CONCERNED CITIZEN
WHO ARE YOUR PEOPLE?
THE ADVOCATE

DEMOCRACY
by the people
FOR ONE EVENING IN NOVEMBER, the Forum was remade into the White House Situation Room. The imagined scenario: a crisis in 2021 as North Korea fires a test missile far into the Pacific Ocean, with experts convinced this advance in the country’s capabilities was funded by a new Chinese digital currency. The assembled group, which included former Cabinet members and presidential advisers such as Lawrence Summers, Meghan O’Sullivan, and Ash Carter, dove deeply into the substance of the matter. Just as valuable, their firsthand knowledge of how personalities, agendas, and imperfect information play vital roles in decision making.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WHEN I SPEAK TO PEOPLE ON MY TRAVELS, or to people who are visiting Harvard Kennedy School from across the United States and around the globe, they often ask me what we are doing to strengthen democracy and democratic institutions at a time when they appear to be under threat. In this issue of the magazine, we offer some answers to that important question.

Many of our faculty, students, alumni, and staff are committed to making democracy count. We have efforts underway to increase civic participation, strengthen democratic institutions, train leaders to be more responsive to their citizens, and improve accuracy in the media and the public sphere. All of these elements are crucial to a healthy democracy, and our efforts bring together knowledgeable members of the Kennedy School community with concerned political and civic leaders from outside the School.

In this issue, you can read essays by some of our faculty members whose scholarship and professional experience bear on democracy. These essays represent a range of perspectives and academic disciplines—covering redistricting, increased polarization and the rise of populism, racial inequality, misinformation in the media, and more. We have gathered these wide-ranging essays together under the title “By the People,” evoking President Abraham Lincoln’s appeal in the Gettysburg Address that “government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

This issue’s alumni stories also underscore the power of civic participation. Nisreen Haj Ahmad MC/MPP 2008 is teaching community groups in the Arab world about organizing—drawing on what she learned from Marshall Ganz, the Rita E. Hauser Senior Lecturer in Leadership, Organizing, and Civil Society at the Kennedy School. Christina Fletes MPA 2016 is striving to increase democratic participation in the United States as a California-based voting rights lawyer. And Manivannan Ponniah MC/MPP 2016 applies Marshall Ganz’s organizing experience to convincing underrepresented populations, participate in the democratic process.

I hope you enjoy reading about the varied ways that Harvard Kennedy School is examining and improving democracy and democratic institutions in the United States and across the world.

I wish you all the best for 2020.

Dean Doug Elmendorf

Don K. Price Professor of Public Policy

January 2020

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IN THIS ISSUE


26 Concerned Citizen Working from within the bureaucracy, Manivanan Ponniah MC/MPP 2019 struggles to create a democratic forum for citizens and clean up a city.


36 The Advocate Christina Fletes MPA 2016 wants to make sure that all Americans, especially those from underrepresented populations, participate in the democratic process.

DEPARTMENTS

4 Ideas Democracy | Research briefs

8 Profiles Joe Goldman MPP 2003 | Maia Sandu MC/MPP 2010

9 Faculty Dan Levy

10 Bully pulpit George Will, Jeff Flake, Arthur Brooks | David King | LaTosha Brown | Mark Carmey | Tara Westover | Ngugi Okonjo-Iweala | M. T. Gomes

42 In print The Education of an Idealist | Legitimacy | How America Lost Its Mind | Valuing U.S. National Parks and Programs | Do Morals Matter?

44 Alumni voices Classnotes | From the field: Zeenith Ebrahim MC/MPP 2019 | Jennifer Kao PhD 2019 | Hoang Bui MPP 2019 | Maria Soledad Rueda MC/MPP 2019

62 Ways and means Jill Wagner MPA 1983

64 Exit poll

Cover: March For Our Lives, 2018 by Shannon Finney; type treatment by Delaine Meadows
MAKE DEMOCRACY COUNT

Efforts to MAKE DEMOCRACY COUNT are underway across Harvard Kennedy School. Many faculty members and programs focus on increasing citizen participation, strengthening democratic institutions, training leaders to be more responsive to their citizens, and improving transparency and accuracy in the media and the public sphere.

- The Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative trains mayors and senior city leaders from across the country and around the world to be more responsive to citizens’ needs.
- The Legislative Negotiation Project teaches legislators to work together effectively across the aisle.
- The Politics of the Press class taught by Nancy Gibbs.
- Democracy, Politics, and Institutions class taught by Thomas Patterson.
- Discontent and Disobedience in Democracies class taught by Arthur Applaum.
- Media Manipulation and Disinformation Campaigns class taught by Joan Donovan.
- The Rise of Authoritarian Populism class taught by Pippa Norris.
- The Making Democracy Count Seminar Series examines ways to strengthen democracy and public participation in government.
- Organizing: People, Power, Change class taught by Marshall Ganz.
- The Politics of the Press class taught by Nancy Gibbs.
- Democracy, Politics, and Institutions class taught by Thomas Patterson.
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IDEAS

- Archon Fung Winthrop Laflin McCormack Professor of Citizenship and Self-Government studies public participation, deliberation, and transparency.
- Harvard Votes Challenge increases voter registration on campus.
- Khalil Muhammad Professor of History, Race and Public Policy examines the intersections of race, democracy, inequality, and criminal justice in modern U.S. history.
- Jane Mansbridge Political Leadership studies representation, democratic deliberation, and everyday activism.
- Marshall Ganz Rita E. Hauser Senior Lecturer in Leadership, Organizing, and Civil Society teaches social movements.
- John Robert Macbride Adams Professor of Political Leadership and Democratic Values studies representation, democratic deliberation, and everyday activism.
- Marshall Ganz Rita E. Hauser Senior Lecturer in Leadership, Organizing, and Civil Society teaches social movements.
- Miles Rapoport Senior Practice Fellow in American Democracy and visiting faculty member E.J. Dionne explore universal participation policies such as compulsory voting.
- Cornell Williams Brooks Professor of the Practice of Public Leadership and Social Justice explores making democracy more racially inclusive.
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ENGAGED CITIZENS

- The Making Democracy Count Seminar Series examines ways to strengthen democracy and public participation in government.

MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

- The Politics of the Press class taught by Nancy Gibbs.
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RESPONSIVE LEADERS

- The Making Democracy Count Seminar Series examines ways to strengthen democracy and public participation in government.

HIGH-QUALITY INSTITUTIONS

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The Physics of Dissent

HOW DO “PEOPLE POWER” movements succeed when only a small number of the people take part? Berthold Beitz Professor in Human Rights and International Affairs ERICA CHENOWETH’S recent article in Nature Human Behavior, “The Physics of Dissent and the Effects of Movement Momentum,” argues that a basic law of physics—

\[ \text{mass} \times \text{velocity} = \text{momentum} \]

—can be applied to analyze social movements. Using data about the potential effects of social momentum on sudden leadership changes in African countries from 1990 to 2014, Chenoweth and her coauthor, University of Kent’s Margherita Belgioioso, show that even when participation (mass) is low, if a social movement is characterized by a large number of protest events in a short span of time (high velocity), it can quickly gain the tremendous momentum needed to effect social change.

The Making of Moral Character

INTENTIONAL CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT has recently become a focus of many schools and applied programs, and research on fostering moral character has been on the rise. According to a new article in the Journal of Character & Leadership Development by DANA BORN, a lecturer in public policy, this research tends to focus on two areas: moral reasoning, which consists of individuals’ assessment of what is moral in a series of social problems; and moral excellence, which derives from individuals’ character-related values or virtues. “Empirical Assessment: Two Facets of Moral Maturity” explores the two components in detail and uses empirical data to test whether they are linked. Born finds that moral reasoning and moral excellence are not necessarily related—an important distinction in the ongoing conversation about how to foster moral maturity across society.

The Risky Business of Portrait Painting

ARISTOTLE’S POETICS describes a good portrait as “a likeness which is true to life and yet more beautiful.” But throughout the history of commissioned art, both truth and beauty have often taken a back seat to power and political calculus. “Risky Business: Commissioning Portraits in Renaissance Italy,” a new working paper by RICHARD ZECKHAUSER, the Frank Plumpont Ramsey Professor of Political Economy, explores the dark underbelly of portraiture in Renaissance Italy and the risks incurred by both patron and painter in commissioning official art. Paintings could be unflattering, unrecognized, scandalous, judged too ambitious or indecorous, or never show up at all—leading to potential reputational risk and ruin for artists, clergy members, and those in (or trying to ascend to) the highest echelons of power. Zeckhauser and coauthor Jonathan Nelson, an HKS research fellow from Syracuse University Florence, explore several examples of paintings gone wrong—including that of the art world’s favorite mystery woman, the Mona Lisa.

Running out of STEM

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATH (STEM) jobs are key to the growth of our national economy and vital to promoting technological innovation worldwide. So why do STEM workers seem always to be in short supply? Professor of Public Policy DAVID DEMING, in his new HKS Faculty Research Working Paper, “STEM Careers and the Changing Skill Requirements of Work,” finds that STEM is characterized by more rapid change and turnover than are other fields of employment. The reason: As technology advances and new skills are required, the skills of older STEM workers become obsolete, leading to a disproportionately younger workforce and a declining rate of return on initially high-value STEM degrees. Deming’s findings provide an explanation for patterns in work and education returns across STEM and highlight the important impact of STEM jobs on the diffusion of new technology across the labor market.

Notion of Immigrants

DOES RECENT IMMIGRANT LINEAGE INFLUENCE the legislative behavior of members of Congress? It’s an important question as the “nation of immigrants” struggles to craft and implement fair and humane immigration policy. In “Descended from Immigrants and Revolutionists: How Family Immigration History Shapes Representation in Congress,” Assistant Professor of Public Policy BENJAMIN SCHNEER and two coauthors look to the past to better understand how legislators’ immigrant backgrounds affected their behavior, using census data to infer immigrant identity and going over more than five decades’ worth of congressional votes and floor speeches from 1915 to 1971—a period that included the closing of the border in the 1920s and the reshaping of immigration law in 1965. They found that members of Congress born abroad, or whose parents or grandparents were born abroad, voted for pro-immigration policies more often than those further removed from the immigrant experience, even when the makeup of their districts or their ideologies would have predicted otherwise. The results, the researchers say, shed light on current political dynamics. As on so much else, the parties have diverged, and Democrats are considerably closer to the immigrant experience than Republicans, which helps explain why immigration policy does not enjoy the bipartisan support it once did.

Deflating Standardized Tests

IN A SYSTEM that increasingly measures educational quality by test scores, the stakes for standardized exams have become incredibly high, in many cases affecting rates of high school graduation, school closures and funding levels, grade retention (students repeating a year), and educator pay. “The Causes and Consequences of Test Score Manipulation: Evidence from the New York Regents Examinations,” published in the American Economic Journal: Applied Economics, finds that New York’s high school exit exams were plagued by extensive and widespread score manipulation. Professor of Public Policy WILL DOBBIE and coauthors found that this manipulation had both helpful and harmful effects: Score inflation increased students’ probability of graduating from high school by nearly 17 percent, but decreased their likelihood of taking more-advanced classes by nearly 10 percent. The findings add to an ongoing conversation about the realities of standardized testing and its effects on the overall performance of students across the public school system.
JOE GOLDMAN MPP 2003 has been working on democracy, in one way or another, for much of his life. You could say it started when he helped design an electoral process at his suburban Chicago high school, continued during college when he began working in the field of public deliberations, and went from there, as he established his credentials in the field, connecting public voices to decision making. Then in 2010, frustrated by the siloed decision making. Then in 2010, frustrated by the siloed approach to pro-democracy work, Goldman spent a couple of weeks figuring out how he could finally do justice in an online environment to the ideas and teaching we are known for. We have always strived to help our students make a positive impact in solving public problems, and remote teaching technology now allows us to expand our reach and bring HKS to the world in a way that was not feasible before.

Do you have typical students in mind? Successful mid-career professionals who want to improve their communities and the world around them and who for whatever reason—professional, financial, personal—cannot come to the Kennedy School for a year or two to get one of our residential master’s degrees. They have to be willing to devote about 10 hours a week to the course they enroll in.

What do you hope learners will get out of the program? We hope they get what we hope all our students get from the Kennedy School: an improved environment.

How does the program use the Kennedy School’s learning methods? One of the facets we are very proud of is that our faculty and learning designers worked very hard and creatively to bring the Kennedy School’s signature pedagogies to the online format. Three key approaches we use are case studies, simulations, and group work. Effectively enabling each of these online required thinking carefully about the comparative advantages of the online environment.

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Technology has now matured to the point where we felt we could finally do justice in an online environment to the ideas and teaching we are known for. For more information visit onlinelearning.hks.harvard.edu.

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PROFILE

A REFORMER, INTERRUPTED

Moldovan politician Maia Sandu MC/MPA 2010 surprised everyone but herself when she became prime minister. She attacked corruption and began to rebuild institutions in her country until her coalition government was toppled by the old guard. But she’s not done yet.

BY JAMES F. SMITH

JOINING ONE-THIRD OF THE ADULTS IN MOLDOVA, Europe’s poorest country, Maia Sandu MC/MPA 2010 left home a decade ago to pursue education and opportunity abroad, earning a Harvard Kennedy School degree and then working for the World Bank in Washington. But unlike most young Moldovans, she went back, determined to use her education and management skills to repair a corrupt political system that was destroying her homeland.

Within a few years, the young technocrat joined the Cabinet, established a pro-European political party, ran for president (narrowly losing), and then, last June, engineered an unlikely coalition that made her prime minister of the small former Soviet republic, sandwiched between Ukraine and Romania. In office, she confronted billionaire oligarchs and pro-Russian Socialists who had vied with one another for control over government coffers.

Sandu’s tenure as prime minister ended in November, after just five months; her foes ousted her through a no-confidence vote when she refused to back down from reforming a court system that had been charged by the European Court of Human Rights with endemic corruption. But she’s determined to bring her country fully into Europe and into a more hopeful future.

“I will definitely continue the fight,” Sandu told HKS Magazine following her ouster. “The situation in my country is difficult, especially because voters who believe in democracy continue to emigrate, but I am still hopeful for Moldova and will work hard to contribute to building a democratic country, with good governance.”

Sandu broke onto Moldova’s national—and fractured—political stage immediately after returning from the United States in 2012. She was appointed education minister—and quickly showed her resolve to modernize her homeland. She enacted numerous reforms, including installing video cameras in exam rooms to end widespread cheating, hiring to educate teachers down 50 percent, according to one study. Sandu infuriated vested interests but won growing public admiration.

Frustrated by the entrenched corruption she witnessed, she founded a new political party—the Party of Action and Solidarity—in 2015, and ran for president a year later, drawing 48 percent of the vote in the runoff. Her party became a credible force in Parliament in the reformist pro-European bloc.

