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Newsweek



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Newsweek is where diverse voices and opinions meet — a place where curious and open minds come to get a broader understanding of the key issues shaping our world. We provide a forum that enables you to find common ground by participating in good-faith debate with others across political, social and cultural divides.



The image displays the Newsweek digital presence across three devices. On the left, a laptop shows the Newsweek website with a 'Top Stories' section featuring an article about Europe's readiness for World War III. In the center, a tablet displays the Newsweek magazine cover with an 'EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW' featuring South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, titled 'Home Truths'. On the right, a smartphone shows the Newsweek app with a 'FOR JUSTICE!' article featuring Rakim Brooks. To the right of the devices, a white starburst graphic contains the text 'ONLY 94c PER WEEK'.

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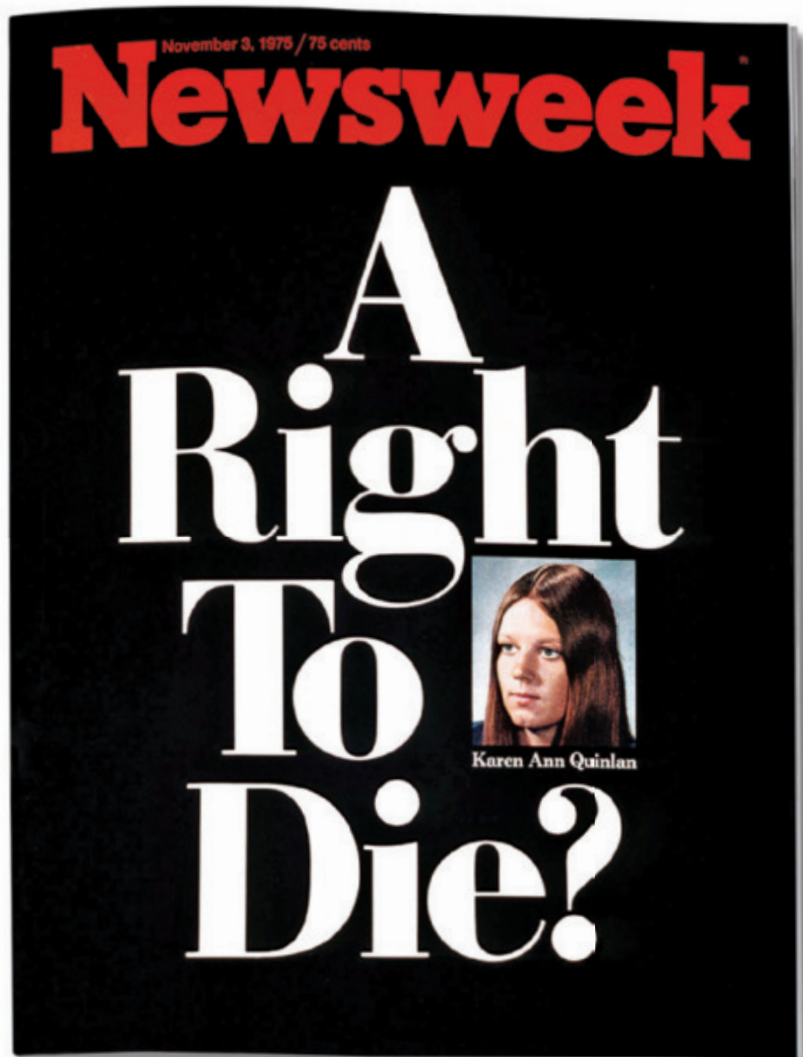
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THE ARCHIVES



1975

“The case is yet another symptom of a changing legal climate in the practice of medicine and new concerns about ethical safeguards ensuring respect for human life,” *Newsweek* wrote. In June, the United Kingdom’s House of Commons passed the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill, which would allow those aged 18 and over in England and Wales who have fewer than six months to live, to request assistance to end their own lives if they meet eligibility criteria. It has yet to pass the House of Lords.



1983

“Americans were brought face to face with the consequences of...using its military might to try to shape an unruly world,” *Newsweek* wrote. In June, the U.S. military struck three Iranian nuclear facilities, deploying B-2 bombers among other assets to disrupt Iran’s nuclear program.



2013

“First lady invites prime-time TV audience into White House. How do you tell millions to wipe their feet?” *Newsweek* wrote in an imagined tweet about Jacqueline Kennedy’s renovations, including the Rose Garden. President Donald Trump’s recent garden changes kept Kennedy’s design but replaced grass with stonework.



TALENT

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TOKYO

Japanese First

Lawmakers applaud Liberal Democratic Party President Sanae Takaichi as she is elected Japan's first female prime minister by the lower house of the Diet, the country's parliament, on October 21. Her election was later approved by the upper house. Takaichi's ascent was enabled by the LDP's new coalition with the Japan Innovation Party. Despite this historic breakthrough, critics pointed to Takaichi's views regarding women's rights—opposing same-sex marriage and supporting male-only imperial succession.

📷 TOMOHIRO OHSUMI

GETTY







ABOVE

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Dance Floor Drama

An excavator clears rubble after the East Wing of the White House is demolished on October 23, kick-starting President Donald Trump's plan to build a \$300 million ballroom. The new addition drew sharp criticism from Democrats, who are dismayed at the increasing cost of the project and the complete destruction of the East Wing—not included in Trump's initial plans—among other complaints.

ERIC LEE



GETTY (2): VATICAN MEDIA/SAMIR HUSSEIN/WIREIMAGE/GETTY



LEFT

PARIS

Historic Heist

A French forensics officer examines the cut window at the Louvre Museum on October 19, through which thieves stole eight crown jewels worth about \$102 million earlier that day. The burglars used a mechanical lift to reach a balcony, cutting through glass display cases in a four-minute heist. The stolen 19th-century pieces belonged to French imperial and royal figures. As *Newsweek* went to press, two suspects had been arrested.

📷 KIRAN RIDLEY

ABOVE

VATICAN CITY

Sacred Moment

For the first time in more than 500 years, a pope and a British monarch pray together at the Vatican on October 23, as Pope Leo XIV is joined by King Charles III and Queen Camilla. The service in the Sistine Chapel brought together the heads of the Catholic Church and the Church of England during a state visit—their first meeting since Leo's election in May and part of the Catholic Church's 2025 Jubilee celebrations.

📷 FRANCESCO SFORZA



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IMMIGRATION

CHINA'S PATH TO US CITIZENSHIP

How wealthy Chinese nationals, many with links to the ruling Communist Party, are gaining U.S. residency via projects in rural Arkansas through America's EB-5 Immigrant Investor Program

BY
DIDI KIRSTEN TATLOW

NEW STEEL AND SOLAR PLANTS AND A TRANSPORT TERMINAL have become a godsend for the Mississippi River town of Osceola, now long past its heyday as a timber and grain hub where steamboats once called and blues music echoed.

But crucial to the financing of the burgeoning industrial cluster in this rural northeastern corner of Arkansas, one of America's poorest states, is a surprising set of investors: Chinese citizens who have secured residency in the United States—and potentially a path to citizenship—through an investment visa scheme that has been bringing in thousands of people each year, by far the biggest group of whom are from China.

A *Newsweek* investigation has revealed how the entry of potentially hundreds of Chinese citizens to the U.S. via this struggling town of 6,400 is being facilitated by Chinese companies with links to the ruling Communist Party that market their ability to buy entry to the United States. Also involved is the immigration investment subsidiary of a non-profit economic development corporation in Little Rock.

There is no indication of wrongdoing on the part of the Chinese and American companies or individuals involved, but the scale of the immigration pipeline from the country described by U.S. security agencies as America's main global adversary has raised concerns among some serving and former U.S. officials. As well as potential security risks from the arrival of hundreds of new residents, there are also worries over the level of Chinese involvement in industrial centers of potential strategic importance.

"The fundamental question that needs to be asked is, would this transaction allow or facilitate the influence of an adversary state or adversary actor to the detriment of the United States, both from the economic health,

you know, sustainability, resilience, as well as the national security of the United States?" said a U.S. official with knowledge of the situation who was granted anonymity to speak as they were not permitted to discuss the issue publicly. "The answer is, yes."

Supply Chain Control

The information comes amid FBI concerns that China may be targeting the Mississippi River system to access the U.S. interior from Louisiana's southern ports northward through St. Louis and into Chicago by establishing businesses and buying properties. China is aiming for "access to and control of supply chains, economic ties leveraged for political influence, ability to disrupt and collect intelligence," agent Benjamin Dreessen told the Louisiana District Export Council in July, according to the minutes of the meeting, reported by *The Center Square*. The FBI and the council did not respond to *Newsweek's* requests for comment.

Both immigration and relations with China are among the most contentious issues of President Donald Trump's second term. Around 400,000 people have been deported from the United States since January, and in September a \$100,000 fee was introduced for new H-1B visa petitions, with highly skilled foreign workers prioritized. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has said the government will "aggressively" revoke visas from Chinese students, especially those with ties to the Communist Party. But Trump has also said he would welcome 600,000 Chinese students, and in September the White House announced plans for wealthy foreigners to acquire legal residency by purchasing a "Gold Card."

The White House did not respond to a request for comment on Chinese



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immigration through the Osceola projects. China's embassy in Washington, D.C. did not respond to a *Newsweek* request for comment.

Washington, D.C.-based national security experts have urged the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States to review the industrial hub in Osceola, two sources familiar with the situation told *Newsweek*. But the committee had declined to investigate, without giving a reason, they said. In a statement to *Newsweek*, Brody Garner, a spokesperson for the congressional Government Accountability Office, said that EB-5 visa projects qualified for CFIUS scrutiny. Garner did not respond to an email requesting specifics of the Osceola situation.

The EB-5 visa has been popular with wealthy Chinese since its start in 1990. In 2022, the scheme was reformed and reauthorized by Congress following years of fraud and national security concerns. Today the visa costs either \$800,000 or just over \$1 million, depending on the location and investment project, which must create jobs in the U.S.

Scores of businesses offer the investment spots across the U.S., with EB-5

investment immigration hitting a record in financial year 2024. Chinese citizens were the biggest group, taking 9,547 or 64 percent of the 14,924 visas issued worldwide, according to the Department of State. About 10 percent each went to India and Vietnam. Approximately 130,000 visas have been issued in the scheme's 35 years, according to Department of State figures.

Land of Freedom

Helping to arrange EB-5s is also a business for Chinese immigration firms, which must obtain a certificate from the powerful Ministry of Public Security to operate. Some boast of their ties to the authorities.

One company that has offered the investment spots in Osceola is Huiqiao Immigration Group, known in English as Wise Visa. The Shanghai company says it was founded “on the initiative” of honorary chairman and businessman Hu Zhirong, who is also a senior official in Guangdong province of an organization belonging to the Chinese Communist Party's United Front global political influence and interference organization, according to the company website.

Huiqiao says it is a “Ministry of Public Security Specially Authorized Professional Overseas Service Agency,” and that “the development of Huiqiao Immigration is inseparable from the care and support of numerous leaders in China.”

Contacted via the Chinese social media Weixin, Huiqiao's Fred Wang told *Newsweek* that it was “only a small company” in the immigration business. Neither he nor the company responded to further questions.

Another company offering the investment spots, Shenzhen-based Qiaolian International, is a prominent member of the Guangdong Entry & Exit Immigration Association that is supervised and guided by the Ministry of Public Security, according to the company's website.

In a plush Sheraton hotel in Shenzhen last year, Qiaolian presented potential investors in Osceola with opportunities in the steel and solar plants and transport hub, state media China Daily reported.

“In this era of cultural diversity and boundless possibilities, the United States, as a land of freedom, continues to attract global attention,” Qiaolian's website says, adding it offers “overseas identity planning.” Efforts to reach the company for comment were unsuccessful.

No Requirements

Shanghai Immido Immigration Service Co. Ltd., another Chinese immigration company that has offered Chinese citizens the investment spots in the Osceola projects, says on its website that the EB-5 is “the most suitable U.S. immigration program” as it has “no educational, language, business, or work experience requirements. No immigration detention, and the location of the investment is irrelevant to where you live.” An investment spot secured by an EB-5 investor also offers a green card to their spouse and children under 21.

Not just anyone can move from China. Those who do are monitored by China's Ministry of Public Security, which issues necessary exit permits and passports. Local public security departments “manage citizens' private travel abroad,”

GROWTH Mayor Joe Harris Jr. told *Newsweek* that the arrival of steel mills in Osceola, Arkansas, has changed the landscape and quality of life in one of the poorest states in the country.





OPPORTUNITY The Gold Card gives foreign nationals a pathway to citizenship for upward of \$1 million.

according to the website of the National Immigration Administration. It did not respond to a request for comment.

"It's no secret that any high-net worth individual in China can only maintain their status, travel freely and move capital abroad with the acquiescence of the [Chinese Communist] Party," said Laura Harth, director of the China in the World program at Safeguard Defenders, a Spain-based human rights organization.

That presented potential risks, Harth said.

"It raises a lot of questions, not in the least whether this might be something the CCP would actively seize on to get some of its 'people' well settled in the United States," she said, adding that Chinese citizens abroad would remain obliged to assist Chinese security authorities according to Chinese law.

Despite the scale of the investments, there is little sign of any Chinese presence in Osceola outside of two restaurants where fried catfish and battered chicken are the most popular orders. "American-style Chinese food," owner Eric Chen said, wryly, standing behind the counter

at King Wok restaurant. A Chinese ink painting of an eagle, and one of Mao Zedong with 10 top generals of the 1949 revolution, adorn the walls.

Chen said he didn't know any investors who had settled locally. Those who get EB-5 visas can live wherever they like. In an interview, Rush B. Deacon, senior vice president, special projects at ACC Capital—the development corporation which has investment immigration branches in Little Rock and in Shanghai—said that he didn't believe any successful immigrants had chosen to live in Osceola.

"It raises...questions, not in the least whether this might be something the CCP would...seize on to get some of its 'people' well settled in the United States."

Newsweek was unable to contact any of the investors who have immigrated via that route.

Wealthier Days

But the transformational potential of the investments for the city is evident.

"With the steel mills arriving here in Osceola, it has really changed the landscape in this area, and while changing the landscape it also has changed the quality of life," said Mayor Joe Harris Jr. in an interview at his office in City Hall, an elegantly marbled former bank in the historic downtown area.

Well-paying jobs of \$100,000 a year were finally available, even if most of the approximately 2,000 new workers at the plants were not choosing to live there, said Harris, an Osceola native and a former Arkansas State Representative.

Outside in the historic downtown, the imposing Mississippi County Courthouse, built over a century ago in Classical style with Ionic columns and a copper dome, also speaks of wealthier days in a town where the poverty rate is about 27 percent.

