

STL CULTURE

THE DAUNTING QUESTION



BY CHARLES GIRAUD  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT  
LIBERTY, 2026

In St. Louis, a seemingly simple question—"Where did you go to high school?"—holds weight that goes beyond small talk. For many, it's a test of social acceptance, a way to gauge your socioeconomic background, and an indicator of how you might fit into the city's tight-knit social structure. Your answer to this question can have profound effects on how people perceive you, whether they are willing to form a connection, and what your social standing might be in a city deeply divided by both geography and class.

St. Louis has an abundance of private schools, many of which are considered among the best in the region. In fact, St. Louis is one of the top 10 cities in the country with the most private high schools. Schools like John Burroughs, St. Louis University High School, Mary Institute and St. Louis Country Day School, Christian Brothers College High School, and many others are seen as elite institutions that reflect generations of old money and long standing social connections. These schools don't just educate: they incubate society's future leaders, professionals, and power brokers.

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OPINION

“SMILE LESS, SPEAK MORE”

BY GLENNIS WOOSLEY  
NIXA, 2026

Foundation a few shades too dark, heavily overlined dark eyebrows, thick black eyeliner, and pale pink lips all create the “Republican makeup look” that trended on social media in February. Months later, the new trend in Republican fashion became “Mar-a-Lago Face,” involving plastic surgery that makes women look hyper-feminine with high cheeks, plump lips and a lifted pixie nose. But, behind both of these heavily curated appearances lies something more telling: a need to conform.

For many women in conservative politics, the pressure to look a certain way mirrors the pressure to behave a certain way. Polished, agreeable, feminine.

To understand how women in politics got here, one must go back to the beginning.

It started with women's suffrage where women gained the right to vote in 1920 through the Thirteenth Amendment. But four years before, in 1916, Jeannette Rankin became the first woman elected to Congress, representing Montana. Then, in 1933, Frances Perkins became the first woman to serve on the Cabinet, as the Secretary of Labor under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. From 1940 to 1973, Margaret Chase Smith, a Maine Republican, became the first woman to serve in both the House and the Senate.

While women like Rankin, Perkins, and Smith shattered barriers, they often had to do

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SEN. CHRIS MURPHY RALLIES MO DEMS IN GOP DISTRICT

BY EMILY NGUYEN  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
LIBERTY, 2026

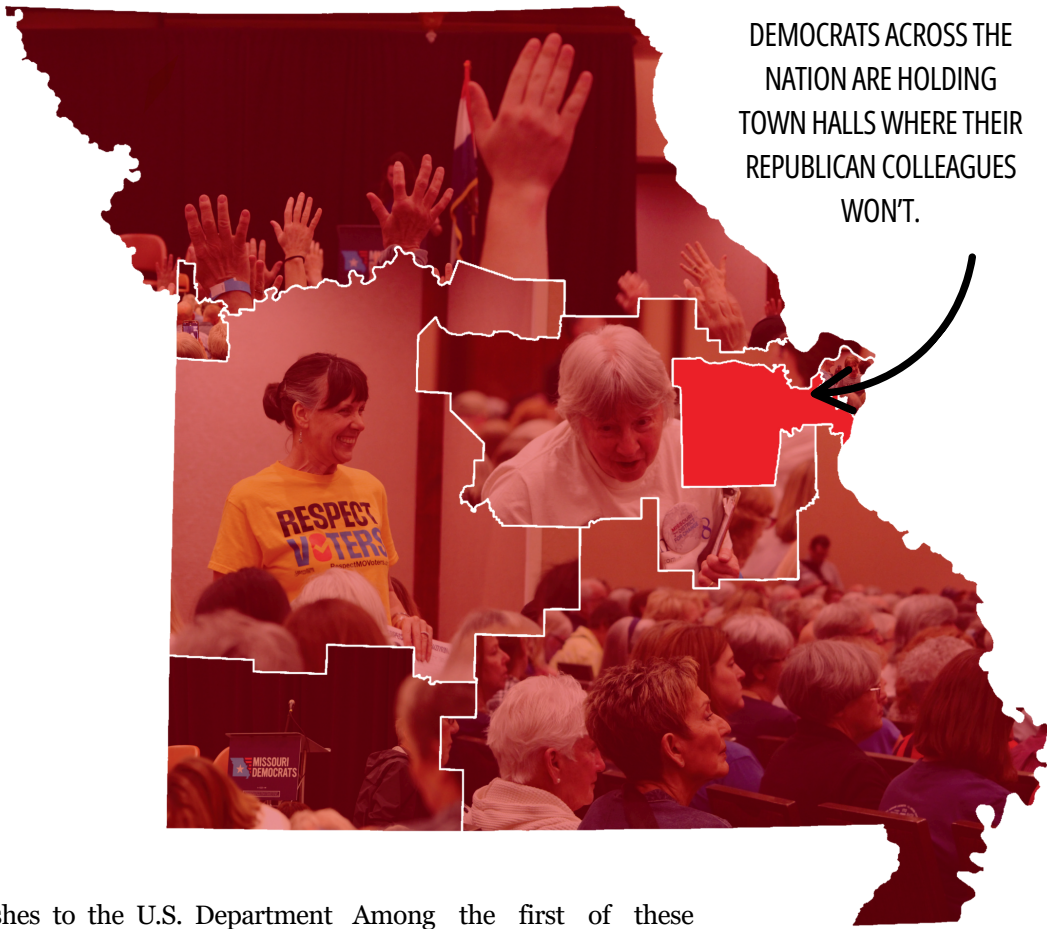
When law enforcement escorted Jay Carey from his verbal brawl with North Carolina congressman Chuck Edwards, the U.S. army veteran left the town hall with no regrets.

Yelling “Do your job!” in a now-viral video of the fiasco, Carey admitted that the ordeal was “the only way to really get [Edwards’s] attention.”

The forum ejecting Carey is part of a town hall trend that Republicans have been told to halt by House Speaker Mike Johnson, following explosive confrontations from constituents.

These town halls, held in majority-red districts, have faced fiery uproar from their community members, largely upset with their lawmakers for complying with federal spending cuts by the Department of Government Efficiency and its de facto head, Elon Musk.