After inconclusive parliamentary elections in February 2019, Sandu forged a coalition with the old-guard, pro-Russian Socialists. Their shared goal was to squeeze out the wealthy oligarch Vladimir Plahotniuc, whose ruling party was accused of living off theft from nearly every public institution. Moldovans endured a weeklong constitutional crisis in June, with her foes blocking government buildings. Sandu stood firm, and a court ruling prompted Plahotniuc and several allies to back down and leave the country in their private jets. Sandu became prime minister, vowing to pursue a policy of “de-oligarchization.”

In an interview with HKS Magazine in Washington in September, she recalled the tense days of recruiting technocrats and separatists to join her cabinet. (For the first time in Moldova, the cabinet had more women than men.) Some said yes because they were certain that Sandu would never take office. “I think I was the only one who believed there was a chance for this government to happen,” she said.

The challenges were immense from the outset. In one especially notorious corruption case, discovered in 2014, $1 billion was pilfered from three Moldovan banks, forcing a government bailout. No one has been charged.

“It is about making people believe again in their country.” Sandu said when asked to describe her top priority. Citizens watched the bank theft unfold, “and then nobody is held responsible, not one single cent is recovered in four years,” she said. “People stop believing in the state, in the country. Why would somebody want to open a business, pay taxes, in a country that allows these things to happen?”

During that September visit, Sandu spoke for 25 minutes without notes at a forum hosted jointly by the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute in Washington. She outlined the obstacles and explained her strategy for overcoming them. Soft-spoken but direct and blunt, she described the scale of the graft in government agencies. She needed to cleanse the court system of corrupt judges; she faced a separatist movement in Transnistria; Ukraine’s dispute with Russia could lead to a cutoff of natural gas supplies this winter; previous controls on the media linger in ways that diminish open debate. “But I believe the stronger the institutions, the less vulnerable we are in the face of the external risks,” she said.

After she was toppled from office, she pointed to some significant victories during her rule. “We started to clean up government institutions, state-owned enterprise health care, and other sectors from pervasive corruption and shameless extraction of rent,” she told a European political convention in Croatia a week after she left office. “We broke down illegal monopolies that were suffocating the economy. We stopped huge flows of smuggling in tobacco products.”

Still, she knew she was fighting powerful forces—even within her coalition. Finally, the Socialist Party broke with her and brought an early end to the experiment. As she explained it, the power brokers could not stomach the idea of a truly independent judiciary that would investigate and prosecute those who stole from the people.

“We scared them with our uncompromising approach to fighting corruption, and they took down our government,” she said. “But we have managed to rid the country of one authoritarian leader and we will do it again. The people will no longer accept to live in an oppressive, corrupt regime, which takes away their fundamental rights.”

American specialists on Eastern Europe, normally skeptical of promises of change in the region, had expressed surprise and admiration as Sandu rose to leadership. “She took the helm at a very challenging time because of how divided the country is between those who look to Moscow, those who look to line their own pockets, and those who look to Europe,” said Damon Wilson, vice president of the Atlantic Council. Sandu draws on more than an HKS education and World Bank training, Wilson said: “She’s got an extraordinarily strong moral compass and sense of purpose. What some people saw as potentially a liability—that she would be almost too honest, too earnest, almost too good—is her ultimate strength.”

We scared them with our uncompromising approach to fighting corruption, and they took down our government. But we have managed to rid the country of one authoritarian leader and we will do it again.”

MAIA SANDU

DURSUN AYDEMIR/ANADOLU AGENCY

VALENTYN OGIRENKO

Sandu said in September that she knew she was making a high-stakes gamble by aligning with the Socialists but felt that public patience was running out. “I just knew it was our last chance, because if we let the previous regime continue, fewer and fewer activists would have been willing to expose themselves and stay with us. So this was a critical moment, and we had to use it.”

She smiled when she remembered her time at Harvard. “That was the best year,” she said. “Harvard helped me realize you should not get disappointed. We have to understand that development takes time, and we have to kind of sequence our expectations. It helped me a lot, in terms of leadership skills, analytical skills, but also putting things into perspective, and not getting disappointed and insisting on things.”

10

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Political events in recent years have overturned prior certainties such as the dominance of moderates on the left or the right, respect for expertise and regard for truth, and a presumption of friendship rather than enmity between compatriots. The rule of incumbent politicians and parties has given way to insurgents fighting against the old order of policy and politics in the United States and around the world. These insurgents have elevated notions that were unacceptable in political discourse just a few years ago: Brexit, walling out immigrants, a universal basic income, and wealth taxes.

The basic terms of democratic governance are shifting before our eyes, and we don’t know what the future holds. Some fear the rise of hateful populism and the collapse of democratic norms and practices. Others see opportunities for marginalized people and groups to exercise greater voice and influence. At the Kennedy School, we are striving to produce ideas and insights to meet these great uncertainties and to help make democratic governance successful in the future. In the pages that follow, you can read about the varied ways our faculty members think about facets of democracy and democratic institutions and our students work to make democracy better in practice.
A VIBRANT DEMOCRACY depends on robust electoral participation. That is not what we have, but it is what we must aspire to. Though some hold up the United States as a beacon of democracy, the country’s electoral participation is relatively feeble: In the 2016 general elections, it was 56 percent of the voting age population. In other words, people who didn’t vote greatly outnumber those who voted for the winning presidential candidate.

In fact, the United States compares poorly with other countries in this regard. In the most recent national election, turnout was 87 percent in Belgium, 79 percent in Australia, and 68 percent in France. Among the 36 developed democracies that make up the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, America ranks 28th in voter turnout.

There was a time when some political scientists thought that low participation was a sign that people were satisfied with how their society was being governed. Whether or not that was ever the case, few would be so sanguine about low engagement today. Many decades of research have firmly established that people who are white, better educated, and have higher incomes tend to vote more often than those who don’t enjoy socioeconomic advantages. Although political inequality has many other sources, such as lobbying and in-group connections, equalizing influence at the ballot box would be an excellent first step in addressing it.

Americans who don’t vote have significantly different views from those who do. Research has shown, for example, that nonvoters are substantially more likely than voters to think that government should guarantee jobs and health insurance and that union organizing should be made easier, and less likely to think that abortion should always be legal. Furthermore, many Americans don’t vote because they think their vote makes no difference, they don’t trust politicians and political parties, and they don’t like the choices that the major parties offer.

Achieving full participation will require mending these broken ties of trust and real representation. It will require that political leaders and parties offer a range of visions of society, economy, and policy such that every American finds something compelling, authentic, and valuable in the political process. Because candidates would be competing for the votes of a much larger and more diverse electorate, full participation would increase political competition and compel the creation of policy proposals and relational strategies that resonate and connect with all Americans, not just half of us.

But how can we get there? Many current priorities—the left is focused on removing barriers to voting, voter suppression, and disenfranchisement, while the right hinges on voter fraud and the security and integrity of our electoral machinery—are important, but achieving them would not bring us even close to full participation. That requires a culture of voting, in which every American feels that it is her or his patriotic duty to participate. I believe that this responsibility extends well beyond individuals. Organizations in America—schools and colleges, clubs, churches, and businesses—should also strengthen the civic bonds that our democracy requires. They can start by encouraging their employees, customers, students, and others they touch to participate in elections.

Last year, for example, we launched an effort—the Harvard Votes Challenge—to get all eligible students at the University to register to vote. Though we didn’t quite achieve full participation, we registered 93 percent of eligible students at the Kennedy School. Many other campuses, including the University of Michigan and Yale University, have embraced similar efforts. So have some corporations and organizations. The United Auto Workers has worked with General Motors, Chrysler, and Ford to make Election Day a corporate holiday to encourage voting and poll work. Patagonia has done the same. Many companies—and under the banner of Time to Vote—are exploring ways to encourage their customers and employees to participate in elections.

We do not know where full participation will lead, but it might, as the eminent political scientist E. E. Schattschneider wrote more than 40 years ago, “produce the most painless revolution in history, the first revolution ever legalized and legitimized in advance”—one that overturns the “whole balance of power in the political system”—because that balance depends, right now, not only on who votes but, critically, on who does not. We’re a long way from achieving that vision of democracy, but America is worth it.

Archon Fung is the Winthrop Laffin McCormack Professor of Citizenship and Self-Government. His research explores policies, practices, and institutional designs that deepen the quality of democratic governance.

TRUTH AND TRUST

Nancy Gibbs

ON ANY GIVEN MORNING IN 2019, you could watch the news and read the polls and conclude that democracy was not designed to survive Facebook. Or Twitter, or WhatsApp, or any of the other channels through which information flows and toxins thrive.

Disinformation is nothing new: Lies as tools, lies as weapons, have always challenged a system that depends for success on a certain amount of public trust. But the ease of creating and the speed of spreading bad information outpace our efforts to correct it, which can feel like using tweezers to clean up after a sandstorm. Journalists wrestle with the risk that fact-checking

will disperse nonsense rather than dispel it. Policymakers and technologists square off over rights and responsibilities, even as governments across the world debate where to put the guardrails around our privacy. But institutions are at a disadvantage trying to manage new technologies when people in so many countries don’t trust them to do what’s right. Even the trust individuals have in one another has suffered through this period of category 5 disruption.

The twin crises of truth and trust are inseparable, making all the challenges of public policy that much more difficult to address. A Pew Research Center study found that two-thirds of Americans think that other Americans have little or no trust in the federal government; a majority believe that trust in individuals as well as institutions is shrinking, and that this will make it harder to solve the nation’s problems. An insidious process is at work here: The very awareness of distrust and growing cynicism about government’s ability to promote progress leads to disengagement. The more people turn away from a common public sphere to their own curated
information streams, the greater the likelihood of political conflict, division, and misunderstanding. The trust crisis flows downstream from larger challenges around inequality. We know that the gap between rich and poor has widened in health, life expectancy, and education, so maybe it’s not surprising that the Edelman Trust Barometer registered a widening of the “trust gap” in 2019. In its global annual survey, the “informal public”—college-educated, with incomes in the top quartile—reported greater trust in institutions that was 16 points higher than that of the “mass public.” Trust becomes one more luxury good, allowing some citizens to engage in public debate with greater confidence and conviction than others.

I should confess my own bias, as a 30-year veteran of mainstream “legacy” media and its journey through this same polluted and polarized landscape. While never a practicing journalist, I have always admired journalists who have tried to operate in a common space, one more luxury good, allowing some citizens to share the insights they gain, if policymakers can’t leverage their expertise, and if citizens can’t trust the possibility of progress, this extraordinary house of democracy would slowly become uninhabitable. Trust and truth fit together; like air and water and weather, our information environment is something we experience collectively as well as individually. Trust is what allows us to take risks, to explore and exchange ideas, to honestly weigh options on the merits rather than judge them only by their partisan seasoning. All over the Kennedy School, and the University and others like it, scholars are testing their visions for solving our most perplexing problems. If we can’t share the insights they gain, if policymakers can’t leverage their expertise, and if citizens can’t trust the possibility of progress, this extraordinary house we’ve been building together for more than 240 years will slowly become uninhabitable. Trust and truth aren’t the only things that matter in a democracy, but no democracy can survive without them.

Nancy Gibbs

Nancy Gibbs is the Lombard Director of the Shorenstein Center and the writing Edward R. Murrow Professor of Practice of Press, Politics and Public Policy. Until September 2017, she was editor in chief of TIME.

One group of scholars held that the dichotomy was due to differences in education and living standards. In the West, affluent people with high degrees of literacy were less racked by the distributional conflicts that made democracy hard to sustain, and more able to take part in the reasoned debate and compromise that are at the heart of the democratic enterprise. A survey of scholars held that the reasons for the difference were cultural: The West was the beneficiary of traditions, religious and otherwise, that respect the individual and cemented its inviolability in the face of state power; whereas elsewhere, people imbued collectivist and theocratic belief systems that rendered democracy either incoercible or illegitimate. These are, of course, not the only explanations offered for why “we” had democracy and “they” didn’t, but they more or less limn the boundaries of the universe of explanations.

As a scholar of the Arab world—a region with 450 million people, only 10 million of whom today live in what we might call a democracy—I have always found these arguments unsatisfying at best and offensive at worst. In particular, I am troubled by claims that democracy is the natural outgrowth of values and beliefs abundant in the West and deficient in the East. After all, my experience of the Arab world has been of a region in which citizens and activists have for the past 50 years demanded a steady drumbeat of demands for freedom, dignity, and social justice. The beat has been louder at some times than at others, but it has always been present—and has always, in my view, given the lie to the notion that non-Western people somehow want democracy less or are less able to imagine it. And although most Arabs have yet to convert their democratic yearnings into genuinely democratic institutions, others outside the advanced industrialized West have done so. Indians, Indonesians, Mongolians, Namibians, Botswanans, Ghanaians, Senegalese, and South Africans have all managed to get and keep democracy.

Today, as many in the West are reeling from what they see as a daily stream of indignities visited upon their democratic ways and institutions, the notion that democracy is something the West figured out seems especially quaint. As our Harvard colleagues Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt—authors of the remarkable 2018 book How Democracies Die—remind us, even “consolidated” democracies can suddenly find themselves slouching toward authoritarianism. When politicians care more about staying in power than about respecting the rules of democratic competition, and when citizens suspend their critical faculties and give themselves over to their worst tribal instincts, even the hoariest constitutional safeguards will prove no stronger than the paper on which they are printed. One need only cast a glance at Hungary, in which a democratically elected leader seems to be dismantling a democratic edifice with remarkable efficiency, to grasp how democracies once deemed impregnable can prove eerily vulnerable.

Although the newly discovered fragility of democracy in the United States and some parts of Europe has put paid to the naïve dichotomization of the world into the democratic West and the rest, it has put back on the table for scholars of democracy everywhere the question of whether democracy’s emergence and survival require that citizens and leaders possess certain values, beliefs, and skills. As has been argued by Scott Mainwaring, my former colleague in the Kennedy School’s program Democracy in Hard Places and one of the most gifted scholars of Latin America, democracy emerges not only to the extent that leaders value it. Only when politicians care so much about democracy that they would be willing to sacrifice their fondest policy goals in order to maintain it, can we bet on its survival. But it is not just leaders whose democratic values and virtues we need to worry about. As our colleague Archon Fung has argued, democracy is unlikely to be long for this world if citizens are unable to distinguish lies from truth, or if they lack the capacity to properly assign credit or blame for the policies that affect their lives.

For a scholar of the developing world, such claims—made routinely today by American scholars writing about America—lead to some uncomfortable places. One cannot, after all, argue that democracy in the United States is endangered by President Trump’s disregard for democratic norms and procedures, or by his supporters’ inability or unwillingness to sort the president’s fictions from facts, while refusing to entertain the possibility that similar phenomena inhibit democracy in the non-Western world. And although this means that we must once again entertain questions of whether this or that country’s democratic deficit is attributable to such things as a lack of democratic culture and liberal values and the relative sophistication of its citizens, our newfound recognition that no society has a lock on these things is likely to lead us to better and more useful answers.

Tarek Masoud

Tarek Masoud is a professor of public policy and the Sultan of Oman Professor of International Relations and the faculty chair of the Middle East Initiative. His research focuses on political development in Arabic-speaking and Muslim-majority countries.

