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NATIONAL

ACLU sues Trump administration over asylum ban

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Sergio Martínez-Beltrán
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President Donald Trump speaks before signing the Laken Riley Act in the East Room of the White House, Wednesday, Jan. 29, 2025, in Washington.

Alex Brandon/AP

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The American Civil Liberties Union filed suit Monday challenging President Donald Trump's executive action suspending asylum in the U.S.

Trump's move prohibits migrants at the southern border to claim asylum, and allows immigration officers to quickly "repel" or "remove" migrants. His order,

along with his decision to shut down a mobile app used by asylum seekers to schedule an appointment, pretty much ends all avenues for asylum claims.

The lawsuit, presented in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, alleges Trump's effort to unilaterally ban access to asylum is "unlawful as it is unprecedented" because it overrides Congress' authority. The suit is joined by three immigrant rights groups.

"The government is doing just what Congress by statute decreed that the United States must not do," the lawsuit reads. "It is returning asylum seekers—not just single adults, but families too—to countries where they face persecution or torture, without allowing them to invoke the protections Congress has provided."

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The three main plaintiffs are Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services (RAICES), Law American Immigrants Advocacy Center, and Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project.

"This is an unprecedented power grab that will put countless lives in danger," Lee Gelernt, the deputy director of the ACLU Immigrants' Rights Project, said in an email. "No president has the authority to unilaterally override the protections Congress has afforded those fleeing danger."

Gelernt said in an email that Trump's move was not only illegal but "at odds with America's sacred post WWII commitment to provide refuge for those fleeing persecution."

Kristi Noem, the new Homeland Security secretary, as well as President Trump, and other members of his cabinet are named as defendants.

In a statement to NPR, White House spokesperson Kush Desai said, "President Trump was given a resounding mandate to end the disregard and abuse of our immigration laws and secure our borders."

DHS declined to comment.

Established in 1980, the US asylum law allows people fleeing war and persecution to seek refuge if they can show "credible" fear.

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Trump's order, as well as a fact sheet posted on the White House website, say that the temporary ban is needed to protect against those taking part in an "invasion" of the United States through the U.S.-Mexico border.

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Trump, however, inherited a relatively quiet border. Unauthorized crossings have dropped to COVID-era numbers after hitting an all-time high in December 2023. Biden's asylum restrictions at the southern border played a big role in the decline in unlawful crossings.

The ACLU also challenged Biden's restrictions, although they allowed for immigrants to seek asylum at a port of entry.

Jennifer Babaie, the director of advocacy and legal services of Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center, said in a statement that "spreading falsehoods about an 'invasion' at our border only fuels fear, aiming to dismantle the entire asylum process and weaponize our immigration laws."

The ACLU is asking the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia to immediately block the Trump administration from implementing the asylum ban at the Southern Border.

