

[The Fox's Rabbit Hole: An open letter to right-wing conspiracy enthusiasts](#)

I had an interesting and somewhat disheartening conversation with an old friend yesterday who has recently gone over the deep end of Fox News conspiracy mongering (and worse). As the talk lurched from one preposterous right-wing extreme to another (Bill Gates, Pizzagate, John Podesta's art collection, ANTIFA and the putrid musings of Tucker Carlson), I found it harder and harder to keep a straight face. On returning home I found relief, as I often do, in committing my thoughts to paper. Here is that writing, an open letter to anyone who who has fallen down the rabbit hole:

On Tucker Carlson: Tucker attended St. George's Academy — an elite private boarding school in Middletown. His BA is from Trinity College in Hartford. In my own college days, I encountered many examples of his type: white, wealthy, privileged, eager to argue, reactionary — the sort of frat boy Ivy League wannabe who writes incendiary ultra-conservative editorials for the school paper in response to all those “ultra-liberals” who, in his fevered conservative imagination, make up the rest of the school population. He may fancy himself an iconoclastic “free thinker” who marches to the beat of his own drum, but in truth, Carlson suffers from that most ironic of psychopathologies: the persecution complex of wealth and entitlement. His politics are the politics of deep-seated personal neuroses. He is a sick puppy; don't believe a word he says.

On the subject of John Podesta's supposedly controversial sculpture “Arch of Hysteria” (in case you missed it, the controversy is that the sculpture supposedly bears a resemblance to a victim of serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer). The truth is that “Arch of Hysteria” simply is a modernist work by surrealist artist Louise Bourgeois, whose sculpture is often suffused with ominous Freudian overtones (as is the case with the work of many surrealists): nightmarish spiders, twisted humanoid forms, and other death-obsessed images. It may be dark, but it is ART with no overt connection to the demented crimes of Jeffrey Dahmer. In order to make so preposterous a connection, one must go down yet another mindless psychic vortex — the sort of mirrored funhouse parallel reality the internet will readily provide.

People will find whatever connections and correlations they want to find. There is an old saying: You see what you believe. What has changed is how the internet now provides “evidence” for whatever belief you may already have, regardless of how absurd it may be. Remember: ANYONE can and will post ANYTHING on the internet.

On Pizzagate. Let's review: a former president (Bill Clinton), a former NY state senator (Hillary Clinton), their political advisor (John Podesta), another former president (Obama) and numerous others (all Democrats, of course) were either directly involved with or aware of a secret ring of cannibalistic pedophiles operating out of the basements of pizza parlors. Does this not sound crazy to you? Well ... it

should. Because it is crazy and it IS delusional and as you spend time and energy worrying about genuinely deranged theories coming straight from Trump's base of support, he is busily fanning the flames of racial resentment, rolling back women's reproductive rights, threatening European alliances, endangering the public's health and rescinding hard-earned LGBTQ civil liberties. This is the reality we should be concerned with: the psychopathic narcissist whose complete lack of humanity has brought on a wave of justified protest.

Bill Gates? Out to de-populate the world with tainted vaccines and microchips? This, too, is beneath rational discussion. Throughout history, anyone who has amassed wealth is often cast as the source for all the problems of the world (for the Nazis it was an international cabal of Jewish / Masonic industrialists). I have researched every point typically raised to support this lunatic fear-of-Gates: that he is being sued by India for genocide, that he has caused countless deaths, or that he wants to reduce world population through vaccine-based sterilization, and not one iota of it is true.

Given enough time and with nothing better to do (and the quarantine has certainly helped in that department), ANYONE can find evidence to support ANYTHING they want to believe. So ask yourself this: why would you WANT to believe such things? Personally, I want to believe in alien civilizations and UFOs because there is something hopeful and optimistic about extraterrestrial intelligence; we could certainly use some of that right now. But conversely, there is nothing but fear and paranoia in believing that "Black Lives Matter" is an evil conspiracy or that roving gangs of ANTIFA anarchists are plotting to take over the country. Such mindsets are classic cases of blaming the victims (in this case — the victims of lifelong discrimination, murder and abuse at the hands of police) for the "crime" of righteous resistance and protest.

