearly \$3,700—laughably high in most U.S. cities—but she’s grateful for it.

“If I hadn’t heard about this place, I was either going to end up living in a basement, or in this other apartment I know (where) the girls are struggling with leaks and mold,” Lopez said.

The Basic Needs Center at UC Berkeley, which operates a food pantry for students and faculty, found in a snapshot survey that a quarter of undergraduates reported they “lacked a safe, regular and adequate nighttime place to stay and sleep” at some point since October.

“That’s huge,” said Ruben Canedo, co-chair of UC’s system-wide Basic Needs Committee.

Black Doctors Hit With—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

lawsuit.

Dr. Stella Safo, an HIV specialist, is among a group of past and present employees at the Arnold Institute for Global Health at Mount Sinai in New York City who in April 2019 sued alleging sex, age and race discrimination. Some claims have been dismissed but others are moving forward. Safo’s claims focus on alleged gender discrimination, but she said that, as a Black woman, race and gender discrimination are intertwined. Since filing the lawsuit, she’s heard from a lot of people with similar stories.

Adewumi’s allegations don’t surprise her: “It’s what many of us have gone through directly,” she said.

Speaking out has been “terrible,” Safo said, adding that she risked her career and lost friendships. But she’s felt vindicated by changes: The New York City Council last year passed legislation to create an advisory board to examine racial and gender discrimination in hospitals.

A judge sealed Adewumi’s lawsuit and some filings in the case at the request of Wellstar, which cited confidential information. The following account of what happened comes from an interview with Adewumi and a complaint he filed with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which in July granted him permission to sue.

Adewumi signed on in March 2018 to lead neurosurgery services at Wellstar Cobb Hospital in Austell, Georgia. The hospital hadn’t had a neurosurgeon for a decade and referred patients elsewhere, including Wellstar Kennestone Hospital, where Adewumi’s supervisor worked.

As his practice started to flourish, Adewumi felt his supervisor was targeting him “with the intention of undermining my skill as a physician and pushing me out of the group,” the EEOC complaint says.

In November 2018, Adewumi began receiving “letters of inquiry” about surgeries he’d done. These anonymous letters can be submitted by any member of the medical staff or be triggered by a patient complaint. They’re reviewed by the hospital’s medical executive committee.

At first, Adewumi said, he didn’t know what the letters were, having never received anything similar. But within eight months, he had received 15, all but one filed by colleagues.

Separate independent reviews requested by the hospital and by Adewumi’s lawyers found that concerns stemmed from differences in opinion about the approach or surgical technique, not patient care standards or safety, according to the EEOC complaint.

In contrast, Adewumi said, he’s aware of at least two cases where

white colleagues performed surgeries that were unnecessary or left a patient disfigured. He doesn’t believe they received letters of inquiry or were disciplined in any way.

After trying unsuccessfully to mend the relationship with his supervisor, Adewumi said he went up the chain to raise concerns and a hospital system executive suggested it might be better if he resigned. Floored by the suggestion, Adewumi refused to quit.

Wellstar then proposed an “action plan.” It wasn’t meant to be punitive but would help “better integrate” him into the main group of neurosurgeons at Wellstar Kennestone Hospital, he was told.

Several Black doctors in Georgia and elsewhere who spoke to The Associated Press said the hierarchy and competition in hospitals, where surgeons are evaluated and compensated based on productivity, can lead to people being targeted if they aren’t liked or are perceived as professional threats. Racial bias can compound that, they said.

Adewumi suspects that’s what happened to him. Before arriving at Wellstar, he’d done two fellowships on spine and brain tumors, learning difficult techniques that others within the neurosurgery group couldn’t do. Additionally, his presence at Wellstar Cobb meant lucrative surgeries were no longer being referred to his colleagues at

Wellstar Kennestone.

During an action plan check-in meeting in August 2019, medical executive committee leaders applauded Adewumi’s progress. Two months later, on Oct. 8, he was fired “not for cause.” He was assured he’d done “nothing wrong,” that he was being dismissed because “certain relationships were not fostered.”

His termination was effective at the end of a 180-day notice period, in April 2020, but he wasn’t required or allowed to work at the hospital in the meantime. That meant he couldn’t fulfill a six-week “mentorship” requirement, leaving his action plan incomplete.

