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**Georgia On
Everyone's Mind**

**COVID-19 Affecting
the Workplace**

**Why Did President
Trump Kill Federal
Inmates on His
Way Out?**

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Letter From the Editor



Dear Reader,

Our world has been shaken. We've fallen on hard times between a global pandemic, ongoing domestic crises, and the chaos introduced to the personal matters that dictate our lives. In these pages, you will read stories reflecting on these challenges. You will read about ways the pandemic has affected our lives. You will read about executions and the political mechanisms that have led to them. You will read about sensitive personal harms that make up enormous systemic ones. You will also read stories of hope, hope for a future where illnesses like diabetes and heart and lung diseases have novel treatments. Hope for a future of our own making that is better than the one we have inherited. Yes, we have fallen on hard times, but I hope you will find within these pages a sense that the difficulties of the day are not as all-encompassing as they may seem.

The months since our last publication have been turbulent ones. We have watched in distress as an election was challenged and the very foundation of American democracy called into question by a sizable minority of our population. We have witnessed a test of the political systems that thwart coups d'état in this country. We have continued to preserve our city, locked in turmoil as activists struggle to make their voices heard and an ongoing housing crisis locks ever more people out of their livelihoods. We have looked on over world affairs as tragedies unfolded and new hope blossomed. Even in these difficult months, we remain resilient and look forward to better days ahead.

This magazine has also buckled under the hardship of this time. That is why, with this letter, I wish to appeal to each of you as readers, as those who enjoy what our magazine offers and wish to see it continue. Since the pandemic began, we have experienced an increasing pressure on our contributors. Some have left the state to live with their families during our remote education period. Others have been unable to maintain their positions as students at PSU. Still others have graduated and moved on to new challenges and opportunities elsewhere. I wish to extend to you an invitation to contribute your voice to The Pacific Sentinel. At this magazine, we wish to represent the student body of PSU with integrity and to foster the interests and thirst for knowledge that drives students to our pages. At this time, we are unable to adequately represent you without more contributors capturing the full diversity of experience at this university. I ask that each of you consider contributing to our magazine. All writers, editors, photographers, illustrators, and designers are paid for their contributions. You can find a full list of available positions on our website at www.pacsentinel.com/jobs

Kind Regards,
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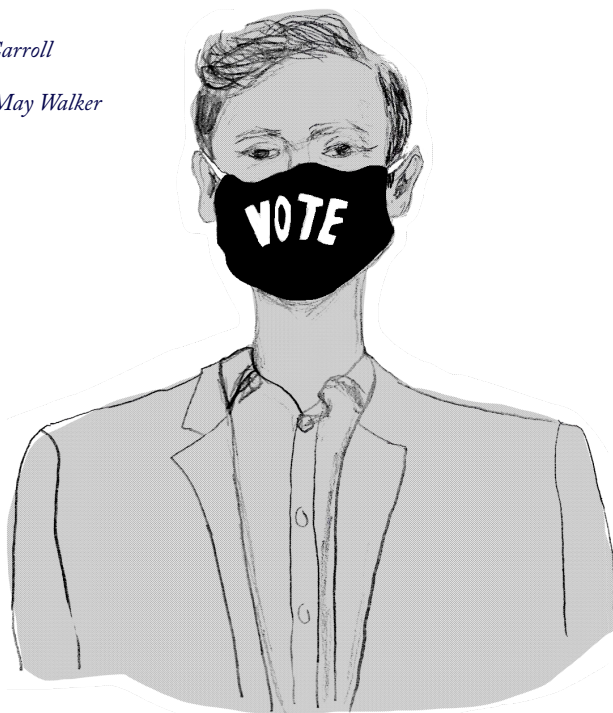
GEORGIA

ON EVERYONE'S MIND

Two seats from Georgia just reshaped the U.S. Senate after historic and fraught campaigns.

by Conor Carroll

Illustrations by May Walker



The 2020 election results surprised pundits with many contradicting polls for President and Congress across the United States, but one of the most significant revelations was the voter turnout in Georgia.

Historically a red state, several crucial urban counties in Georgia turned out large in numbers, and voted Democratic, resulting in a slim but critical victory for President Elect Joe Biden, and relegating the U.S. Senate races there to a special election, which took place January 5, 2021.

The state of Georgia's voting laws are specific and atypical when it comes to electing any public official. To win a race, a candidate must receive at least 50% plus one vote of the total ballots received. If this does not happen, a run-off election occurs.

According to a U.S. Department of the Interior report from 2009, in Georgia and many former Confederate states, Black people have had difficulties voting since the Constitutional right to do so was enshrined. Georgia was infamous for suppressing the Black vote before and during the Jim Crow Era. According to a Cambridge University

study, tactics like poll taxes, literacy tests, and grandfather clauses in state laws all intended to supplant the ever-growing Black vote.

Poll taxes would be too high for Black people to pay, as this demographic made less than half of what their white counterparts did for over a century, and still make less on average in 2020. Literacy tests were intended to stop someone from voting if they could not answer certain questions at the poll station. Due to poor schooling and the effects of slavery, most Black people could barely read, which would then disqualify them even if they knew the answers.

Many of these tactics are still present, just in different forms. Georgia mandates some of the country's most aggressive methods for purging voters from registration rolls. Republican election officials claim these tactics are crucial to prevent fraud despite lacking evidence.

