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**From:** Gregory Brown [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Sunday, June 5, 2016 7:31 AM  
**To:** undisclosed-recipients:  
**Subject:** Greg Brown's Weekend Reading and Other Things.. 6/05/2016

DEAR FRIEND.....

The Greatest

[image: Inline image 1]

Muhammad Ali stands over fallen challenger Sonny Liston after dropping him with a short hard right to the jaw on May 25, 1965, in Lewiston, Maine.

Like friends and fans around the world I was extremely sadden when on Friday night my cell phone begin to blow up with text messages from friends telling me that my old friend \*Muhammad Ali\* had just died. As someone who had been a fan since his winning a gold medal at the \*1960 Rome Olympics\*, so much so that my father took me to my first live fight in March 1963 when a young \*Cassius Clay\* defeated \*Doug Jones\* in a ten-round decision after being knocked down several times to my chagrin at the legendary \*(Mecca of Boxing)\* \*Madison Square Garden\* that \*Ring Magazine\* selected as its #80 \*Fight of the Year\* in 1963. Prior to that my hero did a cameo role in one of my favorite feature films of all time, \*'Requiem for a Heavyweight'\*, starring Anthony Quinn, Jackie Gleason and Mickey Rooney in 1962.

I first met my hero whom at the time my father and others called \*"the Louisville Lip"\*, during a promotion of one of his two spoken words=albums at a record store on a 125 Street in Harlem in 1964. And I only started to get to know him when I helped my old friend John Daily along with the R&B singer Lloyd Price put together the close circuit television deal for the \*'Rumble in the Jungle'\* fight in 1974 when he defeated the then heavyweight champion George Foreman in Kinshasa, Zaire. But it was through my friendship with Jeremiah Shabazz (from the Nation of Islam) that I entered into Muhammad Ali's inner-circle orbit of friends. And although I was able to get Muhammad Ali to support Philadelphia International Records \*'Clean Up The Ghetto'\* campaign in the last 1970s, our relationship was cemented when I put together the \*W.O.R.L.D. Foundation\* which had he accepted would have given him financial security for the rest of his life as well as a global humanitarian platform.

Almost everybody who has ever met Muhammad Ali has been touch in one way or another and one of my favorite moments was when he showed up unannounced one early morning at my apartment in New York saying that he heard that my mother was in the hospital and we went together with his driver to Yonkers, NY where he spent the entire morning entertaining my 80 year-old mother, other patients and hospital staff with his magic tricks until his handlers finally tracked us down and demanded that he come back to the city to fulfill his scheduled obligations. Another fond memory was when one year in the 1980s after extreme lobbying, Ali put together a birthday party for me in London that I didn't make because I had other party at my home with

80 friends that we later moved to Tramp. Or the many times that I took him to Elaine's or Utzi's in NYC. But one of my most favorite moments was when as a group we went to see Joe Frazier sing at Jimmy's in midtown Manhattan and he brought Ali on the stage and sang "We did it OUR way".

Since his death a number of friends have sent me emails and texts recalling how I had introduced them to Muhammad Ali and what that meant in their lives. Unlike today's fighters, Muhammad Ali ducked nobody. He fought everyone. Yet, his most brave moment was when three years after winning the Heavyweight Championship he refused induction into the armed services based on religious and humanitarian grounds – knowing that he would be stripped of his title, lose millions of dollars in income and potentially face years in prison.

Muhammad Ali defeated every top heavyweight in his era, which has been called the golden age of heavyweight boxing. Ali was named "Fighter of the Year" by Ring Magazine more times than any other fighter, and was involved in more Ring Magazine "Fight of the Year" bouts than any other fighter. He was an inductee into the International Boxing Hall of Fame and held wins over seven other Hall of Fame inductees. He was one of only three boxers to be named "Sportsman of the Year" by Sports Illustrated.

And if there is Athlete of the Century, it should be Muhammad Ali.

