

# THE LONG-TERM ISSUE

## Introduction

8

### How to escape the present

We're stuck in a cycle of short-term thinking. History shows there are ways out.

By

*Richard Fisher*

14

### When more is not more

The failure of capitalism to solve our biggest problems is prompting many to question one of its basic precepts.

By

*David Rotman*

## Fiction

80

### Quiet Earth Philosophy

By

*Masande Ntshanga*

## The back page

88

### Communication breakdown

## TODAY

18

### Don't worry ... the Earth is doomed

Catastrophes are inevitable. The good news is that many are within our control, at least in theory.

By *Tate Ryan-Mosley*

21

### Dispatches

How technology is being used to tackle some of the world's thorniest problems.

By *Lynne Peskoe Yang, Diego Arguedas Ortiz, Namgay Zam, and Leigh Cowart*

28

### Spotting the next pandemic

Q+A: Meet a researcher on the front lines of the hunt for new zoonotic diseases.

By *Mallory Pickett*

30

### How the truth was murdered

We're awash in conspiracy theories. We didn't have to be. These people warned us.

By *Abby Ohlheiser*

## TOMORROW

38

### The true dangers of AI are closer than we think

Q+A: A takeover by superintelligent machines is the wrong thing to worry about. By *Karen Hao*

40

### Preventing fires has failed. It's time to work with them instead.

The blazes in California resulted from a century of fire suppression policies. Here's a blueprint for replacing them.

By *James Temple*

44

### Technology's housing problem

Algorithms have worsened racial discrimination in housing. Could they help eliminate it instead?

By *Charlton McIlwain*

48

### Betting the farm in Singapore

Might the covid-19 pandemic have finally given vertical farming the kick it needs to go mainstream? By *Megan Tatum*

54

### Shoot for the moon

Inside the building of NASA's first planetary defense mission.

By *David W. Brown*

## FOREVER

64

### The startup turning human bodies into compost

Q+A: Why alternatives to burying and cremation are better for the planet. By *Britta Lokting*

68

### Waste away

Nuclear engineers across America are trying new techniques to answer an old—and very, very long-term—question. By *Wudan Yan*

74

### What do you really know?

A massive physics experiment shows just how much we rely on one another for knowledge—and how society is threatened if that reliance breaks down.

By *Matthew Hutson*