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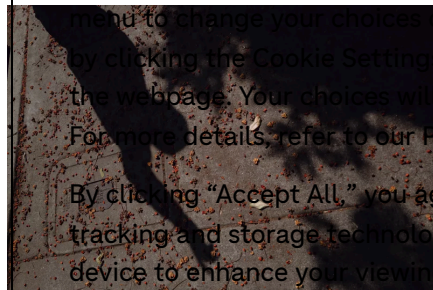
IMMIGRATION

'Antagonized for being Hispanic': Growing claims of racial profiling in LA raids

JULY 4, 2025 · 1:00 PM ET

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Emma de Paz was selling breakfast to day laborers outside a Los Angeles Home Depot on June 19 when immigration agents showed up. Some of them chased workers through the parking lot. Others rounded up the food cart vendors. De Paz was handcuffed, forced onto her knees, and driven to a federal detention center downtown, she recounted what he saw.

A man who witnessed an immigration raid at a junkyard in Montebello, Calif., on June 12, recounted what he saw.

Zaydee Sanchez for NPR

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They didn't ask if she had papers or not. They just grabbed her and put her into one of the vans," Barrera said, recalling his conversation with his sister, who has since been transferred to a desert detention center 90 miles away. "They had no reason to arrest her. They didn't have a warrant."

PLAYLIST TRANSCRIPT

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Though his sister is undocumented, Barrera said the agents could not have known that before detaining her or many of the 29 other people they rounded up that morning.

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"She has dark skin. They assumed she was Hispanic, and they took her," he said.

"It's the racial factor."

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Photos of Emma de Paz under a street

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agents raided the lot and arrested her. **We and our partners process data to provide:**

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De Paz's brother, Carlos Barrera, said agents arrested her without asking any questions. He believes she was targeted for looking Hispanic.

"Open season" on immigrants

Immigrant advocates and civil rights lawyers say evidence is mounting that immigration agents carrying out the Trump administration's deportation crackdown in southern California are engaging in widespread racial profiling.

They've raided known hubs for Latino workers almost daily — hardware store parking lots, car

washes, and street vendor corners. Videos of many of those operations, filmed by bystanders and posted to social media, have shown agents arresting people who appear to be Latino as they stand on sidewalks or wait at bus stops.

On Wednesday, the American Civil Liberties Union and other legal groups filed a federal class action lawsuit alleging that immigration agents roving the streets are targeting people based on the color of their skin or their apparent occupation. They want a judge to declare the raids unconstitutional.

"There is a real sense that it is open season on anyone who appears to be an immigrant," said Eva Bitran, director of immigrants' rights at the ACLU of Southern California. "They are arriving, corralling people before asking one single question, just based on their location and their appearance. Often they are handcuffing people even before they have asked for their papers, or even after a person has said 'I am a US citizen, I have a green card, I have every right to be here.' "

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Eva Bitran, director of immigrants' rights at the ACLU of Southern California. The civil rights group is challenging the Trump administration's dragnet immigration raids as unconstitutional.

Zaydee Sanchez for NPR

Tricia McLaughlin, assistant secretary for public affairs with the Department of Homeland Security, denied that immigration agents are engaging in racial profiling.

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"Any claims that individuals have been targeted by law enforcement because of their skin color are disgusting and categorically FALSE," McLaughlin said in a statement. **We and our partners process data to provide:**

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"DHS enforcement operations are highly targeted, and officers do their due diligence," she added. "We know who we are targeting ahead of time. If and when we do encounter individuals subject to arrest, our law enforcement is trained to ask a series of well-determined questions to determine status and removability."

Rules govern immigration stops

But some legal experts say the indiscriminate sweeps agents appear to be carrying out likely violate rules governing their authority to arrest people they

encounter in public, including Fourth Amendment protections against unreasonable seizure.

Under federal law, immigration agents can question anyone about their immigration status.

But before arresting someone in public without a warrant, "agents have to have a 'reasonable suspicion' that someone is in the country illegally," said Jean Reisz, professor of immigration law at the University of Southern California. "That

reasonable suspicion has to be based on articulable facts. It can't just be based on race. It can't be that this person looks like what I think someone from another country looks like.

People are free not to answer an immigration agent's questions, but if they try to run, agents often consider that suspicious enough to arrest them, she said.

Advocates say the Trump administration's ambitious daily arrest quotas are leading immigration agents to lean on the thinnest of justifications and on false assumptions about people they encounter to justify arrests.

"If you're asking these law enforcement agencies to arrest 3,000 people a day, they cannot form reasonable suspicion for each specific person," Bitran said. "So they have to be cutting corners."

Earlier this year, the ACLU convinced a federal judge in Central California that Border Patrol agents there violated the Constitution when they carried out raids that swept up dozens of people based largely on their Latino appearance. Those swept up included U.S. citizens.

"I'm a U.S. citizen!" On June 12th, Javier Ramirez was at his uncle's auto junkyard in the mostly Latino city of Montebello, east of Los Angeles, when a white unmarked SUV pulled up to the front gate. Video from a security camera shows three U.S. Border Patrol agents quickly get out, pull up their face coverings, and walk through the gate.

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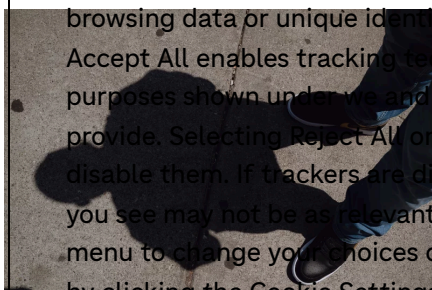
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A recent concert in downtown Los Angeles to protest ongoing immigration raids. Small protests have popped up almost daily, often at the sites where someone was arrested for deportation.

Zaydee Gonzalez for NPR

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Abimael Dominguez recalled how Border Patrol agents arrested his uncle's junkyard on June 12 and arrested his brother, Javier Ramirez. Ramirez is a U.S. citizen, and was eventually released, but his brother said the experience traumatized him. By clicking "Accept All," you agree to the use of cookies, similar tracking and storage technologies, and information about your device to enhance your viewing, listening and user experience, personalize content, personalize messages from NPR's sponsors, provide social media features, and analyze NPR's traffic. This information is shared with social media, sponsorship, analytics, and other vendors or service providers.