In March 2020, as the coronavirus began to strain hospitals, he emailed Wellstar administrators offering to come back temporarily in any capacity to help. He figured the hospital could use extra hands, and it could allow him to complete his action plan and resolve his situation without suing. But Wellstar refused.

With his action plan incomplete, the hospital refused to give him a “letter of good standing,” leaving him unable to find a hospital that will credential him, meaning he can’t work as a neurosurgeon.

“They have cornered him and locked him out, effectively,” Hoffer said. “You don’t do this by happenstance, by mistake. This is intentional and deliberate and that is why we have a lawsuit pending.”

Researchers To Reassess Last US Slave Ship

MOBILE, Ala. (AP) — Researchers are returning to the Alabama coast near Mobile to assess the sunken remains of the last slave ship to bring captive Africans to the United States more than 160 years ago.

The Alabama Historical Commission says a team will begin a 10-day evaluation of the remnants of the Clotilda on Monday. Experts have described the wreck as the most complete slave ship ever discovered.

The agency has hired Resolve Marine, a salvage and services company, for work involving the Clotilda. The ship was scuttled in the muddy Mobile River after illegally dropping off 110 West Africans on the Alabama coast in 1860, decades after Congress outlawed the international slave trade.

The company plans to moor a 100-foot-long (30.5-meter-long) barge at the site with equipment to support divers and store artifacts that are removed from the water for analysis and documen-

tation.

Some have advocated for removing the wreckage from the water and placing it on display in a new museum that’s being discussed, and officials have said the work will help determine whether such a project is possible.

The Clotilda’s voyage was financed by a wealthy Alabama businessman, Timothy Meaher, whose descendants still have extensive land holdings around Mobile. Enslaved upon their arrival in Alabama, some of the Africans started a community called Africatown USA just north of Mobile after the Civil War, and many of their descendants still live there.

Ship wreckage in the river was identified as being that of the Clotilda in 2019, and officials have been assessing the site and deciding what to do with it ever since. While small parts of the two-masted wooden schooner have been brought to the surface, researchers have found



that most of the ship — including the pen that was used to imprison the captives — remains intact on the river bottom.

Working with the state and SEARCH Inc., Resolve Marine said it will perform work including an assessment of the Clotilda’s hull and a limited excavation of artifacts. It’s also developing a plan to conserve the wreckage

where it’s currently located in the river a few miles north of Mobile.

The work, which is being funded with a \$1 million state appropriation, “will add to the collective understanding of the vessel and the site’s potential to yield significant archaeological information about the ship and its final voyage,” Jozsef said.

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Business & Finance

FDA Plans To Ban Menthol Flavors In Cigarettes, Cigars

By Matthew Perrone

AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C. (AP)—The U.S. government on Thursday released its long-awaited plan to ban menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars, citing the toll on Black smokers and young people.

“The proposed rules would help prevent children from becoming the next generation of smokers and help adult smokers quit,” said Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra, in a statement.

He added that the ban would also be an “important step to advance health equity” by reducing disparities in tobacco use.

The Food and Drug Administration said eliminating menthol cigarettes could prevent between 300,000 and 650,000 smoking deaths over 40 years.

Menthol accounts for more than a third of cigarettes sold in the U.S., and the mint flavor is favored by Black smokers and young people. Menthol’s cooling effect has been shown to mask the throat harshness of smoking, making it easier to start and harder to quit.

The FDA said it will also seek to ban menthol and dozens of other flavors like grape and strawberry from cigars, which are increasingly popular with young people, especially Black teens.

The agency’s proposals on both cigarettes and cigars are only initial drafts and are unlikely to be finalized before next year. Companies would have one additional year to phase out their products. Tobacco industry lawsuits could delay the prohibition for several more years, according to experts. For now, FDA will take comments for two months.

Altria, which sells menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars, said it disagreed with the ban.

“Taking these products out of the legal marketplace will push them into unregulated, criminal markets,” the company said in a statement. “We will continue to engage in this long-term regula-

tory process.”

The FDA has attempted several times to get rid of menthol but faced pushback from Big Tobacco, members of Congress and competing political interests under both Democratic and Republican administrations.

Regulators have been under legal pressure to issue a decision after anti-smoking and civil rights groups sued the FDA for “unreasonably” delaying action on earlier requests to ban menthol.

