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It's_our_system_on_the_cliff_E.J._Dionne_TWP_December_23,_2012.pdf;
John_Boehner's_animal_House_Dana_Milbank_TWP_December_21,_2012.pdf;
Celebrating_the_Prince_of_Peace_in_the_Land_of_Guns_Michael_Moore_Huff_Post_12_24_12.pdf;
Buying_Back_Greek_Debt_Rewarded_Hedge_Funds_Landon_Thomas_NYT_December_23,_2012.pdf;
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NYT_December_24,_2012.pdf; The_Gun-Game_Complex_NYT_Editorial_December_26,_2012.pdf;
Republicans_rejecting_their_own_ideas_EJ_Dionne_TWP_December_26,_2012.pdf;
Crowdfunding_Will_Make_2013_The_Year_Of_The_Gold_Rush_David_Drake_Forbes_12_27_12.pdf

Dear Friends.....

As this is the last Weekend Reading of 2012, here are five issues and/or stories of great importance that didn't get the attention deserved in the mass media.

The Concentration of Wealth and the Spread of Poverty

One of the great underreported stories of 2012 is the accelerated spread of poverty and concentration of wealth in the United States. The richest 1% of Americans earnings has *"almost tripled since 1980,"* and *"we've wiped out 20 years of increases and wealth for the middle American"* according to the Federal Reserve. While, not so for our political class. The Center for Responsive Politics reports Congressional wealth has increased 11 percent between 2009 and 2011. Forty-seven percent of Congress members are millionaires; in the Senate the number is 67 percent. Meanwhile the numbers living in extreme poverty are growing rapidly, as Peter Edelman told AlterNet writer Karen Dolan in an interview this year: *"Extreme poverty means having an income of less than half the poverty line. That's less than \$9,000 a year for a family of three. The stunning fact is that in 2010, there were 20.5 million people who had incomes that low. And perhaps even more disturbing — 6 million people have no income other than food stamps."* *And politicians and media are talking about perserving tax cuts for the rich, while cutting the services for the poor, elderly and children....*

In America's latest oil and gas rush, the country's biggest fracking incident has almost gone unreported.

The oil and gas industry is entrenched in southern Louisiana — and it is taking a horrific toll. In early August, a *"frack-out"* occurred in Louisiana's Assumption Parish, where an underground cavern used to produce raw

material for the petrochemical industry collapsed, freeing oil and gas from underground wells. Geologists can only compare the resulting disaster to the drilling technique known as fracking: vast quantities of subterranean liquid forced its way to the surface, cracking apart underground rock and causing the earth to open up under the Bayou Corne, where a delicate swamp forest was swallowed up by a giant toxic sinkhole. The sinkhole has since grown to eight acres — the size of six football fields — and prompted hundreds of people to evacuate. It has boggled geologists, who say the disaster is unprecedented: as Truthout's Mike Ludwig quoted one expert, *"Nobody in the world has ever faced a situation like this that we're grappling with."* Geologists and engineers are now facing problems they've never had to deal with simultaneously: a sinkhole, plus a widespread leak of both oil and natural gas. No clear road map for recovery exists for Bayou Corne, and evacuees still do not know when they will be able to return to their homes.

Texas Brine, the drilling and storage company connected with the incident (the company drew brine from a salt cavern underneath the bayou), hasn't faced much blowback. In fact, Texas Brine initially blamed its cavern's collapse on recent earthquakes — not on its own activities. However, officials say Texas Brine's collapsed cavern is actually to blame for the earthquakes (as well as for the sinkhole)! Despite the disaster's historic proportions, mainstream media have barely batted an eye, aside from a few initial reports in August. Truthout's Ludwig was one of the only journalists to visit the evacuation zone near the sinkhole and interview evacuees. He produced an in-depth feature exposing the disaster and its implications for the rest of the country.

In the coming months, Truthout plans to follow up on the cleanup effort and the lives of the people who are waiting to go home, and to zero in on more ground-level stories in other locations. As the unconventional oil and gas drilling rapidly industrializes rural areas across the nation, the lessons of Bayou Corne will be crucial to draw upon. The full story of America's current oil and gas rush cannot be told without the voices of the people living in areas impacted by the industry. This is why Truthout says it will be taking a "fracking road trip" to the areas hardest hit by drilling, to learn more about how that practice is uniting and dividing families, friends and neighbors, who must make tough choices about the future of their communities when the fossil fuel companies come knocking at their doors. And if you can please see the movie GASLAND, currently playing on HBO

Why has major news organizations not focused on Climate Change to the degree that it is degree it has change weather patterns in American and elsewhere around the world.

One of the great elephants in the room, is global climate change — and the failure of our leaders and media to act. The science is clear and unambiguous: climate change is real; it's caused by humans burning fossil fuels; and it's at or near an irreversible catastrophic tipping point. But you wouldn't know any of this if you're getting your news from the corporate media.

2012 has been a year of alarming extremes — record smashing heat, historic droughts and wildfires, Hurricane Sandy, record-breaking melting of Arctic sea ice. We just passed the 333rd consecutive month of global temperatures above the 20th-century average. Climate scientists now say it's growing worse faster than any of them predicted even a few years ago. And yet, U.S. corporate media coverage of climate change is actually down from its peak in 2007. A Media Matters study of the corporate media's coverage of this summer's record heat found that only 14 percent of heat wave stories mentioned climate change and only 8 percent of the coverage pointed out that human activities are driving climate change. And even when there is climate change coverage, it's often framed with a false balance — both sides of the argument have equal opportunity to be heard — so even widely debunked climate deniers get equal time.

It is well known that media coverage — or lack of — has significant effects on public opinion. Is it any wonder then that climate change was nearly absent from the recent presidential campaign? The moderators of the four corporate-sponsored presidential debates didn't even ask a climate change question — the first time that has happened since 1988. Last month, President Obama continued to punt on climate change, saying in a press conference, *"I think the American people right now have been so focused, and will continue to be focused on our*

economy and jobs and growth, that if the message is somehow we're going to ignore jobs and growth simply to address climate change, I don't think anybody is going to go for that. I won't go for that."

Why the near silence at a time of such urgency? We all grew up being taught that a free press is essential to our democratic system. Thomas Jefferson said, "Whenever the people are well-informed, they can be trusted with their own government."

On a recent episode of Moyers & Company, Bill Moyers said, "In 1983, 50 corporations controlled a majority of media in America. In 1990 the number had dropped to 23. In 1997, 10. And today, six. There you have it. The fistful of multinational conglomerates that own the majority of media in America." As such we are with a monolithic media industry driven to maximize the next quarter's profits and fueled by oil and gas industry advertising. As long as meaningful action on climate change will hurt the short-term profits of the fossil fuel industries, the media conglomerates and Wall Street, we can't expect the media blackout to end. "It's called capitalism," as Google's Eric Schmidt said last week trying to explain the Internet giant's evasions of billions of dollars in taxes. It's going to be up to those of us to go to independent media to make sure that we are well-informed as the costs of climate change inaction will be far more expensive and catastrophic than we are being told.

What happens when major media downsizes.

As a result of the major media downsizing, mainstream media still tries to report on just about everything — but there is a real reporting crisis with the inability of the mainstream to connect the dots, almost any dots, or display any kind of historical memory, or include in its daily reporting the sort of information that would make real sense of the "news."

