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Have you heard that Joe Biden wants to take away our hamburgers? No, of course he doesn't, but that has not kept the right-wing media machine from spouting the claim as if it were true. (Unsplash/Niklas Rhose)



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At NPR, a story that is both reassuring and disturbing: In 2016, researchers at the Federal Reserve Bank in St. Louis found that millennials were lagging far, far behind previous generations when it comes to wealth accumulation. Since then, many millennials have closed the gap but not non-college-educated millennials and Black millennials, who continue to lag — and lag badly. "This growing inequality between college and non-college-educated millennials fits into a ginormous amount of other research that shows that today's blue-collar and low-income workers have less upward mobility than they did in previous generations," the report states. The reasons are complicated and solutions are difficult, but failure to address these kinds of emerging divergences will only guarantee deeper polarization in our already polarized society.

In The New York Times, Thomas Edsall examines the state of the "race versus class" debate, that is, should progressive messaging lead with race or class or both? A recent paper by two Yale political scientists has kicked off a fascinating discussion, fascinating and fraught. "This debate is not one that lends itself to resolution," Edsall observes, which may be the only uncontroversial statement in the column.

In Politico, Megan Cassella explains how Biden is rewriting the social contract, achieving greater government involvement in the economy than any president since Lyndon Johnson. As with the Great Society programs of LBJ, some of the changes Biden is making will be hard to undo, which is the good news. The bad news? There are always unintended consequences to even the best policies that create or exacerbate additional difficulties.

At Vox, a look at West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin and how his whole history, to say nothing of the electorate he faces every six years, has primed him to be the kind of senator he is. I have already registered my views on his opposition to eliminating the filibuster, but I confess that after reading this article, and realizing he is the only contemporary Democrat in West Virginia who has figured out how to win elections there, I am more sympathetic to his stance. Sympathy, however, is not the same as

decisive persuasion, and I still think he is wrong and should vote to at least significantly modify the filibuster.

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Also at Vox, James Carville discusses the problem Democrats have with what he calls "'faculty lounge' politics." Carville said, "Wokeness is a problem and everyone knows it. It's hard to talk to anybody today — and I talk to lots of people in the Democratic Party — who doesn't say this. But they don't want to say it out loud." So, there are really two problems: first the insane language of the woke left; and, second, the lack of candor that dominates discussions of political strategy and organizing for fear of offending someone, somewhere. That lack of candor and the fear of getting targeted that causes it, create the kind of intellectual corruption that destroys organizations — universities, political parties, magazines and newspapers.

The situation on the political and cultural right is even worse. Have you heard that Joe Biden wants to take away our hamburgers? No, of course he doesn't, but that has not kept the right-wing media machine from spouting the claim as if it were true. The Washington Post's Ashley Parker has the story. It started with speculation in the Daily Mail, which cited a University of Michigan study of how Americans might cut greenhouse emissions, a study that did not mention Biden and was completed before he became president. There is the study. There is Biden. Who is to say he might not try limiting us to one burger a month in order to cut emissions? The key takeaway, offered by Daniel Effron, a professor of organizational behavior at the London Business School who has studied the psychology of lying, is this:

> "One of the things misinformation can do is signal to people that there's a deeper truth to what's being claimed, even if people know it's not literally true," Effron said. "So you see a bunch of people sharing this thing about the burger and you may not think, 'Biden is going to literally take away the burgers,' but you may start to believe the broader point
> this misinformation is making — the broader point in this case being Biden is super liberal, he's going to infringe on our liberties, he can't be trusted."

Both sides distort information to make their points, but there is no comparison between the effectiveness of the right-wing media machine and its liberal

counterpart. Fox, EWTN, et al., take liberals to the cleaners every day of the week.

From Gramaphone in the U.K. sad news that the great German mezzo-soprano Christa Ludwig has died at age 93. The obituary recalls her splendid performance in the concert recording of "Candide," which was the last thing Leonard Bernstein recorded. She began her career in 1945 singing in factories and bars because the opera houses had been destroyed in the war. Here she is singing "I Am Easily Assimilated" from "Candide." The castanets are stunning!

Posted to Leonard Bernstein's YouTube channel April 26, 2021: Christa Ludwig sings "I Am Easily Assimilated" from Leonard Bernstein's "Candide," with the London Symphony Orchestra & Chorus at the the Barbican Theatre, in London, Dec. 13, 1989 (©1989 Deutsche Grammophon)