The internet is an infinitely expanding network with millions of millions of web pages. Think of each website as a star which, together with all the other stars, make up a kind of universe. When you look up at the sky, you can see the Big Dipper. But do the stars that make up that constellation really look like a big dipper? Sure... if you want them to. But really, when you "see" the "Big Dipper" you are seeing a PATTERN that has become familiar to you. Truthfully, if you can see outside the habituated patterns of dippers (and horses and belts-of-Orion, etc.) you can rearrange the stars that make up the familiar constellations into any pattern you like. Such as it is with the internet. When you find yourself distinguishing patterns that fit neatly into false "truths" that others WANT you to swallow (racist, homophobic, misogynistic, lunatic) ask yourself: why are you willing to arrange the vast collection of information both credible and INcredible into such patterns? When you do so, you are projecting your own prejudices onto a map that can represent whatever you want it to. Gravitate toward the constructive, avoid the hateful and destructive, and remember: If something seems so bizarre it is hard to believe, maybe it's because it just ain't true.

Letter to the Editor: Forest Losses

Global forest losses are one of the big drivers of climate change. RI needs to step up and stop deforestation as part of our climate policy. And if solar is a part of our future energy strategy we need very good numbers on the trade offs of solar for forest. I do not think solar wins, but where solar can provide multiple benefits is on buildings and parking lots. The benefits of shading parking lots can help reduce the heat island effect. Ground mounted solar makes it worse. And the list could go on and on.

The report makes clear that DEM is constrained by a governor who still wants to make Wall St happy, but the only way to do that is growing inequality and climate catastrophe and these days, that leads to pandemics and people in the streets. Climate justice has to lead everything RI does in the next 20 years, or life is going to get very strange and dictators will roam the land.

Letter to the Editor: Thanks and Hope

I am truly thankful for Trump.

That hurt to write.

I'm thankful for this president who has encouraged and incited white supremacy to show its hidden face. I am thankful that racists are free to speak their truth for all to hear.

I'm thankful to be shown love's enemy.

Without the help of Trump, I would not know the true morals of my friends, family, neighbors, and strangers.

I'm thankful for the opportunity to have real discussions about race relations from opposite viewpoints. I am even more thankful when the black voice is heard.

I'm thankful to see, at this point in time, the world awakening to the fact that black people are seen as less than human by a scary, large amount of white people.

I am most thankful for all the people fighting to make the righteous changes towards equality for all.

Thanks and praise be to the powerful voices shouting out in protest that systemic racism will no longer be tolerated!

I see the haters. I hear the hate. I stand with Black Lives Matter because no life matters unless every life does.

I stand for the human rights of all people. I stand for equality. I stand for love especially as we celebrate Pride Month.

I pray for a kind, new world void of greed for my children and our future generations.

May our next president have an intelligent mind, speak with unifying language, and have a caring soul.

Amen

— Amy Jeffrey

Letter to the Editor: Looking at history

Recently there was an article about the town I live in and how 100 years ago it was a stronghold for the KKK. There was a lot of outcry about this article, but one post in particular struck a chord with me. "You will learn if you put children through school that World War II is merely one page in the history book, and the Vietnam war is barely a paragraph. Comparatively, something that happened in town 100 ago would barely qualify as a comma in one sentence, in today's school world history."

I feel those “commas” (small incidents) are important. Without the commas you lose the context of the paragraph and the meaning changes. Isn't it important to teach the comma's along with the greater narrative?

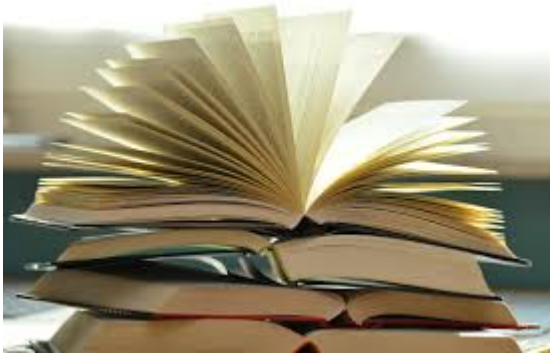
There has never been a time in America, or probably in all of history, where some group or people were not being persecuted. Humans are territorial animals and it is built into our nature to form groups of in and outs. Studies have shown this quality of group recognition starts by around two weeks old. Teaching history and whitewashing out the bad things that the prevailing group did isn't teaching history, but promoting political propaganda. If you look closely at any aspect of our culture you find narratives that propagate the prevailing mythology of the times. An example is the #1 children's book in America, *The Giving Tree*, propagates female subjugation as did the previous #2 children's book, *The Rainbow Fish*.

The commas are usually not told. The town I grew up in Bellmore, NY, used to be the American Nazi stronghold and eugenics started in Boston and was the backbone of Hitler's “solution” for racial impurity. While Japanese Americans were stripped of their homes and put in interment prisons, WW II German POWs were put in luxury “camps” in America and integrated into American towns and life. The witch persecution of the religious Puritans was really just persecution of women, along with people who held different religious beliefs.

The commas go on and on. Knowing them is far more important for an informed culture than a feel-good narrative.