Ali's example inspired countless black Americans and others. The New York Times columnist William Rhoden wrote, "Ali's actions changed my standard of what constituted an athlete's greatness. Possessing a killer jump shot or the ability to stop on a dime was no longer enough. What were you doing for the liberation of your people? What were you doing to help your country live up to the covenant of its founding principles?" Recalling Ali's anti-war position, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar said: "I remember the teachers at my high school didn't like Ali because he was so anti-establishment and he kind of thumbed his nose at authority and got away with it. The fact that he was proud to be a Black man and that he had so much talent ... made some people think that he was dangerous. But for those very reasons I enjoyed him."

Ali even inspired Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who had been reluctant to address the Vietnam War for fear of alienating the Johnson Administration and its support of the civil rights agenda. Now, King began to voice his own opposition to the war for the first time. In speaking of the cost on Ali's career of his refusal to be drafted, his trainer Angelo Dundee said, "One thing must be taken into account when talking about Ali: He was robbed of his best years, his prime years." I remember 1980 in Las Vegas, taking Ali from his hotel to the venue for the Larry Holmes fight in my dear friend Nabila's limo, as Don King had forgotten to supply him transportation. By then it was evident from his sluggish performance that something had happened to him physically.

In 1984, at age 42, Ali was diagnosed with Parkinson's syndrome, which shares symptoms with the degenerative neurological condition of the same name. Some believe Ali's condition was brought on in part by the many blows his body had absorbed over the years. "Maybe my Parkinson's is God's way of reminding me what is important. It slowed me down and caused me to listen rather than talk," he said, according to the BBC. "Actually, people pay more attention to me now because I don't talk as much." Despite his health concerns, Ali remained an active philanthropist through his post-boxing days, supporting the Special Olympics, Make-A-Wish Foundation, the Muhammad Ali Parkinson Center in Arizona and a museum bearing his name in Louisville.

Political activism has never been widespread among athletes. Since the 1950s, only a handful of athletes have challenged the political status quo. Perhaps not surprisingly, most dissident athletes have been African Americans. Jackie Robinson used his celebrity as first black in modern major league baseball as a platform to speak out for civil rights. Bill Russell led his teammates on boycotts of segregated facilities while starring for the Boston Celtics. Olympic track medalists John Carlos and Tommie Smith created an international furor with their black power salute at the 1968

Olympics in Mexico City, which hurt their subsequent professional careers. Coaches and team executives told Dave Meggyesy, a white All-Pro linebacker for the St. Louis Cardinals in the late 1960s, that his antiwar views were detrimental to his team and his career. As he recounts in his memoir *Out of Their League*, Meggyesy refused to back down, was consequently benched, and retired at age 28 while still in his athletic prime.

In 1969 All-Star St. Louis Cardinal outfielder Curt Flood refused to accept being traded to the Philadelphia Phillies. He objected to being treated like a piece of property and to the restriction placed on his freedom by the reserve clause, which allowed teams to trade players without their having any say in the matter. Flood, an African American, considered himself a “well-paid slave.” With support from the player union, Flood sued Major League Baseball. In 1970 the US Supreme Court ruled against Flood, but five years later the reserve clause had been abolished and players became free agents, paid according to their abilities and their value to their teams. In the 1970s tennis great Arthur Ashe campaigned against apartheid well before the movement gained widespread support. In 1992 he was arrested outside the White House in a protest against American treatment of Haitian refugees. In the 1970s and 1980s, tennis star Billie Jean King, followed by Martina Navratilova, spoke out for women’s rights and gay and lesbian rights.

In 2003, just before the United States invaded Iraq, Dallas Mavericks guard Steve Nash wore a T-shirt during the National Basketball Association (NBA) All-Star weekend that said “No War. Shoot for Peace.” Several other pro athletes — including NBA players Etan Thomas, Josh Howard, Adam Morrison, and Adonal Foyle, baseball’s Carlos Delgado, and tennis star Martina Navratilova — raised their voices against the war in Iraq. In 2010 a number of baseball players publicly opposed Arizona’s controversial anti-immigration law. But with the exception of Robinson, however, none of these jocks for justice had the impact that Ali had on public opinion. His fame, his sacrifice, and his lifetime commitment to peace and human rights is unequalled in the sports world and I am sure that Muhammad Ali inspired all of them.

