

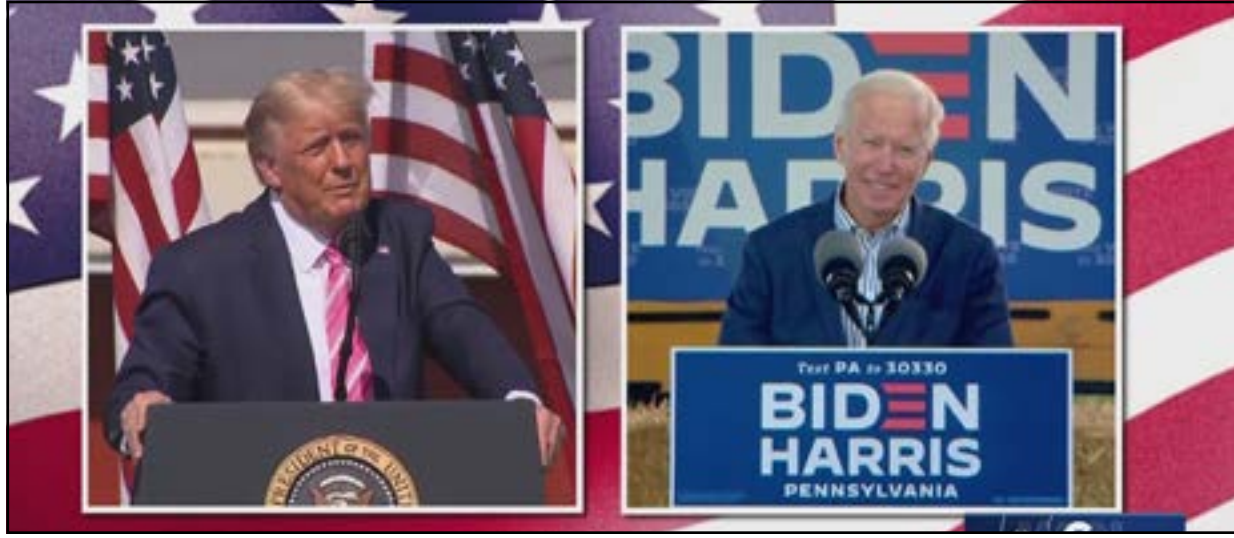
## What To Expect In NC On Election Night

By The Associated Press

North Carolina's statewide elections are generally closely divided affairs, but Democrats have failed to win a U.S. Senate race since 2008. Party officials were encouraged that the streak could be broken this year when former state Supreme Court Chief Justice Cheri Beasley got in the race last year.

The primary field was cleared for Beasley, who would be North Carolina's first Black senator if elected, and she's been the top fundraiser throughout the campaign. But Republican three-term Rep. Ted Budd has benefited from the Senate endorsement of former President Donald Trump and tens of millions of dollars in outside spending for ads attacking Beasley.

The Senate Leadership Fund had spent close to \$30 million against Beasley by the campaign's



WILL IT BE A REPEAT OF 2020 OR IS TRUMPISM REALLY ON THE WANE?

final weeks. Beasley and her allies have criticized Budd on his anti-abortion views and for his votes

against bills related to controlling health care costs. Budd's camp has attacked Beasley for supporting

President Joe Biden's policies and for her written opinions while on the state Supreme Court that they say were weak on crime.

Republicans currently hold eight of the 13 U.S. House seats, with North Carolina gaining a 14th seat based on census figures. Redistricting litigation ultimately put Democrats in a strong position to win six U.S. House seats,

with a chance to reach parity with the GOP in a new open Raleigh-area district considered a toss-up. This race pits Democratic state Sen. Wiley Nickel against Republican Bo Hines, also endorsed by Trump.

The GOP has controlled the General Assembly since 2011 but hasn't held veto-proof majorities since 2018, which has allowed Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper to block what he considers extreme Republican policies on guns, abortion and immigration. But Republicans need only two additional Senate seats and three House seats to overcome his vetoes.

Cooper and other Democrats contend Republicans will severely restrict or prohibit abortion in light of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in June overturning *Roe v. Wade*. GOP legislative leaders say there's no consensus on abortion changes and have focused their campaigns on the economy and state tax cuts they approved.

The outcome of the two state Supreme Court races could have a lot to say about whether abortion restrictions or challenged Republican policies will be upheld. Democrats currently hold a 4-3

seat advantage. Republicans need to win one of the two to take back a majority they last held in 2016.

Here's a look at what to expect on election night:

### ELECTION NIGHT

Polls close at 7:30 p.m. local time

### HOW NORTH CAROLINA VOTES

The vast majority of North Carolina voters (nearly 84 percent in the 2020 presidential election) cast absentee ballots. And most of those are in-person votes. Mail-in absentee ballots accounted for 18 percent of the total vote for president in 2020.

The most populous counties—Wake (home to the state capital, Raleigh), Mecklenburg (Charlotte) and Guilford (Greensboro)—vote heavily Democratic. North Carolina's rural counties skew overwhelmingly Republican. To win statewide office, Republicans need to limit their losses in the cities and do well in the suburbs.

### DECISION NOTES

AP will tabulate and declare winners in 139 contested elections in North Carolina, including one U.S. Senate seat, 14 U.S. House

(See **ELECTION NIGHT**, P. 2)

## NC High Court Backs Leandro

By Gary D. Robertson

Associated Press

A local North Carolina judge had the power to transfer large amounts of taxpayer dollars from government coffers to state agencies to carry out a plan to address longstanding education inequities, the state Supreme Court ruled on Friday.

In another landmark decision from school funding litigation that began three decades ago, the court's Democratic majority declared it was legitimate for Superior Court Judge David Lee last year to order the movement of \$1.75 billion from state coffers to agencies to implement an education remedial plan he approved

earlier. The transfer had been blocked on appeal. Friday's majority instructed another trial judge to order state officials to move those funds once he recalculates further how much money is needed to fulfill two years of that eight-year plan.

Republican legislative leaders argued that only the General Assembly has authority to appropriate money, citing language within the North Carolina Constitution.

But in a 4-3 decision, justices agreed with Lee—who died last month—that previous Supreme Court decisions in the case, along with the constitution's declaration addressing the people's

“right to the privilege of education,” gave him authority to order funds be spent without a specific General Assembly law.

Associate Justice Robin Hudson, writing the 139-page majority opinion, described this an “extraordinary” situation for courts to intervene after a 1997 Supreme Court ruling that found there was a constitutionally protected right for children to obtain the “opportunity for a sound basic education.” In 2004, justices declared that the state had failed to live up to that mandate.

As did Lee, Hudson cited the repeated unwillingness of other parts of state government to pro-

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

## Pence Stumps For Budd In NC

By Gary D. Robertson

Associated Press

Former Vice President Mike Pence stumped in North Carolina on Wednesday in the final days before the midterm elections with U.S. Senate candidate Ted Budd, calling him one of the “strongest conservative voices” in the House, where he's served for the past six years.

“I'm here to say just one thing and one thing only, and that is that North Carolina and America need Ted Budd in the United States Senate,” Pence said after he and Budd answered questions on the economy and education from state GOP chairman Michael Whatley before a few dozen Republican activists.