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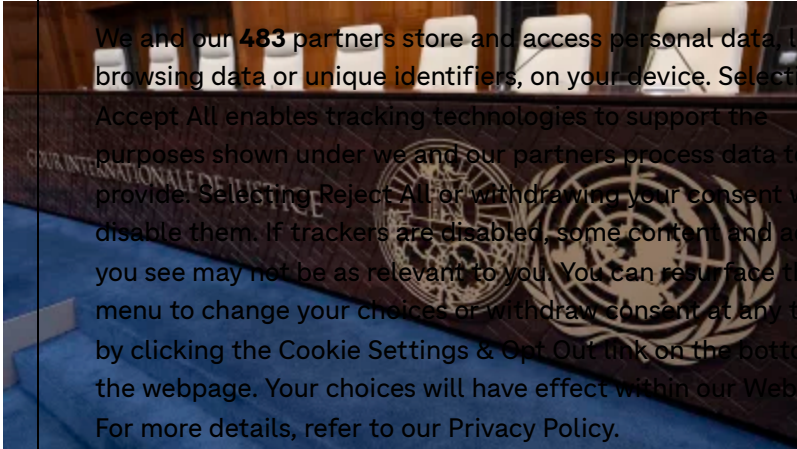
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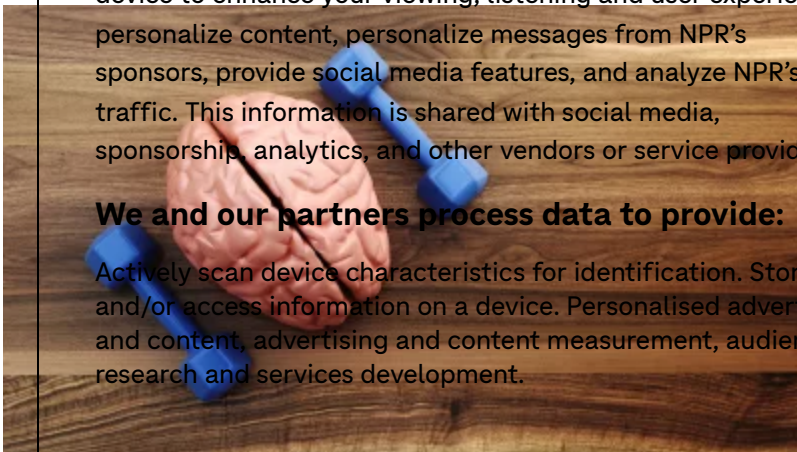
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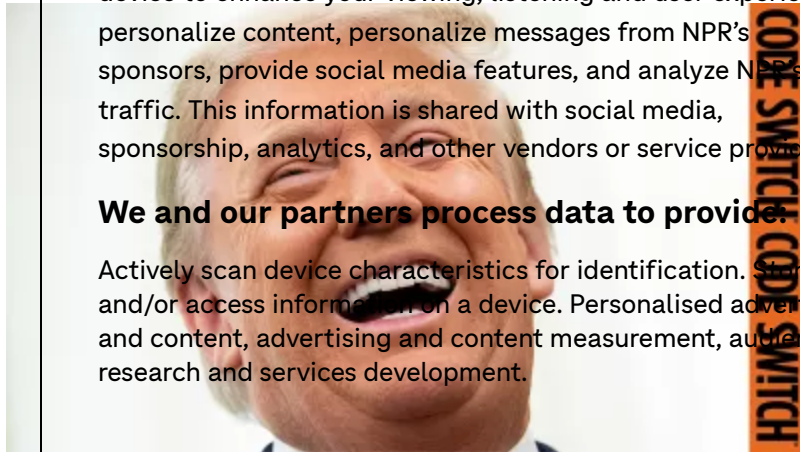
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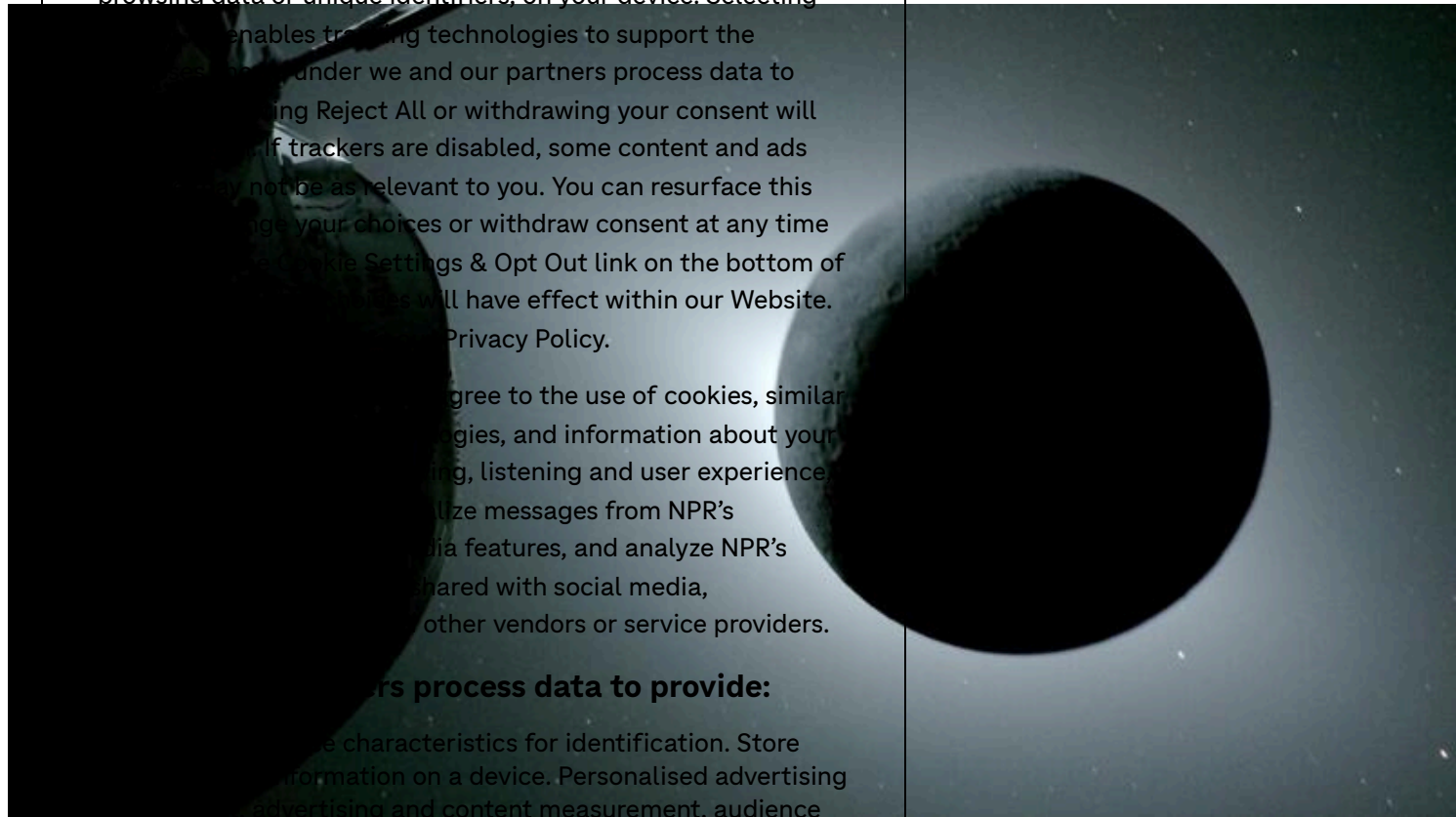
Trump shared a racist "joke." That humor is an American tradition : Code Switch