Menthol is the only cigarette flavor that was not prohibited under the 2009 law that gave the FDA authority over tobacco products, an exemption negotiated by industry lobbyists. The act did, though, instruct the agency to continue to weigh a ban. To date, the FDA has yet to eliminate any traditional tobacco product, though it has had that authority for over a decade.

Last April, the Biden administration pledged to try to ban menthol within the year, responding in part to African-American groups who say menthol has led to lower quit rates and higher rates of death among Black people. Menthols are used by 85 percent of Black smokers.

“Black folks die disproportionately of heart disease, lung cancer and stroke,” said Phillip Gardiner of the African-American Tobacco Control Leadership Council. “Menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars are the main vectors of those diseases in the Black and brown communities, and have been for a long time.”

In 2020, Gardiner’s group and several others sued to compel the FDA to make a decision on a ban.

More than 12 percent of Americans smoke cigarettes, with rates roughly even between white and Black populations.

In 2019, more than 18 million Americans smoked menthol cigarettes, with higher rates among young people, African-Americans and other racial groups, according to the FDA. Menthol smoking declined among White teenagers

between 2011 and 2018, but not among Black and Hispanic youth, the agency noted.

Thursday’s proposals would not apply to electronic cigarettes, including leading brands like Juul and Vuse, which come in menthol. The FDA has been conducting a separate review of vaping products and has so far authorized a handful of tobacco-flavored products from smaller manufacturers.

The FDA made several efforts to begin eliminating menthol cigarettes under both the Obama and Trump administrations, but had never previously released a formal roadmap of how to accomplish the ban.

“This is the first time there’s been support from an administration,” said Mitch Zeller, who recently retired after nine years leading FDA’s tobacco center. “If these rules are finalized they become the law of the land and it becomes illegal for menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars to be sold.”

In recent weeks, dozens of interest groups—for and against the ban—met with Biden administration officials to try and influence the proposed rule, which would wipe out billions in tobacco sales.

For decades, tobacco companies focused menthol advertising and promotions in Black communities, sponsoring music festivals and neighborhood events. Industry documents released via litigation show companies viewed menthol cigarettes as a good “starter product” because they were more palatable to teens.

Menthol’s elimination would be a huge blow to tobacco companies, including Marlboro-maker Altria and Reynolds American, which sells the leading menthol brands, Newport and Kool. With the slow decline of smoking, tobacco companies have been diversifying into alternative products, including electronic cigarettes and tobacco pouches. But those ventures still account for a tiny slice of industry sales.



Japanese Railway Goes Renewable

By Yuri Kageyama

Associated Press

TOKYO (AP)—Tokyo’s Shibuya is famed for its Scramble Crossing, where crowds of people crisscross the intersection in a scene symbolizing urban Japan’s congestion and anonymity. It may have added another boasting right.

Tokyu Railways’ trains running through Shibuya and other stations were switched to power generated only by solar and other renewable sources starting April 1.

That means the carbon dioxide emissions of Tokyu’s sprawling network of seven train lines and one tram service now stand at zero, with green energy being used at all its stations, including for vending machines for drinks, security camera screens and lighting.

Tokyu, which employs 3,855 people and connects Tokyo with nearby Yokohama, is the first railroad operator in Japan to have achieved that goal. It says the carbon dioxide reduction is equivalent to the annual average emissions of 56,000 Japanese households.

Nicholas Little, director of railway education at Michigan State University’s Center for Railway Research and Education, commends Tokyu for promoting renewable energy but stressed the importance of boosting the bottom-line amount of that renewable energy.

“I would stress the bigger impacts come from increasing electricity generation from renewable sources,” he said. “The long-term battle is to increase production of renewable electricity and provide the transmission infrastructure to get it to the places of consump-

tion.” The technology used by Tokyu’s trains is among the most ecologically friendly options for railways. The other two options are batteries and hydrogen power.

And so is it just a publicity stunt, or is Tokyu moving in the right direction?

Ryo Takagi, a professor at Kogakuin University and specialist in electric railway systems, believes the answer isn’t simple because how train technology evolves is complex and depends on many uncertain societal factors.

In a nutshell, Tokyu’s efforts are definitely not hurting and are probably better than doing nothing. They show the company is taking up the challenge of promoting clean energy, he said.

