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Subject: Greg Brown's Weekend Reading and Other Things.. 4/10/2016

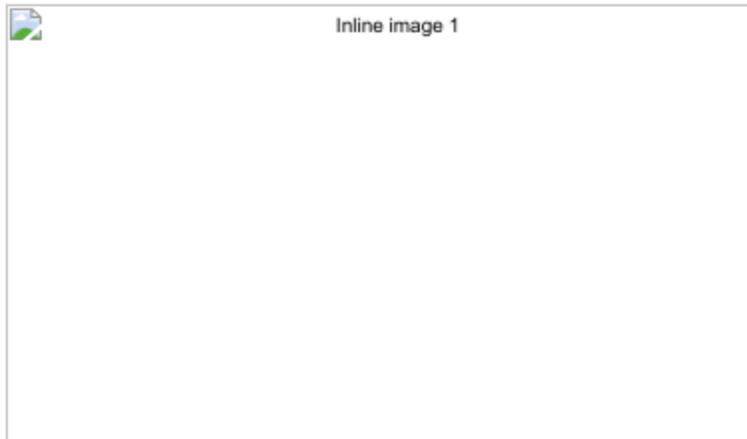
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DEAR FRIEND.....

Ending Child Poverty Now



As I pointed out last week it is a national moral disgrace that there are 14.7 million poor children and 6.5 million extremely poor children in the United States of America – the world's largest economy. It is also unnecessary, costly and the greatest threat to our future national, economic and military security.

The 14.7 million poor children in our nation exceeds the populations of 12 U.S. states combined: Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Maine, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming and is greater than the combined populations of the countries of Sweden and Costa Rica. Our nearly 6.5 million extremely poor children (living below half the poverty line) exceeds the combined populations of Delaware, Montana, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont and Wyoming and is greater than the populations of Denmark or Finland.

The younger children are the poorer they are during their years of greatest brain development. Every other American baby is non-White and 1 in 2 Black babies is poor, 150 years after slavery was legally abolished.

America's poor children did not ask to be born; did not choose their parents, country, state, neighborhood, race, color, or faith. In fact if they had been born in 33 other industrialized countries they would be less likely to be poor. Among these 35 countries, America ranks 34th in relative child poverty — ahead only of Romania whose economy is 99 percent smaller than ours.

The United Kingdom, which, if it were an American state, would rank just above Mississippi in per capita GDP according to the Washington Post, committed to and succeeded in cutting its child poverty rate by half in 10 years. It is about values and political will. Sadly, politics too often trumps good policy and moral decency and responsibility to the next generation and the nation's future. It is way past time for a critical mass of Americans to confront the hypocrisy of America's pretension to be a fair playing field while almost 15 million children languish in poverty. This report calls for an end to child poverty in the richest nation on earth with a 60 percent reduction immediately. It shows solutions to ending child poverty in our nation already exist. For the first time this report shows how, by expanding investments in existing policies and programs that work, we can shrink overall child poverty 60 percent, Black child poverty 72 percent, and improve economic circumstances for 97 percent of poor children at a cost of \$77.2 billion a year. These policies could be pursued immediately, improving the lives and futures of millions of children and eventually saving taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars annually.

Child poverty is too expensive to continue. Every year the lost productivity and extra health and crime costs for adults who grew up poor add up to \$500 billion — six times more than the \$77 billion investment we propose to reduce child poverty by 60 percent. MIT Nobel Laureate economist and 2014 Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient Dr. Robert Solow in his foreword to a 1994 CDF report *Wasting America's Future* presciently wrote: "For many years Americans have allowed child poverty levels to remain astonishingly high...far higher than one would think a rich and ethical society would tolerate. The justification, when one is offered at all, has often been that action is expensive: 'We have more will than wallet.' I suspect that in fact our wallets exceed our will, but in any event this concern for the drain on our resources completely misses the other side of the equation: Inaction has its costs too...As an economist I believe that good things are worth paying for; and that even if curing children's poverty were expensive, it would be hard to think of a better use in the world for money. If society cares about children, it should be willing to spend money on them."