Earlier Pence attended a lun-

cheon fundraiser for the Senate candidate, who is in a highly competitive race with Democratic rival Cheri Beasley. The race is one of several that could determine whether Democrats hold onto power in the narrowly divided Senate.

Pence became a leading target of former President Donald Trump's ire after refusing to help him block certification of Democrat Joe Biden's win while Pence served as the presiding officer of those formal proceedings on Jan. 6, 2021. The anger spilled over to Trump supporters, who considered him a turncoat.

Budd condemned the violence that prompted Pence and lawmakers to rush to safety that day. Still, he voted against certifying the election hours later.

Months later, he called the insurrection a “bad day for America,” but also said it was “just patriots standing up.”

Pence has become increasingly in demand among Republican candidates in the midterms—an effort that is rebuilding his credentials within the GOP as he considers a 2024 presidential campaign. He's been portrayed as someone who can help other Republican candidates win support beyond Trump's voting base. Trump endorsed Budd for the Senate last year and has held two rallies this year to help his candidacy. Budd has said Biden is the elected president.

Pence called Budd a “man of integrity—his family, his faith,

(See **PENCE STUMPS**, P. 2)

## Cheer Co. Denies Involvement In Abuse

By James Pollard

Associated Press/Report for America

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP)—The American cheerleading company behind the sport's top uniforms, camps and competitions is vehemently denying accusations that the enterprise helped facilitate alleged sexual abuse at gyms across the Southeast outlined in

a series of federal lawsuits, and has hired a high-powered defamation lawyer to look into the case.

Varsity Spirit has been named as a defendant in multiple lawsuits brought in three states by civil rights attorney Bakari Sellers and lawyers with the Strom Law Firm; the lawsuits allege widespread sexual abuse

of cheerleaders by coaches at various gyms in North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

The lawsuits allege leaders at Varsity Spirit—as the dominant provider of cheer competitions and camps—failed to provide a safe environment. The coaches were not employed by Varsity Spirit but, according to the lawsuits, some of the alleged abuse

happened in hotels selected by Varsity while teams were attending Varsity competitions. The lawsuits contend Varsity didn't implement or enforce procedures to protect athletes from drugs, alcohol and abuse.

The company denies those accusations, resting responsibility with the individual gyms and coaches named in the lawsuits.

Varsity Spirit and lawyers representing the victims have also disagreed on how strong the connection is between Varsity Spirit and the gyms where the coaches worked. For example, the lawsuits say gyms pay annual or monthly fees to Varsity whereas Varsity says gyms do not pay annual or monthly fees, but have paid to attend competitions and wear certain apparel.

The cheerleading powerhouse retained Thomas Clare, who gained distinction as the co-counsel for Dominion Voting Systems, which has accused Sidney Powell and Rudy Giuliani—allies of former President Donald Trump—of defamation for falsely claiming the election was stolen.

In a letter Tuesday to Sellers and his firm also given to the AP by Varsity Spirit, Clare said the law firm had been making “blatantly false” claims about

(See **CHEER CO.**, P. 2)

even to the slain rap star himself.

And as always, hip-hop has come under fire.

That's no surprise to legendary Public Enemy frontman Chuck D, whom most recognize as hip-hop's voice of reason.

In putting in a perspective as perhaps only the “Fight the Power” artist can, Chuck noted that any other industry that has seen as many fatalities as hip-hop would have addressed that issue long ago.

And Chuck doesn't put the blame entirely on the artists.

“This curiosity of what is this hip-hop thing, what is this Black thing. The world always seems

to want to know and mimic our greatness,” Chuck asserted in a 30-minute interview with the Black Press of America's live morning news program, “Let It Be Known.”

“And if they can find a way to finance and have our people mimic us at our worst – the stereotype that generalizes us as a bunch of murderous thugs and metastasize that over a 10-15-20-year period as being normal, then we got a problem.”

He continued:

“I don't blame the youth. You've got to blame some adults hiding behind the scenes, pied

(See **CHUCK D**, P. 2)

## Judge: Let Disabled Live At Home

By Gary D. Robertson

Associated Press

North Carolina's health agency is weighing whether to challenge a judge's order demanding that the state ramp up services for people with intellectual and development disabilities to allow more of them to live at home or in their communities.

In 2020, Superior Court Judge Allen Baddour ruled that too

many such people were forced to live in institutions in violation of state law.

Baddour allowed the Department of Health and Human Services to develop a plan to address the violation, but recommendations made by a consulting firm haven't been carried out, the

judge wrote in an order filed Wednesday that directs his own remedies.

Baddour ordered that at least 3,000 people must be diverted or shifted to community-based programs by early 2031.

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



### NORTH CAROLINA EARLY IN-PERSON VOTING WRAPS UP SATURDAY

(AP)—People who want to vote in person in North Carolina without doing so on Election Day had one more chance this weekend.

Hundreds of early in-person voting sites in all 100 counties remained open until 3 p.m. Saturday.

This voting option began Oct. 20 and as of early Friday more than 1.6 million ballots had been cast that way. Another 124,000 or so additional ballots had been cast by mail and other absentee methods. Combined that's well over 23 percent of the state's registered voters.

Only people already registered to vote can fill out ballots on Tuesday at their local precinct. And traditional absentee ballots can be cast as long as they are turned in or postmarked by Tuesday.

North Carolina voters are choosing a new U.S. senator to succeed Richard Burr as well as winners for all U.S. House and legislative seats and scores of judges and local elected officials.

### MILES BRIDGES PLEADS NO CONTEST TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CHARGE

Miles Bridges pleaded no contest Thursday in Los Angeles to one felony count of injuring a child's parent, agreeing to do so in exchange for three years probation and no jail time.

The restricted free agent who spent his first four NBA seasons with the Charlotte Hornets will also have to complete 52 weeks of parenting classes, 52 weeks of domestic violence counseling and 100 hours of community service as part of the agreement. He had been facing three felony charges—the one he pleaded no contest to, and two others of child abuse under circumstances or conditions likely to cause great bodily injury or death.

The charges stemmed from accusations that he assaulted his girlfriend in front of their two children in June, the Los Angeles County district attorney said.

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



WHOSE FAULT WAS IT? Top cheerleading company Varsity Spirit is caught up in a nasty scandal involving sexual abuse of its young participants. It has filed court papers saying it was coaches and other staff that preyed on the innocence of the kids.



# What To Expect In NC On Election Night—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

aces and six statewide judicial races. In the 2020 general election, AP first reported results at 7:42 p.m. ET and 90 percent of the results at 11:35 ET on election night, Nov. 3, 2020.

AP does not make projections or name apparent or likely winners. Only when AP is fully confident a race has been won—defined most simply as the moment a trailing candidate no longer has a path to victory—will we make a call. Should a candidate declare vic-

tory—or offer a concession—before AP calls a race, we will cover newsworthy developments in our reporting. In doing so, we will make clear that AP has not yet declared a winner and explain the reason why we believe the race is too early or too close to call.

The AP may call a statewide or U.S. House race in which the margin between the top two candidates is 0.5 percent or less, if we determine the lead is too large for a recount to change the

outcome.

