



KYLE GRILLOT/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

The Angeles National Forest last week in California. Choices that countries made decades ago are irreversibly affecting today's climate.

## A Climate Crossroads With 2 Paths: Merely Bad or Truly Horrific

By JOHN BRANCH and BRAD PLUMER

America is now under siege by climate change in ways that scientists have warned about for years. But there is a second part to their admonition: Decades of growing crisis are already locked into the global ecosystem and cannot be reversed.

This means the kinds of cascading disasters occurring today — drought in the West fueling historic wildfires that send smoke all the way to the East Coast, or parades of tropical storms lining up

across the Atlantic to march destructively toward North America — are no longer features of the next generation and perhaps longer, depending on humanity's willingness to take action.

"I've been labeled an alarmist," said Peter Kalmus, a climate scientist in Los Angeles, where he and millions of others have inhaled dangerously high levels of smoke for weeks. "And I think it's a lot harder for people to say that I'm being alarmist now."

Last month, before the skies over San Francisco turned a sur-

### A Surge in Cascading Disasters Intensifies a Sense of Urgency

real orange, Death Valley reached 130 degrees Fahrenheit, the highest temperature ever measured on the planet. Dozens of people have perished from the heat in Phoenix, which in July suffered its hottest month on record, only to surpass that milestone in August.

Conversations about climate

change have broken into everyday life, to the top of the headlines and to center stage in the presidential campaign. The questions are profound and urgent. Can this be reversed? What can be done to minimize the looming dangers for the decades ahead? Will the destruction of recent weeks become a moment of reckoning, or just a blip in the news cycle?

The Times spoke with two dozen climate experts, including scientists, economists, sociologists and policymakers, and their answers were by turns alarming, cynical and hopeful.

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## G.O.P. UNITY SHOWS UNYIELDING DRIVE TO REMAKE COURTS

### Romney Supports Filling Ginsburg's Seat as Trump Tightens Grip on Party

By NICHOLAS FANDOS

WASHINGTON — Senator Mitt Romney of Utah said on Tuesday that he would back President Trump's push to fill the Supreme Court seat vacated by the death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, cementing all but monolithic Republican support six weeks before the presidential election for confirming a new justice who would tilt the court decisively to the right.

Mr. Romney's decision capped off an extraordinarily swift and enthusiastic rally by Republicans around Mr. Trump's position that underscored his iron grip on the party four years into his presidency. But it also reflected the political bargain that has been driving Republicans for much of the past four years.

Republican senators have loyally stood behind the president at every turn, even as he trampled party principles, shattered institutional norms and made crass statements — all in the service of empowering their own party to install a generation of conservative judges in the nation's federal courts.

Now, with the biggest prize of all in reach — a third seat further tipping the Supreme Court to the right — they are rushing to collect on their bet, even if it is the last thing they do before they lose their Senate majority, Mr. Trump loses the presidency, or both.

Neither party is sure how the court fight will affect the election. "At this point, I would say that our conference is committed to moving forward," said Senator

John Thune of South Dakota, the No. 2 Senate Republican.

No one more clearly embodied the trade-off than Mr. Romney, the party's 2012 presidential nominee, who may best represent the conventional Republican Party that Mr. Trump has delighted in tearing down.

Mr. Romney has made no secret of his distaste for Mr. Trump; he was the only Republican to vote to convict and remove the president from office during his impeachment trial in February. But with deeply held religious beliefs and conservative principles, Mr. Romney was not about to pass up an opportunity to cement a court that could limit abortion rights, further empower business interests and potentially strike down far-reaching federal programs that future Democratic administrations may try to enact.

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ANNA MONEYSMAKER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES  
Senator Mitt Romney's move put a key G.O.P. goal in reach.

## Schools Struggle To Track Down Online Truants

By ABBY GOODNOUGH

WASHINGTON — One month into the school year, Linnet Early, a social studies teacher outside St. Louis, has an anxious new ritual: scanning the Zoom squares on her computer screen at the beginning of each class to see which of her sixth-grade students are missing. It is usually quite a few.

"I'll have kids gone for a week, pop in for one class next, then miss the second class that week," said Ms. Early, who has 100 mostly low-income students spread across eight classes, all online. "It's hard to know what their struggles are, how to wrap your arms around it."

Around the country, teachers and school administrators are hoping that a patchwork of plans cobbled together over the summer will help address one of the most pressing challenges they face as millions of students start a new school year online: How to make sure they come to virtual class, and what balance to strike between punitive and forgiving policies if they don't.

Attendance data from last spring, while limited, suggests that the problem loomed large in many districts after school buildings closed in mid-March. In one survey of 5,659 educators around the country, 34 percent of respondents said that no more than one in four students were attending their remote classes, and a majority said fewer than half their students were attending.

Disengagement was especially high in poorer communities, including many urban school systems. In Seattle, elementary school students logged into the

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TODD HEISLER/THE NEW YORK TIMES

A 1.3-mile stretch of 34th Avenue in Jackson Heights, Queens, has become a gathering spot.

## 6 Months On, a Transformed New York Emerges

By CORINA KNOLL

Even as the coronavirus is ravaging the country and the world, a new reality is emerging in New York City.

Nowhere is that more evident than on a stretch of 34th Avenue in Jackson Heights, Queens, that is now a lively symbol of renewal in a neighborhood where the virus infected one in 22 people and claimed 260 lives.