Georgia is also one of 18 states requiring voter I.D. Voters must also pay postage to both request and send mail-in ballots, which must arrive before 7 p.m. on Election Day. These rules disproportionately affect people

of color and immigrants, according to the Center for Public Integrity.

The current iteration of voting in Georgia began in 1963, when the U.S. Supreme Court held in *Gray v. Sanders* that a previous voting law contravened the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment. The majority decision (8-1) ruled that the previous voting methods helped to give more power to rural voters and disenfranchise black voters, and gave way to the jurisprudential notion of "one person, one vote."

After the Supreme Court ruling in *Gray v. Sanders*, Georgia had to create a new system for voting, one in which, according to the 2009 Department of the Interior report, yet again intended to "disenfranchise Black voters." The report goes on to say "In 1963, state representative Denmark Groover from Macon introduced a proposal to apply majority-vote, runoff election rules to all local, state, and federal offices. A staunch segregationist, Groover's hostility to black voting was reinforced by personal experience."

Before the run-off election became inevitable, there were two senate elections



that occurred during the normal election cycle. There was a standard Class II senatorial election between incumbent Republican Senator David Perdue and Democratic challenger Jon Ossoff, and since neither received 50% plus one vote of the total, the election proceeded to a runoff election.

The Class III senate election in Georgia, was different and enthralling. The candidates were so completely different demographically and ideologically and yet so popular within their own political bases. Their differences have created political fireworks: a progressive

versus a far-right, alleged QAnon supporter.

Following Senator Johnny Isakson's resignation effective December 31, 2019, Governor Brian Kemp appointed Kelly Loeffler to serve as Isakson's replacement, effective January 6, 2020, until the special election took place on Election Day, 2020. The pool of candidates during the special election essentially came down to the candidates that received the most votes in the regular election: previously appointed Republican Senator Kelly Loeffler, and Reverend Raphael Warnock, a Democrat.

Technically the incumbent, Loeffler was never actually elected, hence the legal need for the special election. Typically, both U.S. Senators from a single state are not up for election in the same cycle, but due to Loeffler's appointment rather than election, a second Georgian Senate seat was up for grabs.

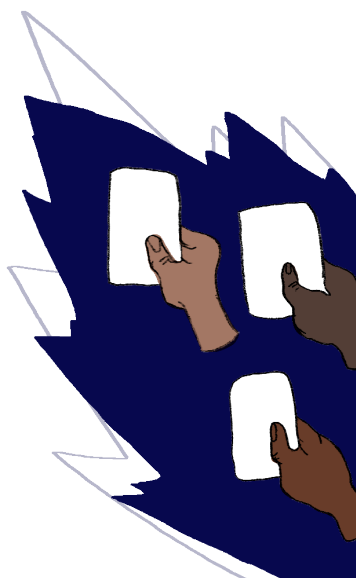
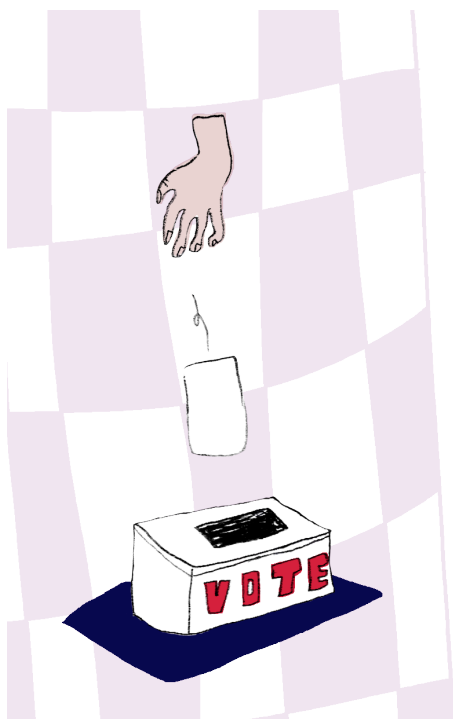
Loeffler is a former businesswoman, she was previously CEO of at least one subsidiary of commodity and financial service provider Intercontinental Exchange, owned by her husband Jeffrey Sprecher. Another subsidiary of IE is the New York Stock Exchange.

Loeffler's first real Congressional endorsement, prior to the runoff, was Representative Marjory Taylor Greene, a QAnon supporter. Loeffler also recently came out with an advertisement, where she states that "I am more conservative than Atilla the Hun."

Warnock, on the other hand, is an African American, and the Senior Pastor at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta Georgia, a Church with storied roots in progressivism and civil rights. Warnock's victory made him the first Black U.S. Senator elected in Georgia.

The reason these elections were so critical to both parties is because they determined which party would have the majority power in the Senate.

The runoff elections on January 5 both went to the Democratic candidates, securing a narrow Democratic majority in the U.S. Senate once Vice President Elect Kamala Harris assumed the role of Senate tie breaker upon becoming Vice President of the United States.



A Minimum Requirement of Neutrality

U.S. Supreme Court ruling blocks N.Y. Governor's strict capacity caps on attendance numbers for religious gatherings, despite scientist's warnings and massive Covid-19 surge.

by Conor Carroll

Illustrations by May Walker

In a 5-4 majority ruling, the U.S. Supreme Court sided with religious institutions in a dispute over COVID-19 restrictions established by New York Governor Andrew Cuomo that sought to limit the number of people attending religious services.