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In a second video filmed by Ramirez's brother minutes later, Ramirez is handcuffed while an agent pins him against the fence.

"We're all U.S. citizens!" Ramirez shouts. "I've got my passport!"

He tussles with the officer, who pushes him to the ground. Agents then load Ramirez into a van and drive off.

"You can't take him! You can't take him!" Ramirez's brother, Abimael Dominguez, shouts.

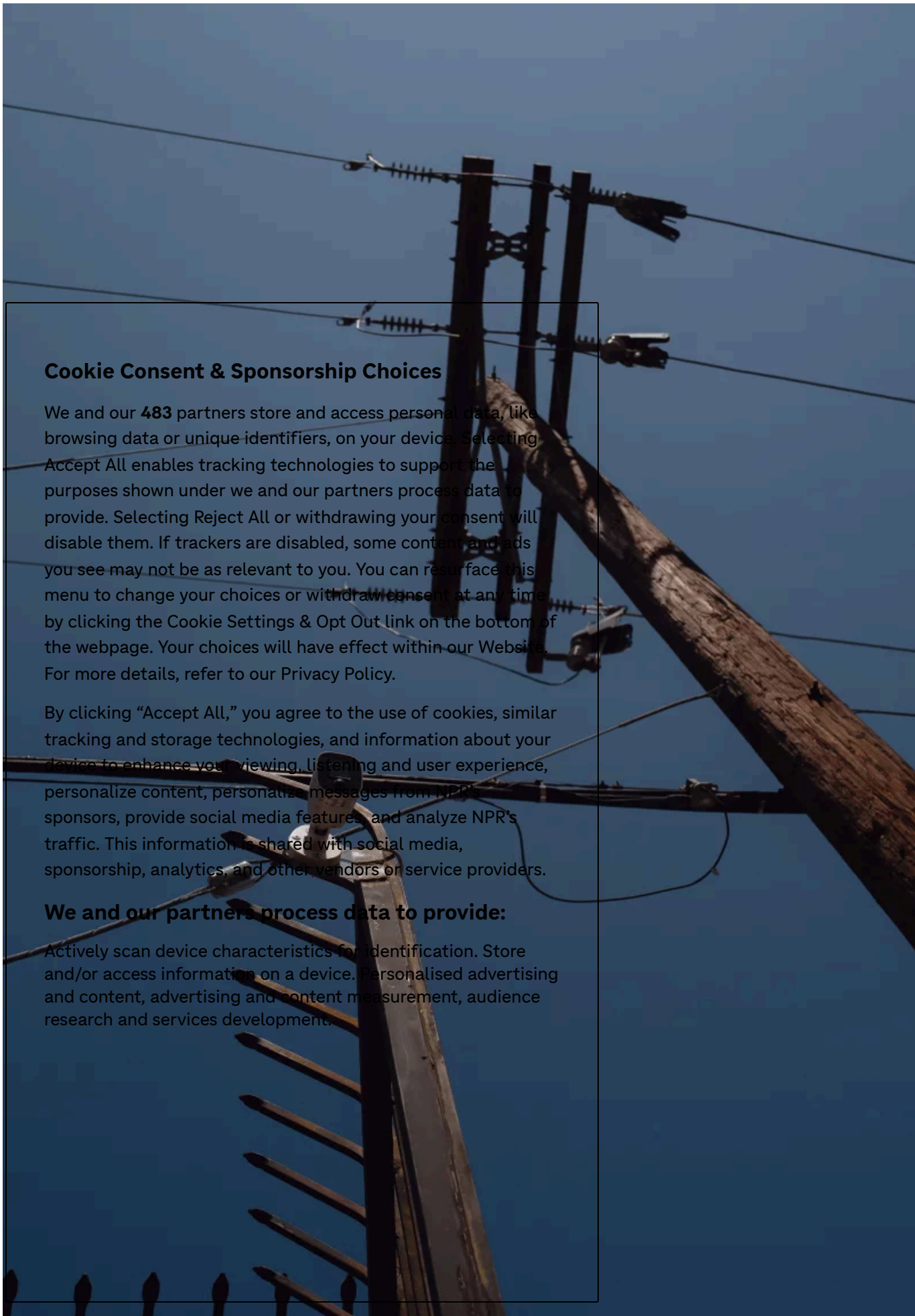
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Security cameras captured how Border Patrol agents drove up to the junkyard, covered their faces and quickly walked onto the property in search of people to deport.

Zaydee Sanchez for NPR

According to court filings, Ramirez was taken to the federal detention center in downtown Los Angeles. Agents confirmed his U.S. citizenship, but charged him with assaulting, resisting or impeding a federal officer.

Standing outside the junkyard on a recent morning, Dominguez said that agents had no reason to suspect his brother or anyone else working there was in the

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"There's a lot of Hispanic brothers right here," but everyone working in the yard that day was a U.S. citizen, he said. "Racial profiling is the way I look at it. Because they just walked in and said 'hey, you and you.'"

Another U.S. citizen who was temporarily detained during the raid is now a plaintiff in the ACLU's lawsuit

Javier Ramirez has since been released on bail. But his brother said he fears leaving home

"He's traumatized," Dominguez said. "The NPR checks, to be a U.S. citizen and not be able to walk in the country of freedom. It sucks that we're antagonized for being Hispanic"