Residents began trickling to the partially closed-off street soon after the deadliest days had passed. Strollers and wheelchairs appeared. A retired nurse planted purple corn and sunflowers in the median, and a group took up a daily bingo game. Regular Zumba classes cropped up, then English-

### Signs of Resilience as Virus Deaths in U.S. Surpass 200,000

language lessons. Families bicycled in packs, and neighbors cheered one day when a boy finally got to remove his training wheels. Artists sketched murals in chalk next to picnics while children zipped through makeshift obstacle courses.

The renewal in New York City comes roughly six months after it became the epicenter of the virus in the United States. Six months of hardship and numbness: Nearly 24,000 people in the city have died

during a pandemic that beat down into it, preyed on its vulnerabilities and sent its identity reeling.

The virus soon spread everywhere. On Tuesday, the nation's coronavirus death toll surpassed 200,000.

Still, in the city, where the infection rate has dropped to only 1 percent, there have been small transformations that have revealed the grit and gifts of those who stayed as others scurried to second homes.

During a crisis that has not disappeared, there are signs of resilience and innovation — vibrancy in unusual places and a reimagining of community, resources and opportunity. And a distinct sense of resolve: Our landscape was

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## The Green Party's Biggest Fan? It's Often the Republican Party

This article is by Maggie Haberman, Danny Hakim and Nick Corasaniti.

Four years ago, the Green Party candidate played a significant role in several crucial battleground states, drawing a vote total in three of them — Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania — that exceeded the margin between Donald J. Trump and Hillary Clinton.

This year, the Republican Party has been trying to use the Green Party to its advantage again, if not always successfully.

In Wisconsin, a G.O.P. elections commissioner and lawyers with ties to Republicans tried to aid attempts by Howie Hawkins, the current Green Party presidential candidate, to get on the ballot there, which were ultimately unsuccessful. In Montana, state reg-

ulators found the G.O.P. violated campaign finance laws as part of an effort to aid the Greens in five down-ballot races, including for senator and governor.

And in Western Pennsylvania, petitioners from Florida and California were brought in to gather signatures for Mr. Hawkins by an outside firm whose actions Mr. Hawkins and the party said they could not account for. Mr. Hawkins also did not make the ballot there.

With Mr. Trump trailing Joseph R. Biden Jr. in most national and swing-state polls, Republicans are again trying to help third parties that may appeal to Democratic voters and siphon off votes from Mr. Biden. This is taking place alongside a broader pattern of disinformation and skepticism by the

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## Hard Choices Over Afghan Killer Cleared the Way for Peace Talks

By THOMAS GIBBONS-NEFF and NAJIM RAHIM

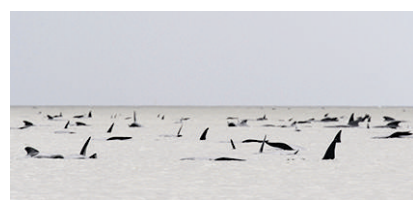
KABUL, Afghanistan — He was a young Afghan police officer working alongside American forces in one of the hot spots of the war, with Taliban ambushes all around. Then he turned his weapon on two United States Marines, killing them both.

Now, he is out of prison. His attack, in Helmand Province in 2011, was a serious eruption in a phenomenon that within a year would redefine the American war in Afghanistan: insider killings, often by members of the Afghan security forces who, like the police officer, were not at the time part of the Taliban.

But just this month, that officer, Mohammad Dawood, 31, reached the top of the Taliban's demand list for prisoner releases as they negotiated the opening of peace talks with the Afghan government. And along with just five other men detained after killing Westerners, his fate became a sticking point that nearly derailed the whole process, officials say.

While the Taliban made the men's release an ultimatum before they would go to the table, officials for the United States, France and Australia were quietly

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**Beached Whales Off Tasmania**  
Over 450 pilot whales were stranded on the west coast of the island. Rescuers estimated that half had died. PAGE A8

### A Schism on Display

The United States and China's leaders exchanged video barbs at the United Nations General Assembly. PAGE A9

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### Deal May Avert a Shutdown

Democrats and the White House agreed on measures that would extend government funding through Dec. 11. PAGE A20

### The Quietest Campaign Trail

On Joseph R. Biden Jr.'s socially distanced tour of key states, he doesn't miss the roar of the crowd as much as the handshake interactions. PAGE A12

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### Britain Braces Again

Amid a second wave that could grow exponentially, the prime minister imposed new limits. PAGE A4

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### Google Case Focuses on Search

The Justice Department is said to have narrowed its impending suit to how the company uses its dominance in search to harm rivals and consumers. PAGE B1

### The Burden of a Retail Job

Inflexible shifts are forcing many women to cut their hours so they can help their children study at home. PAGE B1

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### Grief, God and Perseverance

Amanda Kloots reflects on her life since the death of her husband, the actor Nick Cordero, from Covid-19. PAGE C1



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### Taking On 73 Feet of Fury

Maya Gabeira rode the biggest wave ever ridden by a woman, in waters where she was nearly killed. PAGE B12

### On the Outside, Looking In

The parents of pro athletes who usually watch their children play in person have learned to improvise. PAGE B10

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Melissa Clark revisits five of the most reliable recipes she has offered to readers since the pandemic began. PAGE D7

### The Bagel Consultant

A baker is helping entrepreneurs, many without a schmear of experience, to open their own bagel shops. PAGE D1

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### Jennifer Senior

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