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Tarek Masoud

PRIOR TO THE ELECTION OF DONALD TRUMP, and the current season of hand-wringing about democracy’s prospects for survival in the United States and Europe, Western social scientists tended to think of democracy as something “we” had achieved and “they”—that is, the peoples of the so-called developing world—had yet to grasp. The hypothesized reasons for this gap between “us” and “them” were many.

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When you think about having a conversation with someone on the opposite end of the political spectrum, does it make your blood boil? Does the anticipation of how angry and frustrated you will feel lead you to avoid such a conversation? Do you suspect that if you got into it, you would utterly destroy your opponent’s arguments?

In my work as a decision scientist, I have focused on the psychology of disagreement and how people engage with opinions, judgments, and decisions that are different from their own. In dozens of experiments with thousands of people, I have found that many expectations people hold about disagreements are wrong.

Democracies are made healthier, and function better, when citizens listen to and understand a wide range of views—both those they agree with and those they don’t. However, American political discourse has become increasingly polarized. Deliberately or not, people often place themselves in a partisan echo chamber where they consume only those views that support their pre-existing beliefs. This means not only reading and listening to partisan media, but also maintaining relationships and having political conversations only with friends, relatives, and colleagues who are likely to agree with them.

All these choices may be based on people’s expectations of how a potential experience will make them and their counterparts feel. After all, who wants to be miserable and ruin relationships? Avoiding certain people or certain news networks seems like a small price to pay for protection from negativity. However, research I have done with Harvard colleagues has led to important insights about people’s expectations regarding the emotional consequences of conflict. It turns out that people are bad at forecasting both their own and their counterparts’ feelings. These incorrect predictions lead to two kinds of mistakes: First, people avoid conversations they disagree with; second, they expect to win arguments that they probably cannot.

In a series of studies I conducted with Charlie Dorison PhD PPOS 2020, we asked people to report the emotions they feel in conflict and those they think their partners will feel. If they have accurate perceptions, the answers to both questions should be the same. A typical person should realize that the one disagreeing with is also typical. We found that irritation and anger are the principal emotions people feel during arguments. Meanwhile, they expect their conversation partners to feel much more anxiety and fear than they report feeling themselves. This prediction comes from a mistaken belief that our views are valid and defensible while our opponents are shoddy and wrong.

If you think you are right, you assume that your political opponents will be embarrassed and anxious when the flaws in their arguments are exposed. What people misjudge, however, is that their opponents are likely to feel the same way—that they are right and their interlocutors are misguided. In our experiments, we found that when people hold such biased beliefs, they are willing to bet money on winning an argument. Of course, when both sides do this, one is bound to lose.

So does this mean that it’s useless to talk to people we disagree with? Not necessarily. Other research I have done with Dorison and Todd Rogers, a professor of public policy at Harvard Kennedy School, has shown that people assume that being exposed to conflicting views will make them feel much worse than it actually does. The emotions they report after listening to an opponent are less negative than what they expected going into the experience.

Because people don’t want to feel what they anticipate to be unpleasant emotions, they tend to seek out media and conversation partners that support their beliefs. This tendency is called selective exposure, and it leads to echo chambers, worsening polarization and potentially undermining democracy. If we expose ourselves to differing views about political issues, however, we can make better-informed decisions and be part of a greater marketplace of ideas. We can break out of the echo chamber and learn something new.

My colleagues and I found that correcting the erroneous forecasts that lead to selective exposure is not very difficult. For example, in one experiment, we simply explained to participants that in previous studies, people didn’t end up disliking listening to the other side as much as they had expected. These participants were then more willing to read information from opposing politicians. They still preferred their own side, of course, but their openness to learning about opposing arguments went up by 20 to 30 percent.

This research gives me hope. If people learn that hearing opposing views won’t be as bad as they expect, we may be able to increase contact across the aisle, making our democracy healthier. Actively engaging with opposing views might make us realize that both sides have some merit, and might reduce vitriolic, unwinnable arguments. Having an accurate understanding of how people feel in conflict should help us all listen more and argue less.

Julia Minson is an associate professor of public policy. She is a social psychologist with research interests in conflict, negotiations, and judgment and decision making.

NEARLY 6 MILLION AMERICANS WITH CRIMINAL RECORDS INCLUDING INCARCERATION ARE DENIED THE OPPORTUNITY TO VOTE. NOT ONLY ARE THESE CITIZENS LEGALLY PREVENTED FROM VOTING, BUT THE RIGHT TO VOTE AND DEMOCRACY ITSELF ARE INCARCERATED—BEHIND BARS OF RACIALLY MOTIVATED, ANTEBELLUM, AND MORALLY ANTIQUATED LAWS THAT AFFECT VOTERS ACROSS RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER TODAY. CAMPAIGNS TO RE-ENFRANCHISE THOSE RETURNING FROM PRISON, “RETURNING CITIZENS,” OFFER POWERFUL LESSONS ON HIGH-ImpACT ADVOCACY FOR LEADERS AT HARVARD AND BEYOND.

Cornell William Brooks

Nearly 6 million Americans with criminal records including incarceration are denied the opportunity to vote. Not only are these citizens legally prevented from voting, but the right to vote and democracy itself are incarcerated—behind bars of racially motivated, antebellum, and morally antiquated laws that affect voters across race, class, and gender today. Campaigns to re-enfranchise those returning from prison, “returning citizens,” offer powerful lessons on high-impact advocacy for leaders at Harvard and beyond.

One state, in particular, illustrates the impact of felony disenfranchisement on the voting rights of returning citizens and democracy itself. For decades, the state of Florida led the nation with the harshest laws. Following the end of the Civil War and the beginning of Reconstruction, legal provisions were codified in the 1868 Florida Constitution, which automatically excluded felons from voting. Petty crimes (such as stealing a case of fruit or a gold button) for which black people were disproportionately prosecuted—otherwise known as “Black Codes”—could result in permanently losing the right to vote. The Black Codes were preceded by the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which abolished slavery or involuntary servitude, except as punishment for a crime. As a consequence, the felony disenfranchisement provisions of Florida’s Constitution, in combination with the U.S. Constitution’s punishment clause, enabled one of the most draconian means of voter suppression—in one of the most consequential states in American presidential elections.

The degree of harm to democracy in Florida in particular and America generally may be measured by the depth of the impact on African American voters and the breadth of the effect on voters in the state. Felony disenfranchisement has resulted in 10 percent of all Floridians, or 1.4 million prospective voters, permanently losing the right to vote. In fact, felony-disenfranchised Floridians represent more than 25 percent of the 6 million Americans robbed of the right to vote.

Florida’s Reconstruction-era effort to disenfranchise former slaves, 150 years ago, reduces the size of the American electorate and the reach of democracy today. The impact of felony disenfranchisement on black Floridians is disproportionate and deep. Despite the fact that African Americans make up 16 percent of Florida’s population, more than 20 percent of citizens who have lost their right to vote in Florida are African American. The power of franchise restoration, in many cases, is at the discretion of each gubernatorial
administration, which may craft clemency rules to restore voting rights to returning citizens. For instance, under Governor Rick Scott, who served from 2011 to 2019, Florida only allowed a restoration of returning citizens’ voting rights five to seven years after their release, with satisfactory completion of parole and payment of restitution. These rules were the most restrictive in several administrations, according to the Brennan Center for Justice. A federal district court judge in Tallahassee ruled that “the unfettered discretion that the [Florida] Clemency Board possesses” violates the First and Fourteenth Amendments of the U.S. Constitution.

In 2018, we witnessed the culmination of a robust campaign to undo the legacy of felony disenfranchisement in Florida, led by grassroots organizations such as the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition and Floridians for a Fair Democracy. Desmond Meade, a returning citizen and president of the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition, worked with other organizations to draft Amendment 4, which restored the right to vote of felons with good behavior who had completed their sentences. The amendment was placed on the statewide referendum.

To de-incarcerate the vote and democracy demands a variety of tools, disciplines, and approaches. To be sure, the threats that imperil the franchise are intersectional (race, class, and gender) and require an interdisciplinary response (law, policy, the arts, and morality). A coalition of not only black and brown men as well as poor people with criminal records, but people of all backgrounds supported the multipronged campaign—responding to a message focused on “love, forgiveness, and redemption.” This is the breadth and depth of learning about advocacy that the William Monroe Trotter Collaborative for Social Justice in Harvard Kennedy School’s Center for Public Leadership seeks to support students at the School, other graduate and professional schools, and Harvard College. The Trotter Collaborative is an interdisciplinary initiative that brings students, staff, and faculty together to work with advocacy organizations across America.

The Trotter Collaborative, as a social justice public policy clinic, seeks: first and most important, to assist in teaching and soft interdisciplinarity advocacy skills; second, to leverage Harvard’s considerable analytic capital to inform grassroots organizations across America; third, to equip those organizations to address intersectional injustices with interdisciplinary tools for justice; and fourth, to empower students and others to craft evidence-based justice reforms that impact and even inspire. The voting suppression crisis in our democracy should compel Harvard, the Trotter Collaborative, and the country to consider the past to face the present. Imagine two prisoners, investors with-mugshots 7069 and 2053, losing their right to vote forever. As a consequence of their civil disobedience during the Montgomery bus boycott, Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Louise Parks were arrested and convicted of breaking city racial segregation ordinances in Montgomery, Alabama. It is morally inconceivable that King and Parks could have gone to their graves as votless, third-class citizens. Today, we can imagine Harvard students using an even wider array of advocacy tools to further address social injustice, including felony disenfranchisement colleagues across Harvard and beyond, well-honed advocacy skills, well-informed policy analysis, and morally expansive imagination, students can assist grassroots organizations in emancipating bodies, votes, and democracy.

Jane Mansbridge is the Charles F. Adams Professor of Political Leadership and Democratic Values. Her current work includes studies of representation, democratic deliberation, everyday activism, and the public understanding of free-rider problems.

Jane Mansbridge

A TEACHABLE SKILL

The voting suppression crisis in our democracy should compel Harvard, the Trotter Collaborative, and the country to consider the past to face the present.

Cornell William Brooks

IT IS EASY TO THINK OF THE POLARIZATION of American politics as a fairly recent phenomenon, a sudden departure from a collegial and collaborative past. The truth is that the causes of our current political divide are both systemic and historical, stretching back far beyond the rise of social media or the ascendance of cable news and free-flowing political money.

The seeds of today’s partisanship were planted in 1964, with the signing of the Civil Rights Act. Southern conservatives began their exit from the Democratic Party, making the Republicans more conservative and both parties more homogeneous.

That mythic time when politics “worked” was also, as many of us forget, of Democratic hegemony—Democrats were the sun to the Republicans’ moon, and Republicans knew they had to go along or go alone. After the 1964 election, majority control of the House and the Senate came up for grabs, and getting a majority in Congress became each party’s single most important goal, incentives for cooperation began to evaporate.

Economic inequality may also play a role: Polarization declined from a high point at the end of the 19th century to a low in the 1950s, then rose again, to a peak in the 1970s, and has been rising ever since. Even if political partisans do see one another as enemies, it is important to realize that enemies can negotiate. And they must, to keep even basic government going.

Jane Mansbridge

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A big difference from classic negotiation in business is that the specific members of Congress who negotiate an agreement with specific members of the other party then have to sell that agreement to their party colleagues (not easy), who in turn must sell it to their constituents (also not easy). Conceptually, it’s what in negotiation theory is called a three-level game. Throughout the process, activists on both sides often have incentives to torpedo the deal. Nevertheless, a well-crafted agreement, which gives each side something it wants, can survive those attacks.

The materials developed at the Kennedy School, which include simulations, cases, and exercises, have been through a year of testing with congressional staffers and state legislators, with highly successful results. The Library of Congress has started a program to train high-level congressional staffers in negotiation skills, using Kennedy School materials and, at least for the initial sessions, HKS Faculty members. The first training, held this past August, got rave reviews from the instructors, and many congressional staffers have already signed up for the next one. We hope that learning the fundamentals of good negotiation can help these people (who do much of the negotiating), and eventually members of Congress as well, break through the impasses created by polarization.

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Jane Mansbridge
HEALTHY COMPETITION

Arthur Brooks

COMPETITION CAN GET A BAD RAP. It is often blamed for growing inequality and predatory behavior and for making it impossible for the little guy to get ahead. It’s seen as encouraging us to be unnecessarily adversarial and brutal. Some consider it the enemy of cooperation. In my view, these criticisms are misguided. I believe that competition is the most important philosophical advance of the United States, and we must better understand and protect it.

When competition works the way it’s supposed to, people love it. Think of a sports event: No one wants it to be noncompetitive. Even if you love your Red Sox, you don’t want the Yankees’ bus to break down on the way to the game. You want the Yankees to show up with their absolute best and get beaten, fair and square. But “fair and square” requires clear rules, an umpire who calls strikes and balls the same for both teams, and teams that accept the final score—whether they like it or not. For competition in sports (or any other area of life) to work, you need fair play, agreed-upon rules, and voluntary cooperation.

Consider competition in another part of our lives—politics. Democracy is a form of political competition. It can’t function when there are uncontested elections or cheating. We make fun of elections in countries where the Dear Leader gets 98 percent of the vote unopposed, ballot boxes are stuffed, and if you try to run against the leader, you’ll go to jail (or worse). We’re grateful to live in a multiparty democracy where candidates truly compete (which means, by the way, that we’re grateful for the people who disagree with us politically).

Today, there is a particular need for healthy competition in the world of ideas. In an idea-based economy, true competition is the secret to a free society that respects differences, ensures the right to dissent, and creates the conditions for progress through learning. Unfortunately, the competition of ideas is currently under threat. In some circles, there is a culture of “deplatforming” and “canceling”—of shutting down the competition of ideas instead of trying to win it. Acceptable discourse is narrowed, protest is squashed, opposing views are silenced, and contrary opinions are painted as evil or ignorant. This behavior affects everyone—progressives, conservatives, and centrists alike—because it weakens us: It dulls our ability to argue, makes us less likely to see our mistakes, and renders us less tolerant of others. All of us, no matter what our point of view, need to stand up and fight for our right to disagree, and for the right of people to disagree with us.

Of course, there are some bad actors out there with bad ideas. The answer to their ideas is more speech, not less. And in truth, whether they agree with us or not, the majority of people in the public sphere aim to make the country better. While we will—and should—disagree over how to achieve prosperity and happiness and secure our freedoms, we must maintain a shared commitment to being able to disagree per se.

Ideas are the currency of progress, and Harvard is one of the most important idea factories in the world. At the Kennedy School we are committed to the competition of ideas and free speech. We will not allow deplatforming or canceling. We’ve put in place school behavioral norms that say: You can peacefully protest all you want, because that is a form of participation in the competition of ideas. But you can’t shut down that competition and take away someone else’s voice.

Why does this commitment matter? Because, although the Kennedy School can’t improve the national discourse by itself, we can model the behavior we know our nation and the world need, and send forth our graduates—the leaders of the future—armed with these values.