Let me give you a perfectly humdrum and typical recent example: Last week, **The New York Times** featured a front-page piece by Elisabeth Bumiller headlined "**Pentagon Says Afghan Forces Still Need Assistance.**" It was a perfectly reasonable and informative story based on "a bleak new Pentagon report [that] has found that only one of the Afghan National Army's 23 brigades is able to operate independently without air or other military support from the United States and NATO partners. The key conclusion in Bumiller's piece: with incidents of violence in Afghanistan higher than when the Obama administration's "surge" began in 2009 and the Taliban "resilient," it will be a "challenge" to have Afghan forces ready to take over the fighting in 2014, once U.S. combat troops are gone.

There was only one problem: either Bumiller doesn't know, or didn't care to mention, that some version of the basic finding in that Pentagon report has for years been an Afghan reality. In October 2007, for instance, in a report from the military itself, Colonel Thomas McGrath, then in charge of Afghan army and police training, claimed that he expected "*the first independent brigade-size operations to be conducted by Afghan National Army forces sometime in the spring [of 2008].*" In 2008, the U.S. Government Accountability Office issued a report indicating that only two of 105 army units "are assessed as being fully capable of conducting their primary mission." In 2009, General Stanley McChrystal, Afghan war commander, claimed optimistically that 43 of the 123 units of the Afghan Army could "*operate independently*" (though he clearly meant small-sized units and was defining "independently" as something more limited than "from all U.S. support").

A Government Accountability Office report issued early in 2011 indicated that, in 2010, not a single Afghan army unit had been able to operate independently of American forces. In September 2011, Lieutenant General William Caldwell, then in charge of training those same troops, reported that only 2 of 23 brigades could operate independently and, according to the reliable Spencer Ackerman of Wired's Danger Room blog, when pressed at a Pentagon news conference, admitted that the real figure was probably zero, since even those two "*still require U.S. support for their maintenance, logistics, and medical systems.*" Today, as Bumiller reports, with more than \$40 billion in U.S. funds spent on training Afghan security forces since 2003, it's back at one brigade.

In 2012 after pouring hundreds of billions and thousands of trainers the Afghan army and police are incapable of operating on their own and the major media has cease to follow up. Isolation journalism is unfortunately our norm and underreporting, was the main media problem of 2012 and will be so again in 2013 and beyond.

What If There Was A Way to Prevent HIV — And No One Cared

People should be shocked at how little coverage – and public notice – the roll-out of two advancements in the fight against HIV/AIDS have received: the HIV prevention pill, and the at-home HIV test. Marketed under the name of **Truvada** (also known as PrEP, which employs a combination of medications already being used to treat AIDS), the HIV prevention pill does not eliminate, but does dramatically reduce the risk of HIV transmission between an infected and an uninfected sexual partner. Marketed under the name **OraQuick**, it produces results in as little as 20 minutes, according to its marketers. This type of privacy at-home test, both boost testing rates and drive down infection rates.

If you asked me 25 years ago how people would react when we found a way to prevent HIV infection, I would have predicted dancing in the streets and widespread news coverage. Maybe the underwhelming response is an indication of how far HIV treatment has come in the U.S., with HIV-positive celebrities like Magic Johnson living full and relatively normal lives. Perhaps nothing short of a cure will merit a strong media response. However, for those who cannot afford treatment, AIDS is still a killer, and the public must be informed about methods of preventing its spread. With blacks comprising nearly half the Americans infected by HIV, it could be said that a story of this particular importance has not been covered by the major media due to who are infected.

This week President Obama cut his Christmas holiday short, returning to Washington for a last attempt at avoiding the fiscal cliff. But he ran into the Republican strategy of fanaticism. It's a long-established principle of game theory, that a fanatic who restricts his freedom to avert a disaster puts maximum pressure on his opponent to give ground. Like in a game of highway chicken, for example, the driver that can't swerve because he's tied his hands to the steering wheel and chained his foot to the accelerator forces the other to swerve in order to avoid crashing. The trick is for the first driver to convince the second that he's crazy enough to have committed himself to instant death if the second doesn't act rationally.

House Speaker John Boehner's failure to persuade rank-and-file House Republicans to raise taxes even on millionaires fits the fanatic's strategy exactly. It allowed Boehner to credibly claim he has no choice in the matter -- Republican fanatics in the House tied his hands and manacled his feet -- so the only way to avoid going over the cliff is for Obama and the Democrats to make more concessions. As such, Boehner passed the ball to the Senate pressuring them to extend all the Bush tax cuts and continue all current spending (lifting the debt limit along the way) -- unless or until a "grand bargain" on the budget is agreed to before the end of the next year.

The real problem is that it doesn't change or fix anything and still down the road Boehner's hands will still be tied and the fanatics will remain in charge -- which will give Republicans the stronger position in negotiations leading to a "grand bargain." Compromise again would have to be almost entirely on the Democrats' side.

More importantly, economist including Paul Krugman, Evan Soltas of Wonkblog and Joe Weisenthal say that the current budget deficit is overwhelmingly the result of the depressed economy, and it's not clear that we have a structural budget problem at all, let alone the fundamental mismatch between what we want and what we're willing to pay for that people like to claim exists. Much of the deficit panic is fundamentally misplaced. And it's especially galling if you look at what many of the same people now opining about the evils of deficits said back when we had a surplus. People forget that back when we had a surplus, George W. Bush campaigned on the basis that the surplus of the late Clinton years meant that we needed to cut taxes — and Alan Greenspan provided crucial support, telling Congress that the biggest danger we faced was that we might pay off our debt too fast. Now Greenspan is helping groups like Fix the Debt.

When we get obsessed with deficit reduction, all we do is provide a pot of money that Republican Conservatives are willing to squander on more tax breaks for the wealthy as soon as they get a chance. Think about it, if Romney had won; do you have even a bit of doubt that all the supposed deficit hawks of the GOP would suddenly have discovered that unfunded tax cuts and military spending are perfectly fine? The point is that the whole focus of budget discussion is based on a combination of bad economics and bad (and fundamentally dishonest) politics. We're looking not so much at a Grand Bargain, as much as the Big Scam being continued.

That's why like Robert Reich, ■ recommend going over the cliff and forcing the Republicans' hand. It's a risky strategy but it would at least expose the Republican tactic and put public pressure squarely on rank-and-file Republicans, where it belongs. The fanatics in the GOP have to be held accountable or they'll continue to hold the nation hostage to their extremism. Even if it takes until the 2014 midterms to loosen their hold, because the cost is worth it.

It is now apparent that the country is going to go over the "fiscal cliff" before year's end as congressional leaders will be unable to broker a deal. Let's review what happens on January 1:

Tax rates on all incomes would return to what they were during the Clinton era, before the Bush tax cuts reduced rates. Automatic spending cuts to a wide variety of agencies, including the Pentagon, would take effect—a punishment Congress imposed upon itself, by failing to find alternative spending cuts that it had vowed, in 2011, to find. Extensions of [refundable tax credits for the working poor, families with children, and people paying college tuition](#) would expire, as would an emergency federal program that provides extra [unemployment benefits](#) and a temporary reduction in payroll taxes. Medicare would reduce what it pays doctors and income tax filers would have to consider whether they fall into the "alternative minimum tax," resulting in substantially higher liabilities. Lots of people would feel the impact personally—their paychecks would shrink, government services would become less available, and so on. In addition, the policies as a whole would reduce the money going into the economy, causing it to slow down and quite possibly fall back into recession. That's obviously not an outcome anybody wants.