Not only does child poverty cost far more than eliminating it would, we have so many better choices that reflect more just values as well as economic savings. We believe that food, shelter, quality early childhood investments to get every child ready for school and an equitable education for all children should take precedence over massive welfare for the rich and blatantly excessive spending for military weapons that do not work. We cannot let our leaders spend \$400 billion, without offsets, to make permanent tax breaks to wealthy corporations and others and then say we cannot afford to ensure every child is housed and fed.

Here are just a few ways we could fund the \$77 billion — 2 percent of our national budget — to make a huge down payment on ending preventable, costly and immoral child poverty in our wealthy nation:

- Closing tax loopholes that let U.S. corporations avoid \$90 billion in federal income taxes each year by shifting profits to subsidiaries in tax havens; or
- Eliminating tax breaks for the wealthy by taxing capital gains and dividends at the same rates as wages saving more than \$84 billion a year; or
- Closing 23 tax loopholes in former House Ways and Means Chairman Dave Camp's Tax Reform Act of 2014 which would free up an average of \$79.3 billion a year; or
- Decreasing 14 percent of the nation's FY2015 \$578 billion military budget. The U.S. has less than 5 percent of the world's population but 37 percent of the world's military expenditures; or
- Scrapping the F-35 fighter jet program which is several years behind schedule and 68 percent over budget and still not producing fully functional planes. For the nearly \$1.5 trillion projected costs of this program, the nation could reduce child poverty by 60 percent for 19 years.

If we love America and love our children we must all stand against the excessive greed that tramples millions of our children entrusted to our care. America's Declaration of Independence says, "*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, and are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights.*" After more than two centuries, it is time to make those truths evident in the lives of all poor children and to close our intolerable national hypocrisy gap and show the world whether democratic capitalism is an oxymoron or can work. A nation that does not stand for its children does not stand for anything and will not stand tall in the 21st century world or before God.

So True



Inline image 1



Inline image 1

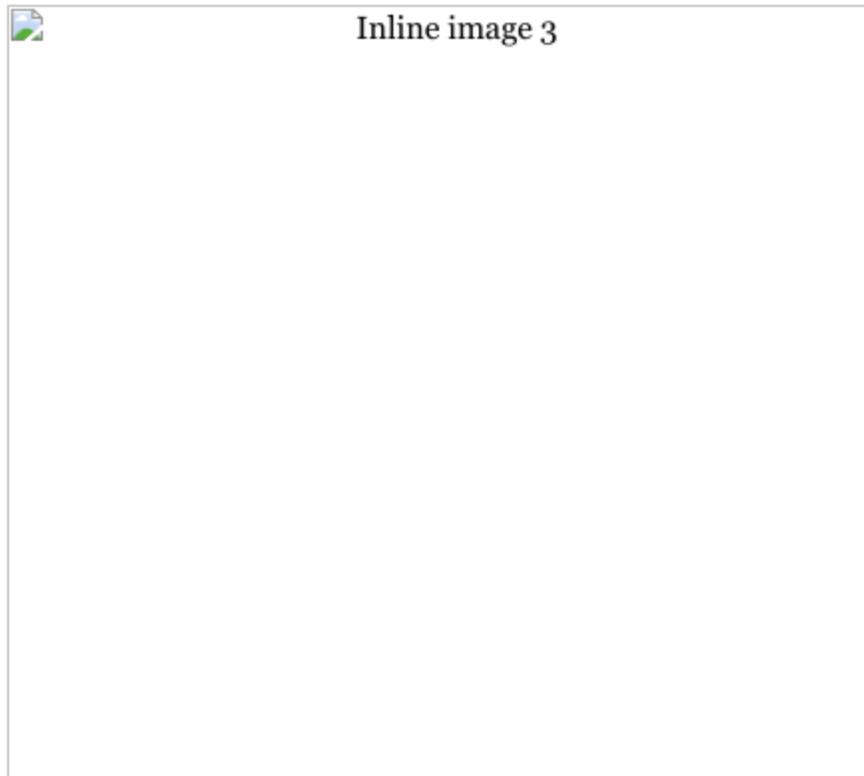
The New Normal

How Donald Trump May Reshape the Electoral Map

Donald Trump is the definitive GOP delegate leader and has the clearest path to the presidential nomination of any remaining candidate. But does he have an electoral path to 270 in November? There's a basic math problem for any Republican nominee.