President Donald Trump has dismissed the commotions as a result of “paid troublemakers” while other Republican leaders have accused Democrats of arranging the protests. Carey was primarily upset about sla-



DEMOCRATS ACROSS THE NATION ARE HOLDING TOWN HALLS WHERE THEIR REPUBLICAN COLLEAGUES WON'T.

shes to the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, who provide benefits and healthcare to veterans just like himself.

In response to the town hall scrap, national and state-level Democratic organizations have announced a series of “in-person public events” in predominantly red districts.

Among the first of these “People’s Town Halls” was an April 25th event held in Republican Representative Ann Wagner’s district at the DoubleTree Hotel in Chesterfield, Missouri.

Nearly 1,600 constituents waited outside the venue under a light drizzle, waiting to be seated in the hotel’s

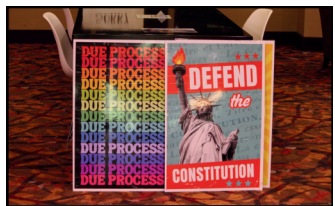
conference center or a separate overload space.

The crowd welcomed numerous guest speakers with applause, including Missouri State Senator Tracy McCreery and Missouri Democratic

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At the People’s Town Hall in Chesterfield, Missouri, nearly 1,600 Missourians cheered on guest speakers including political consultant Fred Wellman (pictured above) and executive director of Abortion Access Missouri Mallory Schwarz (pictured below).



MSU STUDENTS TAKE ON DEI CUTS

BY JACK EDWARDS  
NIXA, 2027

When Donald Trump took office on January 20th, 2025, one of his goals was to eliminate diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) policies throughout many sectors of the country, including higher education.

Missouri State University, located in Springfield, Missouri, is one of the universities impacted by such cuts to DEI programs. In a statement sent out by MSU president Richard “Biff” Williams on January 29th, the removal of programs like the Office of Inclusive Engagement and the Collaborative Diversity Conference and Inclusive Excellence Awards Gala, to comply with President Trump’s threats, were announced.

While the definition of DEI has remained relatively the same over the years, many people have their own definition and view of what the term actually means.

“In my terms, DEI is exactly what it sounds like,” freshman political science major Brooklyn Eiserer said.

“It’s about diversity; it’s about opportunity. I feel like it’s about disrupting the system that the US has always



Missouri State University has halted all diversity, equity and inclusion programs.

had, which is a very systemically racist, systemically oppressive system. DEI put in place an opportunity for individuals, who are minorities or are disenfranchised, to be, you know, considered the same as everyone else.”

When the announcement was first issued, MSU students were alarmed and unsure of what the future held for them.

“I woke up to an email that said DEI was pretty much gone,” freshman journalism major Kamryn Stofer said. “I was getting ready for class thinking that I was going to lose my scholarship.”

MSU had several scholarships regarding student diversity, including the “Diversity in Education

Scholarship,” which provided \$2,000 for the students’ first 2 years and \$3,000 for the following 2 years. As well as the “Inclusive Excellence Scholarship,” which provided \$4,000 per school year. It was later announced by President Williams that these scholarships given out by the university would still be upheld due to the original email not clarifying whether these programs were going to be maintained or terminated.

After the announcement, there were many protests facilitated by MSU students as well as groups like the Springfield Missouri Young Communist League protesting against DEI cuts

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day was different. My cousins taught me how to play Survival mode (for those that don’t know, Survival mode means that you can die in the game).

In Survival, the player must effectively manage their hunger and health, fend off monsters, and gather resources. I remember being taught how to gather cobblestone and how to smelt sand into glass, but one specific, seemingly insignificant moment stuck out to me: my cousins killed a cow to get food.

Now, does anyone want to kill a cow? Not really. I’m sure I was told the same thing except that it was a necessary part to survive in the game.

Over a decade later, I revisited this memory, realizing this happens in the real world. But, what if I told you that it’s not necessary to eat animals?

First, using animalclock.org, let me set the scene: an estimated eight billion chickens die per year in the United States. That’s just chickens in the United States!

Over 99% of the animals killed for food are raised in factory farms. I had never given thought to truly how many animals are killed for the 15 minutes it takes to eat a meal. I especially never gave thought to the animals’ lives. The average egg-laying hen gets an 8 x 10 inch metal cage to live their entire life. For reference, that’s the distance between your thumb and your pinky. Mother pigs can’t even turn around to see their children.

Now, I know you’re probably thinking: while this is sad, it’s an unfortunate reality. What if I told you it wasn’t?

I highly doubt that many people know what the conditions for most farm animals are like. I would strongly encourage watching the documentary Dominion to see what most animals’ lives look like. Or, you’re probably thinking to yourself, like I did for so long, “No, I know it’s going to be awful. It’s better that I don’t think about it.” If so, why don’t you want to see it? Yes, it’s disturbing, but wouldn’t you care if humans were being put to death in gas chambers? Wouldn’t you care if humans were being electrocuted and boiled alive?

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INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

AID LOSS MAY WORSEN MYANMAR EARTHQUAKE

BY ALICE CRAIG  
BOROUGH, 2027

On March 28, disaster struck in Myanmar as an earthquake with a rating of 7.7 wrecked havoc upon the lives of Mandalay citizens. With the recorded death toll as high as 3,500 and of the injured over 4,000, these numbers are expected to rise.

Unfortunately, the government of Myanmar is struggling to deal with this disaster due to the massive destruction caused by this natural disturbance, the possibility of an upcoming monsoon due to massive rains, and the most pressing matter, the ongoing civil war.

A result of these components is a disruption of the market, which will worsen the already devastating food and healthcare shortages. UN Secretary General António Guterres emphasized the importance of providing aid to Myanmar, where, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, more than 17 million people have been affected by the earthquake.

In addition to food scarcity, water and electricity shortages plague the most affected areas.

The UN has allocated a budget of five million dollars to the relief efforts for immediate aid and 12 million dollars for food, shelter, water, sanitation, debris removal, and healthcare.