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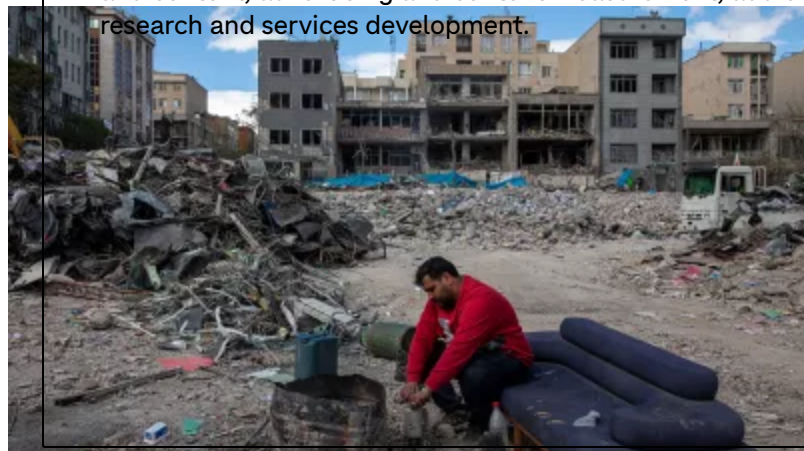
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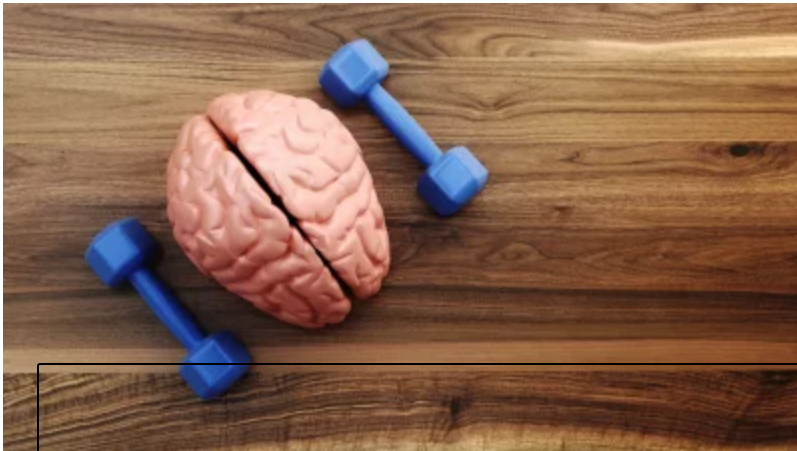
POP CULTURE HAPPY HOUR

The embarrassing truth of dating men : Pop Culture Happy Hour

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U.S. and Iran agree to 2-week ceasefire, suspending Trump's threat to annihilate Iran



This form of mental exercise may cut dementia risk for decades

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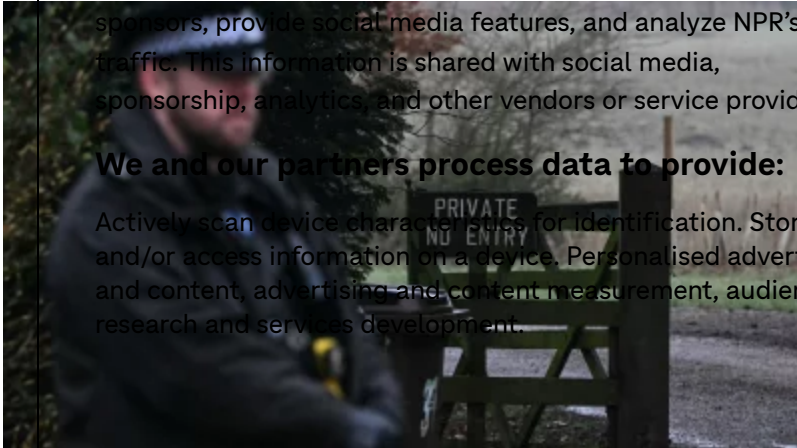
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Trump shared a racist "joke," That humor is an American tradition : Code Switch

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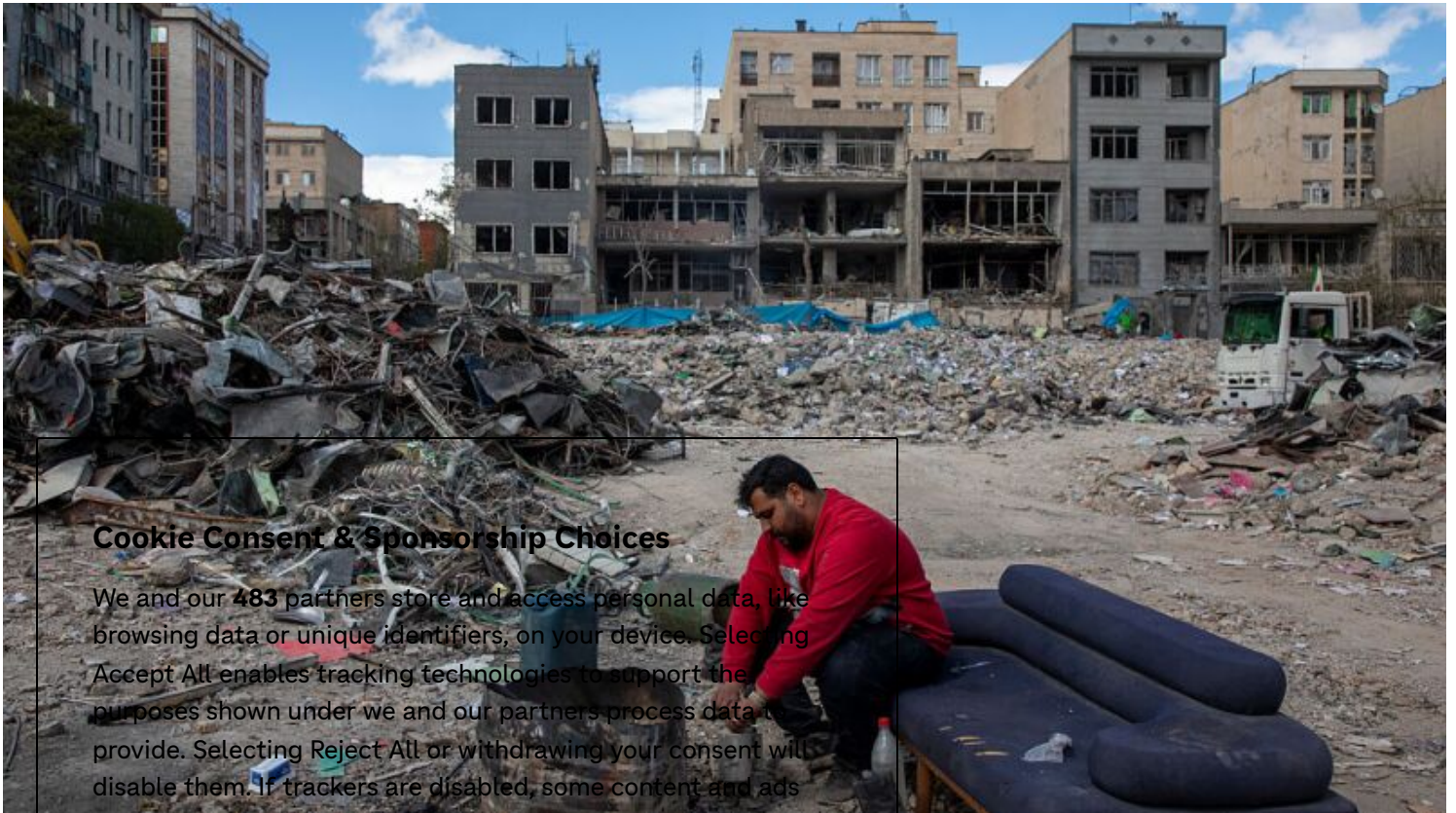
NASA's Artemis II crew are quite the photographers. See what they've snapped so far