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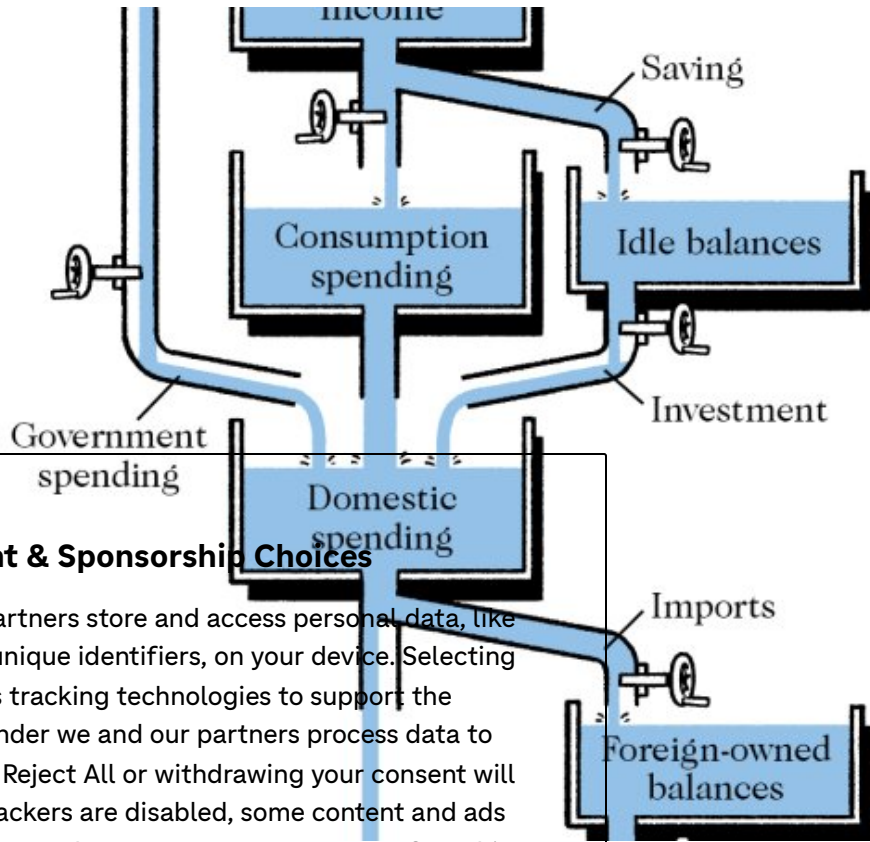
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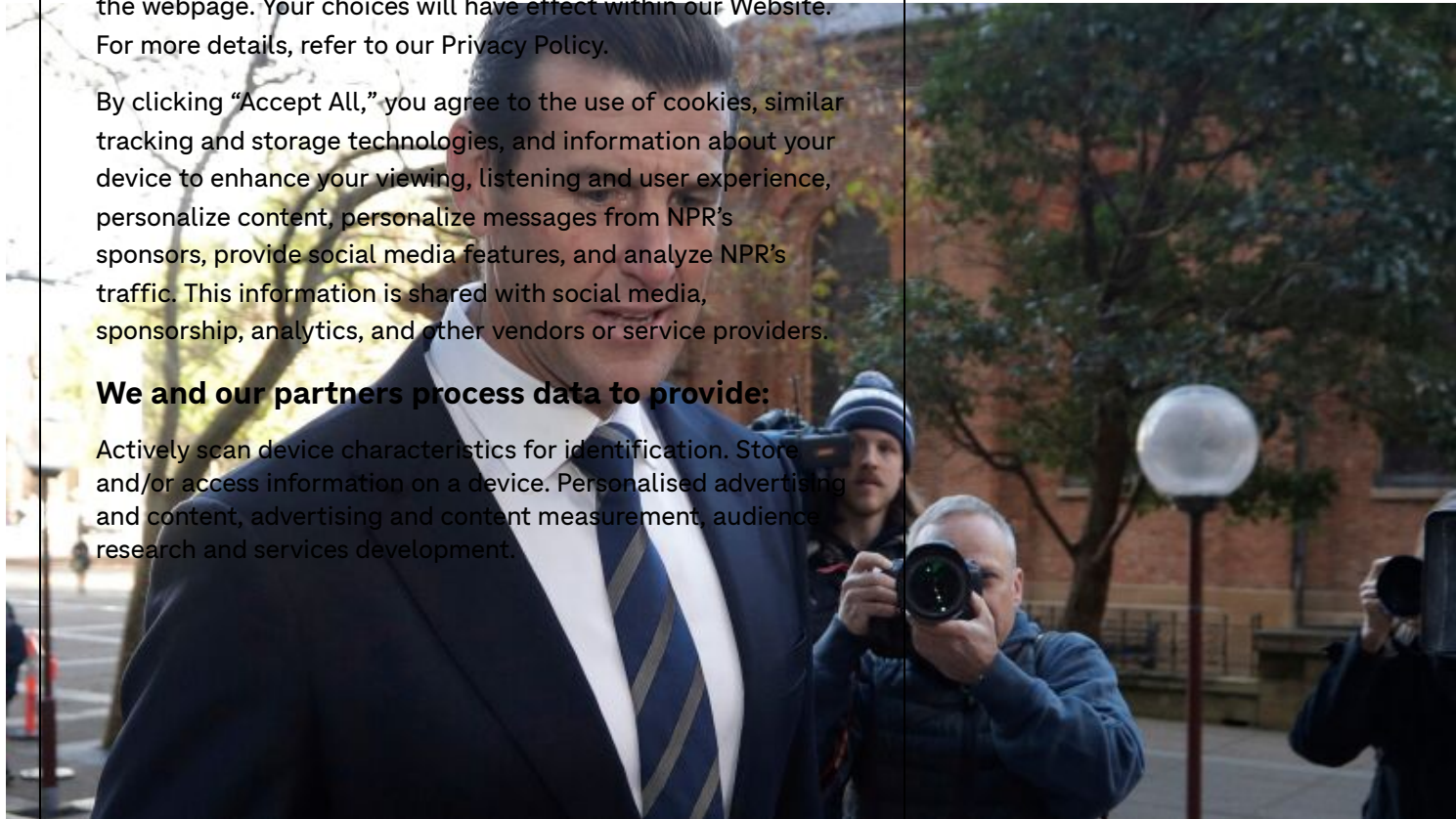
How Bill Phillips used flowing water to model the economy

