

Don't Look Now.....



[Matt Labash](#)

Everyone has their peculiar morning rituals. Some insist on observing the cockcrow by spending time alone with Jesus, or their coffee, or their [Christ Coffee](#), if they want to kill two birds. Others might kiss the dog, or let the wife out for a pee. Me? As a professional journalist/trained student of human depravity, I tend to reach for my laptop first thing, to see what toxic sludge flooded the inbox overnight. No need for it to arrive sugar-coated. I prefer to face the bad news head-on. Or just “the news,” if you abhor redundancy. As a wake-up mechanism, it’s a bit like taking a cold plunge, for those of us who aren’t masochistic enough to actually immerse ourselves in ice baths. (If God wanted our clackers to shrink up into our stomachs, he’d have hung them off our [duodenum](#).)

Yes, I know cynicism comes easy. Anyone can do it. Even this clown:



Matt Labash3d

Am getting so sick of winning. But I’d just like to congratulate President Stable Genius for the terrific job he’s doing crashing the stock market, so that we don’t get too big for our britches with a false sense of financial security. Like I’ve always said, “Who needs a retirement fund?” Wouldn’t you rather own the libs than a roof over your head when you’re in your eighties?

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So it won’t surprise you to learn that some subscribers, family members, and detractors — often one and the same — accuse me of being a cynic. To which I respond, “What else should I be?” If you’re an attentive observer of our times, and aren’t a cynic by this late date, then maybe you just aren’t paying close enough attention.

If I feel like ginning up a healthy head of outrage, and I sometimes do — if for no other reason, just to beat off the winter blahs/shack nasties when I feel pent-up and fishing isn’t going well — there is no shortage of present outrage options. But this one really did the trick for me the other day. A story about how the Trump administration — which seems hellbent on lopping off functioning appendages until the federal government is nothing but a dysfunctional, limbless torso — just [cut over a billion dollars](#) from food banks and school food programs that buy food from local farmers. If you’re keeping a tally of The People’s President at home, that’s three Real People subsets that he’s screwing to the wall: food bank dependents, schoolchildren, and farmers. All three of which, we have a lot of around here.

I don’t pretend to be an expert on food banks, but my wife does work at our church’s. And that’s not a partisan statement — hunger transcends politics, and besides, plenty of good-hearted Trumpsters volunteer there, too. But it is probably the very worthiest thing our church does: they feed needy

people, which often as not, are not drug-addled, criminal mopes, but the working poor, who just can't make their budget add up to feed their families in the era of \$10 eggs. (I don't eat eggs, myself — can't stand them. But even if I loved them, that would be enough to make me find alternative protein sources.)

If you're insulated in your security bubble and don't quite understand that things are tough all over, consider this: my Southern Maryland county, which is an outer, semi-rural suburb of D.C., was considered the 17th most affluent county in the country after the 2020 census. Though trust me, we're not that rich, collectively. We just don't have any truly low-income housing, so it makes us skew much higher than we'd rank otherwise. Our Walmarts — where I stop in about twice a week — are riddled with people sporting pajama bottoms and neck tats and riding mobility scooters (some from genuine disabilities, some from being too heavy from constantly eating the kind of cheap, processed food they sell at Walmart), just like everywhere else. And yet, the food bank demand has gone up here every year for the last several. In 2024, our church food pantry saw an increase of 480 new weekly families. (Up from 416 in 2023). Meaning there are plenty of people who eat here, in one of the wealthiest counties in the richest country in the world, who wouldn't eat without it.

And if you're a Christian — Trumpster or otherwise — you don't think it's your duty to feed them? Here's some more bad news: It is, actually. See Matthew 25:

37 "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' 40 "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

But the King of Kings' 2,000-year-old pronouncements likely don't cut much ice if you've bought into the new gospel of the Great Faux-Populist King. As longtime readers here know, I detest writers larding up their copy by saying, "*Merriam-Webster* defines {whatever they're writing about} as follows....." So let's go another route. *Britannica* defines populism as a "political program or movement that champions, or claims to champion, the common person, usually by favourable contrast with a real or perceived elite or establishment."