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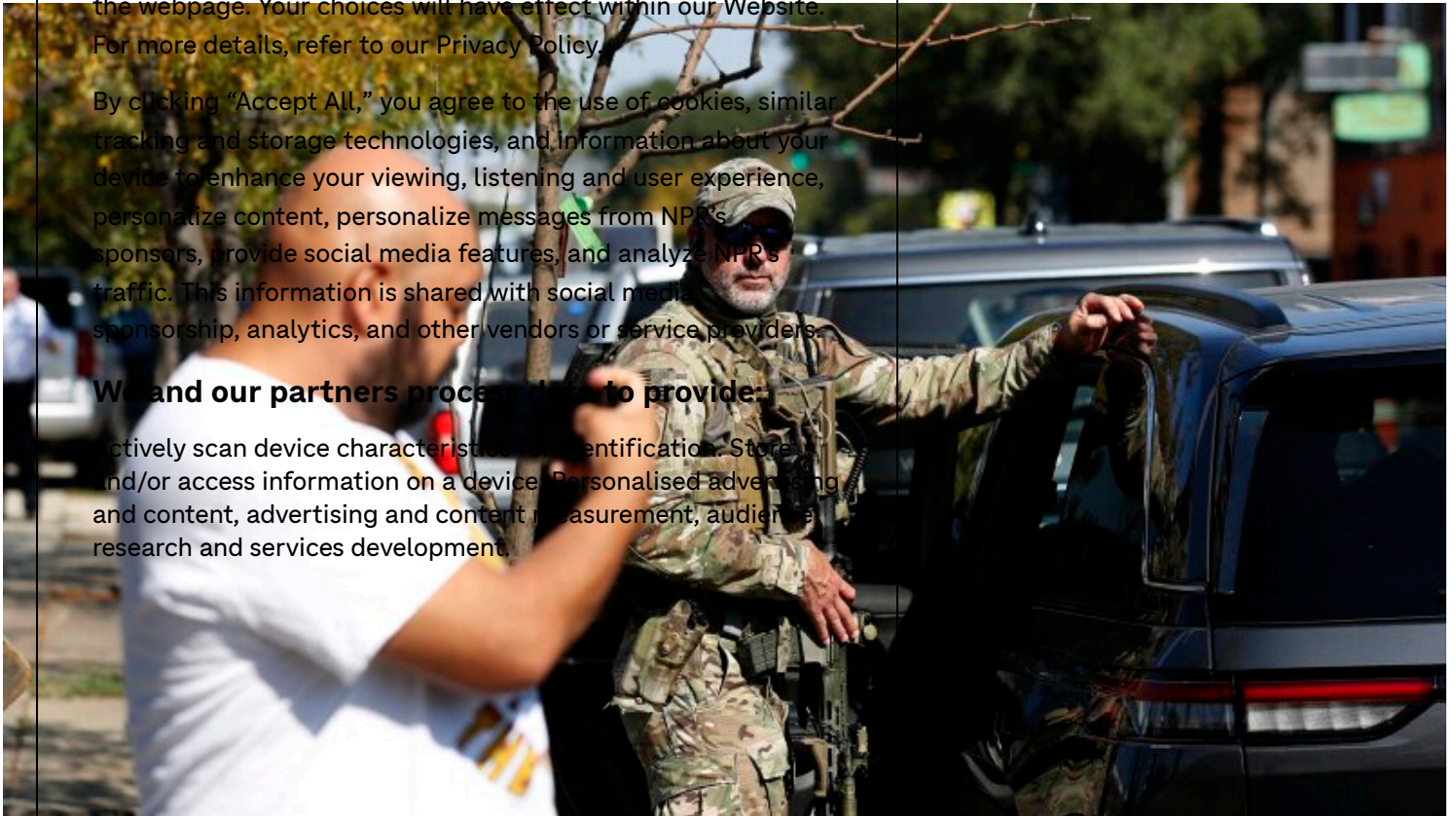
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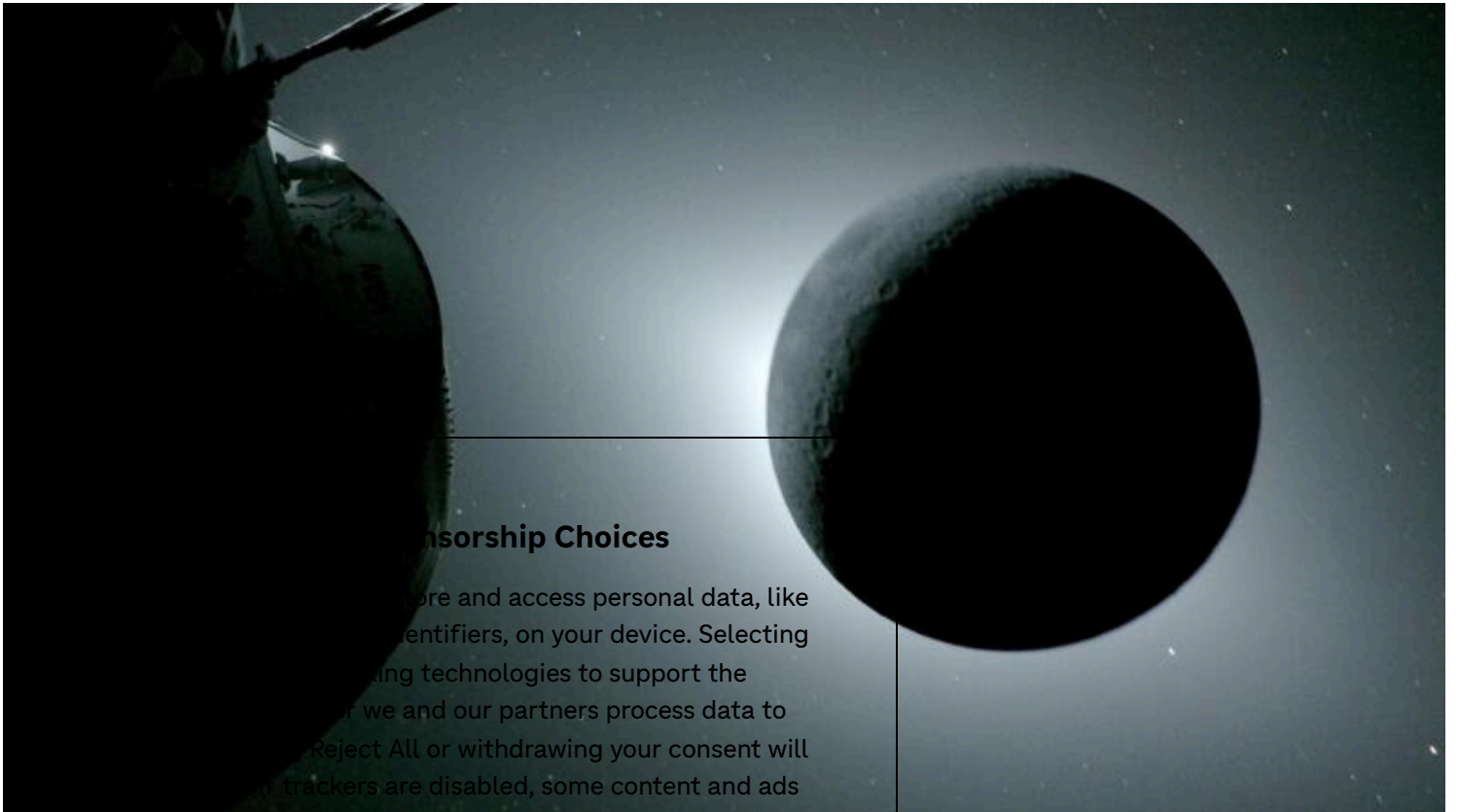
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TECHNOLOGY