— Arthur Brooks is professor of the practice of public leadership. Previously, he served for 10 years as president of the American Enterprise Institute, a public policy think tank in Washington, D.C.

KICKING THE SAND CASTLE

Pippa Norris

DEMOCRACY IS UNDER SIEGE AROUND THE WORLD. In the early 21st century, many countries face major challenges of democratic backsliding and even occasional outright regime reversal, with authoritarian forces rising. It’s not just events occurring under President Trump in the United States. Democracy has already been destroyed in Egypt, Venezuela, Thailand, Ukraine, and Russia. It is in the process of being undermined in Poland, Hungary, Turkey, and the Philippines. Long-established democracies are not exempt, as demonstrated by the political instability and deep polarization in the United Kingdom, under pressure from Brexit. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington warned that gains for human freedom are temporary, in a two-steps-forward, one-step-back dynamic. Earlier historical eras experienced periodic waves of regime change around the world, with reversals in democracy in the 1930s and the 1960s. During recent decades, accumulating signs suggest that history is now in danger of repeating itself.

The most comprehensive and rigorous data from the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem), an academic project devoted to measuring democracy, demonstrates that the quality of liberal democracy has eroded worldwide during the past decade, although the map is patchy. Some of the most dramatic net losses have occurred in Turkey, Brazil, Ukraine, Poland, Nicaragua, India, and the United States. Several Anglo-American democracies have seen major erosion in civil liberties and political rights, according to V-Dem estimates, with some of the worst performance in the U.K. under Brexit and the United States under Trump. Around the globe, American retreat and European divisions threaten the rules-based order and global alliances established to defend the values of democratic governance, freedom, rule of law, and human rights.
These challenges have the capacity to undermine America’s core values and interests, both at home and abroad. We are one of the oldest democracies and one of the most successful multicultural societies in the world. Democratic rollback threatens American values: the protection and promotion of human rights and the rule of law; international cooperation to achieve lasting peace; good governance; accountable and responsive public institutions; resilience against disaster; gender equality; freedom, justice, and dignity for all. Backsliding undermines transparent and accountable governance. It weakens legal guardrails preventing the abuse of power. Strongman demagogues have seized office by exploiting the politics of fear, deepening social rifts, and heightening intolerance. Formal protections and unwritten democratic norms respecting civil liberties and minority rights are in danger. The legitimacy of parliaments, elections, and parliaments is undermined.

Moreover, America’s interests are directly threatened by the potential consequences of these developments. They endanger long-standing global alliances, the rules-based world order, and international cooperation over everything from trade and security to counterterrorism, sustainable development, and climate change. Several major authoritarian states—notably Russia, Saudi Arabia, and China—have become even more repressive at home and emboldened in actively undermining weak states abroad, with effective use of international sanctions. China’s Belt and Road Initiative, which provides an alternative model of development through remarkable economic growth, aids the country’s rise even as China lacks legal guardrails preventing the abuse of power. America’s safety, security, and freedom go hand in hand. We cannot blithely assume that freedom and the rule of law happen by themselves or will simply continue, at home or beyond our borders. Understanding the causes and consequences of these phenomena is critical for mitigating the risks. The problems evident around the globe are widely agreed upon. The underlying causes are not.

Authoritarian resurgence is puzzling intellectually because the dominant theoretical paradigm during the past decade has focused on explaining the drivers of democratic advance, not retreat.

— Pippa Norris

Pippa Norris is the Paul F. McGuire Lecturer in Comparative Politics. A comparative political scientist, she focuses on democracy, public opinion and elections, political communications, and gender politics.

DRAWING A LINE

Benjamin Schneer

IN MOST STATES, REDISTRICTING, the process by which electoral district boundaries are drawn, is an overtly partisan exercise controlled by state legislatures. Politicians from the party in power draw the lines that determine congressional and legislative districts every 10 years, after each census. Often they adhere to a brutal partisan calculus that privileges maintaining political power rather than reflecting the will of voters—in other words, legislators routinely engage in partisan gerrymandering. Extreme gerrymanders should concern anyone who wants government to reflect the will of the people. It makes it difficult to remove a political party from power in a state legislature even when a majority of voters select an alternative.

Following a 2019 Supreme Court decision, Rucho v. Common Cause, prospects for addressing partisan gerrymandering at the federal level have all but disappeared for the foreseeable future. But several state-level solutions still exist. One of these is for more states to create independent redistricting commissions, which take the authority for drawing electoral lines from politicians and hand it over to multipartisan citizen volunteers who do not hold public office. These commissions are designed to be insulated from politicians, whose primary interest is often to ensure their own reelection.

The United States will enter a new redistricting cycle after the 2020 census, providing an opportunity to study the performance of independent redistricting commissions from the previous cycle, in 2011. In a recent policy memo, I and coauthors examined the effects of commission-based redistricting by focusing on the experience of Arizona, a state with a five-member independent commission. We found that independent redistricting can yield several advantages, including more public participation in—and satisfaction with—the process, increased competitiveness, and greater fairness. For example, survey respondents in states with independent commissions are more likely than voters in states where legislatures draw the districts to say that they view their state’s process as “fair.” This is owing in part to the outreach conducted in such states. For example, in Arizona the commission went on a listening tour and hosted public hearings, provided time for public comment at their meetings when drawing district lines, and sought public feedback in other ways.

Commissions certainly increased competition in Arizona, where 24 out of 30 legislative districts became more competitive after redistricting. Only three congressional districts (out of a total of nine post-redistricting) became less competitive. And the three most competitive congressional districts in the state joined the most competitive in the nation. Increased competitiveness tends to produce greater turnout, increase the parties from year to year and fewer uncontested elections. Put simply, voters are more likely to face meaningful choices at the ballot box in competitive elections.

Increased competitiveness tends to produce greater turnover between the parties from year to year and fewer uncontested elections. Put simply, voters are more likely to face meaningful choices at the ballot box in competitive elections.
IN EARLY JULY, after a very public disagreement on WhatsApp, the president and vice president of a Bangalore-based citizens group resigned. Manivannan Ponniah MC/MPA 2019 (above), a public official and the founder of the group, jumped into the fray, sending heated messages in an effort to spur the members to move past their disagreements. “Who is the president now?? Is CITAG headless??” Ponniah messaged. “For God’s sake, do something, guys!!”
Concerned Citizen
www.hks.harvard.edu
realized, oh, my God, this is so simple!” he said. 
complaints within 10 working days. The office quickly began humming. 
taxes—and mandated that officers sit at the counters every afternoon. They were also required to resolve something breaks down—streetlights stop working, or garbage piles up. 
governments, known as municipal corporations, usually struggle with finances; corruption is rife; 
and citizens view officials with suspicion. People generally avoid contact with municipal offices until 
governance would follow, he reasoned. 
Bangalore needs the intervention. The city was once known as a pensioner's paradise for its green cover and hundreds of lakes. In the early 2000s, the city became an IT hub as global companies set up back offices to take advantage of an abundant, cheap, well-educated workforce. The population doubled in two decades, to more than 11 million, and the city government was caught unprepared. Roads today are choked with traffic, groundwater has run out in some places, and the air is toxic. Almost 80 percent of the city's tailed tree canopy has been lost over the past 40 years, and 90 percent of its lakes are fed by sewage. 
Public utilities have struggled to keep up. To quench Bangalore’s unforgiving thirst, the water department brings in 388 million gallons of water daily from a distant river, at a cost of $6 million a month. Power cuts are routine. And garbage is everywhere, accumulating in so-called black spots even as it gets removed. Bangalore is ranked the 194th cleanest city out of 458 on an Indian government scorecard, a steep fall from its seventh-place finish in 2015. 
For their first project, the citizens of CITAG are working with the city’s solid waste management department to address grievances. They are making innovative use of blockchain technology—a transparent and tamperproof ledger—to keep track of people’s complaints about garbage disposal, which the city can then resolve. It’s a first step, they hope, on a path toward CITAG’s greater involvement with the city government. If only they can get past the testing stage.

This is so simple

In early September, Ponniah sat behind a large desk in his imposing office at the state legislature complex, where he heads the labor, food, and civil services departments. Nine chairs, in three rows, were arranged in front of him. At 3:00 p.m., his daily office hours commenced, and people walked in—ordinary citizens, businessmen, trade union representatives. A staff member served them buttermilk as they waited their turn. 
An old man and a younger colleague complained that some government contractors were not getting legally mandated holidays. Ponniah dictated a strongly worded letter threatening the local commissioner with prosecution and signed it with an ink pen. 
A group of health activists requested funding to educate rural women. Ponniah asked them to set up a pilot. 
A young man came in to inquire about a job posting. He stayed as Ponniah, prompted by a reporter, described how he had arrived at this position. 
Ponniah hails from a small village in south India and belongs to the lowest of the Hindu castes, known as Dalits, or “untouchables.” His father was an Indian Railways supervisor and valued education highly, so he ensured that his four children read books in their free time and attended university. Ponniah got a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering and passed India’s rigorous civil service exams in 1998, after which he was posted to Karnataka, the state of which Bangalore is the capital. (The exams are so competitive that in 2017, one million people applied to fill 980 spots.) 
Ponniah’s first posting was in the small city of Tumkur. It could have been a thankless task: City 
Electricity Supply Company. In 2017, he was promoted to Bangalore’s ..... Bangalore is ranked the 194th cleanest city out of 458 on an Indian government scorecard, a steep fall from its seventh-place finish in 2015. 

He improved on his ideas about transparent governance at his next posting, where he set up a 24-hour help line for citizens’ complaints and assembled a skeletal nighttime staff to address emergencies. Then he began working directly with people who’d lodged a suit against illegal encroachments in the city. To their delight, he ordered the properties, owned by powerful vested interests, demolished. He was immediately transferred by the political class. But when news spread, people rioted in the streets in protest. His transfer order was canceled, and Ponniah earned the moniker Demolition King.

Next he set up neighborhood citizens committees that fundraised and worked directly with the corporation to fix ailing civic services on a voluntary basis. Taxes were already so low, Ponniah reasoned, that he was justified in asking citizens to contribute to funding city services. 
In 2012, Ponniah was appointed to Bangalore’s Electricity Supply Company. In 2017, he was promoted
Bangaloreans admire Ponniah for getting things done and for being transparent and not corrupt, he said. “He’s like a movie hero.”

That is a recipe for governance failure, Ponniah believes. He wants people to get directly involved in the government service—compared, for example, with about 6.5 percent in the United States—serving the very few Indians participate in governance, and government has shrunk even as the population also goes up in the eyes of the people,” Randeep said.

CITAG wants to incorporate blockchain in the back end of the complaints-logging database to make the record keeping tamper-proof. A decentralized distributed ledger system would mean that each record entered into the database would be linked to the preceding record. Altering one record would disrupt the entire ledger, so changes would be transparent. In addition, multiple copies of the ledger would be created, increasing the accountability of all workers involved in responding to citizen complaints. Ponniah thinks a similar system could be applied to other government record keeping as well. “Security is very important in government, because most of the corruption is happening because data can be compromised,” he said.

CITAG faced turmoil in July. The managing committee had not established clear-cut processes, and members disagreed about the blockchain vendor. The president and vice president resigned without notice. The city began dragging its feet on providing app data to CITAG. Work on the project stalled.

To Ponniah, the lesson was clear: Make government easy to navigate, and citizens will participate. “I realized, oh, my God, this is so simple!” he said.
ALUMNI

WHO ARE YOUR PEOPLE?

Nisreen Haj Ahmad MC/MPA 2008 applies Marshall Ganz’s organizing methodology in the Middle East context and finds hope in hard places.

BY RALPH RANALLI

TWO OF THE MOST FORMATIVE EXPERIENCES in Nisreen Haj Ahmad’s life were her father’s exile and his eventual return. She was just two years old when the Israeli army raided her family’s home in the West Bank in the middle of the night and arrested her father, a Palestinian activist working to resist the Israeli occupation. “They put him on a helicopter and dropped him in Lebanon near the border,” says Haj Ahmad MC/MPA 2008. “My mom waited a few years thinking he would be allowed to return, but he wasn’t. So she took us and we went to live with him in Jordan.”

Every summer she, her mother, and her three siblings would cross the King Hussein Bridge to visit family in the occupied territories. They would rise early in the morning and endure long wait times, questioning, and “humiliating” invasive searches, she says, “so I decided to become a lawyer to protect the rights of the people.” She earned her law degree from the University of Jordan in 1995, only to be told by the Jordanian bar association that at 20 she was too young to practice. So she went to Scotland and began earning a master’s degree in international trade law from the University of Edinburgh.

Then Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) signed the Oslo II Accords, and suddenly her father was allowed to return to the West Bank.

“I remember we were on a bus of 30 people, all expelled for resisting the occupation and all allowed to return,” she says. “This was a different kind of crossing over that bridge—it was like returning victorious, with no security checks or anything. It was very surreal.” She remembers hearing Tania Nasser, a renowned Palestinian singer whose husband had also been exiled, singing an Arabic folk song to the passengers about returning home, and seeing the huge, joyous crowd that engulfed her father, raised him to their shoulders, and swept him away.

Those were heady, hopeful days, says Haj Ahmad, who now runs an Amman-based nonprofit called Ahel (“the people of the cause”), which partners with and trains community groups and organizations in organizing and collective action for justice and human rights. “It was a moment when we thought there would be peace,” she says.

After finishing her master’s degree, she became a legal advisor and negotiator for the Palestinian Authority, first working on trade deals with the European Union and Canada. She then started working with the PLO on the post-Oslo permanent status talks with Israel, including the Camp David and Taba summits, only to feel her hope slowly fade to disappointment and then near-despair over the next decade. The peace talks bogged down over continuing Israeli settlements; then, in 2000,

“You hear people’s stories and you hear how they change from victimization to power. And you see that transformation, and it’s humbling. It’s a reason for pride for me, and for some satisfaction that I’m not wasting my life.”