Today’s brand-focused, business-like athletes generally choose to make ornamental political statements with T-shirts, playing accessories and social media posts, and not to put their careers on the line with their activism. Simply put, there’s too much money at stake in today’s modern sports culture. Choosing to sacrifice nearly four years of one’s career seems unthinkable, no matter the cause. The peak time for professional athletic performance is between 25 and 27 years old, and that’s when star athletes receive their largest contracts. Ali was sidelined for that period of his life.

Late civil rights movement leader Stokely Carmichael perhaps put it best, as quoted in Zirin’s book:

Of all the people who opposed the war in Vietnam, I think that Muhammad Ali risked the most. Lots of people refused to go. Some went to jail. But no one risked as much from their decision not to go to war in Vietnam as much as Muhammad Ali. And his real greatness can be seen in the fact that, despite all that was done to him, he became even greater and more humane.

His humanity — that’s where Ali’s true greatness lies. Sports fans can say we were robbed of Ali’s true prime, but society gained something much better: a leading voice against the class and race issues that intertwined with one of the deadliest foreign wars in U.S. history.

For most of us Muhammad Ali is definitely the greatest of all time. And just not because of boxing. Because I remember getting off a plane in 1973 on the island nation of Mauritius which is in the middle of the Indian Ocean and when a twelve year-old native boy who was trying to help me with my luggage for a tip realized that I came from America all he

wanted to know was, did I know (his hero) Muhammad Ali. Think about this a pre-teen who lived on a rock in the middle of the Indian Ocean not only knew about Muhammad Ali but was inspired by him. And this was no different from the numbers of stragglers whom he had never met showing up at his home in Chicago with their dreams and often broke hoping that Mohammad Ali could help them. And for the most part, he would try to help them all.

When going to an event with Muhammad Ali to avoid the crowds we were often escorted into the venue through the kitchen where he would stop to say hello to the cooks, dishwashers, waiters and cleanup personnel, as well as performing some of his magic tricks, signing autographs and taking pictures. And if you tried to coax him along by reminding him of the celebrities and movers and shakers awaiting his appearance, he would quickly retort that they could wait as these cooks, waiters, dishwasher and cleanup personnel were *"his people"* and he wanted them to know that he cared and they mattered. For this reason alone and for me Muhammad Ali will always be *"The Greatest..... Ever....."*

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So True

[image: Inline image 5]

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The Ugly Truth

*"The U.S. is the Death Merchant of the World"*

*\*[image: Inline image 1]\**

A Kiowa Warrior helicopter hover during the United States and South Korean Joint live fire Exercise at Rodriguez Range in Pocheon, South Korea.

In an article in *"Salon Magazine"* by Ben Norton titled – *"We are the death merchant of the world": Ex-Bush official Lawrence Wilkerson condemns military-industrial complex* – is an ugly truth that should no longer be denied especially in a country that claims to hold a high moral ground.

Norton's piece is based on his interview with Col. Lawrence Wilkerson who was the former chief of staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell and played an important role in the George W. Bush administration.

The United States remains the world's preeminent exporter of arms, with more than 50 percent of the global weaponry market was controlled by the United States in 2014. Arms sales by the U.S. jumped 35 percent, or nearly \$10 billion, to \$36.2 billion in 2014, according to the Congressional Research Service report, which analyzed the global arms market between 2007 and 2014. Trailing the U.S. in weapons receipts is Russia, with \$10.2 billion in sales in 2014, followed by Sweden with \$5.5 billion, France with \$4.4 billion and China with \$2.2 billion, reports The New York Times.