"We've got river, rail and road, and we're centrally located in the U.S. Actually, it's an ideal location for almost any industry," C. David Burnett, Osceola city attorney and a former state senator, told *Newsweek*. In addition to the mighty river, the BNSF railway runs through town and the I-55 highway connects Osceola to New Orleans and Chicago.

Speaking from Little Rock, ACC Capital's Deacon told *Newsweek*: "We're very proud of our projects." They were bringing in "billions of dollars" and providing jobs in a depressed region, he said. ACC Capital's EB-5 visa office is known as Pine State Regional Center. It also has an office in Shanghai staffed by Chinese citizens who manage its Asia-wide business, Deacon said.

Chinese immigration companies refer to the five projects so far—three steel mills, a solar plant and a rail and river terminal—as "Songzhou" or Pine State, 1 to 5. The projects are: Big River Steel phases one and two, and Hybar Steel, Terminals and Solar Power.

Using EB-5 money was simply smart financing as it was cheaper than commercial market loans, enabling the industrial cluster to expand, Deacon said. “It has a catalytic impact in recycling equity into new projects,” he added.

“So, you’ve boosted your economic development opportunity, creating more jobs,” he said.

Traditionally, EB-5 projects have focused on real estate developments in wealthy cities such as San Francisco, Los Angeles and New York, or on the hotel business. But over the years, the scheme’s reputation began to suffer. A 2023 report by the Government Accountability Office titled “Opportunities Exist to Improve Fraud and National Security Risk Monitoring” called for better data collection and management. To improve its quality, the 2022 congressional relaunch placed a new emphasis on transparency and investments in poor or rural areas.

The U.S. government scrutinizes arrivals carefully for national security risks, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service said in an email to *Newsweek*.

Spokesperson Matthew Tragesser added: “Every alien applicant or petition beneficiary seeking a benefit from USCIS undergoes a rigorous screening and vetting process. USCIS safeguards the American people by thoroughly screening and vetting *all* aliens.”

Vetting Process

The Osceola projects are the brainchild of steel investor David Stickler, senior managing partner at Global Principal Partners, and his China-born wife, Rebecca Li, a gymnast-turned-steel financier who is a senior adviser to the firm.

Detailed requests for comment that were sent to GPP were answered by Patricia Rioux, the president of ODEA, a marketing company.

“EB-5 program participants represent a diverse group of countries from around the world, and all are subject to a thorough vetting process overseen by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services,” she said.



INDUSTRY A Hybar terminal in a levee of the Mississippi River, where Chinese investment is booming.

“The EB-5 participants have no direct relationship with or voice in the affairs of Hybar. The participants engage only with Pine State Regional Center, a U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services approved EB-5 regional center.

“Pine State, a subsidiary of a well-respected 70-year-old nonprofit organization dedicated to economic development in distressed and rural areas of the United States, has a lending relationship with Hybar’s parent company,” Rioux said.

Other investors in the projects include asset manager Texas Pacific Group, the Arkansas Teachers Retirement System and Koch Industries. Big River Steel was bought by U.S. Steel in 2019. The companies did not reply to requests for comment.

The hub is expanding and so are the investment visa offerings, with a second phase of Hybar Steel in the works, Deacon said. “Sizing on that EB-5 offering is still under consideration,” he said, and more Hybar steel factories were planned in the American South and in the Pacific Northwest.

About 240 EB-5 visas, or \$120 million at then-prices, helped fund the first two investments, Big River Steel, Deacon said. Some 487 visas worth \$390 million have gone into the Hybar projects, with final applicants for the power plant currently being onboarded, Deacon said.

Details on how many investors were from China and how much ACC Capital earned from the transactions were confidential, he said. But Deacon dismissed



security considerations over Chinese applicants, saying: “For strategic purposes, not necessarily related to security concerns for any group of investors, we try to very intentionally spread our source of investors among a number of different countries.”

“Strategic diversification is simply a sound investment philosophy in any financial program or portfolio.”

“Strategic diversification is simply a sound investment philosophy in any financial program.”



AMERICAN DREAM A source said emigrating to the U.S. from China remained an attractive prospect.

“This is not the program you want to use if you’re a bad guy. This is not your way to get into the United States. You’re going to go through more serious vetting through the EB-5 process than you would any other visa category,” Deacon added.

Security Concerns

Others are not so sure the scheme is safe. Several national security experts in Washington, D.C. have urged CFIUS to review the investments, sources familiar with the situation told *Newsweek*. The concerns center around foreign influence over GPP and Hybar by Chinese nationals, and direct Chinese investment in Hybar through the EB-5 visa program amounting to potential foreign control, two sources said.

But CFIUS had not taken action, they told *Newsweek*. CFIUS is chaired by the Department of the Treasury with other government departments including Commerce and Defense on board. The Treasury did not respond to requests for comment.

Stickler and his wife Li have often been in China, where GPP helped to modernize a steel project in the steel center of Tangshan, according to a U.S. media report.

On one trip, the couple met with a prominent United Front member in Yunnan province and subsequently participated in a sports event, according to Chinese language media. Li’s Chinese social media

accounts say she has been a director of two institutes in Beijing belonging to an esoteric movement called “Create Abundance.” Chinese authorities have accused the group of being a pyramid scheme and a cult.

GPP did not reply to a question about Li’s alleged ties to Create Abundance. Create Abundance’s lawyer in Canada did not reply to a request for comment.

Despite uncertainty over changes in the U.S. immigration system, interest in China in emigrating to the U.S. remains high. “It’s still attractive, for sure,” said a person who asked to be identified only by his last name, Zhang, at the Shanghai business-to-business immigration company Etouce. The company is not directly involved in the Osceola investments.

In Osceola, Mayor Harris said of Stickler, whom he called a friend: “The way I figure he does business, he’s a genius at what he does. Because he knows his industry that he’s financing, and he knows how to get the investors involved.”

“I would not want to comment on his investors. I would rather for him to comment on his investors, because I don’t know enough about his investors. I just know he makes it happen,” Harris said. **N**

Didi Kirsten Tatlow is senior reporter, international affairs at *Newsweek*. Contact her by email, d.kirstentatlow@newsweek.com

MIDDLE EAST

Frenemy of the State

Qatar's lobbying blitz in Washington has seen its influence grow over U.S. lawmakers, raising questions about power, politics and global alignment

BY
JESUS MESA

QATAR MAY ONLY BE ABOUT THE SIZE OF Connecticut, but the gas-rich Gulf emirate has outstripped its physical limits to become one of the most influential foreign players in geopolitics. Fueled by immense wealth and a willingness to engage with adversaries others avoid, Qatar—with just over 3 million residents, most of them foreign workers—has positioned itself not just as a mediator in Middle East conflicts but as an outside power broker in Donald Trump-era America.

But this rise has sharpened the paradox at the heart of the Washington-Doha relationship. Qatar is a key military partner and host of America's largest base in the region. It is also the chief back channel for and sponsor of Hamas, criticized for harboring the Palestinian militant group's leaders and accused of tolerating—if not outright supporting—extremist financing. Praised for its ability to get Hamas to the negotiating table and condemned for the cozy relationship that allowed it to do so in the first place, Qatar is both neutral and, to many across the political spectrum, suspect.

"I wouldn't call them friend or enemy," said Natalie Ecanow, a fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, speaking on *Newsweek's* *The 1600* podcast in October. "It's more like a frenemy. And that ambiguity is their strength."

In 2025, that ambiguity collided head-on with U.S. policy under President Trump. After a surprise Israeli strike in Doha targeting Hamas leadership in September—the first time Israel had targeted Qatari soil—Qatar helped to broker the

ceasefire that led to the release of all the remaining living Israeli hostages from Gaza last month. In the run-up to the deal, Trump signed an executive order pledging U.S. military protection to Qatar in the event of an external attack, and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth announced the U.S. would host Qatari troops for training purposes at a military base in Idaho.

Some analysts saw that one-two punch of security guarantees followed by a military sweetener as the Trump administration's "carrot" to Qatar for its help in the Gaza deal, whereas Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's airstrikes provided the "stick."

"I certainly see it as a thank you. And if not a thank you, certainly as part of what I view as a series of events or tokens of appreciation that have come either from Trump or from Netanyahu over the past month since that pivotal Israeli strike in Doha," Ecanow said. "That sort of helped the Qataris turn the screws on Hamas and get a deal across the finish line."

How Qatar Got Here

Qatar has steadily worked to position itself as a major soft power through cultural, diplomatic and humanitarian efforts. Like many Middle Eastern nations, its wealth is rooted in fossil fuel extraction—roughly 86 percent of its exports—transforming it from a modest pearl-diving economy into a leading petrostate. "Qatar's possession of one of the largest reserves of natural gas in the world propelled its rise to prominence as a global supplier of liquefied natural



GIOVANNI MEREGHETTI/UCG/UNIVERSAL IMAGES GROUP/GETTY



gas from the mid-1990s on,” said Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, a fellow at Rice University’s Baker Institute of Foreign Policy. “That enabled heavy spending on entities such as Al Jazeera, Qatar Airways, and educational initiatives that established Doha as an emerging regional hub in the Arab world.”

Winning the bid to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup—a stinging defeat for the U.S. effort—boosted Qatar’s global profile and helped attract major fashion, sports and cultural events. But none of that mattered when, in June 2017, the country was isolated by its Gulf neighbors. The blockade, led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, triggered a geopolitical crisis. Flights were grounded, borders sealed and goods delayed. The stated reasons were Qatar’s support for the Muslim Brotherhood and ties to Iran, but the subtext was a regional power struggle.

“That was an enormous wake-up call for the Qataris, not just because they would have been outgunned on the battlefield, but because they were woefully

“I certainly see it as a thank you. And if not a thank you, certainly as part of what I view as a series of events or tokens of appreciation.”

outflanked in an, arguably, even more important source of power—influence in Washington, D.C.,” Ben Freeman, director at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, told *Newsweek*. “This helped to pave the way for the Qatari emir to sit down with Trump in the White House less than a year after Trump was seemingly encouraging an invasion.”

“When it was threatened with invasion by its neighbors during the Gulf Cooperation Council spat, Qatar was caught flatfooted and realized it needed to buy influence in Washington,” Nick Cleveland-Stout, a research associate at the Quincy Institute, told *Newsweek*. “Armed with a cadre of lobbyists to market itself in Washington D.C., Qatar has successfully become the new capital of regional and even international diplomacy.”

Qatar began flooding K Street with money. In the year following its diplomatic crisis with neighboring states, Doha spent \$18 million across 33 firms—many led by Republicans with ties to Trump, according to a Quincy Institute report. The Qataris also invested in firms and staffers with close relationships to Democrats. “Foreign influence is a bipartisan affair,” Cleveland-Stout said. “Perhaps Qatar’s most well-known lobbyist is Jim Moran,

a former Democratic lawmaker,” he added. The campaign included everything from media outreach to back channel deals. The Quincy Institute report said one firm targeted 250 key influencers to reshape Trump’s perception of Qatar. Another organized junkets for right-leaning figures and commentators. “They offered access, hospitality and a different narrative,” said Ecanow from the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. “And it worked.”

Ali Al-Ansari, Qatar’s media attaché to the U.S., told *Newsweek*: “Qatar’s strategic partnership with the United States is built on decades of cooperation across a range of shared interests.... One consequence of our deepening partnership has been the

“As a mediator, [it’s] willing and able to talk to entities the U.S. government and many of its partners find abhorrent or classify as terrorist.”

launch of large-scale disinformation campaigns against Qatar by bad actors who are threatened by the Qatar-U.S. partnership and do not want it to succeed. These actors thrive on chaos and instability and do not want peace to prevail because it does not serve their interests. As a result, lobbying has become necessary as a defensive measure to prevent falsehoods from being accepted as fact in Washington and among the American public.”

By the end of Trump’s first term, Qatar had more than tripled its foreign lobbying spending, the report found, surpassing regional rivals like Saudi Arabia and the UAE. From 2021 to 2025, Foreign Agents Registration Act disclosures show Qatar’s lobbyists logged more in-person meetings with U.S. officials than any other country—627. That power became political leverage. In Congress, lawmakers once skeptical of Qatar began shifting. Some, like Senator Lindsey Graham, became frequent points of contact. Doha also poured more than \$6 billion into U.S. universities, mostly to fund branches in Qatar. Those with campuses there include Georgetown, Northwestern and Texas A&M. Qatar also emerged as a top foreign donor to Washington think tanks. “They built relationships with both sides,” said Ecanow. “They were never naive about Washington. They understood that influence is cumulative.”

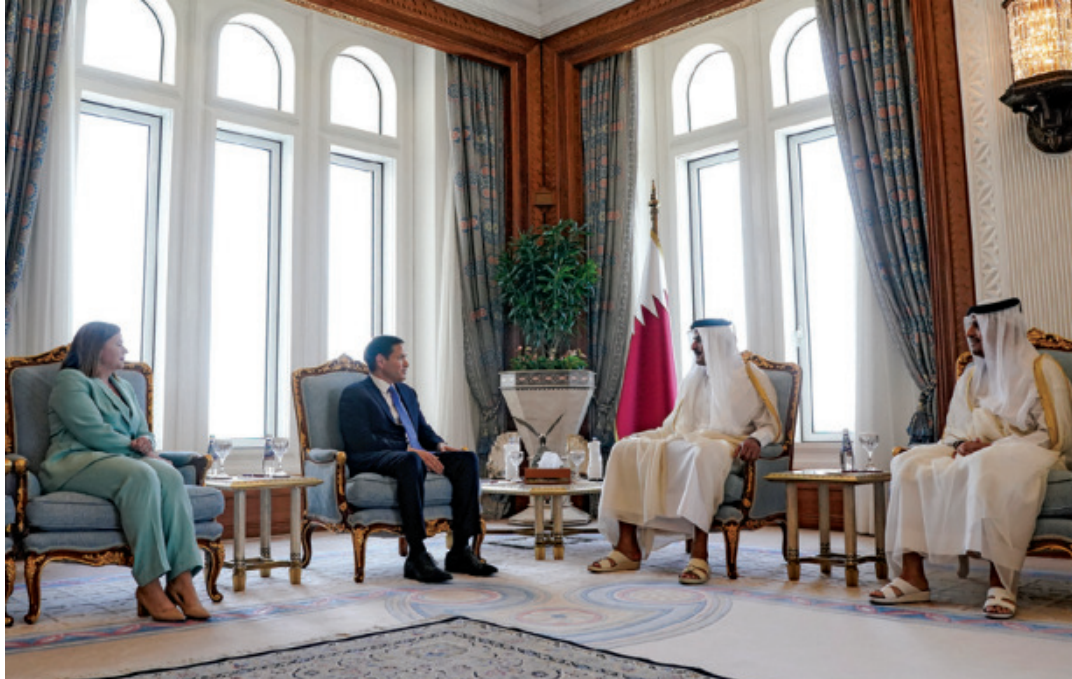
PARTNERSHIP Trump attends a state dinner in Doha with Qatar Emir Tamim bin Hamad al Thani in May.