This request for injunctive relief is the latest suit pitting religious groups against city or state officials seeking to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The disputes, one brought by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn and another from the Agudath Israel of Madison synagogue, came during a surge of coronavirus cases nationwide.

The case further highlights the divisive nature of public health versus the right to practice one's religion, a legal concept which has migrated to the societal fore since the pandemic began, with several different justices delivering several different, and often contentious, opinions.

Cuomo issued the executive order at the center of both disputes in October. As part of the state's effort to combat COVID-19, the executive order and an initiative that it implements identify "clusters" of COVID-19 cases and then take

situation specific action to prevent the virus from spreading.

An area immediately around a cluster is known as a "red" zone, where attendance at worship services is limited to 10 people. The area around a "red" zone is known as an "orange" zone; attendance at worship services there is limited to 25 people. "Yellow" zones surround "orange" zones; attendance there is limited to 50% of the building's maximum capacity.

The diocese went to the Supreme Court on November 12, asking the justices to block the attendance limits after the lower courts declined to do so. It told the Supreme Court that as a practical matter, the order "effectively bars in-person worship at affected churches—a 'devastating' and 'spiritually harmful' burden on the Catholic community."

The synagogue followed on Nov. 16. They stressed that although they have complied with previous COVID-19 rules, the restrictions imposed by Cuomo's order impede them from conducting services for all of their congregants, and they argued that Cuomo's order beleaguered Orthodox Jewish communities because other

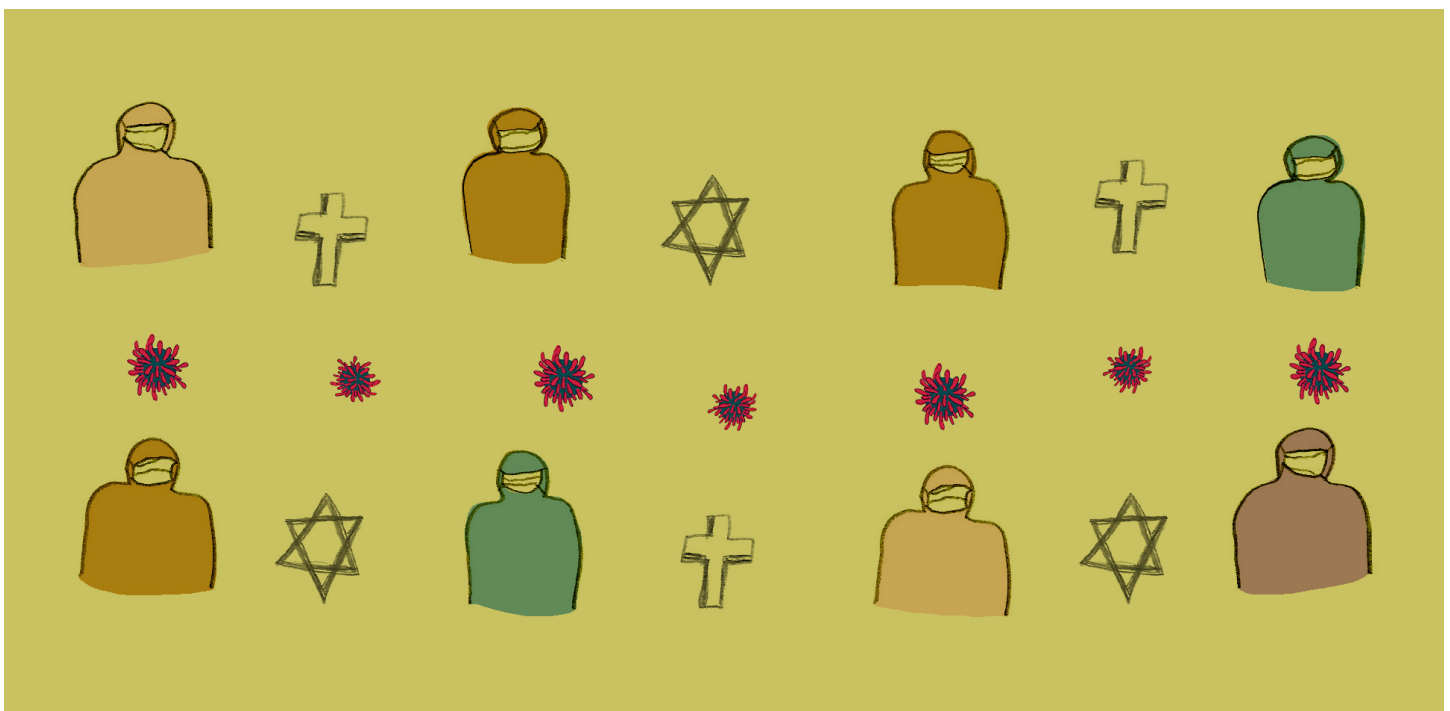
Orthodox Jews had not observed the rules.

