

# SOIGNÉ

MARCH 22'

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**FOUL** *covid*

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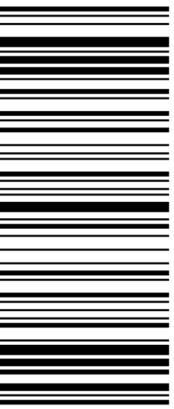
FASHION

**NYFW x TECH**  
**ROARS BACK**  
*Streetstyle*  
*Takeover*

LGBT  
**GOP**

**the West's**  
**silence in**  
**CENTRAL Asia**

**A MODEL REVOLUTION**



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# INTRODUCTION

TO THOSE OF YOU DISENGAGED, DESPONDENT, OR UTTERLY DISINTERESTED IN TODAY'S CULTURAL PUBLICATIONS,

SOIGNÉ IS A NEW HETERODOX PUBLICATION IN A MARKETPLACE SATURATED WITH GROUP-THINK. SOIGNÉ VALUES FREEDOM, ARTISTS, OWNERSHIP, CONSERVATION, AUTHENTICITY, AND ABOVE ALL CHALLENGING PRECONCEPTIONS. MEDIA IS AWASH WITH SELF-SELECTING BIASES, AND WHILE WE CHOOSE OUR BIAS AS FREEDOM, WE BELIEVE IDEAS OUGHT TO BE PRESENTED AND CHALLENGED. EVEN ONES WE AGREE WITH. WE HONE OUR OWN POINTS OF VIEW NOT FROM RESTRICTING THE IDEAS WE ENCOUNTER BUT RATHER FROM ENGAGING THEM.

IF YOU FIND YOURSELF DISENGAGED FROM FASHION AND CULTURE MAGAZINES AND MEDIA BUT STILL VERY MUCH INTERESTED IN WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE WORLD, SOIGNÉ IS FOR YOU. IF YOU FIND YOURSELF AGREEING WITH EVERYTHING YOU READ AND SLOWLY DULLING YOUR OWN ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND ANOTHER'S ARGUMENT, SOIGNÉ IS FOR YOU. IF YOU FIND YOURSELF LOOKING FOR A TAKE FROM SOMEONE WHO LOVES FREEDOM AND LIBERTY THE WAY YOU DO, BUT APPROACHES THE TOPIC FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE, SOIGNÉ IS FOR YOU. IF YOU LOVE VALUES LIKE STEWARDSHIP AND CONSERVATION, SOIGNÉ IS FOR YOU. AND IF YOU BELIEVE AS WE DO THAT ARTISTS OUGHT TO OWN THEIR WORK AND PUBLICATIONS LIKE US OUGHT TO RESPECT THAT OWNERSHIP OF IDEAS, THEN SOIGNÉ IS FOR YOU.

SOIGNÉ, ELEGANT IDEAS FOR AN ELEVATED YOU.

— JADAN PETER ELLIS HORYN

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# SOIGNÉ

**WHAT:** A heterodox print publication devoted to Fashion & Culture honoring Artists, Ideas, and Ownership

soi·gné /swän'yā/

*adjective:* ELEGANTLY

- DRESSED
- DESIGNED

## WHY SOIGNÉ?

Instead of blindly accepting cultural traditions and trends, we examine them and explain the practical implications of culture as it is, not what we assume or assign it to be.

## OUR MISSION

DEFEND ARTISTS    CHALLENGE IDEAS    DISRUPT CULTURE  
EMBRACE TECHNOLOGY    BE ACCESSIBLE

## DISTINCTIVES

### DEFEND

Uncancelable - stand by writers/artists for free speech and freedom of creativity.

### OWN

Artists own their work, we license and honor their IP with technology through tokenization and NFTs.

### REWARD

Pay all contributors, no free labor.

### FAIR

All signed associates receive a commission from business brought in.

### SHARE

Digital monetization initiates a royalty system for clicks/views of content.

### CONSERVE

Utilize 100% recycled paper and 100% biodegradable ink for magazines.

### CHALLENGE

Take a rebellious view of a tradition or trend - challenge our readers with ideas.

### DISRUPT

Create an alternative to monoculture.

### FREE

Classical Liberal advocacy of Free Thought and Free Speech.

### AUTHENTIC

First-person experiential writing, writers are a part of the story not written out of it. There is no pretense of objectivity, we search for truth. Cultivate a style of writing called Authenticism.

### FORWARD

QR codes, Meta content, and NFTs built-in from the beginning.

### ACCESSIBLE

Use technology to open print and digital to audiences traditionally unable to use.

Simplicity is the  
keynote of all  
true *elegance*.

- COCO CHANEL

# STEVEN TORRISI



PHOTO BY: ALEXANDRA ROSE STARK | @alecrose

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The future of medical biohacking - suppositories are like an IV on to go -Ben Greenfield



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# NYFW

AN IN-PERSON RETURN

By JADAN HORYN

New York Fashion Week roared back to the Big Apple for its 77th year. NYFW featured a return to in-person fashion shows after nearly two years of pandemic-driven virtual ones.

Of late, open questions have swirled around the viability of NYFW and its influence. The rise of influencer culture and declining major designer participation led many to predict its demise.

American fashion is a powerful cultural force. Once simply emulating French styles and designs, New York came into its own as the U.S. ascended economically. "American Runway," a book put out by the Council of Fashion Designers of America -- the organizers of NYFW -- details the rise and enduring power of New York and America in the fashion world.

However, as they say in fashion, what was once out, is in.

Whether it is the end of mass hysteria on the pandemic, the desire to be together, or the rise of the metaverse, NYFW is back.

If 2021 was the year NFTs went mainstream in the art world, 2022 is the year the fashion world incorporated them writ-large. Previous NYFWs featured forward-thinking designers such as Rebecca Minkoff, who incorporated limited NFTs into her presentation. Now more traditional designers and more prominent labels are utilizing them for various purposes.

Asher Jay, CEO and founder of NFT marketplace start-up Incooperate said, "While NFTs

have myopically only been utilized to tokenize and sell digital media as collectibles, conscientious innovators in the fashion industry can use NFTs for so much more, from creating exclusivity around product launches and unique access into Fashion Week events to streamlining brand licensing deals and issuing certificates of authenticity for luxury merchandise."

The merging of technology and fashion is a hallmark of 2022. "NFTs are executed on smart contracts, which encourage transparency around transactions," said Jay. When implemented intentionally and intelligently, NFTs can even inform consumers about a brand's integrity, commitment to purpose, and capacity to deliver on social and ecological change."

This is crucial as American designers face increasing scrutiny over how their products are developed and the integrity of their marketing claims. Influencer culture is holding brands accountable. The result is more focus on diverse body sizes, clothes sourced ethically, and the industry's impact on the world. At the same time, the profit motive is driving brands to seek consumers who are willing to pay a premium for their values, which until now has been a debatable proposition.

The return of NYFW's in-person events hails the possible resurgence of the power of fashion to shape culture and business the world over. Or, like the industry it represents, NYFW may be a flash in the pan fad from a pent-up populace yearning to be together. But, for now, it offers hope to New York and a return to near normalcy.

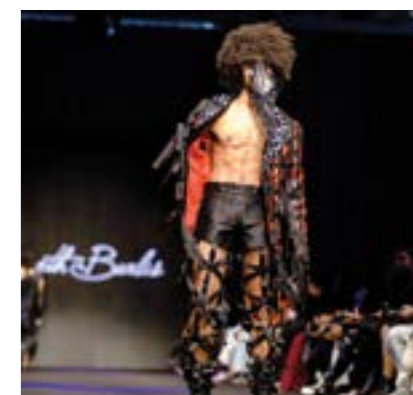
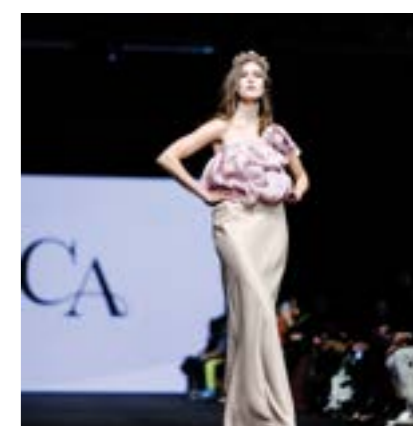
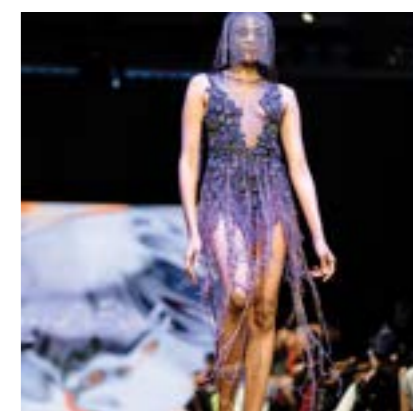
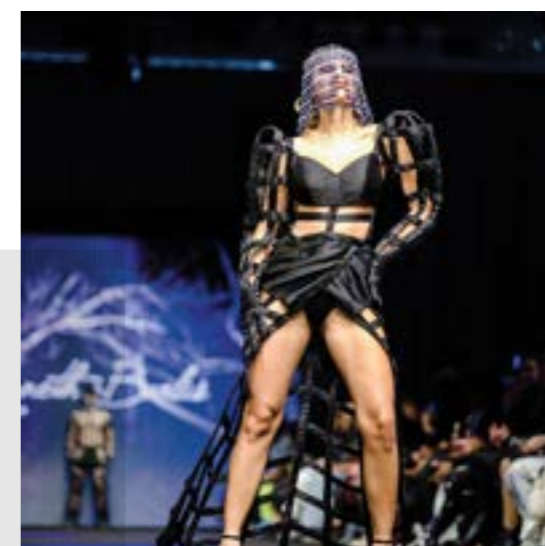
ARE YOU SOIGNÉ?



# NYFW

NEW YORK  
FASHION WEEK

PHOTOGRAPHY BY:  
JACKSON SEELEY





# StreetStyle Ksubi



- 01 KING PATCH LETTERMAN BLACK**  
 Sizes: XS-2XL  
 M.S.R.P.: \$600.00  
 Material Composition: 60%Wool, 40%Polyester
- 02 ROSE VOLTAGE LS SHIRT BLUE STRIPE**  
 Sizes: XS-2XL  
 M.S.R.P.: \$220.00  
 Material Composition: 100%Cotton
- 03 OLD DOLLAR VEST GREY**  
 Sizes: XS-2XL  
 M.S.R.P.: \$260.00  
 Material Composition: 30%Nylon, 30% Acrylic, 24% Wool, 16% Mohair
- 04 CONTACT HIGH CHITCH FLYER TRASHED**  
 Sizes: 28-40  
 M.S.R.P.: \$280.00  
 Material Composition: 100%Cotton
- 05 4X4 BIGGIE HOODIE CHARCOAL**  
 Sizes: XS-2XL  
 M.S.R.P.: \$200.00  
 Material Composition: 100%Cotton
- 06 FRESHMAN SHRUNKEN VEST GREEN MULTI**  
 Sizes: XS-L  
 M.S.R.P.: \$240.00  
 Material Composition: 30%acrylic 30%nylon24%wool16%mohair
- 07 SUPER X MINI WRECKONING**  
 Sizes: 23-32  
 M.S.R.P.: \$220.00  
 Material Composition: 100%cotton
- 08 NEW WAVE JACKET BLANC**  
 Sizes: XS-L  
 M.S.R.P.: \$260.00  
 Material Composition: 100%cotton
- 09 PLAYBACK JEAN TWILIGHT**  
 Sizes: 23-32  
 M.S.R.P.: \$220.00  
 Material Composition: 100%cotton



# Style for everyBODY

By: Olga Sokolova



Kiara Acy, Confidence and body positive activist from Toronto, plus-size model, and fashion stylist. Owner of Style for everyBODY.

We're facing a very important shift in the fashion industry and overall. Fashion now much more than ever needs new vision, freedom, and new standards without any limits. We asked Kiara about her perspective on the body positive movement in fashion, how to accept yourself when you're different, and who inspires her to be stronger and confident every day!

## 1. What challenges have you faced doing styling for everyBODY?

When I was a young adult, I was convinced that my only path to happiness was to lose weight. I thought that if I was size XS my life would change. People would be nicer to me, my clothes would fit better, guys would like me more. After I lost 25kg, I was still convinced I was fat. I didn't feel pretty. Nothing changed. I realized the problem was not my weight, it was all in my head. After working with clients of different shapes and sizes, it dawned on me how many young girls and boys HATE their bodies. They are told to not eat "bad food" and always compare bodies with each other. Many of them have eating disorders and feel insecure about their bodies. I've seen so many girls that want to lose weight even though they are skinny! It is all mental! And wrong. Most of my clients are in great shape.

Everyone is beautiful and unique. But all the time when we shop together, we find that so many elegant pieces are just not available in their size. Even online! They have money to buy them, the clothes would fit them, they LOVE the collection, but the stores and brands just do not want to include them. Right now, there is more inclusivity, mostly online, but when you shop at the big stores you cannot find anything bigger than size L. And even size L is a blessing if you find one.

Olga Sokolova is a journalist, media producer, TV host, and fashion expert. Contributor for Forbes and L'Officiel.

## 2. Now the fashion industry is not only about only perfect skinny models. we have a lot of diversity, new types and sizes. who is your main inspiration?

