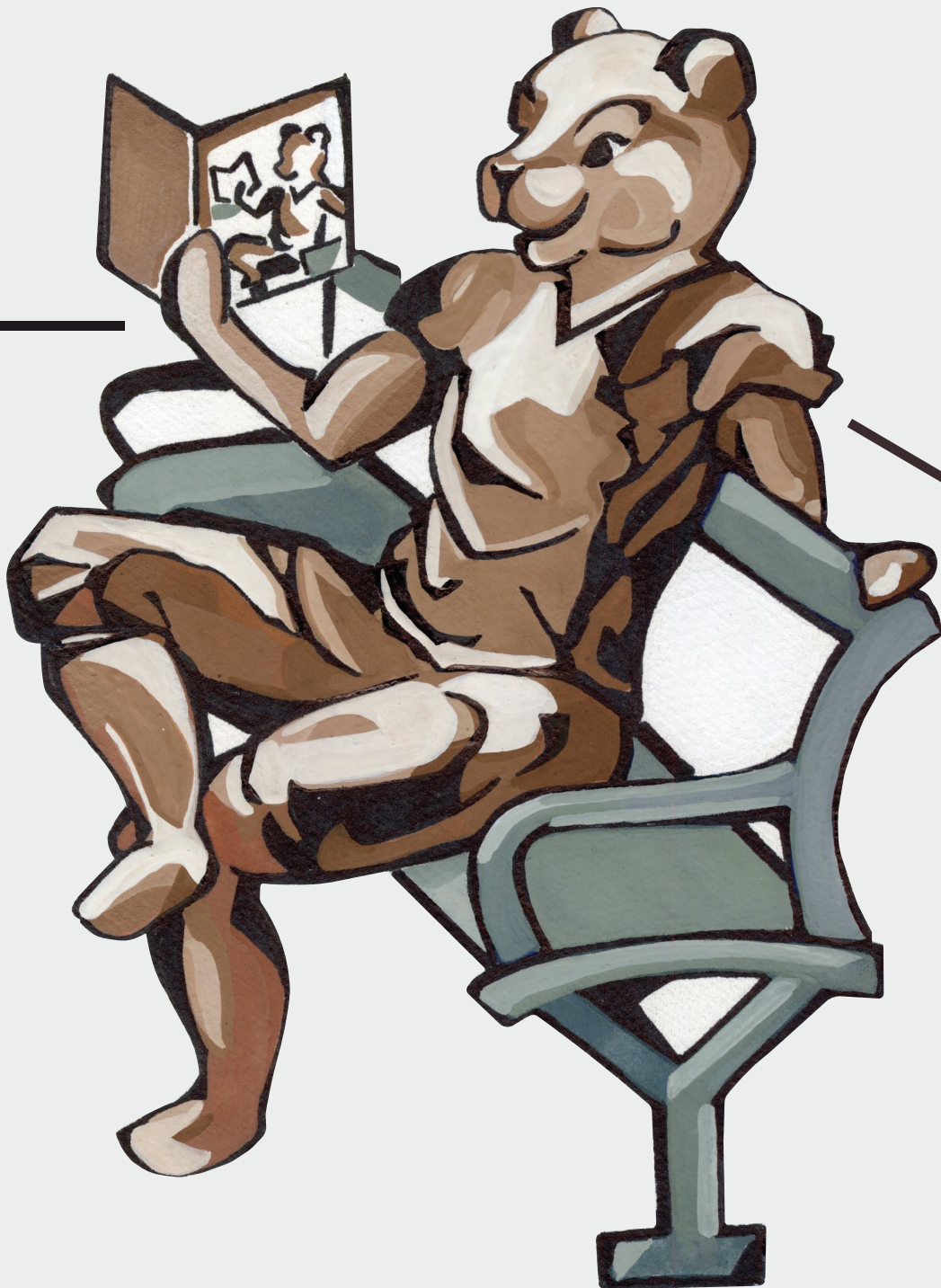


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THE

Brigham Young

POLITICAL REVIEW



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Dear Reader,

4

They say “you know in your soul, when it’s time to go” - (at least, that’s what Taylor Swift says). Yet, goodbyes are hard. You, especially, are hard for me to say goodbye to; you have been in my thoughts steadfastly this year. Yet, as graduation hurls toward me at deafening speed (or so it seems) I must give heed to the implorations of my most revered music icon and wish you farewell.

Being part of the Political Review has been one of the best parts of my BYU experience. My time here has made me more thoughtful, more open, and more kind. I have the warmest feelings toward all of our staff and believe wholeheartedly that each member will go on to great things.

