

# The Washington Post

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Democracy Dies in Darkness

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## Seahawks soar to Super Bowl championship



MIKE BLAKE/REUTERS

Seahawks quarterback Sam Darnold and Coach Mike Macdonald embrace after Seattle defeated the New England Patriots, 29-13, to win Super Bowl LX on Sunday night in Santa Clara, California. Seattle was led by its dominant defense, which shut down Patriots quarterback Drake Maye. More coverage in Sports, C1.

## Killers without a cause: New-age nihilism spreads

BY PETER WHORISKEY

Amid a wave of high-profile killings and political violence in the United States, investigators have been confounded regularly by the absence of a recognizable agenda.

The assailants in several cases — shootings, a bombing, a planned drone attack — resisted familiar labels and categories. They were not Democrat or Republican, or Islamist militant, or antifa or white supremacist.

They were something new. In their manifestos, these attackers declared their contempt for hu-

manity and a desire to see the collapse of civilization. Law enforcement officers and federal prosecutors have begun to describe these attacks as a contemporary strain of nihilism, an online revival of the philosophical stance that arose in the 19th century to deny the existence of moral truths and meaning in the universe.

Recent assailants who have been tagged as nihilists include the following: A 15-year-old shooter in Madison, Wisconsin, who left behind a manifesto titled "War Against Humanity" in which she described the human

race as "filth." A 24-year-old man who plotted a drone attack to blow up the Nashville power grid was seeking to precipitate "the start of the end ... for the interconnected or otherwise globalized world." A self-described "anti-natalist," 25-year-old Guy Edward Bartkus, blew himself up outside an in vitro fertilization clinic in May, having argued that humans should not be brought into existence without their consent.

"Basically it comes down to: I'm angry that I exist and that nobody got my consent to bring me here," the clinic bomber said

in a recording posted online. "There's no way you can get consent to bring someone here, so don't f---ing do it."

By March, federal prosecutors had adopted the rubric, too, coining a new official term for a variety of this destruction: nihilistic violent extremism, which they defined as "criminal conduct ... in furtherance of political, social, religious goals that derive primarily from a hatred of society at large and a desire to bring about its collapse by sowing indiscriminate chaos, destruction, and social instability." The first

SEE NIHILISM ON A8

## Dr. Oz wants you to delay retiring. Not everyone can.

BY PAIGE WINFIELD CUNNINGHAM

Mehmet Oz, administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, is working to persuade Americans that they should postpone retirement for one year. The question is whether they'll buy it.

He has repeatedly said delaying retirement — a fraught decision for millions, especially lower earners who have undersaved for it — marks physical vigor, and could help grow the economy or reduce the national debt.

Getting the average American to work one year longer by starting earlier or retiring later would generate about \$3 trillion for the economy because "they feel healthy, they're vital, they feel strong, they have agency over their future," Oz said Feb. 2 at the National Press Club.

"It's better for society if people engage for longer," Oz said in an interview.

The Democratic National Committee attacked Oz's proposal in a press release the next day, suggesting he was advocating for people to work longer to help pay for

President Donald Trump's tax and immigration bill, which added roughly \$3.4 trillion to the federal deficit.

As the political debate intensifies, salary and education are likely to deeply influence how people hear that message, research shows.

Wealthier Americans are already engaging longer. Those with college degrees and higher income tend to retire later, have more savings and live longer, researchers have found. They're more likely to be interested in their work and see it as part of their identity.

Seventy-six percent of people with a graduate degree are still working at age 67, compared with 39 percent of people with only a high school diploma, according to the Schwartz Center for Economic Policy Analysis.

People who didn't attend college and earn less have a vastly different experience. They're more likely to work in physically demanding roles, retire earlier, have less savings and die sooner. They are far less likely to have the kinds of mentally stimulating, well-paid jobs that could keep

SEE OZ ON A4

## Post office art galleries are being stamped out

Hundreds of historic works housed by the U.S. Postal Service have been lost, sold or destroyed



Murals such as the "Massachusetts Countryside," which was found in 2024, have been abandoned.

BY JACOB BOGAGE

To lift the United States out of the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt put Americans to work building roads and bridges, conserving forests and rivers, laying sewer pipes, and constructing schools, parks and airports.

But the U.S. needed something more, Roosevelt thought. It needed art. So his White House built a national gallery and museum, then scattered the works around the country, placing dazzling murals and sculptures in hundreds of post offices. The works brought visibility — and crucial paychecks — to the artists, and lifted morale during the depths of the Depression and the Second World War.

The vast majority of the works survive nearly a century later, but hundreds are missing or have been destroyed, sold or donated, according to U.S. Postal Service records obtained by The Washington Post. In recent years, senior postal officials weighed covering remaining images that some people find offensive — often those depicting Black labor.

SEE MURALS ON A6

## IN THE NEWS

**Papal pass** The Vatican said Pope Leo XIV is not expected to visit the United States this year, dashing hopes of a return for the Chicago-born pontiff. A2

**Right glittery** Deborah Yanna is putting her sparkly bomber jackets on many of MAGA's top figures. B1

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Savannah Guthrie offered to pay for the return of her mother, in a public message. A2  
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