I am inspired by my friends and my own family. My main inspiration, though, is Ashley Graham. I would have loved to have had a role model like her when I was younger. Despite being criticized thousands of times, she proved to the whole world that a curvy girl can be on the front page of a major fashion magazine. A curvy girl can rock amazing outfits from exclusive designers, walk the runway and shine brighter than a diamond.

## 3. Describe your own style in a few words.

Funky, off-limits, different.

## 4. Who are your favorite designers?

This list changes as my personal style does. Right now, I love a mix of classic timeless pieces with something funky. I love maximalism; minimalism doesn't represent me. I love Jeremy Scott, Kate Spade, Kurt Geiger, Versace, Schiaparelli. All of these brands are completely different. But there is something that unites them: each piece is a work of art. It is unique. Not everyone would dare to wear it. Not everyone would like it. It is complex, not easy. This is what I am so passionate about when it comes to fashion.

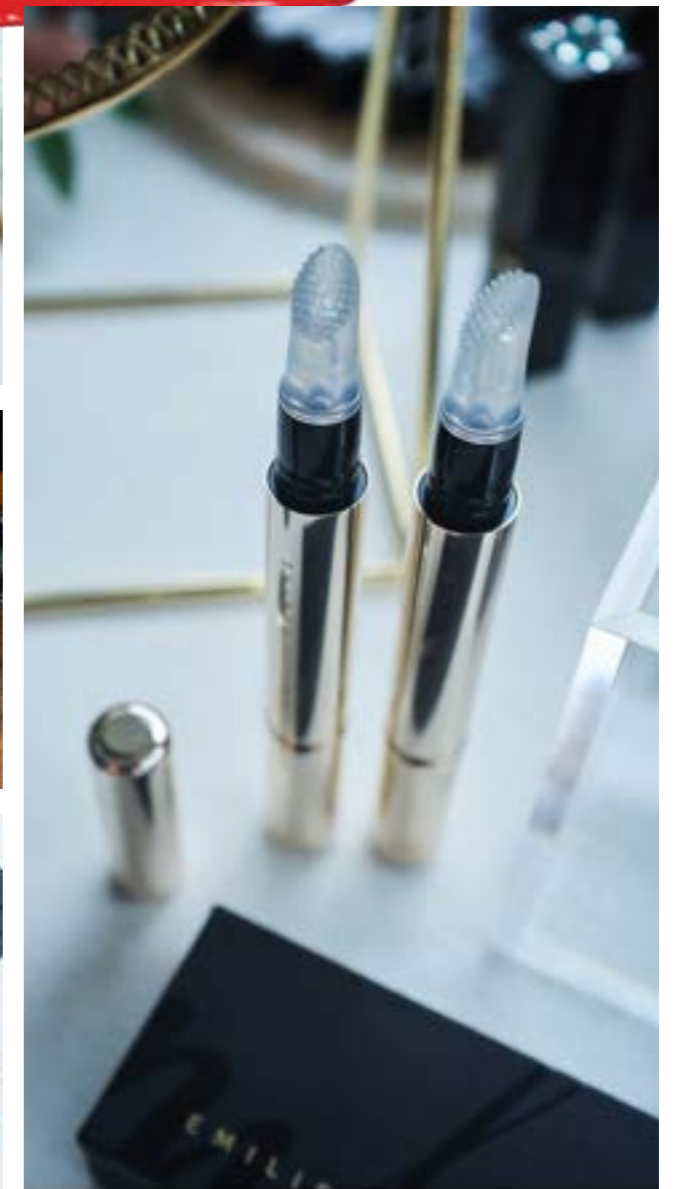
## 5. What are the trends that will stay forever?

There is a reason why French people say: "La mode se démode, le style jamais" (fashion fades, only style remains). Fashion itself is a cycle. A lot of trends repeat themselves, but they also mutate. Something that was popular in the 80s can come back, and it probably will. But look at the details. Something will be different. It is the same trend, but it mutated. The world, people, everything changes so fast now. The same is happening to fashion. I believe that nowadays and in the near future, it is more about personal style and personal brand than about trends.

**La mode se démode,  
le style jamais**



BY BETHANY DAVIS

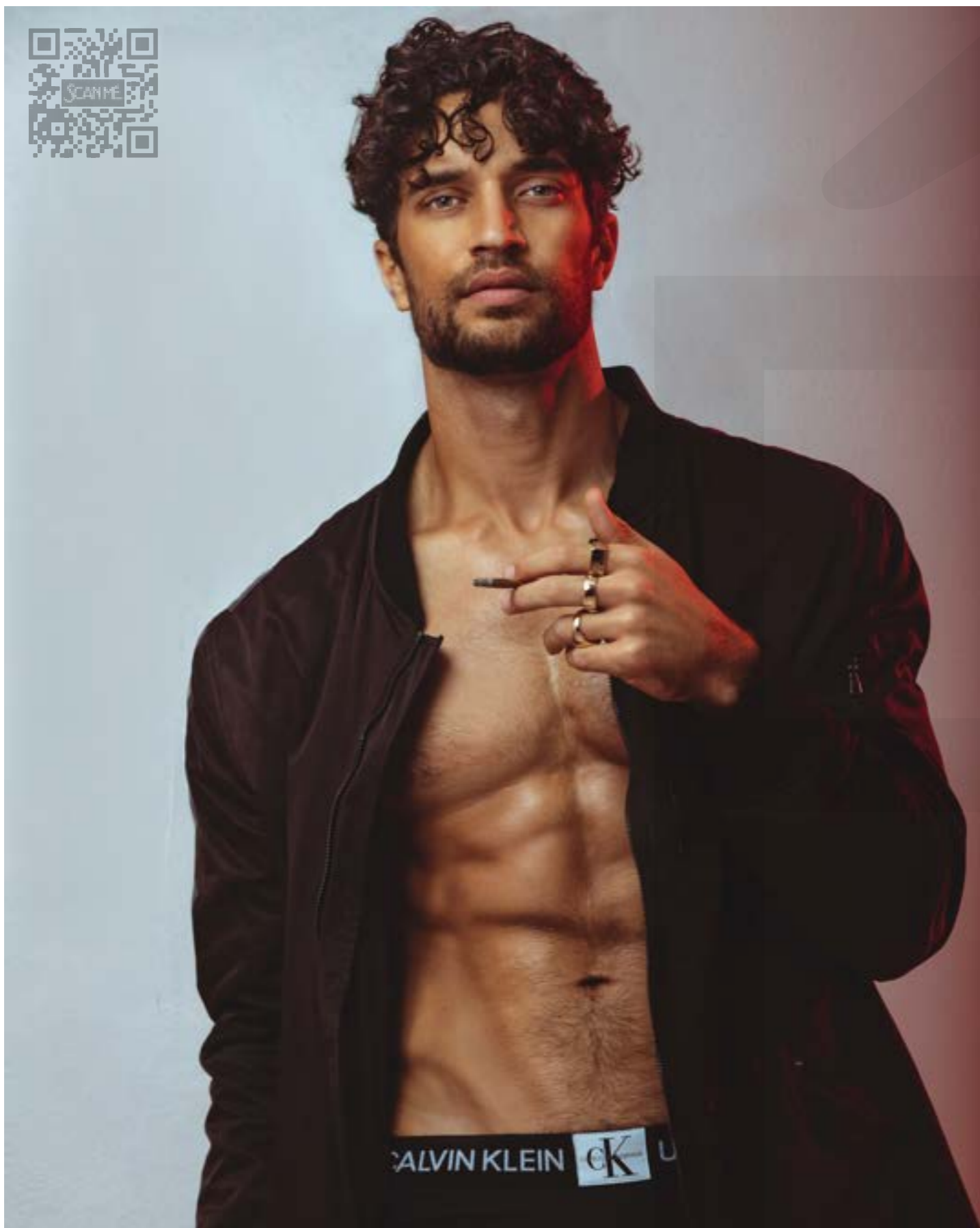


Look to the Emilie Heathe *As If* lipstick for your everyday, on-the-go lip. Deeply moisturizing and great coverage that never fails with any look or outfit.

Bring out your edgy with Emilie Heathe's *The New Vamp* lipstick. A night on the town with your girlfriends and a deep, rich color to last all night.

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The Emilie Heathe *Lip R&R* is there to exfoliate and buff your skin while also moisturizing and buffing your lip. A true necessity for lip care.



TORREN LEE

The Netflix series "Emily in Paris" is a ubiquitous topic of late. From social media posts to Peyton Manning's football-lingo send-up on NBC's Saturday Night Live, it is nearly inescapable. However, as an American girl who has also had the opportunity to travel to France and immerse herself in both the language and the culture, I am here to say that Emily's experience is not the norm.

To begin with, this is not a criticism of the lovely Lily Collins who plays the bright-eyed Midwesterner Emily Cooper, or a breakdown of Emily's love triangle with Gabriel and Alfie (Manning has already offered a detailed analysis). What I am here to say is that we as Americans CAN thrive in Paris. My only warning is that if you haven't seen the show, then this column will be a spoiler alert and a half.

At 18, I travelled to France as an exchange student who had studied French for six years. I thought I was ready to impress the French -- wrong! Once the wheels touched down at DeGaulle, I forgot every word that I had ever learned. So what does a tongue-tied, naive 18-year-old do? Listen, observe, and most importantly, ask questions.

The first faux pas that Emily makes as she sashays into her new job at Savoir is that she fails to inform her new employer that she does not speak the language. Yes, it is ludicrous that such a situation would take place, but it makes for good drama. Never assume that your new French colleagues speak English or automatically welcome you with open arms. Like at any new job, you must earn their respect, and check your entitlement at the door.

As she begins to post on Instagram, her co-worker Luc passes by, sits down and offers her a French reality check. "You come to Paris and you don't speak French. Now that is arrogant." I couldn't have said it better myself Luc, tres bien!

At the end of the day, Emily took to social media by putting on a faux pouty look and "falling in love with Paris" but it does not love her back. Em, quit with the duck lips, it's not cute!

To Emily's credit, she admits her ignorance, which earns her a gold star for the day.

We as Americans expect those who come to our country to speak our language and know our customs/culture. However, when we travel overseas, shouldn't it be quid pro quo? The answer is, oui bien sur!

In the beginning, I mentioned that one should listen, observe and ask questions. Maybe at 18, I was a bit wiser than I thought, but I can tell you that this is a valuable lesson. After class, I would sit down at a local cafe while enjoying pain au chocolat and a latte. I would listen to the people around me.

Yes, I was eavesdropping, but what I did

boss, Sylvie, played by the effortlessly chic Philippine Leroy-Beaulieu, is the embodiment of a successful and confident woman. Her choices in fashion are classic and do not require a heavy abundance of accessories. If you invest in a Chanel suit or anything high-end, then allow the clothes to speak for themselves, and not through charms, tacky jewellery or bucket hats.

On several occasions, Sylvie repeatedly tells Emily to listen, observe and above all "not wear that." I cringed when Emily wore mismatched prints and bucket hats, all the while destroying her expensive high heels on the cobbled streets of Paris.

Another big reality check: If a major French designer like Pierre Cadault calls you ringarde -- French for basic/corny -- then I would run home (in flats), burn your clothes and start from scratch. Thankfully I was never called ringarde, but I tried to blend in without losing my identity. For instance, I invested in an oversized scarf, wore flats or upgraded to a 2-inch slingback.

Lastly, indulge in all things Paris. The biggest thing that I missed when I spent my time in France was enjoying the rich cuisine. I'm not saying to eat only pain au chocolat, but Paris is a walking city, so enjoy the coq au vin with a glass of sauvignon blanc.

Remember this: Emily fell in love with Paris and made many mistakes. Anyone can fall in love with the City of Lights, but to ensure that the city loves you back, listen, observe and indulge. Bonne chance mon amour!

# EMILY un faux pas en PARIS

BY: NAYSA WOOMER

was write down the words that I would hear/ recognize, listen to how they (the French) would conjugate, as well as enunciate, then go back to my host family and ask questions.

Let's be honest, six years in a classroom does not prepare one for slang, or regional accents. Although my French was far from perfect, it became more proficient to the point that I could carry on a proper conversation with Parisians. This is what respect looks like -- it comes in the form of learning, listening, observing the country and culture, and asking questions along the way.

Most importantly, observe your surroundings, whether it be through lifestyle, work-life balance in another country, or in Emily's case how to present oneself. It has always been my observation that French women are naturally confident and walk with a zero effs-given attitude. For example, Emily's

## Helpful Survival Tips en Paris:

- 01 Ask for help. If you do not know how to speak French, attempt to ask for help by saying: Pardon, parlez vous Anglais? Parce que, je parle francais, im peu. Pourriez-vous m'aider? Translation: Excuse me, do you speak English? Because I speak very little French. Could you help me? Even if it is butchered, the attempt alone will win them over.
- 02 Try the local cuisine. If you walk into a Mcdonald's, then I and "Emily in Paris" have failed you. Remember that Julia Child and Ina Garten both started their culinary careers in Paris, and thrived.
- 03 Do not be a prude. The French are very open-minded. Embrace it.





## INDEPENDENT NO MORE: CORPORATE STREAMING AND THE SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL

BY JOHN MATTHEW GILLEN

### SYMBIOPSYCHOTAXIPLASM.

What do you suppose that means?

