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# O'Dwyer's Newsletter



The Inside News of  
PR and Marketing  
Communications

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## BALL WANTS PR TO TOUT ECO-FRIENDLY CANS

Ball Corp., world's largest manufacturer of aluminum cans, is looking for a PR firm to position them as a sustainable solution to the plastic pollution crisis, according to an RFI from the \$11B company based in Broomfield, CO.



It claims Ball management has been passionate about the sustainability pluses of cans for quite some time and now feels the time is ripe to do something about it.

The company says consumers are not aware of the sustainability advantages that aluminum enjoys over plastic, glass and cardboard packaging.

Via PR, Ball wants to make cans "part of the main-stream conversation," with the goal of encouraging retailers and consumers to choose aluminum over other alternatives.

The selected PR firm will reach targeted markets via traditional/social media, events, and conferences.

Ball expects to select a firm by Nov. 19.

Renee Robinson is Ball's director of communications.

## HOPE HICKS LANDS AT FOX

Hope Hicks, former White House communications director and trusted aide to president Trump, has landed at the new Fox, which is being spun-off from 21st Century Fox as part of its \$72B merger with Walt Disney Co.

During her Jan. 2017 to April 2018 White House stint, she was in charge of overall communications strategy and messaging regarding economic/domestic/foreign affairs issues.

Previously, she served as press secretary for the Trump campaign and communications director for the Trump Organization.

Prior to joining the Trump Organization, Hicks worked at Hiltzik Strategies, where she repped Ivanka Trump's business interests. She began a PR career at Zeno Group, which is part of DJE Holdings.

Hicks, 29, will be based in Los Angeles.

Fox also added Danny O'Brien, who most recently worked in government affairs leader at GE Transportation, as executive VP/head of government relations.

He was chief of staff to Jersey Sen. Bob Menendez and former Sens. Joe Biden and Robert Torricelli.

O'Brien will work out of D.C.



Hope Hicks

## IMRE ACQUIRES JMPR

imre has acquired Los Angeles-based JMPR, which specializes in the luxury, lifestyle and transportation industries.



Dave Imre

JMPR's staff will become part of imre's west coast operation, doubling the size of imre's Los Angeles office. There are no layoffs expected in connection with the deal.

imre, which has established the imre Health brand alongside its long-standing consumer practice, has offices in Baltimore and New York in addition to its L.A. location. The firm expects the acquisition of JMPR to help the agency meet its demand for earned media.

"In order to enter the automotive and luxury space, we knew we needed the right team of talent and JMPR's 40 years of experience helped make that happen," said imre founder and CEO Dave Imre.

imre, a certified LGBTQ-owned company, is #26 in O'Dwyer's 2018 rankings. It is on pace to earn over \$20M in global fee revenue in 2018, and with this acquisition has 124 employees across the combined company.

## H&K SPINS OUT SJR CONTENT SHOP

Hill+Knowlton Strategies is spinning out its fast-growing SJR content marketing/strategic storytelling unit, which will operate as an independent WPP unit under the current leadership of Alex Jutkowitz and Mitch Stoller.

Effective Jan. 1, SJR will be able to collaborate with any WPP unit, but will keep a "special attachment" to H&K on common clients, according to H&K's announcement.

Jack Martin, global CEO of H&K, thanked Jutkowitz and Stoller and said his firm and SJR are stronger and better positioned than when they joined forces in 2013.

The PR giant also announced a new management structure, headed by global presidents Lars Erik Grønntun and Richard Millar.

Grønntun has been in charge of Europe, Middle East and Africa for the past four years and is senior strategy consultant in the corporate communications/PA groups.

Millar has led UK operations since 2008 and since 2014 spearheaded the creation of the Global Centre of Creative Strategy and the Shanghai Addition in China.

Both executives report to Martin.



Alex Jutkowitz

## **STANDS ON ISSUES SWAY CONSUMERS**

Consumers are more informed and engaged than ever, and their purchasing decisions are influenced, in part, by the beliefs and tribal values reinforced by today's increasingly polarized media climate.