The US government planned to provide two million dollars to fund relief efforts and is considering contributing another seven million dollars to provide aid for those impacted by the earthquake, but so far this relief has not addressed pertinent issues like the overwhelmed health system.

Unlike last year, when the

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POLITICS AND PLEASANT RELATIONS

BY APURVA GANTI  
MARQUETTE, 2025; WASHU, 2029

In today's society, we are polarized. You probably haven't heard of that before, right? And yet, no matter how often it's repeated, the truth really doesn't change: people are drawing lines in the sand over political beliefs and culture wars. People who may have been your friend in middle school—or at least an acquaintance—might now be someone you don't even acknowledge in the hallway because they once wore a MAGA hat. You may have

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“VEGAN? EW.”

BY AUGUSTUS FARRELL  
GRAMMAR EDITOR  
ST. BORGIA, 2026

Wow! You decided to give this article a chance; something most people wouldn't do. I know I wouldn't have years ago. I'd like to preface this article by saying it is my intention to not force my beliefs on anyone or to come off as hostile. My goal in writing this is to help you, the reader, make sure your moral values align with your actions by asking some questions you've probably never given in-depth thought to.

I remember when I was probably five or six, and I was playing Minecraft with my cousins. I didn't know much of what I was doing: I usually just played in Creative mode, wandering through the world and building houses. But, this



# IS STATE TAKEOVER OF STL POLICE OVERREACH?



Lawsuits against the state takeover of the St. Louis police, now refiled by Alderwoman Megan Green, were dropped following St. Louis Mayor Kara Spencer's election. Ex-mayor Tishaaura Jones (pictured) backed the lawsuits.

BY HANK FOSDICK  
HOME SCHOOL, 2027

Earlier this year, the Missouri Congress passed House Bill 113-39, which aims to take control of the St. Louis Police Department.

Under this bill, the St. Louis Metro Police Department will be managed by a board of six members, consisting of the mayor and four officials selected by the governor, who will be confirmed by both the Missouri Senate and the citizens of Saint Louis. for a minimum of two years.

Back in 2013, Missouri voters granted control of the city's police force to the city itself. Following a drop in the homicide rate last year, the city recorded the lowest homicide rate in St. Louis' history. Seeing this takeover as a large setback, the city filed a lawsuit against the state over the takeover of the police department.

A similar measure had been previously enacted to take state control of the Kansas City Police Department. This is not the first time that Missouri has exerted control over the St. Louis Police Department, which has some of the highest rates of police violence in the entire country. The state of Missouri has stated that the purpose is to help curb crime in St. Louis.

This bill surprisingly garnered significant support from Democrats in both the House and Senate. While the Ethical Society of Police and other St. Louis police officers' unions supported the legislation, legislative proponents did not include any representatives from St. Louis.

Recently, the St. Louis Metro Police Department was ordered by the Missouri state government to reallocate resources previously used to investigate gangs and organized crime for the task of hunting down undocumented individuals. Unfortunately, our police have complied.

This does not bode well for state control, as this misuse of city resources is indicative of our legislature's actions. This seems to be a continuation of Missouri's Republican majority controlling the Democratic cities. ←

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# WHITE FEMINISM (AMONG OTHER THINGS) IS DESTROYING CULTURES OF COLOR

MANY DIVERSE WOMEN ARE TIRED OF BEING OVERSHADOWED BY WHITE PEOPLE'S PERCEPTION OF SUPERIORITY.

BY NAVYA MANCHALA  
LIBERTY, 2028

If you take and use elements from another culture that aren't your own, it's called cultural appropriation. Examples include images, symbols, artifacts, and practices. When you get compliments, money, or awards from those objects, it benefits you, but the people in that culture will most likely get negative attention from it.

Out of the many times that I've logged on to social media, one thing I always notice is the fashion and food trends. Fads come and go: Scandinavian scarves, turmeric milk, bohemian chic, or crop tops, just to name a few.

It feels obvious to me to say that these trends listed above clearly stem from South Asian roots, yet seemingly, no one acknowledges the background and history. Most people online brush over that fact, even though others have tried to bring it to the light.

Just pretending that something isn't what it is and brushing it off when others get offended is cultural appropriation. Heck, even Scandinavians don't call dupattas "scarves". And yes, it's actually called a dupatta. The Scandinavian Scarf trend is just a recent chapter in a long history of erasing South Asian textile heritage.

As an Indian girl growing up in the West, I have had to accept, too often, the demeaning treatment I have received from my white peers, without questioning it.

For me, and others like me, it has been a case of quiet survival: never raising ourselves too high because when we do, we threaten not only the structures we co-exist in, but also the relationships that work as long as a power imbalance is maintained.

I, like many other women of color, have been forced to hold myself down so everyone else can remain in their comfort zones and feel secure.

People on social media paint India as this dirty, unsanitized place. They focus on perpetuating stereotypes about the 'bad' side of India, yet steal long-standing traditions just because they can. It doesn't add up. Would you rather accept that you've taken inspiration from a colored community or mislabel it on purpose and promote colonialism?

And, it's not just India that has been suffering through cultural appropriation. It's the Black, Native American, and Arabic (just to name a few) communities that have been subjected to this treatment. It's about time we gave notice to this issue.

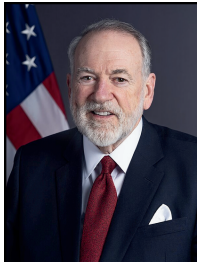
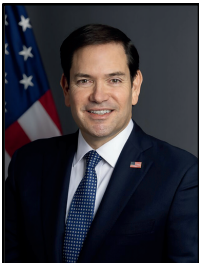
Behavior unchallenged is behavior accepted.

When singer Jason Aldean dressed up as Lil Wayne for Halloween, he didn't stop at fake dreadlocks, he even smeared on blackface in

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# TRUMP'S PICKS: A CRITIQUE



Many of Donald Trump's picks for close advisors have been some of his most controversial.

BY KIRILL KONDRATYUK  
PARKWAY WEST, 2027

Trump's cabinet picks have been controversial, to say the least. Some may even see it as an attempt to repeat the spoils system of Andrew Jackson (Trump's favorite president), in which Jackson gave high government positions based on support rather than merit. So, let's look at some of Trump's most infamous cabinet picks with a pinch of healthy criticism.