All year I’ve rambled on and on about open-mindedness and love. If you’re hoping I’ve changed, you’ll be sorely disappointed to know that I have not, and I never intend to. I consider it my personal mission to bring more love to the world; in my opinion, it’s what we’re lacking the most. In my final words to you all (my funeral oration, of sorts), I must ask that you consider the impacts of your words, thoughts, and actions. Lead with kindness, act with love.

I often wonder why we act as though kindness and love are in short supply. Compassion is something we have unlimited access to. Yet, I think we have inherited a culture of selfishness, of failing to look out for each other. In my view, this apparent lack of compassion acts as fodder for heightening our disagreements and deepening our divides. It leaves us at our worst and at our most depressed. I am a firm believer in our need for community. We have a responsibility to contribute kindness to each of our villages: our families, our friends, our wards, our classes, and our BYU community as a whole.

I urge you - no, I beg you - to be kind.

I wish you all the best of luck in your future endeavors.

Megan Baird
Editor-in-Chief

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“THE QUEER EXPERIENCE” 5

BY BRENDAN ARMSTRONG

Note: I've been a writer for two years now on Political Review, and although I've felt proud of the articles I've written in the past, I have yet to feel as proud of myself as I do with this article. I hope you enjoy it.

I grew up in a God-fearing suburb of Dallas, TX. I prayed and read my scriptures daily, participated in early morning seminary, and attended weekly church services. I graduated high school, and in what was one of the most spiritual times of my life, served a 2-year mission in Lima, Peru. After that, I decided to attend BYU, knowing that the morals there aligned with my own. When the teachings of the church are intertwined with every facet of your identity, it's easy to make those decisions because you know you're following the “correct” path. What made this path difficult to follow then was accepting that my romantic feelings toward men, which before were pushed aside, weren't going away.

I came out in December of 2023 as queer. In one of the more intense moments of my life, I came to terms with the fact that my sexuality wasn't something I could change. Finding my “dream girl” at BYU wasn't a reality for me, and I likely wasn't going to be able to mold myself into someone that I wasn't. With that being said, I figured life would be 10x easier after coming out. While in a lot of regards it has been, it also has not.

With that being said, I've learned various lessons along the way: You can be gay, but you can't talk about it too often because that makes people uncomfortable. You can be proud, but not too proud because that's crass. You can advocate for yourself, but you have to accept that other people won't like who you are. And you have to be okay with that because it's hard for them. You can be queer, but not so queer that you make it your whole identity. You can be excited when there's a gay character in a new movie, but not too excited because that's political. You can wear what you want, but you always have to look over your shoulder in case someone doesn't like what you're wearing. You can share your sexuality with others but not too often because that's annoying. You can live your life authentically, but you can never *say you're living authentically because that offends those who don't share the same lifestyle. You can appreciate*

that society is more accepting now, but not push for more change because that means the world is turning evil. You can stand out, but not so intensely that it takes away from your straight counterparts. You can write about being gay in a college application, but that makes it unfair for straight people, because your chances of getting in are higher. So you have to be grateful for that.

You have to never be “too much,” never show off, never draw attention to yourself, never express desire to act on your romantic feelings, and never be rude. But at the end of the day, you still might be rude even if you weren't trying to be, because standing up for yourself is selfish. The number one thing I've learned is that being a member of the LGBTQ+ community in itself is exhausting. When you hear about legislation being pushed through requiring the dissolution of DEI offices, see political candidates using flamethrowers to torch books on queerness in public libraries, or hear someone make a homophobic comment to be “funny,” your queerness doesn't seem all that exciting anymore. But I've learned that there is so much more joy in being myself than pretending to be someone I'm not.

Many of us students are also members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We are taught that Christ has felt every experience known to man through the Atonement. He knows what heartbreak feels like, he knows what losing a loved-one feels like, and he knows how it feels to make a mistake. But he also knows what it feels like to be gay. To be trans. To be queer. To feel unloved or undeserving. To feel forgotten or abandoned by a misunderstanding society that targets a community based on their sexual preference.

My invitation to those reading this article is as follows: broaden your understanding. Choose to engage in discussions with LGBTQ+ individuals and learn from them and their experiences. Act Christ-like with a desire to understand the queer experience and learn from it. If you're wanting children someday, prepare in the case that one of them identifies as a member of this community and love them even more so if they do. The queer experience is a beautiful one, and something that ought to have more compassion.

