Opinion
News



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February 9, 2021
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In The Washington Post, Stacey Abrams sounds a lot like Pope Francis in his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* when she writes: "The pandemic has been a collision of tragedy and corroded institutions, and the challenge is in how we respond. We can either engage in collective amnesia about what we have just lived through, and leave an unaccountable government in place, or we can rise to meet this moment by fixing the broken social compact." She compellingly makes the case for steps to save our democracy and only puts one foot wrong, calling for "binding self-determination for Puerto Rico." The problem of status on the island is no longer about Washington granting self-determination. It is about a lack of consensus among Puerto Ricans, who are evenly divided on the issue unlike the 93% of Hawaiian voters who approved becoming a state there.

Also in the Post, Ashley Parker, Matt Viser and Seung Min Kim report on how President Joe Biden reached the correct conclusion that it was more important to go big on his COVID-19 relief package than to go bipartisan. I was confident that the enormity of the economic challenge would sideline any neoliberal sympathies in Democratic circles, and it did. I was not sure about the bipartisan angle but am delighted Biden stuck to his guns.

In The New York Times, Neil Irwin gives one of the best explanations of why the January jobs numbers indicate that the economic situation is much worse than it appears. If unemployment persisted mostly in the hospitality industry, which must wait until most people are vaccinated to recover, we would know that all will be well. But why is the number of jobs in the durable goods sector down?

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Good news from Pennsylvania. Politico reports that Lt. Gov. John Fetterman has announced his candidacy for the state's open Senate seat in 2022. Fetterman comes from the heart of the Rust Belt on the other side of the Allegheny Mountains, and is the antithesis of the image of Democrats as snooty, coastal elites. More leftie populists are exactly what we need in the Senate: They are the ones who can best give the lie to the empty promises peddled by the right-wing populists.

God bless "Saturday Night Live" for taking on any and all cultural trends that take themselves too seriously. Last week, as part of the Weekend Update segment, the cast took on cancel culture. I am way past tired of hearing conservatives complain about cancel tactics they have used themselves, but SNL? Have at it.

It appears that some of our readers like hearing about what I am listening to on the weekends. One of my favorite arias is "O patria mia" from Verdi's "Aida," and here it is sung by the great Leontyne Price as part of her farewell to the Met stage in 1985. She had performed the part of Cleopatra in Barber's "Antony and Cleopatra" on the night the new Met opened. Hers was a voice of exquisite beauty and delicacy.