Gene Jacobs, D.O.

[Page Turners: Essential reading for steps toward being anti-racist](#)



It's a popular social media trend, lists of book recommendations dealing with anti-racism. You're probably familiar with their contents, *The Color of Law*, *White Fragility*, Audre Lorde, Ta Neesi-Coates, with some fiction by Zora Neale Huston or Toni Morrison for good measure. I'm male and pale, so I can't speak to whether a list of recommendations will actually help any white person understand race, but here's a list that I feel has helped me:

The End of Policing by Alex Vitale: This and the next book on the list are easily in my top three nonfiction reads of the past 10 years. Vitale expertly walks you through an analysis of our modern policing system. He begins with the inherent vice of police reform, why it continually does not exit us out of our current policing nightmare, beginning with the example of Eric Garner. He proceeds with deconstructing our perceptions of police, how they don't really help us even when we are the victims of crimes, the school-to-prison pipeline, the way they criminalize the homeless, the way police are political creatures and more. This book is essential reading for anyone watching videos of police riots on social media and wondering how it came to be. It's succinct, barely a few hundred pages. An older and more extensive text on police critiques is **Our Enemy in Blue** by Kristian Williams. An excellent work on the militarization of modern police since the Iraq/Afghanistan wars is **Rise of the Warrior Cop** by Radley Balko.

Black against Empire, by Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin Jr: Speaking of aggressive policing, this book, an American Book Award winner, details the politics and history of the Black Panther Party. Few organizations in the continental United States are as misunderstood and unfairly maligned as the Black Panther Party. The book tracks their beginning on the West Coast, their apex in the late '60s, and the repeated targeting and sabotage by the FBI. The Panthers have a rich history, an enduring legacy, far beyond just a five-minute boogiemer in *Forrest Gump*.

The Radical King, edited by Cornel West: What I was taught and most people are taught about Martin Luther King is the safe-for-primetime, offensive to none version. This book, curated and edited by Cornel West, shows just how radical the man was. Divided into four sections, they underscore his identification with the working poor, his opposition to the war in Vietnam and his hostility to American imperialism abroad. King takes great pains to identify racism with economic oppression, something that still applies to our present historical moment. As I see various political leaders invoke his name, I

repeatedly come back to this quote by the man himself: “What you’re saying may get you a foundation grant, but it won’t get you into the kingdom of truth.”

Race for Profit by Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor: Housing discrimination was banned in the late ‘60s, but Taylor shows how the economic system deliberately undermined black homeownership. Even though redlining came to an end, many of its racist goals and implication continued to exist through something Taylor calls predatory inclusion. An excellent companion read to *The Color of Law*. Essential reading if you grew up in a white suburb and have had little trouble buying a house or have parents who easily bought a house.

Give Us the Ballot by Ari Berman: If you’re like me, your history education in high school ends somewhere around World War 2, with maybe a brief unit on the civil rights movement. This book details what happened after, focusing on the Voting Rights Act in 1965 and what happened after. Super ghouls and ghosts in red states and beyond have performed dozens of acts of counter-revolution chipping away slowly at the expanded franchise to ensure nonwhite can’t vote. The Supreme Court of the United States recently invalidated a key part of the Voting Rights Act in *Shelby County v. Holder*. As a result, various states have removed online voting registration, early voting, same-day registration, Sunday voting, expunged thousands of voters from state rolls, and implemented voter ID laws. Almost 1,000 polling places would shut down in the years after the Shelby decision, and the US Commission on Civil Rights found a growth in discriminatory laws that made it harder for minorities to vote.

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Look, I’m pale and male. For straight white males in America, there’s a glass floor, not a glass ceiling. Reading these books isn’t automatically going to make you an anti-racist, but it may inspire some radical empathy and humanism. The reason I suggest these books is that the systemic problems never went away. The past isn’t dead — it’s not even past. By learning more about what it’s like for someone to live without the privileges of being white, maybe one day it will be past.

Solidarity Is the New Thoughts and Prayers:
People want solutions over slogans

CAMPAIGN ZERO



Our social media feeds are peppered with them — empty statements from politicians, attempting and failing to placate citizens tired of police brutality:

“I call on each of us to come together in unity,” says one.

“We stand tall against discrimination and brutality,” says another.

“I see you, I hear you, and I stand with you,” says another.

These sorts of words are nice to hear. But do they offer any solutions, any tangible steps to reversing centuries of murder and discrimination by police in America? Certainly not. This is why solidarity offered from politicians is the new “thoughts and prayers”: It gives our leaders a way to feign allyship with a movement that they make no meaningful attempt to legislatively support.