First, the elephant in the room: Elon Musk and his Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). As we all know, no one elected Elon Musk. He is purely a businessman and has no prior government experience. Both of these are red flags, but it only worsens when you look at what DOGE is supposed to do. The idea behind DOGE is to fire federal workers to reduce the government budget. While this does not sound too out of the ordinary, as many presidents focus on similar objectives, the fact that a billionaire is the chief advisor to Trump and how he talks about cutting around 428 federal agencies down to 99 should raise more red flags.

Well, DOGE is somehow worse than I thought. Musk started a war to dismantle USAID, an agency responsible for delivering civilian aid and developmental assistance to foreign nations; the National Endowment for Democracy, an organization advocating for democracy worldwide; and two federally-ran radio stations, Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

Moving away from Elon, let's see the new Secretary of Health and Human Services, RFK Jr. Yes, you heard it right, an anti-vaccine activist was chosen for a position responsible for the health and well-being of people. RFK Jr. is infamous for his anti-science views, such as spreading the debunked "vaccines cause autism" claim, quoting HIV/AIDS denialists, claiming that the atrazine water supply causes gender dysphoria, promoting raw milk, and opposing water fluoridation. During the 2025 measles outbreak, he promoted dubious treatments, such as vitamin A or cod liver oil, and though he recommended vaccines, overexaggerated their potential harms.

Moving on from anti-vaccine activist to dictator apologist, we meet Tulsi Gabbard, also a former Democrat and Director of National Intelligence. She became infamous in 2017 for her visit to Syria, which was arranged by men connected to the extremist Syrian Social Nationalist Party. Gabbard would meet up with the now despondent dictator Bashar al-Assad and conflate all Syrian opposition with al-Qaeda and ISIS after her visit.

Furthermore, Gabbard earned a bad reputation for her views on Ukraine. Originally, she demonstrated support for Ukraine, but, in March of 2022, she began to spread the bogus claim that there are US Biolabs in Ukraine with deadly pathogens (note: Pro-Russian disinformation accounts on Twitter also quoted her as proof that Russia was right to invade Ukraine). Even Mitt Romney called her out for the false claims she made.

Yet another bad pick was Pete Hegseth for Secretary of Defense. This choice sparked confusion since Hegseth was mostly known as a Fox News pundit, and his only military experience was his service in the Army National Guard. Besides his foreign policy surrounding the Gaza Strip, which includes supporting Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister wanted for war crimes, Hegseth got into controversy over his tattoos.

One of his tattoos depicts a Jerusalem cross, popularized by the Crusaders, and—more controversially—a tattoo reading kafir, which in Arabic means unbeliever, for which he was accused of instigating islamophobia.

Moving on to another bad choice, we have our new FBI Director Kash Patel. Patel is infamous for spreading the deep state conspiracy theory (claim that a shadow government exists), his involvement with QAnon, and authoring a children's book, The Plot Against the King, which is about the infamous Trump-Ukraine scandal. This same man called for the Hoover Dam to be transformed into the "Deep State Museum."

Moving away from the conspiracist category, we go into the unprofessional category and are greeted by Linda McMahon, the Secretary of Education. McMahon was the founder of the WWE, and she was barely, if ever, involved in schooling and education. Her nomination was harshly

criticized by the National Education Association for wanting to eliminate the very department she is leading. However, it is important to mention that not all of Trump's cabinet picks are new faces, as there are some old ones.

Specifically, Russell Vought as the Office of Management and Budget director. While Vought has previously held the same position, he has radicalized since. Vought is a self-proclaimed Christian nationalist who helped to author Project 2025, an initiative by the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think-tank aimed at concentrating power in the hands of the executive branch.

As Vought himself admitted, he wants to restrict pornography and immigration through Project 2025, as well as expand presidential powers. Additionally, he supports a national abortion ban, called Democrats "increasingly evil" for supporting secularism, and published an OMB memo instructing federal agencies to stop all training on "critical race theory" in 2020.

Additionally, we have Tom Homan, Trump's "border czar." He is largely responsible for the deportation of illegal immigrants from the United States, opposed to sanctuary cities, and supported separating children from their parents as a deterrence for illegal immigrants. He also authored Project 2025.

Yet, the most concerning thing about Homan is his affiliations with SPLC-designated hate groups. He, for instance, collaborated on the project "Defend the Border and Save Lives" with The United West, which is an infamously Islamophobic "counter-jihad" group responsible for distributing the film "Obsession: Radical Islam's War Against the West," which claims there is a purported threat of Islam to Western civilization and compares muslims to Nazis. Additionally, he met with Terry Newsome right after the election to discuss mass deportations. The problem is that Terry Newsome is an associate of Proud Boys, a neo-fascist hate group of self-proclaimed "Western chauvinists."

Then, we have Mike Huckabee, the United States ambassador to Israel. First of all, who is Mike Huckabee? Well, he is the former governor of Arkansas, whose

own daughter, Sarah Huckabee, is the current governor. But why is Mike Huckabee a bad choice? Well, he is a Christian Zionist who claims that Palestinians do not exist and that the West Bank (which he refers to as Judea and Samaria) settlements are legal. So, despite Trump's claim, Huckabee certainly would not "bring peace to the Middle East."

As grim as this looks, not all of Trump's picks came through. Matt Gaetz, his pick for Attorney General, had to resign due to the massive criticism from Republicans following the fact that Gaetz is accused of child sex trafficking and statutory rape. Also, Vivek Ramaswamy, a tech entrepreneur and conspiracy theorist, who was originally planned to run DOGE with Elon, dropped out due to friction with the staff and to focus on his potential 2026 Ohio gubernatorial campaign.

Finally, we have Elise Stefanik, who was originally nominated as the United States ambassador to the United Nations. Her appointment was canceled at the last minute since Trump worried that her exit from the House of Representatives may decrease the slim

It's important to note not all of Trump's cabinet picks are random loyalists. For example, the Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, did have experience in foreign policy, specifically influencing foreign policy towards Latin America during the first Trump administration. However, it's weird that Trump chose a warhawk, someone who calls for military intervention, as his Secretary of State, despite Trump's running on isolationism.