The Sundance Film Festival used to mean something.

It used to mean independent movies, new voices and experimental work. It used to mean taking risks and fighting back. It was Spike Lee shooting a black and white movie about black love in Brooklyn and Michael Moore looking for the man who shut down Flint, Michigan. It was Morgan Spurlock killing himself with Happy Meals and Maggie Gyllenhal crawling toward James Spader with an envelope in her mouth.

Sundance used to mean an audience for bold movies from underfunded and underrepresented artists who had never been mainstream enough for a major studio or international distribution.

It mattered. The films mattered. They came with passion out of someone's soul and they had the power to change you forever.

"Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One" was shot in 1968 in New York's Central Park and, due to its experimental style and the maddening ways in which it meddles with reality, remained largely unseen until the 1992 Sun-

dance Film Festival. Steve Buscemi attended the screening and has so impressed he connected with the director and not only arranged to have it distributed, but helped produce a sequel as well, and in 2005, 40 years after the first shot, Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One & Take Two and a Half," was released on DVD.

Steven Soderbergh helped Buscemi with the project and said, "I just thought it was one of the most amazing things I'd ever seen. I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe how great it was and that it wasn't famous, I mean really famous. Even then, almost 10 years ago, I felt maybe it's still, even now, too far ahead of its time. It's the ultimate 'reality' piece."

I've attended Sundance since 2017 (except for 2021) and in that time, I've gotten to know the festival and its content well. I've met the director emeritus John Cooper half a dozen times and I know him to be a good and well-meaning man. We were introduced at a party once and he said, "You have beautiful skin, I hate you." Good guy.

But in 2022, Sundance has become a place where wealthy white people pay thousands of dollars to have minority artists absolve

them of the guilt they feel for propping up a corrupt system that converts human suffering into profit. It is a place that dictates morality and policy agendas deemed worthy by the elite of the American Left and prioritises ideology and money above all else.

Today, Sundance means an opportunity for vast corporate content creators to buy legitimacy and lease artistic credibility. It means billion-dollar businesses exploiting the festival's reputation and brand recognition to sell subscriptions and advertisements. It lives on false virtue and disguised prostitution.

In the past, no studio films ever screened at Sundance; now most features have plans for a release on a streaming platform before they ever reach the big screen. When Alan Ball's directorial debut Uncle Frank came out in 2020, I attended the premiere in the Eccles Theater at Sundance. After the screening, I turned around to see Jeff Bezos sitting in the chair behind me, already chatting with minions about closing a deal to get the film on Prime Video.

Bezos bought the film before the projector was cold.

This year, Amy Poehler directed her first documentary feature, "Lucy and Desi," a portrait

of the relationship between two of America's most important TV innovators. In her pre-recorded introduction to the film, Amy mentioned the date it would begin streaming on Prime Video.

Probably because she was already contractually obligated to do so.

One of the shorts in the festival this year was a three-and-a-half-minute video called "Bump."

One. Shot.

Two guys bump shoulders on a sidewalk and bicker. The end. Cut to black. That was it.

I can't imagine why it was selected for the festival. The director said it was a critique of toxic masculinity. It was shorter than the land acknowledgment that runs before all of the films at Sundance. A long political message calls upon the audience to "resist" without making it exactly clear what should be resisted, but it does make clear that Sundance is righteous and that anyone watching its films is virtuous simply because they are viewing the films.

I'm not saying that all of the movies at Sundance today are of low quality or that any of these artists are illegitimate, far from it, but what I am saying is that the system is fucked. Sundance itself is fucked. Something is rotten in Park City.

The movies are mostly quality work, but they aren't being chosen because they're brilliant art anymore, they're being chosen because they suit the curator's political and financial objectives.

This matters because Sundance used to mean a commitment to the best of what art could do, regardless of money or political agendas. But somewhere along the way, Sundance fell under the rule of corporate greed and political messaging, and what our society lost as a result of this is hard to quantify but is a fundamentally important piece of what gives meaning to reality.

Sundance cancelled its in-person events this year at the last minute and switched to a virtual festival that was beset with confusion and technical difficulties, which effectively reduced it to a short-term streaming service (not to be confused with Sundance Now or Sundance TV). Then, when festival-goers

who had paid thousands of dollars for access to exclusive in-person events asked for their money back due to the sudden cancellations, they were all rejected without exception.

During the 1992 screening of "Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One," there was a problem with the projector, and Steve Buscemi and the other audience members were left sitting in the dark without seeing the end of the movie. They talked endlessly, trying to figure out what it meant, and became so enthralled that many of them remained lifelong friends over that single viewing experience.

That's what Sundance used to mean.

A couple of years ago, at another one of Sundance's exclusive private parties, I asked one of the drunk, fat, old, senior programmers who had been with the festival since the beginning how he decided which films to vote for and he confidently explained that sometimes he knew he couldn't vote for a film because it was "just not Sundance enough."

**"Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One" is an astonishing film you will never see because it isn't being pushed on you by your corporate curators.**

What do you suppose that means? Is it Los Angeles botox patients spewing auto-fellatio babble across Twitter in "mountain chic" designer boots? Is it a generationally wealthy old white lady telling a Senegalese immigrant artist that she loved her work and that she voted for Obama?

Maybe it's just a drunken, rich old fool who has been playing God too long to remember how he voted in 1992.

Maybe it means that "Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One" is an astonishing film you will never see because it isn't being pushed on you by your corporate curators. It isn't being sold to you with a side of fries or playing on your in-flight movie or persuading you which way to vote or lying to you about your country or your world or your own

Goddamn soul.

It's just profoundly great art with no cash value.

Sound and fury, signifying nothing.

It doesn't mean anything.

Not a Goddamn thing.

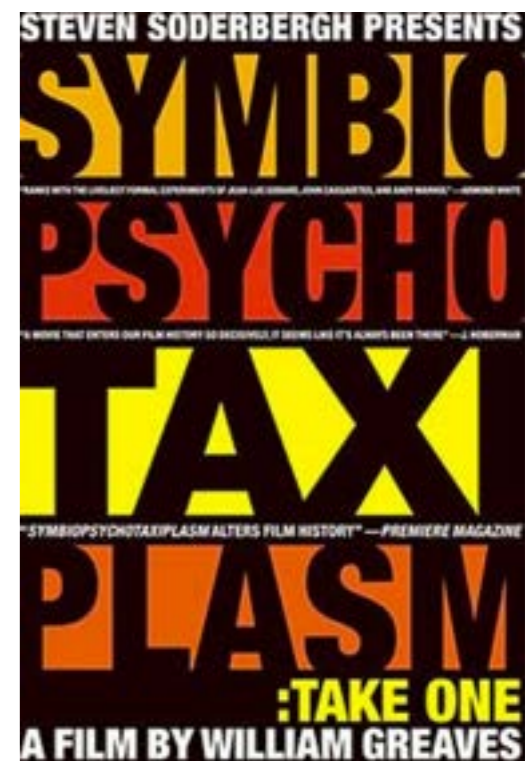
I'm sure once this comes out legions of woke zealots will come after me with long rants to prove that the Sundance Film Festival is still a beacon of righteousness and a paean of artistic achievement and empowerment.

But I offer no defence because I'm also sure of something else.

I'm sure not a single one of them knows what Symbiopsychotaxiplasm means.

Sundance will probably be back to in-person screenings next year, but at this point, they might as well just give up the hassle and stick to being an extremely expensive, highly curated, liberal virtual reality. A limited release streaming platform that tells audiences that they're good people and generates buzz for the highest bidder.

Do you think then they'll lower their ticket prices?



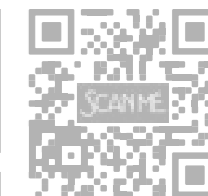


# TYLER



# TURNER

# THE MAN WHO SOLD THE WORLD OVERPRICED ART



BY: ROBERT BLUMENTHAL

There is something amiss in the contemporary art market. Household name artists have fallen out of fashion. Their works have lost an essential allure. Social media self-promotion has democratized the contemporary art world, allowing lesser artists to burst onto the scene. Valuations haven't fallen, but they haven't appreciated in the way new artists have. Led by a wider, less informed pool of investors, a world flush with easy money, and art speculators looking to take advantage of works with limited proven significance, valuations are inflated.

You cannot fault an artist for the price their work commands. Unless they are contributing to the overvaluation.

Less than a decade ago, a Jonas Wood painting fetched between \$3,000 and \$8,000 with a possibility of overproduction. His current exhibition at the David Kordansky has a large primary-priced painting priced at over \$3 million, and recently at auction a piece sold for \$6.5 million. A few factors typically accompany these types of market valuations -- among them museum support, fresh ideas and production levels.

Wood has yet to have a major retrospective in order to reflect these prices. In fact, he has only had two minor, two-person museum shows. Yet the market seems to think these paintings are akin to what a household name artist's work is worth. Mark Bradford, a notably more skilled artist who has had more solo museum shows in one year than Wood has had in his whole career, is selling work for similar prices as Wood. Baselitz is almost 90 years old and has had a full career and countless museum shows, and his works are also now in a similar price range.

**Has the market eliminated the importance of retrospective and museum support?**

Art critics have been harsh on Wood, calling his work derivative of David Hockney's still life series. Wood's continued focus on art that moves in only a certain segment of the international art market has frozen his style and led to continued production of the same ideas. He continues to make these same types of works to satisfy demand without hitting any new notes. More often than not, when an artist plateaus in their ideas, the market follows.

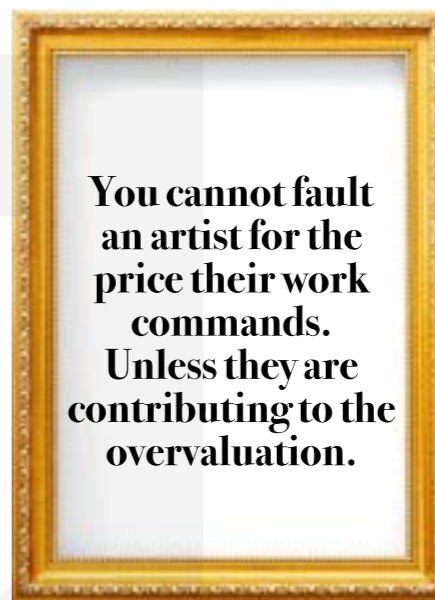
**Has the market eliminated the importance of fresh ideas and perspectives?**

An overreliance on the preferences of Chinese art speculators is causing the overproduction of similar work. Productions in the stratosphere of valuations are something we have seen before. Mark Grotchagn once sold pieces for over \$17 million but his current valuations float in the \$5 million range. It recently came out that a Damien Hirst skull that had sold at auction for around \$100 million never actually changed hands, rendering the sale meaningless.

**Has the market eliminated the importance of production levels?**

It's as if the market has fast-forwarded 40 years, cementing Wood's legacy. Except it hasn't. The answer to all three questions is that Wood's market has moved too fast, and this is a problem for all of us. Not only will it take years to correct, but when it does, the market will leave many collectors feeling cheated and many artists feeling wronged. The biggest risk in all of this is that the focus on the overheated market threatens to overshadow the work itself.

If we allow art to get lost in the shadows of half-made deals and colossal price tags, what will we do once we're left sitting blind in the darkness we have cast over ourselves?



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# IS THERE STILL *freedom* IN FASHION?

By JADAN HORYN | EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



PHOTO BY: GERMAN VAZQUEZ PHOTOGRAPHY

Our society is broadly built on the power of exchanging, challenging, and innovating ideas—creativity expressed by thinkers and artists fuels its dynamism. Yet, something is amiss. Curtailed creativity is all around us. It is the spirit of our new age. Ideas are no longer expressed freely, for freedom has given up its power to fear. Fear, through its enforcer conformity, uses cancellation and corporatism to ensure capitulation. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the elimination of debate on our liberal arts campuses

**With fashion at the heart of our free societies, the sudden cessation of its enduring pulse poses dangerous omens for individuals, ideas, and our institutions.**

or the silencing of ideas in the corporate media. But a more insidious and dangerous self-censorship occurs in the creative arts and their most showy of exemplars, fashion.

Fashion is, despite our easy dismissal, at the very center of our society. Fashion is at its most reduced core, individual self-determination, and self-expression. It is both freedom of expression and freedom of action -- in essence, actioned ideas. But taken in aggregate, the many expressing individuality and agency, it acts as a gravitational force, as the eminent French modernist philosopher Gilles Lipovetsky says, "Fashion ... it appears above all as the primary agent of the spiraling movements toward individualism and the consolidation of liberal societies."

With fashion at the heart of our free societies, the sudden cessation of its enduring pulse poses dangerous omens for individuals, ideas, and our institutions. Take Nasheli Juliana Ortiz-Gonzalez, a Puerto Rican fashion designer famed for her protest design. Nasheli's beliefs lean toward intersectionality and, controversially, Puerto Rican sovereignty.

On the occasion of our first meeting years ago at New York Fashion Week, I was struck by the juxtaposition of her creations and her character. Despite her strident views, a vivacious and affable personality shone through. A student she was mentoring called her our "Puerto Rican Mama."





jasonmorgan35 What an honor.

Art and ideas, yet human and relatable.