“But I am not going out of my way to praise it as great,” Takagi said.

Bigger gains would come from switching from diesel trains in rural areas to hydrogen powered lines and from switching gas-guzzling cars to electric, he said.

Tokyu paid an undisclosed amount to Tokyo Electric Power Co., the utility behind the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster, for certification vouching for its use of renewables, even as Japan continues to use coal and other fossil fuels.

Tech Stocks Sink Again, Worst Since 2008

The Dow Jones Industrial Average slumped more than 900 points Friday as another sharp sell-off led by technology stocks added to Wall Street’s losses in April, leaving the S&P 500 with its biggest monthly skid since the start of the pandemic.

A sharp drop in Amazon weighed on the market after the internet retail giant posted its first loss since 2015. The decline knocked more than \$200 billion off Amazon’s market value.

The benchmark S&P 500 fell 3.6% and finished April with an 8.8% loss, its worst monthly slide since March 2020. The Dow slumped 2.8%.

The Nasdaq composite, heavily weighted with technology stocks, bore the brunt of the damage this month, ending April with a 13.3%

loss, its biggest monthly decline since the 2008 financial crisis.

Major indexes shifted between slumps and rallies throughout the week as the latest round of corporate earnings hit the market in force. Investors have been reviewing a particularly heavy batch of financial results from big tech companies, industrial firms and retailers.

But some disappointing results or outlooks from Apple, Google’s parent company and Amazon helped fuel the selling this week.

“When you start to hear from companies saying that perhaps demand is down, the concerns over a deeper slowdown in the economy gains momentum, and that’s where we are,” said Quincy Krosby, chief equity strategist for LPL Financial.

Traders also continue to fret about the tough medicine the Federal Reserve is using in its fight against inflation: higher interest rates. The central bank is expected to announce another round of rate hikes next week, a move that will further increase borrowing costs across the board for people buying cars, using credit cards and taking out mortgages to buy homes.

“Rising cost pressures and uncertain outlooks from the largest technology names have investors agitated going into the weekend and investors are not likely to be comfortable any time soon with the Fed widely expected to deliver a 50-basis point hike along with a hawkish message next week,” said Charlie Ripley, senior investment

strategist for Allianz Investment Management.

The S&P 500 fell 155.57 points to 4,131.93 Friday. The benchmark index is now down 13.3% for the year. The Dow dropped 939.18 points to 32,977.21. The Nasdaq slid 536.89 points to 12,334.64. It’s down 21.2% so far this year.

Smaller company stocks also had a rough day. The Russell 2000 slid 53.84 points, or 2.8%, to 1,864.10.

Big Tech has been leading the market lower all month as traders shun the high-flying sector. Tech had posted gigantic gains during the pandemic and now is starting to look overpriced, particularly with interest rates set to rise sharply as the Fed steps up its fight against inflation.

Amazon Warehouse Collapse Probe Finds Worker Safety Deficiencies

By Haleluya Hadero

AP Business Writer

U.S. regulators are calling on Amazon to improve its procedures for dealing with severe weather like hurricanes and tornadoes that could threaten workers at its warehouses dotted across the country.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration on Tuesday sent a “Hazard Alert Letter” to the Seattle-based e-commerce giant on Tuesday following the agency’s investigation into the deadly collapse of a company warehouse in Edwardsville, Ill. in December. Six people died and another was critically injured in

the tornado strike.

The investigation “raised concerns about the potential risk to employees during severe weather emergencies,” according to the letter sent to Amazon that OSHA made public.

The agency said its inspection found that, while the company’s severe weather procedures

had met minimal federal safety guidelines for storm sheltering, the company still needed to further protect its workers and contract employees. The letter requires Amazon to review its severe weather emergency procedures but the company won’t face any fines or penalties.

In interviews with Amazon and contract workers, OSHA officials found some employees couldn’t recall ever participating in severe weather drills, or the location of the facility’s shelter. Kelly Nantel, an Amazon spokesperson, however, said employees receive emergency response training, which is “reinforced throughout the year.”

“OSHA’s investigation did not find any violations or causes for citations, but we’re constantly looking to innovate and improve our safety measures and have already begun conducting additional safety and emergency preparedness drills at our sites and will carefully consider any OSHA recommendation that we have not already,” Nantel said.