The top weapons buyer in 2014 was South Korea, a key American ally, which has been squaring off with an increasingly belligerent North Korea in recent years. Iraq was the second biggest weapons buyer, as the country seeks to build up its

military capacity following the withdrawal of the bulk of American ground troops there. Brazil was the third biggest buyer, primarily of Swedish aircraft.

In the years since, however, the former Bush official has established himself as a prominent critic of U.S. foreign policy. “I think Smedley Butler was onto something,” explained Lawrence Wilkerson, in an extended interview with Salon. In his day, in the early 20th century, Butler was the highest ranked and most honored official in the history of the U.S. Marine Corps. He helped lead wars throughout the world over a series of decades, before later becoming a vociferous opponent of American imperialism, declaring “war is a racket.”

Wilkerson spoke highly of Butler, referencing the late general’s famous quote: “Looking back on it, I might have given Al Capone a few hints. The best he could do was to operate his racket in three districts. I operated on three continents.” “I think the problem that Smedley identified, quite eloquently actually,” Wilkerson said, “especially for a Marine — I had to say that as a soldier,” the retired Army colonel added with a laugh “I think the problem is much deeper and more profound today, and much more subtle and sophisticated.” Today, the military-industrial complex is much more pernicious than Eisenhower ever thought it would be,” Wilkerson warned. In his farewell address in 1961, former President Dwight D. Eisenhower famously cautioned Americans that the military and corporate interests were increasingly working together, contrary to the best interests of the citizenry. He called this phenomenon the military-industrial complex.

As a case study of how the contemporary military-industrial complex works, Wilkerson pointed to leading weapons corporations like Lockheed Martin, and their work with draconian, repressive Western-allied regimes in the Gulf, or in inflaming tensions in Korea. “Was Bill Clinton’s expansion of NATO — after George H. W. Bush and [his Secretary of State] James Baker had assured Gorbachev and then Yeltsin that we wouldn’t go an inch further east — was this for Lockheed Martin, and Raytheon, and Boeing, and others, to increase their network of potential weapon sales?” Wilkerson asked.

“You bet it was,” he answered. “Is there a penchant on behalf of the Congress to bless the use of force more often than not because of the constituencies they have and the money they get from the defense contractors?” Wilkerson continued. Again, he answered his own question: “You bet.”

“It’s not like Dick Cheney or someone like that went and said let’s have a war because we want to make money for Halliburton, but it is a pernicious influence on decision-making,” the former Bush official explained. “And the fact that they donate so much money to congressional elections and to PACs and so forth is another pernicious influence.” “Those who deny this are just being utterly naive, or they are complicit too,” Wilkerson added. “And some of my best friends work for Lockheed Martin,” along with Raytheon, Boeing and Halliburton, he quipped.

Wilkerson — who in the same interview with Salon defended Edward Snowden, saying the whistle-blower performed an important service and did not endanger U.S. national security — was also intensely critical of the growing movement to “privatize public functions, like prisons.” “I fault us Republicans for this majorly,” he confessed — although a good many prominent Democrats have also jumped on the neoliberal bandwagon. In a 2011 speech, for instance, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared, “It’s time for the United States to start thinking of Iraq as a business opportunity” for U.S. corporations.

Wilkerson lamented, “We’ve privatized the ultimate public function: war.”

"In many respects it is now private interests that benefit most from our use of military force," he continued. "Whether its private security contractors that are still all over Iraq or Afghanistan, or it's the bigger-known defense contractors, like the number one in the world, Lockheed Martin."

Journalist Antony Loewenstein detailed how the U.S. privatized its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in another interview with Salon. There are an estimated 30,000 military contractors working for the Pentagon in Afghanistan today; they outnumber U.S. troops three-to-one. Thousands more are in Iraq. Lockheed Martin simply "plans to sell every aspect of missile defense that it can," regardless of whether it is needed, Wilkerson said.

And what is best to maximize corporate interest is by no means necessarily the same as what is best for average citizens. "We dwarf the Russians or anyone else who sells weapons in the world," the retired Army colonel continued.