Solidarity did not pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964, legislation did. Solidarity did not pass the Fair Housing Act, legislation did. In fact, solidarity has never accomplished much of anything.

It is a great misconception that solutions do not exist to the problems America is facing. Campaign Zero, an advocacy group dedicated to ending police violence, outlines a 10-point policy platform backed by research that cities and municipalities can adopt at any time. These are: end “broken windows” policing, increase community oversight, limit the use of force, independently investigate and prosecute problem officers, increase community representation in police departments, use police body cameras, enhance police training, end for-profit policing, demilitarize the police force and sign fair police union contracts.

Philip V. McHarris and Thenjiwe McHarris advocate in *The New York Times* to reinvest police funding in other community groups to respond to specific calls that would normally go to police — medical teams responding to overdose calls and social workers for mental health emergencies, for example. Another idea: Instead of sending police patrols to public housing, use that money to fund programs to keep residents safe. Solutions to the problems we face are ample; we do not have to settle for solidarity.

So be critical of the response regarding protests from government. Do not be appeased by pretty words. Solidarity cannot be taken to the bank.

For information on Campaign Zero, go to joincampaignzero.org

You Say You Want a Revolution: Police brutality was the spark but economic inequality is the fuel for racial conflagration

It’s 3 o’clock in the morning as I begin writing this, having just spent the last few hours watching Providence finally get the violent riot it had been lucky to avoid. I can’t sleep, not because of anxiety or psychological distress, but because, having tried to formulate the words for the past week, I need to type out my thoughts on the nationwide protests sparked by the [May 25 killing of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis](#). But in the 2,000 year-old maxim of [Rabbi Hillel](#), the Jewish patron saint of procrastinators, “If not now, when?”

I don’t yet know the extent of the riot in Providence: a police SUV was burned to a crisp on Finance Way near Francis Street just outside the Providence Place Mall and the State House, a car was overturned

on Westminster Street near Messer Street, and some store windows and looting occurred on Westminster Street downtown near Eno Wine. I've heard no report of serious injuries, although I understand some police officers and a videographer were taken for medical examination. There are reports of at least 10 arrests.

I asked RI Gov. Gina Raimondo yesterday morning, many hours before the riot, about the historical forces at play (["Governor Raimondo Addressed the Protests Against Police Brutality"](#), Jun 1, 2020), noting that there were destructive race riots in Providence as long ago as [1824 in "Hard Scrabble" and in 1831 in "Snow Town,"](#) black neighborhoods somewhere between the current State House and University Heights. The nation saw dozens of race riots in the ["red summer" of 1919](#) and almost 200 in the ["long hot summer" of 1967](#), resulting in many deaths including lynching (extra-judicial murder) of blacks by whites. More recently, some remember the week-long [Los Angeles riots of 1992](#), set off by the acquittal of police officers charged with beating arrestee Rodney King, resulting in 63 dead, thousands injured, and a billion dollars in damage.

In response, Raimondo pointed out that for many, perhaps most, these events were older than living memory, as 1992 was 28 years ago and 1967 was 53 years ago: "I'm the mother of two teenagers who are just beside themselves: 'How can this be happening?' I think we have a whole generation of people - I referenced people in their 20s - think about their lives. If you're an African American person in Rhode Island who is mid-20s, you have grown up with two economic recessions, you may or may not have a decent job, you're probably overly burdened with college debt. You and your family and your community are probably hardest hit by this public health crisis. You're probably out of work. You may or may not have the degree or credential to get a decent job, and you're looking around the country and seeing racism everywhere you look, you might see it when you go to the grocery store. Maybe you went through a public education system that let you down. And that was racist. The point is, that is the generation I think where you're seeing it is new for them in a way. They weren't around in the '60s, '70s and '80s."

The 1967 riots (as well as earlier riots going back several years) led to the creation of the [Kerner Commission](#), whose 1968 report, despite being over 400 pages, became a surprise best seller with two million copies purchased by the public in an era, decades before downloading, when they had to pay actual money for a printed book. Then-President Lyndon Johnson, who had appointed the commission, rejected and ignored their findings because they concluded that the reason for the riots was white racism that had, since the time of slavery, unfairly disadvantaged blacks in job opportunities, housing, education and both *de jure* and *de facto* segregation. In the commission's most quoted line, they said that "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white - separate and unequal." The report said that the failure of race relations was grounded in basic mutual incomprehension: "What white Americans have never fully understood but what the Negro can never forget - is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it."