Except that all of these things won't happen right away. Because the administration has already instructed federal agencies to keep spending money as if the old, 2012 authorizations were still in effect. (For this reason, the *Huffington Post's* [Ryan Grim](#) has likened the fiscal cliff to the Y2K scare.) The [Internal Revenue Service](#), for its part, has not yet issued instructions on how to change withholding calculations for personal income taxes. The IRS has said ■ offer guidance by year's end, which presumably means Monday. But even if the IRS produces new withholding guidelines, employers and payroll companies would need time to adjust their systems—in many cases it would take a payroll cycle or two, maybe even more. The Labor Department could pay those extended unemployment benefits retroactively, as it has done in the past.

The upside is that once the Bush tax cuts come off the books, the baseline for budget calculations changes: Bills preserving Bush-era rates on lower and middle-incomes, while restoring Clinton-era rates on upper incomes, would become tax cuts rather than tax increases. It's a purely semantic distinction, for sure, but it could win over reluctant Republicans. In addition, the House on January 3 votes for its leadership—and whether to reelect John Boehner as speaker. After that date, Boehner could more easily defy the most conservative members of his caucus, whose opposition could prevent him from serving as speaker again.

The problem with what congress is trying to do now is just kicking the can down the road, as all of the deals currently being considered does not fix or even begin to address the systemic economic dysfunction that is causing today's deficits or address ways of growing the country's economy. Republicans will tell you its because government is too big and spending it out of control. And Democrats will tell you that Republicans are only interested in protecting the wealth of the rich. And guess what, both are right. But the difference is that the Republican ideology of no new taxes doesn't generate enough revenue to run the country when this same group continues to push for more and more defense spending. And since neither party will come clean to the public about the cuts that they would make in Social Programs, only a Grand Bargain, similar to what the President offered last month (admittedly with a bit of tweaking) will come close to addressing the systemic economic problems currently facing the country.

New York Times conservative columnist David Brooks said Sunday that Republicans should shoulder most of the blame if lawmakers do not reach an agreement on the fiscal cliff ahead of Tuesday's deadline. "What's happening in Washington right now is pathetic. When you think about what the revolutionary generation did, what the civil war generation did, what the World War II generation did -- we're asking not to bankrupt our children and we've got a shambolic, dysfunctional process," Brooks said during an appearance on **NBC's "Meet the Press."** "Most of the blame still has to go to the Republicans," he continued. "They've had a brain freeze since the election. They have no strategy. They don't know what they want. They haven't decided what they want."

Last month the country had a national election and Republicans have to be tone deaf if they don't understand that the people voted for tax fairness and preserving the country's social safety net/programs. Therefore, if we do go over the "fiscal cliff" and our congressional leaders use this reset opportunity to craft and pass a Grand Bargain that really begins to fix the country's economy, the temporary pain, international embarrassment and short-term collateral damage will be worth it.

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

This week The Washington Post listed – The top 10 political quotes of 2012. In the age of political soundbites this year here they are:

10. *“By the end of my second term, we will have the first permanent base on the moon, and it will be American.”* – Newt Gingrich
9. *“I wish they weren’t called the ‘Bush tax cuts.’ If they’re called some other body’s tax cuts, they’re probably less likely to be raised.”* – George W. Bush
8. *“(Florida Gov.) Rick Scott doesn’t seem to have any political skills at all. ■ give him a ‘B’ for governing. ■ give him an ‘A’ for strangeness.”* – Former Florida GOP Chairman, Tom Slade
7. *“Well, I think you hit a reset button for the fall campaign. Everything changes. It’s almost like an Etch A Sketch. You can kind of shake it up and restart all over again.”* – Romney adviser Eric Fehrstrom
6. *“Rick, I’ll tell you what. Ten thousand bucks? Ten thousand dollar bet?”* — Romney
5. *“There are a whole bunch of hardworking people out there. If you were successful, somebody along the line gave you some help. There was a great teacher somewhere in your life. Somebody helped to create this unbelievable American system that we have that allowed you to thrive. Somebody invested in roads and bridges. If you’ve got a business — you didn’t build that.”* – Obama
4. *“What do you want me to tell Romney? I can’t tell him to do that. I can’t tell him to do that to himself. You’re crazy. You’re absolutely crazy. You’re getting as bad as Biden.”* – Clint Eastwood, talking to an empty chair at the GOP convention
3. *“It seems to me, first of all, from what I understand from doctors, that’s really rare. If it’s a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down.”* – Rep. Todd Akin (R-Mo.)
2. *“Osama bin Laden is dead, and General Motors is alive.”* – Vice President Biden
1. *“There are 47 percent of the people who will vote for the president no matter what. All right, there are 47 percent who are with him, who are dependent upon government, who believe that they are victims, who believe that government has a responsibility to care for them, who believe that they are entitled to health care, to food, to housing, to you name it.”* – Romney

For more information please feel free to look at the attached article/list from **The Washington Post**.

As the **New York Times** asked in an editorial this week ***Could A.I.G. Happen Again?*** Although the United States government recently sold the last of its shares in the American International Group, more than four years after it bailed out the insurance giant with a package of assistance that eventually totaled \$180 billion with the Treasury Department saying that it made “a positive return” of \$22.7 billion. But whether the government profited from the bailout is not important. The truly vital issue is this: Could this happen again? ***Unfortunately, the troubling answer is yes.***

A.I.G., whose chief business is insuring consumers and businesses, collapsed in 2008 because of reckless speculation by a subsidiary, A.I.G. Financial Products. That unit bet big on the housing and credit boom with credit-default swaps, which are financial instruments that mimic insurance. By the

time it collapsed, the division had guaranteed nearly \$80 billion in mortgage securities, often for large investment banks and hedge funds. The government stepped in to bail out A.I.G. because its failure could have dealt mortal blows to other financial institutions that the company had agreed to protect from losses.

In the aftermath of the financial crisis, policy makers in Washington, London and elsewhere began working to address the shortcomings exposed by A.I.G. Congress passed the Dodd-Frank reform law that imposes new controls on financial activity but leaves it to regulatory agencies, such as the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, to fill in the details. While those agencies have made some progress, like requiring derivative trades to be more transparently traded and reported, they have completed just [one-third of the rules](#) required by the law. The things regulators have yet to finish include imposing limits on the size of bets investors can make using credit default swaps and other exotic financial instruments, and also requiring investors to maintain sufficient reserves to make good on all of those bets.

Another cause for concern is that American, European and Asian policy makers have not sufficiently coordinated their regulation of financial derivatives. That means investors looking to escape regulations in one country can do so by moving their trades to another part of the world. The derivatives business is global and its regulation must also be international. One of the reasons the A.I.G. Financial Products unit escaped the notice of regulators was that it was based in London, where it operated under a French banking license. At the very least, U.S. agencies must regulate the trading activities of the foreign branches and subsidiaries of American financial institutions.