Amazon has noted workers at the warehouse, known as a “delivery station,” had little time to prepare when the National Weather Service declared a tornado warning on December 10. About 10 minutes before the tornado touched down, the agency said managers directed workers to go to a restroom in response

to tornado warnings and other weather alerts.

But some employees unaware of the designated tornado shelter—a restroom located in the northern portion of the building—went to a separate restroom in the hard-hit south end, the agency said. All the injured and killed had taken shelter in the south side bathroom.

John Felton, Amazon’s senior vice president of global delivery services, had said in December that most of the 46 people in the warehouse headed to a shelter on the north side while a smaller group went to the south end, where the loading docks were located and delivery vehicles were parked.

“The tornado that hit our delivery station was extreme and very sudden, with winds that were much like the force of a category 4 hurricane, and we believe our team did the right thing, moving people to shelter as soon as the warning was issued,” Nantel said.

In the inspection, the agency said it also reviewed contractor safety and training records as well as the facility’s written “Emergency Action Plan.” Officials took issue with the plan, writing in the letter it “was not customized with specific instructions” for hazards expected at the Edwardsville site.

Though Amazon had posted evacuation maps at the facility

showing the location of the designated shelter, officials found the written plan did not “specifically identify” the shelter’s location in the warehouse. Nantel said the company’s buildings have “emergency plans that identify exit routes and shelter areas.”

Separately, officials said a megaphone that was supposed to activate the site’s shelter-in-place procedure was locked in a cage and not accessible, resulting in managers verbally telling workers on where to take shelter. “These tragic deaths have sparked discussions nationwide on the vital need for comprehensive workplace emergency plans,” William Donovan, OSHA’s regional administrator in Chicago, said in a statement.

“Employers should re-evaluate their emergency plans for the safest shelter-in-place locations and prepare before an emergency to ensure workers know where to go and how to keep themselves safe in the event of a disaster.”

The agency has recommended Amazon make its warning devices readily accessible, ensures all employees participate in drills for emergency weather events and include site-specific information in its emergency plans. It said it will also send hazard alert letters to three delivery service providers, who employed the injured worker and five of the employees who died.



THIS AMAZON FACILITY COLLAPSED AFTER A TORNADO HIT IT IN EDWARDSVILLE, ILL.

Opinion



An Extraordinary Life, Linking Past and Present

By Ben Jealous

People for the American Way

I was trained to fight by my grandmother, Mamie Bland Todd. She would often remind me, “Pessimists are right more often, but optimists win more often.”

“In this life you have to decide what’s more important to you.” Then she would add, “As for me, I’ll take winning.”

My favorite optimist died recently at 105.

For our family, she was the last living link to our story of origin in antebellum Southern Virginia. Three of her grandparents were Black and born into slavery. The fourth was White and helped run a plantation.

She and my grandfather made the great migration north to the Up South that is Baltimore. Their love story was the bridge to our family’s life in modern America.

She carried lessons from the old world with her. She learned to fight from her paternal grandfather, Edward David Bland. He was born into slavery in his White uncle’s house. He would defeat one of his White cousins to become one of the last Black Reconstruction statesmen in Virginia.

He was also the Black leader of a multiracial populist movement made up of former slaves and former Confederate soldiers. His White counterpart was former Confederate General William Mahone. Theirs was a coalition of working men, Black and White. Most of them were farmers with rough hands and dirty fingernails.

Together they built a movement in the early 1880s that created Virginia State University, expanded Virginia Tech, and secured the future of free public education for every child in the commonwealth. Their common enemy was the far right-wing politicians who said Virginia could not afford the universal free public education that had been created during Reconstruction.

Publicly, these wealthy conservatives said the state could not afford both free public education and paying off Civil War debt. Privately, they feared free universal public education would render both poor Whites and poor Blacks ungovernable.

Bland and Mahone’s multiracial movement also attacked voter suppression, outlawing the poll tax and several other measures meant to make it harder for Blacks and low-income Whites to vote.

When they took control of the state legislature, they made Mahone a U.S. Senator. Without forgetting the sins of the past, the men they led each chose to invest in new-found unity rather than renew old hurts and divisions.

