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News Item

Frustration, polarization, and the pandemic ‘endgame’ in America | Columbia Journalism Review

By Jon Allsop
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> Yesterday, President Biden gave a speech at the White House outlining what he sees as the way out of the pandemic morass. Again. He announced his most aggressive action yet to mandate vaccination—tightening existing rules for the public sector and adding requirements for many businesses—and articulated frustration with the unvaccinated (“Our patience is wearing thin”) that drove headlines in major outlets. Frustration has been a dominant mood in mainstream pandemic coverage lately—with the unvaccinated, for sure, but also with Biden, for taking too long to announce tougher measures. Yesterday morning, an NPR report channeled public-health experts’ “growing sense of disappointment and frustration” with the administration’s performance; *Politico*’s influential DC Playbook newsletter regurgitated the report at length (under the heading “IF YOU’VE LOST NPR…”) and concluded that Biden risks “losing his intellectual base.” Other coverage, by contrast, has expressed frustration at Biden’s relative powerlessness. Ahead of his speech, many observers predicted that the Americans Biden most needs to reach wouldn’t be listening. Speaking on CNN after Biden wrapped up, Jake Tapper raised doubts as to the viability of his policies and the effectiveness of his sharper tone, especially in a climate of rampant COVID misinformation.
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