Racial segregation in education had been outlawed as a result of the Supreme Court decision in [Brown v. Board of Education](#) in 1954, in public accommodations (trains, buses, taverns, and so on) since the [Civil Rights Act of 1964](#), and in elections since the [Voting Rights Act of 1965](#). But segregation remained real, notoriously praised in [1963 by George Wallace in his inaugural address as governor of Alabama](#), promising “segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever.” As late as 1968, a few weeks after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., and a few weeks before the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy, my father unknowingly used the AAA Tour Guide to book a reservation for a family vacation in Washington, DC, at a hotel of the wrong race: the city was still completely segregated although it had been illegal for four years by then, so the front desk refused to notice us and the hotel restaurant refused to serve us; we got the message and, at my mother’s strong insistence, left for a different hotel. We were guests of Sen. John O. Pastore and rode the subway with Sen. Eugene McCarthy, but my strongest memory of the trip a half-century later remains that hotel.

There seemed a possibility of meaningful improvement in the racial situation after the Kerner Commission report, and even President Richard Nixon (whose successful campaigns in 1968 and 1972 employed the [“Southern strategy”](#) of appealing to racists who felt abandoned by the embrace of racial equality) was willing to fight baldly illegal racial discrimination in housing, [suing egregious perpetrators such as the Trump real estate empire](#). That progress came to an end with the election of President Ronald Reagan in 1980, whose general belief in constraining the federal government left many states free to revert to their natural reluctance to pursue racial equality, not so much overt racism as simple inertia - but that was enough. Reaganism accepted as an article of faith that free markets pursue prosperity, but that is not true: free markets pursue efficiency, which is usually aligned with prosperity but not always; for example, a market-based solution would “solve” the problem of homelessness by starving all of the homeless people to death, but such an efficient “solution” would be immediately recognized by all sane people as highly undesirable for good reasons having nothing to do with efficiency.

As of [the most recent data available in 2018](#), 26.0% of Providence residents were below the poverty line, as well as 32.8% in Central Falls, 24.1% in Woonsocket and 18.6% in Pawtucket, all much worse than the statewide rate of 12.9%. Accounting for inflation, real wages for most workers [have remained essentially stagnant](#) since 1964, peaking in 1973, with increasing inequality between the top and bottom quintiles (fifths). Measuring anything, especially wages, over such a long period is complicated, but there are important indicators, such as that [wages as a percentage of Gross Domestic Income](#) (that is, how large a share workers get of the national economic pie) is much lower than it was in the 1950s through the 1970s. All of this troubling economic data is before the coronavirus tanked the economy, which the Congressional Budget Office [projects will cost the economy \\$16 trillion](#) (\$7.9 trillion adjusted for inflation) over the next decade.

I’ve noted in the past ([“Opinion: We the People, Establishing Rule of Law”](#), Apr 3, 2019) observations by writers such as Arlie Russell Hochschild about the subjective perception by many that the American Dream is fading from their reach, causing a resulting politics of despair. Although her focus was the despair that led in 2009 to the formation of the Tea Party, I contend - and this is the main point I want to make - that the subjective economic despair on the right is substantially the same as on the left, but

that the objective realities of race make these fundamentally different. Both sides have become possessed of a “burn it all down” mentality that is ultimately destructive of their own ends. But, as the Kerner Commission wrote, “Violence cannot build a better society. Disruption and disorder nourish repression, not justice. They strike at the freedom of every citizen. The community cannot - it will not - tolerate coercion and mob rule. Violence and destruction must be ended - in the streets of the ghetto and in the lives of people.”

As I warned years ago ([“Fine, Just Fine! Everything Is Fine!”](#), Aug 16, 2018), “Trump has broken all bounds of precedent in lying: he lies about everything, so flagrantly and so often, that no one believes him about anything, anyway. This is going to lead to a major catastrophe of national scope in the future when trustworthy leadership will be essential but unavailable, Trump having squandered the credibility he would need to survive a crisis. Trump thinks like a small-time real estate huckster where the consequences of antisocial conduct, especially lying but also habitually stiffing creditors and repeatedly declaring bankruptcy, have limited effect. Trump is a man in way over his head, denying he is drowning rather than trying to swim. The unanswered question is how much of the country and the world he can take down with him.” When I wrote that, I had no way to know that Trump, in the final year of his term, would face the worst race riots since 1967, the worst economic crisis since 1933, and the worst public health crisis since 1918 - and prove himself incompetent to manage any of them.