In the past six presidential elections, Democrats have won states that add up to 365 electoral votes in 2008 and 332 electoral votes in 2012 — 53% of the votes verses 46% in 2008 and 51% of the votes verses 48% in 2012 — and a difference 8,538,559 in 2008 and 3,473,402 in 2012 more votes.

Therefore whether the Democratic standard bearer be Hillary Clinton or Bernie Sanders, should Donald Trump be the GOP nominee, he will have a big hill to climb with little room for error and has to win all the big battleground states — Ohio, Florida, Virginia — as well as find some blue states they can flip to red.



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Inline image 2

Trump claims he is bringing in so many new voters to the Republican fold that he can win traditionally blue states, like New Jersey, Michigan or even New York. At a speech earlier this month in Michigan, Trump argued, "These are states that a normal Republican, because I'm not a normal Republican in any way, a normal Republican cannot think in terms of, frankly, I hate to say this, cannot think in terms of bringing in Michigan." Trump's reasoning is based on his belief that he will win an overwhelming number of white voters.

Except that after the 2012 election, the Republican National Committee commissioned a so-called political "*autopsy*" report. It said in order to win the White House again, the GOP had to become more competitive with minority voters, particularly Hispanics. But there were contrarian voices. Even before Trump began his march, some GOP strategists were saying minority outreach is crucial in the long run but not necessarily right away. "If we are not going to do that, there is a way to win the presidential election by goosing the white vote. The sky is not yet falling. We are on the brink, but we are not there yet," said GOP strategist Ford O'Connell.

These people say that Trump, with his hardliner stands on trade and immigration, might be just the candidate to eke out one more Electoral College win thanks to a largely white vote. "Trump could make the map larger. Because of where he's standing with white voters right now, he would have the Democrats on their heels particularly in the industrial Midwest," predicted O'Connell. And a number of Republicans, some who are no fans of Trump believe it may be possible.

"I see Donald Trump as a wrecking ball," said Ari Fleischer, a former White House press secretary for George W. Bush and one of the co-authors of the RNC's 2012 autopsy. "He's currently swinging through the Republican Party, and destroying our positions on entitlement reform and on free trade." "But like all wrecking balls, he's going to swing in another direction too, and that will be going through

the Democratic Party, wrecking their support among traditional blue-collar, working-class voters," Fleischer continued. "That's the Donald Trump that we've seen so far. He changes everything."

Both Bush 41 and 43 won by winning over "*Reagan Democrats*", blue-collar white voters who since the 1980s have switched from the Democratic Party to the GOP. "The Reagan Democrats align with the angry white males who've made themselves felt in the Trump primaries," the Democratic pollster Stan Greenberg acknowledged. But, Greenberg said, there's a big unknown variable still: "The question is: Are there enough of them, and what's the price of trying to reach them?"

There's no question the white working-class vote is shrinking. Non-college-educated voters were about half of the electorate in 1992. Now they make up a third. But in Rust Belt states like Wisconsin, Ohio and Pennsylvania, they still make up half of eligible voters. Those voters are exactly Trump's base, but turning them out won't be easy. In the last election, white non-college-educated voters had a turnout rate of about 57 percent, while 80 percent of white college-educated voters showed up.

Ultimately, Trump would need an unprecedented turnout among these voters. Some analysts calculate that Trump would need at least 65 percent of the white vote to win; 2012 GOP nominee Mitt Romney got 59 percent. "He would have to pull a rabbit out of the hat to do this," Brookings Institution demographer William Frey said of Trump. "The demography is against him in a lot of the country, even though we see these huge crowds coming out at his rallies."