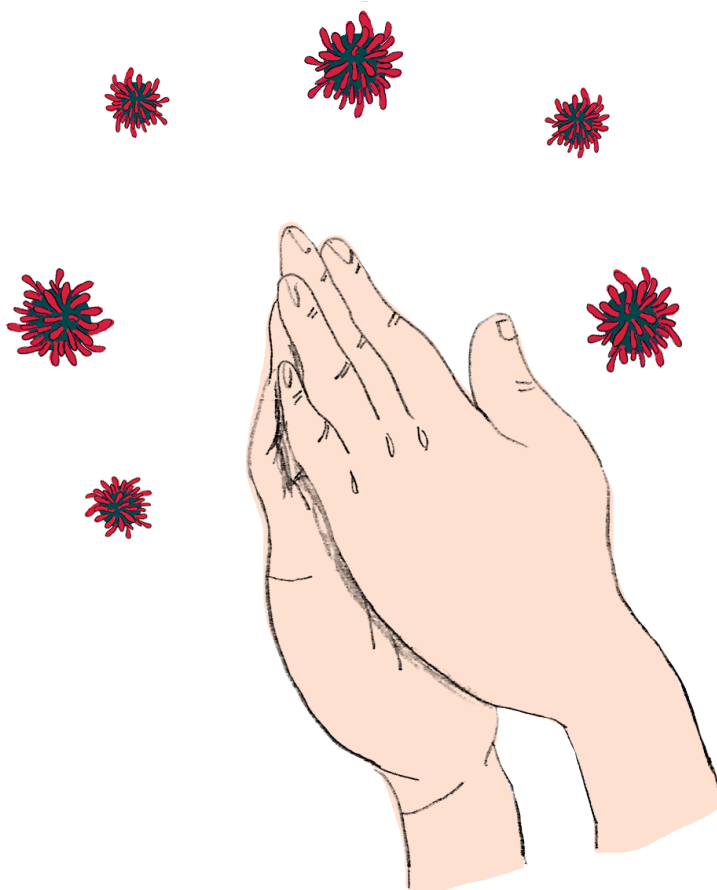
Cuomo pushed back, responding that the restrictions on attendance no longer apply to the churches and synagogue, which are in areas that are now designated as yellow zones. In any event, Cuomo told the justices, the order isn't focused on gatherings because they are religious, but because of the possibility that they could be superspreader events.

If anything, Cuomo added, the order treats religious gatherings more favorably than secular events—such as plays and concerts—that involve similar risks.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and hundreds of experts, have made it very clear that large gatherings at indoor events, where people linger and congregate, are some of the most dangerous events that any person can attend during a pandemic. These events include large religious gatherings.

In their majority opinion in the Diocese of Brooklyn case (which also pertains to the synagogue's case), the Supreme Court stopped the state from enforcing the attendance limits, while the challengers continue to litigate the issue





in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit and, if necessary, return to the Supreme Court for a final decision on the merits.

Justice Neil Gorsuch stated in his concurrence, “So, at least according to the Governor, it may be unsafe to go to church, but it is always fine to pick up another bottle of wine, shop for a new bike, or spend the afternoon exploring your distal points and meridians. Who knew public health would so perfectly align with secular convenience?”

Justice Sonya Sotomayor stated in her dissent that, “[Justice Gorsuch] does not even try to square his examples with the conditions medical experts tell us facilitate the spread of COVID-19: large groups of people gathering, speaking, and singing in close proximity indoors for extended periods of time. Unlike religious services... bike repair shops and liquor stores generally do not feature customers gathering inside to sing and speak together for an hour or more at a time.”

Sotomayor finished with a rather dire message, “Justices of this Court play a deadly game in second-guessing the expert judgment of health officials about the environments in which a contagious virus, now infecting a million Americans each week, spreads most easily.”

The realities of the pandemic are unavoidable and science-based, as a recent *Nature Magazine* and Stanford University study espoused, “across

metro areas, full-service restaurants, gyms, hotels, cafes, religious organizations, and limited-service restaurants produced the largest predicted increases in infections when reopened.”

Even Pope Francis, religious leader to over a billion Catholics around the world, penned a *New York Times* op-ed decrying the fact that people of faith are disregarding orders of public safety. He asserts that “[the common good] takes precedence over simplistic appeals to personal freedom.”



An Unspoken Norm

Bankruptcy, sexual abuse, and the tainted legacy of the Boy Scouts of America

by Conor Carroll

Illustration by Greer Siegel

According to reports in 2020, approximately 92,700 people filed sexual abuse claims against the Boy Scouts of America by a November 16, 2020 deadline.

The Boy Scouts of America filed for bankruptcy in February 2020, under the increasing fiscal burden of sex abuse lawsuits. Under the Chapter 11 filing, the organization will reorganize and establish a reparation fund. A judge set the November 16 deadline to permit alleged victims a last chance to file claims.

The New York Times reported in 2020 that the Boy Scouts of America has over \$1 billion in financial holdings. This includes “financial investments like stocks and bonds (\$680 million), cash in the bank (\$55 million), and property (\$102 million). But much more is held by the more than 250 local councils, which own hundreds of camps, reservations and other properties across the country.”

The BSA began addressing the problem of sexual abuse in the 1980s, according to lawyer Jason Amala, a partner in his Seattle based law firm which often represents child sexual abuse plaintiffs. Amala told the Albany

Times Union in 2020 that “If the bankruptcy had happened 10 or 20 years ago, it may have topped 150,000 abuse claims.”