The AP will not call down-ballot races on election night if the margin between the top two candidates is less than 2 percent or if the leading candidate is within 2 percent of the 50 percent runoff threshold. AP will revisit those races later in the week to confirm there aren't enough outstanding votes left to count that could change the outcome.

**WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW?**  
**Q:WHAT DID WE LEARN**

**FROM THE PRIMARY?**

A:Former President Donald Trump's endorsement still means a great deal in the Tar Heel state. Budd was little known outside Washington or his central North Carolina congressional district when he entered the Senate race in spring 2021. At the time, former Gov. Pat McCrory was considered the GOP primary front-runner. But Trump's announcement in June 2021 endorsing Budd and indirectly disparaging

McCrory was the game-changer over time. Budd ultimately beat McCrory in the May primary by 34 percentage points. Trump's support has remained a key element of Budd's strategy.

**Q:WHAT'S CHANGED SINCE**

**THE PANDEMIC ELECTION OF 2020?**

A:After the 2020 Census showed an increase in its population, North Carolina gained one more seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, giving it 14.

## CHUCK D

*Continued from page 1*

pipings and pied papering all of this madness and making this kind of thing seem normal. Was there a shootout at a dice game? Yes. Were Black men involved in that circle? Yes. But it's somebody pushing buttons and pulling levers and not only doing so but they have been greatly enriched financially by these incidents."

Takeoff's death counts among a string of murders in the hip-hop community over the past several years.

Other high-profile murders include PnB Rock, Pop Smoke, XXX Tentacion, Nipsey Hustle, King Von, and Young Dolph.

"I was in college when Biggie and 'Pac was killed and thought there was no way we'd ever experience anything remotely close to that again," media personality Jemele Hill tweeted following Takeoff's death.

"Now," Hill continued. "It's happening so frequently that you barely have time to recover before someone else is killed."

Chuck noted that a large part of the argument about hip-hop deaths and violence comes from many who don't consider all available facts.

"There are hundreds of thousands of artists out there," he said when asked whether the younger artists pay attention to the old heads.

"Who do you count? Do you count the more successful ones because more people like them? When we start getting into followers and likes, those algorithms don't add up to who we are as a people," Chuck insisted.

He explained:

"I have ten stations on Rap Station (Radio). We play artists from the underground and under-found. We play artists with a 10-15-year career, women worldwide and in more abundance than in the United States."

Chuck continued:

"If you only pay attention to what's being washed up on your shores, you're going to get a limited view of what it really is. There is really no kind of educational forum that people can go to like in other aspects of life. Our arts and culture should be taught to us. If we don't control our educational curriculum, we're going to let corporations teach us. And, whenever corporations show up, God walks out the door."

In a recent podcast, Takeoff spoke about receiving his flowers before he died.

"It's time to pop it," Takeoff said on "Drink Champs."

"It's time to give me my flowers. I don't want them later when I'm not here. I want them right now."

Chuck said the life artists today lead, compared to earlier hip-hop stars, is different.

"At the beginning of hip-hop, especially in the real beginning, cats wanted to get away from that," Chuck recounted.

"They didn't want to be in the Bronx. New York City had been de-emphasized and abandoned by the U.S.A. during a tough fiscal time post-Nixon. Cats saw the emergence of hard drugs coming in out of nowhere. Guns coming out of nowhere, and cats wanted to get away from that, and they didn't want to [rhyme] about that in the 1980s.

He concluded:

"You had MCs and rappers who adhered to those values and qualities. We could have 'The Message' by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five that talked about what's going on, but they also made party records to not talk about things people saw every day.

"There was a balance to at least try to bring good times into the picture. People often said Public Enemy bought a political message, but we came from the 1960s, so we remember a time of being broke but not broken.

"Many cats came from the 1970s doing hip hop in the 1980s and 1990s.

"We came from the Black Panther Party doing lunch programs, the Nation of Islam doing things in the neighborhood. We remember Dr. Martin Luther King and Malcolm X being assassinated when they were living people to us.

"On my birth certificate, it says 'Negro.' I remember being 'Colored' and 'Black is Beautiful.' That's a different period that has been kind of pushed under the rug in Americana."

# NC High Court Backs Leandro—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

vide the resources necessary to comply with those rulings for affirming the transfer after years of judicial deference.

"Today, that deference expires," Hudson said.

"Now, this court must determine whether that duty is a binding obligation or an unenforceable suggestion," she added. "We hold the former: the state may not indefinitely violate the constitutional rights of North Carolina schoolchildren without consequence."

The opinion is a major victory for the plaintiffs in the litigation originally filed in 1994 and their education allies, which include Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper. He was not named a legal party in the case but his office helped develop the remedial plan that Lee ultimately ordered.

"As the (state) Supreme Court has affirmed today, we must do more for our students all across North Carolina," Cooper said in a news release.

The justices ruled barely two months after hearing oral arguments and four days before statewide elections for two Supreme Court seats now held by Democrats Sam Ervin IV and Hudson. Ervin is seeking reelection, while Hudson is retiring.

Republicans can obtain a majority if they win at least one of the seats, which could open the door for the Supreme Court to revisit the case.

The remedial plan that Lee signed off on directed at least \$5.6 billion be spent by 2028 on things like improving teacher recruitment and salaries, hiring more school support personnel and expanding pre-kindergarten.

Lee's successor, Judge Mike Robinson, earlier this year reduced Lee's proposed transfer to \$785 million, citing the passage of education funding in the 2021 state budget law. The Supreme Court ordered Friday another look at the figure in light of this year's budget law.

## STATE BRIEFS

*Continued from page 1*

"We believe this resolution was the best avenue to hold Mr. Bridges accountable for his conduct," the district attorney's office said. "We also understand through the victim's representatives that the victim wanted an expedited resolution of the case. The victim and her representatives were consulted about the proposed resolution and agreed with the outcome of the case."

The charges against Bridges came just before this summer's free agency period started. Bridges was coming off a season where he averaged 20.2 points, 7.0 rebounds and 3.8 assists—all career-bests, numbers that likely would have earned him a major payday.

His NBA future, at least in the short term, remains most unclear. It's possible that he still may face disciplinary action from the league, and it would be difficult for some teams to consider signing Bridges given that the season has started and rosters are full in many cases.

The Hornets said they will "continue to gather information before determining any potential next steps" and declined further comment.

Bridges also must adhere to a 10-year criminal protective order for the victim, weekly narcotics and marijuana testing and restitution for the victim, the district attorney's office said. A restitution hearing is scheduled for Jan. 13.

## SHOT FIRED AT FAMILY HOME OF N. CAROLINA US HOUSE CANDIDATE

(AP)—A recent shooting at the Hickory residence of GOP congressional candidate Pat Harrigan's parents and young children caused no injuries but placed "tremendous stress" on the family in the final weeks of his campaign, Harrigan's mother said Thursday.

Harrigan, a firearms manufacturer and U.S. Army Special Forces veteran, is running against Democratic state Sen. Jeff Jackson for an open U.S. House seat in North Carolina's new 14th District based in western Charlotte. The left-leaning district emerged from a lengthy redistricting battle during which North Carolina redrew its congressional map to account for the additional seat it was awarded following the 2020 census.