The blame for regulatory delays falls, in part, on an unrepentant financial industry that has fought against regulation at every turn, on Capitol Hill or in the courts. It has, for instance, sued the C.F.T.C. to block a rule that would have limited the size of investors' positions in certain derivatives. Such shortsighted opposition hinders rules that would help restore long-term confidence in the financial system and the economy, which is in everybody's interest, including banks and investors. But ultimately, the blame for the slow progress rests with the Obama administration and policy makers in Europe and Asia, too.

After the Depression hit, the United States created several regulatory agencies like the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation that helped maintain relative financial stability and prosperity for almost seven decades before deregulation chipped away at their effectiveness. It is imperative that policy makers speed up the rules to help correct critical vulnerabilities in the financial system. Otherwise, history will definitely repeat itself and the country or the world's financial systems may not be able control the damage.

This week my dear friend **David Drake**, founder and chairman of LDJ Capital, a New York City private-equity firm, and of The Soho Loft Capital Creation Events series, a global events and media company the article – ***Crowdfunding Will Make 2013 The Year Of The Gold Rush*** in **FORBES Magazine**. While 2012 was an amazing year for crowdfunding, 2013 should outdo it. Here are half dozen predictions for 2013 by David – ***why this new form of capital formation will continue to soar.***

1. The Global Crowdfunding will double in annual revenue to \$6 billion in 2013

The global predictions in 2013 for the debt crowdfunding industry are strong. LendingClub will add almost \$1 billion in 2013 to the total of \$3 billion reached in 2012. There are 34 additional debt crowdfunding firms

growing globally, including Zopa (\$400 million since inception) and Prosper (\$250 million). The balance of the \$1.25 billion will come from donations and rewards-based crowdfunding, which will provide the bulk of growth in 2013 and 2014.

2. The EU will embrace crowdfunding laws

Led by the Directorate General for Enterprise and Industry, the EU Commission will have a couple more workshops Q1-3 2013 and create a proposal towards making crowdfunding for equity a legal option by Q4 2013.

3. Crowdfunding platforms will turn into a commodity

The 700+ crowd funding sites today will increase to 1,500 by Q2 2013 and quietly contract under the hood to 200 well-financed and revenue-generating sites by Q1 2014. Sites like Crowd Valley with 300 plus private label crowd funding platforms offered free to organizations will start charging for these services. David sees 1,000 more sites using crowd funding with free API technology from firms like CrowdTilt which allows any site to start group charging and collecting money from several projects and thousands of donors.

4. █████ will not fuel Crowd Funding in 2013, but international expansion will

The lack of standardized valuations for crowdfunding sites makes 2013 a year where David sees growth and █████ will mature to grow fastest in 2014. Next year will see a the gold rush: International expansion firms will grab market share and organically grow with innovation being the discernible advantage. Kickstarter launches in the UK, Indiegogo is already in Germany and several other countries. David again sees more international expansion by US companies in the field. Leading international firms, like Crowd Valley and Give2Gether, will push into the US, while Kickstarter and Indiegogo get as much as 30% of their revenue from abroad.

5. Broker-dealers will lead the “Rich Man’s Crowd Funding” strategy

The smallest broker dealers will consist of crowdfunding for equity players licensed with FINRA that use “Rich Man’s Crowd Funding.” Currently you raise private capital mainly through SEC exemptions. Most common is Regulation D, 506 which allows you to have only 35 non-accredited investors and an unlimited amount of “rich people” allowed to invest. To be accredited you have to have earned \$200,000 (\$300k for married couples) the last 2 years or have a net worth over \$1 million (and you must exclude the value of your home). Reg D, 506 as we call it, stood for \$900 Billion in capital raised in 2011. David predicts Crowd Funding for Equities will not become a legal SEC / FINRA regulated program in 2013 but rather by January 2014 because of the byzantine processes required for the SEC and FINRA to interpret the JOBS Act and implement the law. See Obama’s 10 Steps with SEC & FINRA to Legalize US Equity Crowd Funding.

6. By July we will see issuers raise \$1 million in capital per week

By year end we will see a total of 104 startups in 2013 having raised a minimum \$1 million through crowd funding in 2013. Crowdfunding will be a generally accepted tool to raise capital and the general public explosion will come in 2014 when corporate America officially embraces it.

Columnist E.J. Dionne wrote this week in **The Washington Post** – *It’s our system on the cliff* – The United States faces a crisis in our political system because the Republican Party, particularly in the House of Representatives, is no longer a normal, governing party. Republicans in the House will blame it on the Democrats, except that when Speaker John Boehner fail to gather enough Republican votes for his “Plan B” proposal to avert the “fiscal cliff” it was a catastrophic admission that the right wing of the Republican House has chosen to marginalize itself from any serious negotiations. Running a country or government it not about adhering to ideology purity, it is about getting things done so that the government provides services according to the laws.

As Dana Milbank wrote in **The Washington Post** this week – *John Boehner’s animal House* “In Boehner’s House, the animals are rampaging. The outcome should have been obvious, perhaps, when Boehner named his proposal Plan B, better known as an emergency contraceptive. But instead of gaining negotiating leverage by getting House Republicans on board for a modest tax hike on millionaires, Boehner birthed a rebellion that ended in public humiliation. As Thursday night’s vote approached, Republican leaders, realizing they didn’t have the votes, shut down the chamber, canceled plans to be in session Friday and sent members home until after Christmas. In a private meeting, Boehner bid them good riddance with a prayer: “God grant me the serenity to

accept the things I cannot change." A beaten Boehner stood before the cameras Friday morning to give a postmortem. "It's not the outcome that I wanted," he said, but "that was the will of the House."

As such the only way we will avoid a constitutional crackup is for a new, bipartisan majority to take effective control of the House and isolate those who would rather see the country fall into chaos than vote for anything that might offend their ideological sensibilities. In a democratic system with separated powers, two houses of Congress, split between the parties, a normal party accepts that compromise is the only way to legislate. A normal party takes into account election results. A normal party recognizes when the other side has made real concessions. A normal party takes responsibility.

It's true that Boehner miscalculated, foolishly asking Republicans to vote for a symbolic tax increase that had no chance of becoming law. And the speaker fed the fires of rebellion with repeated false claims that Obama had made no meaningful concession when the president had, in fact, annoyed his base by making rather big ones. But now, at least, we know something important: The current Republican majority in the House cannot govern. Only a coalition across party lines can get the public's business done. As such the one available majority for action, especially on budgets, is a coalition uniting most Democrats with those Republicans who still hold the old-fashioned view that they were elected to help run the country.

This past week Michael Moore wrote an article in **The Huffington Post**, *Celebrating the Prince of Peace in the Land of Guns* in an attempt to explain why America has such a violent culture. Despite the National Rifle Association's delusional assertion that more guns makes society more safer and that automatic and semiautomatic military grade weapons with large magazine clips should not be regulated, New York City's stringent gun laws has resulted in the number of murders per year has gone from 2,200 to under 400, it won't really bring about an end to these mass slayings and it will not address the core problem we have. Connecticut had one of the strongest gun laws in the country. That did nothing to prevent the murders of 20 small children on December 14th.