Trump himself is a big motivator, but he cuts both ways. Yes, he has been able to attract thousands (he says millions) of new voters to the GOP primaries, but in a general election he'd also motivate his opponents. For every white working-class male Trump turns out in the Rust Belt, he could also bring out a college-educated suburban woman and a newly registered Latino to vote against him in another part of the country.

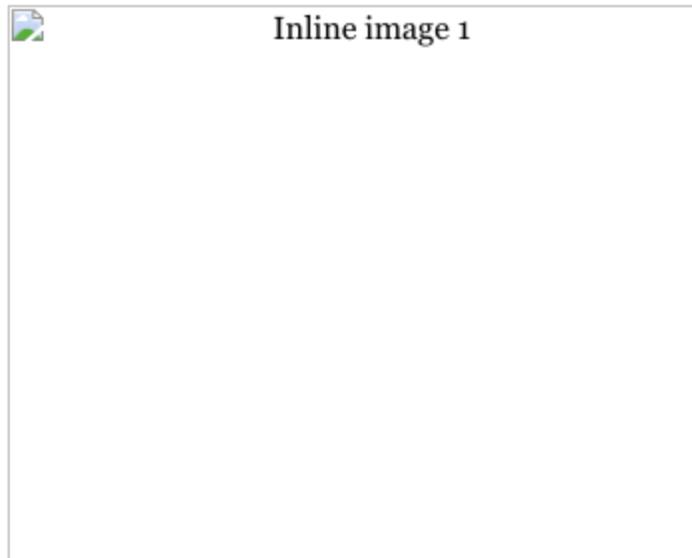
"The problem with the theory and the strategy is that, I think almost immediately, you'll see other states like Florida, Virginia, Colorado, Nevada — states that have had a growth of both ethnic diversity, immigrant diversity but also a rise of cosmopolitan, well-educated populations," Greenberg said, "and those voters don't like Donald Trump."

Yes, Trump is a wild card who breaks all of the rules seemingly without consequences. But because he is so polarizing, which has worked well in the company of likeminded constituents who have drunk the Kool Aid; that it is minorities, immigrants, Muslims, Big Government and liberal media that is the cause of their sinking economically. But in a General Election where the candidate who builds the biggest tent tends to win, it is difficult to envision how Trump will over-perform Romney and [2008 nominee John] McCain. And what happens should the Democratic Party spend the next six months registering between two to three million new Black and Hispanic voters, who because of Trump's vitriolic racist, misogynistic, xenophobic rants against minorities, will most likely vote Democratic for the next decade?

After successive campaigns in which President Obama expanded the Democrats' electoral map options by focusing on fast-growing and increasingly diverse states, a 2016 race between Clinton and Trump could devolve principally into a pitched battle for the Rust Belt. But can he run the table? I don't think so, because he will definitely do worse with Black and Latino voters, as well as with working women, than either Romney or McCain, further cementing Democratic electoral map, especially when Trump amps up the rhetoric to sure up *'angry'* white votes – and believe me – this won't be forgotten any time soon. And since Ted Cruz who is second in delegates for the Republican nomination, shares many of the same views, thus could be described as *Trump Lite*, there should be little difference in the electoral outcome. Hence, the 2008/2012/2016 Presidential Electoral maps could be "*The New Normal*". As a result, it is easy to understand why the Republican Establishment is so afraid (in spite of whatever they say) of Donald Trump being the 2016 GOP nominee.

The Truth about Free Trade

It's Not Free and not only about jobs



On the wake of Bernie Sanders stunning upset victory in the Michigan primary, there's a renewed recognition that the negative impacts of global trade matter — a lot. There's still a broad assumption Clinton will win the nomination, but there's been some talk that she might consider Sherrod Brown, Ohio's staunchly anti-*"free trade"* senator as her running mate. And of course, as the New York Times dwells on, Clinton is "*sharpening*" her "*message on jobs and trade.*"

But Michigan matters not just for Clinton, but for the Democratic Party as a whole. And it's going to take much more than sharper messaging to actually make a difference in people's lives. It's not just a

matter of changing policies around the edges — as Clinton now says that she wants to do — the entire corporate-dominated policymaking process that produces such deals needs to be done away with, and replaced with something far more open, democratic and informed by long-term realism. And that can only happen through a mobilization of political will — or as Sanders would call it, “a political revolution.”