Another pick with some experience is Lori Chavez-DeRemer, Secretary of Labor, who supported the "Protecting the Right to Organize Act," which would weaken right-to-work laws and give advantages to workers who join unions.

Overall, the problem with Trump's second cabinet is that his executive branch picks are immensely based on loyalty over quality and experience.

Trump surrounded himself with yes men, sacrificing their quality over loyalty, which is why our government contains conspiracy theorists, a tech billionaire, and Christian nationalists with ties to their own interests. ←



# “SMILE MORE, SPEAK LESS”

IN A SYSTEM THAT PUNISHES DEFIANCE AND REWARDS COMPLIANCE, CONSERVATIVE WOMEN IN POLITICS ARE TOO OFTEN FORCED TO SHRINK THEMSELVES TO BE ALLOWED IN DECISION-MAKING ROOMS



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so on male terms by adopting the tone, attire, and demeanor of their male colleagues just to be taken seriously. In fact, women weren’t even allowed to wear pantsuits on the Senate floor until 1993, a rule that symbolized how rigid the expectations were around how a woman in power should look.

Fast forward to today, and the expectation remains: women can lead, but only if they follow unwritten rules. Instead of hiding femininity, they’re expected to perform a hyper-stylized version of it. Every detail, from a woman’s voice to her wardrobe, becomes a test. Too loud? She’s emotional. Too

assertive? She’s bossy. Too polished? She’s fake. The test isn’t about power, rather, about proving she deserves to be in the decision-making room.

This is exactly what makes trends like the “Republican makeup look,” and the so-called “Mar-a-Lago Face,” so revealing.

These beauty choices are actually political statements, intentional or not. The high cheekbones, heavily contoured features, and thin, pale lips serve as visual cues of belonging.

In conservative political spaces, this hyper-feminine look communicates loyalty to certain image of womanhood — one in recent years that has echoed 1950s ideals: polished, feminine, and posi-

tioned behind male power. While looking feminine is not a problem, the forced conformity, in both appearance and actions, to communicate one’s political view, is.

To solve this, one must shift their focus from appearance and conformity to substance and leadership. It’s about creating a political environment where women can thrive as their authentic selves, free from the pressure to meet unrealistic expectations. True progress in gender equality will come when women are judged for their ideas, their leadership, and their contributions, rather than their looks or how well they can do the Republican makeup look. ➡



Jeannette Rankin (left) was the first woman to hold federal office, serving in the House of Representatives.

Margaret Chase Smith (right) became the first woman to serve in both the House and Senate.

Both women were Republicans.



# MSU

IN JANUARY OF 2025, MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY CUT THEIR DEI PROGRAMS.



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and other right-wing ideology. A benefit presented by the public outrage was an increased social media presence of DEI awareness.

“The increase in social media DEI awareness has increased exponentially,” Stofer said.

“The amount of people that I follow on social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat and their awareness of DEI policies has skyrocketed. I have seen that post more on social media in the last four months than I have in the entirety of the first part of the semester.”

For many individuals, the importance of DEI throughout the campus was a major factor in people’s decisions to apply and attend MSU.

“I was upset because it was one of the reasons I had chosen the school,” Eiserer said. “I wanted a school that had diversity, especially when I had options like LSU (Louisiana State University) WashU (Washington University in St. Louis), which are fairly diverse.”

“But I chose Missouri State in hopes that it was super diverse, and that’s exactly what it was. They have certain buildings that are literally dedicated as a safe space for LGBTQ+ students, African-American students, like that’s just what they’re known for.”

The threats made by Donald Trump during his campaign and term relating to cutting college funds were a persistent threat that ultimately led to the cancellation of DEI programs at MSU, among hundreds of colleges throughout the state of Missouri and the rest of the United States.

“You have to make a decision because obviously, no matter what you do, if you continue DEI, students are gonna be mad, if you stop, students are gonna be mad. However, I do think the entire program of DEI is getting ripped out from under staff, students and faculty so quickly without any warning. I think that was more harmful than just taking away certain parts of DEI to reform the entire program,” Stofer said.

“If certain parts were put in, and parts were taken out, then that would’ve been better than just ripping out DEI from under our feet.” ➡

Party Chair Russ Carnahan, who rallied residents in preparation for Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT), the politician leading this tour of nationwide forums.

While he is not Bernie Sanders, who has recently drawn crowds of over 30,000 people with his and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s Fighting Oligarchy Tour, Murphy said that he still has “an obligation to try to go out and support a national mobilization” in an interview with the Connecticut Mirror and Associated Press.

The gathering in Chesterfield featured a question and answer period but largely challenged Representative Wagner’s decade-long absence from public forums and further invigorated local Democrats in preparation for the 2026 midterm. Chuck Summers, a potential Democratic candidate vying for Wagner’s seat, could even be seen handing out his own campaign literature to event goers.

Organized by local Democratic groups from St. Louis, St. Charles, Warren,



Sen. Chris Murphy (pictured) stopped by Chesterfield, Missouri on April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025, challenging Ann Wagner’s absence in Missouri’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District. .

# MO DEMS

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# AID LOSS MAY WORSEN MYANMAR EARTHQUAKE



Various international organizations lent humanitarian aid in the aftermath of the 2011 Shan Earthquake (pictured) in Myanmar. The 2025 Myanmar earthquake may tell a different story.

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US provided 141 million dollars of aid to Myanmar, it is unlikely that President Donald Trump will provide a similar amount this year, as many USAID programs, which provide foreign aid and developmental assistance outside of the US, were terminated earlier in the president’s term. The dissolution of these programs has already seen tremendous consequences around the world.

It’s estimated that 1.3 billion dollars of aid money were not utilized due to the cancellation of such USAID programs. This loss of aid is devastating to those who are suffering around the globe. Some of the countries and territories that are receiving less or no USAID aid at the moment include Syria, Haiti, Niger, Lebanon, Gaza, Yemen, and Afghanistan.

