

March 8, 2024

Time, Time, Time, See What's Become of Me

Anytime you have a 50-50 chance of getting something right, there's a 90% probability you'll get it wrong. Andy Rooney. (ht CH)

A gentle reminder: Nearly everything we do every day is a waste of time and energy. -
Anon

Racism is not dead, but it is on life support — kept alive by politicians, race hustlers and people who get a sense of superiority by denouncing others as racists. — Thomas Sowell

You can resolve to live your life with integrity. Let your credo be this: Let the lie come into the world, let it even triumph. But not through me. - Alexander Solzhenitsyn

Who would have thought thirty years ago that everyone would have a phone in their pocket, and yet nobody would call each other? - Rachel Lomasky

Markets

[Updated Charts](#)

There is an argument that the stock markets peaked today. Not confirmed, but, if so, we should go down for a while. Gold is more bullish than I anticipated.

If you're wondering why the economy is doing so well, it's actually fairly simple - The US National Debt is now rising by \$1 TRILLION every 100 days.

Peter Zeihan

I was scanning the financial news this morning and realized Germany was in recession. In my morning brief I was informed Japan was in recession as well. On a call with a client someone brought up that the United Kingdom had joined the downers club. A quick convo with the staff revealed the same was true for Hungary and Ireland. And Greece and Lithuania and Estonia and Finland. Israel probably as well, while Australia, New Zealand, France, Spain and Italy are only a rounding error away. China's data, such that it is, suggests that the Middle Kingdom is by most definitions at best recession-adjacent.

Those of you who were with me back in the 90s may recall a series of articles I wrote under the title, "Medicare Must Die." Basically, I began to understand that the US would incur severe financial problems in the future if Medicare and Social Security continued on their trajectories.

Little did I know.

The fiscal deficits have become obscene and there is no fiscal discipline, anywhere. At the same time, Medicare and Social Security continue to be significant problems. The Treasury estimates that the U.S. will spend \$215.7 trillion in the next 75 years to give Social Security and Medicare payouts to beneficiaries. In that period, collections – mostly through payroll taxes – are estimated at only \$137.4 trillion.

There have been opportunities during the past 30 years to change direction, but we doubled down, instead.

Now, the car has no brakes, our foot is firmly on the accelerator and that is a cliff ahead.

Que sera, sera.

Hang on tight.

Time, Time, Time - See What's Become of Me

Something I think about a lot is how human nature expresses itself when the constraints are lifted, when we have beaten hunger, we have excellent prospects for survival and we are climbing up to the very pinnacle of Maslow's hierarchy. (I know, I really need to get out more.) We can ski in Switzerland, be educated in the knowledge of humankind, choose from multiple styles and colors of clothing, take Ozempic shots and eat strawberries in December.

Truly, truly remarkable. We are so extraordinarily fortunate to have lived in these times in the United States of America and in the West.

Homo sapiens have been around for some 300,000 years and until the 20th century (beginning in the 19th), essentially everyone worried about starvation and disease - they were omnipresent facts of life. Life really was "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short."

When scarcity abounds, family is important, religion provides hope and tradition provides order in a chaotic world. There are not enough calories available to become overweight, even if you wanted to.

There was a good chance you would not survive childhood, and if you did, your life expectancy was in the mid-to-upper 40s.

When the sun set, it was dark. Light was expensive, and if you had access to any, you had to conserve it carefully.

Since you only got around on foot or on horseback or carriage, you could not go far, even if you wanted to. And travel was dangerous. Law and order was another scarce commodity.

There is an argument that marriage, children and religion were not ingrained human behaviors, even though they were common to most cultures. It could be argued that most cultures shared the same underlying reality to a greater or lesser extent, so adapted socially in similar ways.

So, during the day you did what you had to to survive; at night, you slept.

Now, as an experiment, take these same people, give them perpetual day, an abundance of food and relative safety and what will they do?

Sex, drugs and rock and roll. Obesity. An orgy of undisciplined behavior.

Sex has been around forever, of course, as have drugs and the "night life." However, now there are no virgins and no obstacles to sex - there are even friends with benefits.

A smorgasbord of drugs is readily available. Bars and dance halls are just down the road and easily accessible with the 200-or-more horses in your garage. As long as you are reasonably careful, you can remain safe. Not only do you not have to face reality, you can escape it altogether at a moment's notice. In spite of abusing yourself, you will probably live for 75-80 years. Your government will provide essentially unlimited money with which to keep the party going.

