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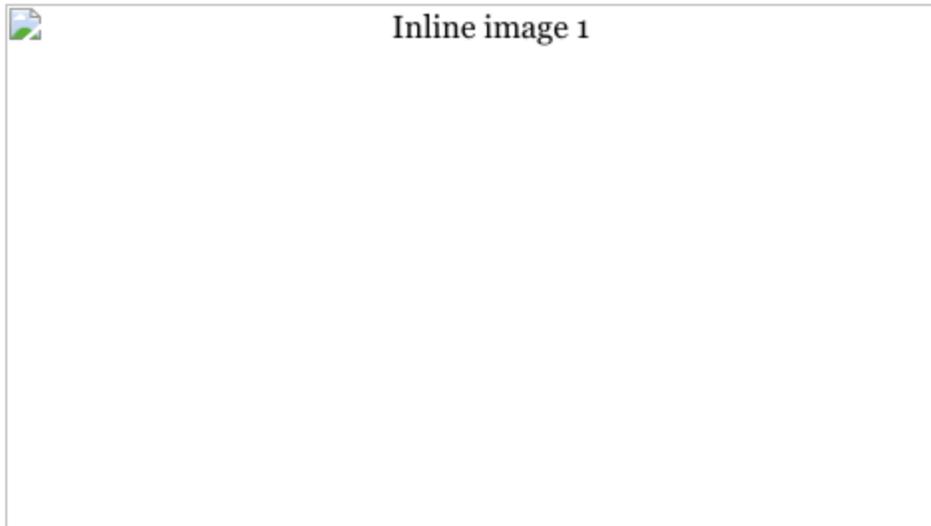
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DEAR FRIEND.....

Was It Worth It

An Olympic ghost town: Rio stuck with big bills, vacant venues



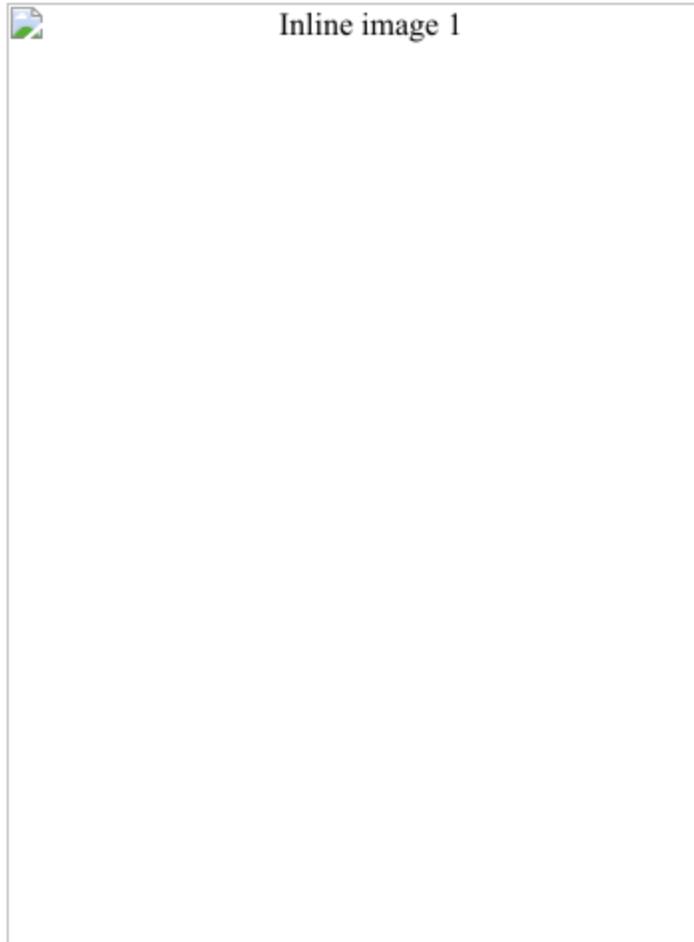
With its economy failing, more than 200,000 Zika virus cases and Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff facing an impeachment, against all odds, Rio de Janeiro pulled off last year's Olympics, keeping crime at bay and fending off dire forecasts of corruption, environmental degradation, and cost overruns. But now a half year later with the festivities having faded in memory, sobriety is setting in as the state of Rio is now broke. It hasn't been able to pay its bills since long before the games. A federal bailout kept police on the streets and hospitals open while Olympics tourists were in town. But now the money has dried up, and public employees aren't being paid.

The state government is voting on an austerity package that could slash state workers' wages and pensions by 30 percent. That's triggered violent protests and led demonstrators to briefly storm the state Legislature last month. Meanwhile, crime is surging across the state. From January to October, murders increased by 18 percent, and street robberies jumped by 48 percent compared to the same time last year, according to the state's security institute.

Rio organizers still owe creditors about \$40 million. Four of the new arenas in the main Olympic Park have failed to find private-sector management, and ownership has passed to the federal government. Another new arena will be run by the cash-strapped city with Brazil stuck in its deepest recession in decades.

The historic Maracana stadium, site of the opening and closing ceremony, has been vandalized as stadium operators, the Rio state government, and Olympic organizers have fought over \$1 million in unpaid electricity bills. The electric utility reacted by cutting off all power to the city landmark. There are few players for a new \$20 million Olympic golf course, and little money for upkeep. Deodoro, the second-largest cluster of Olympic venues, is closed and searching for a management company.

The state of Rio de Janeiro is months late paying teachers, hospital workers, and pensions. The state also reports record-breaking crime in 2016 in almost all categories from homicides to robbery. "During the Olympics, the city was really trying hard to keep things together," said Oliver Stuenkel, a Brazilian who teaches international relations at the Getulio Vargas Foundation, a Brazilian university. "But the minute the Olympics were over, the whole thing disintegrated."



The Games, at their best, are a collection of special moments. They're the thrill of seeing Michael Phelps and Usain Bolt pile up medals, pushing the limits of physical performance. But none of it — from the heartwarming gestures of international sportsmanship to the mindless, wall-to-wall guilty pleasure coverage of an American douchebag peeing on a gas station — can possibly be worth lives being ruined so the IOC can sell \$92 soccer balls, all while paying Olympic Village housekeepers \$1.83 per hour and berating their overworked volunteer help.

Better image, or worse?

The Olympics — and to a lesser extent the 2014 World Cup — showcased the reality of Rio, a city romanticized for its sprawling beaches, annual Carnival celebration, and sensual lifestyle. It also exposed the city's crime, environmental contamination, and corruption. Some building projects connected to the Olympics and World Cup have been tied to a probe which has led to the jailing of dozens of politicians and businessmen for receiving kickbacks in Brazil's largest corruption scandal.

Three politicians who were instrumental in landing and organizing the Olympics — former Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, former Rio governor Sergio Cabral, and former Rio Mayor Eduardo — have been under investigation. Cabral, an early promoter of the Olympics and World Cup, has been jailed on corruption charges. "The Olympics gave people a better sense of the difficulties Brazil faces," Stuenkel said. "Maybe not a better or worse image, but more rounded."

Unpaid bills

Sidney Levy, the chief executive officer of the Rio organizing committee, tried to run the games with only private money, and almost succeeded. His \$3 billion operating budget — the budget for running the games, not building the infrastructure — was frugal by Olympic standards. At the last minute, he had to ask for a 250-million-real bailout — \$80 million — from the city of Rio and the federal government to run the Paralympics.

Eventually, he got only 100 million reals (\$30 million), and the shortfall has left organizers owing creditors millions. Today, Levy says he's nearly a forgotten man. "I could call the president of the country, and the call was taken," Levy said. "But try it today. I could call the IOC and everybody.

But now people have other things to handle. We are no longer a priority." Levy said organizers probably lost about \$200 million in income during the run-up to the games as sponsors backed out of expensive deals as the recession kicked in. Levy said he has not asked the IOC to help pay debts, but acknowledged the Olympic body came up with millions in advance money several times during the run-up to the games. "The whole thing was too painful," Levy told The Associated Press. "We never really enjoyed the games, themselves; 2016 was just extremely hard. It's like we were climbing Everest, and ice is falling on your lips, and you are not seeing."

White elephants

The Olympic Park is a ghost town; sleek sports arenas without events, deserted before they were even broken in, and well-tended flower gardens, free from pedestrian wear-and-tear. "The arenas are beautiful," Wagner Tolvai said, walking inside the park with his girlfriend Patricia Silva. "But it's all abandoned, everything has stopped. Nobody is here." He likened the 2.5 billion real (\$800 million) park to a new shopping mall "without stores, or customers." The park is only open on weekends, and there's not much to do but walk, pedal a bike, or look for shade.

Four permanent arenas are being run by the federal government. Among them is the Olympic tennis center, which was used earlier this month for a one-day beach volleyball tournament. This in a city with endless sand and beaches. Two temporary venues for swimming and handball have yet to be dismantled. The exterior of the swimming venue is falling apart and many translucent tapestries that covered the outside of the building are frayed or falling to the ground. The warm-up pool, which was covered during the games, is filled with muddy, stagnant water.

Away from the park, the famous Maracana stadium has drawn the most attention. It was renovated for the 2014 World Cup at a cost of about \$500 million. It was largely abandoned after the Olympics and Paralympics, and then hit by vandals who ripped out thousands of seats and stole televisions. "The Maracana is the biggest symbol of the way the games were managed," said Mauricio Santoro, a political scientist at Rio de Janeiro State University. "The vast majority of people in Rio will never go to the golf course, or the Olympic venues. But the Maracana is different. It's the jewel of the crown."

Up the road from the Olympic Park, the \$1 billion Athletes Village — it housed about 10,000 athletes — is fenced off and empty. The developer says it has sold only 260 of the 3,604 apartments — about 7 percent. Rio's Globo newspaper reported that new Rio Mayor Marcelo Crivella is arranging low-cost loans for public employees to buy the units.

Subway and busses

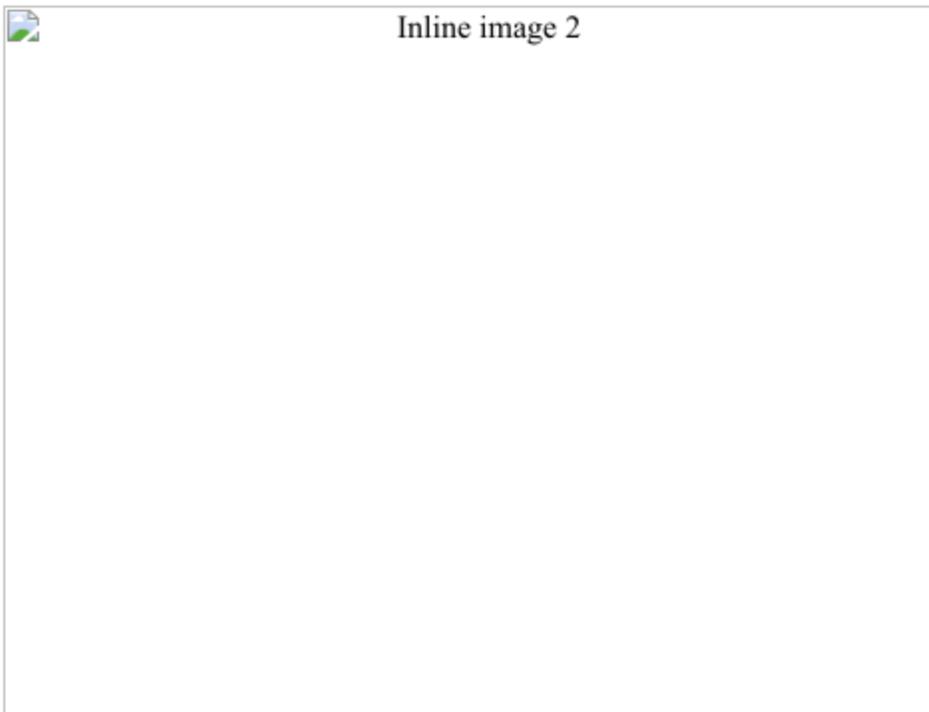
Transportation projects driven by the Olympics look better than the sports venues. The games led to a subway line extension, though at the reportedly inflated price of \$3 billion. They also produced a high-speed bus network, a light-rail line, and a pedestrian-friendly, renovated port area. Rio's international airport also got a makeover. People using the new subway line have benefited, though city traffic is still badly snarled. But many of the improvements benefit mostly the wealthy south and west of the city. "The gains were unevenly spread across the city," Stuenkel, the political scientist said.

To call the Olympics a bad investment would be disingenuous, because few actually believe the Games produce any return of public value. Study after study after study has shown they create no economic benefits, yet cities and nations still fight to host them, always to disastrous ends. Something like \$12 billion — roughly \$15,000 per Carioca, five times the annual minimum wage salary in Brazil — was spent on the Rio Games.