“CRISIS IN HAITI” 6

BY CALEB JOHNSTON

Just over six years ago, I arrived in Santiago, Chile, expecting to serve the Chilean people for the balance of my mission. That I did, but I was presented with a welcome surprise on the ride from the airport to our mission president's home. The two missionaries who picked me up told me that there were tons of Haitians in Santiago, and many missionaries learned Haitian Creole to be able to teach them. Curious and eager to learn, I soon found myself studying and teaching in Creole. I found Haitians to be a delightful, kind-hearted, and God-fearing people.

I grew quite fond of Haitian culture and people and still maintain Haitian connections. For that reason, my heart wrenches over the continued adversity that the country faces, especially recently. Haiti can be a success story from history class—it had the first successful slave revolt and was the first African-led nation in the new world [15]. The country has been plagued by poverty, conflict, and other misfortune since. Half the country is below the poverty line, and it is considered the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere [3]. It's also particularly susceptible to earthquakes because of its poor infrastructure and position along a fault line. The 2010 earthquake in the capital city of Port Au Prince killed about 220,000 people [8].

More recently, the country has been rife with political conflict. In 2021, President Jovenel Moise was killed by Colombian mercenaries with part of the assassination plot being planned in the United States [3]. The current prime minister, Ariel Henry, was appointed prime minister just two days before the assassination, but was not yet sworn in. The assassination led to a brief power struggle between Ariel Henry and acting Prime Minister Claude Joseph. Henry eventually gained international recognition and has led the country since [8]. There has been anything but closure to the case since. Just recently, President Moise's wife was accused of conspiring with Claude Joseph to plan the assassination [3].

Prime Minister Ariely Henry has postponed elections since, over two years since being recognized as Haiti's unelected leader [3]. It has been eight years since Haitians have had an election [9]. Gang activity has in-

creased, with Jimmy Cherizier, nicknamed “Barbecue,” leading the calls for Henry's resignation. Prompted by the rising conflict, a group of Caribbean leaders and American Secretary of State Anthony Blinken have agreed to set up a seven-member council that would lead Haiti as its acting president [2]. Prime Minister Henry has agreed to resign once a transitional government is appointed [1]. The situation in Haiti was already dangerous, now it is harrowing. Prime Minister Henry is in Puerto Rico, unable to safely return to Haiti. Gangs now control the major airports. Gang leader Barbecue has promised, “We won't lie to people, saying we have a peaceful revolution. We do not have a peaceful revolution. We are starting a bloody revolution in the country.” [1] With such a dire situation, escalating since the assassination of President Jovenel Moise, why has there not been a forceful international response?

Kenya has volunteered to lead UN forces in Haiti in a peacekeeping mission, and the US has pledged up to \$200 million in such an effort [4]. It's not enough. The urgency from the peacekeeping mission is lacking, and the inaction since President Moise was assassinated is disappointing; the downward spiral into chaos should have been predictable. Haiti is in emergency mode, and our second-rate response doesn't cut it. Haiti will need to be a more self-reliant democracy in the future, but for now, it needs our urgent assistance.

Recently, Congressional Republicans blocked \$40 million of aid towards Haiti that was requested by the Biden Administration [13]. The issue has been engulfed by partisan bickering; Republicans justify their hesitancy by claiming that the Biden Administration has not presented a detailed plan for the use of the funds. Such a concern is valid, but to me it is part of a broader, disheartening trend. The Republican party continues to distance itself from foreign intervention, from Ukraine to Haiti. I believe in American exceptionalism, just as many other Republicans do. Yet the Republican form of exceptionalism has become isolated and selfish. Obviously, American intervention doesn't always work, but our indifference towards a crisis not too far from home is embarrassing. Haiti needs help, and it needs help now.

“EMBRACING CROSS-CUTTING CLEAVAGES” 7

BY CALEB RINGGER

On March 5, 1770, nine British soldiers fired on a crowd of Bostonians, killing five in what quickly became known as the Boston Massacre. The event was one of the defining moments in the leadup to the American Revolution, and it is considered one of the most heinous examples of British tyranny in the colonial era.

Less well known, however, is what happened to the soldiers who killed the five Bostonians, who were quickly indicted on murder charges by a patriot-leaning Boston court. The soldiers were represented in court by John Adams, the same John Adams who would go on to be the most vigorous proponent of independence from Britain in Congress and serve as the second president of the United States. Adams was, at the time, already a prominent patriot lawyer in the area—and yet, he defended the soldiers, arguing successfully that they had been provoked by the crowd. Seven of the soldiers were found not guilty, and two were found guilty of the lesser charge of manslaughter.