Although free trade agreements like NAFTA and TPP are often used against politicians in the other party, Bernie Sanders isn't the only major candidate against them, as Donald Trump has slammed President Obama on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), calling it “an attack on America's business. It does not stop Japan's currency manipulation. This is a bad deal.” And both Bernie and Trump are right, as there is nothing free about Free Trade. And these agreements in the end cost American jobs, and especially jobs that can be shipped across the border to countries with cheaper labor.

Another fundamental problem is not just the trade deals themselves — horrendous as they may be — but the super-secretive policy apparatus that produces them, the norms by which it functions, and the comfortable cluelessness with which it's accepted as perfectly normal, if not axiomatically unquestionable, by our governing elites — both here in America and around the world. It's all done in the name of “*free trade*,” of course, but the corporate-dominated reality just described is closer in spirit to the mercantilism of the pre-Adam Smith era.

To see just how ludicrous the “*free trade*” label is, consider the beginning of this brief post from economist Dean Baker, writing at the world's oldest blog:

Hey, can an experienced doctor from Germany show up and start practicing in New York next week? Since the answer is no, we can say that we don't have free trade.

Protectionism is the rule when it comes to high-income professions, as Baker has been pointing out for years. In fact, it's gotten stronger. And not just for professions, of course:

We also have strengthened patent and copyright protections, making drugs and other affected items far more expensive. These protections are also forms of protectionism.

The thing is “*free trade*” sounds so good ... so free! It's definitely good messaging. No? Well, not if you're trying to think straight, in an effort to design policies that actually work. And that's the real challenge that Democrats and Republicans face — whichever candidate's side they are on just now. Because the problem's not going to go away any time soon. That problem is much harder for Clinton precisely because she's so deeply wedded to the system as it currently exists. Even if she genuinely wanted to start fixing things, how could she possibly proceed? But given the sorry state of Democratic Party as a whole, it's going to be very challenging for Sanders as well.

After Sanders' upset win in Michigan, there were a number of predictable responses, portraying Sanders' views as simplistic — much like Donald Trump's, get it? — such as this from Washington

Monthly's blog, pointing out that Michigan's industrial decline started well before NAFTA — as anyone who's seen "*Roger and Me*" knows very well. But this kind of analysis, though historically well founded, is nonetheless off-base: The real-world challenge is not uprooting historic wrongs, but struggling against current wrongs and preventing future ones. NAFTA still matters because the damage it's done is still ongoing, it's been replicated, and the mechanisms driving it have spread, not because anyone thinks it's the sole source of problems in Michigan or anywhere else.

In late 2013, just before NAFTA turned 20, Jeff Faux, founder of the Economic Policy Institute, wrote an assessment of what NAFTA had meant. He called it "*A Template for Neoliberal Globalization*," and highlighted four main ways it had impacted American workers:

First, it caused the loss of some 700,000 jobs as companies moved their production to Mexico, where labor was cheaper....

Second, NAFTA strengthened the ability of U.S. employers to force workers to accept lower wages and benefits....

Third, NAFTA drove several million Mexican workers and their families out of the agriculture and small business sectors, which could not compete with the flood of products—often subsidized—from U.S. producers. This dislocation was a major cause of the dramatic increase of undocumented workers in the United States....

Fourth, and ultimately most importantly, NAFTA created a template for the rules of the emerging global economy, in which the benefits would flow to capital and the costs to labor. Among other things, NAFTA granted corporations extraordinary protections against national labor laws that might threaten profits, set up special courts — chosen from rosters of pro-business experts — to judge corporate suits against governments, and at the same time effectively denied legal status to workers and unions to defend themselves in these new cross-border jurisdictions.