The riots were sparked by a horrifying incident of police brutality, but are really fueled by despair both political and economic. Candidate Donald Trump in [August 2016 promised he would get 95% of the black vote](#), a claim that was utterly delusional then and remains utterly delusional today, with his actual polling so low as to put zero within the sampling margin of error. (The [best estimate is 8%](#) in the 2016 election.) But Trump is not merely unpopular with black people: A [July 2019 poll by Quinnipiac University](#) found that 51% of Americans think Trump is a racist, including 80% of black people but only 46% of white people - and 8% of Republicans - agree. This is not policy disagreement, but a divergence of worldviews so completely opposite as to preclude any possible reconciliation. The black-issues-oriented *The Root* reviewed a major Trump 2018 speech under the headline [“The Top 10 Racist Dog Whistles Hidden in Trump’s State of the Union Address.”](#)

The police are, however, the sharp edge of racial oppression in the perception of many black people. As the Kerner Commission said in 1968, “The police are not merely a ‘spark’ factor. To some Negroes police have come to symbolize white power, white racism and white repression. And the fact is that many police do reflect and express these white attitudes. The atmosphere of hostility and cynicism is reinforced by a widespread belief among Negroes in the existence of police brutality and in a ‘double standard’ of justice and protection - one for Negroes and one for whites.”

People resort to violence in the streets when they have lost all hope of achieving their goals through conventional political means. That the nation’s highest elected official is viewed as a racist by more than half of all people and an overwhelming majority of blacks has resulted in a deep despair. Trump’s threat on Twitter “when the looting starts, the shooting starts” is a literal throwback to the 1960s, [used by](#)

[George Wallace](#) in his 1968 presidential campaign – yes, the same one known for saying “segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever.”

Nor are these riots primarily the work of “outside agitators,” neither right-wing [“boogaloo boys”](#) nor left-wing [“AntiFa,”](#) despite competing contradictory claims. There may be a few outside agitators, but [this claim has been made repeatedly for decades](#) and it has never proven true. Indigenous despair should be recognized for what it is.

Trump is pursuing an aggressive escalation, [telling state governors](#) “most of you are weak” and “You have to dominate. If you don’t dominate, you’re wasting your time. They’re going to run over you. You’re going to look like a bunch of jerks.” In doing so, Trump is defying the advice of the Kerner Commission from so long ago: “This deepening racial division is not inevitable. The movement apart can be reversed. Choice is still possible. Our principal task is to define that choice and to press for a national resolution. To pursue our present course will involve the continuing polarization of the American community and, ultimately, the destruction of basic democratic values. The alternative is not blind repression or capitulation to lawlessness. It is the realization of common opportunities for all within a single society. This alternative will require a commitment to national action—compassionate, massive and sustained, backed by the resources of the most powerful and the richest nation on this earth. From every American it will require new attitudes, new understanding, and, above all, new will.”

[Eyes on the Prize: Is Gina looking toward Washington?](#)



Gina Is Tops

Biggest Little governor, Gina Raimondo, has been doing a fabulous job of leadership during the coronavirus crisis. Earlier challenges like the Blizzard of '78 and the banking crisis pale in comparison. Governors Garrahy and Sundlun both performed well, but this is a health pandemic of epic proportion.

Your superior correspondents are deeply impressed with how Gina is handling this.

Veep?

While we are discussing Ms. Raimondo, P&J hope you saw the op-ed piece in *The Urinal* by moderate conservative journalist and occasional TV commentator — but diehard Republican — George Will, endorsing Our Gina as a potential running mate with Joe Biden this fall.

Biden has promised to pick a woman for the veep slot, so that has narrowed the field. And it must have delighted Governor Gigi, as she has been quite obvious about her aspirations to continue her political career on the national stage — a good bet if the Dems take back the White House. While vice president may be a reach, a Cabinet post is not inconceivable, and given the shower of assholes and incompetents President Walking Eagle (he's so full of shit he can't fly) has blessed us with, it is likely Biden would clean the Cabinet house, opening up a ton of possible high-falutin' jobs.

What Is Irony?

Here is what is irony. President Walking Eagle going after Twitter, which he uses along with Fox News as his personal PR firm. Twitter actually dared to challenge claims he made online that were so false as to be laughable. This demented, lying blowhard who somehow became our leaderless leader has made a second-rate social media outlet his main form of communication for announcing policy decisions. Now they dare question his pathological reworking of the truth, if not inspiring violence? How dare they?

Fireside chats? Sleep tight while spinning in your grave, FDR.

How Low Can You Go?

We thought *The Providence Urinal* could not crawl further into the basement by turning their once estimable rag into a car ad shopper, but they have managed to do so by now eliminating their editorials.

Executive editor Alan Rosenberg, who P&J have long liked and admired, was sent out by his bosses at Gannett to shill for the corporate owners and offer a lame and pathetic explanation of the decision, which held no more water than a shot glass.