Why would John Adams, who wanted nothing more than to see his native Massachusetts free from British domination, defend the soldiers who killed five Bostonians and provided so much fuel to the patriot cause? Why would he provoke the anger of his friends and allies, which certainly resulted from this decision? He explained himself, saying “These criminals charged with murder are not yet legally proved guilty, and therefore, however criminal, are entitled by the laws of God and man to all legal counsel and aid.” [1] He further predicted, correctly, that “this whole people will one day rejoice that I became an advocate for the aforesaid criminals.” [2]

John Adams’ choice to set aside his political bias and pursue justice, even when it appeared harmful to his political allies, provides a powerful example of a moral principle I value deeply. I’ve often said that if I were to write a code of ethics, near the top of the list I would write the command to “frequently criticize yourself and your allies, and compliment your opponents.” By this I mean more than the simple commandments to “beware of pride” and “love your enemies,” though those gospel principles certainly inform my worldview. More specifically, a willingness to criticize oneself and compliment one’s enemies demonstrates integrity, virtue, a commitment to truth, and an ability to rise above the tribalistic partisan politics that threaten democratic society.

Further, and crucially, doing so also acts as a check on extremism. If you can stand your ground where you are, with a firm commitment to principles, you will insulate yourself against the temptation to take every political inch you can get to score points over your enemies. The best historical example here is, of course, the French Revolution—though it teaches us more about what not to do. During the Revolution, yester-

day’s radicals became today’s conservatives and tomorrow’s traitors to the republic due to the relentless tide of revolutionary fury that, “like Saturn, devoured its own children.” [3] It was the revolutionaries’ inability to ever criticize themselves, to rein in their extremism, or to see their opponents as anything besides enemies to freedom, that led them to destroy all their noble accomplishments, devolve into bloody slaughter, and ultimately bring the Ancien Régime back to power.

I’ll be the first to admit that doing this is not easy. It requires great discipline, self-denial, and patience. It’s not easy to compliment your enemies, especially when they never compliment you back. It’s not easy to criticize your allies, especially when your enemies will use it against you. However, political scientist Lilliana Mason suggests that there may be a solution. In her book *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity*, Mason describes a phenomenon that many have long noticed—that Americans are increasingly becoming neatly sorted into two broad camps under the umbrella of their party or ideology [4]. Everything in American society is politicized, and stereotypes are more and more accurately describing reality. For example, you can likely guess someone’s opinion on mask mandates based on their opinion on abortion, and you can guess their opinion on abortion based on a glance at their Spotify Wrapped (Jon Bellion, Morgan Wallen, AJR: reactionary conservative. Charli XCX, Phoebe Bridgers, Lana Del Rey: bisexual Doc Marten-wearing socialist).

Mason coined the term “cross cutting cleavages” to describe people who hold identities that do not match up with their party—for example, a liberal Christian, a Black conservative, or a freedom-loving, Carhartt-wearing, gun-toting Democrat. Mason claims that such people are uniquely positioned to heal polarization and resist extremism, because even their own identities are pulled in two opposite directions. This moderates the temptation towards extreme partisan bias.

Do not take me the wrong way—I am not labeling you as an extremist if your most important identities broadly line up with the stereotypes of your party. I’m also not saying that people with clear cross-cutting cleavages cannot be extreme. However, as Mason’s research shows, people who embrace cross-cutting identities are statistically less likely to be extreme, more forgiving towards out-partisans, and less prone to intense partisan hatred.

In conclusion, I invite you to consider and embrace your cross-cutting cleavages. Don’t stop yourself from rooting for the Chiefs because “the liberals like them.” Don’t leave the Church because the conservatives in your ward annoy you. Embrace the tensions, break out of the molds, and be authentically yourself. In the process, you just might help save America.

“TRUMP V. ANDERSEN 2024: GOVERNMENTAL SHOWDOWN?”

8

BY ISABEL HALLOWS

On January 6, 2021, politics in the United States fundamentally changed. In the waning days of his presidency and upon the verification of the 2020 election, Donald J. Trump employed divisive and anti-democratic rhetoric, inciting protests that swept through the streets of Washington D.C. Most notably, demonstrators converged on the Halls of Congress, engaging in riotous behavior to voice their grievances and denounce what they perceived as a ‘stolen election’.

The issue of this piece is not to determine Trump’s guilt or innocence, nor to establish whether the election of 2020 was stolen, but rather to evaluate the subsequent Supreme Court ruling made in the context of this issue. This dispute arose when several states sought to bar Trump from appearing on the ballot due to his alleged involvement in the events of January 6th, 2021. On March 4, the Supreme Court issued a per curiam, or unsigned, opinion that effectively overturned the Colorado Supreme Court decision that banned Trump from being on the ballot. At the heart of the case was the interpretation of Section 3 of the Fourteenth Amendment, which prohibits individuals who have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the United States from holding public office.