The Olympics were never meant to be an economic panacea for Rio, but there was certainly hope that the games would boost the local economy. Instead, officials are now trying to figure out if tax cuts awarded to corporations involved with the Olympics actually worsened Rio state's financial situation.



Inline image 2



Nearly all of that money went to the already wealthy: developers, landowners, transportation moguls, massive — and allegedly corrupt — construction firms, effectively making the Olympics an enormously successful regressive wealth transfer program, taking money from the poor and middle class via taxes and giving it to the rich. This is an unconscionable crime in a city with open sewers, endemic violence, abject poverty, and lack of economic opportunities for millions of its citizens. Rio will be paying for these Games for years, if not decades, to come.

Tokyo 2020 advice

Levy, the CEO, said Tokyo's 2020 Olympics will face completely different challenges.

“They have a society that works pretty well already,” he said. “They don't have to prove anything to anybody.”

Tokyo will face higher costs than Rio, and organizers are already looking for places to cut.

Levy suggested reining in sports federations, which all want five-star treatment. He used an example from the equestrian events.

“They wanted 15 horse ambulances,” Levy said. “We offered nine. In the end, the right number was four. The magic of the games doesn't come from these things.”

After every Games, there's a tradition of determining whether or not the event was a "*success*." This depends on who's judging, and what they consider important. Usually, it's journalists evaluating if the focus remained on athletic achievements and good TV, rather than the surrounding unpleasantness — as if the suffering of thousands and corruption of city officials is simply a regrettable side story, another disposable thread in a quadrennial reality show. But for the people who call Rio home, the Games weren't just programming inventory for NBC to sell ads against, or the set of a late-summer blockbuster. They were real, with a real, lasting impact. From a human rights perspective, from a human perspective, attempting to determine the success of the Games is the wrong question. There has never been a successful Olympics. They're all, as one historian puts it, different kinds of total disasters.

With this said, here in my home town Los Angeles, do we really want the 2024 Olympics?

So True



Inline image 1

America makes up 5% of the world's population, yet locks up 25% of the world's prisoners. Ava DuVernay's film #13TH explores how we got here.

We Have To Rethink Re-training

And it isn't just a diploma



Inline image 1

If we accept the premise that a well-trained military is key to a country's defense, one would believe that a well-educated workforce is key to a country's prosperity.

The well-paying jobs of the 1950s, 60s and 70s have been under assault in America for more than four decades, as a result of globalization and technology and are never coming back no matter what politicians promise. Manufacturing jobs lost to China are not coming back. First because of cheap labor which has become an international commodity and secondly do to automation. Case in point, is a mobile phone factory in Dongguan, China, that has replaced most of its workers with robots, it witnessed a spectacular rise in productivity. The factory used to be run by 650 employees, but now just 60 people get the entire job done, while robots take care of the rest. The general manager, says the number of required employees will eventually drop to 20. Despite this reduction in staff, not only is the factory producing more equipment (a 250% increase), but it's also ensuring better quality.

The United States has lost approximately has lost more than 200,000 jobs in the mining industry since September 2014 and today there are less than 65,000 people working in the coal sector. Whereas there are now more than 260,000 solar workers with one out of every 50 new jobs added in the United States in 2016 was created by the solar industry, representing 2% percent of all new jobs and growing more than 20% per year, nearly tripling since 2010. Over the next 12 months, employers surveyed expect to see total solar industry employment increase by 10 percent to 286,335 solar workers. In 2016, the five states with the most solar jobs were California, Massachusetts, Texas, Nevada, and Florida.

Now solar might not be the answer in Buckhannon, West Virginia or Yorktown, Ohio but new battery factories producing the latest technologies could be. Last March, the Federal Highway Administration released data that said that 58,495 bridges out of the 609,539 bridges in the United States are currently rated as structurally deficient, equating to 9.6 percent of the bridge stock in the county. The same is true for the countries, road, dams, levies, electric grid, water and sewage, so there are millions of jobs if we chose to make them happen. And in the private sector, even robots require educated workers to make and maintain them.

But unemployed coal miners, auto or factory workers have to be retrained to master the skills of today's new workplace. And for many the answer has been either community colleges or for-profit schools, which like Trump University are little more than shams offering worthless diplomas and saddling their student with (on average) more than \$30,000 student loan debt. Despite the claims that for-profit colleges serve an unmet need, are more nimble than stodgy traditional colleges, and increase access to poor and minority students, these '**Lower ed**' institutions target and thrive off of inequality. That inequality is just shrouded in euphemisms that don't challenge the conventional wisdom of the educational gospel as these schools focuses on profits for their owners or shareholders.

When economists say that these agile, responsive institutions are better suited to career training, they're talking about inequality. In the knowledge economy, technological advancements make human labor more efficient. But more work can be produced with fewer workers. A consequence of that efficiency has been greater economic insecurity. The more insecure people feel, the more they are willing to spend money for an insurance policy against low wages, unemployment, and downward mobility. Those least likely to have an insurance policy that our labor market values are people for whom higher education has always been a long shot: poor people, single parents, the socially isolated, African Americans, the working class.

When education researchers talk about the unmet consumer demand that for-profit colleges serve, they're talking about inequality. These aren't the people who go to good schools with college-prep classes, have medical care and stable housing, focus on standardized tests, and have the money to participate in extracurricular activities. These consumers are the people who do not have those social resources that many traditional colleges assume their likely student will have. And, the answer can also be summed up by race, class, and gender.

When investors and politicians say that for-profit colleges offer a flexible solution to retrain the country's workforce, again, they are talking about inequality. Whose training in the jobs of the 20th century are now obsolete in the 21st century. As such, like the miners in West Virginia and former factory workers are looking to education as a solution, to their current predicament. Women who carry the burden of primary childcare, men working more than one job, older adults caring for both their parents and their own children — a group for whom time isn't just money, but also the lack of money and the immense pressure of that absence.

Flexible solutions, on-demand education, open-access career retraining, reskilling, and upskilling — these are terms that talk about inequality without taking inequality seriously. When these words and conceptualizations of for-profit higher education are used, strange conclusions follow. People with "low cognitive abilities" are blamed for enrolling in "*low-quality*" for-profit colleges. The argument goes that more for-profit colleges are a democratic good despite the fact that the most vulnerable students pay a high price for attending them. It's said that consumers drive products, as if students are consuming degrees rather than the promise of a good job. In effect, people are blamed for doing precisely what the education gospel demands — More Education Equals Higher Wages — and a Qualified Talent Pool.

More than two million students are enrolled in for-profit colleges, from the small family-run operations to the behemoths brandished on billboards, subway ads, and commercials that you see advertised on television, often late at night: University of Phoenix, DeVry, Corinthian College, and ITT Tech. The advertisements that for profit colleges create make attending college seem so easy; why you

can even attend class online while at home in your pajamas! However, these advertisements do not mention the sinister side of attending a for profit college. For instance, while for profit colleges only serve 13 percent of the total higher education population in the U.S., they receive 31 percent of all federal student loans.

The fundamental problem is that these schools made promises they couldn't keep. For-profit colleges are far more expensive than community colleges, their closest peers, but, according to a 2013 study by three Harvard professors, their graduates have lower earnings and are actually more likely to end up unemployed. To make matters worse, these students are usually in a lot of debt. Ninety-six per cent of them take out loans, and they owe an average of more than forty thousand dollars. According to a study by the economists Adam Looney and Constantine Yannelis, students at for-profit schools are roughly three times as likely to default as students at traditional colleges. And the ones who don't default often use deferments to stay afloat: according to the Department of Education, seventy-one per cent of the alumni of American National University hadn't repaid a dime, even after being out of school for six years.

Not surprisingly, most of the students attending for profit colleges are low-income students, whose household income is at or below the federal poverty line, and former veterans utilizing their GI Bills. These startling statistics point to a clear, profit driven assault on America's working class. Thus, many argue that for profit colleges have been helping to maintain a permanent underclass. Much like car title loan companies and paycheck lending companies, for profit colleges prey on poor and minority students, saddle them with debt, and leave them with only debt, as their degree is often worthless in the job market.

Progressives argue that for profit colleges maintain the permanent underclass. For profit colleges maintain this permanent underclass by targeting veterans and low income students to attend their non-accredited programs, and encouraging them to borrow federally insured loans. Once many of these students finish, they have difficulty finding jobs, as their degree is not regionally accredited. Since these colleges are not regionally accredited, the credits you earn from them are non-transferable to nonprofit universities. In addition, most students do not actually graduate. Ultimately, for profit universities benefit from our tax dollars, and therefore, if the Trump Administration repeals regulations governing them they will go back to their predatory practices and again ride on the student-loan gravy train.

However, for profit colleges point to deeper issues within our society. First, education should not be run as a for profit business, and especially with no federal oversight or regulation. Clearly, for profit colleges do not regulate themselves and are utilizing valuable federal student loan money to provide a scam education to vulnerable populations in society. As public education is continually dismantled in this country on the primary, secondary and post-secondary level, we shouldn't be surprised that a certain segment of the population remains trapped in a cycle of poverty.

Many believe that the creation of a permanent underclass is not an accident; in fact, they would argue that private prisons, charter schools, voucher programs, and for profit colleges all aim to create an underclass that is profitable to corporations. The creation of the underclass begins early. Poor minority students utilizing vouchers or charter schools to attend primary and secondary schools are taking away important tax revenue from their local public schools and putting it in the hands of people making a profit. Not to mention, poor students who do not have the privilege of using vouchers or

attending charter schools often end up becoming part of the school to prison pipeline, as they attend failing high schools that are highly securitized and policed. After attending lackluster secondary schools, many poor and vulnerable students are left with few options and attend a for profit college, further indebting themselves without the benefit of graduating with an accredited degree.

If we as a nation really want to reverse this inequality we will have to take a long term view and understand that a student loan is just another way to disguise a TAX. Today, Americans have more than \$1.3 trillion in student loans and this number is growing. So instead of giving massive tax breaks that mostly go to the wealthy, why not forgive some of the student loan debt, enabling the millions of people living in servitude to buy homes for their families, computers for their children and cars for themselves. It is called the multiplier effect.

Tressie McMillan Cottom recently wrote – From my experience on the ground working in for-profit colleges, and later when studying them, I realized there is a more satisfying – if damning – explanation for the rise of for-profit colleges in the Wall Street era of lower ed. Inequalities in how people work, exacerbated by social policies and legitimized by individualist notions of education as a consumer good, conspired to create the demand for a credential that would insure workers against bad jobs. And everyone from politicians to employers to researchers and those in traditional higher education benefitted when for-profit colleges became the solution to that demand. For-profit credentials became a political solution for “*re-training*” America’s workforce.

It may not be explicit, but when politicians extol the virtues of short-term occupational training, they are promoting for-profit colleges’ specialty. Employers were able to shift job training from on-the-job certifications to tuition-assistance programs where employees complete degrees around their work schedules. In Charlotte, North Carolina, that looked like a large banking call center offering Strayer University classes on-site, paid for with tuition-assistance dollars that had to be repaid if the worker separated from the company before two years of work, ostensibly paying the company back. For researchers, for-profit colleges are an oddity of the higher-education ecosystem that provides data to answer research questions. And traditional higher education benefitted, to some degree, when the most vulnerable and expensive students to enroll and teach pursued education at for-profit colleges instead of taxing the limited resources of public and private not-for-profit colleges.

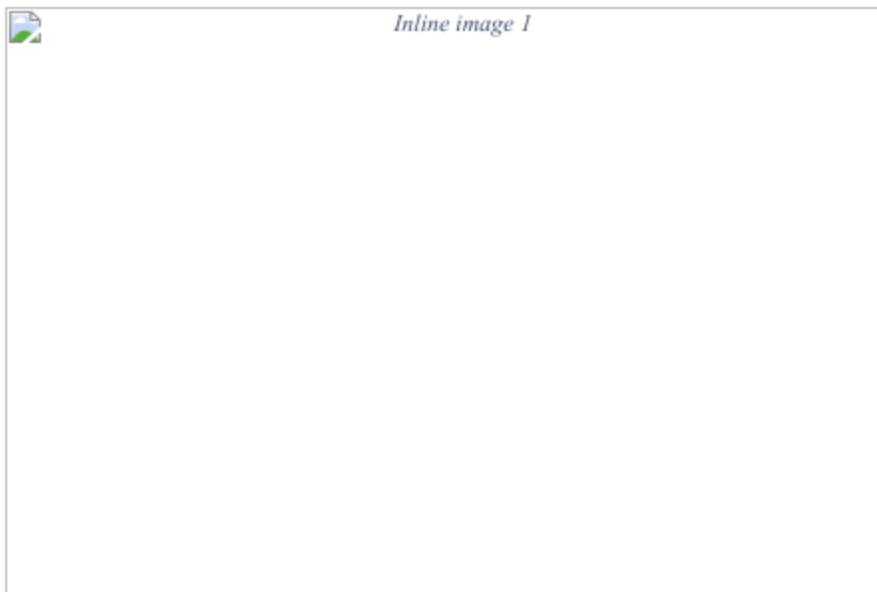
The assumed public good of for-profit colleges as a solution to bad social conditions is that students get the training they need, on-demand. But the best-case scenario isn’t that great. Even the students who succeeded at for-profit colleges paid a price that’s not usually associated with the education gospel. Many took on significant debt. Those who took on less thanks to employer tuition plans or veteran’s benefits are still part of a system that will likely ask them to get more credentials in the future. They will re-enter the higher-education pipeline with a for-profit degree – a credential that makes it hard to move back into traditional higher education, which may be more prestigious, less expensive, or better suited for the student.