Wonderfully, former *Urinal* publisher Howard Sutton wrote an op-ed eloquently and pointedly attacking the decision, that resounded like a virtual but audible face-slap following the decision by *Urinal* higher-ups to bend over and take it with a smile. (Credit to the corporate whores who actually allowed it to be published.)

The Urinal's \$3 a day newsstand price for a paper that could be used as a fly swatter were it not so lightweight is embarrassing. P&J love our talented friends at *The Urinal* who do a marvelous job of providing good quality journalism. But the current situation of big biz manipulation and arm-twisting in defiance of good news reporting is shameful.

Note: In major elections, for many years *The Urinal's* decision on whom to endorse for president and national was generally decided by the upstairs execs anyhow. So look for them to demand all employees wear MAGA hats this November.

Comic Book World

The latest examples of how we're turning into a comic book world are stories about the proposed US Space Force. It's an idea that sounds like it comes out of a comic book. The outfits current astronauts are wearing (not unlike what the original astronauts wore) are highly influenced by science fiction and old comic book illustrations. So not much has changed in that department. Unfortunately we now have a president whose reading of choice seems more along the lines of comic books.

[Locals Take Action: Grappling with recent changes ain't easy](#)



Pub Life: A Plea from the Bars of Rhode Island Syndicate (B.O.R.I.S):

While pub and bar owners across Rhode Island are looking forward to lockdown restrictions being lifted, the industry still faces a crisis. Public drinking establishments were feeling the pinch long before the pandemic hit, and even as society starts to return to normal, social distancing will mean fewer people in watering holes. This calls for drastic action, and B.O.R.I.S is calling for a new, universal approach to drinking. First, they encourage occasional drinkers to step aside. No more passers-by, no more single round wasters, no more social sipping to be polite. Instead, it's time that serious drinkers step up to the table and show us what they're made of. Get over to your local bar and hammer down six pints before breakfast. Empty that half-empty bottle of top shelf scotch. Have your martini shaken, stirred and fired down your gullet before you can say, "Hey, is that cirrhosis?" Whatever you decide to do, B.O.R.I.S is encouraging all of you to unite in a common goal: Drink irresponsibly. And teach your kids, too.

Sexy Farmers

With lockdown rules over public gatherings still remaining hazy, farmers across Rhode Island are worried they won't be able to gather in sufficient numbers to work in their fields over the summer. And that means no more driving trucks to and from the pasture, one arm leaning on the window, face being leathered by the midday sun. To compensate for what was voted Sexiest Farm Look, (Situat), 2019, beauty salons across the state are starting to offer farmer's tans for any fashionable agriculturalist still seeking a mate. "We've designed a stencil resembling the outline of a t-shirt and a John Deere hat," comments Mas Kara, owner of Beauti 4 U *sâlon*, in Coventry "and we place that on top of the client being tanned. That way clients can ensure an even look that is guaranteed to make farm animals of all breeds go wild." Expect a spike in births in the Johnston area, come February.

Newport Goes to War

Newport City Council declared war against East Greenwich on Tuesday after the Kent County settlement was awarded the recognition of *Town Most Up Its Own Hole, 2020*. "After 35 years as the most proudly pretentious town in the State, Newport is disgusted that the recognition has been given to those pretenders in East Greenwich," commented an official spokesperson. "And let's face it, Newport is located on the only *actual* island in Rhode Island. The rest is mere plantation land. Peasants and the like." Despite the fury, the war was short lasting. Upon approaching the Pell bridge, the armies of Newport were turned away by police for breaching lockdown orders. All were too polite to argue, and quietly slunk home for some brandy and a spot of tennis. At time of publication, both towns agree that the other is populated by wankers.

Under Pressure: Dealing with the pressure to attend the right school

I remember the first time the idea of college really stuck into my mind. It was the summer going into seventh grade and my family went to the beach with my mother's college friends' family. The kind of college friend who earns the title of auntie. I always admired this woman. She created a beautiful life for herself and her family and so when while eating some pizza at the place they were staying, I was taken aback when this woman I call auntie brought up her daughter's college sob story. Her daughter, who had been a straight A overachiever with almost lifelong dreams of going to Yale didn't get in, she was devastated. She ended up attending Cornell instead. Cornell, an amazing school, but still not her first choice.

Little me hearing all of this was astounded. Cornell to me was an Ivy League. All I knew was that to get in was something to be proud of. But then all of the sudden an idea was pushed upon me. To aim higher. Higher than what I physically, mentally and emotionally could take. Like my mother's friend's daughter. To not just take a great school but to desire a spectacular school. A prestigious and then some school.

Maybe that was the start of it all. The pushing to be more, to be enough. Suddenly college was a way to measure my status. From that point on I took school more seriously. I wanted to have a way to feel proud of myself. A way to calculate what my worth was.