Political analysts say the 2022 map favors Republicans in seven of the state's 14 districts and favors Democrats in six, with one toss-up district in the Raleigh suburbs.

Marla Harrigan, 74, told The Associated Press on Thursday that she and her husband James Harrigan were watching television down the hall when a bullet shattered their laundry room window on the night of Oct. 18. The Hickory Police Department responded to their 911 call and noted in the police report that the incident involved a firearm.

The congressional candidate's children, ages 3 and 5, were asleep in the bedroom directly above the room where the shooting occurred, Marla Harrigan said. The bullet came from a densely wooded area and did not wake the kids.

Associate Justice Phil Berger Jr., who wrote an 88-page dissenting opinion for the court's three Republicans, said it's clear that the power to allot funds rests solely with the General Assembly.

"If legislative power over appropriations is absolute, then the judicial branch has no role in this endeavor," wrote Berger. He is the son of Senate leader Phil Berger, a Rockingham County Republican, who became a legal party in the case.

Instead, the younger Berger wrote, "the majority today now joins in denying legislative defendants due process, the fundamental fairness owed to any party, and usurps the

## JUDGE

*Continued from page 1*

Separately, he told DHHS to eliminate by mid-2032 a waiting list of roughly 16,000 people who are qualified to participate in a Medicaid-funded program that helps them live at home or outside of an institution.

A shortage of well-paid direct-care workers also must be addressed by the state Department of Health and Human Services, the judge ruled.

North Carolina residents with intellectual and development disabilities and their families "have waited far too long for this," said Virginia Knowlton Marcus, CEO of Disability Rights North Carolina. The nonprofit is a plaintiff in a 2017 lawsuit along with several people with disabilities and their guardians that led to Baddour's rulings.

"It is long past time for the state to enable people with (these disabilities) to have independent lives in the communities of their choice. This is no different than what people without disabilities expect and demand every day," Knowlton Marcus said.

Dave Richard, the DHHS deputy secretary for Medicaid, said Thursday that the department has several concerns about Baddour's order but hasn't yet decided whether to appeal it.

"We are all for enhancing community-based services, giving people the choices that they need," Richard said in a brief interview, but Baddour's roadmap in the order "has the possibility to actually create some unintended consequences."

Baddour didn't describe how much state or federal money would be required to reach compliance. Disability Rights NC suggested that it could cost hundreds of millions of dollars annually. Medicaid would fund many of these services—at least two-thirds of the funding would originate from the federal government—helping generate demand for new service providers and jobs, the group said in a news release. The state will actually save money with the shift, Knowlton Marcus said.

Baddour's ruling requires DHHS to meet annual goals for reducing the Medicaid "NC Innovations Waiver" waiting list and for transitioning people with such disabilities away from living at the state's three large development centers, privately run intermediate care facilities or adult care homes. Individuals who prefer living in an institution or are too medically fragile to live somewhere else wouldn't be required to move.

# Pence Stumps For Budd In NC—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

his commitment to conservative principles is known far beyond the state of North Carolina."

Pence campaigned Tuesday with Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp, who also refused to help the defeated president overturn the state's results in 2020. And he recently campaigned for Arizona Republican Senate candidate Blake Masters, who embraced Trump and his false narrative about the last presidential election.

During her own campaign event in Raleigh on Wednesday,

Beasley said Budd shares the same "extreme" views as Pence when it comes to prohibiting abortion.

In the wake of the Supreme Court's decision to strike down Roe v. Wade, Beasley, a former chief justice of the state Supreme Court, has made protecting abortion rights a significant part of her platform.

Pence "recently said that he doesn't want to just make abortion illegal. He wants to make it unthinkable," Beasley said in a downtown park surrounded by

several dozen supporters. "The only thing that's unthinkable is electing Ted Budd, who wants to take away our rights."

The question-and-answer session with Budd and Pence didn't touch on abortion, focusing instead on criticizing the Biden administration for policies they said have contributed to high inflation and gas prices. "Everything they have done has driven this economy into a ditch," Pence said. He and Budd didn't address the media after their event at state GOP headquarters.

Members of Congress have campaigned in person with Beasley in recent weeks but not Biden, who has low approval ratings in the state. Former President Barack Obama last week endorsed Beasley, who would be the first Black U.S. senator for North Carolina if elected.

Budd has gotten in-person campaign support over the past week from U.S. Sens. Ted Cruz of Texas, Tom Cotton of Arkansas and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina.

# Cheer Co. Denies Involvement—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Varsity Spirit in what amounts to "sham litigation."

"As Varsity Spirit has previously and repeatedly stated, its concern, first and foremost, is for the survivors and their safety, and Varsity Spirit wholeheartedly supports survivors in their pursuit of justice against the individuals responsible," Clare wrote. "The fact that brave men and women have come forward to make specific allegations of abuse against individual coaches, and others employed and supervised by gym owners, does not give you license to make blatantly false public claims about Varsity Spirit..."

Specifically, Varsity Spirit took issue with a recent court filing in which Sellers alleged the company served "as a central player in the scheme to host exploitative events where minor athletes were subjected to sexual abuse and assault under the influence of drugs and alcohol." Clare also took issue with another allegation in the court filing that Varsity Spirit's environment "promoting free access to underage minors for the purpose of sexual solicitation was the method by which Defendants recruited new

gym owners, coaches, choreographers, videographers, and other affiliated personnel."

"What information, evidence, or factual basis do you possibly have to support this patently untenable claim as it pertains to Varsity Spirit? We urge you to provide any information you have to us—and also to make that evidence public—immediately," Clare wrote in the letter.

In a statement to The Associated Press, Sellers said the legal team encourages sexual abuse survivors in cheerleading to continue sharing their experiences.

"We are committed to our clients and vigorously prosecuting these cases and take our responsibilities to the clients and the court very seriously," Sellers said. "We hope this does not have the effect of chilling those who have suffered abuse from coming forward."

Varsity Spirit hosts 400 competitions every year, and 300,000 athletes participate annually in the company's camps, according to Tom Becker, who works with a consulting firm assisting the cheerleading company with media inquiries.

News of the alleged abuse first



**FAMED CIVIL RIGHTS LAWYER BAKARI SELLERS**

spread in early September when attorneys with Strom Law filed their first federal lawsuit accusing multiple cheerleading coaches in Greenville, S.C., including one who had recently died by suicide, of sexually abusing at least six boys and girls. Over the next two months, six more coaches were named and three more survivors of the alleged abuse came forward in that case. The attorneys also filed federal complaints for teenage survivors of sexual abuse by cheer coaches at gyms in Memphis, Tenn., and Raleigh, N.C.

So far, no arrests have been made in any of the cases. Attorneys for the abuse survivors say federal agencies—who asked them to remain unidentified—are investigating the allegations. Officials have not indicated whether they are involved.

James Pollard is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercover issues.

## The Carolinian

(ISSN 00455873)

1504 New Bern Avenue, Raleigh, North Carolina 27610  
 Mailing Address: P.O. Box 25308  
 Raleigh, North Carolina 27611  
 Periodical Postage Paid at Raleigh North Carolina 27611  
 Warrenton Address: P.O. Box 536  
 Warrenton, NC 27589  
 Postmaster  
 Send all address changes to:  
 The Carolinian  
 1504 New Bern Avenue  
 Raleigh, NC 27610  
**PUBLISHED SIX TIMES MONTHLY**  
**SUBSCRIPTION RATES**

One Year .....\$45.00  
 Payable in advance. Address all communications and make all checks and money orders payable to *The Carolinian*.