In fact, let's be clear about Newtown: the killer had no criminal record so he would never have shown up on a background check. All of the guns he used were legally purchased. None fit the legal description of an "assault" weapon. The killer seemed to have mental problems and his mother had him seek help, but that was worthless. As for security measures, the Sandy Hook school was locked down and buttoned up BEFORE the killer showed up that morning. Drills had been held for just such an incident. A lot of good that did. And here's the dirty little fact none of us liberals want to discuss: The killer only ceased his slaughter when he saw that cops were swarming onto the school grounds -- i.e, the men with the guns. When he saw the guns a-coming, he stopped the bloodshed and killed himself. Guns on police officers prevented another 20 or 40 or 100 deaths from happening. Guns sometimes work. (Then again, there was an armed deputy sheriff at Columbine High School the day of that massacre and he couldn't/didn't stop it.)

I am sorry to offer this reality check on our much-needed march toward a bunch of well-intended, necessary -- but ultimately, mostly cosmetic-- changes to our gun laws. The sad facts are these: Other countries that have guns (like Canada, which has 7 million guns -- mostly hunting guns -- in their 12 million households) have a low murder rate. Kids in Japan watch the same violent movies and kids in Australia play the same violent video games (Grand Theft Auto was created by a British company; the UK had 58 gun murders last year in a nation of 63 million people). They simply don't kill each other at the rate that we do. Why is that? THAT is the question we should be exploring while we are banning and restricting guns: Who are we?

Michael Moore tries to answer that question.

We are a country whose leaders officially sanction and carry out acts of violence as a means to often an immoral end. We invade countries who didn't attack us. We're currently using drones in a half-dozen countries, often killing civilians. This probably shouldn't come as a surprise to us as we are a nation founded on genocide and built on the backs of slaves. We slaughtered 600,000 of each other in a civil war. We "tamed the Wild West with a six-shooter," and we rape and beat and kill our women without mercy and at a staggering rate: every three hours a women is murdered in the USA (half the time by an ex or a current); every three minutes a woman is raped in the USA; and every 15 seconds a woman is beaten in the USA.

We belong to an illustrious group of nations that still have the death penalty (North Korea, Saudi Arabia, China, Iran). We think nothing of letting tens of thousands of our own citizens die each year because they are uninsured and thus don't see a doctor until it's too late. There is a level of arrogance in the otherwise friendly American spirit, conning ourselves into believing there's something exceptional about us that separates us from all those "other" countries (there are indeed many good things about us; the same could also be said of Belgium, New Zealand, France, Germany, etc.). We think we're #1 in everything when the truth is our students are 17th in science and 25th in math, and we're 35th in life expectancy. We believe we have the greatest democracy but we have the lowest voting turnout of any western democracy. We're biggest and the bestest at everything and we demand and take what we want. And sometimes we have to be violent m*****f*****s to get it.

Michael Moore believes that America's culture of violence is the result of:

1. POVERTY. Moore believes that the one thing that separates us from the rest of the developed world, it's this. 50 million of our people live in poverty. One in five Americans goes hungry at some point during the year. The majority of those who aren't poor are living from paycheck to paycheck. There's no doubt this creates more crime. Middle class jobs prevent crime and violence. (If you don't believe that, ask yourself this: If your neighbor has a job and is making \$50,000/year, what are the chances he's going to break into your home, shoot you and take your TV? Nil.)

2. FEAR/RACISM. Moore says that we are an awfully fearful country considering that, unlike most nations, we've never been invaded. (No, 1812 wasn't an invasion. We started it.) Why on earth would we need 300 million guns in our homes? I get why the Russians might be a little spooked (over 20 million of them died in World War II). But what's our excuse? Worried that the Indians from the casino may go on the warpath? Concerned that the Canadians seem to be amassing too many Tim Horton's donut shops on both sides of the border?

No. It's because too many white people are afraid of black people. Period. The vast majority of the guns in the U.S. are sold to white people who live in the suburbs or the country. When we fantasize about being mugged or home invaded, what's the image of the perpetrator in our heads? Is it the freckled-face kid from down the street -- or is it someone who is, if not black, at least poor? I think it would be worth it to a) do our best to eradicate poverty and re-create the middle class we used to have, and b) stop promoting the image of the black man as the boogeyman out to hurt you. Calm down, white people, and put away your guns.

3. THE "ME" SOCIETY. Moore says that the third major cause is our -- it's the every-man-for-himself ethos of this country that has put us in this mess and I believe it's been our undoing. Pull yourself up by your bootstraps! You're not my problem! This is mine!

Clearly, we are no longer our brother's and sister's keeper. You get sick and can't afford the operation? Not my problem. The bank has foreclosed on your home? Not my problem. Can't afford to go to college? Not my problem. And yet, it all sooner or later becomes our problem, doesn't it? Take away too many safety nets and everyone starts to feel the impact. Do you want to live in that kind of society, one where you will then have a legitimate reason to be in fear? I don't.

Although Moore concedes that it's not perfect elsewhere, he suggests that in other civilized countries where there is free medical care, free or low-cost college, mental health help -- one of the reasons gun murders in other countries are so rare is because there's less of the lone wolf mentality amongst their citizens. Most are raised with a sense of connection, if not outright solidarity. And that makes it harder to kill one another. Moore; *And for hunters who can't nail a deer in three shots -- and claim you need a clip of 30 rounds -- you're not a hunter my friend, and you have no business owning a gun.*

Last month, Greece, under pressure from its European creditors, wanted to retire some of its debt by buying back its bonds at a deep discount to their face value. A senior executive at Deutsche Bank proposed that Europe take a tough negotiating stance toward private hedge funds that had bought Greek bonds. He urged officials to use a legal mechanism that would force the funds to sell at a lower price than they might voluntarily accept. The move was "perfectly legal" and would not "upset the markets," the executive, Hakan Wohlin, argued. And

by forcing private investors to sell low — for 28 to 30 cents on the euro, instead of the 34 to 35 cents many hedge funds were aiming for — Greece could achieve significant debt reduction at a reasonable cost. But in this latest showdown with private investors over Greece's debt, Europe blinked first. See Landon Thomas' article — ***Buying Back Greek Debt Rewarded Hedge Funds*** — in **The New York Times**.

With litigious hedge funds and global finance's most powerful lobbying group warning of a market crisis, European officials rejected the hard-line approach. When the results were tallied on Dec. 12, Greece had reached its target of buying back enough bonds at a discount to retire 21 billion euros, or about \$27 billion, of its debt. The bigger winners, though, were hedge funds, which pocketed higher profits than many had expected, in yet another Greek bailout financed by European taxpayers.

To some experts, this latest chapter in the long-running Greek drama is another reminder of how private investors have outmaneuvered European officials at various stages of the debt crisis. And they caution that each time it happens, future debt workouts in the euro zone will become even more costly. *"I just don't understand why they did this,"* said Mitu Gulati, a sovereign debt specialist at Duke University School of Law, who argues that Europe could have saved up to 2 billion euros. *"This would have been an easy transaction to do, and still the hedge funds would have come out with a hefty profit."*

Opportunistic hedge funds have profited handsomely from the euro zone crisis, be it by speculating in Greek bonds or by buying up the senior debt of failed Spanish banks. They have successfully bet that Europe, ever fearful of Greek-style contagion, will prefer taxpayer-financed bailouts to forcing concessions from the private sector. In Greece this year, so-called vulture funds like Dart Management were paid back in full after refusing to take the losses that most other private bondholders grudgingly accepted as part of the 100 billion euro Greek bailout that Athens and Europe agreed to in March.