Two Faces of the Emirate

That same access fuels suspicion, even from MAGA ranks. The executive order signed by Trump was the most explicit U.S. security guarantee to Qatar to date, taking the Gulf monarchy into the highest tier of American non-NATO defense relationships. But it came less than two years after some in Congress pushed legislation to strip Qatar of its major non-NATO ally status over its ties to Hamas. That contradiction isn’t lost on critics or supporters.

“The defense guarantees they now have are unprecedented,” said Bilal Y. Saab, a former Pentagon official and senior managing director of TRENDS US, a strategic consulting firm based in Washington, D.C. “Its usefulness [is] as a mediator,



DIPLOMACY

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio meets with the emir on September 16 to discuss Qatar's role as a mediator, after the Israeli strike targeting Hamas leaders in the emirate.

willing and able to talk to entities the U.S. government and many of its partners find abhorrent or classify as terrorist.”

“Qatar is showing how the U.S. political system really works,” said Quincy Institute’s Freeman. “If you have a lot of money you can bend it to your will. They are playing the game perfectly right now and that is why they’re getting nearly everything they want from the Trump administration.” That leverage has become central to how Doha pitches itself in Washington: as a state willing to engage the unengageable while giving the U.S. a platform to operate in the region. It’s a delicate posture that’s invited scrutiny, especially from lawmakers skeptical of Qatar’s role in the Israel-Hamas conflict.

From the MAGA-aligned right, there is open discomfort with the arrangement. “They don’t like that Qatar is being elevated as a partner while still refusing to distance itself from groups seen as terrorists,” said Ecanow. “There’s real pressure within the conservative base for answers on that.”

Far-right commentator Laura Loomer has been especially vocal. “This is really going to be such a stain on the admin if this is true,” she posted on X. Other nationalist influencers and lawmakers from both sides of the aisle have cast Qatar as a foreign power meddling in American priorities under the guise of diplomacy. The

backlash has extended to Qatar’s media and messaging power. Long accused of shaping anti-Western narratives through its state-run outlet Al Jazeera, Qatar has come under fire for its indirect influence on U.S. media. In 2023, a Qatari royal invested \$50 million in Newsmax, a conservative-aligned network that soon after began softening its tone on Qatar. “That’s the risk,” Freeman said. “The U.S. just committed its soldiers to defend a monarchy that has directly enriched the president’s inner circle. That’s not a partnership—it’s a tripwire.”

What’s Next for Qatar?

Yet Qatar’s position in Washington looks more secure than ever. The defense guarantees inked in 2025 formalized what had long been understood: Qatar is now an ally with near-Article 5 protections.

“The new defense commitments are a reaffirmation and upgrading of an already-close partnership that goes back decades,” said Coates Ulrichsen. “The benefit Qatar brings is that it is able to be an intermediary that maintains channels of indirect contact between the U.S. and adversaries such as Hamas or the Taliban, particularly at times of tension.”

Qatar’s position is unique for how entrenched it has become. Unlike Egypt or Saudi Arabia, which rely on overt statecraft and

security deals, Qatar operates through relationships cemented through lobbyists, universities and behind-the-scenes negotiations—similar, in a way, to how Trump himself operates outside the bounds of typical diplomatic channels. Freeman, who has tracked Qatar’s foreign lobbying across multiple administrations, said the durability of the alliance is exactly what makes it risky. “Most of the power players in U.S. foreign policy have benefited enormously from Qatar’s largesse,” he said. “The question is what will happen when Qatari and U.S. interests are not aligned?”

“No partnership is perfect. Even the NATO treaty alliance, the most successful in world history, is riddled with problems,” said former Pentagon official Saab. “It will be up to the leaders of both sides to manage the U.S.-Qatar partnership and make the best of it. There is plenty of room for prioritization and compartmentalization. They don’t have to agree on everything.”

Some believe those contradictions can’t hold forever. Qatar took hits from all sides this summer—from Iran then Israel—testing its delicate balancing act. The attacks, said Coates Ulrichsen, “have brought home in a visceral way the risks of mediation in such turbulent times.” Ecanow put it more bluntly: “You can’t be both the mediator and the host for one side’s leadership. Eventually, that tension breaks.” **N**

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POLITICS

College Republicans' Civil War

Four groups are vying for dominance, but can they achieve unity to further their cause?

BY
ALEX J. ROUHANDEH

THE REPUBLICAN PARTY RELIED HEAVILY on Turning Point USA Founder Charlie Kirk's influence among young voters to cement a second term for President Donald Trump last year, making significant gains among 18 to 29-year-olds, according to Pew Research analysis. The gap in support for Trump among this age group narrowed from 30 points in 2016 to 19 in 2024, suggesting the GOP has cemented more broad appeal among this bloc—one that has typically been heavily Democratic.

But Kirk's assassination could prove a threat to that trajectory.

While Turning Point maintains a sprawling network across college campuses, young conservatives who spoke to *Newsweek* say the organization operated heavily from the top down and benefited largely from Kirk's skill and star power.

Some Republicans don't think they should need to rely on Turning Point to see continued gains in the young vote.

In 1892, future Pennsylvania Congressman James F. Burke spearheaded the founding of the American Republican College League at the University of Michigan, which went on to become the College Republican National Committee.

Like the College Democrats of America, founded in 1932, College Republicans has long been an entry point for future leaders in U.S. politics, from President Calvin Coolidge to even former Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton before she switched parties in law school.

The CRNC could be poised to build on Kirk's gains among young voters. However,

the group has fractured within recent years, leading to multiple branches—and drama. There are currently four competing top College Republican factions: the CRNC, College Republicans United, the National Federation of College Republicans and College Republicans of America.

Each says they best represent the MAGA coalition, each has issues with the other, and each told *Newsweek* they would like a unified College Republicans group.

Similar Democratic groups and the Young Republican National Federation have not dealt with the same competition and splintering, though Young Republicans has faced scandal. Politico reported that its New York faction has been disbanded over several members' involvement in a Telegram group chat in which racist and antisemitic messages were shared, including by Peter Giunta, who recently lost his bid to chair the organization. Speaking to Politico at the time, he apologized for the "inexcusable language" in the chat and took "complete responsibility" but was concerned the messages may have been doctored.

The four College Republicans leaders may need to ask themselves whether losing the battle for supremacy is worth it to preserve the mission at hand.

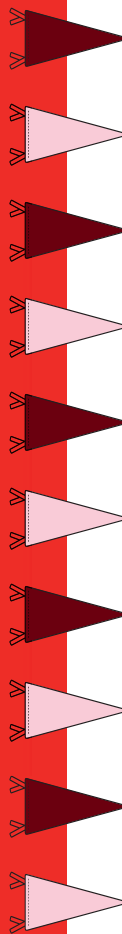
The Decline of the CRNC

The CRNC used to operate under the direct control of the Republican National Committee, but that changed after passage of the 2002 Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act. The law prevented the RNC

and Democratic National Committee from allocating "soft money" to allied groups like College Democrats and College Republicans, which resulted in those groups spinning off as "527 organizations"—tax exempt political entities that can accept unlimited contributions. The CRNC hit a peak fundraising quarter in 2004 amid President George W. Bush's reelection campaign, when it raised \$2.72 million, according to a ProPublica analysis of IRS data. But its fundraising has not broken the \$1 million mark since the second quarter of 2017.

Mirroring the RNC, the CRNC faced its own internal friction over the direction of the party amid Trump's ascent, as various top chapters—like the College Republicans at Harvard—refused to endorse the eventual president. As tensions between MAGA Republicans and





the establishment flared during Trump's first year in office, 2018 saw conservatives at Arizona State University break away from the CRNC to form College Republicans United, taking the name "to designate the MAGA members infighting against the rino [Republican in Name

"We were the first group. Our mission is bigger than these organizational disputes, and I wish that they would realize that as well."

Only] establishment within the CRNC," CRU's website states. The group eventually expanded to the University of Arizona, the University of Iowa and Iowa State University. At one point it even included the California College Republicans, but then its growth hit a wall.

The organization invited far-right provocateur Nick Fuentes to speak at its 2023 national convention, drawing condemnation from the Maricopa County Republican Committee. Its ASU chapter leaders have publicly apologized for sharing racist and antisemitic messages in Facebook chats. And in January, hundreds at ASU protested the group for encouraging students to report their peers to ICE.

Leaders from the other three College Republican organizations describe College Republicans United as "dead," noting its limited geographic footprint and

failure to outline its constitution and leadership on its website. Kevin Decuyper, 30, CRU chair and co-founder, told *Newsweek* the group's ability to draw national attention and inspire counterprotests proves the organization is very much alive. He said he is open to posting national leadership and the group's constitution online. Additionally, he said that while his group may be smaller, it's the only true "America First" organization and the only one not beholden to establishment interests.

"We're the only youth organization with the principles to schedule a wide diversity of these controversial speakers," Decuyper said. "The issue is, although we are College Republicans United, these centrist figures don't want to be in the same room as their competition and different factions of Republican thought, so we've been put in a box, relegated to having the more controversial figures because they're happy to have a platform."

Governance Disputes

The group's openness to far-right figures was a key difference from the other three College Republican groups. When it comes to ideology, the others generally resemble each other in their mainstream and pro-Trump positions.

The fracturing of the National Federation of College Republicans and the College Republicans of America from the CRNC seems to originate from personality conflicts and governance disputes. Tensions between the two groups go

back to 2019, flaring up at the 2021 election for chair of the College Republican National Committee. The latter race was between Western Regional Vice Chair Judah Waxelbaum and South Regional Vice Chair Courtney Britt, who outgoing chairman Chandler Thornton had reportedly wanted to succeed him.

In 2019, Britt served as chair of the Virginia Federation of College Republicans and was up against Arkansas Federation of College Republicans Chair Clay Smith for the CRNC South regional vice chair role. Two years later, British magazine *The Spectator* reported allegations from CRNC insiders that Thornton “threw his support” behind Britt, with two former female members claiming he participated in a failed plot to have them accuse Smith of sexual assault to help tip the race in Britt’s favor. The women declined, but Britt won the race anyway, stating she was unaware of any such plot.

Meanwhile, a report from conservative outlet *National Review* raised claims of meddling in the election for CRNC chair in 2021, detailing an alleged effort by Thornton to effectively toss out pro-Waxelbaum votes. In response, several states announced intent to disaffiliate from the organization, including the New York Federation of College Republicans.

The NYFCR also came out with a seven-page dossier accusing Thornton of failing to account for \$2 million in organizational funds. The group voted to secede from the organization, and state federations in Mississippi, Texas, Florida and Oregon followed suit. Additionally, California’s oldest College Republicans group—the California College Republicans—had already been removed from the CRNC after Thornton elected to back a splinter group, creating tension in the nation’s most populous state.

JT Marshburn, 19, of Georgia, has chaired the CRNC since June. He told *Newsweek* he sees the organization as the primary College Republican group and refrained from commenting on the other groups’ leadership, instead stressing the need for unity. “Part of their disputes

between each other is because they both are splinter groups,” he said. “We were the first group. Our mission is bigger than these organizational disputes, and I wish that they would realize that as well.”

Amid the exodus of state federations from the CRNC, Rachel Howard, 29, who served as Louisiana state chair, emerged as a key leader who blasted Thornton. She told *Newsweek* that she viewed the aftermath of 2021 as the “collapse” of the CRNC and believed a new group was needed to engage college-aged conservatives. Joining forces with Christopher Mayer of Alabama, Howard helped to galvanize the factions to form the National Federation of College Republicans in 2022. Then a fourth group joined the mix.

New Groups, Same Tensions

Will Donahue, 26, a former chair of the California College Republicans, was originally interested in joining forces with Howard on a new organization, but the pair had a falling out. Donahue said he then felt ready to retire from politics but later heard “discontent with the way that NCFR was running,” which motivated him to join forces with then Wisconsin College Republicans Chair William Blathras to form College Republicans of America.

Neither Donahue nor Howard consider the current CRNC as a real challenger and have criticized it for not being transparent about its chapter count and not posting its constitution or bylaws on its website. Marshburn has said he would

be open to posting the group’s constitution on the CRNC website. Yet Donahue and Howard both said they would not mind joining forces with the CRNC, as it remains the wealthiest of the groups, according to fundraising data.

They characterized the divisions within College Republicans as a battle between their two organizations for supremacy, with each accusing the other of falsifying the number of chapters affiliated with their organization. *Newsweek* could not independently verify the number of chapters affiliated with each group.

The pair’s rivalry comes down to competing ideological and philosophical differences on how College Republicans should be run. Each described these differences as manifesting during their first call with each other, yet offered different reasons for not partnering up.

Donahue has shaped CRA’s governance structure in a “Turning Point-style, top-down approach” to combat the lack of institutional memory and ego-fueled jockeying for leadership roles that, he said, plagued the CRNC. Donahue serves as the group’s chair and said he sees himself as a Kirk-like figure, ensuring continuity within the group and guiding the priorities of his chosen president.

“We have watched Republican organizations for decades rise and fall because of democracy,” Donahue told *Newsweek*. “Bureaucracy kills volunteer organizations. It just does. People care about their titles, ...their resumes, and that just totally takes over the conversation. You don’t actually get things done.” He said Howard’s commitment to an elected executive board was the reason the two did not partner earlier. Howard told a different story.

She said Donahue insisted on admitting CRU into their new organization, something she rejected due to their past behavior. Donahue denied this and denounced CRU. He said that the “rumor” was given life because California College Republicans had been removed from the CRNC and found itself competing with the California Federation of College Republicans splinter organization.



“Although we are College Republicans United, these centrist figures don’t want to be in the same room as their competition and different factions of Republican thought.”



INFLUENCE Turning Point USA Founder Charlie Kirk helped make Republican gains among young voters.

The California GOP told California College Republicans—in 2022, before Donahue was chair—that it needed to affiliate with a national organization or the state party would recognize the Federation, he said. Donahue said the group was forced to affiliate with CRU but ultimately disaffiliated later. The two California groups have since merged. Decuyper said the CRU's arrangement with the California Republicans was a “dual partnership.”

‘Smear Campaign’

In turn, Donahue said Howard has called his group “too Trumpy.” He also said Howard campaigned for 2024 GOP presidential primary candidate Nikki Haley, showing *Newsweek* a picture of Howard at an event wearing a lanyard that matched those of individuals wearing Haley campaign gear. Howard called this a “smear campaign” and said she’d visited NFCR members who’d campaigned for Haley, DeSantis and Trump. She showed a picture of herself at a 2019 Trump rally holding a sign of support for the president.