*Founded by P.R. Jervay, Sr. in 1940*  
*The Carolinian Newspaper, Inc. of Raleigh*

**Publisher** ..... **Adria Jervay**  
**Production Manager** ..... **Howard Barnett**  
**Sales Consultant** ..... **Paul R. Jervay, Jr.**  
**Circulation Manager** ..... **Andrew Alston**  
**Jervay Agency, National Advertising Representative**  
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*Member:*  
**North Carolina Black Publishers Association**  
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# Business & Finance

## This One Trend Could Send Bitcoin, Cryptos Even Higher

By RJ Fulton

Motley Fool

The cryptocurrency market is changing, evolving into an asset class for investors -- many of them younger -- looking for exposure outside of traditional assets like stocks and bonds.

Charles Schwab (SCHW 0.13%), a financial services company that provides customers with various investment products, recently conducted a study that shows just how far cryptocurrencies have come in the past decade. The survey asked 1,000 customers with 401(k)s aged 21 to 70 a range of questions related to investing, retirement, and more. Participants were split into four age groups: baby boomers, Gen X, millennials, and Gen Z.

There were plenty of recurring themes in the study that usually had to do with the embrace of new technology in their investing practices or lack thereof. Millennials and Gen Z consistently showed that they are interested in less traditional assets, and are utilizing smart phones and social



media to research and facilitate trades.

Most interesting was the divide in sentiment on cryptocurrencies between younger generations and the older ones. Only 4% of baby boomers owned cryptocurrencies, compared with 47% of millennials and 43% of Gen Z.

In addition, participants were asked about what new assets they would like to have access to in their 401(k). At the top

of the list for millennials and Gen Z were cryptocurrencies. Roughly 45% of those cohorts wanted to have cryptocurrency options, while only 31% of Gen X and just 11% of baby boomers wanted similar access.

This research shows similar trends to what a Bank of America study found in mid-October: Cryptocurrencies are becoming more sought after by younger investors. As this trend continues to evolve, it should further

legitimize the asset class -- and that makes it a great time for investors to get in now while it's still early.

But there are thousands of cryptocurrencies in circulation today. Which ones should investors prioritize?

To get a better idea, we should look at what cryptocurrencies financial service companies are interested in. Turns out there is one that clearly stands out from the rest: Bitcoin (BTC -0.70%).

As the world's first and most valuable cryptocurrency, Bitcoin is in a class of its own since being created in 2009. Over the last dozen years or so, Bitcoin has transformed from a highly speculative asset deemed to only be used by criminals to one that is owned by high-profile investors, and

even Fortune 500 companies like Tesla.

It's this visibility that has helped it become one of the most sought-after cryptocurrencies today, and investment firms are coming to this realization. Charles Schwab competitor Fidelity became the first financial services company to offer its 401(k) customers exposure to Bitcoin in April. Since then, similar moves have been made by other companies to meet client demands. In August 2022 the world's largest asset management firm, BlackRock, partnered with the popular cryptocurrency exchange Coinbase to offer its institutional customers access to Bitcoin trading.

There are other examples, but simply put, Bitcoin is leaps and bounds ahead of any other

cryptocurrency when it comes to becoming a recognized asset. As the second-most-valuable cryptocurrency, Ethereum might be the next best option to Bitcoin, but the distance separating the two is wide. For this reason, Bitcoin seems to be the most likely candidate out of all cryptocurrencies to go mainstream first.

We should expect demand for Bitcoin to filter into the world of finance, business, and even our every day lives as younger investors continue to seek exposure. This process won't happen overnight, or even in the coming months, but will likely take years. This is why now is a great opportunity to buy Bitcoin in preparation for a future where the original cryptocurrency cements itself as a necessary addition to every portfolio.

## BBC's Fake Social Media Accounts

By David Bauder

AP Media Writer

NEW YORK, N.Y. (AP)—Larry, a 71-year-old retired insurance broker and Donald Trump fan from Alabama, wouldn't be likely to run into the liberal Emma, a 25-year-old graphic designer from New York City, on social media—even if they were both real.

Each is a figment of BBC reporter Marianna Spring's imagination. She created five fake Americans and opened social media accounts for them, part of an attempt to illustrate how disinformation spreads on sites like Facebook, Twitter and TikTok despite efforts to stop it, and how that impacts American politics.

That's also left Spring and the BBC vulnerable to charges that the project is ethically suspect in using false information to uncover false information.

"We're doing it with very good intentions because it's important to understand what is going on," Spring said. In the world of disinformation, "the U.S. is the key battleground," she said.

Spring's reporting has appeared on BBC's newscasts and website, as well as the weekly podcast "Americast," the British view of news from the United States. She began the project in August with the midterm election campaign in mind but hopes to keep it going through 2024.

Spring worked with the Pew Research Center in the U.S. to set up five archetypes, although the center was not involved in how to use them. Besides the very conservative Larry and very liberal Emma, there's Britney, a more populist conservative from Texas; Gabriela, a largely apolitical independent from Miami; and Michael, a Black teacher from Milwaukee who's a moderate Democrat.

With computer-generated photos, she set up accounts on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and TikTok. The accounts are passive, meaning her "people" don't have friends or make public comments.

Spring, who uses five different phones labeled with each name,

tends to fill out their "personalities." For instance, Emma is a lesbian who follows LGBTQ groups, is an atheist, takes an active interest in women's issues and abortion rights, supports the legalization of marijuana and follows *The New York Times* and NPR.

These "traits" are the bait, essentially, to see how the social media companies' algorithms kick in and what material is sent their way.

Through what she followed and liked, Britney was revealed as antivax and critical of big business, so she has been sent into several rabbit holes, Spring said. The account has received material, some with violent rhetoric, from groups falsely claiming Donald Trump won the 2020 election. She's also been invited to join in with people who claim the Mar-a-Lago raid was "proof" Trump won and the state was out to get him, and groups that support conspiracy theorist Alex Jones.

Despite efforts by social media companies to combat disinformation, Spring said there's still a con-



siderable amount getting through, mostly from a far-right perspective.

"The best thing you can do is understand how this works," Spring said. "It makes us more aware of how we're being targeted."

Most major social media companies prohibit impersonator accounts. Violators can be kicked off for creating them, although many evade the rules.

Journalists have used several approaches to probe how the tech giants operate. For a story last year, the *Wall Street Journal* created more than 100 automated accounts

to see how TikTok steered users in different directions. The nonprofit newsroom the Markup set up a panel of 1,200 people who agreed to have their web browsers studied for details on how Facebook and YouTube operated.

"My job is to investigate misinformation and I'm setting up fake accounts," Spring said. "The irony is not lost on me."

She's obviously creative, said Aly Colon, a journalism ethics professor at Washington & Lee University. But what Spring called ironic disturbs him and other experts who believe there are above-board ways to report on this issue.