And those are the success stories. The more likely story is the student who finishes with high debt or more debt than their salary can absorb – say, a nursing assistant. Or the student who doesn’t finish, perhaps the most vulnerable of all students. She has debt, no degree, and all the burdens that made her likely to attend a for-profit college in the first place. For these students, the problem of inequalities in access and outcomes is clearly a consequence of the predatory practices of for profit institutions and all of those around them that also profit.

But there's a larger story of inequality with vast social implications. It's the story about whether it is affordable to keep subsidizing 'lower ed' at its current scale as anti-poverty programs and social welfare safety nets continue to shrink or become harder to access. It's the story of society's willingness to make a high-cost, high-risk, debt-driven system of higher education absorb the demand among workers who—as almost every expert predicts—will increasingly have to go back to college many times to stay employable.

That's the challenge for all of higher education, but only in lower ed is the challenge singular, especially expensive, and perversely profitable. It's the story of 'lower ed'—subsidized by taxpayers — retraining workers at the individual's expense. It's the story of people living longer and wages stagnating, of spending more time in the workforce as childcare and healthcare costs continue to rise, and the social safety net frays. The troubling rise of for-profit colleges, despite their boom-and-bust investment cycles, is a symptom of larger issues wrought by changes in how people work and the unwillingness to legislate in order to protect the social contract. More importantly our politicians have to see retraining as a national priority that increases the resources of our nation, instead of the burden that many people frame it as....

Enemy of the People



Members of the media raise their hands for questions as President Trump speaks during a news conference in the White House on Feb. 16.

Last month President Trump went on a tirade against certain media outlets whom had published or done stories that was critical of either him, his administration, his polices or differed with his vision of events, calling them "**Fake News**" and "**the enemy of the people,**" reminiscent of Richard Nixon who in private said, "**The press is the enemy of us**" which was picked up in recordings that he

recorded for posterity. But President Trump is saying to his supporters and the world that the press is the enemy of the American People, suggesting that they are against the interest of the American People. This is more than just a flap, as never before has an Administration said that you can't cover us because we don't like your coverage.

Sean Spicer suggested that the media that had been left without access to a mini briefing, CNN, Politico, BuzzFeed, Huffington Post, Los Angeles Times, New York Times and the Guardian were just media elites who were stopped from attending an off-camera press briefing held by spokesman Sean Spicer, while Breitbart, the Washington Times, the One America News Network — news outlets that the White House feels are more favorable were all allowed in.

In an interview with Chris Matthews on CNBC last Friday, veteran journalist Dan Rather said, "... a great deal of this is very calculated and it is a kind of smoke screen to take away from stories, such as what did happen between associates of candidate Trump and for that matter President Trump and Russian Intelligence — did anything happen or not? — a lot of this is designed to throw off the coverage of the really important stories and have us talking about things like press access but make no mistake about it this is going to continue as President Trump thinks that he is winning and a so-called 'information war'. We will see as he goes along."

The truth is that hopefully this won't work because covering the White House is not about the press, it's about uncovering the real stories from the spokespeople who the Administration puts out to explain positions taken and how it sees an specific issue or the rest of the world and as one reporter said, "in the case of Sean Spicer often times giving contradictory answers that later that are proven factually incorrect."

These are the American people Trump calls enemies of the American people

As Dana Milbank wrote in the Washington Post — Thomas Gibbons-Neff, a fourth-generation military man, deployed twice to Afghanistan. The second time, as a 22-year-old Marine corporal in 2010, he led an eight-man infantry team into combat. Two of his men were wounded by enemy sniper fire, and one of his best buddies later died in combat. Now President Trump says Thomas is an enemy of the American people.

Thomas, a Pentagon correspondent for The Post, was so labeled, along with everybody else in the media, by the commander in chief on Friday. "*The FAKE NEWS media*," Trump tweeted, "*is not my enemy, it is the enemy of the American People!*"

I asked my colleague, who went to Georgetown University on the G.I. Bill before joining The Post two years ago, how it felt to be called an enemy of the country he volunteered to serve in combat. "It's alarming, like a bunch of other things these days," Thomas said. "It also feels like bait." And Thomas isn't taking the bait. Like the rest of us, he's keeping his head down and doing his job.

Trump's Stalinist labeling of the media is his latest attempt to delegitimize the structures of civil society, following similar attacks on the courts and the intelligence community. We in the press are an easy mark because we're already held in low esteem. In this case, the charge, using the universal language of autocrats, probably shouldn't be dignified with a refutation: To be forced to make the case that a free press isn't the enemy of a free people is to fight on Trump's terms.

Instead, allow me to introduce you to the backgrounds of some of my colleagues who Trump would have you believe are enemies of the American people. I would argue that they are the American people. Yes, they went to college, they live in the Washington area, and they earn good wages; that earns them the "elite" epithet. But they hail from all corners of this country, from farms and small towns, the children of immigrants and factory workers, preachers and teachers.

Lori Montgomery, The Post's deputy national editor, grew up on her family's dairy farm in western Pennsylvania. Lori, who spent part of her youth stacking hay and shooting a .22, went to Northwestern to study journalism; her brother still runs the farm.

Jose DelReal, one of The Post's political reporters, was born in Merced, Calif., to immigrants from Mexico who were both farmhands. The family moved to Anchorage, where Jose's mother worked as a maid and his father as a cook and dishwasher. Jobs and scholarships got Jose through Harvard University.

Dan Balz, The Post's chief correspondent, comes from Freeport, Ill., one of the cities of the Lincoln-Douglas debates. His father sold batteries. Dan went to the University of Illinois and served for three years in the military.

Political reporter Jenna Johnson grew up in Nebraska, where she attended the University of Nebraska; she got an internship with The Post and has never left. Her parents run the weekly newspaper in the small town in eastern Iowa where they now live. Steven Ginsberg, The Post's political editor, grew up in Onancock, a town of 1,200 on the rural Eastern Shore of Virginia. For the first four years of his life there, the family home had no heat.

The mother of Supreme Court reporter Bob Barnes died when he was 10, and his dad, a World War II vet who didn't finish high school, worked as a telephone lineman, climbing poles and installing phones. Bob went from Pensacola, Fla., public schools to the University of Florida — where another future Post editor and writer, David Finkel, got through school working at Pizza Hut and Amoco.

National correspondent Mary Jordan grew up on Cleveland's West Side, her dad a pipe fitter and her mother a maid, both Irish immigrants. Another national reporter, Stephanie McCrummen, whose grandfather was a Southern Baptist preacher, was reared by a mother who worked for Bell South in Birmingham, Ala. And Dan Eggen, a political editor, is the son of a Lutheran minister from small-town Minnesota.

If space allowed, I could go on. My colleagues don't volunteer these stories ordinarily, for the same reason I don't drone on about my Civil War ancestry, or about how I was reared by a single mother, a schoolteacher, and worked my way through college. Everybody in the newsroom — everybody in America — has an American story. Such stories are so commonplace as to be unremarkable — or at least they seemed unremarkable until Trump declared some of us enemies of the American people. So let's pause to remember: We are all the American people. And we all love our country.

Many journalists are reading President Trump's attacks on the media as nothing more than demagogic assaults by a budding authoritarian out to manipulate news coverage of his administration and himself. I think there is a more strategic calculation in his war on the press. White House chief strategist Stephen K. Bannon tipped Trump's hand last month when he blurted out that the media is "*the opposition party*." That label captures Trump's view of journalists.

The White House regards press outlets that aren't in lock-step with his messages and ignore its many contradictions as rivals — dangerous adversaries standing between him and what he wants to achieve. He knows we are going to watch and report relentlessly on what he does — or fails to do; that we are going to throw light on dark places, and find stones that he would just as soon leave unturned.

As such Trump is out to bring down what he views as Fake Media in the public eye. His aim is to denigrate the work of the media so that their reporting and analyses are summarily dismissed by the public, regardless of the evidence. Calling the New York Times, Washington Post, CNN and other major media outlets who have disagreed with his narrative the "most dishonest human beings on earth" and "scum," repeatedly declaring "*the news is fake*": These aren't off-the-cuff invectives. These are essential weapons in his war arsenal. It's called branding. And it worked like a charm for Trump during the election cycle.

The New York Times offered a riveting account of Trump teaching a lesson on the subject last year. "*You know, you have to brand people a certain way when they're your opponents*," he told an outdoor rally in Boca Raton, Fla., in March 2016. "*Lyin' Ted*," Trump said to the audience about Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Tex.), spelling it out letter by letter: "*L-Y-I-N-apostrophe*." "*We can't say it the right way*," he explained. "*We've got to go — Lyin'! Lyin' Ted*." He held up Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) as another example. "*Little Marco*," he called him. Then Trump spelled out his preferred nickname for his opponent: "*L-I-D-D-L-E. Liddle, Liddle, Liddle Marco*." He branded Jeb Bush as "*low energy*." "*We started off with 17 people who were up on this stage*," Trump reminded the crowd. They were all favored, he said. "*Now*," he said, finishing with a flourish, "*Trump is favored*." "*But you've got to brand people*," he told the crowd.

Lest we forget, there was also the "*crooked Hillary*" branding iron that Trump kept applying to Clinton, and it stuck. Trump's belittling of the intelligence community's work and his questioning of their motives coincide with intelligence community reports concerning Russian interference and influence in our presidential election. Brand and degrade. That is what Trump's disparagement of the media is all about — to take them out before our in-depth reporting on him and his administration really sinks in. Most of all the White House and especially President Trump wants to control the narrative without public decent.

The White House has also been using the old trick of employing flackery by denying an aspect of a story or say that the story isn't accurate, because there is one piece of it that doesn't fit the facts when 90% does. This is what the White House is using to deny charges that there was some level of communications between Trump people, Paul Manafort and whoever else and the Russians during the time when the Russians were trying to undermine our electoral process/Presidential Election last year. We can't allow the White House, President or anyone deny us the right of freedom of the press guaranteed under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. And if anyone in the White House had actually read it they might understand how dangerous and wrong what is happening now.

Good Speech Mr. President but Where is the Beef?



On this past Tuesda

y President Trump made his first important speech as he address a joint-session of Congress outlining his Administration's future plans for the country. And whether or not you are a fan of the President or not, it was a solid speech. But one reason is that both supporters and critics have lowered the bar to the point that his just crossing the finish line without stumbling could be considered a success. With this said, the speech did hit some solid points and its tone and positivity was a departure of some of his previous dystopian speeches filled with their dark imagery, angry tone and vile attacks. President Trump's speech of economic nationalism has definitely found a home for the faithful. But then as Michael Moore pointed out to Chris Matthews during an analysis after the speech, *"the President is a member of the Screen Actors Guild, he has a SAG card, he had a show on the network... He is very good as a performance artist."*

As Fact Checker wrote in its analysis of the President's speech: An address to Congress is such an important speech that presidents generally are careful not to stretch the truth. The "16 words" in George W. Bush's 2003 State of the Union address that falsely claimed Iraq's Saddam Hussein sought uranium from Africa led to significant turmoil in the administration, including the criminal conviction of a top aide.

President Trump's maiden address to Congress was notable because it was filled with numerous inaccuracies. In fact, many of the president's false claims are old favorites that he trots out on a regular, almost daily basis. Here's a roundup of 13 of the more notable claims, in the order in which the president made them.

Ford's decision to abandon its plans to open a factory in Mexico and instead expand its Michigan plant has more to do with the company's long-term goal — particularly its plans to invest in electric vehicles — than with the administration. Ford chief executive Mark Fields said about the company's decision to abandon plans to open a factory in Mexico: "The reason that we are not building the new plant, the primary reason, is just demand has gone down for small cars."

Sergio Marchionne, the Fiat Chrysler chief executive, said his company's plan to invest \$1 billion for a factory in Michigan had been in the works for more than a year and had nothing to do with Trump. Marchionne credited instead talks with the United Auto Workers.

Japanese company SoftBank announced its \$100 billion technology investment fund three weeks before the U.S. elections, when Trump faced a narrow path to victory. After a December 2016 meeting with President-elect Trump, SoftBank announced that \$50 billion would go to the United States. But the United States outpaces all other countries in venture capital investments, and it is questionable that none of the \$100 billion would have gone to the vibrant and promising tech industry in America — regardless of whether Trump was elected.