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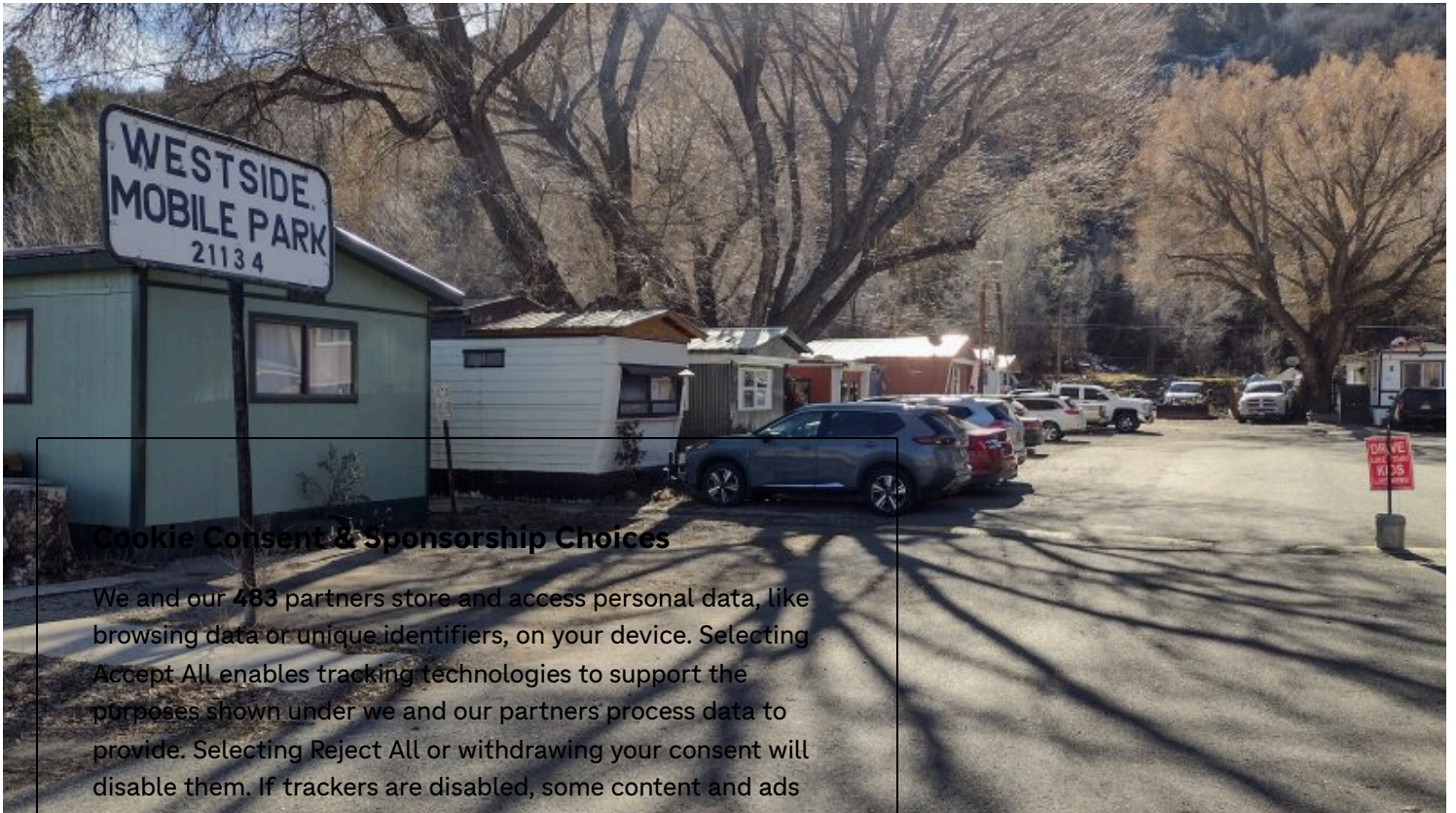
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