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Letters | On exposure to the sun, education, Sudan, Robert Kennedy, growing up, cold-war diplomacy

Letters to the editor

A selection of correspondence

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Exposure to the sun

Regarding the notion that exposure to the sun's ultraviolet radiation may be good for you ("UV's bright side", August 17th"), unprotected exposure to UV rays, whether through exposure to the sun or artificial sources, is a major risk factor for skin cancer. Your skin is damaged every time it is sunburned. As the damage builds over time the risk for skin cancer increases. One in five Americans will get skin cancer and nearly 20 die from melanoma each day. It is important to seek shade, wear protective clothing and apply sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher to uncovered skin. Moreover, using tanning beds before age 35 can increase your chances of developing melanoma by 59% and the risk increases with each use.

Contrary to recent news stories, skin cancer can affect anyone, regardless of skin colour. Skin cancer in patients with darker skin tones is often diagnosed in later stages, when it is more difficult to treat, and patients with darker skin tones are less likely than patients with lighter skin tones to survive melanoma.

You need only a small amount of sun exposure to produce all the vitamin D your body needs. Even if you apply sunscreen, you'll still get the minimum amount of sun exposure needed. And although vitamin D is crucial for bone health, there isn't enough evidence to support its impact on reducing the occurrence of other diseases such as certain cancers, neurological conditions, infectious illnesses, autoimmune disorders, or cardiovascular issues.

DR
President

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SEEMAL DESAI

American Academy of Dermatology
Rosemont, Illinois

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ILLUSTRATION: LEON EDLER

The stages of learning

"God and grades" (August 17th) reported that religiously minded pupils in America do better in public school than other pupils, but they underperform in selective colleges because they prioritise families and communities over elite learning. Could the explanation for this be that excelling in a selective university requires deep and original critical thinking,
at which the pious may perform more poorly than in their earlier stages of education, when things are taken on faith.

DAVE WARK
Professor of physics
Oxford University

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PHOTOGRAPH: IMAGO

The UAE responds

I appreciate that you are highlighting the unfolding tragedy in Sudan, describing it as a sign of growing global disorder ("Chaos machine", August 31st). The most recent peace talks in Switzerland led by the United States, where I represented the government of the United Arab Emirates, demonstrated that the international community is collectively united in its determination to address this humanitarian catastrophe. The UAE played a constructive role in helping to establish the Aligned for Advancing Lifesaving and Peace in Sudan format, which unlocked critical routes for aid deliveries, secured further commitments to protect civilians and developed a proposal for a compliance mechanism to ensure implementation of the Jeddah Declaration, with the objective to secure a ceasefire.

Unfortunately, women and girls continue to be the most affected in crises and conflict zones. We remain committed to intensifying diplomatic efforts to protecting all civilians, especially women and children, from all forms of violence, including sexual violence. The UAE has continued to push for elevating and integrating the perspectives of Sudanese women into recent efforts and talks.

Your allegations are misdirected. The UAE is not providing weapons or any other support to the Rapid Support Forces or any of the warring parties in Sudan. We believe that the only way to achieve peace is through effective diplomacy where the warring parties must reach a full nationwide ceasefire. Only a negotiated settlement and return to a civilian-led government through our collective investment of time, expertise, leverage and humanitarian resources will achieve the momentum needed.

The humanitarian crisis in Sudan is intolerable, and we remain focused on working towards securing an immediate and urgent ceasefire. Both parties must come to the next round of talks. The people of Sudan deserve our full attention and collective efforts to end this war.

LA
Assistant minister of foreign affairs for political affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Abu Dhabi

NA NUSSEIBEH

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ILLUSTRATION: DAVID SIMONDS

What could have been in 1968

Another reason why Democratic elders gave their party's presidential nomination to Hubert Humphrey in 1968 (Lexington, August 17th) was that the previous front-runner, Robert Kennedy, had been assassinated in June. If he had followed the advice of his security staff and not left the Ambassador Hotel through the kitchen Kennedy may have lived and may well have beaten Richard Nixon in the November election. The Vietnam war, a much bigger issue in 1968 than Gaza is today, would probably have taken a vastly different course.