Which brings me to the most important decisions of your life. You have, say, 75 years on this Earth - what are you going to do with them?

Some of those years are gone and there is nothing you can do about that. So, going forward, to be dramatic, you cannot regain the next tick of the clock. You spend a minute, an hour, a day, and it is gone.

Most of us deny death, so we don't think about it at all until someone we know or love dies, and then we get over it. Every now and then, particularly if we have children, we say, "It seems like only yesterday ...," and then we move on. As the ultimate irony, essentially all of us do not recognize our most valuable, and continually depreciating, asset. Some of us are of an age when we are staring death in the eye and can no longer deny the deterioration of our bodies - and I don't mean wearing glasses or a hip replacement. It is amazing how important every moment and very minor things become - but that realization comes after physical, and perhaps mental, resources are becoming exhausted.

Therefore, my contemplations change to, how does human nature respond to no constraints, including time and death.

Everyone chooses what they will do next. When you wake up, the day is before you, regardless of how you value it.

When you have it all, you look for new experiences - good and bad - which requires a loss of discipline. For example, piercings and tattoos have been around for millennia, but in our culture, they were weird or bad. There was even a psychological indicator that said that more than three tattoos indicated some level of emotional instability. So, we decided to go there. Drugs are now normalized to the point that they are considered part of the teenage experience. Everyday female dress has passed even the costumes of prostitutes a couple of decades ago.

When you have it all and you have new experiences, there is nothing left to do to entertain yourself but begin to tear it all down. It may be perfection, but you will tear it down - to give meaning to your life, you understand.

We have time on our hands, together with an unlimited ways to spend it - literally spend it.

We don't value marriage that much, so we can spend it with multiple partners.

We don't value children that much, so we can spend it - and the cost of children - elsewhere.

We don't value religion that much, so we can search for meaning wherever we can find it, including making up our own, godless, religions.

Every variation of human behavior is embraced, from homosexuality to transgender. Taboos attach to language and behavior - and to those identities that are out of favor. You can tell what is valuable by what we do; not what we say.

We value video games.

We value TikTok.

We value ourselves and will attack those who do not believe in the same things we do.

We do not value the past, virtue or honor.

It almost seems like we are peeling back layers of civilization, one at a time and returning to a jungle in which cultural might, not physical might, makes right. Self-restraint and discipline have all but disappeared.

So, what does this all mean? What lessons can we draw?

I have not come up with many, but my first is that we are in uncharted waters. We are making it up as we go along. We might look back on the decadence of prior civilizations, including the Roman Empire. The moral, there, is not uplifting. When a civilization becomes undisciplined, there are barbarians at the gate and also civilizations that maintain discipline. Both will overtake and overcome the undisciplined civilization.

Another is that we will remake ourselves in ways we cannot anticipate. We will separate from and denigrate the old-fashioned, obsolete, bigoted past, including previously-strongly-held values. Everything is up for grabs as foundations are eroded and destroyed, including, but not limited to, myths, free speech, capitalism and democracy.

This is all part of the Fourth Turning.

And, the undisciplined behavior and destruction of old norms are not over, yet.

The new, First Turning will be built on the rubble of the old order.