“No person shall ... hold any office, civil or military, under the United States, or under any state, who, having previously taken an oath ... as an officer of the United States, ... to support the Constitution of the United States, shall have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof. But Congress may, by a vote of two-thirds of each House, remove such disability.”

The Court’s ruling established three main things:

- 1) President Trump’s eligibility cannot be deferred to post election. If Congress is going to make a law that keeps Trump off of the ballot, they have to do so before the election.
- 2) States cannot make decisions that impact federal offices, but they reserve the right to make such decisions for their respective states.
- 3) Unless Congress passes a law (in advance) that explicitly prohibits President Trump from serving another term, he can be on the ballot and can serve another term. This last part would have been left up for question had the court declined to rule on the second aspect of the issue.

The ruling in Trump v. Andersen 2024 has profound implications for the balance of power between the branches of government and the integrity of the electoral process. By affirming that President Trump’s eligibility cannot be deferred to post-election and clarifying the limitations of state authority in making decisions impacting federal offices, the Court upholds principles of pre-election clarity and consistency. The Court’s position in such a politically charged issue reinforces checks and balances, and more importantly sets us up for a showdown between executive and legislative branches. Is Congress going to show up and keep a former President off the ballot for allegedly committing insurrection?

Considering the current political landscape, with Republicans controlling the House and Democrats holding a slim majority buoyed by Independents, it appears unlikely that Congress would move to prevent Trump from appearing on the ballot. While the Court has set the stage for a potential showdown, the actualization of such a scenario remains uncertain and frankly unlikely. Nevertheless, this ruling, while primarily addressing candidate eligibility and congressional authority, potentially carries broader implications.

The most intriguing aspect to me is the invocation of federalist principles, which may mark the initial steps toward a potential transition to nationalized elections. If the highest Court in the land has determined that states lack the authority to regulate who appears on the ballots for national elections, it raises the question of whether the Court might extend its oversight to other aspects of states’ administration of federal elections in the future. While the ruling itself does not explicitly suggest such a trajectory, it evokes elements of cooperative federalism—an ironic twist, considering that conservative justices, often proponents of states’ rights and dual federalism, rendered the decision.

These potential consequences, though likely unintended, are nonetheless compelling and carry potential implications for the future of federal elections. They prompt consideration of how the balance between federal and state authority in election governance might evolve, shaping the landscape of American democracy in unforeseen ways.

“ON THE LEFT TRACK: ARE PROGRESSIVES FINALLY MOVING THE NEEDLE?” 9

BY JANE DRINKWATER

Since I started paying attention to American politics in high school, one trend has dominated the news cycle, the conversation, and the day-to-day realities of government: the Republican Party keeps moving to the right [1]. Since the Tea Party's emergence in 2009, research has repeatedly shown the Republican Party rapidly growing more conservative [2]. Once this ideologically extreme wing of the Republican party realized their power to move the needle, they swung the whole pendulum to the right.

Donald Trump's election in 2016 only made this more evident. On the campaign trail, Trump's flamboyance caused an uproar, but in addition to his extreme behavior and personality, he supported extreme policies that made his moderate opponents balk. Most of these were populist in nature: the border wall, the so-called "Muslim ban", the tariffs on trade partners.

Since his election, this far-right section of the Republican Party has been increasingly referred to as the party's base. These are the folks who participate in primaries, donate to campaigns, and fly flags in their grass. Thanks to their high participation and turnout, they have garnered a massive influence on Republican politics and party operations. Because the base tends to be more radically right-wing than less-involved, moderate Republicans, their political power has pushed the party in a more conservative direction.

And it's not just the voters who have figured out how to move the ideological needle with their political power. Legislators who represent the far-right base also control the direction their party swings in Congress [3]. The obvious example is the Freedom Caucus, which has been making headlines all year for holding up the Republican party's efforts to elect a speaker [4], pass spending bills, and secure the border. Though relatively small and lacking seniority, the Freedom Caucus draws enormous power from its members' tolerance for chaos as they refuse to support any policies or co-partisans that seem too moderate to them. Nothing can pass without their votes, so often their requests are granted. At the very least, they attract publicity that generates conversations for the right-wing issues that matter most to them.