ART SPENCE
Los Angeles

Supporting children

Your report on the importance of investing in children's early years (Graphic detail, August 8th) was a timely reminder that supporting the health, education and care of the world's children aged six and under should be the cornerstone of efforts to promote sustainable development. We are currently a long way from that, with most countries spending far less on children aged 0-6 than on those in the 6-11 and 11-17 groups. This is despite compelling evidence that investing in the early years is a cost-effective way of alleviating poverty, correcting inequality and boosting productivity.

Our research has found that if the G20 had increased spending on those three areas by just 0.6% of GDP from 2018 to 2021, 16.7m children could have been lifted out of poverty. By contrast, making maternity benefits available only to insured mothers or employed mothers can in fact increase poverty rates and reduce female employment.

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Until now, international groups and agreements have done little more than pay lip service to supporting children's early years. But momentum is growing to turn promise into effective action. Importantly, the impetus is coming from three large emerging economies, India, Brazil and South Africa, which are consecutively chairing the G20, rather than the aid powerhouses of the global north.

That momentum will be evident when Brazil chairs the annual G20 summit in November. Beyond that, our goal is to stage the first ever International Financing Summit on the Early Years. Yes, that means another summit and pledging event. But we believe it will be the best way of moving world leaders' minds from good intentions to well-judged investment, to stop seeing the early years chiefly as a cost, and to secure the investments needed to transform lifelong outcomes for all children.

SARAH BROWN
Chair

JUSTIN VAN FLEET
President
Theirworld
London

ILLUSTRATION: JOANNE JOO

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Growing up fast

Your review of the book "Infantilised" noted that the rise of "kidults" may be down to Western culture stopping people from growing up ("RIP adulthood", August 24th). This is not the case in Israel, where the

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reality of meeting existential threats on a daily basis from a young age leaves no room for immaturity. Young Israelis typically have attained all of the markers of adulthood by the time they are 30. They leave home, many to serve in the military at age 18 and as active reservists by 23.

They become financially independent (except for those who rely on their parents to help buy an apartment), co-habit with a partner, parent a dog, get married and have children. Moreover, their independence starts in their early teens, when they assume leadership roles with full responsibility for younger children in youth organisations or as training assistants in a multitude of sports organisations. Teenagers in Israel also work as blue-collar apprentices, farm hands and even entrepreneurs, in addition to traditional service jobs.

You cited the example of a 20-something woman who broke down and cried and called her mother to intervene when her boss corrected her spelling. The notion of a similarly aged Israeli woman, who might have been an infantry or artillery commander, doing the same is risible beyond laughter. There is a far greater likelihood that she would argue her case vehemently, stare the boss down and either agree with the correction or tell him to stuff it. Mommy would never find out.

ILAN SEIDNER
Tel Aviv

Pop culture such as "School of Rock" is to blame for infantilising people? The film was released in 2003. Maybe today's young adults have seen it in their parents' DVD collection.

PAUL MONGRÉ
Bern, Switzerland

I personally follow the policy stated by the oldest person I know of: "There's no point being grown up if you can't be childish sometimes." Doctor Who when he was around 750 years of age (played by Tom Baker at the time).

ADAM GUY
Durham

Baring diplomatic cheeks

Armenia's tricky balancing act of maintaining good relations with Russia and the West reminded me of how Kari Suomalainen, a political cartoonist, described Finland's diplomatic position during the cold war ("Westward ho!", August 3rd). He said it was "The art of bowing to the East without mooning the West."

RYAN SHARPLES
Tacoma, Washington

This article appeared in the Letters section of the print edition under the headline "On exposure to the sun, education, Sudan, Robert Kennedy, growing up, cold-war diplomacy"

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