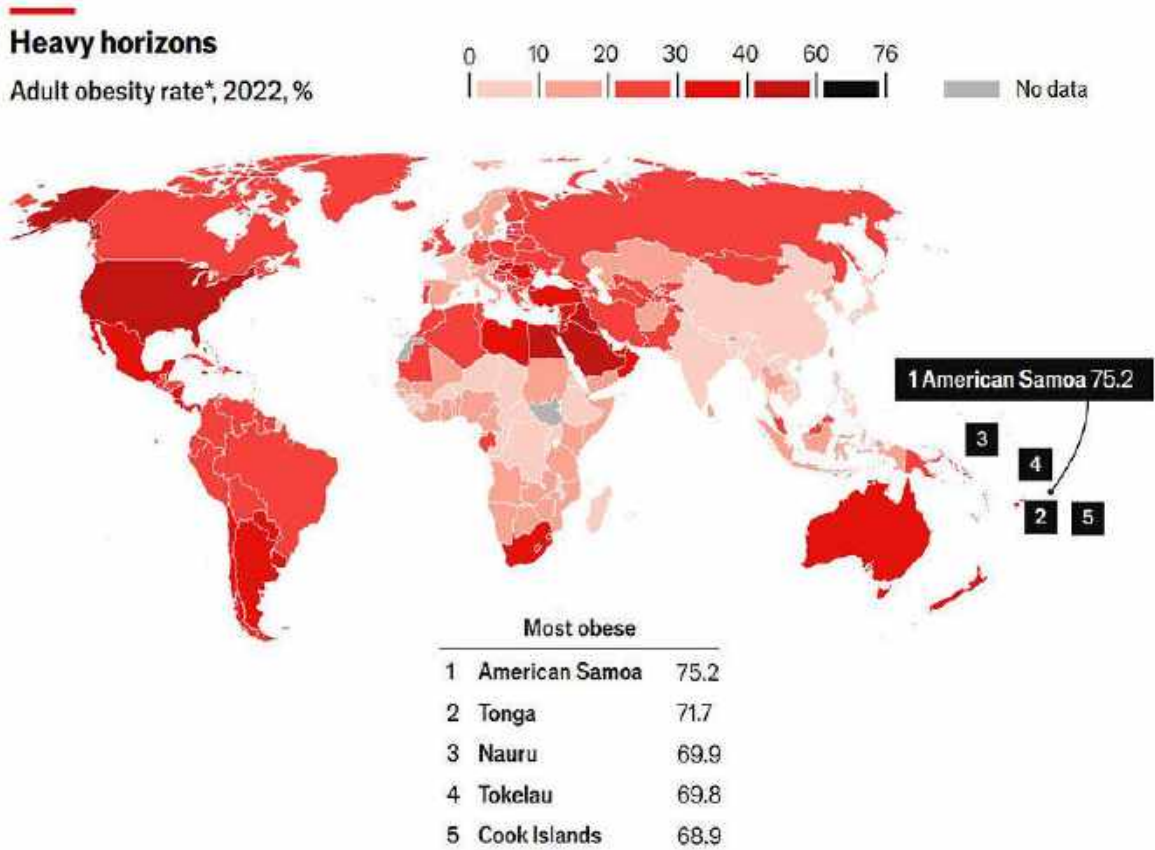
It is far from clear what it will look like.

But one, very important characteristic will be how they view the use of time and what experiences are available to occupy that time, and what experiences become mandatory because of physical or political constraints.

Short Takes

It has long been my view, now that transsexuals are normalized, those of a certain mind will look for the next niche to conquer. Polyamory is now on the upswing. Bestiality and pedophilia will not be far behind.