Donahue said members have defected from the NFCR to his organization due to discontent over Howard’s handling of NFCR’s finances and FEC filings. Some of those individuals were issued cease and desist letters from the NFCR demanding they stop speaking about NFCR finances,

Howard and Donahue said, with Howard stating that the FEC told her the NFCR did not need to submit filings due to the nature of its campaign work.

Howard in turn has accused Donahue of financial mismanagement, citing IRS filings that she says showed his organization was in over \$100,000 of debt as of its fourth quarter 2024 filing. Donahue said those numbers were the result of needing to carry investments from the organization’s direct mail firm, ATA, on their balance sheet, but because this agreement was made through a no-risk contract it is not an amount that needs to be paid back.

Despite their differences, Donahue and Howard said they want to see College Republicans unify, acknowledging shared goals of advancing conservative values and helping GOP candidates win elections.

College Republicans provides a vital forum for that, they argue, because it serves as a key entry point for America’s youth into Republican politics while creating a sense of community. Each organization offers opportunities to engage in campaigning and sometimes sets up members with professional opportunities.

Leaders for the groups suggested they are better equipped than activist organizations to prepare young conservatives for political and policy careers as they are more focused on professional

development and preparing people to navigate the party structure. They argue they can campaign more effectively than organizations like Turning Point USA and its sister organization Turning Point Action, which respectively as 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) organizations are limited in the direct political activity they can carry out.

Mediating a Merger

However, with the personal nature of some of the disputes and the distrust between different state federations and the national organizations, the four College Republican leaders believe the RNC could play an effective role as referee, by potentially mediating a merger and endorsing a unified organization.

A former RNC official who worked closely on these issues told *Newsweek*: “With every chair that comes through the door, the call is being made by either the chair themselves or one of their senior advisers to not recognize any coalition organizations as an official RNC auxiliary.”

RNC issued *Newsweek* with a statement from RNC National Press Secretary Kirsten Pels that said: “President Trump’s 2024 campaign did tremendous work last year expanding Republican outreach to young voters across the country and energizing a new generation of conservatives. The RNC is committed to continuing that momentum and building a strong, unified movement to win in 2026.”

Republicans are facing a critical moment when it comes to engaging America’s youth, with data showing support for Trump among this cohort starting to soften. Turning Point USA, under the leadership of widow Erika Kirk, could continue as the most effective tool in furthering conservative gains among them. But if it fails to retain its 2024 prowess, Republican leaders could be left trying to consolidate the pieces of what was the more than 125-year-old College Republicans. **✚**

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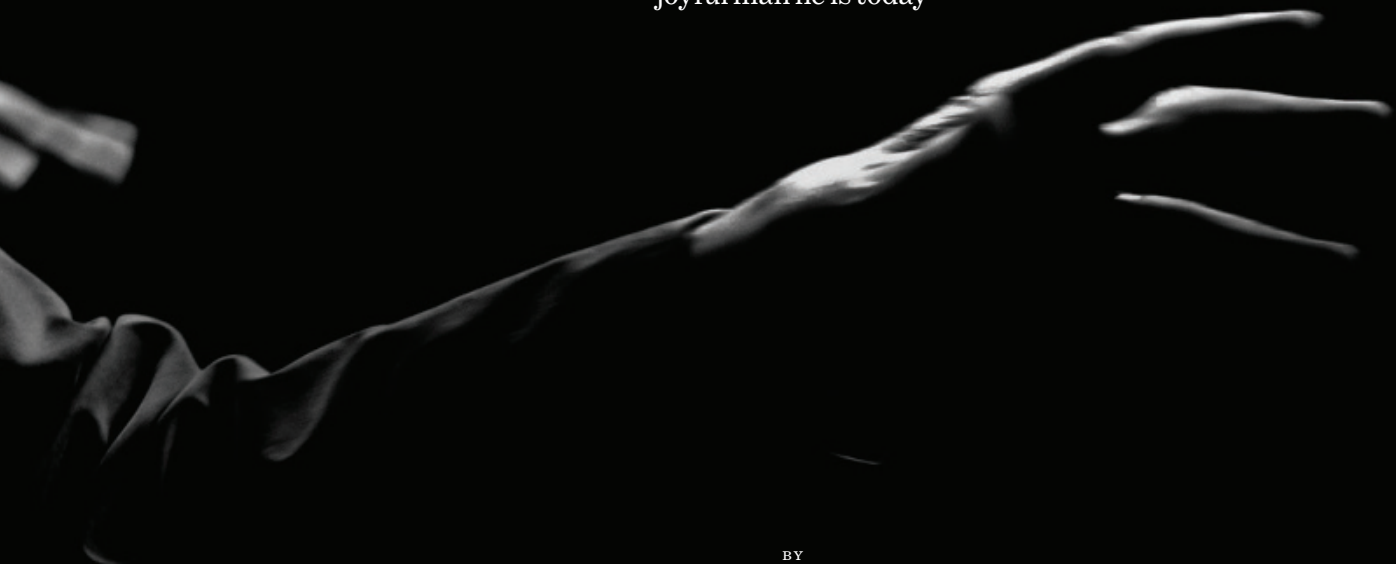


WAKE UP AND LIVE

In a candid chat ahead
of the release of his memoir
We Did OK, Kid, actor, artist
and composer Sir Anthony Hopkins
reveals how his tough childhood
and long battle with alcoholism
formed the contented,
joyful man he is today

BY
JENNIFER H. CUNNINGHAM
AND
H. ALAN SCOTT

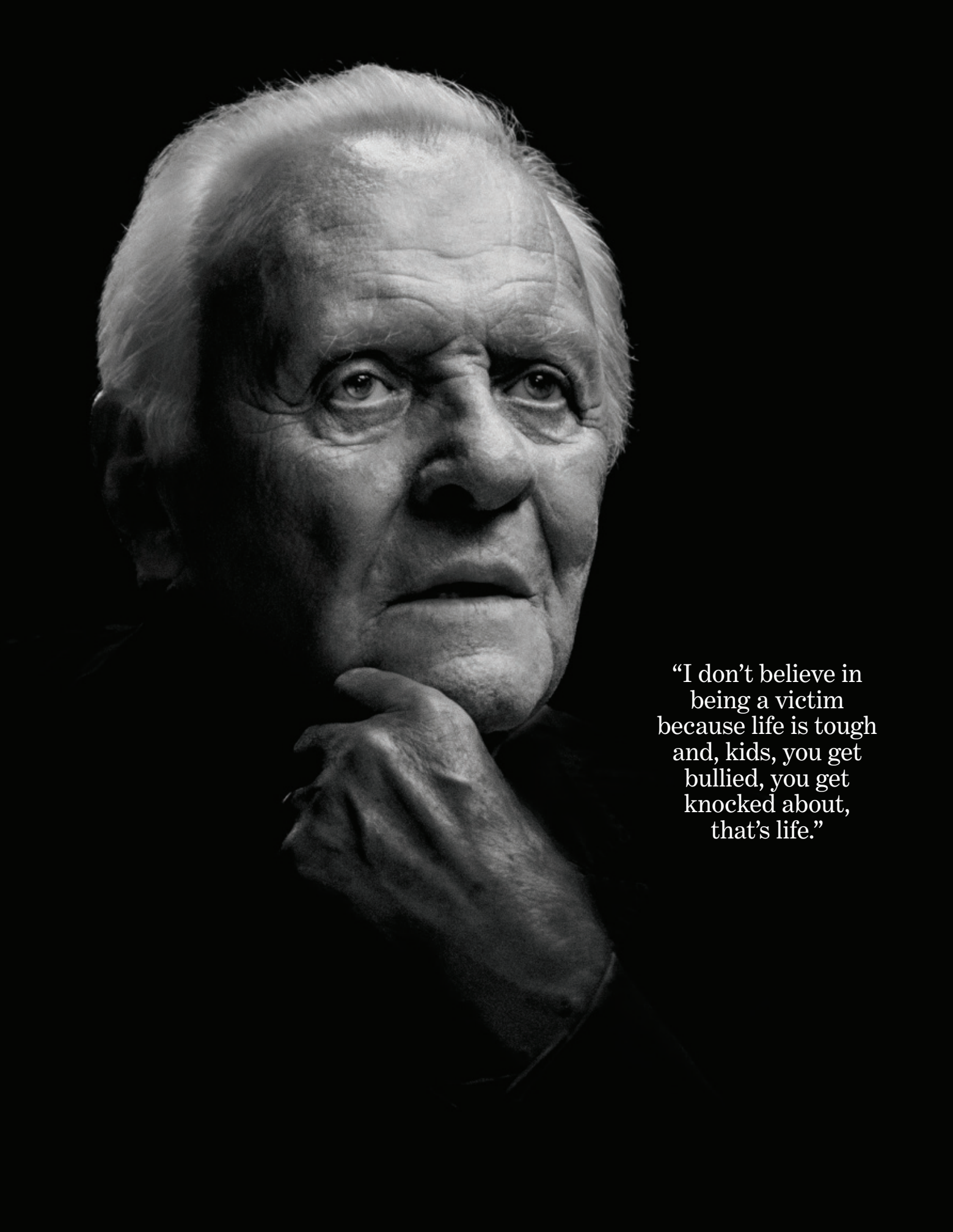
PHOTOGRAPHY
BY
BRANTLEY GUTIERREZ



T

HE EVIL HE PROJECTED AS HANNIBAL Lecter in *The Silence of the Lambs* was chilling. But it was nothing compared to the battle Sir Anthony Hopkins faced against the demons of his past. The rebellious anger forged in him from being bullied during a lonely childhood in Wales drove him, but the fierce grip alcoholism held in adulthood threatened to silence his talent for good. Knowing all this, the title of Hopkins' new memoir, *We Did OK, Kid*, is more than just a lighthearted quip; it's a verdict of his 87 years spent overcoming personal struggles to find success and be at peace with himself.

Speaking exclusively to *Newsweek*, Hopkins recalled the pivotal moment at age 17 with his father, a baker, that turned his anger into his strength. "My father said, 'I don't know what's gonna happen to you. Hopeless.' And I took a step back and said, 'One day I'll show you,'" Hopkins said. "My father looked at me and said, 'Well, I hope you do.' I think what happened at that moment, I had stopped playing the game of being stupid. And I was angry, resentful, repressed, put all that stuff inside me, and I think it switched something on."



“I don’t believe in
being a victim
because life is tough
and, kids, you get
bullied, you get
knocked about,
that’s life.”

“I’m a plumber. If you call
a plumber and say,
‘Can you mend my faucets?’
he comes in and does the job.
That’s my job. It’s a craft.”



It ignited a determination that propelled Hopkins down an extraordinary path. He was soon spotted by legendary Shakespearean actor Sir Laurence Olivier and invited to join the Royal National Theatre in London in 1965, which set the stage for him to eventually become one of cinema's most iconic performers. Hopkins' work on film would result in breaking two Academy Award records: His 1992 Best Actor win for *The Silence of the Lambs* is the shortest lead performance to ever win, according to Guinness World Records, and his 2021 win for *The Father* at age 83 made him the oldest person to be awarded an acting Oscar.

But the man responsible for these iconic roles holds a surprisingly simple view of his craft.

"I was asked by another interviewer, 'How did you play Lecter?' I said, 'Just stood still and didn't blink.' 'But how did you do *The Remains of the Day* playing a butler?' 'Well, just be very quiet.' It's no big deal," Hopkins said, emphasizing that what he does is just what he does, putting no more importance on it than any other profession. "I'm a plumber. If you call a plumber and say, 'Can you mend my faucets?' he comes in and does the job. That's my job. It's a craft, it's a job. There's nothing mysterious about it. People like to make a big mystery. They all think they're special. Special? God help us."

This same bluntness and honesty drives the narrative of *We Did OK, Kid*, where he confronts every part of his life with equal candor, from his greatest triumphs to his battle with alcoholism. Hopkins writes about how the fun of drinking with fellow actors spiraled into an isolating and dangerous addiction.

"Suddenly I was here in California, and I was driving with my car blackout [drunk]. Couldn't remember where I'd been. I woke up, I thought, I'm gonna die, or I'm going to take someone with me, I'll kill somebody...I remember saying to someone, 'I need help.'"

The journey that began with that cry for

help led not only to nearly 50 years of sobriety, but to the profound self-acceptance that defines his outlook today. Fortunately for us all, he is here to share the hard-won wisdom from that journey in the conversation that follows, which he had with *Newsweek* Editor-in-Chief Jennifer H. Cunningham on October 8 in Santa Monica, California. The interview has been lightly edited for length and clarity.

Tell us about the photo of you and your father that inspired the book's title, *We Did OK, Kid*.

That was during the Second World War, 1941; I was 3-and-a-half. I have, for some reason, very good recall. I remember the images. That was on a Sunday morning. My father was in what they call the Royal Observer Corps. I dropped a candy into the sand, and I started to blubber a bit. And Cliff [a man at the Post Office] gave me another sweet. Many years later, I found those photographs. And I looked at them, and I said, "We did OK, kid."

Because it goes back to my past when I was not swift as a student. You come into the world, you're confused, then you go to school and you're taught things that don't make any sense at all and I was hopeless, I just wasn't bright, and so I was bullied. So I became isolated and defiant in a way, I never reacted to the bullying. I call it dumb insolence. At an early age, I learned to be defiant. I wouldn't react.

Was that a coping mechanism for you?

Yes it was. It's not the healthiest way to go through life, but it fueled me in a way. One thing I claim at this moment is that I'm not a victim. I don't believe in being a victim because life is tough and, kids, you get bullied, you get knocked about, that's life. And you have to be resilient, and I inherited that from my parents. They worked hard. My father said, "Stand up straight, stop complaining." And I inherited that from him.



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Newsmakers

“There’s no escape.
We’re all going to die, aren’t we?
That’s the big fat joke of life.
So you say, screw it.
That’s the shortest prayer
in the world.”

You describe a pivotal moment when you were 17 years old involving a school report.

My parents were standing in the kitchen behind the bakery. My father worked hard to give me an education. And the dreaded moment came, my school report. My father opened it, gave it to my mother, and she said, “Anthony is way below the standard of the school.” I felt sorry for them, not for me, because I thought, Well, they have worked hard, why is it I can’t cope? My father said, “I don’t know what’s gonna happen to you. Hopeless.” And I took a step back and said, “One day I’ll show you. I’ll show both of you.” My father looked at me and said, “Well, I hope you do.” And my mother said, “I’m sure you will.”