The big winners this time, according to bankers and investors, were American and European hedge funds like Greylock Capital, Fir Tree, Brevan Howard and Third Point, all of which snapped up Greek debt last summer as warnings grew that Greece might leave the euro and default on its debt. Many have booked gains of 100 percent or higher. They largely have the financial lobby to thank — in particular the Institute of International Finance, which is based in Washington and represents the interests of more than 450 banks, hedge funds and other financial institutions around the world. The institute played on fears in Brussels, Rome and Madrid that a hard-line approach to the hedge funds would create another round of market chaos.

The warning was blunt: If Athens set off legal mechanisms in the bond contracts known as collective action clauses, forcing bondholders to accept lower prices, investors would stop buying the bonds of struggling European countries. That would be bad news for Spain and Italy — to say nothing of Portugal and Ireland when they return to global bond markets in 2013.

For collective action clauses to kick in, two-thirds of investors must agree to the offer price, and European officials say there was no certainty that this would have happened. A buyback was only going to work if enough investors holding Greek bonds could be persuaded to sell — and in the early summer, when it looked as if a Greek default and departure from the euro zone might be imminent, that prospect seemed ludicrous.

When Greek bonds trading on the open market hit a low of 12 to 13 cents on the euro over the summer, a number of investors including Citigroup's in-house hedge funds started to pile into Greece sending the demand soaring to 25 cents on the euro. Then these same hedge funds/investors 's lobbyists flew to Athens in mid-November to tell the government that invoking the clauses would be disastrous for Greece and the euro zone. They also pressured other European governments on the highest levels. Their warnings resonated.

There would be no use of collective action clauses, and bankers were told to fashion a voluntary plan. As word seeped out that the exchange would be a friendly one, hedge funds pressed their advantage. *"I won't even*

answer the phone for anything less than 35 cents," one large holder said in late November. On Dec. 3, the terms of the buyback were announced. To the market's pleasant surprise, instead of the average price of 28 cents agreed to earlier, the offer was made at an average price of around 33 cents. One week later, the deal was done. **And if this isn't carpetbagging nothing is....**

As **The Economist** wrote last month in the article — **Why France could become the biggest danger to Europe's single currency** — two reasons could be is that it failed to balance a single budget since 1981 and public debt rising from 22% of GDP then to over 90% today. France has always been at the heart of the euro, as of the European Union. President François Mitterrand argued for the single currency because he hoped to bolster French influence in an EU that would otherwise fall under the sway of a unified Germany. France has gained from the euro: it is borrowing at record low rates and has avoided the troubles of the Mediterranean. But with its economy looking increasingly vulnerable France's Socialist President François Hollande ceded leadership in the euro crisis to Germany.

France still has many strengths, but its weaknesses have been laid bare by the euro crisis. For years it has been losing competitiveness to Germany and the trend has accelerated as the Germans have cut costs and pushed through big reforms. Without the option of currency devaluation, France has resorted to public spending and debt. Even as other EU countries have curbed the reach of the state, it has grown in France to consume almost 57% of GDP, the highest share in the euro zone.

With overly rigid labor- and product-market regulation, exceptionally high taxes and the euro zone's heaviest social charges on payrolls, the economy is stagnant, may tip into recession this quarter and will barely grow next year. This has led to 10% of the workforce, and over 25% of the young becoming jobless. The external current-account deficit has swung from a small surplus in 1999 into one of the euro zone's biggest deficits. In short, too many of France's firms are uncompetitive and the country's bloated government is living beyond its means.

Having pushed through a string of leftish measures, including a 75% top income-tax rate, increased taxes on companies, wealth, capital gains and dividends, a higher minimum wage and a partial rollback of a previously accepted rise in the pension age, the major European financial institutions and the German government are increasingly losing faith that President Hollande to make the structural changes needed to put the county's finances in order required to keep the euro zone intact.

As Linda greenhouse wrote in the **New York Times** this week in the article, **The [REDACTED]. at the Bench**, although there has been plenty written about the National Rifle Association in recent days, little has been said about the gun lobby's increasingly pernicious role in judicial confirmations. In 2009, when President Obama chose Judge Sonia Sotomayor as his first Supreme Court nominee, the White House expected that her compelling personal story, sterling credentials, and experience both as a prosecutor and, for 17 years, as a federal judge would win broad bipartisan support for her nomination. His biggest fear that the National Rifle would use its influence to get Senators to vote against her, because she voted with an appeals court panel to uphold New York State's ban on nunchucks, a martial-arts weapon consisting of two sticks held together with a chain or rope, commonly used by gang members and muggers. As such only seven Republicans voted for her confirmation.

One senator, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, said by way of explaining her "no" vote that her constituents had expressed "overwhelming concern" about Judge Sotomayor's views on the Second Amendment. However, Senator Murkowski told the National Journal at the time, "I am a bit concerned that the [REDACTED]. weighed in and said they were going to score this." She added, "I don't think that was appropriate." The following year, after the [REDACTED]. opposed Elena Kagan for the Supreme Court and announced that "this vote matters and will be part of future candidate evaluations," Republican support for another nominee without a record on gun issues shrank to five senators. At least Supreme Court confirmation debates take place in the light of day. Members of

the public can tune in and decide whether they are persuaded that Elena Kagan represents "a clear a present danger to the right to keep and bear arms," to quote the ██████'s statement of opposition to her nomination. (Justice Kagan had never owned or shot a gun, but since joining the court has taken lessons and gone hunting with Justice Antonin Scalia, pronouncing the experience "kind of fun.")

The new Big Ugly is that the ██████ has begun to involve itself in lower court nominations as well, where it can work its will in the shadows. It has effectively blocked President Obama's nomination of Caitlin J. Halligan to a seat on the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit that has been vacant since September 2005, when John G. Roberts Jr. moved to a courthouse up the street. The president has submitted the name of the superbly qualified Ms. Halligan to the Senate three times. When the Democrats' effort to break a Republican filibuster failed last year, Senator Murkowski was the only Republican to vote for cloture, perhaps liberated by the fact that she won her last election as a write-in candidate, thus freeing herself of party discipline - which in the Republicans' case effectively means discipline by the ██████. In this year's Republican Senate primary in Indiana, the ██████ spent \$200,000 toward the successful effort to defeat the incumbent, Richard Lugar, attacking the six-term senator for, among other sins, having voted to confirm "both of Barack Obama's anti-gun nominees to the U.S. Supreme Court."

The ██████ has embedded itself so deeply into the culture of Republican politics that it would take a cataclysm to break the bonds of money and fear that keep Republican office holders captive to the gun lobby's agenda. It is totally unacceptable for the ██████ to be calling the tune on judicial nominations for an entire political party. We have to recognize a naked power play for what it is. Voters who think they care about the crisis of gun violence in America and don't acknowledge the danger of the ██████'s control over the Republican Party, as well as many Democrats and now that this same lobbying organization for the gun manufactures are trying to do the same in the judiciary – are naive to not understand that they are a big part of the problem.