Just astounding

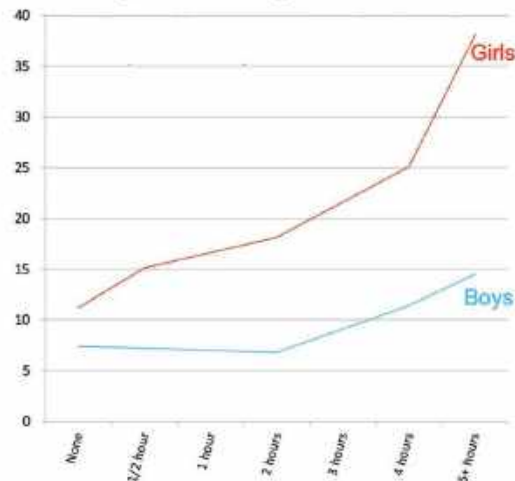


Source: NCD Risk Factor Collaboration, Feb 2024

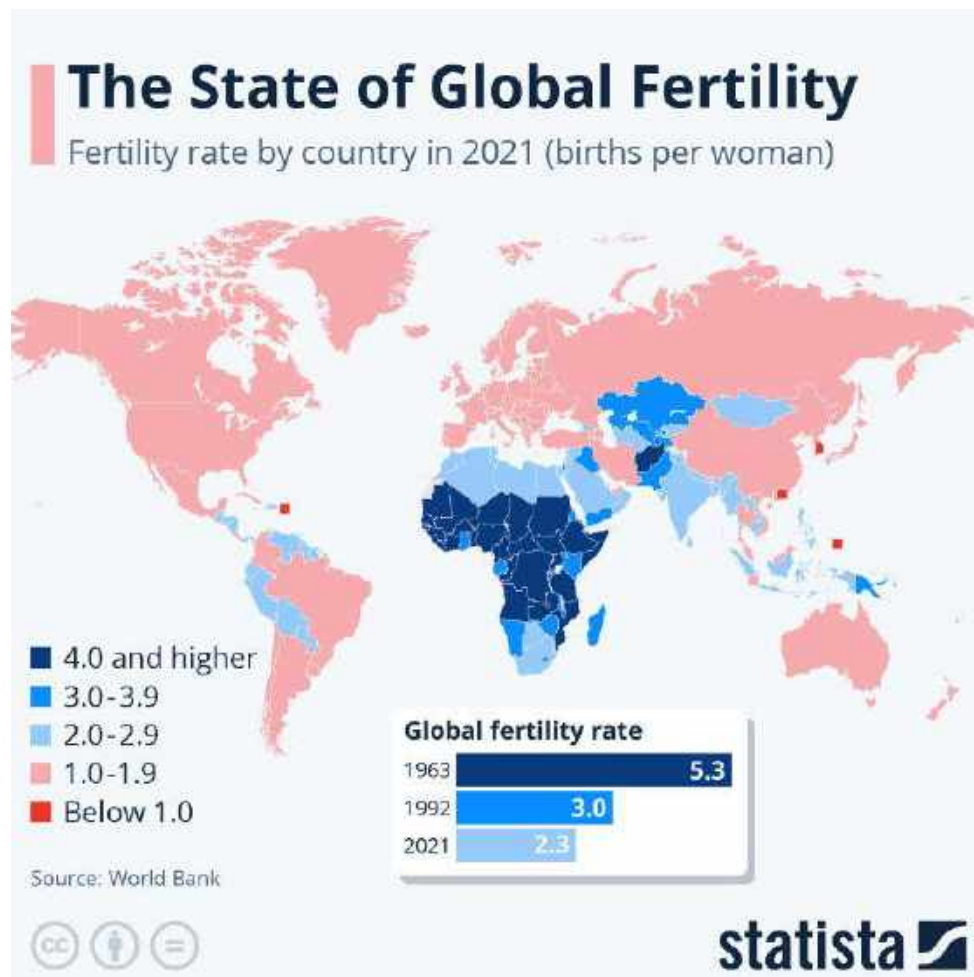
*Aged 18 and over with a BMI equal to or greater than 30

There is ever-increasing evidence on this - from Jon Haidt

Percent of UK Teens Depressed as a Function of Hours per Weekday on Social Media



Africa is literally the future



Who knew? From *The New York Times*

Oregon removed criminal penalties for possessing street drugs in 2020. But amid soaring overdose deaths, state lawmakers have voted to bring back some restrictions