This time around, I saw via social media that something had profoundly changed. The abiding joy and creativity seemed dimmed. A woman whose personality lights up a room and whose clothes demand response does not suddenly go quiet. I asked for an interview on a gut instinct, an intuitive read of her psyche and the zeitgeist. Despite identifying as Latinx and cospiritual with leftist thought, she expressed deep resignation to the power of fear. I dove deep with her into how she was repeatedly silenced by enforced corporatism, a form of censorship that companies deploy ostensibly to protect their brand but has morphed into a way to straightjacket artists into conformity.

She spoke of being instructed to remove expressions of solidarity from her designs and to -- most tellingly -- refrain from using or speaking on such topics on social media.

She was then censored on the intersectional left for her focus on an issue that was felt to not be in its "moment." Cancel culture is the pithy neologistic manifestation of the right, the left, and the mushy center all seeking to enforce a normative creativity. It fails to see the paradox in forced conformity masquerading as creativity. She left academia and the corporate system to advance her passions for the broader Latinx community in the non-profit space, a place where she demands to be allowed to speak out and speak up.

Authoritarianism purporting to be individualism

Jason Morgan is one of the world's most handsome men. His visage has graced the catwalks the world over. His ice-blue eyes stare back from countless magazine editorials and advertisements. He was seen and adored but never heard. Exactly what we demand of those we objectify -- obsequious silence.

In 2020 he found his voice and came out ... as a Trump supporter.

PHOTO BY: DAVID BENOLJEL



... sat with him over cocktails in Miami Beach, discussing the consequences of a pretty face suddenly having a voice. "The reaction was instantaneous; I lost thousands of followers and campaigns." The power of corporatism and canceling is something crucial in the cancellation, corporatism, censorship, and conformity cycle. It can be broken if you don't allow yourself to break. The mob only speaks with one voice until someone says something different.

Whether you find intersectional Marxism repulsive or Trumpism repugnant is immaterial. Neither should be punished for expressing an essential aspect of their agency as individuals.

Left and Right, so engrossed in their orgiastic desire for cultural revenge, risk the presupposition that our society rests on. They are advancing the destruction of creatives, thinkers, of human people, to enforce their version of acceptable conformity. Meanwhile, corporatism seeks to co-opt talent and ideas while squashing those same talents' less marketable ideas. That is until the male model speaks out and the Latinx fashion designer creates more protest designs.

When you limit the bounds of discourse, you otherize and ostracize people, pushing them to the fringe. Those whose views are far more radical find fertile ground in a person disaffected and aggrieved. The very action of limiting an offensive idea can transform the person into a full-throated defense.

All around us, the dam is breaking. All that is required is for people to stand up and speak up. Fear loses its power when people embrace their freedom. Creatives cannot be cowed into conformity. The very structure of our modern society relies on the individualistic aspect of fashion expressed as actioned ideas.

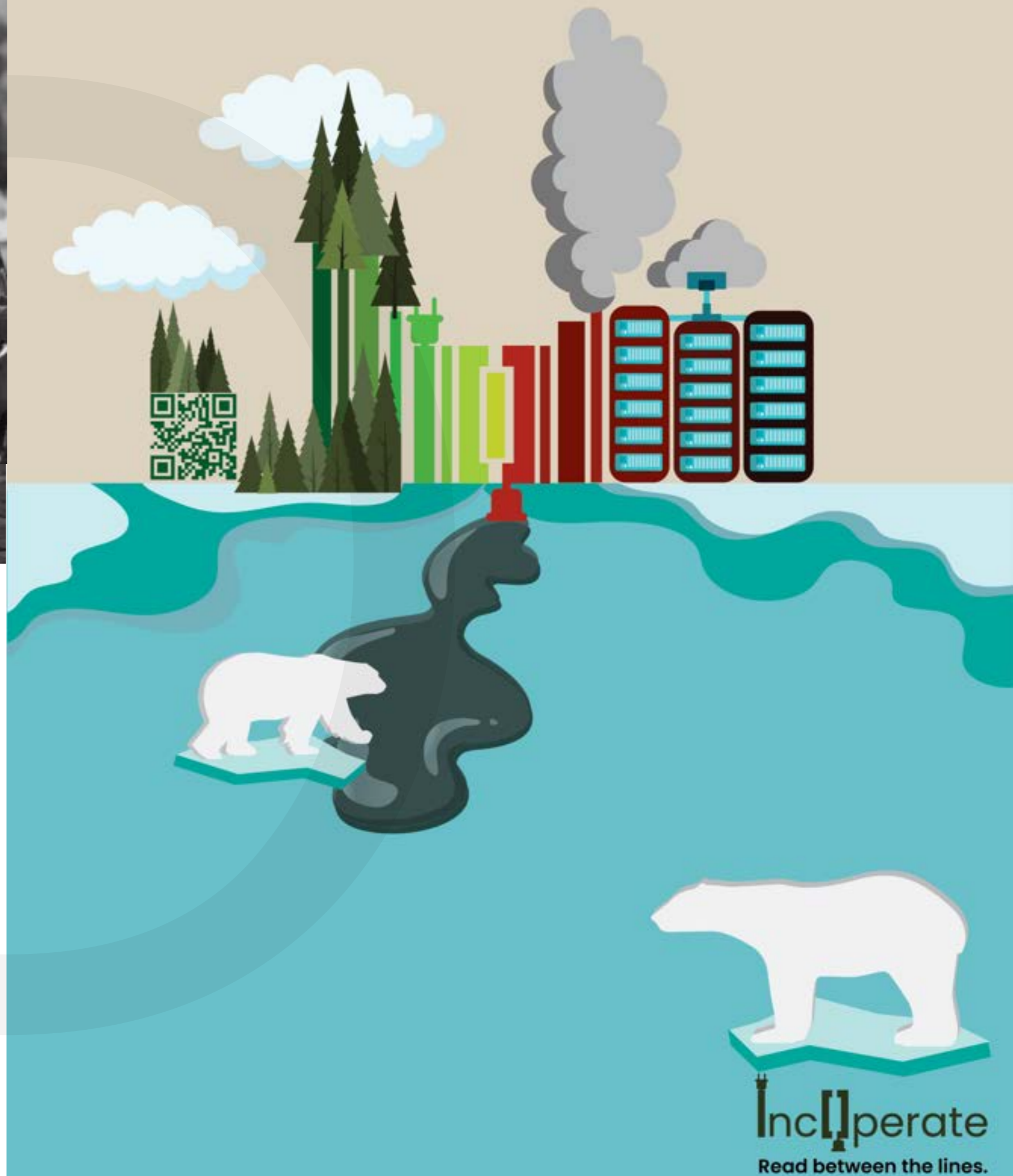
We must defend the freedom of ideas, or else we will have only fear of them. Fear that will use force to demand conformity and end creativity.

**Fear loses its power when people embrace their freedom**

**Let fashion be free, lest we all be enslaved.**

SOIGNÉ.CO

A negative impact cannot have a positive outcome. Offsets are neutral, it's time to take a position.



**Inc[]perate**  
Read between the lines.

In 2009 I came out, as a Republican. **I am a Black man who happens to be gay**

When I tell people that line their mouths drop because I am a Black man who happens to be gay. Ironic, given that I attended a conservative, politically prominent religious college, Liberty University.

The idea of me, a Black gay Republican, blows minds on the right and triggers friends on the left.

I have grown to enjoy triggering the left because I get to ruin a stereotypical narrative about blackness and queerness while presenting a conservative message to a new audience.

The narrative society has told me about myself is that I face bigotry in the GOP. Yes, there have been moments when so-called conservatives expressed reservations. Trust me, I have endured and fought back against "Republicans" who use derogatory terms about people of color or members of the LGBTQ+ community, but these have been few and far between.

**one of the weapons of the left is to bully you into silence. To otherize you**

I am told the Democratic Party is the party of minorities of all kinds. Earth tones and the Rainbow all together as one. I'm told that Democrats are and affirming. What being called an Oreo, Uncle Tom or, one that really struck a nerve, by a white Democrat "the GOP House Nigger." I tell people all the time that one of the weapons of the left is to bully you into silence. To otherize you. To deny you your race or your sexuality because your mind thinks differently.

**It is from Democrats that I have experienced the most hate.**

When it comes to speaking about LGBTQ issues with a liberal older black person, I cringe. They see a gay person as less than a human and they see everything about me as wrong. They preach about civil rights to Blacks but claim that LGBTQ+ rights to life, liberty and property are not civil rights.

On election day in 2021, I was confronted by a black woman while passing out ballots for now Virginia Gov. Youngkin and the GOP ticket. Looking directly at me in a way only black women can, she quipped, "How did you get like that?" I responded, "Like what?" and she proceeded, "You know, like that." Again I asked, "What do you mean?" And then she finally said it.

"You must not be from this area." "Well, bless her-heart," I thought.

**Southern for, "You don't belong here."**

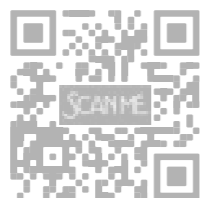
I told her well I am from Southside Virginia just the town over and have been a proud Republican for a decade-plus. After she voted she got in her car and took photos of me like I was some rare animal. I stood there, amazed by her actions but realised how angry some can get when confronted with something different.

The Trump revolution, despite the media narrative, opened the Republican Party up to LGBTQ+ conservatives. The change is partywide and nationwide. It's real and it's a reaffirmation of the "Big Tent" of the GOP, a coalition of people who are, as Robert Ingersoll said, part of a [GOP] that is "grand enough ... to invite every human being in favor of liberty and progress to fight shoulder to shoulder for the advancement of mankind."

Being in the GOP as a gay Black man truthfully has been one of the most interesting aspects of my journey as an activist. I understand that my lens gives me a higher obligation not only to point out the errors of my friends but also the unending errors on the other side. I also have to inform my fellow conservatives and Republican friends that building relationships with non-traditional communities is the best path forward, pushing my party to expand the base of the GOP. I preach that everyone wants to pay lower taxes, have good schools and have safe communities. When you look at it from that perspective, you can take the message of conservatism everywhere. Even to the most hateful-woke liberal communities in the deepest blue parts of this, our beautiful home of the brave and free.

By Thomas Turner

**He called me "the GOP house nigg\*r"**



# THE PARENTS' REVOLUTION



BY TYLER TURNER

On June 14, 2021, I stood in front of the District 196 school board in Rosemount, Minnesota. I admonished 14-year school board member Art Coulson because of his prior rhetoric toward parents and community members of the district. Coulson had openly dismissed citizens' comments about critical race theory being taught. He called the complaints, "malarkey" and "Fox News talking points." I recommended that Coulson resign from the school board because he had broken Minnesota School Board policy with his controversial statements.

I was just one of many individuals across this state and country who had finally decided to hold our public education system and its representatives accountable. This sweeping movement across America appeared almost as a parental revolution. I would consider it a working-class populist revolt against elected bureaucrats for political comparison. It seemed that a new speech would go viral daily including a speech by young Brad Taylor, who spoke after me on that day in June.

This movement in our area was spearheaded by a group called Dakota County Patriots. This group was headed by several individuals, including my wife Rebekah Turner. This newly developed grassroots organization held private meetings, put on fundraisers and handed out flyers in the county's school districts to support candidates for the 2021 school board elections. Local politicians now reach out to the organization in hopes of getting more support for their 2022 campaigns. This organization continues to be active into the 2022 midterm elections, by proposing resolutions for political campaigns and state platforms. Members of the group have also gone to caucus to run as delegates and to become chairmen in their local senate districts and precincts.

I believe this revolution was much deeper than just parents and citizens wanting to get their time in the spotlight by yelling at school board members. I think this was our society waking up to the fact that bureaucrats -- *elected school board officials, teachers' unions, etc.* -- *care very little about individual children. These bureaucrats care more about the politically accepted message and narrative.* Issues like COVID-19 and social

justice have become bureaucrat adopted issues, so, no matter the nuance, the messaging has to be, according to bureaucrats, systematic and streamlined. In order to deal with COVID-19, public officials believe everyone has to wear a mask. Therefore children have to wear masks, according to elected bureaucrats, no matter the science disproving their effectiveness or the limited threat of the virus to children. Social justice has become a hyper-politicized issue, therefore, implementation of the tenants of critical race theory dogma has become mainstream in public educational institutions.

These issues coming to light, after a very controversial 2020 election, made individual citizens realize they were becoming nothing more than an entity toward the bureaucratic ideal. Opposition to this ideal is seen as an impediment to the established bureaucracies.