And so it goes: on the right, the most extreme wing determines the party's direction, while the moderates fall in line. Yet the left follows an opposite pattern. The more ideologically progressive sector of the party has consistently been asked to fall in line, while moderates dominate party politics. For decades,

the Democratic party's political calculus has suggested that far-left voters can always be counted on to vote blue. While progressives may remain unsatisfied with foreign policy or income inequality, they have historically voted for moderate Democratic candidates who are closer to their ideals than Republicans.

This logic was on full display in the 2020 Democratic primary. The field was crowded with candidates who wanted to take on Donald Trump; more than 25 vied to become the Democratic nominee. This group spanned a variety of ages, demographics, and ideological stances. One was campaigning for universal basic income; several proposed some type of universal health care; many supported the Green New Deal. Yet despite the attention they garnered, these candidates eventually realized that they were pushing moderate voters away and splitting the remaining Democrats, leaving an opening for an even farther-left candidate to win. Bernie Sanders had moderate Democrats particularly worried. Ahead of Super Tuesday, 3 candidates dropped out of the race to rally around Joe Biden, who was seen as a moderate and electable candidate.

Sanders remained in the race, but he and his supporters faced a constant stream of complaints. While extreme Republicans became the face of their party, winning the presidency and claiming their place as "the base", the Bernie Bros were called traitors, hated for drawing away would-be Democrat votes.

This year, that pattern started to change. In the 2024 primary, progressive voters have finally threatened to withdraw support from a moderate candidate. Across the country, hundreds of thousands of Democrats are voting "uncommitted" in the primary to protest Biden's support of Israel in their war against Hamas [5]. It's a threat not to vote for Joe Biden in a close election, a high-stakes bet on an issue that would almost certainly polarize moderate voters.

This display of political power has already started to change their party's policy. In the days following the first "uncommitted" votes, Vice President Harris publically called for a ceasefire, which the Biden administration had avoided saying before. The United States upset Israel by allowing the UN to pass a ceasefire resolution, and the Biden administration has been sending more humanitarian aid to Gaza.

Of course, even without the protest, the brutality in Gaza has become impossible to ignore. Even moderate voters are increasingly concerned about Israel's conduct in its war, which has destroyed infrastructure, introduced a horrific famine, and claimed the lives of over 31,000 Palestinians (as of March, 2024) [6]. It's also possible that the Biden administration is just giving lip service to these protesters to dispel concerns. Perhaps no substantive policy changes will come out of it. Perhaps no

“SAY HER NAME”: LAKEN RILEY AND THE CRISIS AT THE SOUTHERN BORDER”

10

BY NATHAN CHASE

In the latest Gallup poll, Americans say that immigration is the most important issue facing the country [1]. Americans now view this issue more urgent than the economy, inflation, wars abroad, and abortion. It's not hard to see why. 2023 had the largest level of people who entered the country illegally than in any other year in history [2]. The issue has especially gained traction in the last few months with the murder of Laken Riley, a 22 year old nursing student from Augusta University. On February 22, 2024, Laken went on a morning jog near the University of Georgia, when she was abducted and brutally killed by 26 year old Jose Ibarra. Ibarra entered the United States illegally from Venezuela, and had multiple charges before this incident [3]. Laken Riley's name made a large presence at the 2024 State of the Union address as members of Congress wore a pin with her name on it [4]. This tragic and senseless murder has been at the center of the crisis on the southern border, and shows why action must be taken immediately.

The United States is no doubt a country founded and built by immigrants. We should continue the idea that the American dream is for anyone who wants to come and earn it. However, we also are a country of law and order, and we must do things in a fair, organized way. Every president since the 1950's has had their own take on what to do with this issue whether it's migrant quotas, amnesty, DACA, or border security [5]. When it comes to this issue, politicians have been following the wind and going to what makes them most favorable to the public. The Biden administration is a prime example of this like when Vice President Kamala Harris and White House press stated in 2022 that “the border is secure”, yet President Biden contradicted that statement shortly after by saying “the border hasn't been secure for the last 10 years” [6, 7].

Americans and cities are feeling the pressure

Studies have shown that legal immigration has a positive effect on the economy and urban development in the United States [8]. However illegal immigration, at its current level, has been a problem not only for states near the southern border, but for America's large cities like New York and Chicago [9]. Since migrants have been coming in at such high levels in a short period of time, these cities don't have the resour-

es to help everyone, which then starts to put pressure on American taxpayers [10]. For example, in January of 2024, New York City temporarily moved migrants from a shelter to a local high school, drawing backlash from locals [11]. This is not fair to the Americans who were already here. Another example of Americans feeling the pressure is California's new effort to expand healthcare coverage for undocumented immigrants in 2024 [12]. Although it is humane that everyone has access to healthcare, the problem is that it comes out of the American tax money. Currently, the nation is facing many issues where the middle and working class are feeling the pressures of high inflation with high prices of groceries and other life expenses. We need to solve the problems here at home first, so that we can be in a better position to help others coming in.