NISREEN HAJ AHMAD

BY RALPH RANALLI

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NISREEN HAJ AHMAD
invaded the West Bank during Operation Defensive
the Second Intifada erupted; and in 2002 Israel
Haj Ahmad right away. “She had this combination
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graduate student complex. With its view of the
Haj Ahmad knew, she was in Cambridge, living
a new perspective—might help. The next thing
Haj Ahmad knew, she was in Cambridge, living
in an apartment in the high-rise Peabody Terrace
student complex. With its view of the
lined Charles River and the tot lot next door
where her four-year-old son could ride his bike and
play in the sprinklers, it was a world away, both
gographically and emotionally, from what she’d
left. “Frankly, I was just running away,” she says. “I
didn’t have many expectations; I just wanted to be
in a place where I wasn’t struggling.”
But soon she would have another formative experience: meeting Marshall Ganz, the Rita E.
Hauser Senior Lecturer in Leadership, Organizing, and
Civil Society. Ganz recalls being engaged by
Haj Ahmad right away. “She had this combination
of deep curiosity and sort of evident courage—and
a deep sense of searching,” he says. “It wasn’t just
intellectual curiosity, but more like a question: ‘How
do I make sense of what I’ve experienced in a way
that I can actually go forward?’”
Haj Ahmad had never heard of Ganz when she
arrived at HKS. But people with ties to the School
whom she knew from her negotiator days suggested
that she drop in on his class during shopping week.
“I heard him talk about narrative and stories and
what your calling is,” she says. “That resonated with
me because at that point, my life had reached a
junction where it no longer made sense.”
Haj Ahmad took Ganz’s courses in public
narrative (MLD-355M) and organizing (MLD-377).
Public narrative starts with the individual, the story
of self, says Ganz. “First it’s about ‘Why do I care?’
Then we move to the story of us, how to bring to light
shared values in others and then how to turn that into
action.”
The way Ganz frames problem solving also struck
a chord with Haj Ahmad. “That’s the thing I got from
are my people?’ and not ‘What is the problem?’ or
‘What is the issue and how are we going to solve it?’
When you are at the negotiation table—say, with
Israel—the question is ‘Who are my people and what
are they doing for their cause or for their rights?’
The answer was that they were depending on the
negotiator. So it hit me that there is a tendency
of the people who struggle the most to think that
someone else will represent them or defend them or
lobby on their behalf.”
One such effort is the Stand Up with
Teachers Campaign, which began organizing the
female teachers in Jordan’s private schools in 2015. Most of the teachers were being paid less than
minimum wage and were coerced to resign just before summer break. They also lost their
contracts if they became pregnant.
Haj Ahmad says that Ahel trainers helped the
teachers organize and discover where to apply
pressure so that it would be most effective. The
teachers eventually persuaded the minister of
education, Omar Razzaz, to adopt new regulations
stating that no private school would be recertified
unless it provided transparent bank statements
showing that it was paying teachers at least
minimum wage for 12 months of the year.
“You hear people’s stories and you hear how
they change from victimization to power,” Haj
Ahmad says. “And you see that transformation,
and it’s humbling. It’s a reason for pride for me, and
for some satisfaction that I’m not wasting my life.”
Ganz says “her positivity in fighting in an
arena where hopelessness would be almost
the obvious choice” is what he finds inspiring
about Haj Ahmad. “We try to make a distinction
between optimism and hope,” he says. “That sort
of optimism that says ‘Hey, everything’s going
to work out’ or ‘Everything’s going to be great,’
and it’s humbling. It’s a reason for pride for me, and
for some satisfaction that I’m not wasting my life.”
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about Haj Ahmad. “We try to make a distinction
between optimism and hope,” he says. “That sort
of optimism that says ‘Hey, everything’s going
to be all right’ can blind you to reality. Hope is
a recognition that the possible can sometimes
be achieved over the probable—in other words, that
David can beat Goliath from time to time. And
Nisreen has a deep sense of hopefulness.”
Christina Fletes MPA 2016 wants to make sure that all Americans, especially those from underrepresented populations, participate in the democratic process.

BY ANDREW FAUGHT
PHOTOS BY ALISON YIN
It’s not voter fraud but, rather, voter suppression that she’s trying to prevent. After the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, voting access was on the upswing until 2008. (Of the 5.6 million new voters that year, 4.6 million were from underrepresented groups, and most of their votes went to Barack Obama.)

Amid swirling accusations that voting officials are trying to curtail minority votes that lean Democratic, voter participation in the 2016 presidential election was down by an estimated 2.7 percent, according to the United States Election Project, an independent information source on the country’s electoral system. The reasons are several, experts say. Some states have required a photo ID to vote (millions of Americans lack such proof). Others have made it harder for working Americans to cast ballots by reducing the time available for voting. Some counties have purged voters from their rolls, claiming that they no longer live where they claim to live. States frequently aren’t held to task for questionable behavior.

“Proving that it’s intentional is not always easy,” says Abdi Soltani, ACLU of Northern California’s executive director. “In California, we have put a major focus on working with our counties and with the state so that every person who wants to vote is readily able to register and vote.”

California has 5.5 million eligible but unregistered voters, most of them from communities of color. Every month, Fletes drives the 1½-hour drive to Fresno, in the state’s vast Central Valley, to get out the vote. The state’s interior is poorer and in some places more diverse than the coastal regions are. She often hears similar concerns among some of them questions of simple logistics, some of them born of apprehension: “Does my voter move? Where do I go to cast my ballot? Do I need an ID? “It’s scary to walk into a building and engage in a process if you don’t know how it works,” Fletes says. “What’s going to happen once you walk in the door? Is there a different language, will somebody be there to help you?”

To date, California translates election materials into so languages. At least 110 languages are spoken in the state, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. In 2009, Fletes was appointed to sit on the state’s Language Accessibility Advisory Council, established in 2008 to assist the secretary of state on issues related to election and election materials. The ACLU’s concerns aren’t limited to language barriers. In 2018, the organization sued Secretary of State Alex Padilla for failing to provide voter registration services for low-income Californians and those with disabilities. A judge ruled that the state must expand its voter registration efforts.

As voting goes, California is watched closely by the rest of the country. Some legislative bills proposed requiring voters to be 16 or younger, and possibly as young as 16. ACLU Northern California is pushing for the state’s 50,000 parolees to regain voting privileges; the loss of them is a form of disenfranchisement, Fletes points out, that affects mostly brown and black people and is rooted in the country’s discriminatory Jim Crow laws.

Meanwhile, Fletes in recent months has been meeting with community groups to apprise them of perhaps the biggest change to emerge on California’s electoral landscape in decades: the Voter’s Choice Act, which replaces neighborhood polling with one-stop mega “vote centers.” The centers are an attempt to increase participation by allowing residents to register to vote on site—on a day and at a time that fits their schedules. Voters in participating counties will still be able to mail in their ballots.

With Fresno County adopting the system for its March 2020 primary election (the state will phase in the changes across its 58 counties), Fletes has asked Planned Parenthood and other well-known groups, along with community organizations such as Mi Familia Vota, Power California, and Valley Forward, to help with outreach efforts.

“As a Latina lawyer, Fletes belongs to a small sorority—statistics show that just 1 percent of California attorneys are women of Latin descent—and she has made it a point to be a role model for first-generation college students or law school students who want to promote social justice. One of her Berkeley Law classmates was Evelyn Rangel-Medina, now the managing director of United for Respect, a nonprofit that advocates for questionable behavior.

providing domestic workers the right to be paid fairly and get their work done in a healthy and safe environment. She has advocated for domestic workers to have the right to form unions and to work in safe and healthy conditions.

In her first year at HKS, Fletes was awarded a Dubin Summer Fellowship by the school to collaborate with another UC Berkeley Law School student and the head of Carnegie Mellon University’s Social Impact Lab.

“After a big test, we’re going to have a pizza and a drink and talk about our dreams,” Fletes says. “We want to give back to our community.”

Fletes is already battle-tested in her short time with the ACLU. In June, she and two colleagues filed a lawsuit against Fresno County’s chief elections official after a Unitarian Universalist Church was removed as a polling site for the primary in June 2018. The reason? The church refused to cover “Black Lives Matter” banners that were hung on the property. Although state election laws say that campaign-related materials must be at least 100 feet from a polling site, the ACLU argued that the church was more than 200 feet from voting booths and were not campaign related. The lawsuit is pending. “It charges that the elections chief violated the church’s First Amendment right to free speech,” Fletes says.

The church sufile is one reason that Fletes left a global law firm in January 2019 to join the ACLU. “I felt like I needed to get out of the locker room and go back to what I originally intended to do, which is public interest work—working for racial justice, working for people in my community,” she says. “It’s how I am in the right place at the right moment.”

Her commitment has powerful antecedents. “I’m the daughter of immigrants,” Fletes says. “I’ve always had to work for anyone, especially my parents. I’ve had many privileges—going to Harvard and getting my law degree—that other people in my shoes have not. The best thing I can do is use my position to help others who may not have the same opportunities that I had.”

In addition to her experience with Proposition 227, another legislative proposal—this one federal—shaped her fate. In 2006, when she was in high school, the Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act proposed to criminalize assistance to undocumented immigrants who sought food, housing, or medical services. The House of Representatives approved the bill, but it died in the Senate. Fletes skipped a day of school to march in San Francisco with thousands of others who were shouting their objections. “I protested with my parents and uncle, who wouldn’t typically be out there protesting,” she says. “We were a community raising our voices against something that we felt was wrong. That was more important than being in class.”

CHRISTINA FLETES
“Anything that prevents people from having free and fair access—open access to the ballot—that’s voter suppression.”

IOP Fall 2019 Resident Fellow LaTosha Brown, cofounder of the Black Voters Matter Fund, at a Forum in October on engaging communities of color.

“I’m trying to be glass half-full about multilateralism. But it’s not the comprehensive multilateralism that reigned up until the great financial crisis.”

Mark Carney, governor of the Bank of England, speaking about the value of international cooperation at a Forum in October.

“Is your education going to make you arrogant? Is it going to make you persuasive? ... It has to be possible to attack prejudiced ideas without attacking human beings or reducing them to that one thing.”

Tara Westover, author and A.M. Rosenthal Writer-in-Residence at the Shorenstein Center for Media, Politics, and Public Policy, at a Forum in November.

“It’s important to look at where we succeeded in the past. ... African policymakers are capable of taking measures that can generate growth.”

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, chair of Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization and former World Bank managing director and Nigerian finance minister, speaking on PolicyCast.

“Anyone who lives in this country and is a citizen is entitled to vote.”

IOP Fall 2019 Resident Fellow Alice Stewart, a CNN commentator and formerly Senator Ted Cruz’s presidential campaign communications director.

“I’m trying to be glass half-full about multilateralism. But it’s not the comprehensive multilateralism that reigned up until the great financial crisis.”

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The Education of an Idealist: A Memoir
Samantha Power, Anna Lindh Professor of the Practice of Global Leadership and Public Policy, Harvard Kennedy School; William D. Zabel ’61 Professor of Practice in Human Rights, Harvard Law School

BY TURNS A DEEPLY PERSONAL HISTORY, a diplomatic page-turner, and a moral manifesto, Samantha Power’s new book, The Education of an Idealist: A Memoir, is a complex and engaging work by one of the world’s most influential voices at the intersection of human rights and geopolitics.

Starting in her native Ireland, Power recounts spending childhood days at the pub with her gregarious and adventurous father and attending the age of nine with her mother and brother to the United States. She writes of her student years at Yale, her interest in pursing a career as a sports journalist, and the moment she was captivated by the lone protester standing in front of a tank during China’s 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy protesters in Tiananmen Square.

The haunting images from China propelled her to study foreign affairs, and a few years later, she ended up in the war-torn Balkans as a 23-year-old freelance journalist covering the siege of Sarajevo and Bosnian Serb atrocities. After earning a Harvard Law degree and writing A Problem from Hell, a Pulitzer Prize-winning book about American responses to twentieth-century genocides, she landed a job with then-Senator Barack Obama. She became Obama’s chief human rights and UN adviser after he was elected president and in 2015 was appointed U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, the youngest diplomat to assume that role.

Power gives readers a behind-the-scenes look at U.S. and global efforts to respond to crises in South Sudan, Burma, Syria, and beyond, and how she maintained a close relationship with the Russian ambassador even as the two waged a pitched battle in the UN Security Council. She also shows the challenges of raising two young children while managing a 24/7 national security job. In the end, Power remains upbeat about our ability to make a difference in our communities and internationally. “People who care, act, and refuse to give up may not change the world,” she writes, “but they can change many individual worlds.”

Legitimacy
The Right to Rule in a Wanton World
Arthur Appelbaum, Adams Professor of Political Leadership and Democratic Values

ARTHUR APPELBAUM’S WORK focuses on political legitimacy, civil and official disobedience, and role morality. His latest book, Legitimacy: The Right to Rule in a Wanton World, presents one of the first full-fledged philosophical accounts of what makes governments legitimate during an unsettled time for liberal democracy—a time marked by eruptions of authoritarianism and arbitrary rule.

Appelbaum argues that adherence to procedure is not enough to ensure a legitimate government. “Following the best traditions for producing legitimate government doesn’t constitute legitimate government any more than following the best recipe for crème brûlée constitutes crème brûlée,” he writes. Even a properly chosen government does not rule legitimately if it fails to protect basic rights, to treat its citizens as political equals, or to act coherently.

Instead, Appelbaum reasons, a legitimate government must be made up of free citizens and must uphold three principles: liberty, equality, and agency. He explains, “The liberty, equality, and agency principles control three distinct aspects of governance: The liberty principle controls what decisions should be made. The equality principle controls who has the normative power to make these decisions. The agency principle controls how decisions are made.” He singles out disregard of the third principle—which may result in a ruler’s acting in incoherent and wanton ways—as the most damaging in today’s world. “The greatest danger to the legitimacy of contemporary democracies,” Appelbaum writes, “is the threat of wantonism... Rulers that cannot govern themselves cannot legitimately govern others.”

How America Lost Its Mind
The Assault on Reason That’s Crippling Our Democracy
Thomas Patterson, Bradlee Professor of Government and the Press

THE KNOW NOTHING MOVEMENT broke like a wave over America in the 1850s. A large number of American Protestants, seeing a papist conspiracy behind the arrival of millions of Catholic immigrants from Ireland and Germany, organized in a not-so-secret society that at its high-water mark included members who held mayoral and statewide offices and even a viable presidential candidate. But, Thomas Patterson writes, “their governing principles were as zany as their theories,” among them the belief that the Irish were a racially separate and inferior group, and soon the movement’s popularity ebbed.

Legitimacy
The Right to Rule in a Wanton World
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Valuing U.S. National Parks and Programs
America’s Best Investment
Linda Blimes, Daniel Patrick Moynihan Senior Lecturer in Public Policy, coeditor, John Loomis, Colorado State University

THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE (NPS) OVERSEES more than 95 million acres, fielding 22,000 employees and 339,000 volunteers to manage national parks, monuments, historical sites, battlefields, shorelines, and more. But although the national parks are heralded as one of our country’s most important and enduring treasures, the agency faces a $12 billion maintenance backlog and a $2.5 billion budget that has remained flat for decades, is funneled from five sources, and includes tough restrictions on how the money is used.

Linda Blimes first began looking at the NPS’s budgetary woes while researching examples of poor financing systems. Years later, she and her coeditor, John Loomis, offer a new economic analysis, assigning the national parks a value beyond their beauty and ecological importance. Valuing U.S. National Parks and Programs, they claim, provides the first comprehensive economic assessment of America’s best investment.

Do Morals Matter?
Presidents and Foreign Policy from FDR to Trump
Joseph S. Nye Jr., Harvard University Distinguished Service Professor, emeritus, and former dean of Harvard Kennedy School

IN HIS NEW BOOK, Joseph S. Nye Jr., the preeminent scholar of international relations who coined the term “soft power,” meticulously weighs the ethics of the foreign policy decisions of every U.S. president from Franklin Delano Roosevelt onward. “Good moral reasoning should be three-dimensional, weighing and balancing the intentions, the means, and the consequences of presidents’ decisions,” he argues. “A moral foreign policy is not a matter of intentions versus consequences but must involve both as well as the means that were used.”