As we look forward, to this country's future, groups like Dakota County Patriots are necessary to help galvanize the local communities. These grassroots organizations will help to fight back against the bureaucratic monopolies on both the federal and state level. Citizens must hold the school boards and city councils accountable. As citizens, we need to make sure we stand against centralized imposition by the state. French philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville once aptly stated:

**“Local assemblies of citizens constitute the strength of free nations.”**

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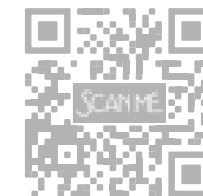
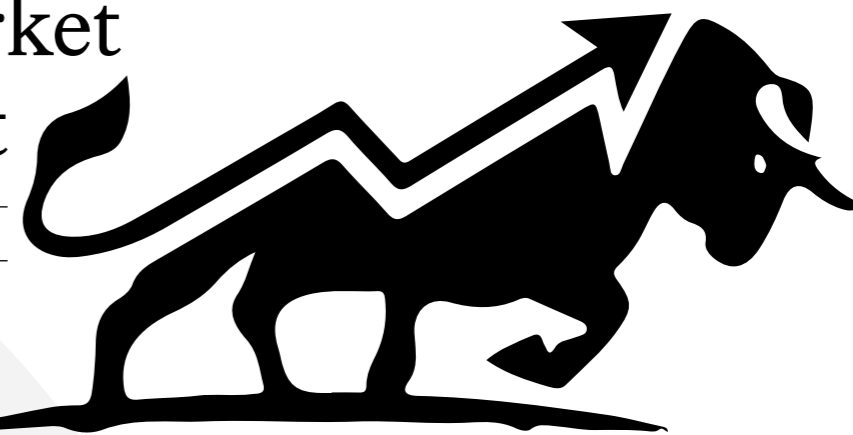
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# Bull-market Burnout

BY SETH DENSON



Timing the markets has always been a challenge, even for the most seasoned investor, but with many analysts predicting a correction, the continued bull market seemingly defying all odds is leaving investors asking a simple (but complex) question:

**How long can this go on?**

**That is the multi-trillion-dollar question.**

Toward the end of 2019, the global economy began to slow and a continued trade war with China kept the world on financial edge. The U.S. stock market defied gravity and maintained its historic bull-run growth momentum with the Dow Jones ending the year above 28,000 points. Analysts across the country, myself included, assumed, and even stated on national television, that the markets were in a state of "extra innings," but the end of the game was nearing.

What no one predicted was the worldwide crises of 2020 which sent the markets off the cliff faster than a runaway wagon in an old Western flick.

Yet, despite a global pandemic, chaotic new leadership in Washington, continued shutdowns, and supply chain disruptions the markets not only bounced back but

soared to even greater heights.

The Fed pulling out all the stops to keep the economy going created a false high. **It turns out that if the government dumps money into the markets, they tend to do well. Too well, in fact.**

According to a detailed analysis from Advisor Perspectives, four major market valuation indicators show **the market is overvalued somewhere in the range of 130% to 214%, or tens of trillions of dollars.**

Not good.

For a brief moment at the beginning of 2020, the market corrected. Lockdowns and restrictions in purchasing dipped the market down to a more realistic level. Then, the government did what it always does regardless of which party is in power -- threw money at the market to make sure it did better on their watch than it did under the last administration.

The Fed has been buying billions in securities on a monthly basis while holding interest rates too low for too long. These conditions, along with apps like RobinHood which allow amateur investors

to pump their stimulus money into the markets, added up to people taking greater and greater chances due to fear of missing out.

In short, the market has become cash-dependent, and the Fed knows it. It is all but encouraging investors to go "all in" no matter the cost. **Credit cards being used to buy stocks and mortgages being refinanced in order to throw extra money into the market** are just some examples of what is happening. Much like an addict getting short-term fixes, investors get to continue the ride, as the bulls run, and run, and run.

**This brings us to today, with the markets more erratic than a teenager on social media.** Few know what to expect, but regardless of the external factors - meme stocks, FED policy, endorphin-based investing, etc. - the bulls are getting tired.

Investors are beginning to see signs that it's time to rest. Companies are buying up residential housing, while the younger generations are being forced to rent. The price of oil is on its way to orbit and OPEC is having emergency meetings to ensure the cost doesn't get too hot. The word inflation followed by an ever-larger number is becoming a daily punchline. The cost of food is going through the roof, and some used cars are selling for more than when they were new.

**In spite of all of this, the bull run lives on for the moment.** Investors are feeling fatigue set in even if they're not aware of it yet. It's a gnawing feeling, watching the news, wondering what new variant, geopolitical squabble, or supply chain shortage might finally ruin one's portfolio.

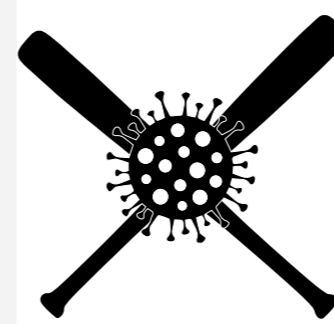
The market since the death spiral of 2020 has been a rebound market. A dead-cat bounce. But because the fall was so fast, the bounce from the bottom sent us that much higher. Still, what goes up, must come down, and hopefully next time we'll learn not to run so long, so fast or so far that we risk breaking our own necks in the process.



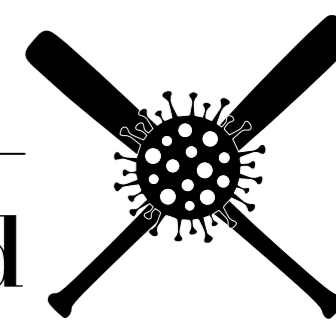


THE COMPLETE CORE AND CARDIO WORKOUT

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BY TERI D. BRAKE



# Foul ball: How Covid costs baseball its future

During Game 6 of the 2020 World Series, Los Angeles Dodgers' third baseman Justin Turner tested positive for Covid. Turner was pulled from the game in the 8th inning -- only to return to the field some 20 minutes later, maskless, to celebrate the series win with his teammates. A celebration that included hugs, kisses and a group photo of the team hugging with Turner at the center holding the Fall Classic trophy.

By the time the dust settled, five more players would test positive. While the Dodgers, and Turner, did issue an apology, it was seen by many fans on social media as a weak play for forgiveness. Major League Commissioner Rob Manfred announced on Nov. 6 that there would be no punishment delivered to the Dodgers or Turner for the blatant decision to ignore the strict Covid protocols in the passion of the win.

Fans, already incensed by photos of Dr. Anthony Fauci enjoying a Nationals game with his mask pulled down while they couldn't enter a park without one regardless of money or influence, were outraged by Manfred's decision. But the season was over, and the news cycle quickly turned its attention elsewhere.

The following 2021 season was riddled with stops and starts due to positive tests -- but without an off-season to forget, the hypocrisy stayed in focus and the fallout has been severe.

Guess where future major league baseball players get their start? If you said Little League organizations throughout the United States and beyond -- you guessed right. Little Leaguers become high school players. High school becomes college. College becomes Minor League and Minors become Majors. **It's an ecosystem whose interruption at any stage jeopardizes the rise of new talent -- and the money that comes with it.**

You have likely never heard of Needville, Texas. It's a tiny spot on the map, 50 miles southwest of Houston. Population 3,068. They don't have a McDonald's, much less a Wal-Mart or Target -- but what they do have are kids with a passion for baseball. **So when their assistant coach tested positive for Covid and they were eliminated from a tournament in August 2021 during their run to the Little League World Series,** you can imagine their heartbreak. When

interviewed, these young boys described feeling "crushed" and "devastated." The community was furious about the prevalence of hypocrisy and double standards within the sport at large. Did these pre-teens work any less hard toward their baseball dreams than Justin Turner?

Oh, by the way, an important note to mention here: the Dodgers positive Covid test results stood as positive -- whereas the coach of the Needville Little Leaguers did not. His follow-up test just one day later came back negative, yet the elimination ruling remained.

Justin Turner has unwittingly become the self-appointed unmasked face of the sport. Remember his flagrant dismissal of

tive for Covid, or that they only took their masks off for the picture, and then put them back on.

**You don't have to be a baseball fan to appreciate the full display of hypocrisy here.** Are you a football fan? Did you know that on Jan. 21 this year, the NFL sent a memo to teams still standing that they were suspending the requirement of daily Covid-19 testing for unvaccinated players? Meanwhile, in LA County, the youth sports protocol, updated on Jan. 3, requires weekly Covid-19 screening tests and will initiate a minimum seven-day suspension for any youth sports team with four or more Covid-19 cases over a 14-day period. Blatant hypocrisy, unrooted in both science and common sense.

“MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred announced there would be no punishment for the blatant decision to ignore strict Covid protocols”

The bottom line is this: college sports recruiting was already an exercise in loosely organized chaos even before the pandemic. Now, two years later, it is even more so. The trickle-down effect of the last year -- or two years, for some, is beginning to show its ugly face. With athletic programs' budgets slashed, coaches are scrambling to overcome challenges. Major league baseball, by comparison during the same time period, by-and-large continued on. Did the fans watching those games from their couches realize the outrageous double standard?

Do they see it now?

And for the classes of 2020 and 2021 that missed out on important competitions during their junior and senior years or Little Leaguers with hopes of winning it all -- **many of them will never again have the opportunity to showcase their talents to recruiters, and their future love of the game will be relegated to the ever-inflating price of a ticket.**

the protocol so that he could be photographed with his team with an active case of Covid?

In March 2021, just five months after the World Series, the high school seniors at John Burroughs High School in Burbank, California, were suspended for two weeks after it was discovered they had posed for baseball team pictures on school grounds sans masks. Never mind that none of them had tested posi-



ARE YOU SOIGNÉ?

BY STEPHEN KENT

# STAR WARS

THE SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN'S ATTACK ON STAR WARS AND THE JEDI IS ABOUT SOCIAL CONTROL, NOT JUSTICE

It was perhaps only a matter of time before social justice activists armed with masters degrees took to the digital pages of a popular and somewhat esteemed science magazine, in this case the Scientific American, to argue for why Star Wars and the entirely fictional Jedi Order is "inappropriate" for any association with social justice causes. The "mood in the room" that is American politics could only direct its sanctimonious scorn at Founding Fathers, dead poets and seafaring explorers for so long. Lucasfilm should reinforce and guard its Yoda statue while it still has a chance.

In case you missed it, in recent years various organizations operating in the space of social justice, the arts and science have started using the acronym JEDI as a more buzzy alternative to "DEI" initiatives. DEI, which stands for "diversity, equity and inclusion" must not have been inspiring enough for some organizations looking to make Maoist struggle sessions more fun, so J was added on to reorder the initiatives as – JEDI.

It must have been an exciting few years for Star Wars fans on the social justice left who have been establishing "JEDI Councils" in schools and communities across the country. If you view your cause as heroic, or yourself as "the good guys," it stands to reason you'd engage in a little acronym wordplay to wrap yourself in the positive associations our culture offers the Jedi. Star Wars' Jedi knights are one of the most iconic heroes of popular fiction we have today, and have been for at least 40 years. In a time where spandex-laden Marvel and DC superheroes dominate the mainstream, there's something uniquely elevated and enduring about the Jedi and their blend of Arthurian and Samurai aesthetics, layered atop belief systems of the Tibetan monks and Greek stoics.

Jedi are special in the pop culture zeitgeist, and everyone in their right mind views them as heroes warding off the

forces of darkness. They are protectors of the weak. Helpers of the needy. Dragon slayers. They sacrifice and toil for others, often at their own peril. Look no further than Disney+'s new Japanese anime anthology series, Star Wars: Visions, for a sense of how admiration of the Jedi calling has crossed oceans and united seven continents with a shared mythological luminary.

So why do the authors of the piece in Scientific American (J. W. Hammond, Sara E. Brownell, Nita A. Kedharnath, Susan J. Cheng, W. Carson Byrd) dub this joyful Star Wars spin on "diversity, equity and inclusion" work to be "problematic"? In their words, the Jedi are "prone to (white) saviorism and toxically masculine approaches to conflict resolution and toxically masculine approaches to conflict resolution (violent duels with phallic lightsabers, gaslighting by means of "Jedi mind tricks," etc.)" They go on to lazily recycle social commentary about the Jedi which you can get from any tipsy young professional at a happy hour who noticed you have X-Wings on your tie or Baby Yoda earrings, and thought you might like to talk about the philosophical questions of Star Wars.

"Exclusionary cult", "dynastic", "eugenic!" You name it, the Jedi are part of the problem that social justice aims to solve. The (mostly white) authors posturing as defenders of marginalized people would prefer DEI work not be connected to heroes with such black marks on their record. Complexity could make people feel unsafe.

It's not a secret. The Jedi failed to live up to their mantle rhetorically handed down to Star Wars fans by Obi-Wan Kenobi in Episode IV: A New Hope (1977), who said "the Jedi Knights were guardians of peace and justice in the Old Republic." As George Lucas' prequel trilogy showed the world, by the end the Jedi Order was anything but. It is precisely why they were relegated to the dustbin of history by the

Sith and their evil Empire.

The Jedi, as fans both deep and casual know, were an order dedicated to upholding the light side of the Force. They had existed for thousands of years before ever being seen on screen at the peak of their opulence and rapid decline in Episode I: The Phantom Menace (1999). As an organization they'd become detached from both the will of the Force and the best interests of the galaxy. They spoke about justice, protecting the weak and never using the Force for attack, and yet, they opted to become soldiers in a civil war. This is because the Jedi had drunk from the cup of power and become wed to a certain status quo in which they could practice their religion and wield technocratic power simultaneously. They'd been compromised.

It's a telling moment when Obi-Wan Kenobi says to his fallen friend, Anakin Skywalker, "My allegiance is to the Republic, to democracy!" Odd, why would a Jedi Order committed to championing the light side of the Force and a prophecy of cosmic balance have formal allegiance to a worldly political regime and the warm rhetorical blanket of "democracy" if not for those constructs merely securing their position atop the galactic food chain?