"By creating these false identities, she violates what I believe is a fairly clear ethical standard in journalism," said Bob Steele, retired ethics expert for the Poynter Institute. "We should not pretend that we are someone other than ourselves, with very few exceptions."

Spring said she believes the level of public interest in how these social media companies operate outweighs the deception involved.

The BBC said the investigation was created in accordance with its strict editorial guidelines.

"We take ethics extremely seriously and numerous processes are in place to ensure that our activity does not affect anyone else," the network said. "Our coverage is transparent and clearly states that the investigation does not offer exhaustive insight into what every U.S. voter could be seeing on social media, but instead provides a snapshot of the important issues associated with the spread of online disinformation."

## Schools Clash With Parents Over Bans On Student's Cellphones

Cellphones — the ultimate distraction — keep children from learning, educators say. But in attempts to keep the phones at bay, the most vocal pushback doesn't always come from students. In some cases, it's from parents.

Bans on the devices were on the rise before the COVID-19 pandemic. Since schools reopened, struggles with student behavior and mental health have given some schools even more reason to restrict access.

But parents and caregivers who had constant access to their children during remote learning have been reluctant to give that up. Some fear losing touch with their kids during a school shooting.

Shannon Moser, who has students in eighth and ninth grades in Rochester, New York, said she felt parents were being pushed away when the Greece Central School District this year began locking away student phones. There's a form of accountability, she said, when students are able to record what goes on around them.

"Everything is just so politicized, so divisive. And I think parents just have a general fear of what's happening with their kids during the day," Moser said. She said she generally has liberal views, but many parents on either side of the political divide feel the same way.

Amid heightened scrutiny of topics such as race and inclusion, some parents also view cellphone restrictions as a way of keeping

them out of their kids' education.

Over a decade ago, around 90% of public schools prohibited cellphone use, but that shrank to 65% in the 2015-2016 school year. By the 2019-2020 school year, bans were in place at 76% of the schools, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. California and Tennessee recently have passed laws allowing schools to prohibit phones.

Now, in particular, educators see a need to keep students on task to recover from pandemic shutdowns, when many students lost the equivalent of months of learning.

And many school officials may feel empowered to ban the devices, given growing concern among parents about pandemic-era screen time, said Liz Keren-Kolb, clinical associate professor of education technologies at the University of Michigan. But she said parent views on the debate run the gamut.

"You still have the parents that want to have that direct line of communication and have concerns over their child not being able to have that communication," she said. "But I do think that there's more of an empathy and an understanding toward their child being able to put away their device so they can really focus on the learning in the classroom, and wanting that face-to-face experience."

Washington School District in western Pennsylvania implemented a ban this year as educators

increasingly found cellphones to be an obstacle. Students were on their cellphones in the hallways and at the cafeteria tables. Some would call home or answer calls in the middle of a class, high school English teacher Treg Campbell said.

The superintendent, George Lammay, said the ban was the right choice.

"We're looking to increase engagement and academic progress with kids — not try to limit their contact with families. That's not the point," he said.

In some cases, pushback from parents has led to adjustments in policy.

At the Brush School District in Colorado, cellphones were banned after teachers flagged concerns over online bullying. When parents spoke out, the district held a community meeting that lasted over two hours, with most testimony against the ban. The biggest takeaway, Superintendent Bill Wilson said, was that parents wanted their children to have access to their phones.

The policy was adjusted to allow cellphones on campus, although they must be turned off and out of sight. The district also said it would accommodate a handful of students with unique circumstances.

"There's not an intention to say cell phones are evil," Wilson said. "It's a reset to say, 'How do we manage this in a way that makes sense for everybody?'"

## Influencers Debate Leaving Twitter

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Pariss Chandler built a community for Black tech workers on Twitter that eventually became the foundation for her own recruitment company.

Now she's afraid it could all fall apart if Twitter becomes a haven for racist and toxic speech under the control of Elon Musk, a serial provocateur who has indicated he could loosen content rules.

With Twitter driving most of her business, Chandler sees no good alternative as she watches the uncertainty play out.

"Before Elon took over, I felt like the team was working to make Twitter a safer platform, and now they are kind of not there. I don't know what's going

on internally. I have lost hope in that," said Chandler, 31, founder of Black Tech Pipeline, a jobs board and recruitment website. "I'm both sad and terrified for Twitter, both for the employees and also the users."

Those qualms are weighing on many people who have come to rely on Twitter, a relatively small but mighty platform that has become a digital public square of sorts for influencers, policy makers, journalists and other thought leaders.

Musk, the CEO of Tesla and SpaceX, took over Twitter last week in a \$44 billion deal, immediately making his unpredictable style felt.

Just days later, he had tweeted a link to a story from a little-known news outlet that made a dubious claim about the violent attack on Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's husband at their California home. He soon deleted it, but it was a worrying start to his tenure for those concerned about the spread of disinformation online.

### Classifieds

## In NIL Era, Biz Is Good For College Hoops

Armando Bacot didn't bolt early from North Carolina after a memorable run to the NCAA championship game to chase a professional playing career. Neither did Gonzaga's Drew Timme, an All-American star of one of the nation's top programs.

No, business is already good for men's and women's college basketball players able to cash in on their fame now.

The option to remain in school is more enticing than ever since the NCAA permitted college athletes to profit from use of their name, image and likeness in summer 2021.

"It definitely is a factor, definitely something that helped," said Timme, a two-time Associated Press second-team All-American and a preseason pick this year. "If you look across the landscape of not only college basketball, but all college sports, it's a big reason a lot of people are inclined to come back."

That's particularly true on the

women's side, where NIL deals and chartered travel offer more appeal than rookie salaries and much-debated commercial flights in the WNBA.

The women's game has seen stars like Connecticut's Paige Bueckers — who is sidelined this year by a knee injury but will return in 2023-24 — and Iowa State's Ashley Joens opt to stick around. Other prominent names like Louisville's Hailey Van Lith and North Carolina's Deja Kelly soon face choices; they become draft eligible by turning 22 next year.

"If you're an influencer, especially as a student-athlete in college, and that's your appeal for NIL, you're going to want to stay in college because that's how you're going to make your money," Van Lith said. "But I think when it comes to people who are going to pursue professional (playing) careers, I don't know if it'll make much of a change."

Deals have come fast from businesses seeking the most

marketable of athletes, many of whom have hired agents to manage those opportunities. College-town businesses have looked for ways to partner with an athletes to tap into local notoriety. National companies have done it with social-media promotions or ads.

Athletes are given wide latitude provided they provide some type of service in exchange for compensation. While deal terms aren't public, they're estimated to be in some cases six figures or more — with some of the most well-known athletes even pushing past million-dollar projections.

"The difference in college sports, and we've seen this time and again, is: do they follow individuals?" said Columbia University lecturer Joe Favorito, a sports and entertainment marketing consultant. "Kind of. But they really follow the school."

"So there are people investing in Duke or North Carolina or Notre Dame because that's part of the school. So if you go from

St. John's and transfer to Villanova, does that mean all the brand equity is going to come along with you? Maybe not."

Favorito added: "That's the challenge of college athletics. It's much more about community and the collective than it is about individuals sometimes."