While in response last week to the shootings in Newtown, Conn., the National Rifle Association heaped blame on "vicious, violent video games" for corrupting young Americans and called them the "filthiest form of pornography." While it turns out, many of those very games have marketing relationships with the makers of firearms and ammunition, which are also big financial supporters of the ██████, through deals that appear to be designed to increase sales of their deadly wares. As Barry Meier and Andrew Martin reported in **The New York Times** this week, the gun industry works in partnership with the makers of games like **Medal of Honor Warfighter** and **Call of Duty Modern Warfare 2** to publicize their brands to potential customers.

In the case of **Medal of Honor**, its maker, **Electronic Arts**, proudly and prominently promoted its ties to the gun industry by listing on its Web sites partners that included the McMillan Group, a gun and ammunition producer, and **Magpul Industries**, which makes gun magazines and other firearm equipment. The company's Web site proudly declares the bona fides of its game with the motto "Authentic Game. Authentic Brands." and, for a time, even offered a direct link to the Web sites of the companies where its young customers could peruse catalogs of real weapons. While those links have been removed, the Web site still encourages visitors to "Check out the McMillan Website and shoot to win!" These troubling relationships expose the ██████'s disingenuous strategy of blaming the media, songwriters, filmmakers and anybody else it can think of for mass shootings while denying that the association, which is the most influential opponent of sensible gun-control policies, bears any responsibility for the growing number of massacres like Newtown and Columbine.

On Friday, Wayne LaPierre, the executive vice president of the association, excoriated games like **Bulletstorm**, another game made by **Electronic Arts**. Will he and his association now speak just as harshly about the firearms producers that support and try to generate sales of their weapons by agreeing to have their likeness used in such games?

Links on the **Medal of Honor** site allowed visitors to click through on the Web sites of the game's partners and peruse their catalogs. "It was almost like a virtual showroom for guns," said Ryan Smith, who contributes to the **Gameological Society**, an online gaming magazine. After gaming enthusiasts criticized the site, Electronic Arts disabled the links, saying it had been unaware of them.

When asked about the relationships between gun makers and the video game industry, an [REDACTED] spokesman said that the association had no comment because it does not speak for the firearms industry and simply represents America's gun owners. But that claim is completely hollow since companies like the McMillan Group and Magpul support the association through corporate donations and other initiatives like a giveaway of ammunition magazines and other equipment on the association's Facebook page that was later taken down. These ties make clear that the [REDACTED] is an aggressive supporter of the firearm industry, which benefits financially from its powerful lobbying efforts to prevent regulations on gun sales and ownership.

In responding to The Times's reporters, Electronic Arts defended its use of images of real guns in its games as no different than the company's use of licensed images of sports teams or buildings to give its games a real-life-like appearance. In addition, some gun makers and video game companies also said such deals do not include payments to have their weapons included in games. But regardless of whether money changed hands, this kind of marketing is deeply disturbing because it aims to connect the visceral thrill of video games directly with real weapons in the minds of a young, impressionable audience. It is hypocritical and disingenuous for the [REDACTED] to blame the game-makers (who their gun makers collaborate with) for gun violence, instead of assuming the responsibility of hindering sensible gun control laws.

This week in **The Washington Post**, E.J. Dionne wrote, **Republicans rejecting their own ideas**. One of the major components of Obamacare is for each state to set up an insurance exchange, which would extend health insurance coverage to more than 20 million Americans. Many liberals preferred a national exchange, in which the federal government could institute strong rules to protect consumers and offer broader options. This was the path the House took, but the final Senate-passed law went with state-level exchanges in deference to Republican sensibilities. Now the vast majority of Republican governors are refusing to set up the state insurance exchanges required under the law.

To ensure that governors could not just prevent their residents from having access to the new marketplaces, the bill required the federal government to run them if states defaulted. So, irony of ironies, in declining to set up state exchanges, conservative governors are undermining states' rights and giving liberals something far closer to the national system they hoped for. As Robert Laszewski, an industry critic of Obamacare, told The Post's [REDACTED] Aizenman, conservative governors are engaging in "cut-off-your-nose-to-spite-your-face" behavior.

Their most outrageous move was the big lie that the original health-care bill included "death panels." This would have been laughable if it had not been so pernicious. The provision in question would simply have paid for consultations by terminally ill patients — if they wanted them — with their physicians on their best options for their care. Few things are more important to the future of health care than thinking straight about the costs and benefits (to patients and not just the system) of end-of-life treatments. For those of us who oppose physician-assisted suicide, it's urgent to promote, rather than block, serious, moral and compassionate discussions of the difficult issues raised by high-tech medicine.

Or take the health-care law's creation of the Independent Payment Advisory Board, known as IPAB. It's a 15-member body charged with finding ways of cutting the costs of treatment under Medicare. Congress would have the final say, but through a fast-track process. Yet the ink was barely dry on Obama's signature of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) when a group of Republican senators introduced what they called the Health Care

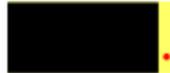
Bureaucrats Elimination Act, to get rid of IPAB. Thus did an innovative effort to save money meet with a slap in the face. Conservatives barely acknowledge other cost-saving experiments in the ACA.

The hypocrisy of this is that the Individual Mandate and Insurance Exchanges was first proposed by the Conservative think-tank, **The Heritage Foundation** and now conservative Republicans are walking away from their own ideas (the exchanges, for example) and of rejecting progressive efforts to save money. Our major non-military fiscal challenges lie in Medicare and Medicaid. In principle, conservatives should seek to find ways of holding down health-care inflation in both the private and public sectors. In practice, they see most efforts to take on this issue system-wide as examples of big government run wild. They seem to have a vague idea that markets can yet solve a problem that markets have not been very good at solving. So we have to ask why are Republicans walking away for their own Conservative ideas, other than for partisan reasons.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

Every man loves two women; the one is the creation of his imagination and the other is not yet born.

Kahlil Gibran



TED is a nonprofit devoted to Ideas Worth Spreading. It started out (in 1984) as a conference bringing together people from three worlds: Technology, Entertainment, Design. Since then its scope has become ever broader. Along with two annual conferences -- the TED Conference in Long Beach and Palm Springs each spring, and the TEDGlobal conference in Edinburgh UK each summer -- TED includes the award-winning TED Talks video site, the Open Translation Project and TED Conversations, the inspiring TED Fellows and TEDx programs, and the annual TED Prize. If you have the time, I strongly urge that you take a look at these three TED talks as they are informative, non-partisan, multi-cultural and another way of looking at life in 2012. Please click on the links and enjoy.....

Adam Davidson: What we learned from teetering on the fiscal cliff

It's the end of 2012, and the US political system is tied in knots over next year's "fiscal cliff" -- a budget impasse that can only be solved with bipartisan agreement. (And the world is watching.) Adam Davidson, cohost of "Planet Money," shares surprising data that shows how it might just be solved. Talk about [the economy] like what it is: not an existential crisis, not some battle between two fundamentally different religious views, but a math problem, a really solvable math problem." (Adam Davidson)

Adam Davidson is the co-host and co-creator of "Planet Money," a weekly podcast and radio feature about the economy

Ronny Edry: Israel and Iran: A love story?

When war between Israel and Iran seemed imminent, Israeli graphic designer Ronny Edry shared a poster on Facebook of himself and his daughter with a bold message: "Iranians ... we [heart] you." Other Israelis quickly

created their own posters with the same message -- and Iranians responded in kind. The simple act of communication inspired surprising Facebook communities like "Israel loves Iran," "Iran loves Israel" and even "Palestine loves Israel." Ronny Edry of Israel accidentally created an online movement for peace in the Middle East when he posted a Facebook image that declared "Iranians, we will never bomb your country."