This phenomenon has put our corporate leaders in the political crosshairs, where a brand's reputation is measured, to a degree, by the positions it takes on social and political issues.



An October study released by FleishmanHillard shows how companies might navigate today's issues-

charged environment, highlighting the social and political areas that currently carry the highest expectations for today's corporate leaders to take a stand.

Nearly half of respondents — 47 percent — said they're less likely to purchase from a company they believe behaves in a manner that conflicts with their personal values, according to the FleishmanHillard study.

Two-thirds — 66 percent — said they've already stopped using a company's products or services because that company's response to an issue didn't comport with their own views.

Respondents were surveyed on 51 issues spanning cultural, economic, political and societal interests. The top 10 issues consumers said they wanted companies to act on were: sexual harassment, ethnic diversity, data security, unemployment, impact of outsourcing jobs to other countries, the gender pay gap, acceptance of diverse religious beliefs, racism and data privacy.

A clear majority of consumers — 79 percent — said they're likely to continue supporting companies that are actively evaluating their company values and policies. On the other hand, 90 percent of those surveyed said they believe companies often deliberately take advantage of social and political issues for their own benefit, which gives a majority of consumers — 55 percent — an unfavorable view of the company.

## **NIELAND FINDS NEW HOME IN BIG VALLEY**

Dave Nieland, a technology pro who most recently was executive VP at Weber Shandwick, has joined Big Valley Marketing, data-driven marketing PR shop in Santa Clara, CA.

A key player in Weber Shandwick's technology practice, Nieland worked with clients there for 16 years on branding, messaging, corporate reputation, crisis and media training

Earlier, he did a three-year stint at BSMG Worldwide and started his career at Temerlin McClain.

Tim Marklein founded BVM in Jan. 2014, after heading W2O's technology and analytics practice for nearly three years.

Earlier, he and BVM analytics lead Inga Starrett worked with Nieland at Weber Shandwick. BVM has worked for BMC Software, Symantec, Bain Capital Ventures, Ruckus Wireless, SnapLogic and Uber.



**Dave Nieland**

## **ACCOUNTS IN TRANSIT**

**Geoffrey Weill Associates** has been appointed U.S. public relations representative for the **Hotel Orania.Berlin** and **Schloss Elmau**, a spa and cultural resort in the Bavarian Alps. Located in Berlin's trendy



Kreuzberg neighborhood, the Orania.Berlin, which opened in 2017, occupies a 1913 building that has served as a café, an office building a venue for art and cultural events. The Schloss Elmau, which hosted the G7 conference in 2015, is a member of Leading

Hotels of the World.

**William Mills Agency** will provide public relations services to payment verification system **Ivy**. Headquartered in Los Angeles, Ivy is a blockchain-based technology for business transactions, which require verification in the international monetary system. "WMA's knowledge of the financial services industry will help us to express how our solutions deliver the verification essential to complete worldwide cryptocurrency transactions," said Ivy president Gary Fan.

**Stern Investor Relations** has been hired to provide strategic advisory services for biopharmaceutical company **Bioasis Technologies, Inc.** Stern will be tasked with enhancing and executing the company's investor relations program and supporting ongoing efforts to expand its visibility within the North American investment community in compliance with regulatory guidelines.

**JMPR Public Relations** has been named agency of record for **Red Line Synthetic Oil**, a supplier of synthetic lubricants and additives for the automotive, motorcycle, marine and powersports markets. JMPR will support the company by bringing awareness to the brand and assisting it with product launches and sponsorship announcements. The agency will also work to curate social media initiatives aimed at Red Line Synthetic Oil's target audience.



**Laura Davidson Public Relations** has been selected as public relations agency of record for the **Bequia Beach Hotel**. The agency will showcase the resort and island's experiences and personalities through a multi-faceted media relations program, engaging with influencers and setting up collaborations with like-minded lifestyle brands. The 56-room property, located on Bequia Island in the Caribbean's St. Vincent and the Grenadines, was built by entrepreneur Bengt Mortstedt.