“We’ve saved taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars by bringing down the price of the fantastic new F-35 jet fighter, and will be saving billions more dollars on contracts all across our government.”

Trump once again takes credit for the lowered cost of the F-35 program. The Pentagon had announced cost reductions of roughly \$600 million before Trump began meeting with Lockheed Martin's chief executive. Sometimes Trump says he saved \$600 million, other times \$700 million.

We previously awarded Four Pinocchios to this claim.

“We have cleared the way for the construction of the Keystone and Dakota Access Pipelines — thereby creating tens of thousands of jobs — and I’ve issued a new directive that new American pipelines be made with American steel.”

Trump appears to be combining two disputed figures — 28,000 jobs for Keystone XL and 12,000 for the Dakota Access pipeline. We have looked closely at the Keystone numbers, and the same methodological issues appear to apply to the Dakota estimates. The actual number of Keystone construction jobs, for instance, is 3,900 on an annualized basis — and other jobs have already been created (such as for building high-strength line pipe). In the context of the U.S. economy, which just in January added 230,000 jobs, these are not many jobs.

As for the steel, workers in Arkansas have already built about half of the high-strength line pipe needed for the project, some 333,000 tons. TransCanada said in 2013 that it had already purchased all of the steel pipe it needed for the Keystone XL, with the rest coming from a Russian-owned plant in Canada,

Italy and India. Experts say the plant in Arkansas (owned by an Indian company) is the only one in the United States that could build the pipe — and it gets its steel from India.

“As we speak, we are removing gang members, drug dealers and criminals that threaten our communities and prey on our citizens. Bad ones are going out as I speak and as I have promised throughout the campaign.”

Trump is referring to the recent arrests of undocumented immigrants convicted of crimes, or the “bad ones.” Trump takes credit for fulfilling his campaign promise of cracking down on illegal immigration, but these arrests are routine. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has always targeted dangerous criminals in enforcement priorities. The recent arrests, however, did include people who would not have fallen under narrowed enforcement priorities under Obama.

Still, 25 percent of the arrests that grabbed headlines in early February were of people who had lesser charges and noncriminal convictions.

According to anecdotes of recent arrests, undocumented people with traffic violations were subject to arrest. They are not the “bad ones,” such as drug dealers or gang members that he describes.

“By finally enforcing our immigration laws we will raise wages, help the unemployed, save billions and billions of dollars and make our communities safer for everyone.”

Trump exaggerates the impact of illegal immigration on crime, taxpayer money and jobs.

Extensive research shows noncitizens are not more prone to criminality than U.S.-born citizens. The vast majority of unauthorized immigrants are not criminal aliens or aggravated felons.

Trump appears to reference the cost of illegal immigration from the Federation for American Immigration Reform, which supports lower levels of legal and illegal immigration. According to the group, the annual cost of illegal immigration at the federal, state and local levels amounted to about \$113 billion as of 2013.

But this calculation makes assumptions that are not necessarily tied to illegal immigration, like enrollment in English proficiency classes. The enrollment number doesn't tell you anything about the actual citizenship status of students (i.e., they could be native-born children of undocumented immigrants, raised in a non-English-speaking home).

In general, economists have found that immigration overall results in a net positive to the U.S. economy. There are slight negative effects, which are felt most strongly by less-educated and low-skilled workers. Illegal immigration, in particular, tends to affect less-educated and low-skilled American workers the most — groups disproportionately consisting of black men and recently arrived less-educated legal immigrants.

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 2010 report found that illegal immigration has tended to depress wages and employment particularly for black men. But factors other than illegal immigration contribute to black unemployment, the report found, including the high school dropout rate and low job-retention rates.

“Millions lifted from welfare to work is not too much to expect.”

“Welfare” is a broad term and can apply to people who are working but receiving some government assistance. If someone is receiving means-tested assistance, it doesn’t necessarily mean they are not working.

Not all people eligible to collect welfare benefits. When they do, many of the benefits are contingent on the recipients working or actively searching for jobs, as a result of an overhaul of welfare signed into law by President Bill Clinton in 1996. And even low-income families receive some level of public assistance.

Trump is apparently unaware that participation has declined in means-tested programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps).

“Ninety-four million Americans are out of the labor force.”

This is an absurd Four-Pinocchio claim, based on a real number. The Bureau of Labor Statistics, relying on a monthly survey known as the

Current Population Survey (CPS), shows that, as of January 2016, 94.4 million Americans 16 years and older were “not in labor force.”

How is this number developed? Well, there is a civilian noninstitutional population of 254.1 million people, and 159.7 million are in the labor force. The difference yields the 94.4 million figure.

But the unemployment rate is only 4.8 percent because just 7.6 million people actively are looking for a job and cannot find one. They are considered part of the overall labor force. In other words, you have to be seeking a job to be counted in the labor force.

Who are the 94 million not in the labor force? The BLS has data for the year 2015. It turns out that 93 percent do not want a job at all. The picture that emerges from a study of the data shows that the 95 million consists mostly of people who are retired, students, stay-at-home parents or disabled.

Trump is doing a real disservice in citing this 94 million figure and suggesting it means these people are looking for work.

[Note: Trump plays a similar trick when he asserted in the speech that “more than 1 in 5 people in their prime working years are not working.” He’s again counting people who do not want to work, such as stay-at-home parents, the disabled and students. According to the BLS, only 1 in 25 people in that 25-54 age group looked for work and could not find it.]

“America has spent approximately \$6 trillion in the Middle East, all this while our infrastructure at home is crumbling. With this \$6 trillion we could have rebuilt our country — twice.”

Trump often incorrectly claims that the United States has spent \$6 trillion on the wars in the Middle East, and here he uses the figure in a particularly misleading way. The wars in Iraq (in the Middle East) and Afghanistan (in South Asia) together cost about \$1.6 trillion from 2001 to 2014.

The \$6 trillion figure adds in estimates of future spending, such as interest on the debt and veterans care for the next three decades. Yet Trump says that this money (*not yet spent*) could have rebuilt the U.S. economy.

President Barack Obama often pleaded with the GOP-led Congress to pass a major infrastructure bill but never received much support. We will see if Trump has any more success.

“The murder rate in 2015 experienced its largest single-year increase in nearly half a century. In Chicago, more than 4,000 people were shot last year alone — and the murder rate so far this year has been even higher. This is not acceptable in our society.”

In 2015, there was the biggest percentage jump in a single year since 1970-1971, or 45 years ago. In 2016, there was an uptick in the homicide rate in the 30 largest cities. One outlier — Chicago — was responsible for 43.7 percent of the total increase in homicide rates in 2016. But overall, violent crime is on a decades-long decline, since the height of the crack cocaine epidemic in the early 1990s.

Crime trends can randomly fluctuate year to year. Many factors affect such rates, including the weather. This is why criminologists do not make generalizations about crime trends based on short-term comparisons of rates, such as annual or monthly changes. They consider the data over much longer periods of time — at least 10 to 15 years — to make conclusions about trends.

For example, in 2006 and 2007, the national violent crime trend increased for the first time in nine years. Democrats bemoaned the return of the crime wave, creating a political headache for George W. Bush's administration.

“After years of driving crime rates down, we’re now in reverse gear,” said then-Sen. Joseph R. Biden Jr. (D-Del.). “It’s time to get back to crime-fighting basics — that means more cops on the streets, equipped with the tools and resources they need to keep our neighborhoods safe.”

Then-Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales denied that the crime trend was reversing: “In general, it doesn’t appear that the current data reveal nationwide trends. Rather, they show local increases in certain communities. Each community is facing different circumstances, and in many places violent crime continues to decrease.”

“Jamiel’s 17-year-old son was viciously murdered by an illegal immigrant gang member, who had just been released from prison. Jamiel Shaw Jr. was an incredible young man, with unlimited potential who was getting ready to go to college where he would have excelled as a great quarterback. But he never got the chance. His father, who is in the audience tonight, has become a good friend of mine.”

Trump likes to use anecdotes as evidence for associating violent crimes with illegal immigration, telling stories of victims of homicide by undocumented immigrants. He brought family members of those killed by illegal immigrants as his guests for Tuesday night’s speech. He often talks about the death of Jamiel Shaw Jr., a 17-year-old football star who was killed in 2008 by a gang member who was in the country illegally.

Clearly, stories like this exist. But the vast majority of unauthorized immigrants do not fit Trump’s description of aggravated felons, whose crimes include murder. U.S. Sentencing Commission data show homicides are a small percentage of the crimes committed by noncitizens, whether they are in the United States illegally or not.

The Congressional Research Service found that the vast majority of unauthorized immigrants do not fit in the category of aggravated felons, whose crimes include murder, drug trafficking or illegal trafficking of firearms.

“I can tell you the money is pouring in. Very nice.”

Trump ad-libbed this line after mentioning that he was pressing NATO allies in “*very frank and strong discussions*,” to meet their financial obligations to the alliance. But the comment is a bit

nonsensical.

NATO's guideline, established in 2006, says that defense expenditures should amount to 2 percent of each country's gross domestic product. In 2016, only four countries besides the United States met that standard, but NATO documents also show that defense spending has increased about 3 percent from 2015 to 2016. In any case, the money would not be going to the United States or even necessarily to NATO; this is money that countries would spend to bolster their own military forces.

I keep saying to myself that I will give the President the benefit of the doubt, because I do believe that putting a trillion dollars in rebuilding the country's infrastructure is a great idea and a successful Presidency even for the other political party is good for the country. But when in the same speech he rails against Obamacare as if it is the enemy, even though it has given 20 million more Americans access to affordable healthcare, I realize that little has changed and his gutting of our consumer and environmental protections so that his friends on Wall Street and in Big Business can make hundreds of billions more confirms that assumption. And for those who applaud the speech even they have to admit that it was short on details.

But then this is a President who was able to turn his first botched military operation in Yemen that resulted in the death of US Navy Seal William Ryan Owens into the high point of the speech without taking any blame.

And the story took another turn Wednesday, with Trump breaking with decades of presidential precedent and blaming the military for the failed operation - and for Owens's death - rather than taking responsibility himself. As Phillip Carter wrote for Vox, most presidents have stepped up and accepted blame for failed military operations, regardless of whether they were their fault. Trump, in other words, has abandoned any notion of the buck stopping with him. So yes, on a pass fail basis President Trump's speech was successful.... As a result, when you examine President Trump's performance closely, one can easily ask, "*Where is the beef*" ***And this is my rant of the week....***

WEEK'S READINGS

This is The Future – Whether We are Ready or Not

Chinese factory replaces 90% of human workers with robots. Production rises by 250%, defects drop by 80%



Inline image 1

After a factory in Dongguan, China, replaced most of its workers with robots, it witnessed a spectacular rise in productivity. While some of the world's leaders are obsessed with keeping people out of their country, an unspoken entity is slowly but certainly taking our jobs: robots. It's been long discussed that robots and computers will start taking our jobs "*in the near future*" – well that near future is upon us and we're not really prepared to deal with it. Of course, some jobs are more at risk than others, are few are as threatened as factory jobs.

According to Monetary Watch, the Changying Precision Technology Company focuses on the production of mobile phones and uses automated production lines. The factory used to be run by 650 employees, but now just 60 people get the entire job done, while robots take care of the rest. Luo Weiqiang, the general manager, says the number of required employees will drop to 20 at one point. Despite this reduction in staff, not only is the factory producing more equipment (a 250% increase), but it's also ensuring better quality.

Without a doubt, this is something we'll be hearing more and more of in the future. Adidas is one of the companies which has already announced a shift towards robot-only factories, and it's not just factories that will eliminate workers for robots. According to a report created by Dr Carl Benedikt Frey and Associate Professor Michael Osborne from the University of Oxford, there's an over 90% chance that robots will take over the jobs of (long list ahead): masons, budget analysts, tax examiners and collectors, butchers and meat cutters, retail salespersons, geological and petroleum technicians, hand sewers, abstract searchers, watch repairers, new account clerks, tax preparers, order clerks, loan officers, legal secretaries, radio operators, tellers, hotel and restaurant hostesses, cashiers, real estate brokers, polishing workers, dental technicians, pesticide sprayers, telephone operators, cooks (not chefs), rock splitters, gaming dealers, and many, many more. Yeah, that's a long list, and it goes on for much longer. Whether we admit it or not, we're stepping well into the bounds of "robots taking over our jobs" and I'm not sure any economy is able to handle this at the moment.

