

# Carving Notches in Dixville

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## Feedback

I got a couple of notes about last week's missive. My friend David, fellow English major, pointed out that there is another example of "telegraphed foreshadowing" in *Porgy and Bess* in the very first scene, when the men are throwing dice: As David put it:

Robbins enters and announces that his wife wants to save money to join the burying lodge, but he believes in spending it while you're alive. And 10 minutes later, he's dead.

Ooof! I forgot about poor Robbins, the opera's first victim of irony overdose, in the form of a sharp steel cotton hook!

I also got a kind note from my friend Nick, who liked my comment on the Iowa Caucus, about how the narrative was stolen. I can't take full credit for that concept — Caitlin Johnstone writes a lot about the importance of shaping the narrative in politics.

## Tuesday

### Joseph Shabalala

On the way to work this morning I heard that Joseph Shabalala had died. He was the founder of the choral group Ladysmith Black Mambazo. His full birth name is **Bhekizizwe Joseph Siphathimandla Mxoveni Mshengu Bigboy Shabalala**. Founded in 1960, Ladysmith Black Mambazo has released well over *one hundred* albums.

I was fortunate enough to hear the group perform at the College of Wooster. It's been a minute, but I remember how gorgeous their blended voices sounded inside the modernist McGaw Chapel. McGaw could be called a "controversial" building — many seem to hate it, but I like it, in part because it gave choral groups such a nice reverberation, and in part because I spent a lot of time on its roof, drinking beer and watching the sunset, on top of one of the concrete

shapes we called the “do not climbs” on account of the signs warning us not to climb them.

After the show, I saw the group milling around in Lowry Center. Most of the men apparently spoke no English at all, and Zulu language speakers were a little scarce in Wooster, Ohio, so they were wearing laminated cards around their necks, which I assume said something like “Hello! I do not speak English. If found, please return to the College of Wooster.” It must have been a strange and lonely journey for these men, touring and singing to audiences behind the language barrier, but I hope the enthusiastic response of the audiences helped make it a little bit more bearable.

Check out this track, “Golgotha”, and take a moment to remember Joseph Shabalala, the man whose name sounds like a song.

## Carving Notches in Dixville

I think it’s worth pointing out that the New York Times has published a detailed article about the errors and inconsistencies in the Iowa Caucus numbers. Unfortunately I can’t read it, because even though I let their site show me ads, it won’t let me read the article unless I give them my e-mail address or sign in with my Google login, but maybe you can.

I also feel a bit vindicated in my suspicions about the development of the app used in the Iowa Caucus. Perez has blamed Iowa Democratic Party, and Troy Price has resigned. But:

The source who worked on the caucus said they found Perez’s comments “extremely frustrating” because he did not disclose the DNC’s extensive role in the app.

“They were intimately involved in this process,” the source said of the DNC, noting the committee’s deputy CTO, Atwater, was on multiple conference calls during the app’s development.

I have seen smart people whose opinions I often agree with and respect arguing that we shouldn’t hold Perez, or Price, responsible. But I would like to point out that people like me who have followed Perez’s career with the DNC have had plenty of other reasons for our disgust, going back to the way he was recruited to run for the job against Keith Ellison

to ensure that the Democratic establishment maintains its fatal grip on the party and, in particular, to prevent Sanders followers from having any say in the party’s direction and identity...

And:

Just over two weeks after Ellison announced, the largest single funder of both the Democratic Party and the Clinton campaign — the Israeli-American billionaire Haim Saban — launched an incredibly

toxic attack on Ellison, designed to signal his veto. “He is clearly an anti-Semite and anti-Israel individual,” pronounced Saban about the African-American Muslim congressman, adding: “Keith Ellison would be a disaster for the relationship between the Jewish community and the Democratic Party.”

So there’s that. And Perez has proven himself to be every bit the tool of the establishment party that they hired him to be:

On Friday, news that the DNC was going to adjust its debate rules to allow billionaire Mike Bloomberg onstage drew outrage and accusations that the party was allowing the former New York City mayor to buy his way into the election — and the beginning of the latest wave of calls for Perez’s resignation.

Per the petition, which I urge you to sign,

DNC Chair Tom Perez unilaterally changed the Democratic Debate Rules to pave the way for Billionaire Michael Bloomberg to participate. He removed the individual donor threshold, which ensured that candidates had adequate grassroots support. This was clearly done to pave the way for a nominee bought and paid for by the top one tenth of one percent. In point of fact, Bloomberg only has one donor — himself!