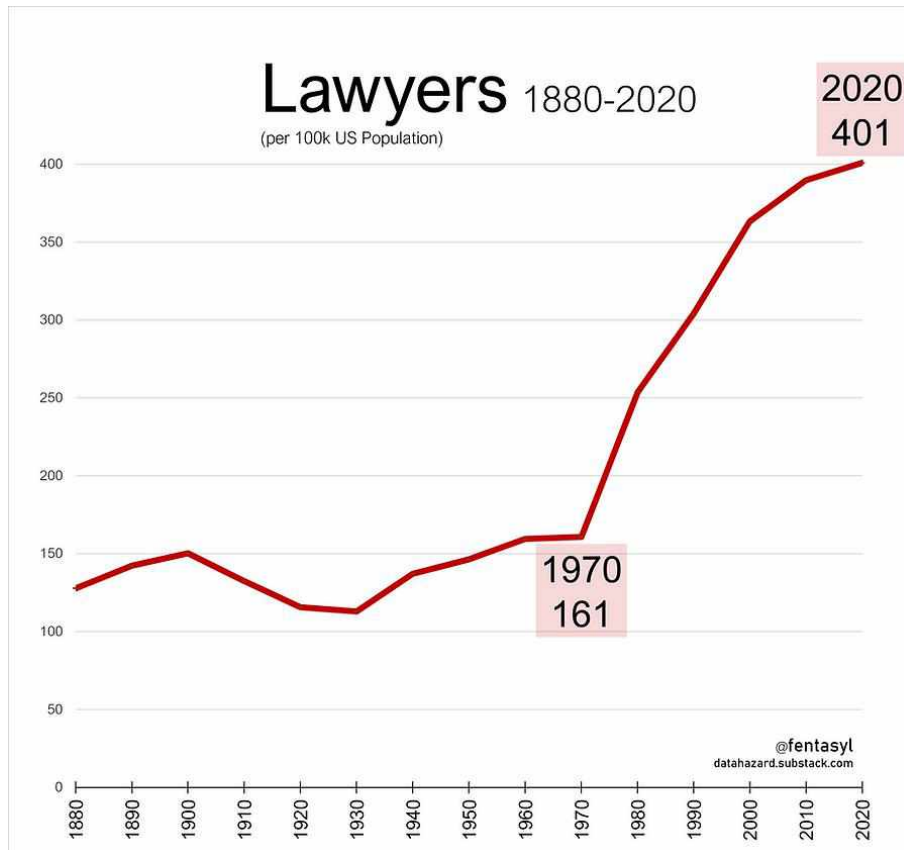
From the Visual Capitalist

Top 10 Fastest Physically-Sinking Cities

- 1 Tianjin, China
- 2 Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
- 3 Chittagong, Bangladesh
- 4 Yangon, Myanmar
- 5 Jakarta, Indonesia
- 6 Ahmedabad, India
- 7 Istanbul, Turkey

- 8 Houston, US
- 9 Lagos, Nigeria
- 10 Manila, Philippines

I remember our quality of life deteriorating dramatically in 1971



On further review, I support quotas and affirmative action ... for men

Women now outnumber men in every single level of educational attainment (associate, bachelor, master's, doctorate) across all five racial categories. In other words, in 20 out of 20 cells, women OUTNUMBER men (US data).

Asian women now out-earn white men.

HELP!

I literally cannot stand to watch political theater like the State of the Union Address. It (particularly last night) has become a political, partisan exercise in kabuki. The State of the Union address had as much to do with the state of the union as the Inflation Reduction Act had to do with reducing inflation. Ian Bremmer put it this way, "With both parties' nominees locked in, Thursday's State of the Union played more like a campaign-rally-cum-stand-up-comedy — complete with crowd work and hecklers." I

have read commentary today and I did check in for several 30-second bites to see how it was going.

Politically, I think Biden did what he had to do as he is playing defense - go on the attack. And his energetic indignation played well against his image as an increasingly-dithering fool. So, I think that was a win for his side.

But, ick.

How very 21st century

The new SAT, an hour shorter than before, is meant to reduce stress.

This was the most likely outcome - excellent that it was unanimous

Supreme Court Rules Trump Can Remain on Colorado's Ballot

The justices unanimously rejected a challenge to Donald Trump's eligibility for another term, one that could have upended the presidential race by taking him off ballots around the nation.

Neil Howe's views on immigration - see his Demography Unplugged newsletter

OK, so we have established that net migration is indeed experiencing a surge.

Why is it happening? Some see this as the new normal—the outcome of economic instability, political crises, and other social and environmental drivers around the world that are unlikely to subside. Not only has the number of migrants from familiar countries in the Western Hemisphere soared, so has [the number coming from distant countries like India, China, and Russia](#).

We would argue, however, that it is not “push” factors that are primarily driving people to come. This would not explain the increase in migrants arriving from countries that are unquestionably better off economically or better governed than they were 20 or 40 years ago. What has changed is the “pull” factor: People are coming because [they think they can stay](#).

The asylum system, which was intended to protect migrants fleeing persecution on the basis of their race, religion, or political opinions, has instead [become the de facto process](#) for many migrants unlawfully entering the United States. With an estimated backlog of [3M pending asylum cases](#), most people at the border who claim asylum are given a court date years away and allowed to stay in the country until their cases are heard. After 150 days have passed, asylum applicants qualify for a work permit. The majority of these requests are eventually denied—but by that point, deportation is highly unlikely because U.S. authorities prioritize deporting people who have committed crimes. It's the broken immigration system, combined with the short-term pull of a strong labor market, that has created the conditions for migration to skyrocket.

AI chatbots are weird. A study last year found that ChatGPT's performance drops around the holidays. Another piece of research found that chatbots perform better when you offer them imaginary money. And now, a new piece of research has further added to the weirdness.

Researchers at software company VMware have found that chatbots perform better on math questions when you tell them to pretend they're on Star Trek. "Surprisingly, it appears that the model's proficiency in mathematical reasoning can be enhanced by the expression of an affinity for Star Trek," the researchers wrote.

For one AI model, asking the chatbot to start its response with the phrases "Captain's Log, Stardate [insert date here]:" generated the most accurate answers.