Machines are already replacing humans – and replicating what we thought were uniquely human skills – at a faster rate than many of us thought possible until recently. For example, at the beginning of the 21st century, few people would have imagined that a computer could beat the best human in the world at Jeopardy. And yet, in 2011, IBM's supercomputer Watson bested two former Jeopardy superstars,

Ken Jennings and Brad Rutter. But a focus on technology's substitutionary (or replacement) role fails to appreciate how it also can be complementary. Job loss in some occupations will certainly continue, but it will be accompanied by gains in different fields, just as in the past.

Watson is a case in point. In 2012, a year after Watson's Jeopardy victory, IBM formed a partnership with the Cleveland Clinic to assist physicians and improve the speed and accuracy of medical diagnosis and treatments. In this case, Watson augments the skills of physicians, creating more demand for doctors with access to the supercomputer. The biggest risk is that this will polarize the labor market as the demand for workers grows on both the high and low ends in terms of education. It's a trend that economist David Autor has been documenting since 1979. Highly skilled individuals in managerial, professional and technical occupations have all seen improvements, as have service jobs that require little education (in part because it's difficult to automate the work of hairstylists or janitors).

One has to have some very mixed feelings about this. Firstly, because innovation itself is indeed exciting. We're entering a new age of automation, and technology is truly reaching impressive peaks. The process is better and it's also more resource efficient, which is also good. We also have to believe that humans do not have to work repetitive, unchallenging jobs and can instead focus on other things, is a positive. But the problem for many workers, especially older workers there might not be other things. In fact for many there definitely aren't. Those people are out of a job, and there's a good chance they'll have a very difficult time finding new jobs. Simply put, our society isn't prepared to integrate these people in different jobs and naturally this will cause huge problems.

But for many this skills gap is a problem that can overcome with better education and training, rather than resigning ourselves to an irreversible decline in the share of jobs that require a human. During the most recent recession, there was a decline in construction and manufacturing jobs, which typically required lower levels of education, and an increase in health-care and professional service jobs, which often require advanced degrees. Instead of wringing our hands and blaming technology, we should be rolling up our sleeves to ensure that people who lose their jobs to technology are being retrained. This also requires patience — recognizing that it will take time for these workers to be reemployed in higher-skilled jobs.

Another example can be seen in the current hit movie, '**Hidden Figures**', which is the story about an unsung group of African American women who worked in a basement office at NASA who performed mathematical equations and calculations by hand. Prior to the development of electronic computers, the term "*computer*" referred to people, not machines and was a job title. One of the ladies, Dorothy Johnson Vaughan, recognizing that the new electronic IBM mainframe computer purchased in 1962 by NASA was going to make her and the ladies in her Computer Pool obsolete, taught herself and the other women in her pool, the FORTRAN programming coding language which saved their jobs by qualifying them to write complex numerically intensive programs for the new electronic IBM computer, that ultimately enabled our men to fly the moon and back.

Today, literally the smartest people in the world think an unprecedented wave of job destruction is coming with the development of artificial intelligence, robotics, software and automation. People in Silicon Valley who have read the Second Machine Age and Rise of the Robots and they see a wave coming.

The White House published a report in January that reinforced this view. Some of the headline stats:

- * 83% of the jobs where people make less than \$20 per hour will be subject to automation or replacement.
- * Between 9% and 47% of jobs are in danger of being made irrelevant due to technological change, with the worst threats falling among the less educated.
- * Between 2.2 and 3.1 million car, bus and truck driving jobs in the U.S. will be eliminated by the advent of self-driving vehicles.

Read that last sentence again: experts are confident that between 2 and 3 million Americans who drive vehicles for a living will lose their jobs in the next fifteen years. Self-driving cars are the most obvious job-destroying technology, but there are similar innovations ahead that will dislocate cashiers, fast food workers, customer service representatives, groundskeepers and many many others in a few short years. How many of these people will be readily employable elsewhere?

Okay, you're thinking. But isn't this all still in the somewhat distant future, since unemployment is only 4.6% according to the headlines? Actually, automation has already eliminated about 4 million manufacturing jobs in the U.S. since 2000. And instead of finding new jobs, a lot of those people left the workforce and didn't come back. The U.S. labor force plummeted by about 10 million during the same period, down to levels not seen in decades. The labor participation rate is now at only 62.7%, a rate right below El Salvador and right above the Ukraine.

Each 1 percent decline in the labor participation rate equates to approximately 2.5 million Americans dropping out. The number of working-age Americans who aren't in the workforce has surged to a record 95 million, up almost 500,000 in the last month alone, with many of these being factory workers. Yes, there are 95 million working-age Americans no longer in the workforce. The Great Displacement is already here and is set to accelerate.

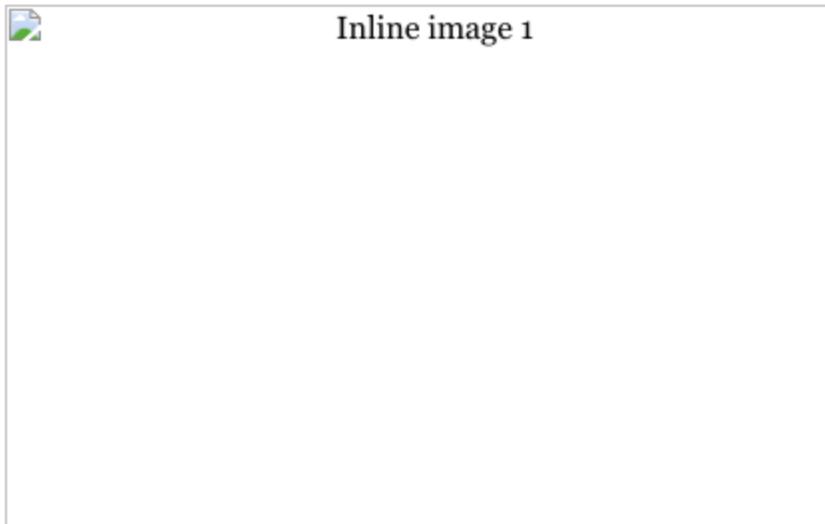
High rates of unemployment are linked to higher rates of substance abuse, domestic violence, child abuse, depression and just about every other social ill. Despair, basically. Note the recent spike in drug and opioid overdoses in the U.S. If you care about communities and our way of life, you care about people having jobs. This is the most pressing economic and social issue of our time; our economy is evolving in ways that will make it more and more difficult for people with lower levels of education to find jobs and support themselves. It's a boiling pot getting hotter one degree at a time. And we're the frog.

Theoretical Scientist Michio Kaku points out (cited in February 26, 2017 Weekend Readings), blue collar repetitive factory jobs will be wiped out. This means jobs in both the automotive and textile industries that are repetitive will disappear. While non-repetitive jobs will thrive; garbage men, sanitation personnel, gardeners, police and construction workers – these jobs will survive. In white collar workers defies common sense; middlemen, low-level accountants, bookkeepers, agents and tellers will be thrown out of work. Middlemen, the friction of capitalism will be obliterated. So who will benefit among white collar workers? Workers who engage in what Kaku describes as "*Intellectual Capitalism*." What is "Intellectual Capitalism?" Kaku says, it involves common sense; creative

imagination, leadership, analysis, telling a joke, writing a script or a book and doing science. As former Prime Minister Tony Blair pointed out, “*England derives more money from music than it does from the coal industry.*” Because as he explained, we are making a transition from a commodity based capital, like coal, to an intellectual capital like Rock and Roll music.

Donald Trump Goes All In for the Military-Industrial Complex

The president’s address signaled his plans for domestic austerity and military bloat.



Donald Trump used his first Joint Address to the Congress of the United States to engage in an unprecedented flight of fiscal fantasy. Specifically, the president imagined that the United States could cut taxes for wealthy Americans and corporations, rip tens of billions of dollars out of domestic programs (*and diplomacy*), hand that money over to the military-industrial complex and somehow remain a functional and genuinely strong nation.

Trump did not articulate this agenda quite so bluntly. His hour-long speech was far more traditional and temperate in character than his ballistic inaugural address. The themes were, for the most part, predictable: “*construction of a great wall along our southern border,*” “*vetting procedures,*” “*for every one new regulation, two old regulations must be eliminated,*” “*school choice,*” “*construction of the Keystone and Dakota Access Pipelines.*” The rhetoric was, by the standards of this presidency, disciplined. But the specifics were few. Only toward the end did the president get specific, saying, “I am sending the Congress a budget that rebuilds the military, eliminates the Defense sequester and calls for one of the largest increases in national defense spending in American history.”

Trump was not at all specific about paying for that increase — aside from mentioning the fact that he had “*placed a hiring freeze on non-military and non-essential Federal workers.*” But his

administration has been clear about its hope that the money will come from deep cuts to domestic programs.

This argument in favor of austerity for working families and munificence for military contractors (the president's speech actually talked up Lockheed and "the fantastic new F-35 jet fighter") is not exactly new. It has been a conservative mantra since the Grand Old Party purged itself of the "*Modern Republicans*" who clung to the vision of former President Dwight Eisenhower and made theirs a party of reaction rather than reason. But even Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush eschewed the budgetary extremism that Trump has embraced with an immediacy and a fervor that arrests any fantasy that a "billionaire populist" president might steer his adopted party back from the brink.

Dwight Eisenhower warned of 'a burden of arms draining the wealth and the labor of all peoples.'

The "*Budget Blueprint*" that Trump took to Congress on Tuesday night did not plot a course to "*make America great again*." It tipped the balance against greatness by making what the first Republican president, Abraham Lincoln, referred to as "the last best hope of earth" into an ever more heavily militarized state that will not care for its own.

This is not an accidental turn.

This is by design. But it is not a grand design; rather, it is an approach that Trump has adopted as he has moved from the capricious politics of his initial candidacy to the reality of a ever more rigidly right-wing presidency.

Mick Mulvaney, Trump's man at the Office of Management and Budget, said on the eve of the president's "Budget Blueprint" speech, "The president is doing what he said he'd do when he ran." But Trump said a lot of things when he was bidding for the presidency in 2016: He made big promises about jobs and infrastructure, delivering more and better health care, protecting Social Security and Medicare. He portrayed himself as a critic of the war in Iraq, a skeptic about new military adventures and a critic of "the fraud and abuse and everything else" in bloated Department of Defense budgets. "I'm gonna build a military that's gonna be much stronger than it is right now," he announced on NBC's Meet the Press in 2015. "It's gonna be so strong, nobody's gonna mess with us," he promised. "But you know what? We can do it for a lot less."

That seemed reasonably definitive.

Yes, of course, Trump bounced all over the ideological landscape during the 2016 campaign, and his presidency hasn't exactly been a model of consistency.

Even with that fact in mind, however, it must have surprised at least a few Trump backers to learn from Mulvaney that bloating up the Pentagon budget was such a high priority of the Trump campaign. “What you see in this budget,” the budget director explained Tuesday, “is exactly what the president ran on. He ran on increasing spending on the military...”

Mulvaney was unsettlingly vague when asked about keeping Trump’s promise to guard against Social Security cuts. But he was clear about the general thrust of the administration’s approach to budgeting.

We must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence...by the military-industrial complex.

— PRESIDENT EISENHOWER

“[We] took \$54 billion out of non-defense discretionary spending in order to increase defense spending — entirely consistent with what the president said that he would do,” Mulvaney explained. “So what’s the president done? He’s protected the nation, but not added any additional money to the 2018 deficit. This is a winning argument for my friends in the House and a winning argument for a lot of folks all over the country.

The president does what he says but doesn’t add to the budget [deficit]. That’s a win.”

Mulvaney is wrong. That’s not a win.

That does not protect America — at least not in the sense that Democratic and Republican presidents have historically understood the preservation of the republic. Budgeting is always a matter of striking balances. And when there is an imbalance, the American experiment is threatened.

Dwight Eisenhower explained this when he appeared barely two months into his presidency before the American Society of Newspaper Editors. The speech was much anticipated. Eisenhower was the first Republican commander in chief in two decades, and he was still placing his imprint on the Oval Office, the country and a world that was in the grips of a “*Cold War*.” The new president could have chosen any topic for his first major address to the assembled media luminaries. He chose as his topic the proper balancing of budget priorities.

Eisenhower recognized the threats that existed. He spoke, at length, about difficult relations between the United States and the Soviet Union and he addressed the threat of annihilation posed by the spread of atomic weaponry. But the career military man — the supreme commander of the Allied Expeditionary Forces in Europe during World War II, the chief of staff of the Army during the postwar era when tensions with Moscow rose — did not come to suggest that increased defense spending was a singular priority. In fact, his purpose was the opposite. He spoke of the “*dread road*” of constant military escalation and warned about “a burden of arms draining the wealth and the labor of all

peoples; a wasting of strength that defies the American system or the Soviet system or any system to achieve true abundance and happiness for the peoples of this earth.”

“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed,” said Eisenhower, who explained that --

This world in arms is not spending money alone.

It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, and the hopes of its children.

The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: a modern brick school in more than 30 cities.

It is two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000 population.

It is two fine, fully equipped hospitals.