Yet that also explains why there's value in sticking around to stay tied to the college's brand, especially in the annual spotlight of March Madness.

On the women's side, Bueckers' partnerships include Gatorade. Van Lith has deals with adidas, Dick's Sporting Goods and JCPenney — which led to a back-to-school shopping spree for Louisville-area kids over the summer. Kelly's partnerships include Dunkin' Donuts and Beats By Dre — even presenting her team with custom headphones from the company — and she modeled a Sports Illustrated-themed swimsuit line for retailer Forever 21.



### ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS

The North Carolina Department of Public Safety has the following contract in Moore County out for bid: C- C11517 Tufts Grading and Sewer Repair . The bid opening is scheduled for: Wednesday, 11/30/2022 . To obtain the Notice to Bidders, any Pre-Bid Requirements, and any Addenda visit: <https://www.ips.state.nc.us/ips/AGENCY/PDF/15086000.pdf>



### ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS

The North Carolina Department of Public Safety has the following contract in Granville County out for bid: C-11446 Fire Suppression Storage Tank. The bid opening is scheduled for: Tuesday, 11/29/2022. To obtain the Notice to Bidders, any Pre-Bid Requirements, and any Addenda visit: <https://www.ips.state.nc.us/ips/AGENCY/PDF/15085900.pdf>



# Opinion



## Black Voters and The Republican Party; The Content of One's Character.

By Raynard Jackson

ThyBlackMan.com

Those who follow my columns know I have been and am extremely critical of the Republican Party's and the conservative movement's continued "ghettoization of the Black voter." For purposes of this column, I will use the terms Republican Party and conservative interchangeably.

Even when Republicans try to do the right thing, they do it the wrong way.

They constantly promote and highlight Blacks who have absolutely no connection to the Black community or the conservative movement.

I have and will continue to call out this crazy behavior both publicly and privately.

Exhibit A in this insulting approach to engaging with the Black community is Diamond and Silk.

They are babbling buffoons who present a travelling minstrel show for their White patrons. Fortunately, they have had their 15 minutes of fame and are being shown the door after years of complaints from "credible" Blacks throughout the conservative movement.

According to a quote often attributed to famed abolitionist Harriet Tubman, "I freed a thousand slaves. I could have freed a thousand more if only they knew they were slaves." Enough said!

Candace Owens is another person that is damaging conservative efforts to bring more Blacks into the movement. She says the most foolish, incendiary things that even White folks are left scratching their heads over.

The most recent ignorant trope to exit her mouth is regarding the death of George Floyd. You can google it to find out the details; but suffice it to say to Owens, just shut the hell up and keep his name out of your mouth.

The man is dead and for you to troll his family is well beyond indecent and inhumane. But we understand that you are looking for your White benefactors to pat you on the head and say "good girl."

The final two examples are Shemeka Michelle and Angela Stanton King. They have two of the most foul mouths I have ever heard. They actually think this is endearing to people all under the guise of "keepn' it real."

No, it's called keeping it ghetto.

Michelle and King need to understand that their job is to inspire people to reach up; not for them to stoop down to dumb down their approach to their target audience.

The people listed above are all in their late 40s and earlier 50s, but their actions are more in line with that of a 20-year-old.

They remind me of the Claudette Colvin versus Rosa Parks argument. Yes, that Rosa Parks!

Colvin refused to give up her seat on a segregated Montgomery, Ala. public bus almost a year before the infamous Rosa Parks incident.

So, why did Rosa Parks become the face of the Civil Rights movement and not Claudette Colvin? Because Colvin did not meet the "self-imposed" standards of the Black community to be the face of a major lawsuit.

Colvin was a 15-year-old unmarried pregnant child who was dark-skinned and didn't have good hair!!! Parks was 42 years of age and employed as a seamstress at a local department store.

But the most important reason was how Parks comported herself; being a woman of good moral standing in the community.

In a similar manner, conservatives must highlight Blacks who uphold certain values, standards and morals.

If the goal is to get more Blacks involved in our movement, why then would you showcase women who are traveling minstrel shows? Would you do that to the Jewish community?

If the goal is to get more Blacks involved in our movement, why then would you showcase a woman who has absolutely no connection to her own community? Owens constantly denigrates the very community she claims to be a part of.

If the goal is to get more Blacks involved in our movement, why then would you promote women who have filthy mouths and one who thinks it is appropriate to show her breasts live on TV?

Don't believe me? Click on this link to observe Ms. King's beautiful twins!!! You can watch the whole thing or go to timestamp 44:18 to see the more revealing parts.

Janet Jackson had "The Pleasure Principle." Conservatives need the "Colvin" Principle.

It can no longer be acceptable for conservatives to choose Blacks who are deficient in the area of character; not if the goal is to move the needle forward.

Yes, there is room for diversity of people and approaches to engagement with the Black community IF the Republican brand was not damaged. But when you have a damaged brand, which we do now, there must be a single, unified approach to substantive engagement with the Black community.

This is public relations 101 on rebuilding a damaged brand.

Those who follow me know I work with some of the biggest names in business, sports, politics and entertainment; so, I know a little something about repairing damaged brands.

I think all the people I discussed above have various levels of talent, but if the goal is to substantively engage with the Black community, there is no room for them.

If the goal is to entertain a white audience, then there is plenty of room for them.

But you can't have both.

If any of the aforementioned people are interested in discussing my views with them, I am more than happy to have that discussion. But what I won't do is engage through social media; that's the coward's tool of choice.

There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. And these folks are killing our chances with the Black community.

Raynard Jackson is a Pulitzer Award nominated columnist and founder and chairman of Black Americans for a Better Future (BAFBF), a federally registered 527 Super PAC established to get more Blacks involved in the Republican Party. BAFBF focuses on

the Black entrepreneur. For more information about BAFBF, visit [www.bafbf.org](http://www.bafbf.org). You can follow Raynard on Twitter; RealRaynardJ; on Gettr: RaynardJackson.



## It's Time to Quit Twitter

By S.E. Williams

Keeping It Real

When the wealthiest person in the world (as reported by both the Bloomberg Billionaires Index and *Forbes's* real-time billionaires) Elon Musk closed his acquisition deal of the popular social media platform, Twitter, last week, he announced plans to delist the company's stock and take it private and in the process, removing it from the hands of public shareholders.

Why would he do this? Well, according to the *New York Times* report, it provides Musk with several advantages. First, as a privately held firm he is not required to make public disclosures about the company's performance on a quarterly basis—in other words, we will just have to take his word for it. Another benefit is that Musk will not be subjected to regulatory oversight to the extent he would were Twitter to remain publicly owned.

Perhaps the biggest advantage however is that it gives Musk tighter control over the rules that govern Twitter's content as well as its priorities, in addition to its finances without having to worry about what his investing public might think about his decisions. For example some might be against the biggest consideration hanging in the air—whether or not former President Donald Trump should once again have free reign to spew his nonsense on the platform and expand the spread of fake news and other disinformation. With shareholders out of the picture Musk will not need to trouble himself with their disapproval.

