



CHERRISS MAY FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Graduation, and an Obligation

At West Point on Saturday, President Biden told graduating cadets that “nothing is guaranteed” about America’s democracy. Page 22.

The Hamas Chief and the Israeli Who Saved His Life

By JO BECKER and ADAM SELLA

TEL AVIV — This is how Dr. Yuval Bitton remembers the morning of Oct. 7. Being jolted awake just after sunrise by the insistent ringing of his phone. The frantic voice of his daughter, who was traveling abroad, asking, “Dad, what’s happened in Israel? Turn on the TV!”

News anchors were still piecing together the reports: Palestinian gunmen penetrating Israel’s vaunted defenses, infiltrating more than 20 towns and military bases, killing approximately 1,200 people and dragging more than 240 men, women and children into Gaza as hostages.

Even in that first moment, Dr. Bitton says, he knew with certainty who had masterminded the attack: Yahya Sinwar, the leader of Hamas in Gaza and Inmate No. 7333335 in the Israeli prison system from 1989 until his release in a prisoner swap in 2011.

But that was not all. Dr. Bitton



Yahya Sinwar, left, and Yuval Bitton over a dozen years ago when Mr. Sinwar, now Hamas’s Gaza leader, was in an Israeli prison.

had a history with Yahya Sinwar. As he watched the images of terror and death flicker across his screen, he was tormented by a decision he had made nearly two decades before — how, working in a prison infirmary, he had come to the aid of a mysteriously and des-

perately ill Mr. Sinwar, and how afterward the Hamas leader had told him that “he owed me his life.”

The two men had then formed a relationship of sorts, sworn enemies who nevertheless showed a wary mutual respect. As a dentist and later as a senior intelligence

officer for the Israeli prison service, Dr. Bitton had spent hundreds of hours talking with and analyzing Mr. Sinwar, who in the seven months since Oct. 7 has eluded Israel’s forces even as their assault on Gaza has killed tens of thousands and turned much of the enclave to rubble. Now American officials believe Mr. Sinwar is calling the shots for Hamas in negotiations over a deal for a cease-fire and the release of some of the hostages.

Dr. Bitton saw that, in a sense, everything that had passed between himself and Mr. Sinwar was a premonition of the events now coming to pass. He understood the way Mr. Sinwar’s mind worked as well as or better than any Israeli official. He knew from experience that the price the Hamas leader would demand for the hostages might well be one Israel would be unwilling to pay.

And by day’s end, he knew something else: Mr. Sinwar’s operatives had his nephew.

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Rediscovery of Slave Narrative Awakens an Era’s Fierce Voice

By JENNIFER SCHUESSLER

One day in 1855, a man walked into a newspaper office in Sydney, Australia, with an odd request.

The man, later described as a “man of color” with “bright, intelligent eyes” and an American accent, was looking for a copy of the United States Constitution.

The text was procured, along with a recent book on the history of the United States. Two weeks later, the man returned with a nearly 20,000-word text of his own, bearing a blunt title: “The United States Governed by Six Hundred Thousand Despots.”

The first half offered an account of the author’s birth into slavery in North Carolina around 1815, his escape from his master, his years on a whaling ship and then his departure from “the land of the free” for the shores of Australia, where he went to work in the gold fields.

The second half was a long, blistering condemnation of the country he had left behind, in particular its revered founding document.

“That devil in sheepskin called the Constitution of the United States,” the man wrote, is “the great chain that binds the north and south together, a union to rob and plunder the sons of Africa, a union cemented with human blood, and blackened with the guilt of 68 years.”

The newspaper published the narrative anonymously, in two installments, attributing it only to “A Fugitive Slave.” How it was received is unknown.

The man’s words then sat, unread and forgotten, until a few years ago, when an American literary scholar came across them

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KENNY HOLSTON/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Senator John Fetterman, the first-term Pennsylvania Democrat, owns a political brand that has always been quirky and irreverent.

Edgier Fetterman Riles the Left And Alienates Some Supporters

By ANNIE KARNI

WASHINGTON — Senator John Fetterman was hard to miss, lumbering down an empty hallway in a Senate office building dressed in his signature baggy gym shorts and a black hoodie. So when Stevie O’Hanlon, an environmentalist and organizer from Chester County, Pa., spotted him recently, she took the opportunity to question her home-state senator about a pipeline in her community.

Mr. Fetterman’s reaction was surprisingly hostile. Raising his phone to capture the confrontation on video, the senator began ridiculing her.

“I didn’t expect this!” Mr. Fetterman said, feigning excitement. “Oh my gosh!”

As Ms. O’Hanlon politely pressed him on what she called his “change of heart” on the issue of

the local pipeline, which he had previously opposed, Mr. Fetterman pulled faces of faux concern until he stepped onto an elevator and let the closing door end the interaction.

Ms. O’Hanlon, a co-founder of the progressive Sunrise Movement, was stunned.

“I’ve talked to Republicans who are much friendlier than that,” she said in an interview, after a clip of the interaction circulated widely on social media. “The person that we voted for is not the person who mocks constituents when they bring up concerns.”

Ms. O’Hanlon is not the only one wondering who Mr. Fetterman has become. Since last fall, the first-term Democratic senator from Pennsylvania has undergone a significant change in politics.

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METROPOLITAN

Legal Minds, Sharp Tongues

A litigation team that is suing Elon Musk was built from the savviest, funniest tweeters in a thread responding to a defamation lawsuit.

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SUNDAY STYLES

The Reluctant TV Star

West Wilson was unemployed and almost broke when he was cast in the reality show “Summer House.” Now he’s an audience favorite.

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SUNDAY BUSINESS

‘Selling Out’ Is Not an Insult

Despite the popular image as an activist, idealistic generation, Generation Z students at elite schools appear to be strikingly corporate-minded.

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ARTS & LEISURE

How Loss Can Shape Art

Ten writers, actors, musicians and filmmakers discuss grief — how they have experienced it and how it has changed them.

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SUNDAY OPINION

Heather Havrilesky

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