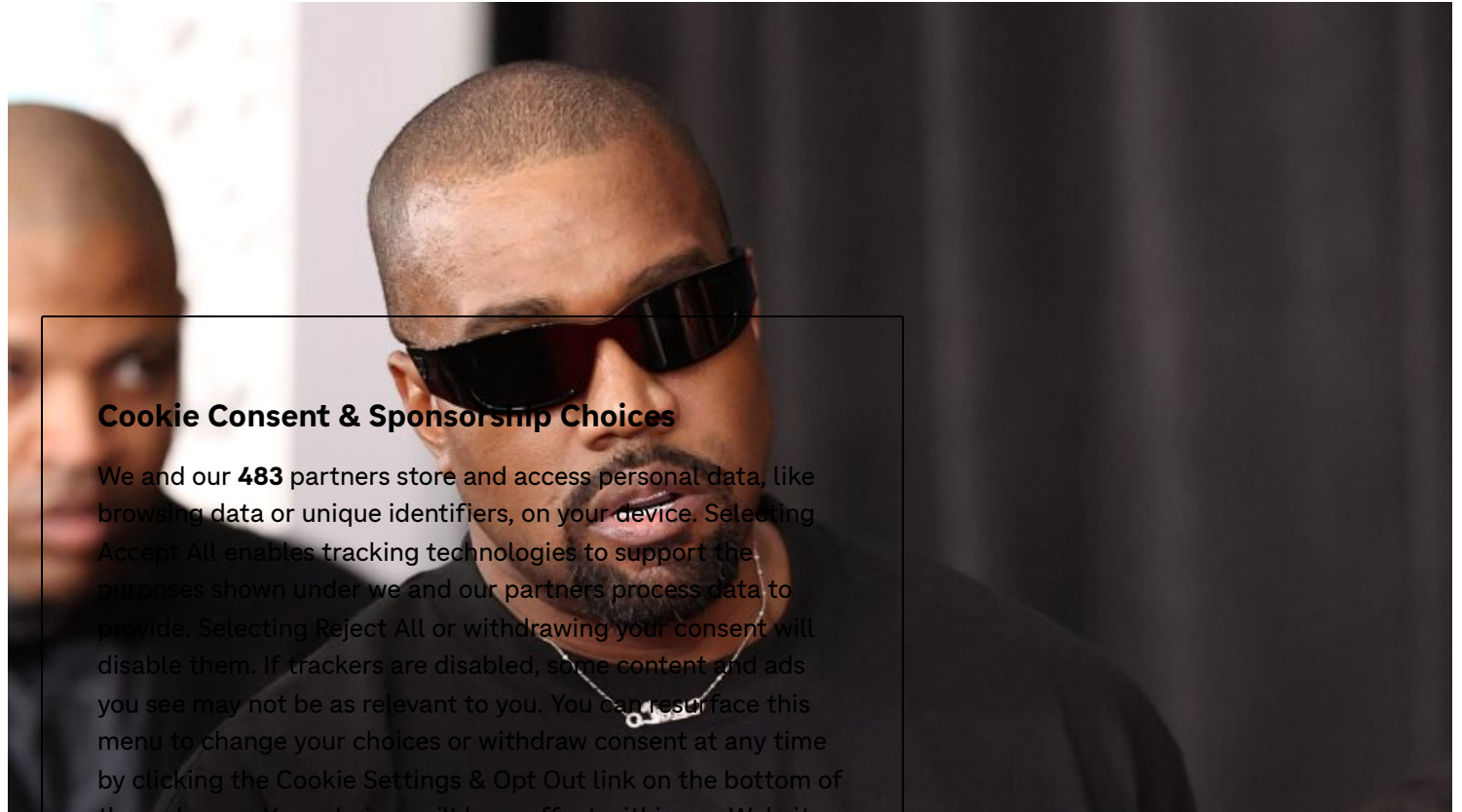
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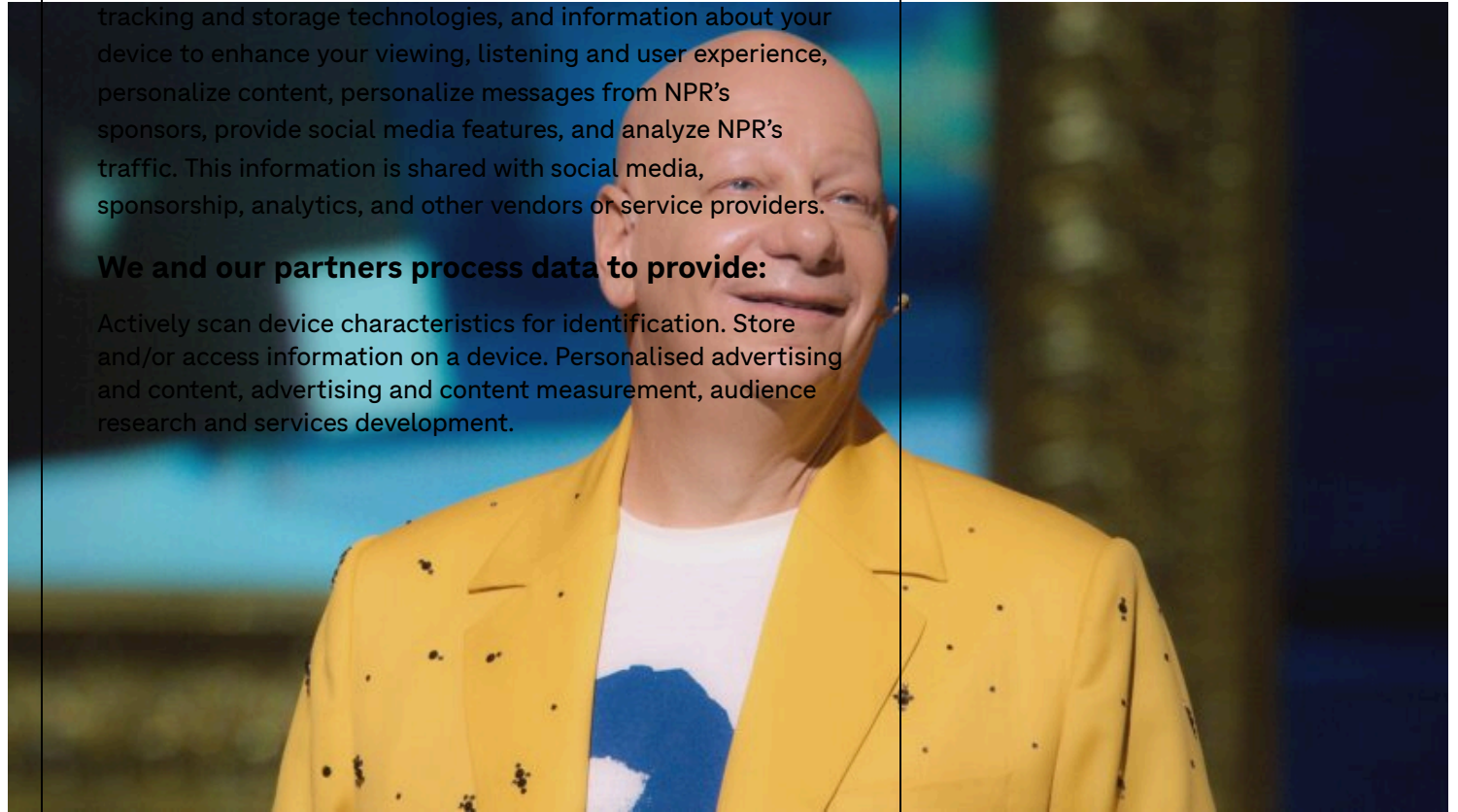