In countries such as Myanmar, where citizens are relying on aid to recover from this disaster, the loss of aid could be more devastating to survivors than the disaster itself. The global community needs to support its allies, or millions will continue to die needlessly as a result. The world today is incredibly interconnected and damage to one economy or peoples ill

undoubtedly have a universal impact.

The disorder caused by war is one of the main reasons that providing aid is so hard to those suffering from a multitude of unfortunate circumstances in the country. For context, Myanmar was under the leadership of a military government from 1962 to 2011, until the people of Myanmar attempted to establish a democratic government.

A coup in 2021 put a stop to progress as the military seized power, creating a civil war between the National League for Democracy (civilian armies) and the previous military government. In response to the attacks, the world imposed sanctions, with little impact, upon the government, who has since continued to enforce their regime upon the people through civilian attacks and mass killings.

The civil war, natural disasters, and potential threat of losing aid are all critical causes of Myanmar sorrow and worry. It is imperative that aid is continued to be provided since more disasters are likely to strike Myanmar soon with the approaching Monsoon season. ➡

Franklin counties, the event opened with a speech from political consultant Fred Wellman, who acted as the master of ceremonies.

While Representative Wagner denounced the forum as a “political stunt” and a “contrived Democrat spectacle,” local Democrats say otherwise.

“In a district where the sitting representative, Ann Wagner, has never held a public town hall, this kind of forum is a rare and meaningful opportunity to speak up, ask tough questions, and connect directly with someone in office, even if they serve another state,” said Amanda Taylor, who ran for the Missouri House of Representatives to represent District 103 in 2024.

Taylor was inaugurated last week as a Ward 4 O’Fallon City Council Member, presiding over areas that encompass Highway K and Knaust Road. She defeated 6-year incumbent Jim Ottomeyer with nearly 58% of the vote during the April municipal election.

While the prospect of a blue town hall in a red state like Missouri may seem unproductive, “just because a region trends Republican doesn’t mean it lacks political diversity,” Taylor pointed out.

Despite the state of Missouri voting for Donald Trump by 18 points, Senator Murphy upheld that “every state, every district matters” in an

interview with Jason Rosenbaum, a politics correspondent for the St. Louis Public Radio.

“Events like this town hall show that Democrats in Missouri are engaged, organized, and eager for representation that truly reflects their voices,” Taylor added.

Though redistricting in 2022 left the district feasibly winnable by Wagner, the Chesterfield event came at a time when the district had just earned a spot on the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee’s most targeted districts list for 2026.

Taylor maintained that “the key to success lies in running a Democrat who can truly connect with suburban voters, someone with moderate views and a strong focus on local issues that matter most to families.” She specified “proposed cuts to Medicaid” and “slashes to the Department of Education” as two issues that will harm many Missourians.

Democrats looking to win Ann Wagner’s district will have to target the issues that stem from Republican leadership and that pose “real threats to families, workers, and students.”

Voters are searching for someone who will not only represent them but, at the very least, will show up for them.

“Where is Ann?” the crowd asked. ➡

Donald Trump (pictured below) began cutting funding from USAID, the United States Agency for International Development, in January. Among eliminating thousands of USAID jobs, the Trump administration also fired three USAID aid workers, shortly after their arrival to a Myanmar earthquake zone.



# POLITICS

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stopped talking to your cousin from rural Arkansas for the same reason.

According to a Harris Poll from November 2024, 42% of adults believe politics is the leading cause of family estrangement. So instead, we stick with people who think like us, and that can lead us down an echo chamber where the only voice we ever hear is our own.

And I can’t really comment on whether this phenomenon is harmful. In my mind, there are two competing truths.

One is where cutting people off for having a different opinion cannot possibly be right.

Listening and acknowledging different opinions is how a person morphs and grows their own ideology and empathy. In today’s day and age where the “epidemic of loneliness” seems to haunt our generation, fueled in large part by social media and its role in heightening polarization, is it really alright to cut off friends and family over politics?

But then, there is another truth: how can we be friends with people who fundamentally oppose what we believe to be basic rights and dignities?

When political divides extend to questions of women’s autonomy, LGBTQ+ rights, minority protections, environmental preservation, and systemic inequality, how can any of us be friends with our peers across the aisle? Is being friends with someone across the aisle subtly showing your approval, or at least not disapproval, of their ideas and beliefs which you so strongly dissent from? Is remaining friends with someone who disagrees an act of tolerance—or silent complicity?

If you’re hoping that I have an answer for you, sorry—I don’t.

All I have is an anecdote that hasn’t really been resolved yet.

Recently, a friend of mine told me that our mutual friend voted for Donald Trump in the last election. I was stunned. We all used to joke around in math class and complain about our econ scores together.

He was a kind, funny, warm person. It didn’t match the image of a Trump supporter I had built in my mind: a white supremacist, Christian nationalist, anti-trans, hate-filled person. That wasn’t him.

And yet, after finding out, things changed. It became harder to make eye contact. The jokes didn’t come as easily. He later told us he regretted his vote, especially after the economic and political chaos of the past three months, but, somehow, that didn’t feel like enough.

I’m still friends with him—for what that’s worth.

But there’s a voice in the back of my head that keeps whispering:

“How can you still like him?” ➡



# THE MYTH OF THE NUCLEAR FAMILY

BY CHARLES GIRAUD  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT  
LIBERTY, 2026

For decades, the nuclear family—a mom, dad, and their biological children—has been seen as the ideal model of family life. In movies, TV shows, and advertisements, it's often presented as the indicator of stability, success, and fulfillment. This image of a happy family in a cozy suburban home has become a symbol of societal achievement for decades. It's the story of love, harmony, and personal success all coming together in a perfect, most commonly 4 person, package.

But, as appealing as the nuclear family might seem, it's ultimately just a constructed vision of family life that does not reflect the messy reality of real relationships. Beneath the shiny surface of perfect family dynamics lies a much deeper truth: emotional, financial, and relational struggles that often get brushed under the rug in favor of maintaining an image of perfection.

This raises an important question for all families, regardless of structure: Is there an ideal family structure, or are struggles simply an unavoidable part of every family?