I think what happened at that moment, I had stopped playing the game of being stupid. And I was angry, resentful, repressed, put all that stuff inside me, and I think it switched something on, call it providence or subconscious mind, whatever it is. I think what happened was at that moment another voice said, “OK, fasten your seat belts. Here we go.” Because within four months I got a scholarship to an acting school. I didn’t know how to act. How on earth I got a scholarship, I don’t know. And my life has been like that. Step-by-step. The most fortunate accidents in my life.

How did your hometown of Port Talbot, Wales, shape you?

Oh, well, you’ll never be able to take Port Talbot out of me. I feel it’s in my bones, in my veins. It was a tough little town. It was steel mill country. The Welsh people were rough, tough people. No time for sentiment, no time for softness. And so that’s very much part of me. It’s my heritage. In that town was born the other actor, Richard Burton. I went up there and asked him for an autograph. And I was very impressed. I thought, That’s what I want to be. The ironic thing was, 28 years later, I met him in the dressing room that I had occupied before in *Equus* in New York [City]. And he said to me, “You came to my house [in Wales], didn’t you, ask[ed] me for my autograph?”

Whose example shaped you most as an actor?

I think about Sir [Laurence] Olivier. He was running the National Theatre. I admired his discipline. One thing I realized, in order to survive as an actor, you have to be ready, you have to be strong. You have to be disciplined. I learned that from him. I started the process of learning the entire text of plays when I was doing

repertory theater. Learn the entire piece, learn everything. And you know what you’re gonna do, so nobody can take you on. And I think that readiness gave me a kind of presence, because Olivier saw it. He encouraged me. He also told me to stop drinking, but he said, “Stay strong. You got it.” He’d tell other actors, “To be an actor, you have to be tough. And don’t mumble. Tell the story.”

Why was it so important to include your journey to sobriety in the book?

Well, because it’s my story. It’s the most significant part of my life. I drank because everyone did, actors, and it’s a show of rebellion





TELLING THE STORY Ahead of the publication of his new memoir, *We Did OK, Kid*, actor Hopkins talks with Newsweek's Cunningham in Santa Monica, California.

and independence. And it was fun. But it occurred to me, I thought, I can enjoy this, but one day I think it's gonna kill me. I had a suspicion it would kill me. Suddenly I was here in California, and I was driving with my car blackout [drunk]. Couldn't remember where I'd been. That was 50 years ago. And I remember, I woke up, I thought, I'm gonna die, or I'm going to take someone with me, I'll kill somebody. To drive a car drunk? It's insanity.

And I remember saying to someone, "I need help." So I got help, and I discovered I was an alcoholic. I can't describe alcoholism, but I couldn't stop drinking. For some reason, because I cracked my own ego, I thought, I am not powerful. I've used willpower.

Doesn't work. I need help. So I made a phone call and joined a group of people who were the same. And I remember my meeting, seeing all these people, I thought, I'm not alone. And that was a big ego break, because you're not special. I thought the recovery would be the greatest thing that ever happened to me.

In your worst moments, how did you maintain your sobriety?

I don't know why the desire to drink left me on that day when I got help. A woman at this office, she said, "You don't have to drink again." She gave me a blessing of some kind. And suddenly I realized it was over. A kind of voice in my head like the voice





IT'S ALL IN THE GAME
Clockwise from top left: As Mr. Stevens in *The Remains of the Day*; at 3-and-a-half with his father in the photo that inspired his book title; Laurence Olivier; Hopkins' forthcoming memoir *We Did OK, Kid*; Hopkins in 1972; with Kathy Bates after winning the Academy Award for *The Silence of the Lambs* in 1992; as Hannibal Lecter in *The Silence of the Lambs* with Jodie Foster; and Hopkins, Katharine Hepburn, Nigel Terry, and John Castle (left to right) in 1968's *The Lion in Winter*.



MIKKI ANSIN/GETTY; COURTESY OF ANTHONY HOPKINS; CLELAND RIMMER/EVENING STANDARD/GETTY; COURTESY OF SAS/SUMMIT BOOKS; ELLEN GRAHAM/GETTY; VINNIE ZUFFANTE/GETTY; MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY; JOHN SPRINGER COLLECTION/CORBIS/GETTY

of my father said, "It's all over. Now you can start living. It has all been for a purpose. So don't forget one moment of it. Now go about your business." And I realized that I couldn't have missed it, it was all a big lesson in there, because I learned a great deal in those tough years. I don't want to go back there, but I wouldn't have missed it for the world. My only reason for bringing this up, it may help someone out there.

Is there a central lesson you want readers to take from your life?

I do believe in the principle, wake up and live. Wake up and live, because we're going to be dead. Act as if it is impossible to fail. And that's like a mantra. Suddenly it occurred to me, it was like out of a dream, suddenly I figured out it's none of my business what people say of me or think of me. I am what I am and I do what I do because I enjoy doing it. It's all in the game. No sweat, no big deal. There are no big deals.

You're also a composer and an artist. What's your advice on creativity?

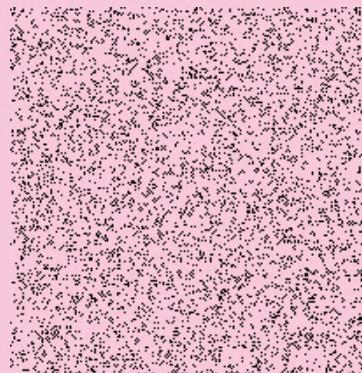
We can do whatever we want if we check into ourselves. Because we are so used to being conditioned saying you can't do that, you're too big for your boots, or stay in your lane. No. Get into the other lanes as well, paint, draw, write, play music, dance, whatever you have to do. We limit ourselves all the time. We just say, "No, I can't do that." And then we admit, "I may fail." So what? You fail. It's like I go back to this: It's none of my business what people say of me or think of me. Act as if it's impossible to fail. And it works.

What advice would you give your younger self?

Have a ball. Don't take anything too seriously. We have to get through life. There's struggle. There's pain. All in the game. But finally, it comes back to it. There's a solace and peace in getting older. Because we're not going anywhere. There's no escape. We're all going to die, aren't we? That's the big fat joke of life. So you say, screw it. That's the shortest prayer in the world, because finally we know nothing. We think we do, but we know nothing.

What drives your joy and optimism now?

The fact that I'm an old man, and still here. Because I wake up, I'm thinking, I don't have any aches or pains so far. And I'm at peace with what time I have left, whatever happens. I think, Well, I'm here. I have no fear. And I've accomplished things. Not through my own ego, but through some circumstance of whatever it is. And I look back to the cover of that book, "We did OK, kid." Because it's impossible to get from where he was, that little boy, to where I am today, but I cannot take credit for it in a conscious way. Maybe I was lucky to have that moment when I was 17, "One day I will show you." Seventy years ago. Maybe that was the moment when something went whoop. Galvanized me. **N**



America's Best Customer Service

2026

WHEN SHOPPING FOR NEW KITCHEN APPLIANCES OR clarifying a charge on a phone bill, customer service can make or break the experience. A single bad interaction with an associate can turn people away, while a great one can turn a one-time buyer into a loyal customer. A good encounter can have a big impact, with 83 percent of customers reporting feeling more loyal to brands that successfully help them solve their problems, according to Khoros. Meanwhile, they found that 65 percent of customers go so far as to switch to another company when they have a bad experience, proving how important a positive interaction with customers can be. That is why *Newsweek* and Statista are partnering for the eighth year to present America's Best Customer Service 2026. This year's ranking

highlights 730 companies that have been reported to provide the best service experiences to customers. This ranking is built on an evaluation of over 200,000 customer evaluations, collected through an independent survey of individuals who made purchases, used services or conducted research on products or services over the past three years. Brands were divided into 166 categories including apparel, bookstores, hearing care and pizza chains. Companies recognized in this ranking include Advance Auto Parts, Aflac, Cabela's, Lululemon Athletica and Old Navy.

We hope this listing helps you find the brands that will support you and provide a positive experience every time.

—Jennifer H. Cunningham, Editor-in-Chief

Methodology

The America's Best Customer Service 2026 rankings were identified from the results of an independent survey of participants who have either made purchases, used services or gathered information about products or services in the past three years. Customers evaluated several brands; in total over 200,000 evaluations were collected.

The survey was conducted on retailers and service providers from 166 categories, providing results for a broad spectrum of customer experiences in traditional retail, online and service segments. For each category, the most relevant brands were included in the scope of the survey according to reputation, turnover or market share.

In the brick-and-mortar categories, only retailers and service providers present in at least two census regions have been included in the list. In the online categories, only retailers and service providers present online have been included in the list. In total, the survey took an average of 13 minutes to complete, and the field period ran from June to July 2025.

The final assessment and rankings were based on the Likelihood of Recommendation (50 percent of the final score) and five weighted evaluation criteria (also 50 percent of the final score):

- 1. Quality of Communication:** measures whether the contact (via e-mail, telephone or face-to-face) was friendly or polite.
- 2. Professional Competence:** measures the quality of information received and whether questions were answered correctly and in sufficient detail.
- 3. Range of Services:** measures the variety of solutions available to fulfill one's personal expectations.
- 4. Customer Focus:** measures whether the customer feels acknowledged and important.
- 5. Accessibility:** measures the availability of customer service in a shop or on a helpline.

The top three to five brands based on category size receiving the highest scores in each category were awarded as America's Best Customer Service 2026.

DISCLAIMER

The rankings are comprised exclusively of brands that are eligible regarding the scope described in this document. A mention in the ranking is a positive recognition based on customers' evaluations and the data sources available at the time. The ranking is the result of an elaborate process which, due to the interval of data-collection and analysis, is a reflection of the last calendar year. Furthermore, events following August 31, 2025, and/or pertaining to individual persons affiliated/associated with the facilities were not included in the metrics. As such, the results of this ranking should not be used as the sole source of information for future deliberations. The information provided in this ranking should be considered in conjunction with other available information about the brands or, if possible, accompanied by a visit to the company. The quality of brands that are not included in the rankings is not disputed.

Brick-and-Mortar Retailers

Clothing	
APPAREL	
1	J. Crew 90.93
2	Tommy Hilfiger 89.94
3	Calvin Klein 86.83
4	Dillard's 86.80
5	Uniqlo 86.28
ATHLETIC APPAREL	
1	New Balance 90.75
2	Nike 85.19
3	Lululemon Athletica 84.92
4	Adidas 84.81
5	Champion 84.64
BABY & CHILDREN'S CLOTHING	
1	Janie and Jack 91.95
2	Carter's 85.88
3	Old Navy 85.21
4	Gap 85.01
5	The Children's Place 84.79
BRIDAL FASHIONS	
1	Vera Wang 93.43
2	Bella Bridesmaids 90.56
3	BHLDN 88.76
DEPARTMENT STORES	
1	Bloomingdale's 88.91
2	Nordstrom 88.13
3	Bosco's 86.21
4	Bealls 81.36
5	Macy's 81.20
DISCOUNT CLOTHING	
1	Marshalls 76.90
2	T.J.Maxx 75.42
3	Ross Stores 74.60

FASHION ACCESSORIES	
1	Nordstrom 90.70
2	Zara 87.61
3	Gap 86.86
4	Nordstrom Rack 86.28
5	Old Navy 85.05
FOOTWEAR (GENERAL)	
1	Foot Locker 82.67
2	Finish Line 82.61
3	Shoe Carnival 80.59
4	DSW 78.64
5	Famous Footwear 76.99
FOOTWEAR (HIGH-END)	
1	Jimmy Choo 92.45
2	Prada 90.18
3	Michael Kors 88.07
4	Gucci 84.98
5	Coach 84.80
FOOTWEAR (RUNNING)	
1	New Balance 90.53
2	Skechers 86.24
3	Adidas 84.87
4	Reebok 83.34
5	Nike 82.95
JEWELRY	
1	Pandora 87.66
2	Swarovski 86.55
3	Kendra Scott 86.08
4	Kay Jewelers 85.78
5	Zales 85.50
JEWELRY (HIGH-END)	
1	Bulgari 90.34
2	Cartier 90.12
3	Harry Winston 88.52

LINGERIE

1	Soma	87.69
2	Calvin Klein	86.75
3	Jockey	86.48
4	Maidenform	85.31
5	Aerie	84.92

LUXURY FASHION ACCESSORIES

1	Louis Vuitton	89.25
2	Prada	88.18
3	Dior	88.01
4	Burberry	87.61
5	Gucci	87.25

OUTDOOR APPAREL

1	L.L.Bean	86.30
2	Eddie Bauer	84.65
3	Patagonia	84.31

PREMIUM APPAREL

1	Hugo Boss	92.10
2	Ralph Lauren	89.88
3	Ann Taylor	88.85
4	Calvin Klein	87.03
5	Tommy Hilfiger	86.70

PURSES/BAGS

1	Kate Spade	89.28
2	Coach	85.44
3	Michael Kors	85.20
4	Chanel	84.86
5	Louis Vuitton	83.52

SECOND HAND

1	Buffalo Exchange	79.82
2	Plato's Closet	79.36
3	The Salvation Army	75.46
4	Once Upon A Child	72.96
5	Goodwill	71.74

**WOMEN'S APPAREL**

1	LOFT	90.90
2	Maurices	89.87
3	Lane Bryant	85.45
4	Anthropologie	83.40
5	Chico's	78.59

Food, Health & Beauty**CHOCOLATE & CANDY STORES**

1	Ghirardelli Chocolate Company	89.35
2	See's Candies	88.81
3	Lindt	88.71
4	Russell Stover	86.66
5	Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory	84.25

CONVENIENCE STORES

1	QuikTrip	85.67
2	Wawa	85.11
3	Sheetz	82.90
4	RaceTrac	82.41
5	Casey's General Stores	79.55

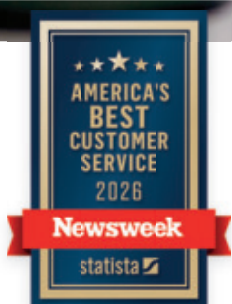
DISCOUNT SUPERMARKETS

1	Trader Joe's	88.64
2	ShopRite	83.02
3	Lidl	81.30
4	WinCo Foods	81.26
5	Aldi	79.58

EYEWEAR

1	Warby Parker	88.45
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2	Pearle Vision	82.74
3	Oakley	81.39
4	MyEyeDr.	81.06
5	LensCrafters	80.91