Hundreds of sex abuse lawsuits have been filed against the BSA over the last 20 years, and courts were presented evidence of the organization’s leadership “attempting to cover up these complaints or firing the alleged assailants but not reporting the criminal acts to the police,” according to Time magazine.

In 2010, an Oregon jury delivered a guilty verdict against the Boy Scouts of America in a sex abuse case. The court instructed that the organization pay \$18.5 million to the victim and, publicize an internal document listing men accused of sexual abuse. This case is considered crucial in bringing to light the extent of sexual abuse in the Boy Scouts of America.

The Los Angeles Times made the list public in 2012. Throughout the 2010’s, there were so many cases brought against the Boy Scouts of America that the organization started to disintegrate under the liability of payments to be made to boys and men that numerous courts discovered had been victimized by the organization or settled out of court.

Many larger states in the U.S., like New York, California, and Texas recently passed overarching laws to broaden the statutes of limitations on child sexual abuse. This led to the BSA coping with a torrent of lawsuits alleging child sexual abuse and coverups by scoutmasters in America writ large.

Amala went on to say that “The BSA likely had the most serious child sexual abuse problem in the country. On some level, the Catholic church problem might pale in comparison, and that says a lot. We focus a lot on the Catholic church problem and deservedly so, but these numbers—they are staggering.”

Sexual misconduct in the BSA was an “unspoken norm,” according to council Andrew Van Arsdale, a primary attorney who has addressed thousands of people that have accused the organization of sexual abuse. In a 2020 interview with CNN Van Arsdale stated, “Based on what we are hearing from survivors, sexual abuse was a rite of passage in troops across the country, similar to other tasks where children had to... perform certain duties to earn their coveted merit badges.”



Pigs are Candidates to Help Solve America's Organ Donation Problem and Diabetes

by Sophie Meyers

Illustration by Hlie Moua

Recently, great advancements have been made in the research and development of xenotransplantation from pigs to humans. The transplantation of tissues and organs from pigs to humans is being considered as an alternative for human heart and lung transplants, as well as a way to cure some types of diabetes through islet cell transplants.

The FDA has approved the first intentional genomic alteration or IGA, a biotechnological technique to make pigs safer to eat and potentially eliminate the risk of xenotransplants from pigs to humans.

The IGA has been implemented in a specific line of domesticated GalSafe pigs to eliminate the alpha-gal sugar that is present in the pigs' cells. The alpha-gal sugar is the suspected cause of tissue and organ rejection in xenotransplants from pigs. The removal of the alpha-gal sugar may also produce pork that is safe to eat for people with Alpha-gal syndrome, which causes allergic reactions to

the alpha-gal sugar in various meats. However, the company Revivicor developed the GalSafe pigs with the intention of developing donor pigs with human compatible cells.

The elimination of the alpha-gal sugar in pigs does not increase safety concerns for the animals, however the pigs are kept separate from other pigs who have the alpha-gal sugar to prevent the spread of disease that the GalSafe pigs are not protected from. Xenotransplantation for the Galsafe pigs is still unapproved by the FDA and researchers agree that more research is needed before attempting tissue and organ donation to humans.

In November, 2020 xenotransplantation research from pigs to non-human primates was approved. Three researchers from the University of Alabama created the line of TKO pigs by eliminating the three known carbohydrate xenoantigens—antigens found across species that could trigger an immune

response. Without these antigens, the results look promising for xenotransplantation from such donor pigs.

According to the Health Resources and Service Administration 109,000 people are currently waiting for transplants in the U.S. and only 39,718 transplants were performed in 2019. 17 People die each day waiting for an organ transplant and every 9 minutes another person is added to the transplant list.

Revivicor hopes to create a new method for islet cell donation from pigs. The researchers have successfully implemented islets from pigs into mice. Islet donation allows people with insulin dependent diabetes to no longer require insulin supplementation and could cure the disease. Islet donation is currently in practice through traditional organ donation, but according to Revivicor, fewer than 100 islet transplants are performed every year.

COVID-19 Affecting the Workplace

COVID-19 continues to prohibit restaurants from opening, but in the coming months there may be hope for a return to normalcy with vaccine distribution.



by Sophie Meyers
Illustrations by Greer Siegel

COVID-19 cases have been decreasing steadily across Oregon since the holidays. The lowest death and case rates since late June 2020 have been recorded with only 96 cases reported on January 25. However, restaurants across the state remain limited to take out only. Government officials promise a steady roll out of vaccines, but front line customer service and other restaurant staff are not yet listed. The plans for vaccinations go out until March.

COVID-19 has impacted the Anderson family both at home and in their business. The family runs a small brewery and taphouse located in central Oregon. Kobold brewing and its attached business The Vault Taphouse had to shut down to deep clean for several days when one worker tested positive for COVID-19. Steve Anderson quickly got a test himself and found out it was positive several days later. Upon discovering the virus spread in the workplace, the old crew was asked to quarantine for two weeks while a makeshift crew of previous workers and friends of the Anderson family came in to cover the taphouse.

“It’s hard to tell where the virus is coming from,” Steve notes, discussing the cause of the spread.