I’m old enough to remember when Perez said “we made the rules, they were very transparent, they’re very inclusive, and we can’t change the rules midstream,” way back in... January of 2020.

I consider myself to be pretty cynical and jaded, but I’m honestly disgusted at the number of liberals prepared to happily grease the skids for Bloomberg’s nomination. They reveal their cynical abuse of identity politics as the tissue paper-thin veil that it always was for them, and their comfort with such a blatantly racist, sexist, authoritarian Republican tells me all I need to know about their actual values.

If, G-d forbid, Bloomberg is nominated, it will completely fracture the Democratic party. The Democrats will lose to Trump in a landslide. And history will remember Tom Perez as the man willing to do the bidding of billionaire fascists in order to make it happen. Because, make no mistake, from any perspective even slightly to the left of extremely hard right, Bloomberg is indistinguishable from Trump, except that he wears patrician, ruling-class affectations instead of anti-ruling class affectations.

## **New Hampshire**

On the drive in I also heard that the voters in Dixville Notch, New Hampshire had cast their ballots in the Democratic primary. There were three votes for Bloomberg, and one each for Buttigieg and Sanders. I think they also passed

one referendum; the text of it simply read “RESOLVED: those goddamn camera operators shall stay off our lawns,” and it passed unanimously.

I’ll be watching the election results tonight. I have a feeling it is going to be a late night and I’m going to need a wee dram of Scotch to calm my nerves.

## Sunday

Wow, is it Sunday already?

So, Bernie won the New Hampshire primary, but the margin was uncomfortably close. More significantly, the results differed from the polling, which is either a sign of possible election tampering, or of an inability to get good polling data.

One theory about the primary is that an awful lot of people were waiting to see which way the wind was blowing before deciding who to vote for. That suggests that Buttigieg got a big boost in NH based on his declaration of victory in IA, despite the facts on the ground in IA leaving a reasonable observer with no confidence in the results. (Associated Press still hasn’t declared a winner.) I learned that the final Des Moines Register poll results, which were withheld based on a challenge from the Buttigieg campaign, have actually been leaked, and they also show a huge discrepancy between Buttigieg’s poll numbers and (current) caucus results. Since IA folks can’t have been choosing Buttigieg in the caucus based on his successes in any previous contests — because there weren’t any! — this is suggestive of, but not proof of, serious ratfucking right down at the individual precinct level.

The withheld and allegedly inaccurate poll had Sanders at 22%, Warren at 18%, Buttigieg at 16%, and Biden at 13%. It was pretty similar to the previously released mid-January poll that showed Sanders at 20%, Warren at 17%, Buttigieg at 16%, and Biden at 15%. The IA caucus results (such as they are) have Biden at about 16% and Warren at 18%, very close to the poll results, and Sanders up from 22% to 26.1%, which is consistent with his campaign’s continued upward momentum. But Buttigieg took a *huge* jump from a consistent 16% to 26.2%, and I just don’t find that credible, and I think you shouldn’t find it credible, either.

In multiple NH polls Monday there was a pretty consistent 7 to 8-point spread between Sanders and Buttigieg, but the actual results were only 1.3 points apart. That is, again, pretty startling, and pretty hard to believe in. I don’t know if anyone is studying these numbers to determine how likely or unlikely this was, statistically, but it seems like someone who knows more about this than I do ought to be looking into it. Unfortunately such a research paper will not get any traction in the mainstream media, and it will likely emerge long after the election has been systematically stolen.

## Brown Suede Shoe Kind of Day

I just had to clean baby shit off a brown suede shoe. The Elvis parody practically writes itself. And I just wound up sitting in a puddle of something that was either baby drool, or urine. I'm not quite sure which. I'm trying not to think about it.

The remainder of the week passed largely in a blur. Work has been strange. I had to relocate my desk yet again, as I think I mentioned last week, but I hope I'll be able to stay in this new spot for a while. I might even plug in my wired phone soon. It hasn't been plugged in since my first of three moves last summer.

The team I'm working with in China is locked down, under quarantine, and can't get access to the prototype hardware. From what I hear from them, they are all remaining healthy. But we are struggling to figure out how to enable them to make progress under these circumstances.