HEARING CARE

1	Beltone	88.08
2	Audibel	87.58
3	HearUSA	84.80
4	Miracle-Ear	84.37
5	Connect Hearing	84.27

ORGANIC SUPERMARKETS

1	Whole Foods Market	84.91
2	Sprouts	84.37
3	Fresh Thyme Farmers Market	83.42

PERFUME & COSMETICS

1	Dior	90.34
2	Bath & Body Works	89.82
3	Sephora	87.24
4	Perfumania	85.21
5	Ulta Beauty	85.06

PHARMACIES & DRUGSTORES

1	Giant Eagle Pharmacy	93.80
2	Publix	89.23
3	Albertsons	88.42
4	Meijer	85.44
5	Good Neighbor Pharmacy	84.15

SUPERMARKETS

1	Trader Joe's	89.66
2	Publix	89.62
3	Wegmans	88.41
4	Food Lion	85.37
5	Kroger	83.44

SUPERSTORES & WAREHOUSE CLUB STORES

1	Costco	85.81
2	BJ's	83.33
3	Target	82.35

Home Goods

ARTS & CRAFTS

1	Michaels	81.86
2	Blick Art Materials	81.34
3	Hobby Lobby	81.21

AUTO SUPPLIES

1	Ace Hardware	85.31
2	O'Reilly Auto Parts	85.20
3	NAPA Online	84.99
4	AutoZone	83.79
5	Advance Auto Parts	83.34

BEDROOM FURNITURE & BEDDING

1	Ikea	86.61
2	Ashley	81.26
3	HomeGoods	80.70

BOOKSTORES

1	Books-A-Million	83.55
2	Half Price Books	80.60
3	Barnes & Noble	77.23

CAMPING & OUTDOOR GEAR

1	Scheels	89.84
2	Academy Sports + Outdoors	88.86
3	Bass Pro Shops	87.94
4	REI	87.09
5	Cabela's	86.47

DISCOUNT HOME GOODS

1	Marshalls	83.73
2	Five Below	81.81
3	T.J.Maxx	80.90

FURNITURE

1	Ikea	86.33
2	Havertys Furniture	85.78
3	Pottery Barn	85.35
4	west elm	84.55
5	La-Z-Boy	83.83

HOME GOODS & DECOR

1	Ikea	89.38
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2	Hobby Lobby	85.00
3	Pottery Barn	84.94
4	At Home	82.70
5	HomeGoods	81.23

HOME IMPROVEMENT STORES

1	Tractor Supply Co.	89.55
2	Menards	87.70
3	Ace Hardware	85.17
4	Home Depot	82.13
5	Lowe's	80.18

MUSIC, GAMES & COMICS

1	Books-A-Million	85.76
2	Guitar Center	82.47
3	GameStop	79.07

PARTY SUPPLIES

1	Michaels	83.75
2	Hobby Lobby	80.77
3	Party City	76.49

PET CARE

1	Pet Supermarket	88.85
2	Pet Supplies Plus	86.43
3	Tractor Supply Co.	85.70
4	PetSmart	84.59
5	Petco	82.13

PREMIUM FURNITURE

1	RH	91.51
2	Pottery Barn	89.33
3	Arhaus Furniture	87.81
4	west elm	85.61
5	Havertys Furniture	84.92

SPORTING GOODS & EQUIPMENT

1	Academy Sports + Outdoors	84.05
2	DICK'S Sporting Goods	81.70
3	Big 5 Sporting Goods	80.03
4	Dunham's Sports	79.21
5	Sportsman's Warehouse	79.05

TOYS

1	LEGO	89.03
2	Disney Store	85.83
3	Mattel Toy Store	82.41

Catering, Restaurants & Leisure

BAGEL & SANDWICH CHAINS

1	Jason's Deli	87.99
2	Potbelly Sandwich Shop	86.73
3	Jersey Mike's Subs	86.69
4	McAlister's Deli	86.37
5	Firehouse Subs	84.64

BUFFET RESTAURANTS

1	Pizza Ranch	83.11
2	Golden Corral	81.55
3	Cicis	79.46
4	Sirloin Stockade	79.25
5	Hoss's Steak and Sea House	76.78

CASUAL DINING RESTAURANT CHAINS

1	LongHorn Steakhouse	91.02
2	Texas Roadhouse	89.39
3	Red Lobster	88.76
4	Cheddar's Scratch Kitchen	88.39
5	Ruby Tuesday	88.00

COFFEEHOUSE CHAINS

1	7 Brew Coffee	92.42
2	Scooter's Coffee	86.56
3	Dutch Bros	86.42
4	Peet's Coffee	84.31
5	Starbucks	83.25

DOUGHNUT CHAINS

1	Shipley Do-Nuts	85.84
2	Winchell's Donut House	85.58
3	Voodoo Doughnut	84.85
4	Krispy Kreme	84.35
5	Duck Donuts	83.79

FAST-CASUAL RESTAURANT CHAINS

1	Jersey Mike's Subs	91.27
2	Culver's	89.44
3	Shake Shack	84.20
4	Jimmy John's	79.86
5	McAlister's Deli	79.38

FAST-FOOD RESTAURANT CHAINS

1	Whataburger	91.96
2	In-N-Out Burger	90.71
3	Chick-fil-A	90.42
4	KFC	83.05
5	Taco Bell	81.85

ICE CREAM & FROZEN YOGURT STORES

1	Freddy's Frozen Custard and Steakburgers	92.12
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2	Handel's Homemade Ice Cream	89.89
3	Culver's	89.37
4	Cold Stone Creamery	87.35
5	Bruster's Real Ice Cream	86.74

MOVIE THEATERS

1	Cinemark	84.10
2	AMC Theatres	83.08
3	Regal Cinemas	83.01
4	Harkins Theatres	81.48
5	Landmark Theatres	79.53

PIZZA CHAINS

1	Papa Murphy's	82.64
2	California Pizza Kitchen	82.35
3	Domino's Pizza	81.89
4	Pizza Hut	81.84
5	Papa John's Pizza	80.56

UPSCALE CHAIN RESTAURANTS

1	Ruth's Chris Steak House	92.37
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2	The Capital Grille	92.26
3	Morton's The Steakhouse	89.65
4	Texas de Brazil Churrascaria	88.11
5	Fogo de Chão	86.65

Online Retailers

Clothing

APPAREL

1	Lululemon Athletica	89.60
2	ASOS	89.13
3	Dickies	88.35
4	Zappos	88.14
5	L.L.Bean	87.97

BABY & CHILDREN'S PRODUCTS

1	The Honest Company	90.25
2	The Children's Place	88.82
3	Gerber Childrenswear	87.29
4	Baby Swag	86.25
5	Carter's	86.08

FOOTWEAR

1	HOKA	90.05
2	Brooks Running	88.78
3	Zappos	87.80
4	Nike	87.04
5	Skechers	86.81

JEWELERS

1	James Allen	88.33
2	Etsy	87.97
3	Blue Nile	87.63
4	Brilliant Earth	87.43
5	Pandora	87.23

LUXURY FASHION & ACCESSORIES

1	Louis Vuitton	87.99
2	Net-a-Porter	87.76
3	Chanel	87.32
4	Prada	86.99
5	Farfetch	86.94

MEMBERS-ONLY SALES

1	Rue La La	89.22
2	Gilt	85.92
3	Fabletics	84.18

MEN'S ACCESSORIES

1	MVMT Watches	87.63
2	The Tie Bar	83.31
3	Tieguys.com	82.05

OCCUPATIONAL CLOTHING

1	Carhartt	86.97
2	AllHeart	85.66
3	Uniform Advantage	85.31
4	Dickies	84.66
5	Red Kap	84.12

WOMEN'S APPAREL

1	Lane Bryant	93.42
2	Lands' End	92.73
3	Talbots	90.81
4	Coldwater Creek	89.13
5	Revolve	86.73

Food, Health & Beauty

ADULT BEVERAGES

1	Wine.com	87.04
2	ReserveBar	86.03
3	BevMo!	84.33

CONTACT LENSES

1	Discount Contact Lenses	93.18
2	1-800 Contacts	90.87
3	Hubble	88.05

EYEWEAR RETAILERS

1	Zenni Optical	88.43
2	Warby Parker	87.91
3	EyeBuyDirect	84.48
4	LensCrafters	83.67
5	Glasses.com	83.15

GROCERIES

1	Shipt	92.27
2	AmazonFresh	86.05
3	Instacart	85.01

MEAL KIT SERVICES

1	Blue Apron	86.84
2	Home Chef	84.92
3	HelloFresh	84.26

MEDICAL SUPPLIES

1	Vitality Medical	88.86
2	Allegro Medical	86.20
3	AliMed	81.14



Culver's



DoorDash

CONSUMER ELECTRONICS

1	HP	90.64
2	Samsung	90.35
3	Dell	89.49
4	Bose	88.48
5	Apple	88.20

HOME FURNISHINGS

1	Pottery Barn	90.92
2	At Home	89.73
3	west elm	87.79
4	Ikea	85.83
5	Overstock	85.66

LIGHTING

1	Lamps Plus	90.20
2	Lighting Direct	89.10
3	Visual Comfort & Co.	88.66

OFFICE SUPPLIES

1	Quill	88.55
2	Staples	84.63
3	OfficeSupply.com	83.14

ONLINE HOME STORES

1	Wayfair	86.22
2	Ikea	85.94
3	Overstock	84.60
4	Lowe's	83.25
5	Home Depot	82.90

PLANT & FLOWER RETAILERS

1	ProFlowers	87.15
2	The Sill	86.24
3	FTD	85.59
4	Teleflora	84.27
5	1-800-Flowers.com	82.95

SECOND HAND PRODUCTS

1	Poshmark	84.90
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PERFUME & COSMETICS

1	Clinique	91.86
2	Estée Lauder	91.28
3	Dior	89.87
4	Ulta Beauty	89.35
5	Bath & Body Works	89.29

RESTAURANT DELIVERY SERVICES

1	DoorDash	83.31
2	Uber Eats	81.92
3	Grubhub	80.18

SHOPPING TV CHANNELS

1	Shop LC	91.94
2	HSN	86.68
3	QVC	86.21

SUBSCRIPTION BOXES (CLOTHING & OTHER)

1	Dollar Shave Club	87.90
2	FabFitFun	86.27
3	Stitch Fix	85.05

SUBSCRIPTION BOXES (MAKEUP & COSMETICS)

1	Boxwalla Beauty Box	88.25
2	BoxyCharm By Ipsy	87.81
3	BeautyFIX by Dermstore	87.04
4	Ipsy	87.02
5	Birchbox	86.42

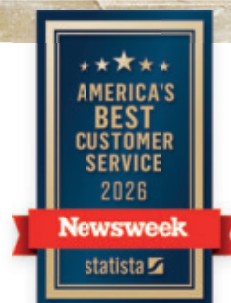
VEGAN & VEGETARIAN PRODUCTS

1	Vitacost	91.39
2	Thrive Market	88.71
3	Purple Carrot	88.09
4	VeganEssentials	86.21
5	Vegancuts	82.66

Home Goods

BOOKSELLERS

1	Barnes & Noble	88.33
2	AbeBooks	88.21
3	Amazon	87.78





2	eBay	83.12
3	thredUP	83.07

Sports & Leisure

BICYCLES

1	Competitive Cyclist	93.78
2	Bike Tires Direct	90.95
3	Tree Fort Bikes	88.53
4	Jenson USA	85.39
5	Bike Nashbar	84.89

COSTUMES & ACCESSORIES

1	Halloween Costumes	83.30
2	Spirit Halloween	82.19
3	Party City	81.86

ELECTRONIC CIGARETTES

1	MyVaporStore.com	90.21
2	VaporDNA	85.53
3	Vuse	85.14

FISHING EQUIPMENT & CLOTHING

1	Cabela's	89.26
2	Tackle Warehouse	87.45
3	Bass Pro Shops	86.43
4	FishUSA	86.14
5	Capitol Fishing Tackle	83.66

HUNTING GEAR & EQUIPMENT

1	Cabela's	89.80
2	Bass Pro Shops	89.20
3	Sportsman's Guide	86.51

MUSICAL EQUIPMENT

1	Sweetwater	94.09
2	Fender	90.27
3	Musician's Friend	88.51

PARTY SUPPLIES (ONLINE)

1	Oriental Trading Company	89.04
2	Walmart	84.92

3	Party City	84.81
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PET FOOD & PET-RELATED PRODUCTS

1	1-800-PetMeds	93.64
2	Petco	90.29
3	Chewy	89.75
4	PetCareRx	83.38
5	PetSmart	78.57

PHOTO & VIDEO EQUIPMENT

1	Sony	94.36
2	Canon	89.27
3	Nikon	88.62
4	Panasonic	88.41
5	Adorama	88.03

SPORTS & FITNESS NUTRITION

1	Bodybuilding	89.72
2	Myprotein	89.19
3	Optimum Nutrition	88.09
4	General Nutrition Centers	88.08
5	Ultimate Sport Nutrition	87.34

Transportation

AUTO PARTS RETAILERS

1	Summit Racing	88.07
2	Advance Auto Parts	87.63
3	RockAuto	87.56
4	1A Auto	86.84
5	O'Reilly Auto Parts	86.37

AUTOMOTIVE MARKETPLACE (ONLINE)

1	CarMax	87.09
2	Autotrader	85.84
3	Cars.com	84.85
4	Carvana	84.35
5	CarGurus	83.55

MOTORCYCLE PARTS & ACCESSORIES (ONLINE)

1	MotoSport	88.70
2	MotorcycleGear.com	88.46
3	Revzilla	86.92
4	Cycle Gear	86.90
5	Chaparral Motorsports	84.64

TIRE & WHEEL MANUFACTURERS (ONLINE)

1	Detroit Wheel and Tire	90.34
2	4 Wheel Parts	89.24
3	Goodyear Auto Service Centers	88.07
4	Big O Tires	87.58
5	RockAuto	87.38