The journey to get into the perfect college was my ticket. My ticket to calculate said worth. I originally picked Stanford as my "dream school" but understand, to me I saw that Stanford was THE place, THE college. I loved California so location wasn't an issue and I loved the elite reputation.

A lot of it all is for the reputation. The acceptance rate. The number it's listed on Forbes.com. And colleges love that. They love being known for being the best. Behind the "every student can make it here" facade, there's the "only the very best will even get the chance" undertone.

As I reached junior year of high school, I had a tennis state championship high school title under my belt, been published and paid for my articles at an arts magazine, received an invitation to a well-known journalism conference in Washington DC and had my eye on New York University to call my home for the next four years.

I wanted to attend NYU like plants want to be watered. I disguised it as a want, but in truth, it was a need. I needed New York City and the news publications and the job opportunities and the mentorships and the professors like a plant needs water. There wasn't any loophole to make it okay not to get it.

So senior year was spent working harder than ever. Writing as much as I could, volunteering and buffing up my resume any ways I could. And then I had the moment. The moment my mother's friend who I call auntie said broke her daughter.

I didn't get into NYU.

A real bummer. My plan for the next four years of my life was wiped away. I was sad, of course, and it took a little time to wrap my head around it. Luckily I was accepted to Emerson College, the college that is home to the #1 journalism program in the country. My reporter heart soared.

Now Boston wasn't New York City, the home I'd been dreaming of for a decent number of years, but it was still a magical city. I visited Emerson and fell in love.

In love with Boylston street. I could see myself strolling through the city blocks getting inspiration from the lights at dusk and the sunrise over the skyscrapers. The professors and amenities and study abroad programs all caught my fancy instantly. Emerson was going to be my home and Boston my new stomping ground.

I decided to take a gap year to raise money, though I think I knew how naive I was being. I never seriously considered state school or community college. I wanted the big leagues. Emerson has a reputation and I would get a good job bearing the Emerson alum name after. I'd continue to strive for a dream lifestyle beginning with a dream education.

Never could I make enough money at my hostess job at the local burger bar for one year at Emerson. Never mind four. I took the gap year anyway with the intention of still attending Emerson in the fall.

In my gap year, I traveled, wrote, began and ended my first relationship, and dealt with a pandemic along with the rest of the world.

During my gap year I also came to terms with something. I wasn't going to Emerson. It was

heartbreaking and many tears were shed. However, in another light I felt freed. When I realized I couldn't afford Emerson, I was angry. Real blown away that a girl who worked hard and seemingly did everything right in the formula to attend a good school couldn't. It wasn't fair. And then I started thinking about how silly that was. How silly I was, and had been for so long.

I had let what college I would attend define me. But I couldn't just blame myself for working that idea up in my mind and I couldn't blame my mom's friend or her story about her daughter. It's instilled in us to allow things that absolutely don't matter be the reason we feel proud of ourselves. We all crave reasons and reassurance that we are special. And for teenagers, it can so easily become college that is the source for validation. That is the deciding factor of if we can do something. Getting into Yale, you must feel like you can do something, a whole lot. Thinking about all of the people who have gone to Yale and done something, just being grouped with them or having some connection to them makes you feel like that could be you. There are reasons that it could be you.

And then there's the acceptance rate number. That little number that kept me awake some nights. You can picture groups of people then pick out the 28% or 12% or, for Brown University, 8%.

You want to be in that acceptance group. And the knowledge that you beat out other students for the spot fuels your fire even more.

It's an idea that needs to stop. All of it.

College education is where small people can feel big. It doesn't matter who you are, you can still feel small. And you get your fix through the college admissions process. The chance to prove to others what you are and what you bring to the table. The college we attend showcases what defines us. Now this isn't a diagnosis or accusation. This is an observation of the ugly possibilities and overbearing pressure the college process brings. Now, in the slightest way I'm grateful for the mindset, but in the smallest way possible. I mean, I graduated valedictorian. The hunger I had to put that title on my resume to impress schools was the same hunger that eventually got me it.

However, I could have still been one of the brightest students and not felt that a good college was the only way to a good life, a good life in any sense. Happiness, love, safety, good health, all were incorporated in the impressive college package. I now am going to attend Rhode Island College, and I fully intend to put in my best work. Not because I have Stanford or NYU on my mind, but because I know that with hard work you can really make the right life for yourself, and find that happiness that matters to you. Another thing, my mom is just as happy with her "My Child Goes to RIC" mug as she was with her now unwanted "My Child Goes to Emerson" mug. And that fact makes everything a bit more alright in my eyes.