Most importantly we have to deny the corporate interests that demand we go abroad to slay monsters and admit that we are the death merchant of the world – and not a titled that we should be proud of...

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Tipping – Yes or No?

Or a reason for employers to underpay their employees

[image: Inline image 1]

As a middle-age African American male who eats in restaurants at least three times a week, down from five times a week and being told by close friends that I didn't always tip enough, I was drawn to an article in *Mother Jones Magazine* by Maddie Oatman – "The Racist, Twisted History of Tipping" – with the sub-titled – "Gratuities were once an excuse to shortchange black people. In fact, they still are. But is it true? Most of us don't think twice about handing over 15% to 25% of our bill after eating out at a full-service restaurant. What is today considered a given started as a purely aristocratic practice — a mere "allowance" that the upper class would offer to the socially inferior.

A tip (which is a gratuity) is a sum of money customarily tendered, in addition to the basic price, to certain service sector workers for a service performed or anticipated. Depending on the country or location, it may be customary to tip servers in bars and restaurants, taxi drivers, hair stylists, and so on. Tips and their amount are a matter of social custom and etiquette, and the custom varies between countries and settings. In some locations tipping is discouraged and considered insulting; while in some other locations tipping is expected from customers. The customary amount of a tip can be a specific range of monetary amounts or a certain percentage of the bill.

In some circumstances, such as with U.S. government workers and more widely with police officers, receiving gratuities (or even offering them) is illegal: they may be regarded as bribery. In most European restaurants a fixed percentage service charge is often added to bills in restaurants and tipping may not be expected when a fee is explicitly charged for the service.

From a theoretical economic point of view, gratuities solve the principal-agent problem, and many managers say they provide incentive for greater worker effort. However studies of the real world practice show that tipping is often discriminatory: workers receive different levels of gratuity based on factors such as age, sex, race, hair color and even breast size, and the size of the gratuity is found to be only very weakly related to the quality of service.

Oatman starts her article by explaining that fresh out of college and working as a unpaid intern for a San Francisco nonprofit, she paid the bills by moonlighting at an Indian restaurant in the Pacific Heights neighborhood. Her hostess job entailed long stretches of boredom punctuated by a cacophonous frenzy with more than the occasional icy glares from impatient diners and reprimands from managers for drifting from my podium. But compared with most restaurant workers, she was sitting pretty:

as her hourly rate exceeded California's minimum wage and she was tipped out by the servers at the end of each shift, as well as receiving health care benefits — because they were a city mandate.

But the truth is that very few of America's 11 million restaurant workers share her good fortune. Because the federal minimum wage is a paltry \$7.25 an hour, but in 18 states servers, bussers, and hosts are paid just \$2.13 =E2 which is less than the price of a Big Mac. This is known as the federal "tipped minimum wage" because, in theory, these food workers will make up the difference in tips. Twenty-five states and DC have their own slightly higher tipped minimums. The remaining seven, including California, guarantee the full state minimum wage to all workers.

[image: Inline image 2]

\*Some of the wages shown in the above map are only for large employers.

\*Oatman:\* On the surface, tipping seems little more than a reward for astute recommendations and polite, speedy service. But the practice has unsavory roots, as Saru Jayaraman, a labor activist and author of *Forked: A New Standard for American Dining*, told me during a taping of *Bite*, the new food and politics podcast from Mother Jones. The origin of the word is unclear — one theory says "tip" is shorthand for "to insure prom=tness"; another suggests it's from 17th-century thief slang meaning "to give." In any case, European aristocrats popularized the habit of slipping gratuities to their hosts' servants, and by the mid-1800s rich Americans, hoping to flaunt their European sophistication, had brought the practice home.

Restaurants and rail operators, notably Pullman, embraced tipping primarily, Jayaraman says, because it enabled them to save money by hiring newly freed slaves to work for tips alone. Plenty of Americans frowned upon the practice, and a union-led movement begat bans on tipping in several states. The fervor spread to Europe, too, before fizzling in the United States—by 1926, the state tipping bans had been repealed.