Using these three dimensions, Nye develops a moral scorecard for each president. This multifaceted approach allows for a nuanced judgment of foreign policy decisions. It also reveals some insights into our former heads of state. Nye judges Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, and George H.W. Bush as the best in their balance of effectiveness and morality in foreign policy. The four least successful, in his assessment, are Johnson, Nixon, George W. Bush, and (tentatively, since he is still sitting) Trump.

Although the bulk of the book is dedicated to the past seven decades, Nye also forecasts the circumstances that will affect future U.S. presidents’ decisions. The next heads of state, he argues, will have to contend with a more powerful China and how with technology makes our world increasingly complex. Nye predicts that “the 46th president will face the moral challenges of defining a foreign policy where America provides global public goods in cooperation with others, and uses not only our hard power but also our soft power to attract their cooperation.”

Do morals matter in the U.S. presidency? For Nye, the answer is a resounding “yes.”

Do Morals Matter?
Presidents and Foreign Policy from FDR to Trump
Joseph S. Nye Jr., Harvard University Distinguished Service Professor, emeritus, and former dean of Harvard Kennedy School

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One tension at the core of democracy has always been that power flows from all citizens, regardless of their level of education or grip on the truth. But whereas ignorance and misinformation are ever with us, democracy today faces an insidious threat from the sheer virulence of misinformation and from its resistance to correction.

"Outrageous ideas abound today but, unlike those of the Know Nothings, they are not likely to disappear in short order," Patterson writes. "The conditions necessary for misinformation to thrive are firmly in place, held there by three of America’s stoutest anchors—the lust for money, the lure of celebrity, and the drive for power."

The sources of this situation may have been diagnosed before universal access to mass communication, the decline of journalism, the indulgence of views unthertouched from fact. Patterson, whose book grew out of his work as journalist and the moment she was captivated by the lone protestor standing in front of a tank during China's 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy protesters in Tiananmen Square.

The haunting images from China propelled her to study foreign affairs, and a few years later, she ended up in the war-torn Balkans as a 23-year-old freelance journalist covering the siege of Sarajevo and Bosnian Serb atrocities. After earning a Harvard Law degree and writing A Problem from Hell, a Pulitzer Prize-winning book about American responses to twentieth-century genocides, she landed a job with then-Senator Barack Obama. She became Obama's chief human rights and UN adviser after he was elected president and in 2015 was appointed U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, the youngest diplomat to assume that role.

Power gives readers a behind-the-scenes look at U.S. and global efforts to respond to crises in South Sudan, Burma, Syria, and beyond, and how she maintained a close relationship with the Russian ambassador even as the two waged a pitched battle in the UN Security Council. She also shows the challenges of raising two young children while managing a 24/7 national security job. In the end, Power remains upbeat about our ability to make a difference in our communities and internationally. “People who care, act, and refuse to give up may not change the world,” she writes, “but they can change many individual worlds.”

Valuing U.S. National Parks and Programs
America’s Best Investment
Linda Blimes, Daniel Patrick Moynihan Senior Lecturer in Public Policy,...
CLASSNOTES

1967

Paul Bailey MPP writes, “I am winding down a career in public policy, working for different government agencies on a variety of topics, with an emphasis on public finance and financial responsibility. I first studied financial responsibility as part of my second year MPP work. Who knew that something learned in school could be a theme of one’s life work? I was in the combined MPP/JD program, so I started off in the 1972 Kennedy School class but graduated in 1974. I am honored that HLS accepted my son for a mid-career MPP; he works for the State Department’s Foreign Service.”

Scott Martin MCPP writes, “I am vice president/principal of Hilker Corporation, an industrial and commercial real estate brokerage, and also of Westwood Net Lease Advisors. With Hilker Corporation I am brokering the sale and lease of industrial and office properties in the St. Louis metro area. Westwood represents buyers of net leased real estate nationwide, such as fast food restaurants, dollar stores, and leased industrial and office properties.”

1969

Jack Underhill MPP is preparing a paper on expanding affordable housing and reducing homelessness for the Conference of the American Society of Public Administration in March 2020. He spent a week in Appalachia with the Appalachian Service Project renovating homes for the poor.

1970 40th Reunion

Geoffrey Dutton MCPP writes, “My 50-year career in academia and industry as a geopolitical software developer ended when I obtained a PhD in geography. Too supernumerated to climb an academic ladder, I took up technical writing for the next 15. When my romance with high tech faded, I put myself out to pasture to write whatever I pleased, including articles damning high tech for betraying its promise and users. I found time to publish in 2018 an oddball thriller called Sunday Shoot, which portrays a ragtag group of radicals out to smash one or more states. Now writing a sequel to it (women’s crime fiction, of all things). Never did make much use of my MCP degree. Cheers to all.”

1974

Manolo Abella MPA writes, “I am now retired after establishing the Institute of Labour Studies in the Philippines and managing various US and International Labor Organization projects for migrant workers all over the world for over 35 years. What I learned from HLS came in handy in advising governments on what to watch out for in reforming bureaucratic structures and systems, especially in politically sensitive areas of public policy like migration. Taking into account conflicting interests and stakes of bureaucracies with overlapping functions and responsibilities served me well in my advisory work, including my research for Goldman’s Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, MOP in Sussex, the European Commission, and the World Bank.”

1976

Harry Harris MPA, after nearly 30 years as a successful and aging entrepreneur, has said HealthCare California, central California’s largest home health agency. In October 2019, he was selected as Fresno’s Man of the Year. Harry enjoys leisure time at his home with family and friends. Also, he engages energetically in frequent global travel, nearing 150,000 air miles annually. Antarctica is a scheduled destination in November 2019, thus completing multiple visits to the seven continents!

1978

Robert Sabatinni MCRP and his wife, Bonnie Clay, are both fully retired and have recently completed a seven-month trip to Italy. Robert was recognized as an Italian citizen in March of last year.

1980 40th Reunion

Ngure Mwaniki MC/MPA, after graduating from HLS, worked in the Office of the Vice President and Ministry of Finance of Kenya, and then worked as a consultant in the Office of the Economic Adviser to His Excellency the President. Ngure later worked as an economic advisor to the first governor of Nairobi City County, and served on several national boards, including those of the Revenue Authority and the Privatization Commission. He currently is founder and chairman of Mwanike Associates Ltd., an economics and management consulting firm that has been in operation for 35 years and covers the sub-Saharan African countries. Ngure is also the Honorary Consul of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in Kenya. He was cochair of the Harvard-Yale Alumni Club of Kenya from 1983 to 1993, and in his spare time enjoys golf, conversation, and creative writing.

David Reed MPP writes, “Dear Bureaucrat, the advice column for people who work in the public sector, published in Federal Times. David writes, “Dear Bureaucrat gives practical advice backed by peer-reviewed research. The most popular column so far has been ‘Dear Bureaucrat, My job wants me to lie!’

1981

William Hamilton HKSEE has published Formulas for Victory: The folly of Limited War. Compiled from in-person interviews of the generals and admirals who were ordered to fight a land war in Southeast Asia and told by a former infantry company commander who carried out those orders on the ground in Vietnam and Cambodia, this book details how the Johnson administration chose to fight a war of attrition against North Vietnam and then failed to seal off the battle area from Red China and Soviet recce and allowed North Vietnamese ground forces to have sanctuaries in Laos, Cambodia, and even North Vietnam bard.

Michael Schabas MCPP writes, “Since 2001 I have been an advisor to Ontario’s Metis provincial regional authority, which is investing $1 billion in expanding and upgrading the 60 regional rail system to operate faster electric trains every 15 minutes across the network. Since early 2019 I have had the same role for the $1 billion Ontario Line subway. For both projects I have frequently on lessons I learned at HLS, including developing and explaining ridership and revenue forecasts, building a real-world business case, recommending a PPP procurement structure, and providing the arguments that persuaded government to provide the necessary financial and policy support.”

Alexandra Schweitzer MPP writes, “I’m back at the Kennedy School as a senior fellow in the Wassenaar Rahmani Center for Business and Government, focusing on social determinants of health (SDOH). I plan to write about the underlying drivers of SDOH collaborations between health care and social service organizations. Managing high-cost, high-risk populations is a critical challenge on its own; adding housing, nutrition, or transportation assistance makes it much more complicated—and much more important. I’m doing similar work as a consultant to Medicaid Accountsable Care Organizations. I’ve had great input from classmates Anne Weiss MPP: Hope to see everyone at our reunion in May.”

Patricia White MPP, after “22-plus years in London, we returned to the United States in March 2017 and are now living in Old Town Alexandria, which reminds us just a tiny bit of London. We maintain ties to London as our daughter still lives there. I continue to serve on the board of the English National Opera. Closer to home I am serving on the board of the National Museum of Women in the Arts and we are getting involved in the local community.”

William Hamilton 2019
Judith Bunnell MPP writes, “Joseph and I have had lots of classmate connections since reunion! Dinner with Leslie Fog Fawell MPP and Mark Sullivan MPP in June. Dinner with Ken Farbstein MPP and Zac Bolitt MPP in Boston and then drinks with Bob. Dinner with Janice and Dana Rosen MPP with their son Wil and our dog. Zac hosted us and Dana and Tony (sourdough bread at his house for a barbecue! Scott Jensen MPP’s daughter, Tessa, is in D.C., so we ’phone’ed up and (of course) look out for her. David Barron MPP also came for a D.C. visit and Mark cooked with Joseph. Kathleen Daini MPA and Rich Lunt ’65 hosted us and Dana and Janice for a summer weekend.... Beach lunch! Looking forward to our visit."

Margaret Castellon MCA/MPP writes, “After a lot of years with ATL and various boards in South Florida, I am considering retiring in the very near future and spending six months traveling through Europe, with a honeymoon in Berlin. I look forward to connecting with fellow alumni who live in Berlin and enjoy the city along my way. When I return, the plan is to take a fresh look at community needs and be of service in any favorably nonprofit.”

Jackie Newberry MPP writes, “Would welcome contact from fellow alumni if you are in Europe. I am working in London and Germany in banking and building a portfolio of directorships. In between, I have built a zero-energy home and am a keen hiker and traveller but haven’t made it to Europe yet. Please let me know if you have any contacts."

Gabriela Romanos MPA writes, “You won’t notice me there, but I hope we’ll find a time to dance together in May! I am pleased to announce that my work is elucidating, fundraising and educating about neuromyelitis optica (NMO) which has been formalized as a job working with terrific neurologists at the Massachusetts General Hospital. We are creating New England’s first NMO clinic and research lab. You won’t notice Bob’s mended knee, but he has a new business venture providing him again with the challenges of entrepreneurialism.”

Bob Samuel MCA/MPP writes, “A donation to the International Rescue Committee provides a way that American citizens and others can help the Syrian Kurds.” Karen Walt MC/MP writes to continue to enjoy creative and successful urban-planning projects in the Dallas-Fort Worth region. Among her recent awards is recognition as a “Texas Planning Legend” — the first baby boomer to be so designated. More information about her consulting practice and projects is at www.planid.com or on Facebook/@KarenWaltCommunitySolutions. On the personal side, Karen and her husband, Terry Morgan, had a fascinating trip to Antarctica. They’ve now visited all seven continents (or eight, if you count Madagascar). Jake is in the fifth year of his PhD program in Victorian literature, and son Max is in his third year of law school. “Come to the reunion!”

1986

Jack Gardner MPP continues to serve as CEO of The John Stewart Company, a statewide developer (and the largest manager) of subsidized affordable housing in California (76,000 units in the United States). Jack was recently inducted into the California Housing Consortium’s Hall of Fame in recognition of his “private sector leadership” and “profound impact” on California’s housing sector. According to the consortium, its Housing Hall of Fame recognizes “heroes in the field” based on characteristics such as innovation, effectiveness, impact, collaborative spirit, and inspirational records of service. James Gruber MCA/MPP, "I look forward to seeing all of you at our 53rd reunion this spring! Prior to my coming retirement this summer from a faculty role at Antich University New England, I had an opportunity to reflect back on 35 years since taking Roland Heft’s class on leadership and how I had to try to apply adaptive leadership to my environmental consulting and teaching. Through the encouragement and support of my dear wife, Paulette (whom I met that same year), I was able to complete the book Building Community—Twelve Principles for a Healthy Future (New Society Publishing) will be released this spring. How the years have passed! See you all May 12, 2019."

Alison Hughes MPA writes, “Following career retirement eight years ago, served (gosh bemoans) as director of our local governmental women’s commission for a year, then the first NMO clinic and research lab. You won’t notice Bob’s mended knee, but he has a new business venture providing him again with the challenges of entrepreneurialism.”

The World Is Here to Support You

Zeenith Ebrahim MCA/MPP 2019

“I GREW UP IN CAPE TOWN in what was classified as a ‘colored’ community,” says Zeenith Ebrahim MCA/MPP 2019, a native of South Africa. “The black community was the worst off, then colored communities, then people of Indian or Asian descent, and then white people. That was kind of the order, and that’s how resources like education, health care, and so on were allocated.”

Although apartheid formally ended in the early 1990s, South Africa’s smaller cities and rural areas remain highly segregated. It is there that Ebrahim hopes her early-stage social enterprise, Jami’ (Swahili for “community”) will have an impact on populations that have trouble accessing health care. Her solution provides an antidote to the intertwined issues of lack of access to health care and lack of access to jobs.

“The intention is to provide very affordable diagnostics for death-related illnesses in low-income communities,” says Ebrahim. The company is working on an app-connected medical device that can be used when care workers would need to assess people’s health, including their blood sugar levels, blood pressure, and heart rate. “The second idea is to provide home care, including a tech platform for people who have suffered a stroke or a heart attack and need help,” she says.

The project was born during Ebrahim’s year at the Kennedy School, where she was an Adrian Cheng Fellow. But it has much deeper roots. “My grandmother was bedridden for 16 years, and we always struggled to find people who could help us,” Ebrahim says. “We didn’t even find people who were qualified. So the idea for the company is that we have a medical device, we have an app, we have people that we trained. They can go for half an hour and just do whatever the family needs them to do, from basic diagnostics to bathing.” She says that people frequently don’t learn they have diabetes or hypertension until something else goes wrong—and often it’s too late. “We want to screen people and try to help them make lifestyle changes early enough,” Ebrahim says. “Of the women we spoke with last year, 60 percent were diabetic, prediabetic, or had hypertension.”

The Community of social innovators created by the Cheng Fellowship and the Social Innovation + Change Initiative at HKS was critical to helping Ebrahim transition from her corporate background. “Having the HKS staff as a support system, kind of cheering you on, and then also the cohort of other Cheng Fellows, was very valuable,” she says. “There was never a sense of competition—it always felt collaborative.”