Steve’s wife and business partner, as well as their two children, have had COVID-19 tests. The family has quarantined in various rooms of their house, limiting their time in common spaces as well as wearing masks and frequently cleaning. The rest of the family has tested negative after getting two tests done several days apart.

Oregon has invested over \$150 million into small businesses across the state during the pandemic. Governor Kate Brown expresses the necessity of funding these businesses, stating “these small businesses are truly the heart and soul of our economy” during a press conference on December 11.

Additionally the state has set up a business advocate for business owners to seek help for their companies during the lockdown.

Governor Kate Brown expresses fears that the \$150 million fund will not supply enough to satisfy the needs of many struggling businesses in a November 18th press conference. Along with businesses, many Oregon tribal

communities are struggling with the lockdown as much of their revenue comes from stores and casinos. While cases have gone down in recent weeks, Multnomah county is still listed in the high risk category by the Oregon government as of February 18.

Governor Brown expresses hopes for vaccine roll out to help these businesses, however these plans have been delayed due to misleading advice from the Trump Administration. Alex Azar, former secretary of the United States Health and Human Services, gave a briefing about faster vaccine roll out. Azar states that “the doses allocated exceeds the priority populations in group 1-A including front line health workers and seniors living in long-term care facilities which means supply exceeds demand from those groups.” Alex Azar speaks about encouraging and helping states expand who gets vaccinated.

Azar urged states to update their vaccine roll out plans to a faster model. Azar states that effective two weeks from the briefing on January 12, there will be a change in allocation; Azar states that the federal government “will



be allocating them [doses] based on the pace of administration as reported by states, and by the size of the 65 and over population in each state.” He goes on to say “we are giving states two weeks notice of this shift to plan, and to improve their reporting if they think their data is faulty.”

Brown states in a January 15 press conference, that the extra doses promised to states across the country “we have now discovered doesn’t actually exist.” Governor Kate Brown expresses outrage at the altered vaccine distribution “I am shocked and appalled that the federal government would set an expectation with the American people, on which they knew they could not deliver, with such grave consequences.”

In light of the fewer vaccines Oregon will be given, the Oregon government adjusted their distribution plans to accommodate fewer Oregonians.

Brown states she is “committed” to developing a financial assistance deal for both businesses, agencies and individuals who are struggling.

This time around, there are some changes

compared to the last Oregon lockdown; parks and playgrounds, along with Chiropractors, physical therapists, and medical spas will remain open with the new guidelines due to lack of evidence that these places resulted in increased spread of the virus. As Brown states during a November 18 press briefing, schools that “meet the metrics” will stay open. Child care facilities will also remain open. Faith based communities are limited to 25 people indoors and 50 people outdoors.

In the same press briefing on November 18, Dr. Dean Sidelinger expresses fear over hospital capacity. In the first week of November, “COVID-19 hospitalizations have increased nearly 50 percent in the past week and over 100 percent in the last month.” Dr. Sidelinger adds that Portland metro hospitals are especially “facing a constraint” due to the influx in COVID-19 related patients. Sidelinger says that Portland hospitals have the fewest ICU beds available since the start of the pandemic. However, Sidelinger warns that “hospitalizations are a lagging indicator” and “today’s hospitalizations reflect the cases from

one to two weeks ago when our case counts were significantly lower.”

Sidelinger explains in the November conference that the numbers indicate the virus spread is resulting from “sporadic community spread” rather than something that can be traced back to any specific events or gatherings.

Both Brown and Sidelinger encouraged Oregonians to maintain social distancing practices.



Executive Executions

President Donald Trump approved more capital punishments than the last 10 administrations combined.

by Conor Carroll
Illustrations by Bailey Granquist

Despite moral objections and legal challenges, the Trump administration executed 13 people between July 2020 and the end of Trump's term of office. According to the Associated Press, "[this would] cement Trump's legacy as the most prolific execution president in over 130 years."

Trump's actions break a tradition of lame duck presidents deferring to incoming presidents on policy about which they differ so starkly, according to Robert Dunham, director of the non-partisan Death Penalty Information Center.

He stated in an interview with the Associated Press, "It's hard to understand why anybody at this stage of a presidency feels compelled to kill this many people... especially when the American public voted for someone else to replace you and that person has said he opposes the death penalty."

The Trump administration's regression to death penalty punishments is seemingly contrary to global standards over the past few years. According to Amnesty International, annual executions recorded worldwide fell by almost a third in 2018 to the lowest figure in

more than a decade.

In an interview with the Associated Press, former Attorney General William Barr defended the extension of executions into the post election period, saying he'll likely schedule more before he departs the Department of Justice. The Biden administration, he said, should keep it up.

"I think the way to stop the death penalty is to repeal the death penalty," Barr stated. "But if you ask juries to impose and juries impose it, then it should be carried out."

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- **LBGTQ+ PERSPECTIVES COLUMNIST**
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- **ACCESSIBILITY COLUMNIST**

The Pacific Sentinel is a monthly student-run magazine at PSU. We seek to uplift student voices and advocate on behalf of the underrepresented. We analyze culture, politics, and daily life to continually take the dialogue further

Reconstructing America Reconstructing America Reconstructing America Reconstructing America

The impeachment is only a symptom of deeper issues of American life

by Wallace Milner

In 1942, in the middle of the Second World War, a movie called Tennessee Johnson was released.