Historically, the nuclear family has been seen as the cornerstone of social stability. After World War II, the image of a working father, a stay-at-home mother, and thriving children in a suburban setting became a symbol of success and respectability. It became the aspirational model for many families, and many worked hard to maintain it even when their actual family life was far less than perfect.

In many communities, the nuclear family still holds a certain level of prestige, with the pressure to maintain a “perfect” family often leads to performative normalcy where marital problems, financial issues, and emotional pain are kept hidden from the outside world. The stigma around divorce, which is otherwise statistically common, remains strong. Divorce is seen not just as the end to a marriage but as a failure that burdens the entire family. This societal pressure can trap families in unhealthy dynamics where parents choose to stay together for the sake of outward respectability, suffering through the situation “for the children.” In these situations, pride and fear of judgment often outweigh the well-being of family members, creating an environment where personal struggles are ignored in favor of maintaining a perfect family image.

But here's the thing: the nuclear family model oversimplifies family life. It reduces the complexity of relationships to a binary definition of success or failure, leaving no room for nuance or imperfection.

The biggest problem with this ideal is that it completely ignores the struggles that all families face. The idea of a "perfect" family doesn't take into account the fact that every family, regardless of how it's structured, will experience conflict, tension, and emotional pain. These struggles are part of the human experience, no matter how much we try to hide them.

Children are especially sensitive to the emotional undercurrents in their homes. While they might not understand the specifics of their parents' problems, they can feel the tension. When families hide their struggles, children learn that emotions should be suppressed, conflict should be avoided, and that

perfect happiness—even if falsified—is the only acceptable standard.

Children raised in these environments might internalize the belief that maintaining appearances is more important than emotional connection. This results in a generation that perpetuates the cycle of emotional suppression and unresolved trauma. In the end, the focus on family pride rather than family well-being undermines the true purpose of family: to create a safe, loving, and emotionally supportive environment for everyone involved.

The truth is that struggle is a part of the human condition. Families, by nature, are complex and dynamic, and they can't be reduced to a simple picture of harmony. Conflict, emotional distress, and hardship are natural parts of life, and they don't discriminate based on the family model. Yes, these challenges can cause pain, but they also create opportunities for growth both for individuals and the family as a whole.

There is no perfect family structure that guarantees happiness, stability, or emotional fulfillment.

In the end, striving for a perfect family image is a fruitless pursuit that only sets us up for disappointment. Instead of trying to conform to an unrealistic ideal, families would do better to focus on navigating their struggles with honesty, vulnerability, and a commitment to emotional well-being. True success in family life isn't about fitting into a preconceived mold: it's about growing together through adversity and providing a foundation of love, resilience, and support.

The real question may not be about finding the "perfect" family but rather about discovering how different families navigate conflict, growth, and healing in different ways. ←

# WHITE FEMINISM

CONTINUED FROM 2

order to recreate Lil Wayne's skin tone. When asked, he offered a typical response to cultural appropriation accusations. He stated that people will always make a big deal out of something you do and that he had no malicious intent.

This is the type of behaviour that cannot go unnoticed because it is destroying other people's cultures.

We live in a time where we pretend everything is perfect with the help of social media. We get to paint a picture for others to see. This can be a good thing, but it also undermines certain issues and refuses to call things out for what they are. “How we are seen determines in part how we are treated; how we treat others is based on how we see them; such seeing comes from representation,” English academic Richard Dyer once said.

So how does feminism tie into this?

I was reading White Tears/Brown Scars by Ruby Hamad, and it opened my eyes to the issues plaguing women of color. I never realized how the feminism I read about in typical female empowerment books failed to consider the experiences outside of the white community.

The books I read about feminism discussed how abhorrent it was that women were expected to be conventionally pretty and written off as the frivolous sex, but they never addressed how colored women in the United States face a domestic violence rate far higher than that of white women or how the mainstream white feminist movement has largely failed to lift the voices of women of color and (in many cases) has actively silenced them.

Often, when I have attempted

BY LIAM TANG  
BORROUGHS, 2028

In the past eight years, countless schools across 41 states have implemented Yondr pouches into the school system.

A Yondr pouch is “a signal-blocking, lockable box” that is magnetically sealed and unlocked with a stationary unlocking base outside the phone-free zone.

The original use of Yondr was designed for concerts to maintain focus on performers and not on cell phones. Currently, Yondr is mainly being used to restrict the use of cellphones in school systems, sparking controversy.

Those who support Yondr argue that cell phones are distracting and limit social interaction in a school context. They argue that schools should be a place of learning

to speak to or confront a white woman about something she said or did that impacted me immensely, I am presented with tearful denials and indignant accusations that I'm hurting her. My confidence diminishes and I start second-guessing myself. I either flare up in frustration at not being heard (which only seems to prove her point) or I back down immediately, apologising and consoling the very person who caused me harm.

Whether angry or calm, shouting or pleading, women of color are still perceived as the aggressors in some of the minds of outsiders with no context. Likewise, some white women are uneducated that their race privileges them as surely as women of colors' condemn theirs. In this context, their tearful displays are a form of emotional and psychological violence that reinforce the very system of white dominance that many claim to oppose.

This same behavior is what many are facing now with all these social media trends that are promoting cultural appropriation.

We need to revisit our experiences through a revised lens, but not remain in a state of anger or repose. Ask yourself how we can all live together in peace. Don't just do better, but do it right so that humans, no matter their class, skin color, religion, traditions or cultural conditioning, can claim a place in society that is fair. ←

# “VEGAN? EW.”



CONTINUED FROM 1

Wouldn't you speak up for those without a voice?

“You can't compare humans to animals!”

Humans have souls; animals don't feel pain; animals

# YONDR A SOLUTION?



When nearly every American teenager has access to a smartphone, schools across the country have found a new way to maintain their institutions as phone-free zones.

where everyone is present mentally and not glued to a phone.

Statistics also show that the absence of cellphones can reduce cyberbullying. “Students who use cell phones had a reportedly higher rate of daily/weekly cyberbullying than did schools that allowed cell phone use,” according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

With these statistics, the answer seems obvious, but it is not.