What about those waiting in line?

This issue at the border is also a betrayal to those who have migrated legally to the United States or those who are waiting to receive citizenship or residency. Currently, green card approval rates are at a record low - 97% of applicants this year will be rejected [13]. Over 100,000 people who were documented in the United States had to wait over 10 years to receive a green card, and 675,000 people will most likely die before getting a green card. America is founded on the idea that everyone gets a fair shot, but people who are waiting to be processed legally have not had those opportunities. We must prevent illegal immigration from happening and prioritize those who are waiting their turn.

Let's not let another Laken Riley incident happen

Laken Riley was just like one of us. She was in her last semester of school, on track to become a nurse and do so much good in the world. Had the country's laws been enforced, perhaps her murderer would not have been in Georgia, and she would still be with us today. Many people use the slogan “Say Her Name” as a way to get people to remember what happened to Laken and to avoid more unavoidable deaths by immigration and border reform. The crisis at the southern border needs immediate attention to bring law and order to the country, be fair to those waiting in line, and prevent similar tragedies from happening again.

“THE FLOWERS IN THE ARENA”

11

BY SCOTT SAWAYA

Rome, the Eternal City, is practically teeming with complexity. Its history and longevity have left behind what can only be described as a plethora of paradoxes. Ruins are interrupted by gift shops and brightly lit gelaterias. Monuments to pagan gods bear crosses of Christianity and adorn the smallest country in the world, which contains one of the largest churches in the world. Navigate through these wonders of past and modern civilizations and you will almost inevitably arrive at one of the most recognizable architectural wonders around the globe, the Colosseum.

Rumored to once have been able to hold as many as 50,000 guests, it is no wonder the almost 2,000-year-old stadium continues to inspire the imagination of artists and tourists alike [1]. Its mesmerizing facade looms over the Roman Forum with a presence that has stunned and amazed visitors throughout history. While imagery of gladiators and simulated battles for the pleasure of the Roman populace often accompany its iconography, there is a period of the Colosseum’s life that deserves more attention. That is its time as an accidental botanical garden.

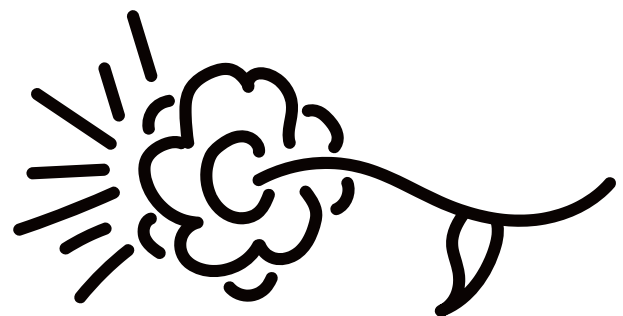
In 1855 Richard Deakin, an English doctor and amateur botanist published *The Flora of the Colosseum* [2]. This collection contained over 400 descriptions and illustrations of the expansive diversity of plants that occupied the ruins growing in open spaces and between the cracks of stones. Alongside cypresses and thistle common to Europe, sprouted much less common flowers found nowhere else in the European continent [3]. The Colosseum’s walls became home to a biodiverse microclimate of flowers and herbs that changed with the seasons and flourished ambivalent to the structure’s intended purpose, producing plants and wildlife that Charles Dickens described as “the most impressive... solemn, grand, majestic, mournful sight conceivable” [4].

Although no one knows for sure, there is a surprising explanation for the Colosseum’s botanical diversity, and it goes all the way back to the competitions and spectacle of the first 6 centuries in the common era. In the peak of the gladiatorial games, it wasn’t just hu-

mans fighting for survival in the arena, it was animals too. Romans would bring creatures like lions and giraffes from Africa for the express purpose of displaying them in the Colosseum where they would rarely survive long. These creatures are believed to have carried stowaways that would long outlive them. Seeds buried in the fur of these creatures were left behind in the arena to sprout and grow over the centuries to come [3].

In 1871, as a means of preserving the architectural integrity of the structure, the plants and flowers were cleared away to reveal the Colosseum we recognize today [1]. Although this process was broadly necessary to preserve the building from being reclaimed by nature, it is worth noting what was lost. A living testament to the atrocities that were once committed there and the resilience of life that can emerge in the wake of something tragic.