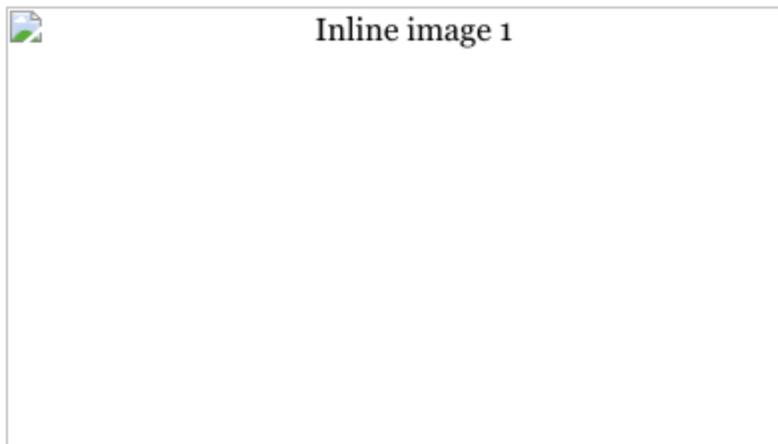
Although all four of these impacts were devastating, the last one is what's most important going forward. It's what's animating the TPP process and every other trade agreement in the works. So long as trade rules are written by the corporations, for the corporations, the rights, the dignity and the self-determination of the American people are all fundamentally threatened. And this is why Free Trade isn't free, because no matter how well-intentioned, the truth is that most agreements favor corporate profits ahead of jobs and the benefit of the country.

As long as Free Trade agreements such as the TPP process are not open and democratic, with the opportunity for open dialog so that the public can at the very least gain some understanding, nothing will change. None of this can happen in the secretive backroom process that's been normalized under neoliberalism's rules. And that's what's got to end.

This is not just a primary campaign question between these two candidates or between the two major parties. Both major political parties need to fundamentally rethink what its trade policy should be. As it now stands, neither party simply accepts that trade agreements are written secretly behind closed doors by government officials from different countries consulting with lawyers and lobbyists from (mostly transnational) large corporations. The interests of the American public in general (or any other public around the world) simply don't enter into the process. There are no labor, environmental, public health or consumer advocates involved. It's understandable why the GOP might like such a system. It's beyond belief that the Democratic Party has never even seriously questioned it. The time to start questioning it — seriously — has finally arrived. And the time for action is now....

Rage in America

The product of decades of calculated fear programs



When we hear crowds shout “*Trump, Trump, Trump!*” and “*Build a wall! Build a wall!*” both the whites who scream these coded chants and the minorities who are the subject of these racist charges know that they are used to engender fear. Both Republicans and Democrats would like you to think that this is all about Donald Trump. But long before The Donald entered the political landscape fear was liberally promoted in movies such as *Birth of a Nation*, to John Wayne westerns, to the propaganda films of WWII and the Communist scare films of the 1950s – as well as the real life policies of segregation that subjugated African Americans for a century. Worse, Trump’s “*promise*” has become a sanction for racial taunting and beatings that have become a ritualistic part of his campaign.

As **Jeet Heer** wrote in the **New Republic** last week in his article ***Republic of Fear*** – From the moment he stepped off the Trump Tower escalator last June, and in his campaign announcement speech called Mexican immigrants criminals and rapists, Donald Trump’s presidential run has been an exercise in white nationalism. The questions that have obsessed political pundits since that moment – Can he win? Will he cause a crack-up in the Republican Party? What happens if there’s a brokered convention and the establishment tries to take the nomination away from him? – are important, of course. But they’re far too narrow. What really needs to be asked is this: How is Donald Trump changing America? Not how he will change the country if he lands in the White House, but how he’s

already changing it. Because Trump, even before he secures the Republican nomination — and even if he never wins the presidency — has transformed America as much as any political figure of our era. It's a transformation that transcends politics and bleeds deeply into our culture.