I have a prototype laser wired up on my desk to a prototype communication board, and we set up another PC so they can log in remotely and try running their software with our hardware from the other side of the planet during Michigan's night. But a while back when swapping prototype communication boards I managed to plug a cable into the wrong socket. It wasn't supposed to be possible, because there are protections designed into the circuits, but something shorted and burned up, and the office suddenly smelled like burning microchip. Fortunately we had spare communication boards, so I was able to get back up and running pretty quickly, but it appears that this little incident also damaged the laser control module, and so the laser is not responding to all commands the way it was. The other prototype laser, which as far as I know is undamaged, is locked up in an office in China.

We continue to be a plague ship of sorts. As the temperature has bounced around crazily — it was five degrees Friday night and it's forty today — our systems just can't get used to the winter that won't stay winter. So the kids keep getting runny noses and coughs and drips and wheezes and generously sharing them with the rest of us.

## Weighty Matters

I've learned the hard way that being in a mode where I'm gradually losing weight, which is the mode I've tried to be in recently, is not compatible with getting over any kind of virus. It just seems to prolong it. If I eat more, I'll get over the viral illness much quicker, but at the same time, start to put weight back on.

I have lost a few pounds over the last couple of months, and that's good. I've been able to wear my 34-inch pants again. But it's a struggle. I have found that various forms of intermittent fasting seem to work well for me. One form is to just use a daily "eating window" and try to eat all of my meals during that time period. This tends to naturally result in eating fewer calories per day, and

allows my system some down time to go into fasting mode each day. But it's also been quite hard to figure out how to make it work with our schedule.

We struggle to get the kids to bed in the evening, and it's a good night if we can get all the kids into bed and quiet by midnight, and ourselves to sleep by 1:00. In order to avoid the worst of the traffic on I-94, I have settled into a pattern where I leave home about 9:30. Because of Malachi's egg allergy, I can't cook my favorite breakfast at home, so I'm often trying to have a quick breakfast on my way to work, consisting of (for example) an egg salad on toast, or a fried egg sandwich, and my caffeine allowance for the day.

I usually work until about 7:30 or 8:00. To eat only within an 8-hour window, I'd need to be done eating by about 5:30. But with the kids' choir practice and various meetings and what-not, we often don't eat dinner until after 9:00 p.m., stretching that eating window to 12 hours or longer. So on some days I've tried having *only* coffee first thing in the morning and not eating solid food until about 2:00 p.m. But that doesn't work well either — coffee on an empty stomach tends to make me a bit too wired, and I'm pretty ravenous by 2:00. So I wind up eating a small lunch late, and then I'm very hungry by dinner time, and eat too much too soon before trying to lie down and sleep, which has its own downsides, including heartburn.

I've also seen very clearly over the last few weeks the way that I can pretty easily stick to a healthy diet on good days, but a really bad day — a day filled with bad news, or a crisis with the kids, or several kids melting down — can very easily trigger me to do stress eating of carbohydrate-heavy food, which actually does make me feel better, although unfortunately only on a temporary basis. And it's recently seemed that eating the same number of calories, when I'm feeling stressed, will result in a pretty surprising amount of weight gain, while eating extra calories for sheer enjoyment — say, when having a special meal out or a take-out Chinese feast — when I'm not feeling stressed will result in little or no weight gain. I am increasingly convinced that we still understand very little about the relationship between different types of food consumed, weight gain, and stress.

We're in a stage, right now, with the kids where home is, undeniably, a much more stressful place to be than work. Elanor is still mostly non-verbal, but very loud. Malachi has learned to scream with joy. Grace gets them out of the house many times each week, but they still wind up, it seems, burning up excess energy by bickering and fighting with each other. I just hope this stage will pass soon. And there's money stress, caused by sudden unexpected bills, which can also send me into a bit of a stress-eating tailspin.

## Wrapping Up

I haven't managed to watch any films or TV shows this week, or get any reading done, so there's really nothing to review. I've been nervously following the election news. We're less than a week from the Nevada Caucus, and it may

very well be as much of a shit-show than the Iowa Caucus. I'm expecting to read about fistfights and thrown chairs and vicious verbal assaults by "Bernie Bros," whether any of these reported events happened or not. And this time I'm expecting that we won't have trustworthy results, since the party has deployed an app to do calculation and reporting, and as of this writing, Caucus chairs on Twitter report that they haven't been trained to use it, or been able to test it. It's gonna be great!

We're all gonna be great!

Have a great week!

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