Online Services & Digital Products**BOOK PRINTING SERVICES**

1	KDP Print	90.64
2	Blurb	88.88
3	Lulu	87.30

BUSINESS PRINTING SERVICES

1	Vistaprint	88.70
2	FedEx	86.34
3	Office Depot	86.00
4	Staples	84.55
5	Moo	83.84

CLOUD STORAGE & CLOUD COMPUTING SERVICES

1	Google Drive	89.07
2	iCloud	84.68
3	OneDrive	84.42

EMAIL SERVICES

1	iCloud	90.22
2	ProtonMail	90.17
3	Gmail	88.70

EMPLOYMENT SEARCH ENGINES

1	LinkedIn	80.41
2	Indeed	78.85
3	Glassdoor	73.85

INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS

1	Verizon Wireless	86.29
2	T-Mobile	85.42
3	Frontier	83.80
4	xfinity	78.26
5	Spectrum	77.12

LANGUAGE E-LEARNING PLATFORMS

1	Rosetta Stone	87.75
2	Duolingo	86.88
3	Babbel	86.59

MOBILE CARRIERS & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

1	Spectrum	90.49
2	Metro by T-Mobile	87.10

3	T-Mobile	84.61
4	Boost Mobile	84.49
5	Verizon Wireless	83.94

MUSIC STREAMING SERVICES

1	Apple Music	89.50
2	Spotify	87.94
3	YouTube Music	87.79
4	Amazon Music	87.43
5	Tidal	79.53

ONLINE DATING SITES

1	Facebook Dating	77.90
2	Bumble	77.70
3	eHarmony	77.15
4	okCupid	73.69
5	Tinder	72.92

PAY-PER-VIEW SERVICES & VIDEO-ON-DEMAND

1	Paramount+	88.89
2	HBO Max	88.54

3	Hulu	86.32
4	Netflix	86.26
5	Amazon Prime Video	85.90

PRICE-COMPARISON WEBSITES

1	Shopzilla	89.37
2	PriceGrabber	89.06
3	Google Shopping	87.53

TICKETING SERVICES

1	Eventbrite	87.65
2	StubHub	85.24
3	Barry's Tickets	85.09
4	Ticketmaster	77.21
5	Fandango	74.07

WEDDING REGISTRIES

1	Amazon	90.12
2	Zola	88.61
3	MyRegistry.com	88.57
4	Target	85.01
5	The Knot	83.90



Spectrum



Services

Beauty & Wellness

FITNESS CENTERS

1	Equinox	90.11
2	Blink Fitness	88.35
3	YMCA of the USA	87.32
4	Life Time Athletic	86.28
5	Orangetheory Fitness	85.74

HAIR SALONS

1	SmartStyle	84.35
2	Hair Cuttery	84.15
3	Sport Clips	84.07
4	Great Clips	83.18
5	Supercuts	82.16

Employment, Education & Child Care

CHILD CARE SERVICES

1	Primrose Schools	88.01
2	Care.com	87.86
3	Children's Lighthouse Learning Centers	87.86

4	LeafSpring School	87.81
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5	KLA Schools	86.01
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LANGUAGE SCHOOLS

1	Berlitz	87.95
2	ELC (English Language Center)	87.30
3	EF Education First	86.83
4	ELS (Educational Services)	86.07
5	The Language Company	85.32

NANNY & AU PAIR AGENCIES

1	Nanny Poppinz	95.67
2	GreatAuPair	88.74
3	Agent Au Pair	87.82

TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

1	Adecco	84.83
2	Manpower	84.82
3	Kelly Services	84.57
4	Frontline Source Group	84.47
5	Randstad	83.84

TUTORING SERVICES

1	Tutor.com	91.29
2	Wyzant	90.01
3	Kaplan International	88.06
4	Varsity Tutors	87.98
5	Sylvan Learning	87.44

Insurance

ACCIDENTAL DEATH & DISMEMBERMENT INSURANCE

1	Aflac	93.52
2	Prudential	88.98
3	MetLife	87.80
4	Allstate	85.88
5	State Farm	85.57

AUTO INSURANCE

1	USAA	87.76
2	American Family	87.71
3	Erie Insurance	87.64
4	Auto-Owners	87.31
5	The Hartford	86.79

DISABILITY INSURANCE

1	MetLife	86.73
2	Allstate	81.65
3	State Farm	80.54

GENERAL LIABILITY INSURANCE

1	Nationwide	87.02
2	The Hartford	86.91
3	AAA	86.42
4	USAA	86.25
5	Progressive	84.40

HEALTH INSURANCE

1	Medicare	86.19
2	UnitedHealthcare	83.47
3	Blue Cross Blue Shield	83.38





4	Humana	82.71
5	Aetna	81.70

HOMEOWNERS INSURANCE

1	USAA	89.71
2	State Farm	85.75
3	Farmers	80.14
4	Progressive	79.39
5	GEICO	79.12

LIFE INSURANCE

1	State Farm	87.69
2	Mutual of Omaha	87.15
3	GEICO	85.91
4	New York Life Insurance Company	85.26
5	MetLife	83.88

RETIREMENT PLANNING SOLUTIONS

1	Edward Jones	93.50
2	Fidelity Investments	90.03
3	Charles Schwab	88.82
4	Vanguard	88.29
5	Empower	84.61

SUPPLEMENTAL INSURANCE

1	Aetna	90.69
2	Colonial Life	89.23
3	Aflac	88.60
4	Humana	87.35
5	Blue Cross Blue Shield	86.24

TRAVEL INSURANCE

1	AAA	93.84
2	GEICO	86.97
3	Allianz Global Assistance	85.85
4	Travel Guard	85.52
5	World Nomads	85.39

Personal Services, Home Care & Maintenance

AUTOMOTIVE REPAIR

1	Pep Boys	89.98
2	NAPA Auto Care Center	89.47
3	Midas	87.64
4	Goodyear Auto Service Centers	85.83
5	Firestone Complete Auto Care	84.90

CAR WASHES

1	Zips Car Wash	87.03
2	Mister Car Wash	86.98
3	Super Wash	84.33

DRY-CLEANING SERVICES

1	Martinizing Dry Cleaning	87.89
2	Tide Dry Cleaners	87.40
3	Zips Dry Cleaners	87.32

HANDYMAN REFERRAL SERVICES & HOME REPAIRS

1	Handy	84.67
2	Task Rabbit	84.46
3	HomeAdvisor	79.78

HOME SECURITY

1	SimpliSafe	87.28
2	Ring	86.82
3	ADT	86.51
4	Vivint	85.97
5	Brinks Home Security	82.89

HOME-CARE SERVICES FOR SENIORS & DISABLED

1	BrightStar Care	87.41
2	Home Instead	85.93
3	Visiting Angels	85.47
4	FirstLight Home Care	83.57
5	Always Best Care	81.07

HOUSE CLEANING & MAID SERVICES

1	Molly Maid	85.22
2	Housekeeper	84.50
3	The Maids	83.98
4	MaidPro	83.64
5	Merry Maids	80.38

STORAGE CENTERS

1	U-Haul	83.84
2	Extra Space Storage	83.65
3	Public Storage	82.72
4	CubeSmart	81.30
5	SelfStorage.com	80.50



Alaska Airlines

Real Estate & Banking

ASSET MANAGEMENT

1	Ameriprise	95.72
2	JPMorgan Chase	93.88
3	Fidelity Investments	93.55
4	Vanguard	90.48
5	Charles Schwab	88.29

COMMERCIAL BANKS

1	Capital One	95.10
2	JPMorgan Chase	90.60
3	Bank of America	81.71
4	Wells Fargo	81.43
5	Citibank	81.25

CROWDFUNDING PLATFORMS

1	GoFundMe	86.23
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2	Kickstarter	85.15
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3	Indiegogo	81.58
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ONLINE BANKING

1	Citizens Bank	90.77
2	Discover Bank	90.44
3	Ally	90.02
4	Capital One	89.98
5	Fifth Third Bank	88.84

PAYMENT SERVICES

1	Apple Pay	90.97
2	American Express	90.91
3	Stripe	89.12
4	PayPal	88.94
5	Amazon Pay	88.84

REAL ESTATE AGENCIES

1	Compass Real Estate	89.03
2	RE/MAX	87.74
3	Keller Williams Realty	87.33
4	Coldwell Banker	85.83
5	Redfin	84.25

REAL ESTATE DATABASE

1	Trulia	86.84
2	Realtor.com	86.25
3	Zillow	84.70
4	Redfin	82.08
5	Apartments.com	78.51

TRADING & BROKERAGE SERVICES

1	Fidelity Investments	90.31
2	Edward Jones	89.74

3	Charles Schwab	89.37
4	E*Trade	87.44
5	Robinhood	85.63

Transportation & Travel

AIRLINES

1	Alaska Airlines	89.23
2	Delta	84.44
3	American Airlines	81.90
4	Hawaiian Airlines	81.68
5	United Airlines	79.98

AMUSEMENT PARK EXPERIENCES

1	Universal Parks & Resorts	92.52
2	Disney Parks & Resorts	90.24
3	Cedar Point	88.64
4	Six Flags	84.64
5	Hersheypark	83.83

APARTMENT HOTELS & EXTENDED STAYS

1	Homewood Suites by Hilton	91.84
2	Residence Inn by Marriott	90.37
3	Best Western	89.59
4	Staybridge Suites	86.12
5	Candlewood Suites	83.72

BUDGET HOTELS (1 TO 2 STARS)

1	Super 8	82.13
2	Quality Inn	80.55
3	Red Roof Inn	76.79

BUS CARRIERS

1	Megabus	77.56
2	Peter Pan Bus Lines	76.04
3	Greyhound	75.09



CAR RENTALS

1	Ace Rent-A-Car	85.83
2	Avis	83.99
3	Enterprise Rent-A-Car	83.81
4	Hertz	82.86
5	Budget Rent A Car System	78.91

CRUISE OPERATORS

1	Disney Cruise Line	91.07
2	Norwegian Cruise Line	89.92
3	Royal Caribbean International	89.27
4	Viking Cruises	88.71
5	Carnival Cruise Line	87.88

ECONOMY HOTELS (3 STARS)

1	Hampton by Hilton	86.27
2	Hilton Garden Inn	85.48
3	Holiday Inn	82.41
4	Comfort Inn	79.65
5	Best Western	77.09

FLIGHTS, HOTELS & HOLIDAY DEALS SEARCH ENGINES

1	Booking.com	87.24
2	trivago	86.97
3	Expedia	86.15
4	Hotels.com	85.37
5	Google Flights	85.01

GAS STATIONS

1	Wawa	93.93
2	QuikTrip	84.93
3	Speedway	84.75
4	Shell	82.54
5	Valero	81.04

LOW-COST AIRLINES

1	Southwest Airlines	84.40
2	JetBlue	79.28

3	Allegiant Air	77.89
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LUXURY HOTELS (5 STARS)

1	Waldorf Astoria	96.43
2	The Ritz-Carlton	94.95
3	JW Marriott	94.59
4	St. Regis	94.05
5	Four Seasons	93.48

MOVING SERVICES

1	U-Haul	87.29
2	Two Men and a Truck	86.76
3	PODS	84.73
4	NorthStar Movers	77.63
5	Allied Van Lines	74.73

MUSIC FESTIVALS

1	CMA Fest	88.81
2	Coachella Valley Music Festival	86.37
3	Lollapalooza	86.20
4	Austin City Limits Music Festival	86.05
5	Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival	81.80

PREMIUM HOTELS (4 STARS)

1	Hyatt Regency	92.03
2	Hilton	91.64
3	Westin	90.74
4	Hyatt	90.56
5	Marriott	88.59

RIDE-SHARING & TAXIS

1	Uber	86.49
2	Lyft	84.63
3	Curb	82.04

SHIPPING & DELIVERY SERVICES

1	UPS	89.97
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2	FedEx	87.86
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3	USPS	87.52
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SPA RESORTS & RETREATS

1	Canyon Ranch	89.97
2	Miraval Resorts and Spas	88.05
3	Gage Spa	86.40
4	Cal-a-Vie	86.39
5	Red Mountain Resort	84.84

TRAVEL AGENCIES

1	Expedia	87.52
2	Envoyage	86.80
3	Travelocity	86.71
4	AAA	86.24
5	Allure Travel	82.21

TRAVEL MANAGEMENT

1	American Express Global Business Travel	89.13
2	FCM Travel Solutions	86.14
3	BCD Travel	82.75

VACATION RENTALS

1	Expedia	90.29
2	Vacasa	90.19
3	Booking.com	86.71
4	Airbnb	85.91
5	VRBO	83.97



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PHOTOGRAPHY

CELEBRATING
WOMEN

Famed photographer Annie Leibovitz discusses the updated edition of her iconic portrait collection with *Newsweek*

BY
RAMSEN SHAMON

AWARD-WINNING AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHER Annie Leibovitz is known for her bold and sometimes provocative photographs. Whether capturing noteworthy celebrities, like Yoko Ono and John Lennon for the cover of *Rolling Stone* (taken hours before his death), Rihanna's very pregnant bejeweled body in Paris or everyday people, her images document our lives, shaping pop culture for five decades and counting.

Leibovitz's new edition of *WOMEN*, a project she first started in 1999, continues to celebrate their power and individuality.

The two-volume set showcases real, stripped-down portraits of powerful women and everyday women, doing what they do best—taking ownership of their lives and living it. The updated collection includes essays from Leibovitz's late partner, writer Susan Sontag; women's rights activist Gloria Steinem; and novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, featuring more than 250 portraits of women including Michelle Obama, Lady Gaga, Billie Eilish, Malala Yousafzai, Elizabeth Taylor, Kamala Harris and Taylor Swift.

Leibovitz spoke to *Newsweek*'s Ramsen Shamon via Zoom from her new photography studio in New York City. This interview was condensed and edited for clarity.

Newsweek Why did you decide to release this second volume now?

Annie Leibovitz Hillary Clinton has a production company for making films and pieces, and one of her people reached out to me and said, "We'd really like to commemorate the *WOMEN's* book from 1999 that you and Susan Sontag did." I just started to brainstorm about the whole idea and thought, well, maybe we would reissue the book from 1999 because it's out of print.

So, I looked through the book and felt like it held up pretty well, but it's 25 years ago. And I just thought maybe it'd be interesting to do a companion book with it and make it more accessible, reduce the size of the original book, run it exactly the way it is. And then do the second volume of women I photographed since 1999. I thought, oh, it's going to be relatively simple to do that. But of course, it turned into something much, much more difficult because I started to think about women's issues, and how to cover what's going on. What basically to say for the second volume because I did the edit, and I was worried that it was a little flat.

So I did do about 10 or 12 new shootings for the second volume. I have a kind of disclaimer in the back of the book on

the second volume that just says, basically, that this is not the first volume. The first volume is very focused. It went over several years to create, and it was kind of based on women from all walks of life. We worked on it for several years. And then the second volume is really an edit of the work I've done photographing women since that first volume. And some of the pictures are just photographs. I really like the photographs as they stand. And then some of them are just women I really, really admire. The second book is really an homage to the first book. And what was a big surprise on the second volume was reading the bios and seeing just where we are as women today and...who these women are since that first volume.

In 2016 you said, "Now, it seems that there really are many more women in high positions." Do you still find that to be true today?

I think there are more women doing things that they weren't doing before. There are definitely more opportunities. In the first volume, there were a lot of women performance artists because that was one way to express yourself. And in this second volume, I have a lot of women—[non-artists] and artists. It's

not a big power surge. It's more subtle—women are doing what they want to do. And doing things, incredible things, much quieter and with much more authority within themselves and confidence within themselves than I think in that first volume.