**Hampton Bates Public Relations** has been named agency of choice by **Diamond Key Security**, a provider of next-generation infrastructure cryptographic solutions. The agency's efforts will focus on launching a fundraising program to support and promote the Diamond Key Security brand and expand fundraising connections for Diamond Key's not-for-profit platform. Hampton Bates will also provide such communications services as PR, fundraising messaging and management, media relations, leadership giving and other fund development activities.

## **NIGERIAN WORK GIVES BALLARD \$1.1M BOOST**

Ballard Partners has signed an open-ended contract with Nigeria's People's Democratic Party pegged at \$1.1M per-year. The center-right party is the main opposition group to Nigeria's president Muhammadu Buhari.

Brian Ballard, a top Republican fundraiser and chair of the Trump Victory organization Florida during the 2016 presidential election, heads up the Nigerian work.

Sylvester Lukis, managing partner of Ballard's DC office, and James Rubin, partner and former assistant secretary of state for PA during the Clinton White House and spokesperson for Madeline Albright, join Ballard on the account.

The Tallahassee-based firm's mission is to enhance the US/Nigeria relationship and strengthen and advance democratic values and the rule of law in Nigeria "with a special focus in the coming months of maintaining political and security conditions free of intimidation and interference in order to ensure the success and fairness of Nigeria's national election for president in 2019," according to its contract.

## **ARCONIC IR HEAD TO GLADSTONE PLACE**

Patricia Figueroa, who headed investor relations at Alcoa spin-off Arconic Inc, has joined Gladstone Place Partners, financial PR shop, as senior VP.

At Arconic, she developed and implemented its post-separation IR strategy and fended off a proxy fight with activist investor Elliott Management, a battle that led to the reshuffling of the aluminum/titanium parts supplier's board and resignation of its CEO.

Previously, Figueroa did a four-year stint at Alcoa, handling IR and financial planning/analysis duties. She also worked at Blue Heron Research Partners, hedge/private equity fund researcher in New York, and Kenworth Olmeca Maya (truck dealership in five Mexican states).



**Patricia Figueroa**

## **TENEO DRIVES ASTON MARTIN'S IPO**

Teneo Blue Rubicon handled the Oct. 3 public offering of Aston Martin Lagonda Global Holdings, parent of the legendary British sports car brand.

Priced at \$25 per-share on the London exchange the offering had an initial market cap in excess of \$5.5B.

Shares of James Bond's favorite car company hit a speed bump on their first day of trading, closing down nearly five percent. Bloomberg reported investors were wary of Aston Martin's hefty valuation.

CEO Andy Palmer, a Nissan Motor alum, announced in June an aggressive growth plan that is highlighted by the opening of a second manufacturing plant in 2019 to produce a new SUV. He expects employment to jump from 2,700 to about 5,000 in 2022.

Simon Sproule, who made his mark as a top communications executive at Nissan Motor and the Renault-Nissan Alliance, joined Aston Martin in 2014 as chief marketing officer after a six-month stint as VP-communications at Elon Musk's Tesla.

## **MARK PENN'S STAGWELL GETS INK**

The Stagwell Group has taken a majority stake in Ink, the London-based travel media and marketing company. The firm creates digital, video, print and experiential content for clients such as American Airlines, Qatar Airways, United Airlines, Virgin Atlantic, Norwegian Air, Singapore Airlines and Etihad Airways.

Ink joint CEOs Michael Keating and Simon Leslie will continue to oversee the firm, which has offices in New York, Miami, Sao Paulo, Singapore and Abu Dhabi.

Ink teams with travel companies to help them connect in a meaningful way with passengers at crucial moments in their journey, said Stagwell CEO Mark Penn.

Ink is the 18th investment made by Stagwell during the past three years.

That roster includes Finn Partners, SKDKnickerbocker, The Harris Poll, PMX Agency, TargetedVictory, National Research Group and ReputationDefender.