But why, you ask? Annoyingly, nobody has a clue. "It's both surprising and irritating that trivial modifications to the prompt can exhibit such dramatic swings in performance," concluded the researchers in their paper.

Oops - From the *Daily Mail*

Electric vehicles may release more pollution than gas-powered vehicles, according to a shocking new study.

Independent researchers said that while exhaust fumes have historically been blamed for carbon emission pollution, the biggest polluter is now tires and brakes.

They found that brakes and tires release 1,850 times more particulate matter - which is air pollution - compared to modern tailpipes which have filters that reduce emissions.

The problem, they say, is that EVs are 30 percent heavier on average than gas vehicles, which causes the brakes and tire treads to wear out faster than standard cars and release tiny, often toxic particles into the atmosphere.

France has become the first country in the world to protect the right to abortion in its constitution.

A man in Germany received 217 Covid vaccine doses over two and a half years. Scientists said he appeared to have no adverse effects — and very robust immunity.

From UNESCO - someone please help me with the logic here (not the premise of "girls" pursuing engineering careers, but the diversity-for-its-own-sake logic) -

Why is it crucial for girls to consider engineering careers? Because inclusivity creates a more diverse engineering workforce! With better #GenderEquality, the challenges posed by the #GlobalGoals will be met more successfully:

Tis a puzzlement - from Y Adropov on Substack

Why do we worship "indigenous peoples" everywhere except Europe?

There are six US citizens being held hostage in Gaza. Interesting that we do not talk about it, much less demand action for their release.

Just when you think we have finally plumbed the depths of absurdity ...

Veterans Affairs wanted to remove the iconic VJ Day photo from all of its buildings to promote "inclusivity" and "awareness" because the iconic kiss may be triggering.

Because of the outcry, the policy was revoked.



Deeply, incredibly sad

In 2018, Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris produced a book called *The Lost Words*. The prompt of the book was the editing of the 'Oxford Junior Dictionary' in recent years. The junior edition of the Oxford Dictionary is aimed at readers ages seven and up and since 2007 the editors have removed from the book many words used to denote/describe things of nature— some of them relatively common words, such as: acorn, bluebell, ivy, fern, moss, blackberry, dandelion, lark, raven, heron, starling, hazel, heather, goldfinch, grey seal, otter and kingfisher.

The editing body of the OED had determined that the words were of little and lessening use to the modern child. Youngsters weren't hob-nobbing with hedgehogs and wrens (also excised) and frogs and buttercups (another casualty!), and so needn't be introduced to words that served well only with regards to the out-of-doors. They excused their actions on the grounds that they needed room for other, newer words with greater relevance to the modern child. Like: attachment, blog, broadband, chatroom, database, committee, and voice-mail.

Not on my Bingo card - Biden and immigration just gets weirder and weirder. From the results of Freedom of Information Act disclosures to Todd Bensman of the Center for Immigration Studies - the Administration bypasses the border, flying 320,000 "aliens" directly into 43 different cities during 2023.

"The program at the center of the FOIA litigation is perhaps the most enigmatic and least-known of the Biden administration's uses of the CBP One cellphone scheduling app, even though it is responsible for almost invisibly importing by air 320,000 aliens with no legal right to enter the United States since it got underway in late 2022," wrote Bensman.

Customs and Border Protection (CBP) had initially refused to disclose information about the flights, which use a cell phone app, CBP One, to arrange. "Under these legally dubious parole programs, aliens who cannot legally enter the country use the CBP One app to apply for travel authorization and temporary humanitarian release from those airports. The parole program allows for two-year periods of legal status during which adults are eligible for work authorization," Bensman continues.