ICE acknowledges it is using powerful spyware



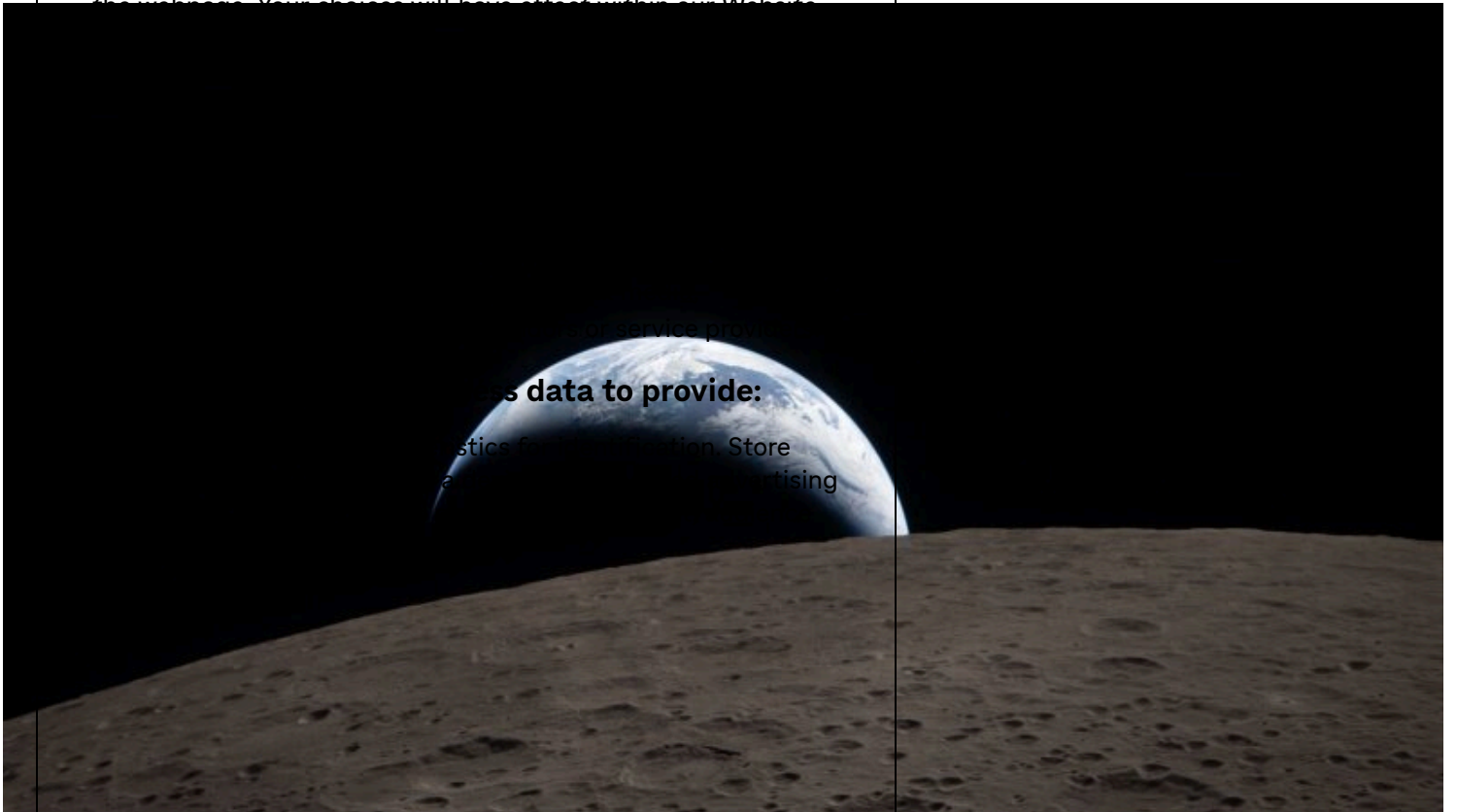
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The Artemis II crew saw parts of the moon never seen before. Here's what they said