**Mark Penn**

## **BOOK EXPLORES PR'S DIVERSITY CHALLENGE**

The PRSA Foundation has teamed up with the Museum of Public Relations to publish a new book as part of a larger collaborative initiative designed to boost diversity and inclusion efforts within the communications profession.

"Diverse Voices: Profiles in Leadership" profiles more than 40 multicultural corporate and PR agency leaders, who share their career challenges and successes, as well as tips for those entering the profession today.

All proceeds from the book's sale fund the Foundation's charitable efforts to advance diversity and inclusion within the communications field.

The initiative is supported by PRSA, The PR Council, The Institute for Public Relations, The LAGRANT Foundation, Page and The Conference Board's Society for New Communications Research, among others.

## **PHILIPPINES BANKS ON BCW**

BCW (Burson Cohn & Wolfe) is working with Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, the central bank of the Philippines, under a one-year \$300K strategic communications contract to promote its economic initiatives and economic messages internationally.

BCW will develop a PR framework with the objective of enhancing the perception of the country "as a competitive investment destination," according to its work agreement. BSP wants the WPP unit to arrange at least 36 media interviews and organized roadshows in Asia, North America and Europe.

George Godsall, market leader for BCW Hong Kong, signed the agreement with BSP on July 24.

The central bank campaign supplements BCW's \$700K push on behalf of the Philippines Dept. of Finance.

The *Philippine Star* reported Sept. 28 that BSP's projection of a 6.8 percent inflation rate for September was higher than the 6.4 percent rate anticipated by the Dept. of Finance.

## **MARKETING TO THE FEMALE NFL FAN**

Each year, from the season kickoff through the Super Bowl, brands roll out new campaigns to engage with NFL fans across the country. But despite the scope, reach and millions of dollars invested against these campaigns, there's one demographic that marketers tend to overlook year after year: the female fan.



**Samantha Baier**

Taylor's 2018 NFL Fan Insights Study underscores the reality that while female fans comprise 45 percent of the fan base, brands have made little effort marketing to them.

We analyzed the viewpoints of female fans across the country and evaluated NFL fan demographic and psychographic profiles, media consumption habits, spheres of influence and perceptions of sports.

Our findings reveal, that when engaging this audience, brands should treat them as the in-the-know and passionate fans they are. However, there needs to be a nuanced approach to showcasing how female fans are really experiencing the sport.

Also, marketers should recognize that that being a female fan means going all in on gameday. While male fans may be engaged and conversing about NFL content whether their team is playing or not, 40 percent of female fans cite team affiliation as the source of their overall fandom for the sport.

In addition to the difference between male vs. female, life stage plays a role in shaping the female fan experience. Younger female fans (ages 18-34) are more likely to pay to be in the stands. This younger fan group is what we refer to as "Seekers," because they go where the action is on gameday. They are more likely to share content from their favorite teams and are typically social media-first, multi-platform users.

Then there are the "Savors." These older female fans (ages 35-54), while they are as active on social media as Seekers, are typically loyal to one platform. Savors connect on social, voice their love for the Sunday football experience and try to create the perfect gameday experience with family & food.

When marketing to both types of fans, we recommend engaging them through emotion and throughout pivotal moments during the fan experience:

- Gameday activations: seekers, bars/stadiums; savors, family/in-home
- Content/storytelling around team passion
- Connections between players and fans

As Taylor continues its work with sponsors and teams, such as P&G, Mercedes Benz, and AMB Group (parent company of the Atlanta Falcons), we'll continue to uncover the nuances of fan engagement. And as the volume and passion of female NFL fans grows, understanding the mindset of this underserved constituency is key for brands to add value to each fan's experience.