It is some 50 miles of concrete highway.

We pay for a single fighter with a half million bushels of wheat.

We pay for a single destroyer with new homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people.

This, I repeat, is the best way of life to be found on the road the world has been taking.

This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.

Eisenhower did not propose surrender or immediate disarmament. But he did propose diplomacy (“We welcome every honest act of peace”), and the sincere pursuit of a world with fewer weapons and fewer excuses for war making (“This we do know: a world that begins to witness the rebirth of trust among nations can find its way to a peace that is neither partial nor punitive”).

“The fruit of success in all these tasks would present the world with the greatest task, and the greatest opportunity, of all,” explained Eisenhower. “It is this: the dedication of the energies, the resources and the imaginations of all peaceful nations to a new kind of war. This would be a declared total war, not upon any human enemy but upon the brute forces of poverty and need.”

“The monuments to this new kind of war would be these: roads and schools, hospitals and homes, food and health,” the new president concluded. “We are ready, in short, to dedicate our strength to serving the needs, rather than the fears, of the world.”

These are different times. The world has changed, and so has the United States. But what has changed the most is the understanding that providing for the common defense does not preclude the promotion

of the general welfare.

Conservatives like to say “there is no free lunch,” and that is true enough when it comes to budgeting. It is not possible to move tens of billions of dollars out of domestic programs that have already in many cases been squeezed to austerity levels and into a military budget so vast, the National Priorities Project reports, that “US military expenditures are roughly the size of the next seven largest military budgets around the world, combined.”

On a planet where Americans account for 4.34 percent of the population, US military spending accounts for 37 percent of the global total. And Trump — with Mulvaney’s assistance — appears to be determined to move the latter percentage upward.

That is a problematic imbalance in itself. But what makes it even more problematic is Mulvaney’s signal that, under Trump, the imbalance will be maintained not by collecting new revenues but by redistributing money that could have been spent on health care and housing and education at home — and on the international diplomacy and foreign aid that might actually reduce the need for military expenditures. “While Trump claims he’s serious about great negotiation, his plan to pillage funds from the State Department and foreign aid to feed the insatiable Pentagon budget says otherwise,” notes Peace Action Executive Director Jon Rainwater. Instead of putting Americans first, Trump “plans to line the arms industry’s pockets by cutting programs like health care that provide real security to American families says otherwise.”

This is the realization of the worst fears that Eisenhower addressed, not just in his 1953 “Cross of Iron” speech but in the final address of his presidency, which warned that “we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex.”

“We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes,” said the 34th president. “We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals so that security and liberty may prosper together.”

John Nichols – The Nation – March 1, 2017

The Death of New York’s Grand Hotels

One New Yorker laments the passing of one of the city's greatest offerings.



Inline image 1

BY KIM VELSEY – February 02, 2017

Last month, one of my favorite hotels in the world, the Waldorf Astoria, a hotel that has hosted every American president since Herbert Hoover, along with Hollywood stars, royalty, foreign heads of state, and many a lavish debutante ball, stopped accepting reservations. The last of the guests have checked out of the art deco colossus, which had operated at its one-square-block Park Avenue site in New York City since 1931, allowing its latest owners — the Chinese insurance conglomerate Anbang — to begin converting up to 1,000 of the hotel's 1,413 rooms into condos.

For anyone who has been following the New York real estate market over the last three decades, this change is hardly surprising. It may even seem overdue. After all, the Sherry-Netherland converted a number of its rooms into co-ops back in 1956, and over the years, the rest of the city's grand old hotels have followed suit — first the Pierre and the Carlyle, then the St. Moritz and the St. Regis and finally, of course, the other Grand Dame, The Plaza. Only the Waldorf, whose fate was effectively sealed when Anbang paid a record \$1.95 billion for the property in 2014, remained. The financial principles that made partial conversions prudent during economic downturns have, by the same token, made them incredibly profitable during boom times: A storied building in a prime location is worth far more sold off in pieces than rented out by the night.

As Kim Vesley wrote last month on the website SURFACE — This may not strike many as particularly heartrending. So what if a historic landmark is turned over to absentee investors and pied-à-terre owners? Grand hotels have always catered to the elite, and if the elite now prefer to keep a one- or two- or five-bedroom apartment sitting empty most of the year rather than paying by the night for a hotel suite, what does it really matter?

And yet, a condo and a hotel — even a condo-hotel hybrid, as many of these iconic structures have become — occupy vastly different positions in the emotional terrain of a city.

Even if you've never spent a night in one of the grand hotels, when you live here long enough, they somehow seep into your memories. In part because sooner or later, you turn up in their lobbies and bars, or at the very least in their bathrooms. And in part because visits to those places, even for dull conferences or awkward cocktails, linger in a way that those to the Javits Center and the Times Square Marriott Marquis never do. Grand hotels are not only for ball-goers and stars, after all, but also for strollers and snoops. As Texan socialite Lynn Wyatt once said of the Carlyle to WSJ. Magazine, "*You can sit in that lobby and see the world walk by.*" Hotels belong to the city in a way that condos do not. "*There's a participatory spectacle that you don't have in a condo,*" says Simeon Bankoff, executive director of the Historic Districts Council, which has pushed to have some of the Waldorf's iconic interior spaces landmarked. "*A hotel bar is very special. It's a place where you can go to pretend.*"



Inline image 2

A banquet held at the Waldorf Astoria in 1906.

This is true of hotels in most cities, of course, but especially of those in New York. We are a mercantile city and our finest hotels have always catered to money, whether it was new, old, or cobbled together for the occasion. And it is, in many ways, that mix of potentates and poseurs that lends the places their frisson. A grand hotel provides the kind of service to which the very rich are accustomed, and offers those who are not so wealthy the opportunity for an evening simulation: a staff of housekeepers, someone to carry their bags, Dover sole delivered to their room at 3 A.M. And for those who can't or don't care to pay for a night's stay, a slowly sipped martini affords some of the best people-watching in the city.

Actually, you don't even need to buy the martini. I once sat for several hours in the Waldorf's lobby on a first date, sipping bad, brown-bagged coffee from a nearby sandwich shop and watching the parade of privilege tromp across the thick carpet. I can't think of any other place in New York except a library where you can sit peacefully inside without paying for your time. There is a sort of largesse to a grand hotel that, along with their actual physical largeness, allows interlopers to roam. "I used to go into the Plaza and walk down corridors, go down staircases, peer over balconies," says Jeremiah Moss, the pseudonymous blogger at Vanishing New York. "You'd find things like a strange antechamber with a piano that seemed kind of odd and abandoned—there was this sense of access. I never stayed there, but if you're a nosy New Yorker, you could just explore."



Inline image 3

Vintage postcards from the Waldorf Astoria

Of course, part of what makes these spaces so charming is that they're out of another era—a glimpse of an old New York that doesn't really exist anymore. When the Plaza opened, at the turn of the last century, its interior was so ornate that the manager worried it might be too much even for the ultra-rich, and "ordered shellac applied atop the gold leaf decorating the lobby so that the guests would not be overly dazzled," wrote Sonny Kleinfield, in his book *Hotel: A Week in the Life of the Plaza*.

These days, gold leaf seems as out of step with the times as white tablecloths and Waldorf salad, with its once-ballyhooed combination of grapes, celery, and mayonnaise. "Hotels aren't important in the same way they once were — the ones that are really important are the small ones in places like SoHo," says architect Hugh Hardy, who once supervised the renovation of the Rainbow Room at Rockefeller Center. "Great big ones are out, just as great big things are out. We've gotten jaded about that sort of thing. People used to cite statistics about how many light bulbs, how many rooms, how many people came to such-and-such event. You have to match the experience with the mood of the time."

Opulence has become insular. Whereas the global elite once embraced the hubbub of a grand hotel, rubbing shoulders with one another as they passed through the great cities of the world, now more and more of them want to come home to a empty condo, preferably via an underground garage, so as to avoid any would-be gawkers. Real estate brokers speak of privacy with hushed awe, as though describing an immortality elixir. This, they insist, is what the wealthy want most, and can never get enough of.



Inline image 4

It's partially a factor of how the real estate market has changed. The advent of luxury condos in the '70s cleared the way for the pied-à-terre and the emergence of such units as an asset class. And partially, it's a shift in the preferences and expectations of elites and the power they crave.

As a result, what once existed as quasi-public, bustling universes unto themselves often become, post-conversion, empty, echoing, and at times even a little creepy (the empty hotel is, after all, a horror movie trope). In 1988, the Plaza had a staff of just over 1,300 people, according to Kleinfield. In a 2005 agreement with the union, Elad Properties, run by Israeli developer Miki Naftali, agreed to keep on 350 hotel staff to service 348 rooms—out of what had been 805.

After the conversion in 2008, a woman living on the 14th floor of the Plaza took a bag to the garbage room 10 feet from her apartment and got trapped inside for seven hours. All the other residents on her floor were out of town. According to the New York Post, she screamed as loud as she could, and “cut her fingers to shreds trying to claw her way out,” panicking that someone might make off with the Fabergé egg she'd left inside her open-doored apartment. The next morning a building worker heard her screams and came to the rescue.

“When these buildings undergo conversions, the energy shifts from this vibrating life that's constantly changing, with characters moving in and out and through, to something much more static,” Moss says. “A kind of coldness.”

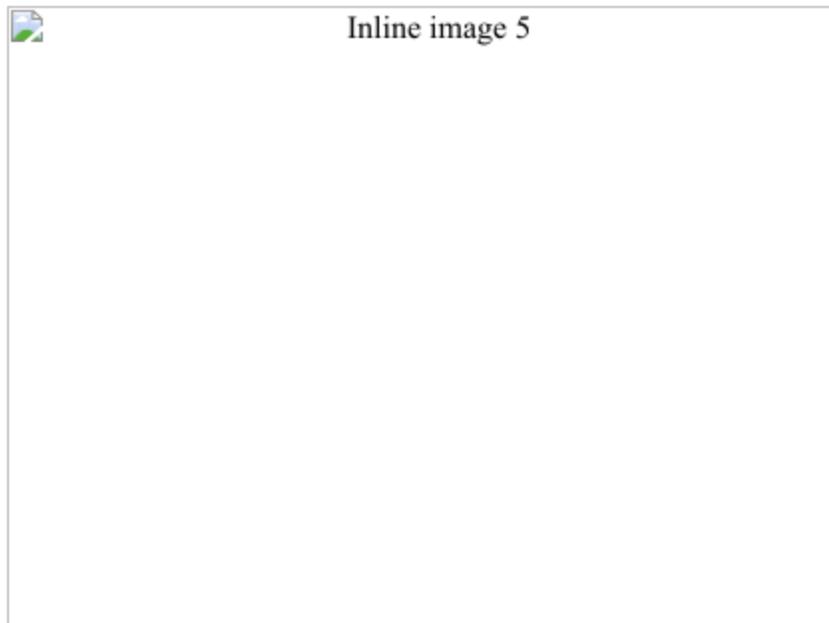
Justin Ferate, a historian who has given tours of the Waldorf for years, compared grand hotels to cruise ships—both all-inclusive experiences. This made a lot of sense to me, as a fan of classic Hollywood movies. Growing up, I understood from watching *Top Hat*, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, and *Rebecca* that hotels and ships were the perfect place to set a plot in motion. Combining all manner of strangers and acquaintances, an enormous staff, traveling socialites, and savvy locals in that hothouse atmosphere created potential—if not for transformation, then at least for excitement. Where else but in a grand hotel could Rebecca's ingenue traveling companion to Mrs. Edyth Van Hopper, be expected to meet a man like Maximilian de Winter?

One of the ironies of these condo conversions is that they capitalize on the magic of a grand hotel while simultaneously destroying it.

Yes, for buyers bragging about their purchases back home, the name of a famous hotel drops far more easily than even the most impressive address, but the Plaza as apartment house is not the Plaza. And the Plaza is not really the Plaza either, when a big chunk of rooms, including many of the best ones, are permanently reserved for the buying class. The Waldorf also intends to reserve the choice cuts for condo owners. According to the most recent plans filed with the Department of Buildings in November, the Waldorf, which declined to comment for this article, may now leave a little more than half the rooms as hotel keys, but will divide the building at the 14th floor, with the hotel below and the condos reaching to the 44th floor.

Besides in its liveliness, the charm of a place like the Plaza or the Waldorf lies in the illusion, at least, of access. The Park Hyatt is a top-notch hotel, but anyone who stays there can't help but see 157 W. 57th Street—where the truly powerful are ensconced—looming above them every time they walk in the front door.

As Kleinfield wrote of the Plaza, "*For the earnest tourist or exhausted businessman, it somehow creates an atmosphere of unfolding possibilities.*" A conversion breaks that spell, a shift that becomes apparent shortly after the first residents move in. While the first Plaza tenants paid among the highest prices in the city and the highest along Central Park South, resales have been sluggish and buyers stingy. The enchanted chateau was revealed to be just another beautiful building in a beautiful location where some rich people lived: the sum of its parts and nothing more.