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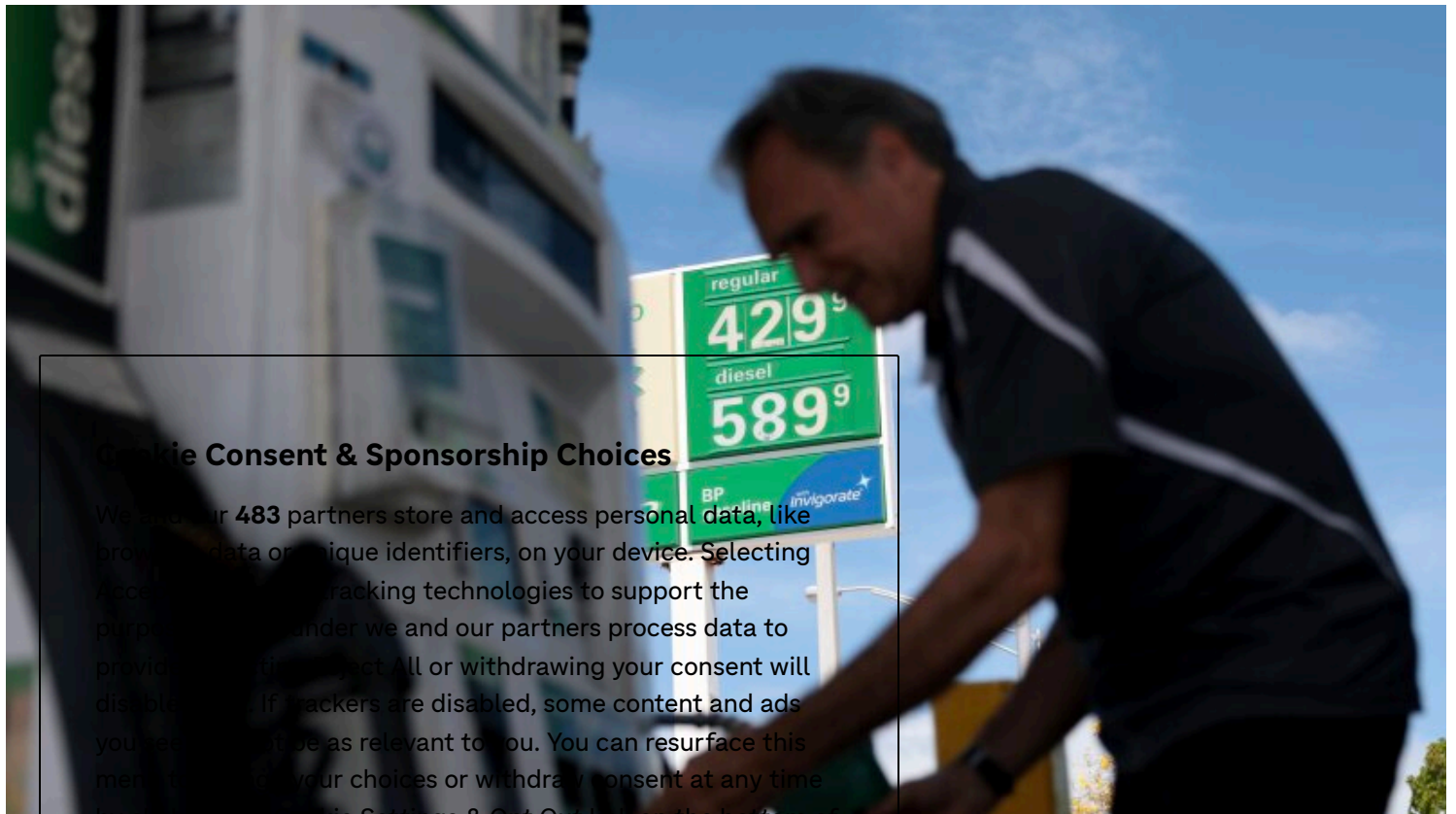
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TELEVISION