*Samantha Baier is director of Taylor's Digital Sports group. As the leader of this team, she develops industry-leading digital campaigns rooted in fan insights for some of the world's leading consumer brands.*

## **PEOPLE ON THE MOVE**

**ROX United**, a part of United Collective, has named **Lisa Ruiz-Rogers** managing director. Ruiz-Rogers joins ROX United from Citizen Relations, where she was a senior vice president, leading a portfolio of Procter & Gamble brands. Her responsibilities included building global and regional communications programs and development of strategic 360 consumer media relations plans including digital content. Previously, Ruiz-Rogers was vice president at MSL Group and she has worked at Blaze PR, Bob Gold & Associates and FCB Healthcare.



**Lisa Ruiz-Rogers**

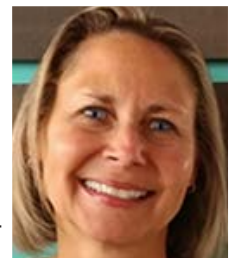
Washington, D.C. based strategic communications firm **Trident DMG**

has hired **Alexander Lange** as director. Lange comes to Trident from LEVICK, where he was a director, handling some of the firm's most visible clients in a wide range of high-stakes criminal and civil litigation. He has also worked for the U.S. Department of Defense and in local prosecutors' offices in both Virginia and the District of Columbia. At Trident, he advises clients with regard to litigation, government investigations, public controversies, crises and sensitive matters.

**Schwartz Media Strategies** has brought on **Jaclyn Messina** as vice president. Messina joins Schwartz from rbb Communications, where she was a senior account director. Before that, she was an account supervisor at Max Borges Agency. She has also served as a writer and producer for CNN and WNYW FOX 5 in New York City. In her new post, she is developing and executing strategic media relations and digital marketing initiatives for clients in the legal, accounting, hospitality and wealth management sectors.

**Naomi Bulochnikov-Paul** is coming back to her former post as VP communications at pay TV channel **Freeform**. Bulochnikov-Paul left Freeform, which is owned by the Disney-ABC Television Group, in February to become director, originals publicity at Netflix. Before her first stint at Freeform, she was vice president, media & talent relations at streaming channel Crackle, which is a subsidiary of Sony Pictures Entertainment. At Freeform, she will be responsible for strategic communication efforts, consumer press campaigns, awards outreach and talent relations.

**School Specialty, Inc.** has appointed **Stacey Rubin** as senior vice president of marketing. Rubin comes to School Specialty from Epsilon Agency|Catapult, where she led strategy and integrated marketing programs for Whirlpool, American Express, Kraft Heinz and Office Depot, among others. Before that she served as vice president of marketing for Tribune Media's publishing and interactive divisions. Previously, she was a senior vice president at Havas Chicago and served as senior vice president and management director at FCB Chicago.



**Stacey Rubin**

## **ADPI PICKS PADILLA FOR MULTIYEAR PUSH**

The American Dairy Products Institute, the national trade association representing the U.S. dairy industry, has picked Padilla and its food and nutrition consulting subsidiary FoodMinds to manage a multiyear communication campaign.

ADPI's members manufacture and market a majority of the milk- and whey-based products made in the U.S.

Padilla and FoodMinds have been tapped to promote dairy proteins as ingredients in a range of food and beverage products, and will kick off a multiyear communication campaign designed to showcase the benefits of dairy protein, with a focus on a research-based, integrated strategic communication program.

The work for ADPI will be conducted across Padilla and FoodMinds' Chicago, Minneapolis, New York, Richmond, San Francisco and Washington D.C. offices.

Padilla in 2017 accounted for more than \$16.3 million in food and beverage-related net fees, according to O'Dwyer's rankings of PR firms.

## **JOELE FRANK WORKS MATTRESS FIRM RE-ORG**

Joele Frank is handling the Chapter 11 filing of Mattress Firm Inc., the country's top bedding retailer, which after an acquisition spree (Sleepy's, Sleep Train), has too many stores that are too close to each other, according to CEO Steve Stagner.

"Leading up to the holiday shopping season, we will exit up to 700 stores," he said a statement. About 200 of the targeted stores will shut down during the next week.

Stagner says Mattress Firm will continue as the largest bed retailer and operate as in a "business-as-usual" manner during the reorganization.