I am not writing this to try and articulate the poetry of such a phenomenon, nor am I advocating for abandoning the care of historic sites in favor of their reclamation by nature.. Indeed, the clearing away of the wildlife of the Colosseum has allowed for its remains to be protected and preserved for generations to come. But I do believe that reflecting on a piece of history that has been overlooked in our broad historical narratives can open our eyes to be aware of all that we do not see. For every piece of history we have, there are countless narratives and details lost, leaving us to pick up the pieces and learn from the pictures we can create. Quiet pieces of history, like the flowers that once bloomed in the basin of a deadly arena, can shift our perspective just enough to bring us closer to the complexity of the world we live in and continue to create.



“CONSERVATISM IS DEAD! AND TRUMP KILLED IT.”

12

BY JACOB LEAVITT

Conservatism is a difficult word to define. As I use it, conservatism is the political school of philosophy established by Edmund Burke in the 1800s that has been moderately adapted through the centuries. As I see it, conservatism is identifiable by four pillars: laissez-faire economics, focus on family and community, institutional trust, and justice and order. Within my definition, a conservative would believe the following statements: the economy works best when the government does not intervene with the free market except to protect individuals and ensure free trade, a key role of the government is to protect families and communities since these are the foundation of a functional society, well-made institutions can be trusted and must be trusted for a successful nation, and society works best when the law is predictable, the legislature is sober-minded, and the people are civil.

My chief claim is that Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump is not conservative. First, economics. President Trump's chief economic accomplishments were increasing tariffs [1], employing economic warfare, and further establishing subsidies to prop up failing industries, hurting GDP [2]. He increased the national debt dramatically; debt increased under Trump more than any conservative president and more than almost all liberal presidents [3]. His 2024 presidential campaign doubles down on these efforts and artfully describes a contradictory socialist, isolationist, and capitalist agenda. On any given day you can find him spouting almost any economic dogma [4]. As a matter of family and community, President Trump's campaign is unabashedly divisive. I have been an outspoken proponent of good-faith politics and bridge building so I may be unusually averse to his rhetoric but, describing culture as a war with allies and enemies rather than a free market of ideas, trades, and opportunities to gain cheap political points tears at the essential fabric of civilization. I also take personal issue with him rebuking churches for not “being faithful” because they did not immediately support his 2024 presidential campaign [5]. As a matter of institutional trust, President Trump proudly has none. One of his most prominent campaign platforms is his mission to “dismantle the deep state” [6] and his claims of widespread voter fraud that affected the 2020 election are unsubstantiated [7] and undermine institutional trust. As a matter of justice and order, Trump has been inconsistent and even self-serving. President Trump wants jurists to be originalists when striking down

Roe and progressive when considering the sedition clause of the 14th Amendment [8]. From 1970 to 2016 Trump was involved in over 4,000 lawsuits—many regarding sexual harassment, business malpractice, and contract disputes [9]. He is not and never has been “conservative” in manner. He made his money on a gambling empire [10], was in three “softcore pornos” in his 50s [11], started the first in-house casino strip club in Atlantic City [12], and has mocked religious people, including Christians, several times [13].

I am not arguing that Donald Trump was or will be a bad president. I am also not arguing that all his policies, pitfalls, and vices are irredeemable or indefensible. I am simply asserting that Trump's 2024 presidential campaign is not a conservative bastion. Unfortunately for conservatives, without Nikki Haley, there is no potential, truly conservative candidate. Furthermore, over the past few years, congress has supplanted conservative Republicans with populist and postmodernist Republicans who confuse advocating for limited government with a deep-seated mistrust of government and who maintain philosophically inconsistent politics. The Trump-era Republican Party fights for whatever issue is relevant and salient—hence populism, and claims Republican victimhood with appeals to “systems of oppression” imagery, albeit typically not with those words or with the same connotation postmodernist Democrats invoke.

Contradictory to my pithy and provocative headline, conservatism is not dead. The vast majority of U.S. economists are capitalists and encourage some form of laissez-faire economic policy. Family and community values are not dead, just smoldering. Most of our community-shattering fights are over differing applications of family and community values, not over the necessity of those values in the first place. Although the 2024 election will likely be contentious, it will end and the world will move on. Failure of institutional trust is exhausting and most conspiracy theories are losing steam before creating devastating change. Conservatism is seeing a resurgence in law schools and among academics. Conservatism is alive, just politically weak. The way I see it, you can either be indifferent, lament the floundering influence of conservatism in politics, or happily celebrate Trump's message for what it is—populism and postmodernism (both of which have reasonable supporters). However, it is incorrect to claim Trump is conservative—because he simply is not.



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