"When the Waldorf was conceived, everyone understood that they had an active role in the hotel's existence," Ferate says. "To be there was to be in a special ether; it gave you the sense that you really were in a rarefied world." The Brescia marble in the ladies' corridor, he notes, was meant to capture the violet or the sapphire in women's eyes. "Now it's something to look at, not to experience." The same, it sometimes seems, might be said of the city itself.

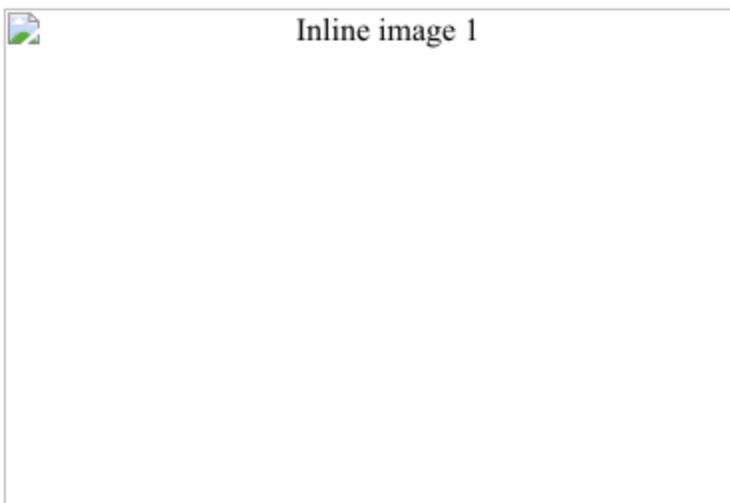
It's hard not to feel a sense of loss when wandering through the Waldorf, but maybe its pending metamorphosis just reveals what's already long gone. In which case, why resist it? After all, one of New York's defining characteristics is its relentless appetite for change. But the most important characteristic is how the different eras and aesthetics, as well as people who live here, overlap and intersect. They collide and challenge one another, creating new things that are meaningful and exciting, not merely new for the sake of newness. It's a reminder of how the city nurtures and reflects a diversity of desires and experiences, including, or maybe especially, the ones we don't really have anymore.

Waldorf Astoria New York – Timeline

Web Link: <http://www.waldorfnewyork.com/about-the-waldorf/hotel-history.html>

As someone who has stayed at the New York Waldorf Astoria many times and holds many fond memories for me, this new incarnation will leave the body intact but the life will be gone. This is what happened with The Plaza, where neither the hotel, famed Palm Court, Oak Room and Oak Bar no longer have the vibrant energy and diversity of its past. As someone who grew up in New York and wandered through both the Waldorf and Plaza wondering about the lives of the "rich" people around me and how could I become one of them, kids today won't be able to enjoy this opportunity. On the good side I suppose, as someone who remembers the Savoy Plaza which was demolished in 1965 to make room for the General Motors' 48 story tower, hopefully the repurposing of this last Old Grand Dame of Hotels in New York will enable it to escape that same fate.

The apple that never browns



The Arctic Apple, which has been genetically engineered not to brown.

By After years of development, protest and regulatory red tape, the first genetically modified, non-browning apples will soon go on sale in the United States. The fruit, sold sliced and marketed under the brand Arctic Apple, could hit a cluster of Midwestern grocery stores as early as Feb. 1. The limited release is an early test run for the controversial apple, which has been genetically modified to eliminate the browning that occurs when an apple is left out in the open air.

Critics and advocates of genetic engineering say that the apple could be a turning point in the nation's highly polarizing debate over genetically modified organisms (GMOs). While genetic modifications have in the past been mainly defended as a way to protect crops, the Arctic Apple would be one of the first GMOs marketed directly to consumers as more convenient. "What companies are desperate for is some really popular GMO product to hit the market," said McKay Jenkins, the author of a forthcoming history of the debate. "Any successful product could lift the cloud over GMOs."

Industry executives predict the apple could open a whole new trade in genetically engineered produce, potentially opening the market to pink pineapples, antioxidant-enriched tomatoes, and other food currently in development. "We see this as less about genetic modification and more about convenience," said Neal Carter, founder of the company that makes the Arctic Apple. "I think consumers are very ready for apples that don't go brown. Everyone can identify with that 'yuck' factor."

GMO critics say they are hopeful, however, that consumers will continue to show skepticism about the produce. Despite a growing consensus in scientific circles that GMOs pose little risk, environmental and consumer groups have successfully mounted campaigns against GMOs over the past 30 years, successfully limiting the practice to commodity crops like soybeans and corn. Anti-GMO groups have successfully pushed for GMO crop bans in places like Boulder County, Colo., and Sonoma County, Calif., and several major food brands have agreed not to use GM ingredients.

Critics have also questioned how consumers will be able to judge the freshness of sliced apples when they don't brown. "This apple is understudied, unlabeled, and unnecessary," said Dana Perls, the senior food and technology campaigner with environmental nonprofit Friends of the Earth. "It's only a matter of time before consumers realize they're being falsely marketed to ... And then there will be an uproar."

Carter and his company, Okanagan Specialty Fruits, have bet millions of dollars that this will not be the case. The Canadian fruit-grower, now a fully owned subsidiary of the biotechnology firm Intrexon, has spent the past 20 years developing the Arctic Apple under the direction of Neal and his wife Louisa. Neal, a bioresource engineer and longtime apple- and cherry-grower in British Columbia, planted his first crop of non-browning Golden Delicious and Granny Smith apples in 2003.

After nine years of testing, the Carters petitioned the U.S. Department of Agriculture to deregulate the apples, which would allow them to sell into the U.S. Despite vocal opposition from anti-GMO groups -- who organized petition drives and sent public comments by the tens of thousands -- the agency ruled in February 2015 the apple posed no significant health or environmental risks.

For the Arctic Apple, however, the greatest test is yet to come: whether the convenience of a non-browning apple is enough to convince consumers to look past GMO's negative reputation. "I don't know what their chances are -- it's a very polarized debate," said Michael White, an assistant professor of genetics at the Washington University School of Medicine. "But I think this is huge. What the Arctic Apple is doing, trying to push GMOs on their own merits, could lead to a more positive discussion."

Despite widespread scientific consensus that genetic engineering is not dangerous to human health, the practice remains controversial and poorly understood. Both the World Health Organization and the National Academies of Science have concluded that there's no health reasons for avoiding the current slate of genetically engineered foods. But in a 2016 poll conducted by the Pew Research Center, 39 percent of Americans said that they believed GM foods were "worse" for their health than non-GMO foods. And the Non-GMO Project, a nonprofit that opposes genetic engineering and administers the Non-GMO label seen on some North American foods, points out that nearly 90 percent of American consumers believe that GM products should be labeled, according to Consumer Reports.

Most Americans already consume a large number of GMOs or GMO-derived ingredients every day. Over ninety percent of all corn and soybeans grown in the U.S. are engineered to improve agricultural efficiency and withstand frequent pesticide applications. The resulting corn and soy are frequently fed to animals intended for human consumption, or routed into processed foods as corn starch, corn syrup, soy lethicin and dozens of other derivatives. Yet even if consumers already eat GMOs, very few do so knowingly.



Inline image 2

To date, most agricultural engineering has focused almost exclusively on improving yields for producers. The exceptions are the Flavr Savr tomato -- the world's first commercialized GMO, which suffered lackluster sales and was eventually pulled following its introduction in 1994 -- and the more recent non-browning Innate Potato, currently sold at several stores under the White Russet brand.

But the Arctic Apple has a distinct advantage over its predecessors: It's being sold sliced in 10-oz bags as a convenience snack food. The Carters say they're imitating the baby carrot model, which has proven a success for vegetable growers, helping to catapult sales of the vegetable. Pre-sliced apples, currently treated with chemicals to prevent browning, enjoy a similar popularity in school cafeterias and Happy Meals. "We might eventually sell them to distributors for service in schools," Carter said. "We thought our initial go-to-market strategy would be through food service. But a significant number of retailers reached out, and we realized -- they're ready for us."

Just in case they're not, of course, Okanagan has hired a marketing consultant and a consumer research firm, convening apple-tasting focus groups and commissioning surveys. Okanagan, which had six full-time employees 14 months ago, plans to quadruple that workforce in the next two years. The February trial-run is part of that public relations campaign; Okanagan wants to "validate our messaging and go-to-market strategy" before launching commercially in the fall, Carter said. The apples will be available at 10 locations of "a few" regional Midwestern grocery chains, which Carter declined to name, where employees will be on hand to poll customers about their first impressions.

Crucially, the apples' packaging will not explicitly declare that they're genetically engineered -- to get that information, shoppers will have to scan a QR code with a smartphone. This was one of the most controversial points of the Obama administration's GMO labeling law, which requires genetically-modified ingredients be noted with an on-package statement, approved symbol, or electronic code. Okanagan has argued that, thanks to press coverage, most consumers will already know that it's apples are GMOs. This non-browning technology could theoretically be applied later to any number of tree fruits, including pears and cherries, which Okanagan's scientists have already begun to research.

The success of the Arctic Apple could embolden the creators of other consumer-directed GMOs currently waiting in the wings. The Food and Drug Administration recently approved an engineered pink pineapple containing the pigment lycopene, which has been found to reduce the risk of cancer and heart disease in consumers who eat tomatoes. In the U.K., researchers have developed a purple tomato that contains extra antioxidants. And many of America's major agrochemical firms, including DuPont Pioneer and Monsanto, have indicated a desire to introduce GMOs with marketable consumer benefits, if consumers seem ready to accept them.

That concerns critics of the Arctic Apple and genetic engineering. More than 130,000 people signed just one of the petitions opposing Okanagan's initial deregulation petition, citing concerns over yet-unknown "negative unintended impacts on human health and the environment." Among the loudest critics of the apple are Friends of the Earth and Food and Water Watch, both environmental groups, and the Organic Consumers Association, Consumers Union and Center for Food Safety, all of which represent customers. CFS has particularly faulted Okanagan for not running more tests on the impact of genetic change to the apple tree, as opposed to just the fruit. "It's an unnecessary genetic change intended to grow market share," said Martha Crouch, a plant biologist and consulting scientist for CFS. "It carries with it environmental and health risks. That puts a larger burden of proof on the company that makes it."

What I notice about non-organically grown produce is that the taste does not have the flavor and complexity of its organically grown cousins. And I think that Arctic Apple do not have the wonderful flavor or apples grown on the tree in your neighbor's backyard. If the tradeoff is longer shelf life verses flavor, I am choosing flavor every time. And unless you are Walmart or own a grocery store, most likely so will you.

THIS WEEK'S QUOTE

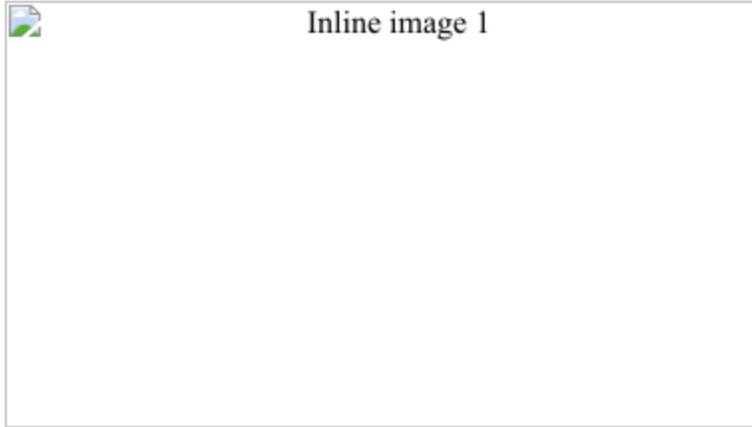
Not everything that is faced can be changed but nothing can be changed that is not faced.