Admittedly, social media is a dynamic force in people's lives today as evidenced by the near 4.65 billion social media users worldwide. And reports indicate that 84 percent of Americans use at least one social media platform. One would think with all the hype about the Musk takeover of Twitter, that it is the most popular social media platform around. In reality however it ranks a distant 10th in the number of monthly active users (mau's) worldwide with 217 million mau's compared to Facebook's 2.9 billion mau's and YouTube's 2.2 billion mau's, even Tik Tok, Snapchat and Pinterest have more users than Twitter.

Even though it is not the most popular it still has enough subscribers to influence conversations across the country. Just as it is easy to see Musk's desire to use his money to control the conversation in America there is little doubt regarding who Musk is, a thinly veiled racist with right leaning tendencies. The question is, do we as individuals and business users of Twitter have the courage to switch our social media traffic away from his social media platform—a platform that has already ratcheted up racism and is fanning the flames of antisemitism, spewing hatred and mind bending rhetoric that will further split the people of this nation,

One way to fight back against such use is to delete our Twitter accounts. It is easy to do. Simply go to [twitter.com](http://twitter.com) and log into your account. Then go to your account settings, scroll down to deactivate my account and then hit the delete button at the bottom of the screen. If you change your mind (and I hope you don't) you have up to 30 days to reactivate your account.

We can continue to enjoy Twitter while we complain about the racist, anti-semitic, ongoing disinformation that will find more and more space to live on the platform or we can stop fueling it by unsubscribing to platforms that work against our greater good as a people, a community and a nation. Sometimes it is not the big things that make a difference in creating the kind of change we want but as the Taoist would remind us, it's the 10,000 little things that matter.

Deleting our Twitter accounts is one small way to help stop the insanity that has certainly set this nation on a dangerous course.

Of course this is just my opinion. I'm keeping it real.



## The Drum And The Cardinal

By Robert C. Koehler

PeaceVoice

My friends Scott and Betsey gave me a drum a few weeks ago. I played it as I sat with them... and I certainly mean the word "play" as childish as you can imagine. I'm no more a musician than I am a nuclear physicist, but I played along with them and, well, this is what happens to me: I notice big things emerge in incredibly small moments.

Welcome, once again, to Bob's Rhubarb Lounge, this not-exactly-real place where all humanity is welcome to participate in the music of human evolution. It's the opposite of anything officially proclaimed to be significant, such as, for instance, an art museum, where the contents are externally determined to be of high cultural value. Even though I love these places, I sense a cultural void present: a disconnect. This is important stuff. It's art! It's not you or me. Our role is to "appreciate" it.

But as I was drumming with my friends, what struck me—not with surprise, just with a smile of awareness—was the collective nature of this resonating sound. We were creating something together. But the "something" went beyond each of us. It started taking on a rhythm—a life—of its own. It had a soft, fleeting, almost mystical presence, which filled me with joy. It filled me with wow. I'm sure there was a goofy smile on my face.

Last week I wrote a column about the "advanced" world's broken connection with nature, but something was missing in my words: the connection itself. Where is it? What is it? And then, oh so quietly, I heard the drums resonate again. I wanted to get up and dance.

And I am still swimming in the resonance now. Life's smallest moments matter; each moment is a moment of connection, a chance to notice and bless life. All I can do is take a moment right now—this very moment (join me if you'd like)—and kneel, hold the preciousness of life as close as possible. This is the opposite of... achievement, success, winning.

What are the deepest ways that you connect?

After my wife died—my God, it's been more than 20 years—the narrative of my life was broken. I was a writer, but my words were lost and isolated. They didn't fit together. That's when I started writing poetry again. I had played with poetry in college. But in the wake of my wife's death, I wasn't trying to win accolades. I just wanted to rebuild meaning in my life, moment by moment, drumbeat by drumbeat.

I wanted to, you might say, push my words to places where they hadn't been before—and perhaps to places where they didn't belong. I wanted to write with reverence. I also wanted to write with irreverence. The opposite of the former is not the latter. The opposite of reverence is indifference, and so I began taking it on myself not to be indifferent to minutiae—to the pulsing drumbeats of everyday life.

My poetry reaches for God. My poetry also reaches for miscellany, for litter. Indeed, this is what I call "litteracy."

This poem is called "The Cardinal":

*I thank you god  
if that's your name  
for the beauty and the trash,  
the spill, the vomit, the love and  
exhaust smoke of  
this new most  
amazing day.  
Outside my window  
a cardinal shocking  
as a nosebleed  
pecks the raw winter  
ground beneath its feet.  
I thank you for its  
food and mine,  
for my coffee and for these  
words, these malleable  
playthings of awareness,  
which still birth  
all I think and know.  
Let them stroke  
the trembling potential  
of what I see and what's  
to come.  
The cardinal lifts.  
I salute it with  
my cup  
and swallow.*

And life goes on, in all its peace and craziness. I'm not sure I know what point I'm trying to make here, except that wonder transcends certainty.

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



## Think Universally, Act Neighborly

By Joel Schlosberg

William Lloyd Garrison Center

After Halloween, it's still a mad and Demon-Haunted World.

On November 1, Kathleen Parker invoked the universalist humanism of Carl Sagan's 1995 book by that name on the op-ed page of the *Washington Post* ("Time to abandon Twitter, people") in contrast to "today's increasingly vile and violent partisanship." It's not just the midterm elections that horrify Parker, but the stoking of divisiveness on social media, particularly on a Twitter now owned by Elon Musk.

Parker amends Sagan's insistence that "if a human disagrees with you, let him live" to a suggestion that if Musk's Twitter becomes overrun by reactionaries, we should "let them live—among themselves."

Musk's "free speech absolutist" approach to Twitter may terrify Parker, but Sagan feared that free speech would be restricted to prevent "foreign authors" from "spouting alien ideologies" or atrophy "when no one contradicts the government." If anything, Sagan was too sanguine that hot-button issues would be dealt with by "shav[ing] a little freedom off the Bill of Rights" rather than a lot.

Rather than calling for top-down oversight of the emerging information superhighway, Sagan welcomed "inexpensive computer self-publishing" as a means to avoid "a very narrow range of attitudes, memories and opinions." Noting how quickly "the apparatus for generating indignation" had whipped up support for a war against Saddam Hussein, "someone almost no American had heard of" before 1990 (and of whom he was "not myself an admirer"), Sagan doubted that such expansive "power to drive and determine public opinion will always reside in responsible hands."

The host and coauthor of *Cosmos* was updating the view of the host and coauthor of "The Twilight Zone." Rod Serling wrote that *Playboy* magazine's 1966 interview with American Nazi Party leader George Lincoln Rockwell was "a public service of infinite value," since "it is not public exposure that helps these perverters of human dignity" but the "apathy" resulting from its absence.

Writing for *Futurism.com* on September 26, Sam Sagan and Ann Druyan (who had coauthored the defense of free speech with her husband Carl in *The Demon-Haunted World*) reiterated that "we can no longer afford to stay in our silos, occasionally lobbing angry invectives at our antagonists. We can't afford to stop communicating with each other."

Calls for online communication to become even more siloed—and for a marketplace of ideas closer to the chartered monopolies of the East India Companies than open agoras—are what really scare me.

New Yorker Joel Schlosberg is a senior news analyst at The William Lloyd Garrison Center for Libertarian Advocacy Journalism.