The film was a flop, attracting almost as many protesters as it did ticket receipts. It was quickly brushed under the rug, a rare disappointment in the otherwise sterling careers of stars Lionel Barrymore and Van Heflin.

I present this piece of information not just because it is an interesting piece of Hollywood trivia, but because this biopic has far more to say about the risks and rewards of impeachment than any present cable news coverage.

The movie tells the story of President Andrew Johnson: His early career, his rise as a senator, and his split with the government of his home state over the issue of secession. It then follows Johnson as he runs for Vice President with Abraham Lincoln—and ascends to the highest office when the Great Emancipator is killed. The movie ends with the protagonist, Johnson, fighting for his political life against a politically motivated impeachment, led by the sly and conniving Thaddeus Stevens. He is only saved by presenting a rousing speech, swaying his opponents and saving the executive branch from the overreach of the radical congress.

The movie is a lie, a collection of misleading anecdotes and outright fabrications. As a story, it isn't a unique or even particularly inventive lie. It's just one small part of the sweeping ideological and political project known as the Lost Cause Narrative. This narrative has been preserved and advanced by such political media as the novel *Gone With the Wind*, and by President Woodrow Wilson, who, in an essay published before his election, compared freed slaves to children.

How exactly did we get from fact to fiction? The deliberate process of manipulation and propaganda, combined with the natural drive

of the powerful to defend their interests has created a false history. Understanding the bloody and tragic reality of the American past will be key if we hope to avoid the mistakes we once made.

By 1868, the American South was vanquished. Utterly at the mercy of the North, the Confederacy had been humiliated on the battlefield and obliterated as a political force. The industrial might of the Union, unleashed by Republican governance, had overawed the decayed Southern political structures. The brutal total war waged by Generals William Tecumseh Sherman and Ulysses Grant had utterly broken the Southern material base.

But the South was defeated in more than just military terms. The Northern victory in the Civil War was a psychological and political

The entire myth of white America was torn apart by the war.

one, akin to a revolution. It was not just the Confederate government that had lost, but a hundred years of Southern agrarian ideology, white supremacist culture, and economic and social thought. The entire myth of white America was torn apart by the war.

For a century, a viciously reactionary Southern planter class had dominated American politics, combining a unique brand of agrarianism, Protestant theology, and expansionist ideology to create what was, up until that point, the American identity. Defeated in the battlefield,

out of power in government, and tarnished in the eyes of the American people, one might be forgiven for assuming 1868 marked the end of the American racial caste system. Instead, it marked the rebirth of an ideology that, 150 years later, still holds sway over the American government.

The real story of Andrew Johnson is quite different from the MGM movie version. An ardent bigot and Southern apologist, Johnson was opposed to secession on the narrowest of terms. He was the most prominent Democrat to oppose the war, a position which earned him the vice presidential slot on Abraham Lincoln's "National Union" ticket, a party created specifically to join Democrats and Republicans in order to advance Lincoln's electoral prospects.

But though he may have been a useful ally, Johnson was never intended to be Lincoln's successor. A former slave owner himself, after ascending to the presidency Johnson quickly worked to bring former Confederate states back into the union. He was opposed in this by the Radical Republicans, a political grouping which demanded far harsher treatment for the defeated South, with the goal of not merely ending slavery but beginning to move towards racial equality.

While Johnson controlled the presidency, his power was limited. The Republicans had large majorities in the House of Representatives and Senate, and attempted to lead a more radical reconstruction. Tension grew as Johnson blocked this version of reconstruction and, when the president removed Secretary of War Edwin Stanton in violation of the Tenure of Office Act, the House began impeachment proceedings.

Far from being the conniving proto-authoritarians they were portrayed as in the

movie, the Radical Republicans were a diverse and complex group, with competing goals and visions for the country. What united them, though, was an uncompromising dedication to seeing that the hard-won freedom of Black Southerners would not be undone.

Most prominent among the Radical Republicans was Thaddeus Stevens. A representative from Pennsylvania, Stevens knew that removing Johnson was just one small step in advancing civil rights. His most famous proposal was to divide the land of slave owners into sections and give it to those freed—what would become the famous “40 acres and a mule” promise.

What Stevens and the rest of the Radical Republicans believed was that a nation built on a historic injustice required more than just liberation to achieve equality. Freedom on paper, Stevens correctly surmised, would not actually be freedom at all, so long as the institutions of white supremacy—the Southern planter class—were preserved.

I find myself thinking of the impeachment of Andrew Johnson when I read news about the impeachment process in recent events. Donald Trump is just the fourth president to undergo impeachment proceedings, and his career bears more than a few similarities to the controversial and brash bigot Johnson. Beyond the particulars of impeachment proceedings, I think of the lessons learned from that impeachment. Andrew Johnson was acquitted by the narrowest of margins, surviving by a single vote, but from that narrowest of margins grew a political movement. The conservative institutions of the South—spared the full brunt of reconstruction until the election of Ulysses Grant—began forming vigilante organizations that would one day become the Ku Klux Klan. Dealt a political blow, the Radical Republicans would never fully institute their vision of redistributive reconstruction. In 1877, Rutherford Hayes would strike a bargain that continued Republican governance, but withdrew federal troops from the South.