I knew immediately when we were going to do the second volume, I was going to ask Gloria Steinem to write something. We all want to know what the hell's going on. We need to know what is going on. Tell us where we're at. I—we need to know. So when you asked me that question, I really want to throw it back at Gloria. It's an amazing essay, because she says, if you want to know what backward is, go back to the '50s. We are going somewhere. It doesn't look like it. But, we are making progress, even though it's more subtle and doesn't look like it. We are going forward. We're not going back. Even though it feels like a difficult time. And then Chimamanda's essay, also totally different, more emotional. She's such a beautiful writer, and it's short because she wants you to think. Just think about what she said and really think through [it].

You previously said this new volume isn't the end of *WOMEN*—that *WOMEN* is an ongoing project. What will it look like in the next 25 years?

I think that what happened with 1999 and the year 2000 is that we didn't really have an idea what we collectively look like. And that was sort of the surprise from the first volume. I was ambivalent about doing a book on women because I thought it was too big of a subject. And then the story has it that I photographed the showgirls for *The New Yorker*. They were transformative pictures to me because I saw women dressing up to be women. Photographically, how do you tell a story in one picture? You can't do that. It's a good question you have. But I think we're just going to continue, on our sense of confidence and building our confidence, and understanding of who we are. It's impossible to say, I think, what it'll be like. I wish

I could. That's a question for Gloria. Should I...should we do a lifeline and give her a call? [Laughs]

A line from Susan Sontag's essay reads, "There are parts of the world where to be photographed is something off-limits to women." That made me immediately think of the girls and women in Afghanistan, whose rights continue to slide with each passing day. What message do you have for marginalized women in the U.S., Afghanistan and around the world?

One thing happened when we were making the first volume: We realized that we couldn't make it an international book. We had to sort of stay within what we knew, which was America, and so we stayed here.

It's heartbreaking to look at the news. It's definitely heartbreaking. Do you know Lynsey Addario's work? The photographer? She does women's stories, and it's very, very beautiful. The stories she shows of women across the world in very difficult situations are so powerful. I would turn you over to her work, Lynsey Addario. And I have a picture of her in the book, but it's a very simple picture. It's just a portrait. I admire her, and I'm proud to see the work that she's creating. There's great, great, great journalism being done right now. And I do think we are seeing what's going on everywhere. It's never been better. Journalists are dying because of it.

How do you define the word "woman"?

We have to keep telling the stories. I don't think there is a definition. I guess I'm trying to show you a collective, a big picture of how different we all are. This is just the drop in the bucket.

Which is your favorite photograph you've ever taken?

Some of my favorite photographs are of my family. There's a photograph in the first volume of my mother. It is one of my favorite photographs because it feels as if there's no camera there between my mother and myself. It feels

"We are making progress, even though it's more subtle and doesn't look like it. We are going forward. We're not going back."



like my mother's really just looking at me. She's not thinking there's a camera there. She's just looking at me, and it's very strong to me.

Your photo of a nude Lady Gaga is iconic. Tell us how it was taken.

At the time, she was working with Tony Bennett on a record. And I worked with Tony Bennett myself, taken Tony Bennett's photograph. She told me that Tony Bennett wanted to paint her because he likes to paint. And I said, that's great. Why don't we do something where he's painting you? We [can] take a photograph of that. So she



SPECIAL PERSON Rihanna is “beautiful to photograph” and work with, says Leibovitz, who photographed the singer pregnant for a *Vogue* shoot in Paris in 2022.

walked in, and she immediately just took off all her clothes and went up on the little podium. [Laughs] We all didn’t know what to do. She just said, “Well, I thought you wanted me like this.” My assistants didn’t know which way to look. And I took that picture. I didn’t ask her to take off all her clothes. I asked her to bring a slip, actually. [Laughs] But she’s Lady Gaga.

What about Rihanna’s photograph showing her bedazzled baby bump?

She’s totally in control. It’s so beautiful to work with Rihanna because she’s so ahead of her time. And I know the Demi Moore

picture was one idea, but [Rihanna] basically was in a whole other stratosphere about her pregnancy and how she displayed herself. She’s just a great woman, a great entrepreneur, loves fashion, beautiful to photograph. I feel like she’s basically pulling me along whenever I work with her. She’s just very special, a very special person.

Looking back at your work, what are you most proud of?

I’m just proud of it. I’m proud—just the people I’ve had the opportunity to work with and meet. And really the most interesting part is to see all this work over

50 years. You can actually stand outside of yourself and look at it and go, whoa! [Laughs] It’s a lot of work. It’s a lot of time. We’re [an] amazing race, the human race.

What three words would you use to describe your body of work?

It’s pretty large. [Laughs] It’s pretty big.

How do you want to be remembered?

I don’t have an answer. [Laughs] 

Ramsen Shamon is *Newsweek*’s deputy opinion editor. Contact him by email, r.shamon@newsweek.com

KOKO HOTEL'S VISION FOR JAPAN TOURISM

JAPAN IS A LAND FULL OF UNIQUE, DIVERSE EXPERIENCES, AND KOKO HOTEL IS THE GATEWAY TO ITS LESSER-VISITED CORNERS.

*By Daniel de Bomford,
Cian O'Neill and Paul Mannion*



KOKO HOTELS

<https://koko-hotels.com>

Kazuyoshi Shimojima,
Director &
Chief Operating Officer,
Polaris Holdings Co., Ltd.



From shredding snow-capped peaks on a board to floating down crystal-clear creeks flowing through gorges that seem straight out of myth, Japan is a land of contrasting experiences. Ancient villages that carry the weight of millennia of history are just a stone's throw away from the futuristic metropolises. Regardless of the season, the weather or one's preference for experiences, Japan offers something for all.

Japan, a Land of Contrasts and Culture

Kazuyoshi Shimojima, Director and COO of Polaris Holdings, the operating company of KOKO Hotels, says that Japan offers an extensive range of experiences, and the country's relatively small size means everything remains close together. Each region has its unique culture, cuisine, and history, creating an environment where no two trips are identical. He says the diversity in culture, geography and climate is part of Japan's appeal.

One thing shared across Japan is its culture of hospitality. "As a hotel company, we see Japanese hospitality as one of the country's defining strengths," Shimojima says. "It's deeply rooted in our culture to be thoughtful and detail-oriented." *Omo-*

tenashi, as it is known in Japanese, is central to KOKO Hotels' operations, where staff are encouraged to treat each guest as a member of their own family. "Our goal is to provide a warm, holistic hospitality experience that makes people feel comfortable, welcome, and genuinely cared for," Shimojima says.

Polaris Has Something to Offer Everyone

The company operates over 14,000 rooms across 93 hotels under different brands spread across the country, offering a variety of options suitable for all budgets. From economical stays in KOKO STAY and KOKO Hotel to more premium stays in KOKO Premier, the company is also investing in and acquiring new properties and larger rooms for longer-term stays and groups, such as families, under the brand KOKO Residence. The company is currently in negotiations for its expansion into ryokan-style inns, especially near hot springs and hopes to share more news soon.

Polaris is also exploring new types of hotels and services, such as staffless check-in and room access linked to smartphones, which would enable staff to act as service agents for customers. As Shimojima says, "Ultimately, by expanding and diversifying our offerings—from contactless hotels to premium group ac-



commodations—we aim to appeal to a much broader range of customers across different travel needs and preferences.”

Contributing to Regional Revitalization

With Japan’s population shrinking and overcrowding in popular tourist spots due to the ever-increasing number of tourists, Polaris is stepping up to help reduce that burden and breathe new life into communities at risk of disappearing.

Shimajima says that while each region has its own unique culture, these local identities have not been effectively communicated to inbound tourists. “It is my firm belief, that once visitors are aware of the diverse experiences Japan offers, I’m confident many of them will choose to explore beyond the typical tourist path,” he says. Shimajima believes that hotels must play a key role in better promoting the richness of these regions through their deep connection to local communities.

Each KOKO Hotel property collects large amounts of content from these communities, translates it, and shares it on social media, focusing on visually compelling examples, such as cherry blossoms, scenic spots, and cultural highlights. The company also partners with less-visited local regions, such as Shizuoka and Higashi-Osaka, acting as a promotional partner. Shimajima describes the company as “almost like an advertising agency.”

However, there are challenges to promoting the regions. Shimajima points to Tohoku as an example of how visitors perceive it to lack convenient access and services. “Outside of major hubs like Tokyo, train stations often have signage only in Japanese, which can be quite confusing for travelers who don’t speak or read the language,” he says.

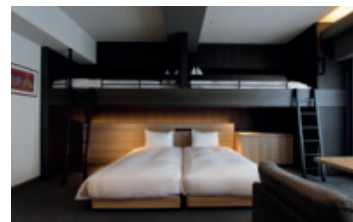
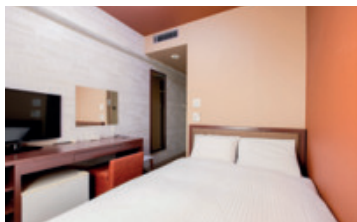
Citing food as one of the most accessible and effective ways to communicate cultural differences between regions, Shimajima says that hotels can act as gateways into Japanese culture. By serving curated menus that feature local dishes, guests can sample the region’s offerings and feel encouraged to stay curious and adventurous.

Promoting Sustainability Alongside Tourism

“At Polaris, we promote a sustainable tourism model that balances environmental responsibility with regional revitalization,” Shimajima says. The company prioritizes transparent supply chains for the food it serves, which fosters trust and promotes the unique offerings of each region. It maintains a variety of initiatives, including harvest visits, composting food waste, and supplying it to nearby growers. “It’s a small but meaningful way we’re contributing to a virtuous cycle—reducing waste, supporting local agriculture, and deepening our connection with the communities in which we operate,” he says.

Together with its partner companies, Polaris benefits from economies of scale and the group’s strengths in real estate and asset management, while bringing its own expertise in hotel management and deep connections to the regions. Shimajima aims to continue driving the company forward through enhanced branding and marketing. By connecting directly with guests through a membership program and influencer marketing, Shimajima seeks to make the brand recognizable to travelers worldwide.

With many travelers returning to Japan again and again, Polaris aims to become their partner for the curious and adventurous who are eager for new experiences beyond the well-trodden Golden Route.



PADMA LAKSHMI



PADMA LAKSHMI'S NEW COOKBOOK, *PADMA'S ALL AMERICAN*, IS A NATURAL EXTENSION OF her Hulu series *Taste the Nation*. In fact, the documentary laid the groundwork for the book, says the former *Top Chef* host. "Once we had done the show, I had all these communities I had already embedded myself in." Beyond recipes, the book carries an important message: Lakshmi "was trying to...really highlight the positive effects of having all

these contributions from immigrants." For Lakshmi, the recipes are ultimately a vehicle for connection. "I am hoping that the food will entice you, will almost be like a bait to get closer to your neighbors. Hopefully you'll be curious enough to get to know the culture that the food came from and the people that are making this food." Lakshmi returns to TV with the new CBS reality competition series *America's Culinary Cup*, where elite chefs compete for a major prize. "It doesn't look like any other TV set or studio I've ever seen." —H. Alan Scott



PADMA SPEAKS ABOUT...

Padma's All American

"*Taste the Nation* started off as a cookbook idea. I put it aside to develop the show. I feel like I am a writer, first and foremost, so I wanted to finish the book. We had only been able to feature three or four recipes in each episode, so I really wanted to flesh that out."

What Defines All-American Food

"We have that saying, 'Nothing is as American as apple pie.' But not one ingredient in apple pie comes from North America. Not the apples, the flour, the lard, the cinnamon or the butter. All these things have been appropriated into the larger American culinary landscape. That is what America is really known for: welcoming, inviting all these other cultures into our fold and absorbing the best of what people bring here from their countries of origin or their heritage."

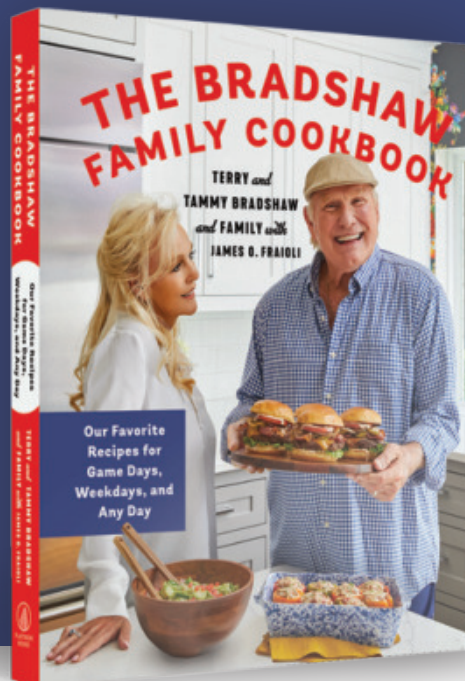
What To Expect From America's Culinary Cup

"I'm so excited. I thought I never wanted to do a competition show again, but it's different when you create it from the ground up...building a show that has my stamp on it. We're giving away a million dollars, and they are very elite chefs."

"The food system in this country would not run without immigrants, it wouldn't."

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PATRICIA ARQUETTE

EVEN BEFORE PATRICIA ARQUETTE SIGNED ON TO PLAY MAGGIE MURDAUGH in Hulu's *Murdaugh: Death in the Family*, she was already "obsessed" with the infamous case of convicted murderer Alex Murdaugh. "I had been following it and watched documentaries and different shows about it," she said. "I was just really doing a deep dive, looking at narcissistic personality disorder." One of the things that fascinated Arquette about Maggie was her slow, tragic realization of her husband's true nature. "I like that her awakening starts to happen, but even until the last second she still never thinks he's capable of that." The Academy Award- and Emmy-winning actress has been busy in recent years with projects like *Severance* on Apple TV+, but she takes nothing for granted. "I'm just grateful, honestly, at this age, that I'm still able to work and getting really good parts and being able to do some more character work, because when you're a young girl, you don't get...chances like that."

What about this story interested you?

I had already been obsessed by this case. I thought, Wow, most women are killed by their intimate partners and how disarming it is to be with somebody that's so manipulative and deceptive.

Maggie is a victim but also not fully without guilt, right?

She is culpable. She feels horrible that she got so normalized to dysfunction.... Addiction is a family disease, and I think the addict and the codependent both are doing their dance of dysfunction.

Was it intimidating to take on such a well-known story?

What was interesting to me about this was this examination of a dysfunctional marriage and entitlement. This kind of kitchen table approach of, "What is this weird dance this family is doing, and what is it like when you start waking up to realize that you don't even know who you're with?"

Are you still amazed by your Oscar win for *Boyhood*?

I used to fantasize when I was a little girl, with my shampoo bottle, like, "I'd like to thank my mother..." But I never really thought I was gonna win an Oscar. That was an incredible moment, and I didn't... see it happening at the time, I was so freaked out. Even now, it kind of makes me sweat. —H. Alan Scott



THE PARTING SHOT

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