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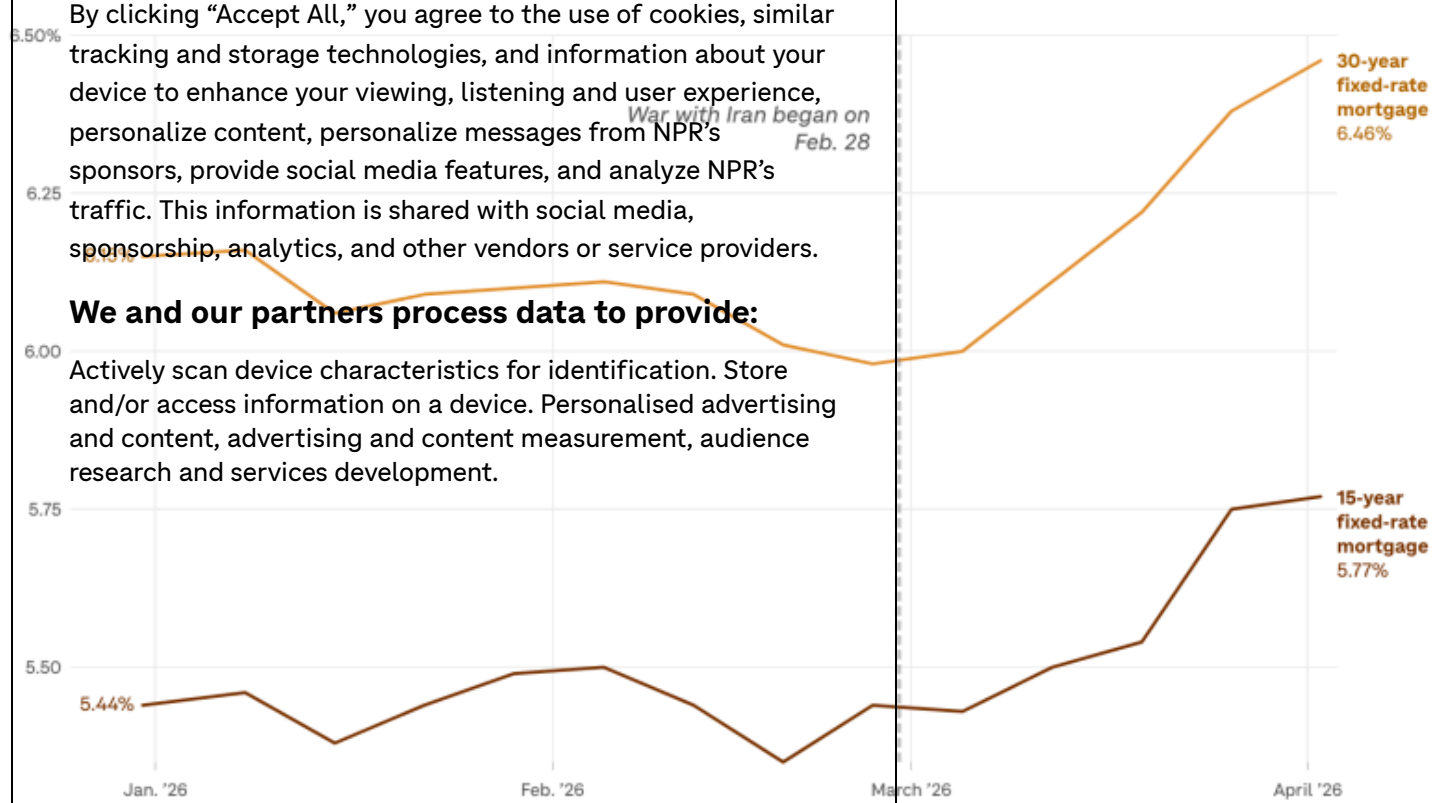
Drive slower, go electric, don't drive at all? Americans weigh options for saving gas