And yet, every time our great populist president has a chance to champion The People, he seems to tell them to piss off, while favoring the moneyed elite instead. Need facts to chew over? Here are some:

- Trump, a billionaire, at least on paper, has staffed his administration with at least [13 other billionaires](#). Plenty of whom have zero experience in whatever they've been tasked with, but they're rich, so who cares?
- He's given the richest billionaire of all, Elon Musk, charge of reshaping the federal government, which has come in the form of indiscriminately firing many thousands of middle-class workers — some of whom could go (the federal government is bloated), but many of whom perform vital services we need to actually [make the country function](#).
- Trump feels [next-to-no pity](#) for the fired workers, while at the same time, he cuts an [informal car commercial](#) for the beleaguered near-trillionaire, whose [shitty, unsafe, overpriced cars](#) are now getting boycotted by irate Americans — protests which Trump says [should be illegal](#), as a

man not of the people, but for The People's persecutor, Elon. Tens of thousands of federal workers are now getting fired, and now have to figure out how to put their lives back together — some of whom will undoubtedly end up showing up at our church's food bank. But Trump's more worried about the guy whose [wealth exceeds the GDP of over 140 countries](#).

- While many say Trump was voted in to combat inflation, which was already declining when he took office, and which most economists say isn't directly attributable to the president, Trump — even with his blizzard of executive orders — has done precisely nothing to combat inflation. In fact, he now says the hoi polloi should [“shut up” about egg prices](#), and seems to be hellbent on increasing prices by slapping tariffs on our closest trade partners, even while repeatedly threatening to make one of them — our once-friendly neighbor to the North, who [now can't stand us](#) — the 51st state.
- Trump, either directly or indirectly (despite sometimes protesting to the contrary), now seems to have at least tacitly endorsed everything [from cuts to Medicaid](#) (which the poor depend on for healthcare, even as 92 percent of those on Medicaid who are under the age of 65 and who are not on disability are working, with Medicaid financing over 40 percent of births in the United States) to ass-patting his enforcer, Elon, the latter of whom just suggested to Joe Rogan (another faux-populist who Spotify only pays a mere \$250 million) that Social Security, which you've spent most of your life paying into, is a “Ponzi scheme.” Even as Trump's all-in on floating [tax cuts for the rich \(including corporations\)](#). And as his hare-brained tariff war — one that even the often-Trump-friendly *Wall Street Journal* called [“the dumbest trade war in history”](#) — is expected to cost the average American family up [to \\$2,000 more per year](#).

Meanwhile, while intimidating media organizations with bogus libel suits, Trump has wrangled tens of millions of dollars in settlements from journalism outfits and social media platforms. Tally up his successful shakedown of ABC for \$16 million, Facebook and Elon's X acquiescing for \$25 million and \$10 million respectively (for sidelining Trump after his coup attempt on January 6) — which doesn't include the \$20 billion he's trying to shake down from CBS for an imagined infraction, even as his [FCC chair/apparatchik is unjustly threatening them](#) — and the People's Champion has already pocketed over \$50 million from his efforts. And they say crime doesn't pay? Considering that according to the [U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics](#), the average American with just a high school diploma will make around \$1.3 million in a lifetime for doing actual work, Trump has made — in just a few months' time — 39 times that for his lawyer's work. And based on past performance, it's fair to assume Trump will try to stiff his attorneys, as is his way, since he's similarly allegedly stiffed not just his lawyers, but everyone [from his carpenters to his dishwashers to his painters](#). Giving new meaning to the term “working stiff.”

I could go on. And on and on. About all the ways the faux-populist champion has fleeced The Sainted People on everything from [his phony university](#), to his [overpriced Bibles](#), to his [shameless shitcoin](#). And yet, even though his approval rankings are underwater, a solid segment of the citizenry — despite all the obvious bullshit and chicanery and general mental instability — would still buy the water they think he walks on.

But, maybe Trump looks at the populace the way W.C. Fields did, the latter of whom once said: “It’s morally wrong to allow a sucker to keep his money.” At the rate Trump’s working his voodoo on the economy, plenty of us won’t have to worry about having any money left to keep.

Bonus Tracks: Believe it or not, there are much better populist songs out there than The Village People’s “YMCA,” [Kid Rock’s “Don’t Tell Me How To Live,”](#) and other atrocities from Trump’s playlist. Here’s two of them. John Mellencamp’s “Hard Times For An Honest Man,” off his timeless *Lonesome Jubilee* album:

And legendary bluesman Skip James’s “Hard Time Killing Floor Blues.” This haunting performance coming in Cologne, Germany, just two years before his death: