

**A Look Back At 2016****Year's Top News Filled With Division — And No Middle Ground**By **ADAM GELLER**  
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**F**ed up with Europe's union across borders? Reject it. Disgusted with the U.S. political establishment? Can it.

The news in 2016 was filled with battles over culture and territory that exposed divisions far deeper than many realized. But people

among the activists, told reporters. Weeks later, federal agents stopped vehicles outside the refuge, arresting eight of the activists and fatally shooting Finicum when he reached into a jacket that held a loaded gun.

Even in the rare cases when compromise prevailed, it was viewed with suspicion.

When a deal took effect in January limiting Iran's

men by police in Louisiana and Minnesota. A South Carolina jury failed to reach a verdict in the trial of an officer caught on video fatally shooting a black man fleeing a traffic stop.

Division, though, was hardly limited to the U.S.

In Venezuela, triple-digit inflation and shortages of food and medicine fueled 6,000 protests throughout the

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confronting those divides repeatedly rejected the prospect of middle-ground solutions and the institutions put in place to deliver them.

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“You're not laughing now, are you?” Nigel Farage, a leader of the so-called Brexit campaign told the European Parliament after voters in Great Britain spurned membership in the continental union. “What the little people did ... was they rejected the multinationals, they rejected the merchant banks, they rejected big politics and they said actually, we want our country back,” he said.

Farage was speaking only about the United Kingdom. But his observation that many people well beyond Britain shared that disdain for working within the system was borne out repeatedly in the year's biggest headlines.

In a U.S. presidential campaign fueled by anger and insults, in Syria's brutal war and Venezuela's massive protests, in fights over gay rights and migration, opposing sides rejected not just compromise but the politics of trying to forge it.

That was clear from the year's first days, when armed activists took over a national wildlife refuge in Oregon's high desert, opposing the federal government's control of public lands.

“It needs to be very clear that these buildings will never, ever return to the federal government,” LaVoy Finicum, an Arizona rancher

nuclear program in exchange for relief on sanctions, it marked the culmination of prolonged negotiation by President Barack Obama's administration. But the pact was repeatedly attacked by critics in both countries, including Donald Trump, saying it gave the other side too much.

“The wisest plan of crazy Trump is tearing up the nuclear deal,” a leading Iranian hardliner, Hossein Shariatmadari, told his country's news agency.

In mid-February, Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia died in his sleep, leaving a vacuum on a court where he had long been the leading conservative voice. Barely an hour after Scalia's death was confirmed, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell staked out an uncompromising position on what lay ahead.

“The American people should have a voice in the selection of their next Supreme Court justice,” McConnell said, disregarding the fact that U.S. voters had twice elected Obama. “Therefore, this vacancy should not be filled until we have a new president.”

North Carolina lawmakers prompted protests and counter-protests when they rushed through House Bill 2, voiding local gay-rights ordinances and limiting bathroom access for transgender people. Companies, the NBA and others followed through on threats to move jobs, games and performances out of the state, amplifying the division.

Tensions over U.S. policing bled into a third year. In July, a sniper killed five Dallas police officers during a protest over shootings of black

year that brought millions into the streets. But the government of President Nicolas Maduro,



In this Saturday, Nov. 21, 2015 file photo, Trump supporters “boo” members of the media after a heckler was removed as Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks during a campaign stop in Birmingham, Ala. The news in 2016 was filled with battles over culture and territory that exposed divisions far deeper than many realized.

blamed by many voters for the chaos, blocked a recall campaign.

“If you're going to shoot me because I'm hungry, shoot me!” a young man shouted at a soldier during one protest in Ca-

racas.

In Colombia, voters narrowly rejected a deal between the government and a guerrilla group to end a 52-year civil war. Even when lawmakers approved a renegotiated

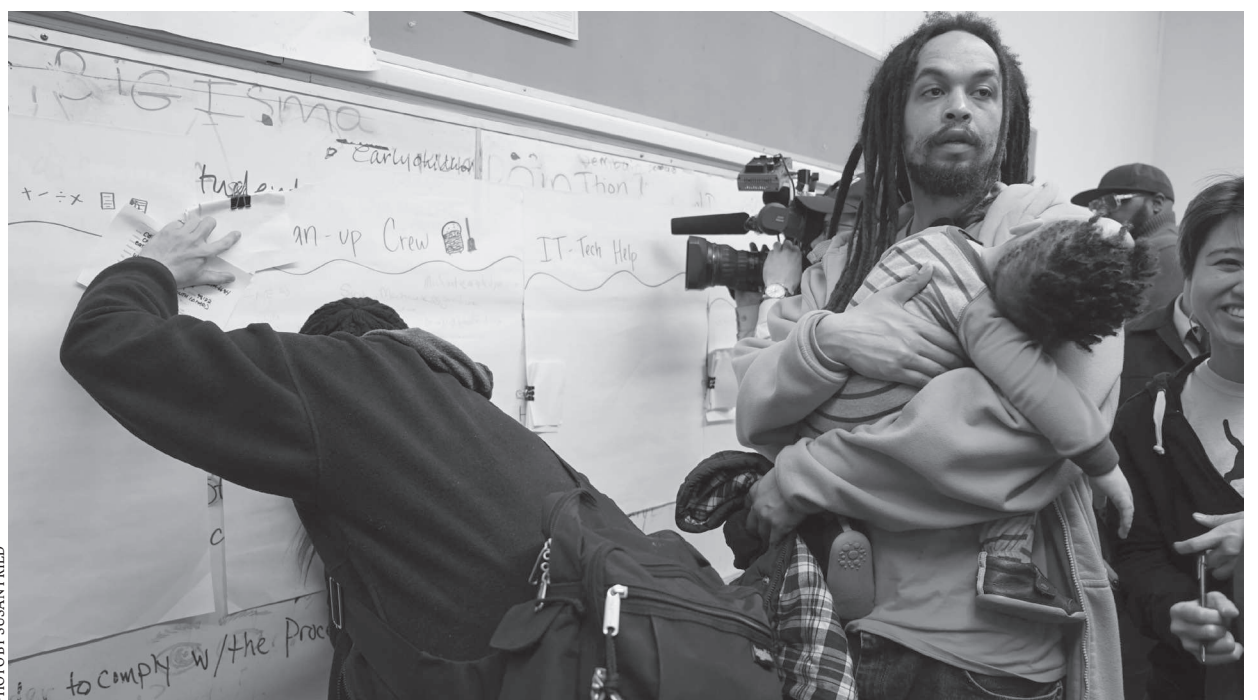
deal, the peace remained fragile.

In Brazil, senators impeached President Dilma Rousseff for manipulating budget figures,

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**Oregon Standoff**

A group of 20 armed White militants led by Ammon Bundy seized buildings at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in eastern Oregon's high desert country on Jan. 2. The group, saying they were acting on the belief local people should control federal lands, continued to occupy the refuge until the final arrests were made Feb. 11. Occupier Robert “LaVoy” Finicum was shot and killed by law enforcement Jan. 26; all other occupiers were taken alive. On Oct. 27 Ammon Bundy and six other defendants were acquitted on charges of conspiracy to impede federal officers and possession of firearms. Here, a member of the occupying group is pictured warming himself by a fire Jan. 6.

**Africatown Vandalized**

James Williams and his son wait to sign up to volunteer to help at the Africatown Center for Education and Innovation in Seattle following a break in at the center in late March. The center was defaced with racist slurs and swastikas along with sustaining thousands of dollars in damage and theft to its computer systems. A former volunteer was arrested in connection with the incident.