Founded in 1986, Mattress Firm was acquired by South Africa's Steinhoff International in 2016.

Joele Frank Wilkinson Brimmer Katcher's Michael Freitag, Jed Repko and Aaron Palash handle the Mattress Firm filing.

## **SORRELL WORRIES ABOUT WPP**

Ousted WPP CEO Martin Sorrell frets that there's no one "looking out" for the ad/PR combine in which he remains a major shareholder.

The WPP founder criticized his old firm's decision to sell Globant digital marketing operation as "bordering on negligent," in a Sept. 30 interview with *The Sunday Times* (London). Commenting on WPP's nearly 20 percent stock price dip in the past 12 months, Sorrell said the share price "is not doing well for all sorts of reasons. I'm not sure, to be blunt that what is being done is necessarily the right thing."

Sorrell pointed out that founders have different attitudes to corporate managers. "Founders have a personal commitment to the company they founded, which is very difficult to replicate," he told the paper.

The 73-year-old executive, who is plotting a comeback via the S4 Capital corporate shell, exited WPP following a probe into his personal behavior.

## **GREECE PAYS PIPER FOR DC WORK**

Greece has hired DLA Piper to a \$75K monthly retainer contract to advance its mutual interests with the US in the areas of economics, trade, foreign policy and national security.

Ignacio Sanchez, co-chair of DLA Piper's government affairs practice, heads the firm's five-member lobbying team for the Greeks.



**Ignacio Sanchez**

That group includes DLA strategic advisor Tom Korologos, the well-connected Republican who was US ambassador to Belgium. Korologos served as director of congressional relations for Ronald Reagan's transition team and advisor to both Bob Dole's presidential bid and the Bush-Cheney transition team.

Greece faces an economic challenge in 2019, which will be the first time in nearly a decade that the country is not subject to International Monetary Fund and European bailout requirements.

The IMF warned Greece in September of the need to stick to its promise of making big pension cuts that were part of the bailout package.

## **MEDIA MANEUVERS**

**Lachlan Murdoch** is to head the version of **21st Century Fox** that will be left following the sale of most of the company's assets to the Walt Disney Company. Murdoch will become chairman and CEO of the new company, which be billed simply as "Fox." The new entity includes Fox Sports, Fox Broadcasting Network, Fox News and the Fox Business Network.

**iHeartMedia** has agreed to invest up to \$10 million in **High Times**. The deal, which is expected to give iHeartMedia an approximately a 5 percent stake in High Times Holding Corp., would give the marijuana company access to iHeartMedia's digital and radio advertising platforms. The deal follows High Times' \$11.2 million acquisition of Dope Media, the Seattle-based publisher of *Dope Magazine*, last month.

## **AWARDS AND EVENTS**

ICR is putting on the 21st annual **ICR Conference** Jan. 14-16, 2019 at the Grand Lakes Resort in Orlando, FL. The conference brings together public and private company management teams, institutional investors, sell-side research analysts, investment bankers, private equity professionals and select media. The event is by invitation only and registration opened Oct. 3. To request an invitation, go to <http://www.icrconference.com>.

As part of Communications Week (Oct. 15-19), the **PRSA Tri-State Conference** will be returning to New York. The conference, which runs from 8 am to 5 pm on Oct. 17, is directed toward PR, marketing and communications professionals in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. This year's theme will be "Automation & Media Relations: Technology to Evolve the PR World." The event will take place at NYU's Kimmel Center. For more information, or to register for the conference, go to <https://2018prsatristateconference.splashthat.com/>.

## COMMENTARY

### FINDING MEANING IN A POST-TRUTH WORLD

Donald Trump is less responsible for America's existential crisis than he is a symptom of it, the result of what happens when people identify themselves by an increasingly narrow set of beliefs, and the only remaining tie that binds us is the notion that objective truth no longer has any value in informing those beliefs.