This is the courageous thing to do: to try to reach the other side before it's too late." (Ronny Edry on the Israel-loves-Iran Facebook campaign)

Ronny Edry is a graphic designer, teacher, father and frequent Facebook updater. While he often posted images on the site without much fanfare, in March of 2012 one of his images garnered international attention. The image showed himself and his daughter, along with the words "Iranians, we will never bomb your country. We heart you." The image became a catalyst for dialogue between the people of two nations on the brink of war.

Edry grew up in Paris, France, and has lived in Israel since 1989. He teaches Visual Communication at Shenkar College of Engineering and Design and is the author of several graphic novels. He is also the owner and founder of "Pushpin," a prep school for art and design.

"It is not possible to dial an Iranian number from an Israeli telephone. It will simply not go through. That lack of communication stems from the government level, where there is no dialogue between the two countries aside from public speeches meant to carry weighty threats of war to each camp. That is why it was so difficult for Ronny Edry, an Israeli graphic designer based in Tel Aviv, to get his message across to the people of Iran." Ronny Edry of Israel accidentally created an online movement for peace in the Middle East when he posted a Facebook image that declared "Iranians, we will never bomb your country."

Lemon Andersen performs "Please don't take my Air Jordans"

Would you kill for a pair of Air Jordans? Lemon Andersen spins a tale of someone who did, reciting a poem by Reg E. Gaines. These verses taught Lemon that poetry could be about more than self-expression, and could sound like music when given rhythm and infused with the grit of the New York streets around him. Lemon Andersen is a wordsmith who thinks deeply about the sounds of syllables.

Lemon Andersen is a poet, spoken word artist and actor. He first garnered national attention appearing in Russell Simmons Def Poetry Jam on Broadway in 2002, which won a Tony Award for Best Special Theatrical Event and netted Andersen a Drama Desk nomination for his writing. Andersen also appeared in eight episodes of HBO's ode to spoken word, Def Poetry. Over the past decade, he has performed in venues across the country, from New York's Nuyorican Poets Café to Hollywood's Kodak Theater. He has appeared in four Spike Lee films and was the subject of the documentary *Lemon*, a look at his journey from two-time felon to bold-faced name -- and how leaving one's past behind just isn't that simple.

Most recently, Spike Lee produced Andersen's one-man play *County of Kings* at The Public Theater in New York City. Since its premiere in 2009, the play has been staged on three continents, to rave reviews. The script was awarded the New York Book Festival's Grand Prize. Anderson's newest work, *ToasT*, was commissioned by the Sundance Institute and will be staged at The Public Theater in 2013.

THIS WEEK'S MUSIC

In 2012 a number of musicians left us along with two of the greatest impresarios of our life-time please enjoy some of the music that left an indelible imprint on many of my generation. I hope that you enjoy.

Jimmy Castor, 71. Funk and soul saxophonist, singer and songwriter whose tune, "It's Just Begun," morphed into an anthem for generations of musical acts. Jan. 16.

Jimmy Castor Bunch – Troglodyte -- [REDACTED]

Etta James, 73. Blues singer best known for her performance of the enduring classic "At Last." Jan. 20. Complications from leukemia.

Etta James - At Last -- [REDACTED]

Don Cornelius, 75. As host of "Soul Train," he helped break down racial barriers and broaden the reach of black culture with funky music, groovy dance steps and cutting edge style. Feb. 1. Self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Don Cornelius Boogie Down the "Soul Train" Line With Mary Wilson -- [REDACTED]
[v=8A0ZsmE4BKg](#)

Whitney Houston, 48. She ruled as pop music's queen until her majestic voice was ravaged by drug use and her regal image ruined by erratic behavior and a tumultuous marriage to singer Bobby Brown. Feb. 11. Accidentally drowned in a bathtub.

Whitney Houston - I Will Always Love You -- [REDACTED]

Davy Jones, 66. Actor turned singer who helped propel the TV rock band The Monkees to the top of the pop charts. Feb. 29. Heart attack.

Monkees - Daydream Believer -- [REDACTED]

Dick Clark, 82. Ever-youthful television entrepreneur who helped bring rock 'n' roll into the mainstream on "American Bandstand," and later produced and hosted game shows and the year-end countdown from Times Square. April 19.

Dick Clark Interviews The Beatles - American Bandstand 1967 -- [REDACTED]
[v=rQ5411a3TC0](#)

Levon Helm, 71. Key member of the rock group The Band who lent his voice to classics like "The Weight" and "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down." April 19.

The Band – Up On Cripple Creek -- [REDACTED]

Adam Yauch, 47. Also known as MCA, the gravelly voiced rapper helped make the Beastie Boys one of the seminal groups in hip-hop. May 4. Cancer.

Beastie Boys - Shake Your Rump -- [REDACTED]
[v=BptQHAW2T5M&playnext=1&list=PLEA2260932FA25D38](#)

Donna Summer, 63. Disco queen whose pulsing anthems such as "Last Dance," "Love to Love You Baby" and "Bad Girls" became the soundtrack for a glittery age of drugs, dance and flashy clothes. She had a home in Sarasota County. May 17.

Donna Summer - Last Dance -- [REDACTED]

Robin Gibb, 62. One of the three Bee Gees whose falsetto harmonies powered such hits as "Stayin' Alive" and "Night Fever" and defined the flashy disco era. May 20.

Bee Gees - Stayin Alive -- [REDACTED]

Herb Reed, 83. Last surviving original member of 1950s vocal group the Platters who sang on hits like "Only You" and "The Great Pretender." June 4.

The Platters – Smoke Gets In Your Eyes -- [REDACTED]

Hal David, 91. Stylish, heartfelt lyricist who teamed with Burt Bacharach on dozens of songs for movies, television and a variety of recording artists in the 1960s and beyond. Sept. 1.

Hal David – Raindrops Keep Falling on my Head -- [REDACTED]

Joe South, 72. Singer-songwriter who performed 1960s and '70s hits such as "Games People Play" and "Walk A Mile In My Shoes" and penned songs including "Down in the Boondocks" for other artists. Sept. 5.

Joe South - Games People Play -- [REDACTED]

Andy Williams, 84. Silky-voiced, clean-cut crooner whose hit recording "Moon River" and years of popular Christmas TV shows brought him fans the world over. Sept. 25.

Andy Williams - Moon River -- [REDACTED]

Dave Brubeck, 91. Jazz composer and pianist whose pioneering style in pieces such as "Take Five" caught listeners' ears with exotic, challenging rhythms. Dec. 5.

Dave Brubeck - Take Five -- [REDACTED]

Ravi Shankar, 92. The sitar virtuoso who became a hippie musical icon of the 1960s after hobnobbing with the Beatles and who introduced traditional Indian ragas to Western audiences over an eight-decade career. Dec. 11.

Ravi Shankar at Monterey Pop -- [REDACTED]

*As there is only one more day in the year of 2012, it has been my pleasure sharing my weekend offerings and in the words of the "Artist Formally Known as Prince," I urge that you live it **"just like it was 1999"** and I wish you and yours all of the happiness and success that God can give and a great 2013....*

Sincerely,
Greg Brown

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