Other problems have arisen, with reports having shown Yondr pouches breaking or being hacked. This raises the question: Do they even work?

Those against yonder pouches claim it's a freedom restriction and is a risk if a student needs to contact their parents or call 911 in a dangerous situation. Rebecca Bratspies, parent to a child in a Yondr school, posted

can't reason. Those are three of the most common responses I've been told. I'll respond to these three rebuttals quickly:

Whether or not animals have souls makes no difference. Is it wrong to kick a dog? Is it wrong to throw a kitten? Placing a belief over objective science is dangerous. It's also just unnecessary as eating meat is not mandated in any religious text. Why not just choose the option that doesn't cause suffering?

Study after study shows that animals feel pain. This rebuttal usually applies to fish, but the notion is wrong. Scientific studies overwhelmingly support the fact that fish feel pain (feel free to fact-check me).

Actually, animals can reason. Primates have been taught sign language. Dolphins talk to each other using whistles. The scientific community disputes this argument by recognizing animals as sentient. Pigs are just as smart as—or smarter than—dogs; yet, one is “food” and another is “man's best friend.”

“Okay, but with that logic, are animals equal to humans? Should animals be able to vote?”

No, I agree that non-human animals shouldn't be able to vote, primarily because they can't comprehend it. In response, though, I'd like to point out that animals don't need to be equal to receive an equal consideration of their interests. It's completely unnecessary to subject animals to their current conditions.

Going vegan saves around 200 lives a year. Yet, to me, it's not about the lives that are saved; it's about the lives that are transformed. Have you ever seen a video of a calf being ripped away from her mother? Could you imagine never even being able to turn around just to see your own children? Not being able to help your weak offspring who died mere inches away from you? Did you know that animals sense that something is terribly wrong when they arrive at the slaughterhouse?

Now, imagine two cows—a mother and a son—running around in a field. Think of how happy your parents were

on X that her neurodivergent kid relies on their phone to “navigate the day.”

“This program makes it worse,” Bratspies claimed. Reports have also claimed that schools spending money on installing Yondr pouches don't have the money to supply other necessities during the school year.

While there are pros and cons to these pouches, it is important to understand both sides of the argument. While restricting the use of cellphones could produce educational and social benefits, it has the potential to create dangerous situations. For example, imagine a school shooting where the students couldn't call 911 on their phones. The arguments for each side are strong, so it's best to think before deciding to support Yondr. ←

when they first held you. In a world where we can choose between buying meat or buying plants, why wouldn't you choose plants?

The “final boss” of why most people don't go vegan is because of taste. Yet, do you really think a dog tastes that bad? Is there really that much of a difference between an animal's body and a human's body that makes us say, “Well, we wouldn't want it to go to waste”?

The answer is no. There isn't a difference. Unfortunately, I also don't believe that this article will turn anyone vegan, but I believe it can plant a seed in at least someone's mind. I know that's what happened to me.

One day, I thought, “Why do so many people hate vegans? They're just standing up for what they believe in.” Never did I think I'd actually agree with them.

So, with that, I want to leave you with two things:

1. Watch Dominion. It's free on YouTube. Watch Dominion. Animals only get one life. Watch Dominion. It makes me cry seeing how trillions of animals don't get to experience happiness. Watch Dominion. I can't convince you by just writing words on a paper; your eyes have to convince you. Watch Dominion. Once again, it's free on YouTube.
2. Just in the time it took you to read this (probably around five minutes), 527,400 animals were killed in the United States for food. That's 1,800 animals a second. With that rate, humans would go extinct in 53 days.

Thank you for your time. Please, don't forget the the mothers whose children were stolen. Please, help them. Watch Dominion. ←

# CAN'T GET ENOUGH?

READ OUR OTHER EDITIONS!



# THE DAUNTING QUESTION

CONTINUED FROM 1

In a city where many private institutions are heavily favored over public schools, there is immense status that comes with attending one of these institutions. For example, John Burroughs is often considered one of the top private schools in the region; it's a place where children from the wealthiest families in St. Louis are sent. To many, the mere opportunity to attend such a school signals a certain level of prestige, wealth, and opportunity. The social fabric of St. Louis is intricately woven into these institutions, with alumni networks stretching across decades. To many people, the schools you attend can define your place in the social hierarchy and, consequently, influence how you are perceived in the city.

St. Louis's educational system is far from fair. Although the public school system serves a significant portion of the city, there's a noticeable divide between those who can afford private school tuition and those who cannot.

A major contributing factor to this social divide is the homogeneity of many of the elite private schools. John Burroughs, SLUH, and CBC cater primarily to affluent and predominantly white families. This means that friendships, career opportunities, and social circles within the communities are often established based on shared cultural, economic, and racial backgrounds.

This dynamic isn't just a matter of personal pride or reputation: it's embedded in the fabric of how people interact with each other in the city.

In St. Louis, many people subconsciously (and sometimes consciously) assign a person's value based on where they went to high school. Attending a public school like Liberty High School (the one I attend), for instance, doesn't come with the same weight as attending a private school like John Burroughs, MICDS, SLUH, or CBC, even though the quality of education may be relatively the same.

The exclusivity of these schools, even in modern times, perpetuates the old guard of St. Louis social circles, which can be difficult for newcomers or those from less prestigious schools to break into.

This educational divide also creates cycles of inequality. As private schools often come with higher levels of funding, more advanced resources, and greater access to college preparation, their students have a significant advantage when it comes to college admissions and future career opportunities. On the other hand, students from less-resourced public schools in St. Louis may face educational inequities that hinder their ability to compete on the same level.

In St. Louis, the question “Where did you go to high school?” does more than just serve as a casual conversation starter.

It's a powerful indicator of social capital, economic standing, and cultural belonging. For many, where you went to school can directly affect how you are perceived, who will accept you into their social circles, and what doors might open or remain closed because of it. As long as the city's social structure continues to be deeply influenced by educational pedigrees, the conversation about high school will remain a central aspect of life in St. Louis. However, with a push for increased awareness and more initiatives to be put in place, there is hope that these divides may eventually be bridged, allowing St. Louis to create a more inclusive and equitable future. ←