The Jedi lost their way. Anakin knew this, as did many Jedi who had come before him who entered the Order (albeit conscripted at young ages) in pursuit of high minded ideals. You cannot fully understand Anakin Skywalker's transformation into Darth Vader without understanding that as a child, two Jedi Knights (Obi-Wan Kenobi and Qui-Gon Jinn) came to his homeworld of Tatooine on royal business and observed that slavery was still widespread there only to remark, "We didn't come here to free slaves."

Well why not? Anakin would be stewing on this question for the rest of his young life up to the very moment he led a battal-

ion of Stormtroopers into the Jedi Temple to wipe them all out.

Do these tortured academics think that Star Wars fans don't understand the Jedi's moral contradictions? Do they really think the public and would-be social justice activists will be driven away from participation in their cause because of allusions to Star Wars? This is what happens when activists are chronically online. Their evidence for Star Wars fandom being a culture of turmoil is shoddy hyperlinks to stories about racist troll campaigns amongst "Star Wars fans" on Twitter, and obscure research from 2009 suggesting the presence of sci-fi posters in science classrooms suppresses interest amongst females to pursue scientific fields. Have they ever been outside or talked to human beings, particularly of the child variety?

The Jedi are known heroes for what they represent, not what they became in the twilight of their existence. They were beacons of hope in a galaxy where evil was ascendant, so feared by the wicked that their enemies had to bury Jedi statues and teachings for fear they'd inspire revolution. And in the end they did just that. The Jedi-way and the Jedi Order are not one in the same. This where you can see plain as day, how the prudes authoring the article in question, are only capable of identifying institutional imperfection (an easy task) but never grappling with the ideas that galvanized them.

There were some good points to be found in the article, such as, "When we label our initiatives, we must be careful about the universe of narratives and symbols within which we situate our work—and the cul-

tural associations and meanings that our projects may take on." Fair.

"JEDI connects justice initiatives to corporate capital. JEDI/Jedi is more than just a name: It's a product. Circulating that product's name can promote and benefit the corporation that owns it." This rings true.

Herein lies the real case these writers are aiming to make, free of poorly sourced evidence to Star Wars being a fascist hellscape smuggling regressive "Orientalist" subplots onto the big screen. Tacking JEDI onto diversity, equity and inclusion work is a "distraction," one that cheapens the work these activists claim is so important and also one that offers moral cache to Disney Corporation, who now own the intellectual property of Star Wars. Jedi included.

Star Wars is the most successful and long-standing popular film franchise in the world, and it's merchandising infrastructure is equally powerful. That's a decent cause for skepticism if you're this particular kind of social justice activist. While the Jedi, the lightsaber and the all-encompassing Force hold a special place in the hearts of millions of kids and adults looking to film for heroes to inspire them, it is also true that these things are highly commercialized consumer products sitting on the trophy shelf of Mickey Mouse.

If you're a leftist, or even perhaps a populist conservative, Disney's corporate reach and cultural influence combined with their questionable labor practices, are real cause for concern. It's reasonable to want to draw a line between their dour DEI workshops and a popular brand. Any

sort of positive association between DEI and the robed warriors of the galaxy far, far away eventually funnels money into the pockets of Disney.

Ultimately however, this kind of gross overmoralization and dressing down of zeitgeisty heroes is about something truly sinister. A world without mythic heroes whose virtue and ideals offer hope to everyday people, is one in which these kinds of credentialist scolds will paint themselves as the only moral authority left standing. They will be our heroes. We'll be made to aspire to their creed alone, only after everything else of meaning in our lives from faith, family and fable has been denigrated.

Sometimes I worry these leftist's movements will fully overrun our society, but then you see how publicly imprudent and rash their adherents can be. If the Jedi aren't good enough for them, no one is. Star Wars would be better off in the long run to have distance from social justice fads like DEI initiatives. However, if these activists seeking moral authority over the public are going to try and confiscate the nations lightsabers by writing off the Jedi as "gaslighting" white saviors and their storied weapons as "phallic" extensions of the patriarchy, then Star Wars fans young and old, progressive or conservative, black, white and brown should answer with one voice—come and take them.

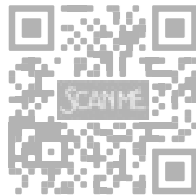
Stephen Kent is the author of *How The Force Can Fix The World: Lessons on Life, Liberty and Happiness from a Galaxy Far, Far Away* and host of *Right Now with Stephen Kent* on YouTube. You can find him on Twitter @Stephen\_kent89



SCAN ME

ARE YOU SOIGNÉ?

# THE PENNSYLVANIA OUTDOORSMEN HUNTED BY CREEPY WILDLIFE OFFICERS



BY TERESA MULL

Ask any outdoorsman in Pennsylvania if he's ever had an unpleasant run-in with a warden of the Game Commission, and chances are he'll laugh and answer, "Oh yeah," then proceed to tell you about an encounter he's had with a wildlife officer interrupting his serene day of hunting or fishing with some bogus complaint.

One friend told me of a time he was out with his grandson waiting in a tree stand for a whitetail to mosey by when an officer barged in on the unsuspecting pair to insinuate they had been illegally baiting deer. He called their attention to a barely visible remnant of a salt lick nearby, which neither hunter knew anything about. They were hunting on a friend's property with permission at the time.

Another man told me that he and his son and the group of friends they hunt with each Thanksgiving holiday had been harassed for years by wildlife officers. According to these hunters, the people who own the property neighboring their land are constantly hunting over the legal limit, baiting deer and breaking other hunting laws, so to put the Game Commission off their scent, they make false accusations and have officers torment the guys next door. The officers are evidently happy to comply.

Another fellow Pennsylvania native I know who now spends most of his time as a big

game hunter and guide in Alaska says he won't even bother hunting in PA when he comes back home, "because the Game Commission is always sniffing around, trying to get you in trouble."

Suffice it to say, the Pennsylvania Game Commission has a lot of power it tends to abuse. That's because in PA, as in many states, we have what's known as "open fields doctrine." These rules, explains the Institute for Justice (IJ), a pro-liberty law firm, have their roots in Prohibition: "After alcohol became illegal, federal agents began searching for illicit stills, often on private land. Many were aghast at this expansion of agents' authority, but the U.S. Supreme Court in 1924 summarily held that the Fourth Amendment – which mentions 'persons, houses, papers, and effects' as being protected from 'unreasonable searches' – does not apply to private land. In one fell swoop, the Court eliminated constitutional protections for over 90% of privately owned land in the United States."

Despite efforts to reverse these unconstitutional mandates, the open fields doctrine is the law of the land throughout much of the country. But IJ is doing something about it, in a Pennsylvania court case challenging warrantless searches of private land.

The Punxsutawney and Pitch Pine hunting clubs are private lodges that own thousands of acres of land in Pennsylvania's Allegheny Mountains. People pay money to join these clubs so they can enjoy the wild, wooded places in privacy and serenity. There are gated entrances, "no trespassing" signs, and privileges only members and their guests can access, at least in theory.

For years, reports IJ, "Pennsylvania wildlife officers have ignored the clubs' efforts to keep out intruders. Like many states, Pennsylvania grants its wildlife officers virtually unlimited power to enter private land whenever they please to snoop around for potential hunting violations. Knowing that, wildlife officers have repeatedly entered the clubs' properties without consent or warrants to spy on members and interrogate them about their compliance with hunting laws."

Can you imagine a police officer appearing in your living room to rummage through your cabinets and drawers in case you might have illicit drugs around? Or have him hang out in your backyard spying on you, just waiting for you to do something wrong? Of course not. He'd need probable cause and a search warrant first. When it comes to private land, though, this isn't the case.

"The property involved is just bigger, that's basically the only difference," explains IJ Attorney Joshua Windham.

The pending Punxsutawney Hunting Club and Pitch Pine Hunting Club v. Pennsylvania Game Commission and Mark Gritzer case centers around a creepy, all-too-common occurrence in Tennessee, Pennsylvania and other states with Warrantless Entry statutes. Jon Mikesell, a Pitch Pine Club member, had reserved the clubhouse for his family's annual vacation over the Fourth of July. Jon's family are largely city-dwellers who don't often get the chance to see wildlife, so he had put out some birdseed to attract common woodland animals.

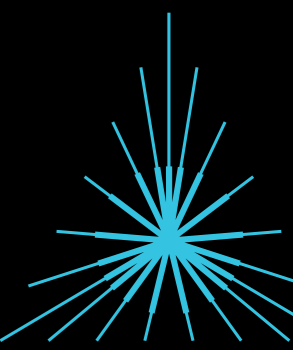
Jon and his family were on the lodge's porch, watching birds and deer eat the seed, when a wildlife officer pulled up in a truck out of nowhere and accused Jon of baiting bears. When Jon asked the officer where he came from, how, and why, the officer explained (from IJ's website): "... he had been spying on Jon and his guests for multiple days from a hidden spot in the woods, and that he would not have been visible because he was wearing camo and had used binoculars to watch them from a distance. Ultimately, the officer left without issuing any citation."

There are countless instances just like this. And it doesn't just affect outdoorsmen, either. Consider the case of Karen A. Anderson-Bagshaw of Ohio. The government set up secret surveillance cameras aimed into her private property to try to prove Bagshaw was committing workers' compensation fraud. In so doing, they caught some pretty private and intrusive footage: a family member urinating on a tree, her naked husband, and so forth. So the next time you're outside, minding your own business, enjoying the silence and tranquility of the great outdoors on "private" property, and you catch an uncanny feeling something or someone is watching you, it may very well be that Big Brother's answer to Elmer Fudd is spying on you too.

Teresa Mull is editor of GunpowderMagazine.com and a widely published freelance writer living in the Pennsylvania Wilds.

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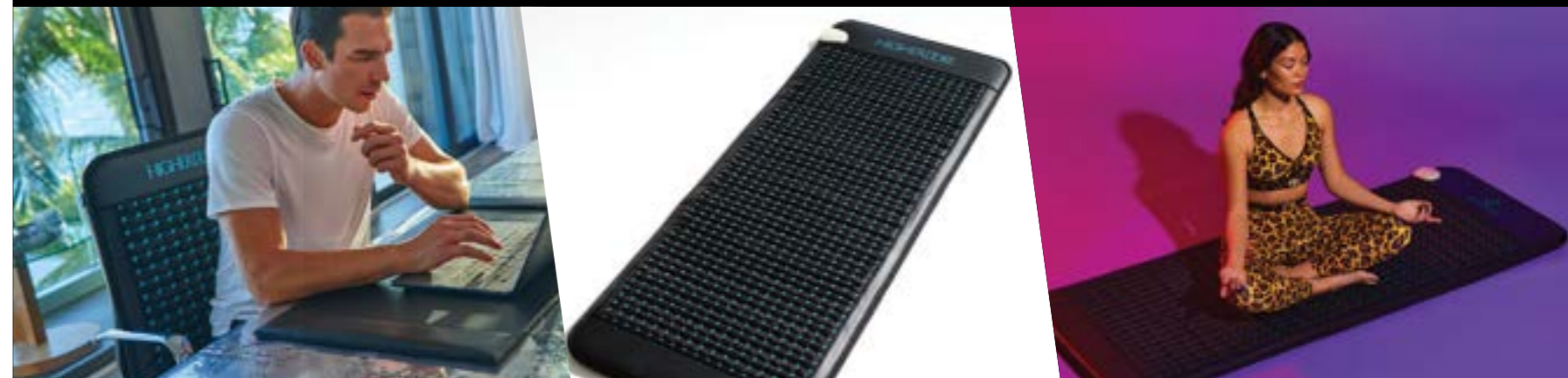
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# FINDING PANDEMIC SOLACE ON THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL

BY MITCHELL GRANT

Our minds wander and wonder at strange thoughts and stories; we daydream of fairy tales and fixate on adventure. We believe that these tales and journeys, these heroes and heroines, live solely in well-written novels or scripts. But they do exist. Or at least the adventures do. It's just a matter of stepping out your front door and letting your feet be swept off to God knows where.

During the latter days of the pandemic, after having moved back in with my parents at the age of thirty-five, my feet were more than willing to take flight. **I was craving some tangible evidence that some semblance of my prior life would come back.** My drugs of fantasy, adventure novels, and television were losing their allure. **Their effects, once a pleasant distraction, now left me craving something more; something a bit harder and all-consuming.** The creation of something worthwhile.

**To solve the conundrum of a shiftless body and an idle mind, my brain was telling me that hiking 2,193 miles within a five-month span seemed like a really great idea.** An idea that I would come to realize involved grueling terrain, multi-day stretches of torrential storms, and a level of hunger that I had, blessedly, never known in my life. This idea led my feet to the Appalachian Trail.

After slogging through the rain for three days with forecasts of fouler weather yet to come, I reached my first iconic stop on the trail: a giant oak tree. **From its many thick branches hung numerous pairs of abandoned boots and shoes.** It was a shrine of sorts to the many hikers that didn't make it. I'm not sure if it's a tradition, or just people owning their shortcomings, but defeated hikers take their shoes, tie them together, and toss them into the tree. **That image and its meaning haunted me all along the trail.** You will be put to the fire, but whatever happens, own it. The forge of my character would come 1,400 miles later, just outside of a town in Connecticut.