Our political dysfunction can be illustrated with a simple exercise: if you told me your stance on, say, climate change, I'd be able to determine with 90 percent accuracy your positions on immigration, abortion and gun control, issues that have nothing to do with one another aside from serving as ideological linchpins in the culture wars that've fenced off the two major political parties in this country. These religious commitments to a fixed set of policy issues don't represent how people normally exchange ideas. In reality, we're motivated by pluralistic principles, our own made-to-order goals. People are complex, even if our modern political silos belie that notion.

Our media environment has definitely had a hand in widening this schism, where hyper-partisan news outlets and social networks are curated to suit our ideology, offering echo chambers that cater to personalized, subjective accounts of reality. Complex issues are condensed into easy-to-swallow slogans. Anyone who doesn't share our viewpoints is naive, stupid or racist. An à la carte media menu is available to feedback our unearned sense of moral superiority, confirming why we're always right and why the other side is always wrong.

This makes conversation with anyone who doesn't share our beliefs difficult, because any claims that run contrary to our fixed ideas of "truth" are seen as an affront to our narcissistic commitments to the identities that define us. It's at the point that, as former New York Times book critic Michiko Kakutani wrote in her new book, *The Death of Truth*, "Stars Wars movies and the Super Bowl remain some of the few communal events that capture an audience cutting across demographic lines." I'm guessing Kakutani was still drafting her tome when the NFL's anthem protests turned the league into a political battleground. So, Star Wars is it?

It's interesting that the post-truth era has become the left's bête noire, given, as Kakutani mentions in her book, its tenets sound eerily similar to what postmodernists in the academic left have been selling us for decades. The legion of Fox News viewers who refuse to accept science, who flock to media narratives that undermine the biases of a perceived "establishment" power structure, remarkably mirrors a school of thought whose message has been, essentially, the same: that everything is an infinitely interpretable social construction, that there are no universal truths. I'm not suggesting Trump has been reading Foucault or Derrida, but addressing this problem is nothing if it isn't a clear and obvious repudia-

tion of the failings of postmodernism, be it from Gauloises-puffing professors or a populist movement with an aversion to objective reality.

In fact, the culture wars have had this weird effect of causing a 180-degree ideological flip on so many issues for the right and left you could argue they've arrived at a sort of accidental consensus in the sense that issues now matter less than blind party loyalty. When I was a kid, conservatives were offended by everything. A trip to a college campus today confirms this is a behavior now ensconced firmly in the left. The left 20 years ago opposed global trade agreements. Now the left decries Trump's tariffs against China while conservatives, once vanguards of free trade, support them. Conservatives railed against the left for their "relativism," but now it's the right who seem to believe truth is in the eye of the beholder. The left, meanwhile, has become an ardent defender of science, though, to be fair, they haven't been immune from the follies of cherry-picking data that confirms their preconceptions either.

So, what to do? It appears the only commonality people share anymore is their logical dexterity, the idea that they're more interested in earning prestige points within their political tribes than expressing coherent viewpoints. Ideally, both sides will eventually realize we're being played by bad information. If we ever intend to repair the bridge between us, we need to reclaim objectivity, and to do that we have to regain control of data and demand better standards from our media. Facebook, now Americans' number-one daily news source, is essentially a facts-free zone, where clickbait and conspiracy theories reach more eyes than actual news. Facebook's massive September security breach, where hackers gained access to 50 million user accounts, attests to the fact that the site remains perilously vulnerable years after data firms and Russian troll farms used it for propaganda efforts in the months leading up to the 2016 election. If you want to improve your media diet, you could do worse than delete your social network accounts. This clearly isn't working.

If our post-truth era teaches us anything, hopefully it's the notion that using media to feed our confirmation biases is a terrible substitute for the greater value of using these tools to gain the insight and knowledge that comes with a rational worldview. Advancements in AI and machine learning will undoubtedly make tomorrow's fake news even more convincing. As long as truth remains a dispensable casualty, we can't expect to bridge our divide anytime soon. But the unwritten implication for failing to do so is dire. We've created the very sort of environment in which extremist ideologies thrive. —Jon Gingerich