What united those men was their commitment to providing a better future for their children. They recognized that what the children of working families—Black and white—needed more than anything was access to a free high-quality education. In short, they needed what the children of plantation owners took for granted.

My grandmother was born in 1916. She was a third-generation NAACP member who rebelled against Jim Crow without hesitation.

As a young teacher, she confronted the White man who was the local superintendent of schools. She convinced him that just like White teachers, Black teachers could not teach without adequate supplies. He rectified the problem at her segregated all-Black school the next day.

Two decades later, she would support my mom when at age 12 she signed on as a named plaintiff in one of the feeder cases to Brown v Board of Education. When my mom desegregated her local high school at 15, my grandmother was with her every step of the way.

Ultimately, however, my grandmother, like her grandfather, could not escape the moral imperative that children of every color who are struggling need the same protections and supports. She would go on to found Child Protective Services for the city of Baltimore and lead Maryland’s effort to replicate the program statewide.

Like Bland, she built an army of warriors for social change. In her case, it was an army of social workers, who were mostly women. Among them was a young White woman and future U.S. senator named Barbara Mikulski.

Four years ago, when I was the Democratic nominee for governor of Maryland, I bumped into Sen. Mikulski at a women’s political event. She looked at me and said, “You’re Mamie Todd’s grandson.”

I said, “I am,” and I watched a tear roll down her face.

As I close this week’s column, tears are running down mine.

Ben Jealous serves as president of People for the American Way and Professor of the Practice in the Africana Studies Department at the University of Pennsylvania where he teaches leadership. Jealous has decades of experience as a leader, coalition builder, campaigner for social justice and seasoned nonprofit executive. In 2008, he was chosen as the youngest-ever president and CEO of the NAACP. He is a graduate of Columbia University and Oxford, where he was a Rhodes Scholar, and he has taught at Princeton and the University of Pennsylvania.



The Global Suicide Budget

By Robert C. Koehler

PeaceVoice

“Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.”

I truly wish these words of Ike, uttered seven decades ago, were no longer quite so relevant. Perhaps what he should have called it was a “cross of irony.”

In 2021, the human race, in order to keep itself safe, invested \$2.1 trillion in the ability to make war—to kill one another, even (if necessary) to end life altogether. It’s the planet’s largest collective military budget ever, but—oh, the irony—the budget will keep on growing... as long as the budget keeps on growing. The more we invest in keeping ourselves safe from the enemy, the more “the enemy” will have to invest to keep itself safe from us.

Gun culture’s sidekick is fear culture. The two are inseparable. Alas, in the public domain, fear culture morphs into what theologian Walter Wink has called the myth of redemptive violence. It sounds like this:

“From Ia Drang to Khe Sanh, from Hue to Saigon and countless villages in between, they pushed through jungles and rice paddies, heat and monsoon, fighting heroically to protect the ideas we hold dear as Americans. Through more than a decade of combat, over air, land, and sea, these proud Americans upheld the highest traditions of our Armed Forces.”

This was President Obama, in 2012, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War, but leaving out a few details: the fact, for instance, that the U.S. dropped six million tons of bombs and other ordnance on Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia between 1964 and 1973, along with some 19 million gallons of toxic chemicals, including Agent Orange; the fact that multi-thousands of vets (highest estimate, 150,000, triple the number of American combat dead) committed suicide after they were finished upholding the highest traditions of the Armed Forces; the fact that as many as three million Vietnamese, including two million civilians, were killed in the war, and hundreds of thousands more were injured and permanently displaced; the fact that the term “ecocide” was coined to describe what we did to the Vietnamese countryside.

Somehow all this never quite hit home in the U.S. of A.—never quite landed in the national conscience and caused a change in the country’s relationship to the world. From the point of view of American leadership, the shattered country of Vietnam became an inconvenience. We lost. The war was perceived as an utter failure and the use of American military muscle plunged in the national polls. “Vietnam syndrome” gripped the country, forcing it to wage proxy wars for the next 17 years. Finally, George H.W. Bush launched Gulf War I, which was a huge success from the American point of view. Yellow ribbons were everywhere! As many as 100,000 Iraqis died, compared to 144 Americans.

But the success was bigger than just winning the war at hand. In its wake, Bush 1 proclaimed: “By God, we’ve kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all.”

America was now fully free to use its military again! This eventually opened the way for Bush 2’s wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and for the ever-expanding U.S. military budget, which amounts to nearly 50 percent of that jaw-dropping global total.

And several thousand nuclear weapons sit ready to go, whenever one or several global leaders decide the time has come for humanity to commit suicide—in the name of keeping itself safe, or at least protecting various interests.

There’s really only one question here, which is: How do we change? Virtually every stable human being on Planet Earth is in favor of never waging nuclear war, I would imagine, yet global cluelessness rules, or sort of rules. I fear we’re trapped in what might be called a metaphorical mousetrap. We live counter to our deepest values in order to, as Obama put it, “upheld our highest traditions.” Or something like that.

But perhaps even something as overwhelming as war can be dismantled one personal connection at a time. So, returning briefly to Vietnam, I consider a minuscule speck of a moment in the life of Paul Meadlo, one of the participants in the My Lai massacre on March 16, 1968. Seymour Hersh, who as a young freelance journalist broke the story to the American public, wrote about it again many years later in the *New Yorker*. He described how the Americans had rounded up the villagers and held them at gunpoint in larger circles. At one point, Lt. William Calley called out:

“Get with it. I want them dead.’ From about 10 or 15 feet away, Meadlo said, Calley ‘started shooting them. Then he told me to start shooting them... I started to shoot them, but the other guys wouldn’t do it. So we’—Meadlo and Calley—‘went ahead and killed them.’”

Hersh adds:

“There was official testimony showing that Meadlo had in fact been extremely distressed by Calley’s order. After being told by Calley to ‘take care of his group,’ one Charlie Company soldier recounted, Meadlo and a fellow-soldier ‘were actually playing with the kids, telling the people where to sit down and giving the kids candy.’ When Calley returned and said that he wanted them dead, the soldier said, ‘Meadlo just looked at him like he couldn’t believe it. He says, ‘Waste them?’” When Calley said yes, another soldier testified, Meadlo and Calley ‘opened up and started firing.’ But then Meadlo ‘started to cry.’”

This to me addresses the global military budget, and the cross of irony, with terrifying clarity. The bullets fly in all directions. Sometimes they hit the soul.

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.



Delusional

By Winslow Myers

War Preventive Initiative

One adjective often, and correctly, used for Putin’s invasion is “delusional.” Even if he manages to pound Ukraine into scorched rubble, he’ll still be further than when he began from anything resembling victory.

He and his henchmen will continue to be generally despised and feared, most intensely by the defiant Ukrainians themselves. As Hemingway wrote, “Man can be destroyed but not defeated.” Another aspect of Putin’s delusion is projection: he rationalizes that he is destroying Nazis while behaving like a Nazi himself.

While we’re quoting Nobel prizewinners, here is a snippet from Faulkner’s Nobel speech: “Our tragedy today is a general and universal physical fear so long sustained by now that we can even bear it. There are no longer problems of the spirit. There is only the question: When will I be blown up?”

Putin happens to be the head of one of the nine nations who could

answer Faulkner’s question. But he is hardly alone in his conviction that military force backed up by nuclear weapons will yield greatness, or security, or whatever it is he hopes to gain from his colossal misjudgment. We’re all a part of the general delusion of our time, that the trillions we have consented to pour into militarism will yield genuine peace. Here’s one more quotation from a Nobel winner, this from T.S. Eliot: “Humankind cannot bear very much reality.”

Mass delusion is indicated by our clinging to obsolete paradigms. Remember how certain that clerical authorities were that the Earth was the center of the solar system? Another obsolete paradigm clarified by the invasion of Ukraine is the usefulness of nuclear weapons as a way to prevent war. Nuclear weapons did not deter Osama bin Laden. Nor did they deter Putin.

Instead, the record of near disaster over the decades of the nuclear age underlines our good fortune to find ourselves still alive and unradiated. Stanislav Petrov was on duty in a Soviet military bunker in 1983 when two signals indicated that U.S. intercontinental missiles were headed toward the U.S.S.R. He rightly decided there must be a malfunction in the Soviet early warning system and chose not to alert his superiors, risking his career. There are a number of such stories in the public domain, which would indicate that there may be even more close calls which remain classified.

What logic might be powerful enough to break the trance these weapons have induced in the governments of the world? I only know what logical common sense tells me: we cannot go on like this, building and renewing weapons and playing nuclear chicken. We can’t continue forever relying on fiendishly complex computer systems that are subject to malfunction, being hacked, or coming to fatally mistaken conclusions, either on their own or in concert with the fallible humans operating them.

Imagine that aliens have swooped in from deep space to check up on our planet. As they circle the earth, they see no borders. It all looks like a single entity, menaced by rising temperatures and intensifying conflicts, both of which threaten the overall health of the living system upon which humans depend for their support. That is reality.

The aliens would say to us, “Wake up from your delusion. Shake off the trance. Grow up. Learn to get along. Greater Russia is an abstraction, a fantasy, an illusion. And so are all the ‘my country right or wrong’ mythologies of America, China, and others. Nations and people have more in common than what separates you. You share a single planet and single life-support system, a common evolutionary history, a collective wish to leave your children a better life than your own, and an interdependent future where your survival depends upon each other. Avoiding blowing yourselves up is your ultimate common self-interest—a reality upon which to build an international security regime not based in deterrence, nuclear weapons, and war—based instead in the need for a further level of cooperation necessary to address your many sustainability challenges.”

Biden and Zelenskyy are doing a heroic job within the existing delusional paradigm. But it is not too soon to start thinking outside the box: nuclear weapons are the problem, not the solution that establishment thinking fatalistically assumes they are. They are a solution only in the Holocaust sense of “final solution.”

What might lie beyond deterrence? Putin or no Putin, creative men and women of good will can end our present drift downstream toward the waterfall ahead. This begins by admitting that we ourselves, along with Putin, are deluded by the false power of nuclear weapons.

Winslow Myers, author of Living Beyond War: A Citizen’s Guide, serves on the Advisory Board of the War Preventive Initiative.



Can Elon Musk Save Twitter?

By Thomas L. Knapp

William Lloyd Garrison Center

Mere days after my column explaining why Elon Musk shouldn’t buy Twitter, Elon Musk bought Twitter—sort of. His offer’s been accepted, but there’s likely a good deal of red tape to get over before he hands over the cash and the current board hands over the keys. Given his continually adversarial relationship with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, it may take a little while.

That guy, he never listens to me. But he seems to have done pretty well for himself anyway. Not everyone can swing a \$44 billion deal on a hot property. Or build an electric car that accelerates from zero to 60 miles per hour in 3.3 seconds. Or send people to space and bring them back, then re-use the rockets.

Can he save Twitter? Well, he seems like a guy who gets things done. I wouldn’t bet against him.

And, make no mistake, Twitter’s in desperate need of saving. It’s been declining for years, shedding real users and picking up annoying spam bots under management that seems less concerned with operating a high-engagement platform for all comers than with carrying water for the American political establishment and scolding and ostracizing wrong-thinkers.

Many Twitter users disagree. They’ve become accustomed to living in a walled garden, protected from viewpoints that make them uncomfortable. And the possibility that new ownership might tell them to grow up, stop whining, and learn to use the “block” button enrages them.

Only a few months ago, those users and I were in general agreement:

It’s Twitter’s platform. Twitter gets to set the rules for using that platform. If you don’t like Twitter’s rules, find or start a platform with rules you like better. Problem solved.

Now those rules may change, because the platform’s ownership is changing. But my position remains the same, because that position wasn’t based on happening to like the rules. It was based on respect for the property rights of the platform’s owners.

Now that the ownership is changing, which may portend the rules changing, some who agreed with me when they liked the rules are hanging out on (virtual) street corners in sackcloth and ashes, waving THE END IS NEAR signs, and even urging the SEC to nix the deal so they can return to their version of Eden, undisturbed by serpents peddling heterodoxy.

Apparently “it’s a private company and can set whatever rules it wants” was a position of convenience, not principle. Go figure.

Musk has a tough row to hoe. Changing an entrenched corporate culture and bringing an aging platform up to date to deal with its infestation of spammers and scammers won’t be easy. I still think he’d have been smarter to start from scratch. But I wish him luck.

If he can transform Twitter back into a bona fide public square, he’ll be due the thanks of a grateful user base. And he’ll probably get some of that thanks, mixed in with complaints from those who pine for the return of their former idea-proof safe space.

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