**We believe that these tales and journeys, these heroes and heroines, live solely in well-written novels or scripts.**

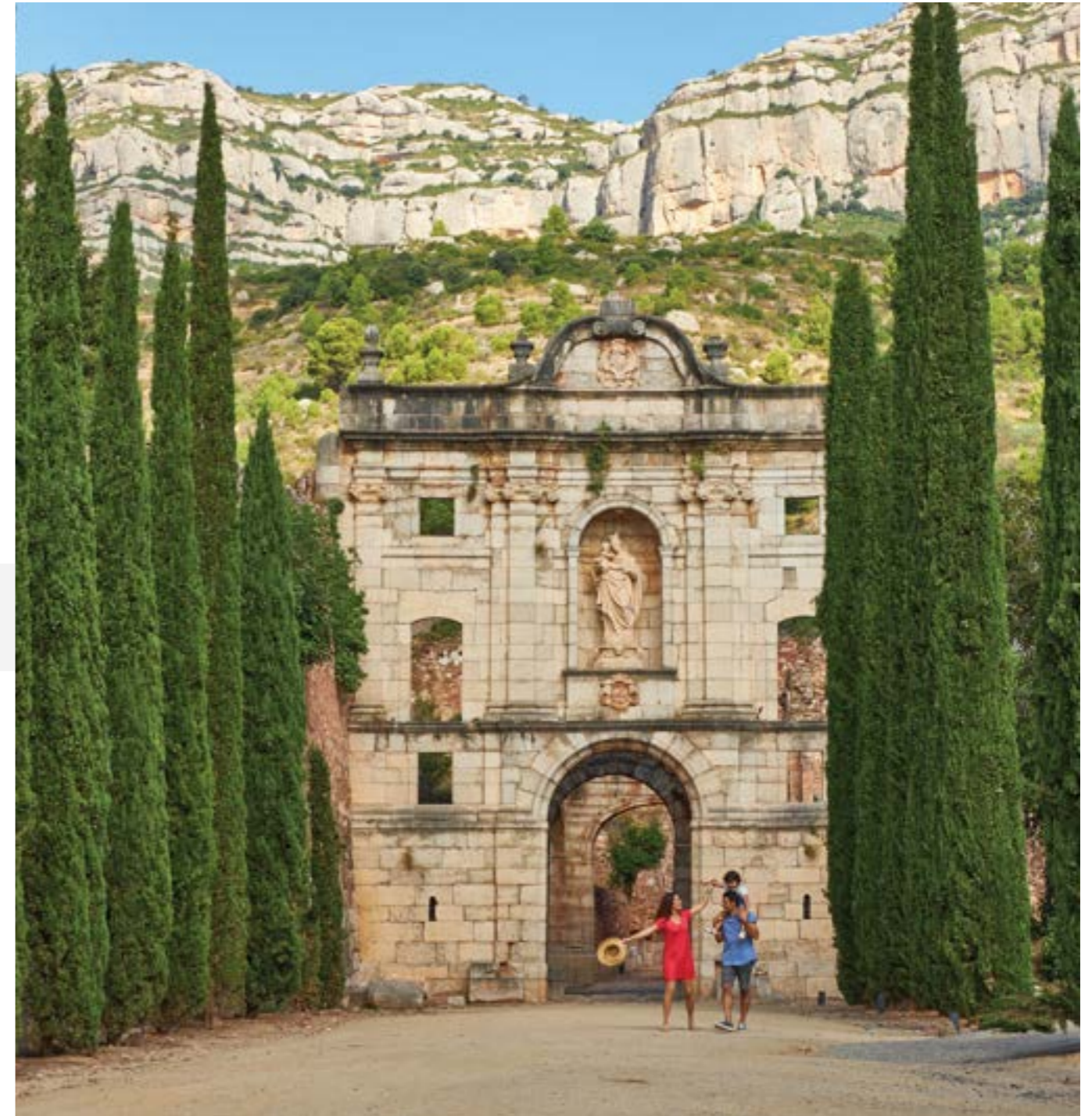
On the morning of July 1, 2021, I woke up in the wee hours of the morning with abdominal cramps and vomiting. I couldn't hold down breakfast, and I soon found out I couldn't keep down water either. With heat indexes exceeding 100 degrees Fahrenheit, every step was a lead weight. Every water source was a reminder of what I needed but couldn't take, and the food which should have sustained me left me before the second bite. For eight hours, or 15 miles in hiker speak, my mind was fixated on its destination. Breathless and faint, consigned to oblivion some moments of the day, I exited off the trailhead and made it to a small grocer in that quaint little Connecticut town. I quite literally stumbled in and grabbed a

Gatorade and downed the entire bottle before I reached the checkout. By the grace of God, I found an open bed at a hostel. I slept for 15 hours and, because I didn't want to discard a new pair of shoes, I got up and continued my march towards Katahdin, 750 miles to the north. The end of my journey.

I could tell you more but it would only be words. And much as the adventure novels ultimately left me empty and needing to experience my own adventure, my words would only leave you without the blessing of your own walk down life's trail. Nothing I could write would tell you what you really want to know. Only you can answer the most important question, which is that, if you were bold enough to open the door and step out on your own adventure, would your boots end up hanging from a tree by some unmarked trailhead? Or would you press on? Marching forward through the wind and the rain until you reached the end of your journey and laid down to die in a good old age full of tales and legends?

Still with your boots on.

## CATALONIA BEYOND BARCELONA:



*An exploration of Tarragona and surrounding areas*

BY CRISTINA SLATTERY

CRISTINA SLATTERY IS MOST WELL KNOWN FOR HER WORK IN THE NEW YORK TIMES, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, FORBES TRAVEL GUIDE, FOODANDWINE.COM, AND TRAVEL+LEISURE.COM





©Alberich Fotografs

The Romans were in Tarragona for seven centuries, a guide tells me as I tour this city about an hour south of Barcelona. Ruins are all around us. The amphitheater by the sea and a Roman tower from the first century are the initial structures from that era that I see. Iberians lived in the region before the Romans came and approximately 4,000 people now reside in Tarragona's Old Town. The Old Town is on top of Tarragona's enormous Roman Circus that was inaugurated in A.D. 96 and whose ruins can be toured. (It is the best-preserved Roman Circus in Europe.) Tarragona's cathedral was built on the remains of the Roman temple. Its construction began in the mid-12th century, and it was consecrated in 1331.

*Tarragona's cathedral was built on the remains of the Roman temple.*

Tarragona is a port city, but it is worth starting a tour of the region south of Catalonia, because the wealth of Roman ruins and the medieval cathedral there are worth a visit. The H10 Imperial Tarraco hotel is conveniently located in the center of the city and would be an excellent choice for those who wish to tour the Old Town. A restaurant that is just a few blocks away from the H10 Imperial Tarraco hotel in the Old Town is Restaurant El Llagut, <https://elllagut.com/>. This restaurant is named after a type of boat that was used on the Ebro River, and one dish that should certainly be tried is their Arroz Romesco, or rice Romesco-style.

Tarragona also makes an excellent starting point for a tour of the surrounding region. The remains of the medieval monastery of Escaladei are about half an hour from Tarragona by car. With its peaceful setting, ongoing construction notwithstanding, a tour of Escaladei helps the visitor understand the lives of the Carthusian monks who lived in this location for centuries. It was one of the richest monasteries in Catalonia and parts of the ruins of the monastery are currently being reconstructed. The wineries of Priorat, however, may be the main draw for today's tourists. One winery, La Conreria d'Scala Dei, grows grapes for red wine primarily but produces some white wines as well. Voltons was started in 1997 by three friends, and one of their red wines has been named one of the 50 Best Wines in the World by Decanter. The slate in the soil and the lack of calcium are two attributes that influence the grapes that are grown in Priorat.

If a traveler wishes to explore other monasteries and the medieval heritage of Catalonia, Poblet and Santes Creus monasteries should be on the itinerary. Not in Priorat, but nearby, Santes Creus, founded in 1160, was an influential monastery through the 19th century. It was a Cistercian monastery, and like

the monks at Escaladei, the monks who lived here attempted to live completely in silence. There was a passageway they used when it was essential that they speak to one another. There is an interactive exhibit that explains in detail how the monks lived, and the architecture, including the magnificent gargoyles that look down captivating visitors from the archways. The beautiful Gothic church contains the tombs of two kings and a queen from the Middle Ages, although Poblet has more tombs of nobles from that time period.

*Reus is the birthplace of Antoni Gaudí, the master architect who designed Barcelona's basilica, La Sagrada Família*

If seeing a Modernist architectural jewel is the goal, a visit to another lively city not far from Tarragona, Reus, is the perfect destination. The Casa Navàs, designed by architect Lluís Domènech i Montaner, was built in the early 20th century. Roses have been carved into walls and flowers decorate the stained glass windows that are found in different parts of this exceptional home. Reus is the birthplace of Antoni Gaudí, the master architect who designed Barcelona's basilica, La Sagrada Família, and there is a small museum dedicated to him across the square from Casa Navàs. The location of his birthplace is also noted on a nearby street.

Final stops for those winding their way back to Barcelona or Tarragona by car could include another winery in a small denomination called Conca de Barberà, and a medieval town called Montblanc. The family-owned winery, Rende Masdeu, has a few rooms attached to it where visitors can stay the night, and there is a restaurant above it. No chemicals are added to these wines, and cava, the Span-



ish sparkling wine similar to champagne, is also produced by the family. Montblanc, home to excellent bakeries, is a historic town in which people currently live within some parts of its medieval walls. Founded in 1163, the town is in no way a museum, but its well-preserved walls were first constructed in the 14th century. It took four centuries to build the cathedral in Montblanc, and work was suspended when the Black Death came in 1348 and ravaged the region. When touring

the cathedral's exterior, the marks made by the original craftsmen that denoted their identities can still be seen.

If a visitor is traveling to Barcelona, it would be wise to dedicate some time to see the architecturally significant monuments and cities that are south and west of the Catalan capital. The food, wine, art and architecture are worth the venture.



# the **WONDER OF** Women AND Men

BY SALLY HALL

In a 1943 issue of *The American Scholar*, William Moulton Marston said: "Not even girls want to be girls so long as our feminine archetype lacks force, strength, and power. Not wanting to be girls, they don't want to be tender, submissive, peace-loving as good women are. Women's strong qualities have become despised because of their weakness. The obvious remedy is to create a feminine character with all the strength of Superman plus all the allure of a good and beautiful woman." He designed Wonder Woman during the women's movement of his time to reflect his conception of an empowered, independent female character.

In most adaptations, Wonder Woman is Princess Diana of the all-female Amazon warrior tribe, based on Greek mythology. "Diana" is the Roman name for the Greek goddess Artemis. Diana, the Amazon ambassador to the larger world, was awarded several gifts by the Olympian gods, including the Lasso of Truth and indestructible bracelets/gauntlets that deflected bullets.

This vision of Wonder Woman was born out of the women's and later feminist movements and presents as a role model to the world. A superwoman - come to save the day. A female legend imbued with divine purpose.

Yet it also denies central aspects of womanhood, like those taught by Jewish and Christian traditions, the power of motherhood, the God-given instinct to nurture and care, and the incredible capacity to empathize. In other words, we are God's wonder women and men - here to save the day. People who rise up and fulfill our purposes and become spiritual parents and leaders who understand what is at stake and rise up to fight for families, homes, community, nation.

In this day and age, it is essential to remind ourselves of the divine legacy we are heirs. To remind ourselves that we are more than conquerors, to remind ourselves that the legend never dies, and the story continues. Remember that we are fearfully and wonderfully made and have a divine purpose ... to save the day!

# THE *Easy Pasture*

BY JOHN MATTHEW GILLEN  
@GANGSTERPRIEST

There is an easy pasture  
Beyond the boiling tempest  
Of Right and Wrong

Where Fear's  
Greedy shadow  
Cannot fall

Where the tender Earth  
Keeps secret  
Her valley of peace

And dew from kind grass  
Anoints the bellies  
Of chewing beasts

Where homegrown clouds  
Turn Golden light  
Silver

And tigers  
Clean lambswool  
With their tongues

It is that land  
Which our land  
Becomes

For the miracle

Was You

All along



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Impressions  
**4,827,934**

Clicks And Engagement  
**89,515**

Store Visits  
**9621**

Clicks  
**7,918**

Cost Of Acquisition  
**\$0.47**

Ad Spent  
**\$4,542.42**

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# SOIGNÉ INVESTIGATES

## HELL *in* Tajikistan

CONTENT WARNING  
GRAPHIC VIOLENCE



This article contains research and original reporting obtained in partnership with Human Rights activists in Tajikistan

Edited by Jadan Horyn

The Pamiris are a tiny minority residing in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region or the Pamirs. The Pamiris, unlike the rest of Tajikistan's titular nation, are Ismaili Muslims -- followers of the Aga Khan -- rather than Sunni Muslims. The Pamiris were instrumental in fighting the communist government in Tajikistan shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s.

The Pamiris joined the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) alliance with other opposition parties in Tajikistan, including the Democratic Party of Tajikistan and the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan. In the spring of 1992, the conflict with the communist supporters escalated into a devastating civil war in the country. The pro-communist forces were able to defeat the united opposition groups and regain control of the country primarily with the help of Russia and Uzbekistan. Pro-communist troops seized power in the capital of the country, which was accompanied by massacres of Pamiris in Dushanbe and adjacent territories. The civil war claimed the lives of tens of thousands of Pamiris, the majority of whom were civilians. However, because the Pamiris, who are distinct from Tajiks with their own languages, beliefs and culture, were not acknowledged as a separate ethnic group in Soviet censuses, international human rights groups did not recognize the mass murder of the Pamiris during the civil war as an act of genocide or ethnic cleansing.