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THE PICTURE SHOW

Photos: NASA releases first images from moon flyby



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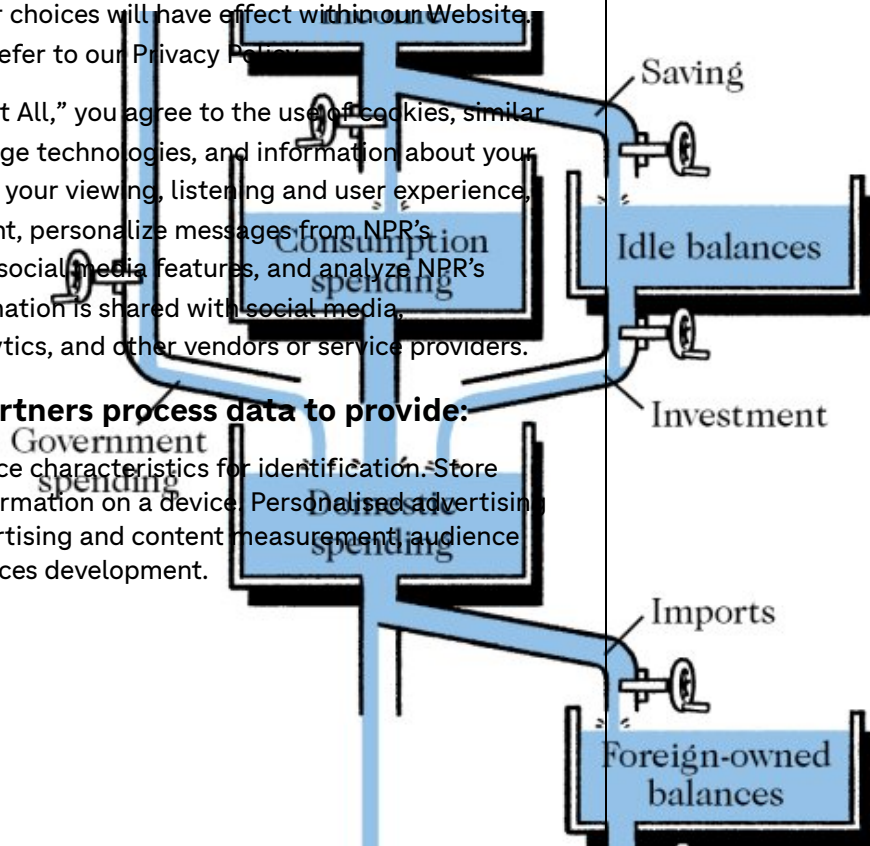
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Telehealth abortion will remain available for now, after a federal judge's ruling

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PLANET MONEY NEWSLETTER

How Bill Phillips used flowing water to model the economy

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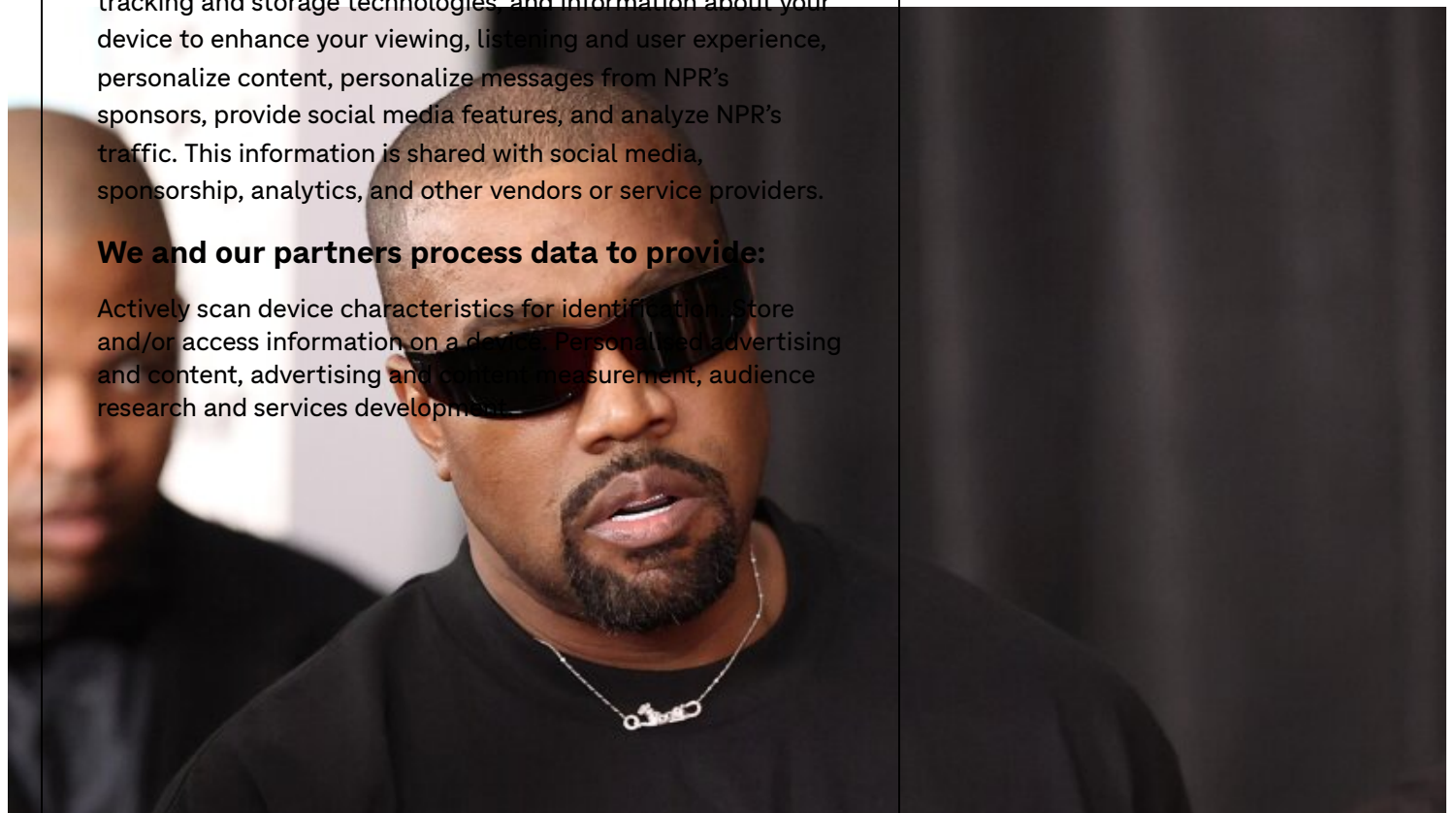
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Congressional Democrats raise alarm over Trump's comments on Iran