James Baldwin

THIS IS BRILLIANT

This is Amazing

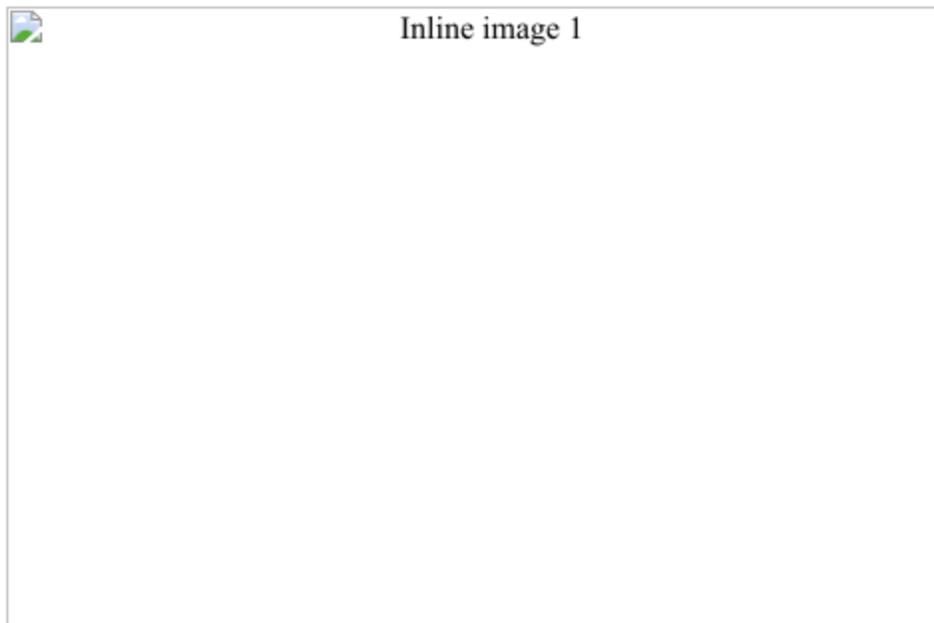
Please watch it until the end.



Web Link: 

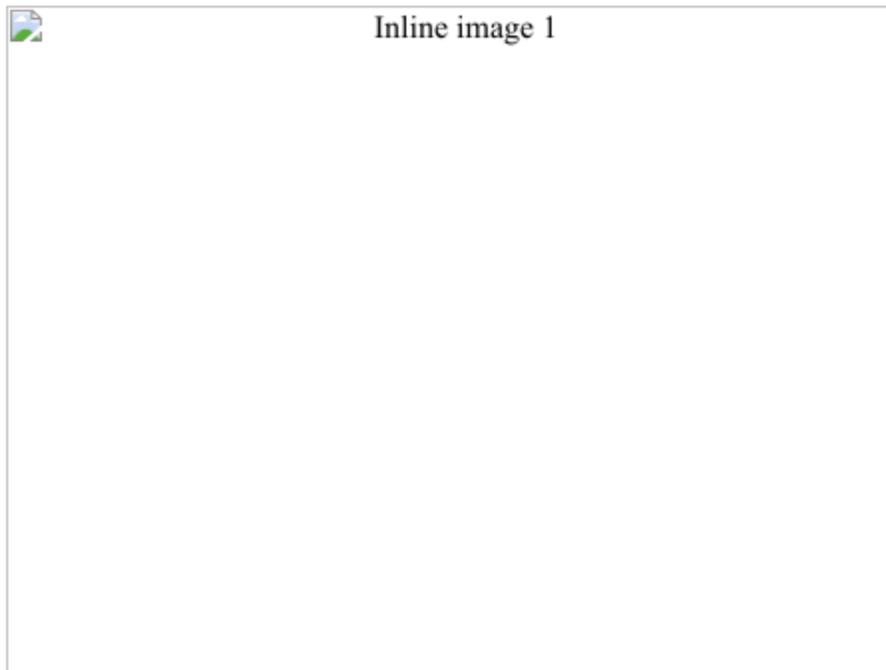
Truly Amazing....

THINK ABOUT THIS



BEST VIDEO OF THE WEEK

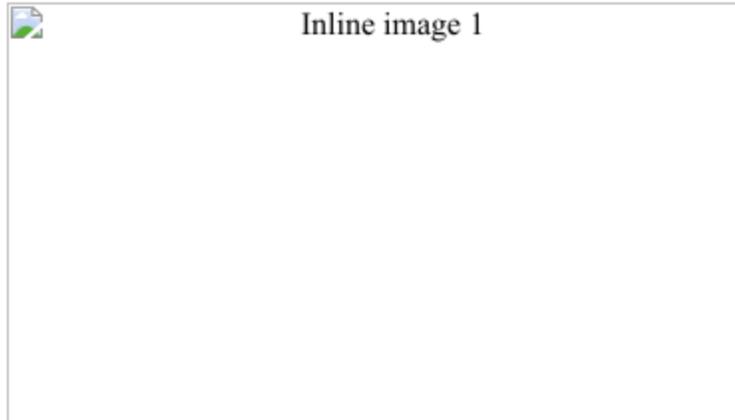
A Wonderful Life Lesson



World renowned jazz pianist Herbie Hancock tells a powerful story about a 'teaching moment' that he had playing with the great Miles Davis that gave him a life lesson that was able to use for the rest of his life which we all could benefit from by using whatever mistakes in life to grow by not seeing them as setbacks...

THIS WEEK'S MUSIC

Jeff Beck



This week you are invited to enjoy the musical brilliance of one of the unsung living legends of Rock Music and in particular British Rock the one and Geoffrey Arnold "Jeff" Beck" (born 24 June 1944) is an English rock guitarist. He is one of the three noted guitarists to have played with **The Yardbirds** (the other two being Eric Clapton and Jimmy Page). Beck also formed **The Jeff Beck Group** and **Beck, Bogert & Appice**. And as his bio on his website says, for more than 50 years, the Grammy-winning guitarist has expanded rock's sonic vocabulary with an inventive style of playing that defies categorization.

Much of Beck's recorded output has been instrumental, with a focus on innovative sound, and his releases have spanned genres ranging from blues rock, hard rock, jazz fusion, and an additional blend of guitar-rock and electronica. Although he recorded two hit albums (in 1975 and 1976) as a solo act, Beck has not established or maintained the sustained commercial success of many of his contemporaries and bandmates. Beck appears on albums by Mick Jagger, Tina Turner, Morrissey, Jon Bon Jovi, Malcolm McLaren, Kate Bush, Roger Waters, Donovan, Stevie Wonder, Les Paul, Zucchero, Cyndi Lauper, Brian May, Stanley Clarke, Screaming Lord Sutch, ZZ Top, and Toots and the Maytals.

He was ranked fifth in **Rolling Stone's** list of the "**100 Greatest Guitarists of All Time**" and the magazine, upon whose cover Beck has appeared three times, has described him as "*one of the most influential lead guitarists in rock*". He is often called a "*guitarist's guitarist*". Beck has earned wide critical praise and received the **Grammy Award** for **Best Rock Instrumental Performance** six times and **Best Pop Instrumental Performance** once. In 2014 he received the British Academy's **Ivor Novello Award** for **Outstanding Contribution to British Music**. Beck has been inducted into the **Rock and Roll Hall of Fame** twice: as a member of the Yardbirds (1992) and as a solo artist (2009).

Beck's big break came in March 1965, when he was recruited by the Yardbirds to succeed Eric Clapton on the recommendation of fellow session musician Jimmy Page, who had been their initial choice. The Yardbirds recorded most of their Top 40 hit songs during Beck's short but significant 20-month tenure with the band allowing him only one full album, which became known as *Roger the Engineer* (titled

Over Under Sideways Down in the United States), released in 1966. Beck was actually pictured on the cover of *For Your Love*, which was released by The Yardbirds' American label in June 1965, though Clapton played guitar on most of the songs. From September to November 1966, Beck shared lead guitar duties in The Yardbirds with Page, who initially joined as bass player in June that year. A clip of this iteration of the band can be seen in the 1966 British film *Blow Up*.

Beck was fired in the middle of a U.S. tour for being a consistent no-show—as well as difficulties caused by his perfectionism and explosive temper. After leaving The Yardbirds, Beck recorded the one-off "*Beck's Bolero*" (with Jimmy Page, John Paul Jones, Nicky Hopkins and Keith Moon) and two solo hit singles in the UK, "*Hi Ho Silver Lining*" and "*Tallyman*". He then formed the Jeff Beck Group, which briefly featured former Shadow Jet Harris on bass, Rod Stewart on vocals, Ronnie Wood firstly on rhythm guitar and later bass, Nicky Hopkins on piano and, after a series of drummers, eventually Micky Waller in early 1967.

The group produced two albums for Columbia Records (Epic in the United States): *Truth* (August 1968) and *Beck-Ola* (July 1969). *Truth*, released five months before the first Led Zeppelin album, features "*You Shook Me*", a song written and first recorded by Muddy Waters, also covered on the Led Zeppelin debut with a very similar arrangement. It sold well (reaching No. 15 on the Billboard charts). *Beck-Ola* saw drummer Micky Waller replaced by Tony Newman, and, while well-received, was less successful both commercially and critically. Resentment, coupled with touring incidents, led the group to dissolve in July 1969.

Beck was ranked **No. 5** in **Rolling Stone's** list of the "**100 Greatest Guitarists**" and is one of the most influential guitarists in the history of rock music, Jeff Beck has cited his major influences as Les Paul, the Shadows, Cliff Gallup, Ravi Shankar, Roy Buchanan, Chet Atkins, Django Reinhardt, Steve Cropper and Lonnie Mack. Of John McLaughlin, he said: "[he] has given us so many different facets of the guitar and introduced thousands of us to world music, by blending Indian music with jazz and classical. I'd say he was the best guitarist alive."

While Beck was not the first rock guitarist to experiment with electronic distortion, he nonetheless helped to redefine the sound and role of the electric guitar in rock music. Beck's work with The Yardbirds and the Jeff Beck Group's 1968 album *Truth* were seminal influences on heavy metal music, which emerged in full force in the early 1970s. In his autobiography, Nick Mason recalls that during 1967 Pink Floyd had wanted to recruit Beck to be its guitarist after the departure of Syd Barrett but "None of us had the nerve to ask him." In 1969, following the death of Brian Jones, Beck was approached about joining the Rolling Stones.

Again, the trailblazing guitarist has been inducted into the **Rock & Roll Hall of Fame** twice. He entered as a member of The Yardbirds in 1992 and as a solo artist in 2009. Beck has earned a total of eight **Grammy Awards** — including one for his previous album *Emotion and Commotion* — and has recorded with everyone from Stevie Wonder and Buddy Guy to Tina Turner and Mick Jagger. He is widely regarded by his peers and fans as one of the greatest guitarists of all time thanks to his ability to make the impossible sound effortless..... And with this said, you are again invited to enjoy the mastery of one of the greatest rock guitarist that ever lived, Mr. Jeff Beck **whom I first met almost a half century ago in London....**

Jeff Beck — *A Day In The Life* -- <https://youtu.be/yUWvKDF3g5Y>

Jeff Beck — *Women of Ireland* -- https://youtu.be/0ej_X2_SggQ

Jeff Beck — *Going Down* -- <https://youtu.be/bYJVA30nUY4>

Jeff Beck — *Sleep Walk* -- <https://youtu.be/5vyu7jAnwZs>

Jeff Beck — *She's A Woman* -- <https://youtu.be/TZIFTbvFKPE>

Jeff Beck — *Little Wing* -- <https://youtu.be/GWwsd5APlgw>

Jeff Beck — *Behind The Veil* -- <https://youtu.be/nQDjSGnmYBI>

Jeff Beck — *Space Boogie* -- <https://youtu.be/fuo-anby0WA>

Jeff Beck — *People Get Ready* -- <https://youtu.be/fwnU66fXs78>

Jeff Beck — *Pump The Pump* -- <https://youtu.be/xiDYrQp9wFQ>

Jeff Beck — *Freeway Jam* -- <https://youtu.be/UfN-APKK4tg>

Jeff Beck — performing at the **Rock and Roll Hall of Fame's Induction Ceremony 2009** -- https://youtu.be/laXXXJ_1dHQ

Beck Group — *Got The Feeling, Situation, Morning Dew, Tonight I Will Be Staying Here With You, Going Down & Definitely Maybe* -- <https://youtu.be/OJW6Y8U-BsI>

Jeff Beck Group — *Definitely Maybe* -- <https://www.facebook.com/thedarksideoftheoz/videos/1163119543756591/>

Jeff Beck & Tal Wilkenfeld — *Cause We've Ended As Love* -- <https://youtu.be/blp7hPFaIfU>

Beck Bogart & Appice — *Superstition* -- <https://youtu.be/xyyhm1D7zII>

Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck & Sting — from "*Secret Policeman's Concert*" -- <https://youtu.be/kdA5SZq-ZJE>

Clapton & Beck — *Moon River* -- <https://youtu.be/SKIFrPn0m4c>

Steven Tyler, Jeff Beck & Sting — *Emotion* -- <https://youtu.be/PEdl0-T3pCk>

Jeff Beck & Stanley Clarke — *Scatterbrain* -- <https://youtu.be/qQxK2rxZwDE>

Rod Stewart & Jeff Beck — *People Get Ready* -- <https://youtu.be/T43m6dcMk6U>

Bonus

The Yardbirds — Performing in the movie *Blow Up* -- <https://youtu.be/w9fZ7oydsl4>

Sting, Zucchero & Jeff Beck — *Fragile* -- <https://youtu.be/mbz-hBSujH8>

I hope that you enjoyed this weekend's offerings and wish you and yours a great week....

Sincerely,

Greg Brown