A formal product launch was scheduled for January 2020. Ebrahim remains grateful for her experience at HKS. “It’s amazing... There is a sense that the world is here to support you. I have never been in a resource-rich environment. I don’t mean money. There’s something about being at Harvard that makes you feel like you have access to resources—and I haven’t lost that feeling.”
he and his wife, Sally Tonkin, had lunch with Patty and Mike Orfield MC/MPA, who were visiting Seattle while their son climbed Mount Ranier.

James Justice MC/MPA writes, “Till the day of my daughter’s wedding in August in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Being named the NBA championship was my daughter’s wedding in August in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Raptors of the year was my daughter’s wedding in August in Niagara-on-the-Lake. James Junke MC/MPA, writes “In May 2019, I attended a lively discussion by Nancy Gibbs, director of theostenren Center, on ‘The Future of Media and Democracy.’ Nice to reconnect here on the West Coast with the stimulating work at HKS.”

Manuel Valle MC/PA is back in Madrid after completing my term on the Board of Directors of the Embassy of Spain in Los Angeles. 

Diane Cherry MC/MPA worked for 22 years on the federal, state, and local levels in energy and environmental policy and took an early retirement back in 2010. The past couple of years she worked at a nonprofit clean energy organization and recently started her own consulting firm, Diane Cherry Consulting. Diane has clients that range from clean energy companies, nonprofits and educational institutions in clean energy-related work in North Carolina and the Southeast. Her current work includes energy resilience for NC military bases, helping them to develop microgrid program for South Carolina renewable energy lawyers, and business development for sustainable energy companies.

Jeffrey Colvin MC/MPA writes, “After graduating I served on the Kennedy School’s New England Alumni Council while working for the Boston Foundation. After seven years in philanthropy, I returned to management consulting with a position as a consultant and executive writer from Columbia. With nearly twenty years of research and writing done, my debut novel, Afficheville, will be published in December of 2019 by Amistad/Africaville Press. Reflecting my love of urban planning and public policy, this work is a historical novel set during the French Revolution.”

Alister and Phillipa Smith MC/MPA, attended a high-level dialogue on “Impact Investment: How can investors make a difference in effective development?” in London and received the award for best paper of the conference. Alister and Phillipa Smith MC/MPA, attended a high-level dialogue on “Impact Investment: How can investors make a difference in effective development?” in London and received the award for best paper of the conference.

Jeffrey Colvin ’95 writes, “I retired from EPA in 2013 when I started its Green Racing program. This involved the development of data sets and analytics of motorsports to change a single important metric—environmental performance—and adopt energy flow regulations instead of controlling just the use of electricity. The concept was that an engine that burns more fuel is more efficient engines rather than power-dense engines and more real-world design and decision-making that could make a difference.”

The program has had a medium of success, especially in Formula 1 and the World Endurance Championship.”

Jeffrey Colvin ’95
JENNIFER KAO REMEMBERS when she first saw the outlines of a multifaceted career that she would eventually make her own. Her experience in the U.K. led Kao to Harvard Kennedy School for her PhD. She was attracted by the school’s multisectoral approach and its position as a hub for policy learning. In Cambridge, her interest in regulation and health care further crystallized.

At Harvard, Kao found the freedom and flexibility to explore her interests at the vanguard of academics and innovation. She took classes across Harvard, but also took advantage of the academic community at MIT and the National Bureau of Economic Research. Her two closest friends in the doctoral program were an environmental economist and a development economist “doing quite different things,” Kao says. “But there was always an intellectual appetite to discuss ideas.” Those conversations inspired her to take a broader view. Kao also points to “doing quite different things,” Kao says. “But there was always an intellectual appetite to discuss ideas.” Those conversations inspired her to take a broader view. Kao also points to “doing quite different things,” Kao says. “But there was always an intellectual appetite to discuss ideas.” Those conversations inspired her to take a broader view. Kao also points to conversations inspired her to take a broader view. Kao also points to conversations inspired her to take a broader view. Kao also points to conversations inspired her to take a broader view. Kao also points to conversations inspired her to take a broader view. Kao also points to conversations inspired her to take

Her research will continue to be in that sweet spot. “My career goal is to be in spaces where you’ll have three voices heard: the policymaker’s, the private sector’s, and the academic’s.”

Since retiring, I’ve written a couple of articles for Tech magazine and was one of two keynote speakers at the 2019 World Motorsports Symposium in London.”

Judy Leear MC/MPP writes, “I am working hard on the Every Woman Treaty, a global effort to stop violence against women. The United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing, China, was 25 years ago, and we have actually come a long way. I am planning on being in New York this fall at the UN for Beijing+25, and would love to connect with any HKS people!”

Gary Stahl MPA has been happily living with his girls in Geneva for the past two years. Gary is director of private sector partnerships for UNICEF. 1994

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CLASSNOTES

Christine Buchholz MPP writes, “In April, I joined the U.S. Department of State’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons as a senior advisor. The year 2020 marks the 20th anniversary of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act and the Palermo Protocol, which spurred on the anti-trafficking movement in the United States and around the world, respectively. While there is much to do to decimate human trafficking, it is a pity to put my Kennedy School degree to good use and celebrate how the movement has matured in the 20 years since we graduated. Ryan continues to work in community health at Unify Health Care, and our kids are now in middle and high school.”

Adai Dammann MC/MPA writes, “After my ‘First Early Retirement’ in 2016, I want to (Africa) to teach English to adult women in Machakos, Tanzania. This was life changing, deepening my understanding of race, nationalism, colonialism, and gender, and thus my commitment to social, racial, and economic justice. Ask me about the women and men I met. Upon return, I taught a place to make a difference in my own community—and now direct the Washington State Labor Education Center, at South Seattle College. I fish with my husband a lot; dote on my two granddaughters; plot a return to Africa, and RESOLVE. Can’t wait to see you all in May!”

Kendra Perkins Newroad MPP was elected for a second term as the Region XII director of the National Bar Association (NBA), the nation’s oldest and largest national network of predominantly African-American attorneys and judges. In this role, she will be responsible for overseeing the NBA’s activities across the District of Columbia. She will also have a seat on the NBA’s Board of Governors. Kendra, who is a government contracts attorney at Wiley Rein LLP, also founded the Section of Government Procurement Law within the NBA and is currently working to stand up the new section.

Rosemary Powers MC/MPA left the public sector in August and pivoted to a mission-driven opportunity as president of the Cristo Rey Boston High School. Cristo Rey is a national network of Catholic schools that combine rigorous college preparatory academics with professional work experience, providing an innovative approach to inner-city education that equips students from families of limited economic means with the knowledge, character, and skills to transform their lives. Rosemary writes, “I am excited to support change for individuals, believing that these local actions will have a transformational effect on national concerns around income disparity and inclusion.”

2001

Mark Schmitt MPA writes, “For the last year I have been working on setting up the ‘Health Impact Transfer’ (HIT) Organization, together with three former Harvard grads. We shift resources from repair medicine into prevention, saving thousands of lives and ever scarce financial resources. Prevention is highly lucrative as savings exceed preventive intervention costs by five to ten times. HIT leverages projects via cryptic tokens. Parties benefiting from cost savings (e.g., Social Security providers) compensate HIT with a fraction of their savings upon successful project execution. Contact us to help build HIT into a worldwide operating organization. See also healthimpacttoken.org.”

2002

Dai Lamagné MPA writes, “Recently I executive produced Doubting Thomas, which you can find for rent on Amazon. Since our graduation I’ve sold Taiwanese to a German company. I executive produced The Last Dalai Lama? and Dying To Know?, which is about the lifelong relationship of Ram Dass and Timothy Leary. I ran for Congress again up in the Hudson Valley as an independent and failed to get on the ballot. However, my campaign went on as Hudson Valley Happiness and was based on Bhutan’s Gross National Happiness Index. I married Sarah Drew, author of the book Breath of Happiness and was based in Manhattan close to IceStoneUSA.com, which I bought.”

Cynthia Medina Carson MPP, after a decade in the anti-corruption space and a long stint as a tech recruiter, launched her own company, WAGER, her motivator to salary secrecy in the workplace. WAGER is a salary transparency consulting group that began by pairing individuals in the same industry to have salary conversations. After hundreds of conversations, Cynthia began to offer one-on-one consulting, workshops, and webinars. Companies such as Spotify and Google are now inviting her to meet employee groups and help create spaces to have these three complex compensation conversations.

Armen Meyer MPP writes, “I moved to San Francisco to start a job in tech. Luckily, I found fellow MPP Joe Bob Lesser in town. We recently decided to buy a garage so we could start a company. Our idea is to rent garages out to founders, out of our garage, so they too can start companies. If small businesses are the engine of the economy, we are the biomethane for the engines. Come visit, and bring your checkbooks for our B2S-only weed round.”

Security through Global Health

Hoang Bui MPP 2019

Born in Vietnam, Hoang Bui MPP ’20 came to the United States with his family as a nine-month-old. In about a year and a half, he will leave for Ghana in his first overseas assignment as a global health foreign service officer with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), beginning a career he hopes will help safeguard the world’s most vulnerable populations and also his country’s security.

Bui recalls the moment that, perhaps more than any other, set him on his path. “He was in middle school. ‘I was pulled out of class, and my sister was on the phone,’” he says. “She said that our mom had been in an industrial accident.” With the loss of his mother’s livelihood, Bui and his family found themselves living below the poverty line. He saw education as his best way forward. “Originally I wanted to be a ‘good immigrant son,’ become a doctor, and make my entire family proud,” Bui says. That plan changed when he discovered that—along with an interest in public health—he had an affinity for languages, which led him to Taiwan, and later Thailand, aided by two National Security Education Program Boren Awards.

Before coming to the Kennedy School as a USAID Donald M. Payne International Development Fellow, Bui worked as a public health advocate in Minnesota, his home state. “Most people don’t know this, but in Minnesota we have about 200,000 Asian Pacific Islanders (APIs), other U.S. citizens or new immigrants,” he says. “In this community, sex is a taboo topic, so sexually transmitted infections go unseen, and HIV incidence rates for APIs in the United States were increasing faster than for other racial groups.” Bui did fieldwork and collected data on sexual health in the API community, but he wasn’t sure how to convey that data effectively to influence policy.

That’s where the Kennedy School came in. As an MPP student, Bui learned to analyze and communicate the data’s implications. “Data and numbers by themselves do not necessarily motivate people,” he says. “So by understanding how to use stories, you can make the data come alive and move people. That is one of the most powerful lessons I took away from my Kennedy School experience.” Another powerful lesson came from Nicholas Burns, the Roy and Barbara Goodman Family Professor of the Practice of Diplomacy and International Relations at the Kennedy School and a career foreign service officer. Burns taught Bui about the good that diplomats can do in the world. A career as a global health foreign service officer will allow Bui to make the biggest possible difference using his skills. According to Bui, “Global health is an indirect way, and in my opinion the most important way, to help countries develop and to strengthen U.S. national security.”
The focus was on family planning and preventing sexually transmitted diseases. The Colombian Congress and the Santander regional government gave Rueda awards for meritorious citizenship and leadership in her humanitarian work.

That she spent her break this way reflects her unshakable belief that shared humanity will prevail. After all, she has seen it happen repeatedly, in more than a decade of postings in Somalia, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Myanmar, Liberia, and Panama—all leading her to the next position in eastern Congo. “I believe profoundly and in the deepest part of my soul that as humans we can be good for one another,” Rueda says. “And I mention this not out of naïveté but out of experiences that have left scars. Each one tested me in physical and emotional ways I never expected.”

Her earliest posts were with the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, where she landed after completing her first master’s degree, at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, and adding a specialization at the FH Joanneum University in Austria. Moving to the ICRC brought Rueda closer to the kind of peace leadership in her humanitarian work.

I learned a lot [at HKS], but it also offered me a healing process I hadn’t expected.”

Before returning to the field in November, Rueda spent the months after graduation in her hometown of San Gil, Colombia, engaged in promoting peace. She worked with her mother, a physician, at the orphanage and school founded by her grandmother and now run by her mother. They worked with displaced Venezuelans, many of them children, who have flooded into Colombia as civil strife rakes their homelands.

Edwin Robinson MC/MPA, a professor of journalism at Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU), won a grant from the Online News Association to cover issues faced by “Dreamers” and DACA recipients. The podcast that she and her students put together is called “DREAMer Nation” and has played on Spanish Public Radio, an online radio station based in Chicago but with an international reach. As part of the grant, NEIU and Spanish Public Radio hosted town halls and a listening hour where students played their stories and the audience shared their own. Edie and a group of students presented at the 2019 Online News Association conference in New Orleans.

David Eagles MPP recently accepted a position as chief operating officer for Goodwill Industries International. Prior to this, he served as the chief operating officer for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development while serving as the acting deputy secretary for a portion of the tenure. Goodwill is a $6 billion global network built on innovation and human potential. It is one of the most valuable and recognized nonprofit brands, and a leading social services enterprise with over 350,000 employees helping families and individuals reach their full potential through learning and the power of work.

Julian Gilpin MPA/MA, writes, “While I’m still at Rutgers, I’ve taken on a new role and aim now the digital news director. I edit and manage our global websites and social media teams based in India, the United Kingdom, Tokyo, Canada, Singapore, and the United States.”

2005 15th Reunion

Ulko Matala MPP writes, “I joined Royal Caribbean Group Ltd. in 2016 as vice president, responsible for the company’s government relations in Europe and Asia-Pacific. Our family has grown since the last reunion: we now have four boys with my wife, Roberta Matala. She continues her work as an elected member of the European Parliament.”

2006

Lisa George MPP writes, “At the end of 2006, my husband, Paul Haney MPA / MBA 2007, and our four-year-old son made an exciting move from Sydney to Singapore. We set up a new office for BCG Digital Ventures for their work in Asia. I will continue in my role as global head of the Maxxi Group Foundation, based out of Marriott’s Singapore office. We’re lucky to already have a few friends there, especially classmate James Crabtree MPA and his family. We look forward to exploring the region in the coming years. Let me know if you happen to come through Singapore!”

2007

Anna Bell Gall MPP was recently named director of strategy and external affairs for the Energy Institute at the University of Texas at Austin. She was formerly senior advisor to the dean of the LBJ School of Public Affairs at UT. Reach out if you find yourself in Austin!

Christopher Hermann MPP in 2011 co-founded News2Tech, an international media company with a strong focus on journalism and technology. He and his wife, Melanie, welcomed their first child, Carl, on August 11, 2019, in Vienna, Austria.

2008

James Allens MPP joined Honeywell Aerospace as director of intellectual property transactions in February 2019. He recently assumed the role of assistant general counsel of sourcing and procurement, supporting Honeywell’s global supply chain operations.

Ben Branham MPP and Sarah Burleson MPP welcomed their second child, Jack Leon Branham, on August 11, 2019, in New York City. While formally coincidental, the fact that his first name is a nod to the place where they met has potential for apocryphal tales down the road. They continue to reside in Brooklyn, where Sarah is a senior trial attorney for Brooklyn Defender Services, and Ben serves as chief communications officer for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. Their four-year-old daughter, Deya, began pre-K in the fall and is relishing the role of big sister.