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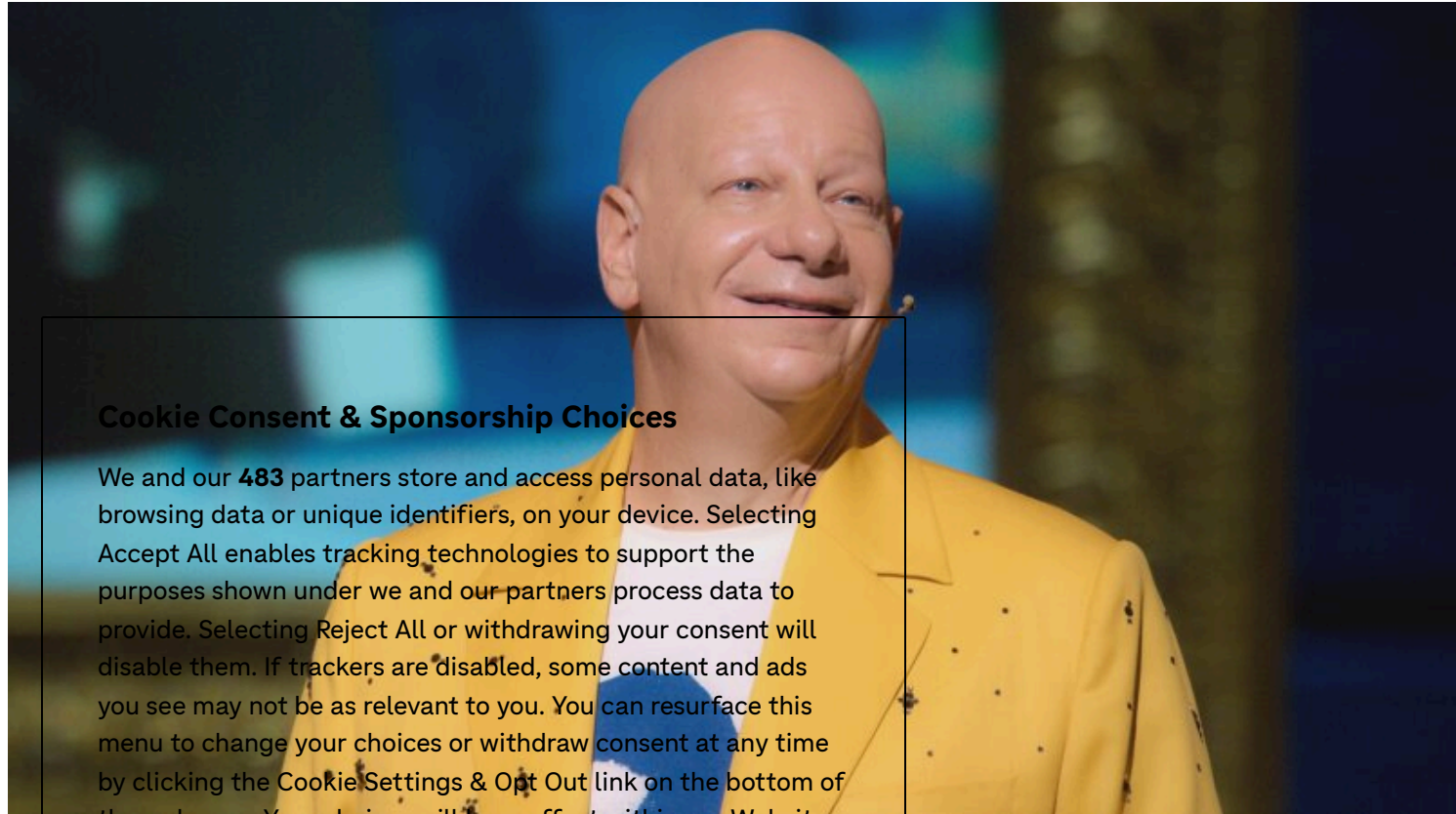
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MUSIC