America's first minimum-wage law, passed by Congress in 1938, allowed states to set a lower wage for tipped workers, but it wasn't until the '60s that labor advocates persuaded Congress to adopt a federal tipped minimum wage that increased in tandem with the regular minimum wage. In 1996, former Godfather's Pizza CEO Herman Cain, who was then head of the National Restaurant Association, helped convince a Republican-led Congress to decouple the two wages. The tipped minimum has been stuck at \$2.13 ever since.

This is why restaurant workers today take home some of the lowest pay offered by any industry. Seven of the 10 worst-paying job categories tracked by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) are in food services. Real median wages for waiters and waitresses are down 5 percent since 2009; cooks saw a decline of 9 percent.

[image: Inline image 3]

Sure, we occasionally hear about waiters hauling in \$80K at posh urban establishments. Those are the stories that corporate players such as Darden, the notoriously stingy owner of the Olive Garden chain, want you to remember. The

restaurant association's website claims the national median take-home pay for tipped servers is \$16 to \$22 an hour. But those same workers, according to the BLS, made just \$9.01 an hour in 2014 — poverty wages for a family of four and nowhere near enough to cover rent on the average two-bedroom apartment. (The association says this figure is low because some restaurants report tips improperly.)

America's two-tiered wage system is hardest on women, who make up 71 percent of tipped servers—waitresses are twice as likely to use food stamps as the general population. And while federal law requires employers to make sure their tipped workers earn at least minimum wage after tips, that rarely happens—from 2010 to 2012, according to the Department of Labor, 84 percent of restaurants were in violation of federal wage law, "which means the women who put food on the tables in America can't actually afford to feed themselves," Jayaraman says.

"The women who put food on the tables in America can't actually afford to feed themselves," Jayaraman says.

The racist origins of tipping persist, meanwhile, in the take-home wages of nonwhite restaurant workers, who earn 56 percent less than their white colleagues. In one study, researchers at Cornell University and Mississippi College found that customers at an unnamed national chain restaurant — even the black customers — tipped white servers better than black servers. This disparity, the researchers noted, could in theory render the tipped minimum wage unlawful.

Jayaraman says she's not advocating the end of tipping, just that it take on a different form. Several celebrated restaurants, including Alice Waters' Chez Panisse and Danny Meyer's The Modern, have largely replaced tipping with higher menu prices or mandatory service charges. San Francisco's Bar Agricole tried it, too, but reverted to tipping after servers complained they were making less money. At least they're working in California, where they'll never take home less than the current \$10-an-hour minimum wage, even if every last table stiffes them.

Tipping is not about generosity. Tipping isn't about gratitude for good service. And tipping certainly isn't about doing what's right and fair for your fellow man. It is also not about racism or a racist practice. Tipping is a practice encouraged by employers to get patrons to supplement the less than adequate wages that they are paying their employees. Because if you are expected to tip recommended an additional 15% to 30% as some restaurants print on their bills, it really isn't a recommendation, especially when tips are pooled and distributed to entire staff of the restaurants, which is more than often the case.

Whether you start leaving 0% tips is up to you. I am not suggesting that you do it, and I don't do it myself. But the point is that an employee's take-home pay shouldn't be up to you, or me, or anyone other than his/her employer. When we tip, we intend to do right by the people handling our food, but we may be just entrenching a system that takes advantage of them. But again it's totally between you and your servers.

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Master of Persuasion is not Leadership

Scott Adams to Bill Maher: Donald Trump Is not a Crazy Clown He is a Master of Persuasion who has fooled voters into thinking he's qualified to be President

[image: Inline image 3]

\*Web Link: <https://youtu.be/0jR3jWMsTmE> <<https://youtu.be/0jR3jWMsTmE>>\*

Like many of his detractors I too was confused by Donald T