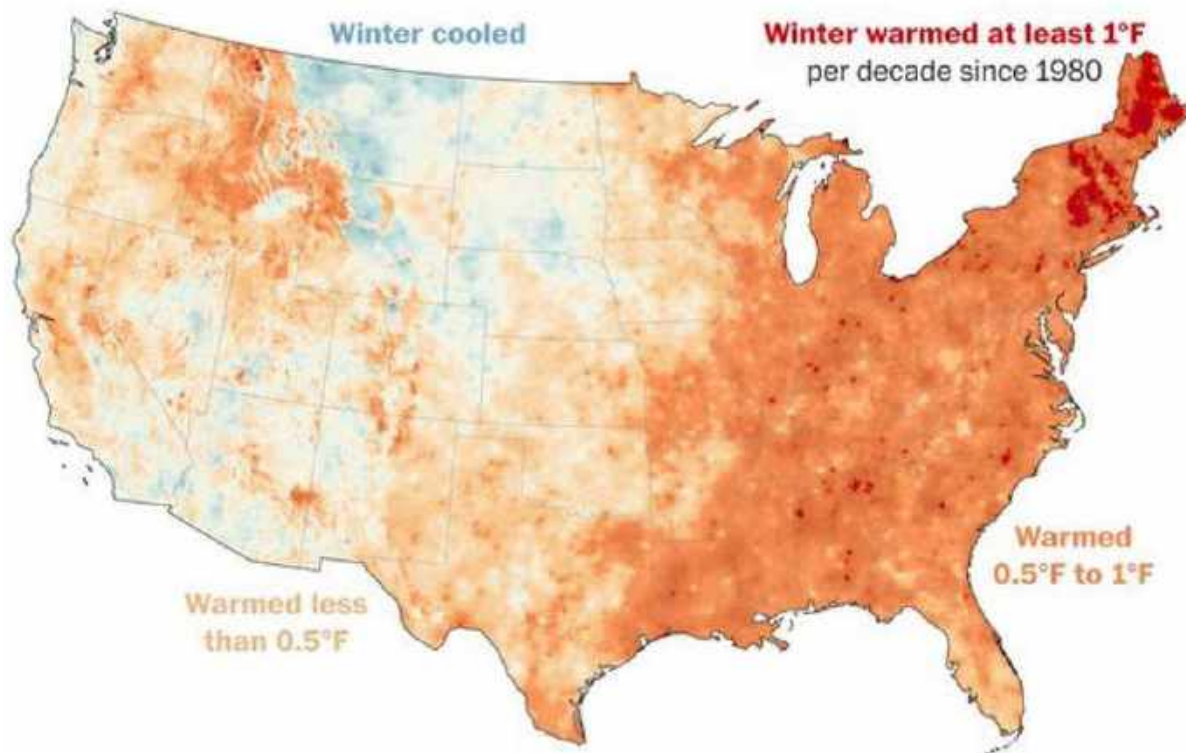
The flights resulted in illegal immigrants being placed in at least 43 American cities from January through December 2023.

Under the terms of their release, migrants are able to remain in the US for two years without obtaining legal status, and are meanwhile eligible for work authorization.

The Biden administration initially refused to disclose which airports undocumented aliens were being flown into, citing a 'law enforcement exception,' new information reveals that the government thought 'bad actors' might pose a safety risk or create law enforcement opportunities - with CBP lawyers writing that revealing the specific airports would "reveal information about the relative number of individuals arriving, and thus resources expended at particular airports."

It Ain't Easy Being Green

From the *Washington Post* - stay away from Maine



A new Swiss Re report acknowledges that no signal of climate change is yet discernible in insured loss trends, but remains a risk for the future.

Brutal



Also true in US

Less than half (45%) of the youngest crop of voters aged 18-34 would be willing to spend \$10 or less per month to combat climate change, according to a recent survey by CRC Research for 85 Fund obtained exclusively by DailyMail.com. And one out of five (20%) in the same age bracket responded that they would not pay anything at all, according to the poll results.

I know it would make a big difference to me - a woke predator is a better predator
John Kerry says people would 'feel better' about the war in Ukraine if Russia would 'make a greater effort to reduce emissions'

War, Energy and Food

It has been my view since the war in Ukraine started that Russia will win - for a number of reasons:

The US inevitably tires of these things;

The US will play politics, in spite of the national interest;

The US has not provided Ukraine what it needs, particularly in the area of air support;

Russia is much bigger - in people and the economy;

Russia does not value human life - they can lose 5 men for each Ukrainian loss and still come out on top;

Putin is a better chess player.

Ukraine has fought the good fight and has exceeded expectations. However, the tide has turned. Unless the game is changed soon, Ukraine will fail and there will be a negotiated settlement.

If Russia will not participate in a negotiated settlement, well, then it will come time to take this much more seriously than we have in the past, and for us to wish we had taken it much more seriously in the past.

Miscellany

I think they got it right this time



With any luck, this will be the worst one I will ever post

“Sorry, I would help but...”



Ok, I lied



Up hill - both ways

**When I was your age, I had
to walk 10 feet through
shag carpet to change the
TV channel.**