Slowly, the white South would re-emerge as a political force. Limiting Black votes through the infamous Grandfather Clause, a complicated piece of bureaucratic trickery that blocked the right to vote through poll taxes and near impossible literacy tests, but exempted from these barriers those who could vote before the war, and their descendents. In other words, unless your grandfather was a voting eligible white man, you were barred from democracy. By reinstating white supremacy over the electoral system, the very system of inequality that had once broken the union was able to again rise. The divisions within the working class over the importance of advancing civil rights would prove to be a useful tool for the emergent millionaire class to hamstring workers’ movements, destroy momentum from populists and progressives, and limit the potential of the New Deal coalition.

The lesson of the Civil War and Andrew Johnson’s impeachment is painfully obvious. The problem of America rests far outside the bounds of an individual president.

The population of our country is locked in a constant battle between the wealthy aristocrats who run it like a business and the vast majority of us, who are in one way or another kept from political power. The Donald Trumps who are handed privilege by the fortune of family are not so far removed from the Andrew Johnsons. They are able to succeed, and able to hold power, because they represent the interests of a small but influential coalition of nationalists, industrialists, and bigots.

I reflect, too, on the fact that, once defeated, the South began a long process of propaganda, an effort to tell a story of America that was

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never true. This Lost Cause Narrative holds sway even today, when millions of Americans feel affinity with the rebels who betrayed our country. They celebrate the legacies and defend the monuments of traitors and murderers who tried to upend all that is worthwhile about America.

It is no coincidence that Thaddeus Stevens is either forgotten or reviled by much of the country. No coincidence either that General Grant is remembered as a corrupt drunkard. It is no coincidence that until the 1950s, the Radical Republicans were considered traitorous villains by former members of the Confederacy.

All these consequences are results of the politics of compromise. The moderate Republicans, who saved Johnson in the hopes that a kinder reconstruction would mend the wounds of the nation, instead ensured the legacy of the war would reverberate for well over a century.

Freedom did not rise from that compromise, but violence did. A steady surge of retaliatory violence that has never truly gone away. While Black Southerners learned how willing their so called Northern white allies were to abandon them, white Southerners learned the tactics of murder and riot as tools to suppress democracy.

In the years after the failed impeachment, lynchings, massacres, and even armed revolutions surged, as American reactionaries sought to preserve with violence what they could not in a fair vote.

If the Democratic Party of today makes the mistake of the Republican Party of the past, the consequences may be equally devastating. What they must have is the courage to advance policies that radically reorganize power in American society.

Just as Thaddeus Stevens hoped to turn the land of the aristocracy into the economic base of the emancipated, the left must have the courage to take back control of this political system from the financial elites by putting power in the hands of workers. A wealthy few have used America’s broken political institutions to gain control of the entire country. The flaws built into our system from its foundation are being utilized to disenfranchise and exploit the vast majority of people.

Undoing the damage of President Trump will not be accomplished through impeachment or elections alone. The very system that put him in power must be destroyed.

That means considering radical political steps. Actions to enfranchise and empower groups that have never been given a fair shot in this country: workers, racial and sexual minorities, women, the poor. Ensuring their right to vote, to organize in mass mobilizations, to act as a united political front is the only way to build a better world. It means building a coalition that has never been fully formed in America, a movement of the oppressed.

After all, the enemies of a democratic society are in many ways the same today as they were in 1860; wealthy landed elites, powerful systems of incarceration and exploitation, economic monopolies and minoritarian political parties, right wing paramilitary organizations and the oppressive apparatuses of racist policing and corrupt political control.

The only way to fight this opposition to a democratic society is to build a full and true one to confront it. The vote is not enough. We need to invest real, material power in the hands of oppressed and exploited groups. Just as once ex-slaves fought for their own freedom, today, the oppressed, exploited and marginalized need to organize and work together.

Democracy is about more than just words on paper. Thaddeus Stevens understood this, and in his own way, Andrew Johnson did too. Both understood that for real change to happen, wealth and land needs to change hands. Andrew Johnson did everything he could to stop it, and Thaddeus Stevens spent his life fighting for it.

This process will not be easy. Like the Reconstruction before it, building a new America will require offending the old one, but this project is a moral and political obligation.

The vestiges from the Civil War still exist today. When millions toil for menial wages, suffer at the hands of racist policing, and when a broken electoral system hands all the power to a wealthy white conservative minority, we are not so far removed from the days of Andrew Johnson as we wish.

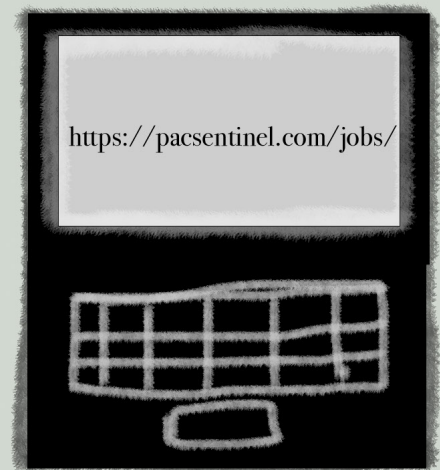
To finish the work of Thaddeus Stevens and Abraham Lincoln, to truly make America the diverse and equal democracy we wish it to be, we must learn from the failure of the Radical Republicans. To build a new nation, we must have the courage to reconstruct the old.

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