Najim Dost MPP/ID 2007 writes, “In the first six years following graduation, I engaged in some consulting work in the area of international development working with clients such as DoS, USIP, and BBC World Services that took me to places (like India and Afghanistan) while also working on my PhD in international studies. Then I settled down in Ottawa, working for the Department of National Defence in the area of performance measurement, data, and analytics.”

Matt Rohs MPP writes, “Hello everyone! Professionally, developing an AI for planning sustainable, inclusive cities at our nonprofit (and always looking for connection to make it happen) while doing part-time consulting and being part-time employee at the World Bank. Personally, Ida (8), Moon (6), and Peter (4) are growing up quickly, allowing Subrina and me to regain territory. HKS was, it is always a
highlight to connect with classmates, alumni, students, and faculty. I miss you all and look forward to the day when we can work together in person. Please stay well and take care of each other.

Karina Weinstein MPA/MPA, “I live in Staten Island (NYC) with my husband and two sons, ages 8 and 2. I am currently teaching, writing about the strategy, innovation, and operations advice of FAB USA, an international development organization working to break the cycle of poverty. My role includes advising FAB on embedding climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies into its work. Additionally, I serve on the board of Motea, a nonprofit organisation that empowers the Mexican and Latin American immigrant community in New York. I am a member of the Student Member Democratic Committee. Looking to connect with alumni interested in climate change and immigrant rights.”

2009

Katherine Ellis MPP/MA, “I am living in Melbourne, Australia, and working as the CEO of the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria. It is the peak body for young people (ages 12–25) and the youth sector in the state, providing policy advice to the government, building the capacity of the sector, elevating youth voices in decision making, and pursuing thought leadership on matters important to young people. We have a particular focus on young people who face marginalisation, such as Aboriginal, disabled, culturally diverse, LGBTQI+, and rural young people.”

Concepción Galdón MPP/MPA is president of the social venture Puentes Global, which she co-founded in 2009. “I’m also a member of Ashoka Spain’s venture board, expert advisor to Madrid City Council, and I sit in several investment committees of impact funds. In 2017 I became IE University’s social innovation head. At IE I have launched a mandate to promote social innovation academic content across schools and programs, encourage more research on the topic, and engage with organizations and corporate partners in sustainability and purpose-driven projects. I’ve also been a professor of entrepreneurship and innovation at IE and a tutor of entrepreneurship projects for corporations.”

Antonio Núñez MPP/MA reports that this past June he launched his book, The Leader ante la innovación (The Leader before Innovation) (Editorial Iván de la Calle), Amazon, published more than 50 CEOs were interviewed for the book, which analyzes the keys to innovative leadership for senior management.

Hassan Tetteh MPP/MA, was promoted to the rank of captain in the United States Navy and currently serves as the health mission chief for the Joint Air National Guard Intelligence Center (JAI) at the Department of Defense. Hassan shared his exciting work as director of Specialized Therapeutic Adapted Recovery (STAR) Teams, based in Washington, D.C., in a TED talk, “From Life to Death,” and highlighted his research in Bali, but I am trying to minimize my (at least non-work) carbon footprint. PLEASE do get in touch, e.g., when in Belfair, Chey.”

Josh Archambault MPP/MA, “I remain in the Washington, D.C., area, working on market-oriented health care reform. Please reach out if you’ve encountered the state level or in D.C. and want to work together. My wife and I have joined a local co-op that works to mobilize churches to support the foster care community and continue to serve as foster parents as well. This has been deeply rewarding and another policy area to engage in on the side!”

Tanya Goginovna MPP and Zack Bogomolov, along with Lucja (L) and Carolin (C), welcomed Ayla Nizhoni into the world in December. Tanya is excited to start in her role as an assistant professor in the Department of Surgery, specializing in the surgery of trauma and critical care at University of California, San Francisco, and San Francisco General Hospital.

Tan Mills MPP/MA, “Hope everyone’s doing great. Courtney and moy are now living in Barbados. I’m working for UK Aid (DFID) across the region and Courtney is embarking upon her next business venture – a hair salon. Our little ones (Avelii and Eli) are very happy and keeping us busy. Do get in touch if you want to say! There are so few of us in the world (and you might bump into Rhiones...).”

Anne Perkins MPP/MA, “My first book, Girls of Color: Women, was released by Sourcebooks in September 2019, the 100th anniversary of coeducation at Yale College. And yes, many people are astounded to learn that Yale did not admit its first women undergraduates until 1919 (and Harvard was even later). Yale-Needs-Women follows the story of five of these young women—three white and two black—through the tumultuous early years of coeducation. Early reviews have been strong: “striking” (Library Journal), “thrilling” (Booklist), “moving and poignant” (Janet Yellen), and “beautifully written” (Henri Louis Gates Jr.). To learn more, visit (DFID) across the region and Courtney is embarking upon her next business venture—embarking upon her next business venture—a hair salon. Our little ones (Avelii and Eli) are very happy and keeping us busy. Do get in touch if you want to say! There are so few of us in the world (and you might bump into Rhiones...).”

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2011

Johanna Brechner MPP/MA reports that on May 25th, the sun shined on the outdoor wedding of Jonathan Brechner and Amanda Kalback in Hoboken, New York. At the Vanderbilt Museum, Mike Kramer MPP was part of the wedding party, adding elegy to the beautiful celebration with a very active dance floor. (Jordan and Amanda now reside in New Jersey.)

Hassina Sherjan MPP/MA, “I have been working to help marginalized women and girls, who were deprived of education during the years of war, to complete high school, through Aga Khan Education (agakhanfoundation.org) and Aga Khan University. Afghanistan, unlike, suffers from insurgency and corruption, is trying hard to reduce the terrorist attacks daily. I believe the main obstacle to peace is the fact that Afghanistan has the highest literacy rate in the world. Fifty percent of girls, by age 12, are either married or engaged. AAE has successfully graduated over 2,000 female students, who are now attending universities or working to support their families.”

Ruth Torres MPP/MA, “After an unsuccessful bid as the city council candidate for my party in 2017, I was elected to be the liaison on the State (that had more women than men for the first time), which was headed by the woman who would become the first female mayor of West Haven, Connecticut. I’ve been on her staff since she took office, which suggests that we should be open to deviation from our current goals when opportunities present themselves. This appointment was never on my radar but I have applied every single thing I learned at HKS. I’ve been on the board of the Harvard Club of the Netherlands Speakers Academy, and I continue to keep our feet in both our homelands—Connecticut and Puerto Rico.”

Mark Tracy MPP/MA has joined Indigo Ag as vice president and head of alternative finance. Indigo is a $50-billion start-up recently named as the no. 1 company on CNBC’s 2019 Disrupt 50 list. Indigo, an international telecoms corporation—and I continue to keep our feet in both our homelands—Connecticut and Puerto Rico.”

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2012

Jay Bhatt MPP reports that on June 23, President George W. Bush and President Bill Clinton were joined by Presidential Leadership Scholars Lisa Tallet, CEO of eBay run to remember, and Jay Bhatt, senior vice president and chief medical officer of the American Hospital Association, at the George W. Bush Presidential Center for a conversation centered on the work they are doing to address veterans’ issues and challenges.
146

2014

Leslea South MPP is developing a University of Washington Seattle summer program to train diverse students for public service and leadership careers.

Michael Kohler MPP and his wife, Allister Chang MPP 2015 spent this year deepening connections to each other’s home countries. Michael in his new condo near Rose Park in Washington, D.C., and Allister on a Bosnia fellowship in Berlin, Germany. Michael keeps being committed to bringing adaptive leadership out to the world. In March 2020, his firm KONU will offer a three-day “Adaptive Leadership Lab” in Washington. A spot discount is available to colleagues and friends of HKS alumni at konu.org.

Natalie Brand MC/MPA writes, “At the end of 2018, I relocated from Washington state to Washington, D.C. I am a reporter for CBS News specifically the affiliates division. I graduate and present reports on national politics for CBS affiliates nationwide, CBSN, and the network. I look forward to life on the road in 2020 as campaign season takes off. Iowa has become a favorite state to visit.”

Kimberly Dowdell MC/MPA relocated to Chicago this year to rejoin HOK, a leading global architecture firm, where she spent part of her other career in New York. Her focus has been on major aviation and corporate design commissions, and on actively pursuing large-scale architecture and planning projects around the world. Kimberly is also serving as the 2019-2020 national president of the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA), where she has ushered in a 40 percent increase in membership since she took the helm in January. In June 2019, Kimberly served as the cochair of the Center for Public Leadership’s Alumni Council (CLAC).

Juan Fernandez MPP and Victor G. Sanchez on October 12, 2019, in Los Angeles, California. In attendance were about 600 friends and family of Michael and his wife, Amanda Dominguez Ayala MPP 2017; Stacey Harris MPP, Marcus Kessler MPP, Christian Martinez-Lane MPP, Amanda Thompson MPP, and Paul Young MPP, as well as former Harvard Journal of Hispanic Policy editorial staff Octavio Gonzalez MPP 2015, Vivian Arango, John Garcia, Jeffrey Reisman, and Sarah Haskins.

In November, Juan joined HCM Strategists as a senior associate in their Washington, D.C. office.

Oluwadugun Hekse MScICSP now works as a senior consultant at Brakeley Ngadjui, advising nonprofits on resource mobilization strategies—within philanthropies, governments, strategic partnerships, and stakeholder engagement. In this capacity, he manages consulting assignments for universities, civil society organizations, and cultural institutions. Brakeley traces its roots back to 1995, when its founder was hired by Harvard to run the first modern university capital campaign.

Presently, Brakeley operates through a number of regional consultancies serving the nonprofit sector throughout the world.

Bessma Aljarbou MC/MPA, a senior consultant at Brakeley Ngadjui, was recently honored by the ITrek Foundation with the Bradley M. Bloom Impact Award for his individual efforts to improve Indonesian bilateral relations.

Edwin Cua MC/MPA recently joined the Office of the Provost at the U.S. Department of the Treasury. He and his wife, Helen, moved their son, Edwin Torrey Cua (aka Teddy), on October 13, 2019.

Abdi Ismail Isse MC/MPA recently took on a new role as the strategy head for the Cloud Network, a group within Cisco Systems, for APAC, Japan, and China, after a stint in management consulting with Monitor Deloitte.


In October 2019, between the 20th anniversary of the People’s Republic of China and the 2020 presidential election of the People’s Republic of China, Hong Kong’s AEO has not changed—American Peg, British Law, Chinese Land, and Digital Asset.”

In 2017

Nirwan Balachandran MC/MPA now heads the new America Foundation as one of the nation’s 40 AAPI Foreign Policy and National Security Next Generation Leaders. He was also honored by the Think Foundation with the Bradley M. Bloom Impact Award for his individual efforts to improve Indonesia bilateral relations.

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Abdi Ismail Isse MC/MPA, “After graduation, I spent seven months in global impact of the world, with more than 2,500 national staff, the implementation of one of ICRC’s delegation for the ICRC, I am overseeing the ICRC’s humanitarian response of the International this mission is to advance the governance of the World. My role as the President of the ICRC and other emerging technologies. Our theory of change revolves around an innovative combination of programs: policy research and advisory services; seminars and summits; education and leadership development programs; and special projects such as our AI Collaborative Forum, Global Governance of AI, Independent Audit of Algorithms, and AI Commons, which proposes AI adoption in developing countries.”

58

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THE GLUE THAT CONNECTS THE PIECES

BY MARI MEGIAS

A career in the communications sector showed Jill Wagner MPA 1983 the importance of an HKS education. Her work with the HKS Fund aims to keep the School addressing the thorniest issues confronting society.

I know that at the Kennedy School, the best and brightest are working on the most intractable problems.”

Donors to the HKS Fund provide crucial resources that give the School the flexibility to respond to emerging challenges and seize new opportunities. For instance, HKS was able to bolster digital HKS and additional emerging opportunities because of funding from alumni donors. “These funds helped start many initiatives at the School,” says Wagner. “And as we enter a new era of disruption, from quantum computing to artificial intelligence, what will this mean for education, for the classes being taught at HKS? How do we get our arms around cybersecurity and privacy?”

By donating to the HKS Fund, she says, alumni can help the School address the thorniest issues confronting society today by working to educate the changemakers and leaders who will take prominent roles in shaping our collective future.

Wagner has been pondering public problems her whole life. A native of Denver who received her bachelor’s degree from Iowa State University, she spent her career as a marketing executive in the telecom industry at a time when it was dominated by men and when the field was disrupted first by the federally mandated dissolution of AT&T and then by the advent of mobile communications.

She says her time as an HKS student gave her the confidence and knowledge to discuss technology with experts. “The technology boys saw me as a marketing type who did only creative stuff,” she says. “But I could go toe-to-toe with them over the technology, since I knew it as well as they did. I understood the possible ramifications when it came to privacy. I knew how technology evolves, how it was not a static thing, and that there were plusses and minuses as it evolved—and this didn’t scare me. I learned this at HKS.”

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A strong advocate for women (she was the first female president of the student body at Iowa State), Wagner has pushed the organizations with which she has been involved to diversify their workforces. Now that she has retired, she continues to mentor young women—not in the boardroom, but in the sorority house where she lives with 45 college-age women near the University of Minnesota. “I’m the adult in the room,” she says. “It’s a hoot and a half, and keeps me young.”

She focuses on education because, she says, “education solves problems; it doesn’t put a Band-Aid on them.” With all that’s going on the world today, Wagner says, it is important that she feed her optimism. “I know that at the Kennedy School, the best and brightest are working on the most intractable problems”—a feeling that was reinforced when, on the plane from her home in Minneapolis to Cambridge, she read a piece on the crisis in the democratic West by Nicholas Burns, Roy and Barbara Goodman Family Professor of the Practice of Diplomacy and International Relations. “As a former U.S. ambassador to NATO, Burns can say things that not everyone else can say, and say them in a way that has a lot of legitimacy,” she says.

A voracious reader, Wagner often peruses books and articles by HKS faculty members, and she knows that her annual donations to the HKS Fund fuel their work. “Many of the funds the Kennedy School receives are donated for something particular—and the HKS Fund is the glue that puts all of these things together,” she says. This glue connects the pieces because even when dollars are earmarked for specific uses, gaps remain. “The HKS Fund is essential to enabling the School to maintain excellence in its mission,” Wagner says. This is why she is such a staunch supporter of Harvard Kennedy School.
WHEN FIRST-YEAR HARVARD STUDENTS moved in at the beginning of the academic year, one of their first interactions was with Harvard Votes Challenge, an effort to increase voter registration across the University. The program, run by students with support from the Institute of Politics and the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation, engaged with more than 1,000 first-year students, mailed more than 600 voter registration forms, and supported students from 48 states and the District of Columbia. It also helped 150 more students who are not eligible to vote figure out ways they could practice civic participation on campus. Undergraduates Kevin Ballen and Tyler Love helped share the message.

PHOTO BY NATALIE MONTANER
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