U.K. issues Ye travel ban over antisemitism, leading to festival cancellation



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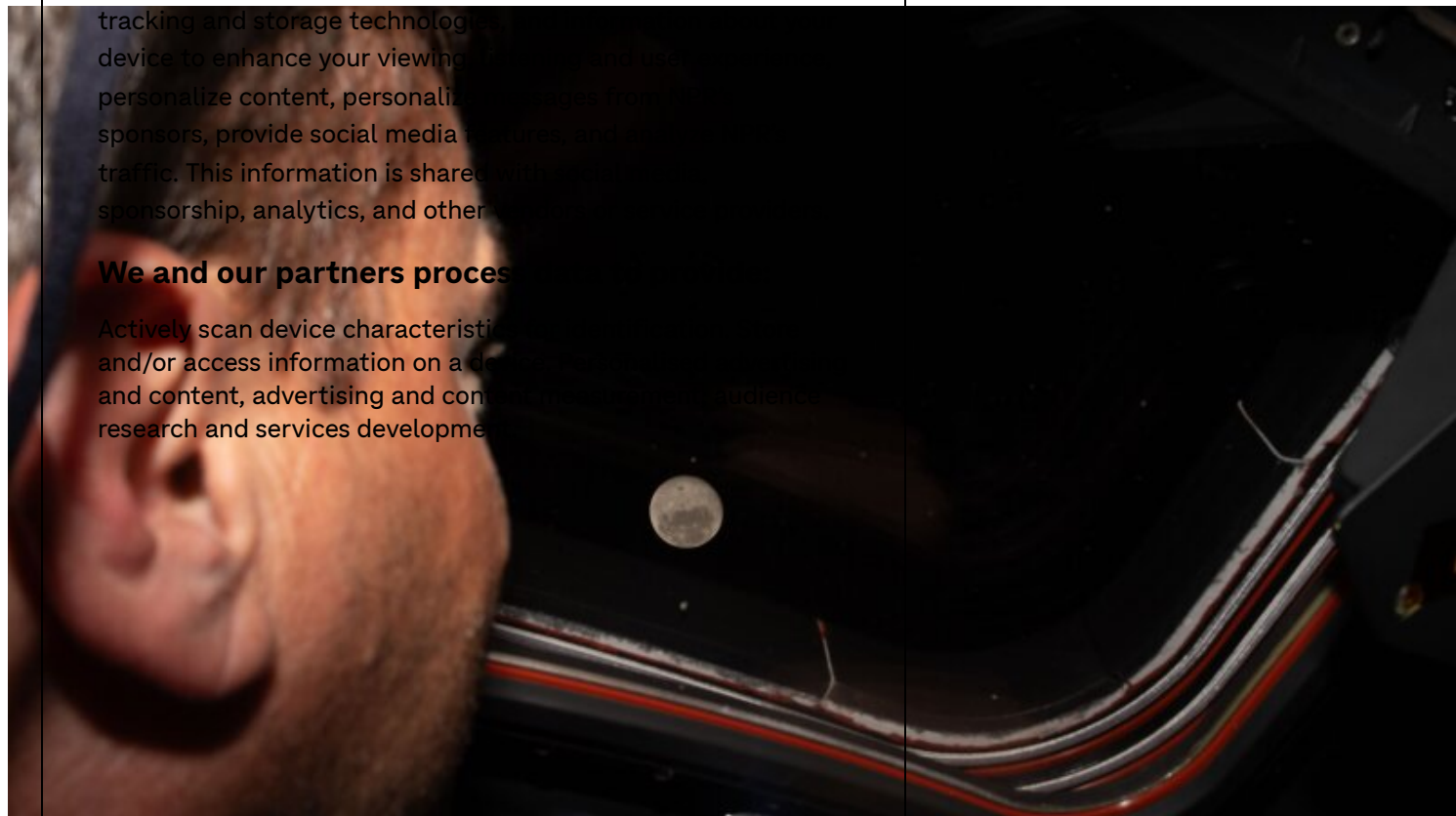
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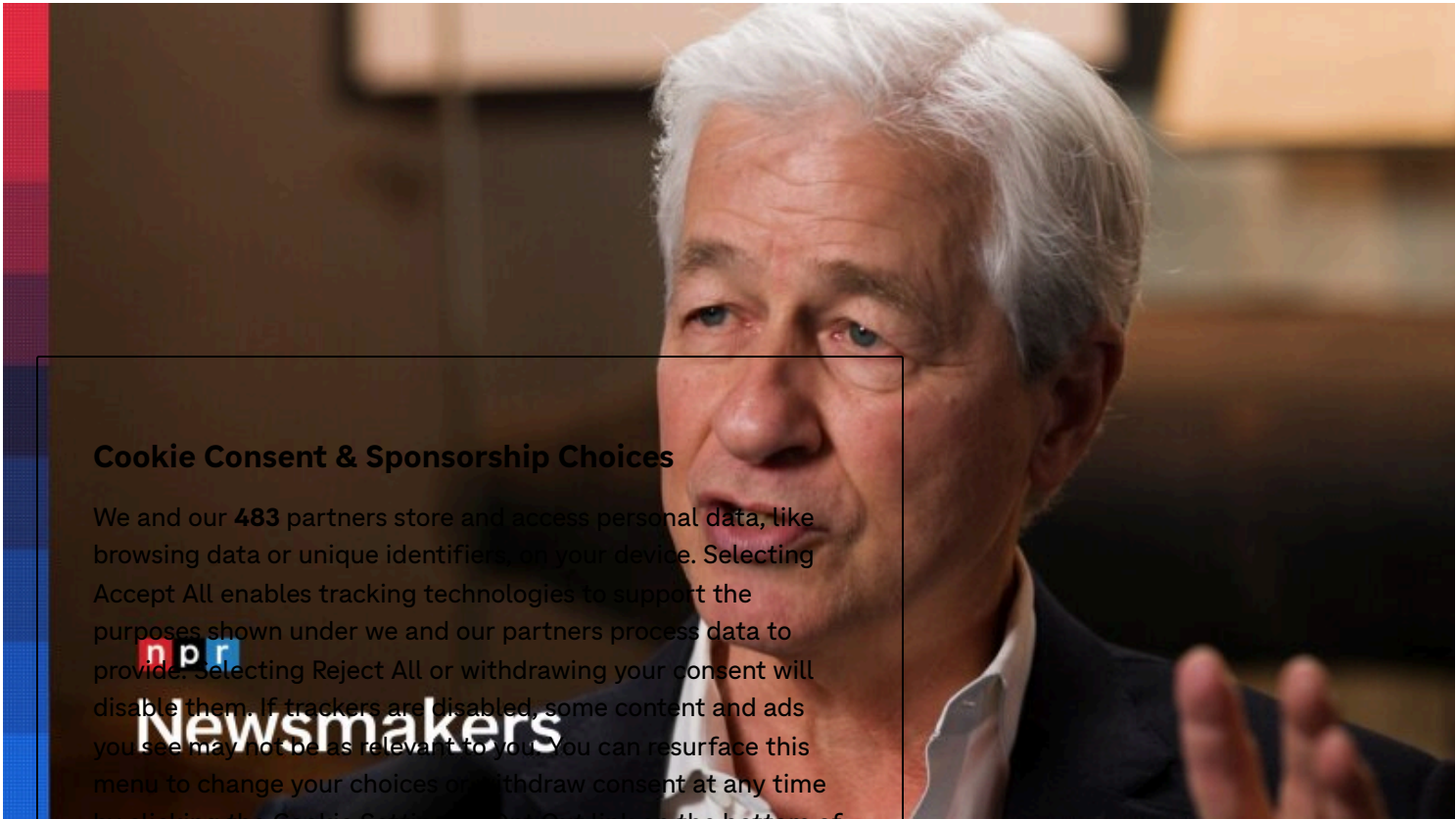
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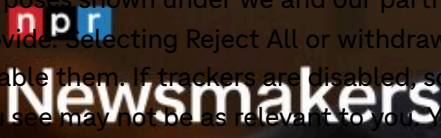
SPACE

Astronauts suggest naming a moon crater 'Carroll' after their commander's late wife



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