Since the end of the civil war in 1997, the

regime in Dushanbe, which is still in power to this day, began steadily subjugating this province while simultaneously reducing its autonomy, despite the fact that the prov-



Colonel Mamadbokirov

minated in a major armed conflict in 2012. The current confrontation in the GBAO is, in fact, a continuation and outcome of the civil war in the 1990s, in which the warring sides did not come to peace on their own but were compelled to sign a peace accord by outside forces in 1997. As a result, the main issues that led to the civil war, such as regional disparities in development, minorities' lack of rights and freedoms, and many others, have never been resolved. President Emomali Rahmon, one of the warlords who has fought the Pamiris since the beginning of the civil war, now intends to end the war, he stated at the end of the last century, by assassinating the remaining Pamiri commanders in order to completely subjugate the GBAO and its people.

The extrajudicial execution of 29-year-old Gulbiddin Ziyabekov by Tajik law enforcement on Nov. 25, 2021, led to a recent protest in Khorog, the administrative center of the GBAO of Tajikistan. Ziyabekov was accused of beating local prosecutor A. Abirzod, a Sunni Tajik, for attempting to sexually abuse a local Ismaili girl, Ziyabekov's neighbor. The murder of Ziyabekov was nothing but an act of state revenge. After the murder of Ziyabekov, thousands of people gathered in Khorog, demanding that the law enforcement officers responsible for his death be found and brought to justice. At the same time, a spontaneous unauthorized rally of almost 3,000 ethnic Pamirs living in Russia

ince's autonomy was guaranteed in the last constitution of the USSR and the Constitution of Tajikistan. This confrontation between Dushanbe and the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) cul-

my of the Pamir region. Dismemberment and de-autonomization of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) is the stated goal of the authorities in Dushanbe.

The Tajik authorities in Khorog preferred to use force instead of negotiating a solution.

Special forces snipers took up positions on the buildings surrounding the central square and opened fire on the demonstrators, injuring 13 and killing two participants in the clash with police. Fearing for the safety of the protesters, the protest leaders were forced to disperse the crowd, hoping that the authorities would restore the internet in the region and would not persecute the protesters. The internet in Khorog and most surrounding areas was taken offline.

### What sparked the most recent confrontation in Khorog?

The most high-profile example is Sharofiddin Gadoev, who was reportedly brought to Russia by the Russian secret service to negotiate a change in Russia's policy toward Tajikistan. He was transferred to back Tajikistan after arriving in Moscow. He was released to Europe after European governments intervened. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees made a resolution on it, acknowledging Gadoev's abduction.

However, the first high-profile arrests and deportations of Pamiri activists did not occur until after the most recent protest in Khorog in November. Chorshanbe Chorshanбиеv is an ethnic Pamiri, a blogger, and a mixed martial arts fighter. He was also the first to be arrested and extradited to Dushanbe by Russia's security forces. His sole flaw was that he stated that he was a Pamiri and did not consider himself a Tajik on his YouTube blogs, which are popular among Pamiris. The Tajik security forces wanted his extradition to Tajikistan due to the deterioration of the situation in the Pamirs, as his detention was required for Tajikistan's special services to explain their activities in Khorog about purported separatist activities there. Following Chorshanбиеv's detention, Russian security authorities detained and deported Amriddin Alovatshoev, another Pamiri informal leader residing in Moscow, to Tajikistan in January. He was one of the organizers of the November 2021 rallies in front of the Tajik embassy in Moscow protesting Ziebekov's unlawful killing.



Lord Ahmad and Rukhshonai Emomali



Rahmon and President Donald J. Trump

was organized near the Tajik embassy in Moscow.

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### What is happening in Khorog, Tajikistan, as of Feb. 6?

Mamadbokir Mamadbokirov, one of the informal leaders of the Pamiris and a former colonel who was a member of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) during the country's civil war in the early 1990s, is expected to be arrested, or killed if he resists, by security forces.

"Last night and all day today, a crowd of people, including women, gathered near his house, organizing a round-the-clock watch to protect him. The government dispatched a large force to the city of Khorog, the capital of Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakhshan region, in order to apprehend Mamadbokir and crush any local resistance. If the government tries to solve the situation by force, which they probably will, there will be many dead on both sides."

"Unarmed friends and neighbors with protect Mamadbokirov, even if it means risking their own lives, as they consider him a Robin Hood of the Pamirs."

Ordinary people from Khorog and other districts have turned to Mamadbokir, a military Commander who listens to people's problems. The authorities see Mamadbokirov as a person capable of resisting their plans to liquidate the auto-

my of the Pamir region. Dismemberment and de-autonomization of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) is the stated goal of the authorities in Dushanbe.

What role does Russia play in the political trafficking of CIS civic activists? More than 30 political officials, opposition leaders, and regular activists residing in Russia who have spoken out against Tajikistan's political regime have been extradited by Moscow.

The most high-profile example is Sharofiddin Gadoev, who was reportedly brought to Russia by the Russian secret service to negotiate a change in Russia's policy toward Tajikistan. He was transferred to back Tajikistan after arriving in Moscow. He was released to Europe after European governments intervened. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees made a resolution on it, acknowledging Gadoev's abduction.

However, the first high-profile arrests and deportations of Pamiri activists did not occur until after the most recent protest in Khorog in November. Chorshanbe Chorshanбиеv is an ethnic Pamiri, a blogger, and a mixed martial arts fighter. He was also the first to be arrested and extradited to Dushanbe by Russia's security forces. His sole flaw was that he stated that he was a Pamiri and did not consider himself a Tajik on his YouTube blogs, which are popular among Pamiris. The Tajik security forces wanted his extradition to Tajikistan due to the deterioration of the situation in the Pamirs, as his detention was required for Tajikistan's special services to explain their activities in Khorog about purported separatist activities there. Following Chorshanбиеv's detention, Russian security authorities detained and deported Amriddin Alovatshoev, another Pamiri informal leader residing in Moscow, to Tajikistan in January. He was one of the organizers of the November 2021 rallies in front of the Tajik embassy in Moscow protesting Ziebekov's unlawful killing.

### The roles of Russia and China in the conflict

What is alarming about this development is that Chinese and Russian security officials are actively assisting the Tajik regime in suppressing the Pamiris, while the international human rights organization and Western nations are oblivious to what is going on in Tajikistan.



MMA Fighter Chorshanбиеv

Their indifference to a probable genocide and humanitarian disaster is deafening.

If this confrontation in GBAO enters a hot phase, which now seems inevitable, both China and Russia will be involved in it, at least this is what the current regime in Tajikistan is counting on. China and Russia clearly do not want a Western presence in the region.

This may be seen in the way they have coordinated their efforts to topple former Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev. Nazarbayev, who was the de facto head of state until the recent crisis in Kazakhstan, pursued a multi-pronged external strategy. He has established good relations with all major players, including China, Russia, the Arab world, Turkey, and the West. Kazakhstan, with its large oil reserves, has long depended on Western oil companies.

Russia and China are increasingly worried about the presence of the West in Kazakhstan, which they see as a necessary sphere of influence to achieve their geopolitical goals. Kassym-Jomart Kemelevich Tokayev, the new president of Kazakhstan, who previously functioned only as a token president and puppet in the hands of



Nazarbayev, has now decided to restore his legitimate authority by calling on Russia to intervene militarily in Kazakhstan. Russian President Vladimir Putin enthusiastically agreed. Russia quickly dispatched a small detachment of "peacekeeping" battalions to Kazakhstan to bring peace and order as part of the Collective Security Treaty Organization pact. By sending its troops to Kazakhstan, Russia also wanted to convey the message that it is ready to take action to prevent similar unrest and political chaos in other Moscow-friendly countries, including Tajikistan. Both Chinese and Russian leaders thus agreed that the rebellion was organized externally, ambiguously referring to the Western alliance.

With the support of China and Russia, the current repressive regime of Tajikistan seeks to crush and subjugate the country's problematic ethnic minorities, the Ismaili Pamiris, in a similar scenario. In poverty-stricken Tajikistan, we do not see the presence of transnational Western oil corporations that need to be removed from the country, but the main target will be the presence of AKDN institutions, which both China and Russia increasingly see as pro-Western. In addition, authoritarian dictatorship is the only form of government that would ensure China's strategic interests in Central Asia.

As a result, China has little tolerance for societies where public opinion matters and individuals may protest decisions that are not in the nation's best interests. This was the situation in Kyrgyzstan, the region's only democracy, where 47 demonstrations registered between 2018 and 2020 were targeting Chinese enterprises. While in Tajikistan there was only one anti-China protest during the same time period, which was organized against the handover of Tajikistan's land to China and took place in protesting GBAR.

Both the Kyrgyz and the Pamiris had to be dealt with because they threatened China's neocolonial ambitions in Central Asia. The Pamir region is of particular importance to Chinese officials. Because of its proximity to Xinjiang, this mountainous region is seen as one of the PRC's defensive strongholds on the western frontier. Chinese pressure has therefore prompted Dushanbe's display of attempting to "restore order in GBAR." In dealing with the Pamiri minority in GBAO, the Tajik authorities appear to be emulating China's strategies for dealing with Muslim minorities in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR).

Daughter of dictator in the Foggy Albion The West, on the other hand, appears to be helping the autocratic Tajik regime and turning a blind eye to the Central Asian country's minority rights concerns. This is particularly obvious in the U.K.'s decision to designate Rukhnona Emomali, daughter of Tajik President Rahmon, as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of

the Republic of Tajikistan to the U.K., which enraged Pamiri activists and Tajik opposition leaders. Rukhshona Emomali is not only the daughter of the most murderous dictator in the post-Soviet space, but also the wife of Shamsullo Sohibov, an infamous Tajik businessman accused by Tajikistan's civil society of involvement in the worst corrupt and offshore deals, money laundering, illegal business seizure and raiding, and the murder of civil activists.



Alovatshoev - A Leader of Pamiri Diaspora in Russia

The ratification of this candidacy by the U.K., one of the world's foremost beacons of democracy and freedom, can be seen by other dictators and totalitarian states as a signal for the transfer of corrupt institutions to Western countries. Such a measure will completely suppress the smoldering civil society in these countries and will serve as an example of disregard for universal human values and the achievements of democratic principles and norms, a policy that will put political expediency above universal human values. This decision will have serious repercussions for the civil society of Tajikistan, the international authority and prestige of the U.K., the Royal Family, and the parliamentary majority, as well as international principles for the protection and implementation of human rights.

#### What comes next

With regard to the population of GBAO, the current Tajik regime will implement two strategic plans: short-term and long-term.

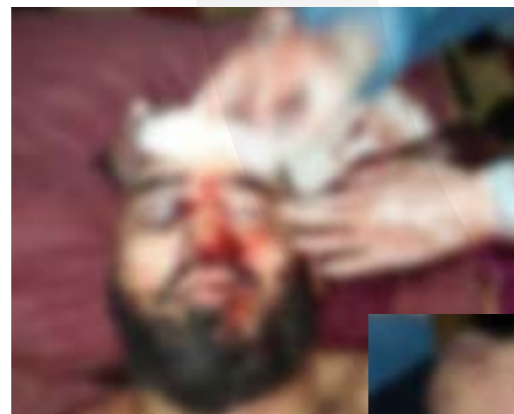
The short-term strategy involves fomenting unrest in and around Khorog. This will be achieved through the arrest and liquidation of the top informal leaders of Khorog, in respect of whom the Tajik law enforcement agencies have already issued an arrest warrant on allegations of creating and

leading organized criminal groups (OCGs) in the region. Following the previous November protests in Khorog, the authorities are howling about the presence of a so-called organized crime group in the region. Local residents, especially state employees such as teachers of secondary schools and health workers of the region, are forced to give interviews to local and national television in order to expose these "criminal gangs." This was done in order to blame local residents for the impending massacre in Khorog.

As a result of the future unrest, large numbers of local residents and military personnel will die, government buildings will be set on fire and infrastructure destroyed. With military-technical assistance from Russia and China, the uprising will ultimately be suppressed. That is where things get a little more intriguing. The authorities will point the finger at an "outside force" for organizing the massacre, as the Kazakh authorities did in the case of the recent riots. They will quickly identify AKDN as a scapegoat, which will be seen as initiating and coordinating the riots from the west.

Now that the local population is no longer under the protection and support of the AKDN, a long-term policy of partial depopulation of GBAO and forcible assimilation of its inhabitants will be pursued. This may include the forcible resettlement of its inhabitants, and the massive resettlement of Tajik Sunnis and Uzbeks from the plains of Tajikistan to Khorog and other places, and the forced assimilation of the surviving residents. This process will go hand-in-hand with the aggressive expansion of China's military and economic presence in the region.

The result will be the genocide of the Pamiri and the silence of the West. Soigné reached out for the official government position on the situation. This is their response in part. S



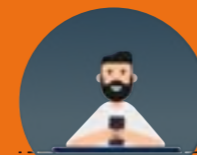
The extrajudicial execution of Gulbiddin Ziyobekov



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