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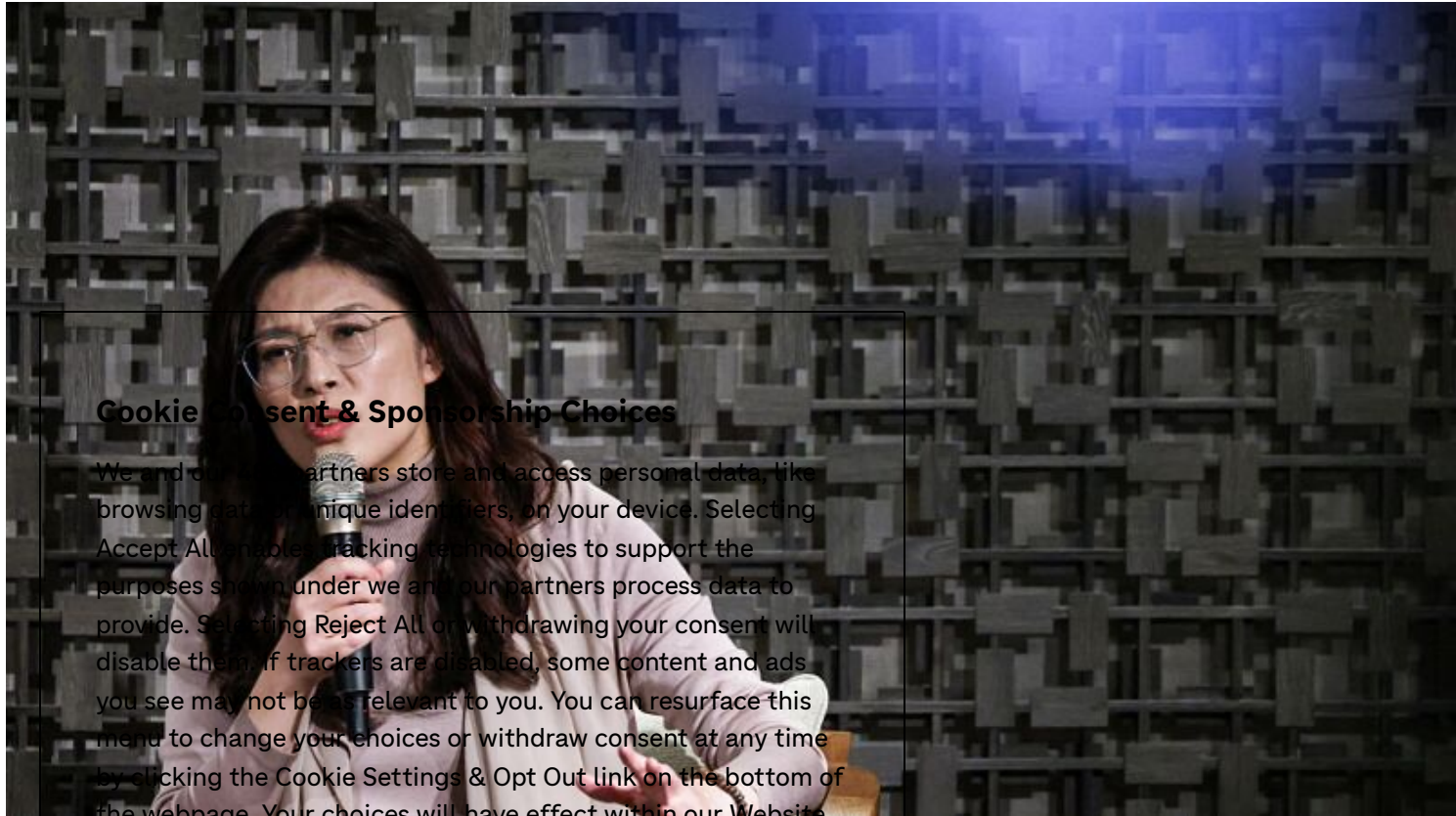
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Taiwan's opposition leader arrives in China for a 'Journey of Peace'

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