Fear is the very essence of Trumpism. Political scientists have found that his most ardent supporters are white people with authoritarian tendencies who are afraid of the way the country is changing — economically, culturally, and demographically. He wins them over by posing as the strongman who is tough enough to fight back against the feared agents of change, whether they're Mexican or Muslim immigrants, *Black Lives Matter* protesters, or “politically correct” liberals who say “happy holidays.” But Trump hasn't simply pandered to such fears, as Republican candidates have since Richard Nixon first cooked up the “*Southern strategy*.” He is a demagogue who's turning white people's anxieties into anger for political advantage. Trump isn't simply reflecting fear; he's conjuring it — both among his followers and among those he demonizes.

But it is too easy just to blame this on Donald Trump because fear in coded messages became the instrument of du jour for the past fifty years. Starting with the use of the “*silent majority*” which every minority understood did not include them to the “*Willie Horton*” political ad and references to “*welfare mothers*” and the revolting talk about “winners” and “losers” or “makers” and “takers” and the now infamous “47%”. These were phrases employed by Presidents Nixon and Reagan and GOP establishment leaders Mitt Romney, Paul Ryan and Ted Cruz. Republicans stoke this fear every time they call, President Obama dangerous or a Muslim. And when the GOP leadership does not rebuke its members for calling the President of the United States dangerous without any evidence is indication of their complicity. Yes, fear is the very essence of *Trumpism* but it is also the core of the Republican's pattern to demonize anyone who disagrees.

These same fear mongers have and are currently employing the boogeyman of taxes, voter fraud, the deficit, Ferguson, NAFTA, imminent ISIS attacks and the Zika virus, while ignoring the fact that more than eleven million Americans die each year from gun violence. One of the reason why Donald Trump gets such large audiences and his followers are so loyal is that he is just articulating what his supporters and many Republicans believe but are afraid to say. But fear mongering is just not a Republican practice, as I watch MSNBC's Chris Matthews question the seriousness of Bernie Sanders candidacy because he gave Hillary Clinton a pass in the first debates on the GOP's bogus accusations about the criminality of her email server and her ethics based on her huge speaking fees — to which he is now part of his daily stomp speeches. But as Nobel laureate **Paul Krugman** wrote this week. “.....Sanders campaign needs to stop feeding the right-wing disinformation machine. Engaging in innuendo suggesting, without evidence, that Clinton is corrupt is, at this point, basically campaigning on behalf of the RNC.and tell his staff to stop it too.”

The other problem with fear is that it has a multiplier effect. Donald Trump is a big bully who is enabling many little bullies. His campaign for president has made white Americans more comfortable with their bigotry, giving them permission to be more vocal and confident in expressing their prejudices, resentments, and hatreds. This is exemplified by the fact that the word “*Trump*” has become a taunt used to humiliate or intimidate — a sort of verbal cudgel and music to the ears of organized white nationalists, who have cheered Trump's rise — and have clearly been emboldened by it.

Rocky J. Suhayda, chair of the American Nazi Party, captured the enthusiasm last September when he wrote: “*We have a wonderful opportunity here folks that may never come again, at the right time.*”

Donald Trump's campaign statements, if nothing else, have shown that 'our views' are not so 'unpopular' as the political correctness crowd have told everyone they are!" For decades, this cohort has had to grapple with the fact that public expressions of racism were becoming taboo. When politicians tried to win over these voters, they had to use code words and dog whistles. Trump has changed all that: The dog whistle has given way to the air horn. And now when white people want to harass Hispanic basketball players or Muslim students, they have a rallying cry: "Trump, Trump, Trump!"

Former President Jimmy Carter says that the American democracy has been transformed to an oligarchy and if this is true the use of fear has been a major instrument. Americans were generally known for having a positive outlook on life – in fact it was called, ***The American Dream***. A CNN/ORC poll carried out in December 2015 suggests 69% of Americans are either "very angry" or "somewhat angry" about "the way things are going" in the US. And the same proportion - 69% - are angry because the political system "seems to only be working for the insiders with money and power, like those on Wall Street or in Washington," according to a NBC/Wall Street Journal poll last November. Many people are not only angry, they are angrier than they were a year ago, according to an NBC/Esquire survey last month - particularly Republicans (61%) and white people (54%) but also (42%) of Democrats, (43%) of Latinos and (33%) of African Americans.

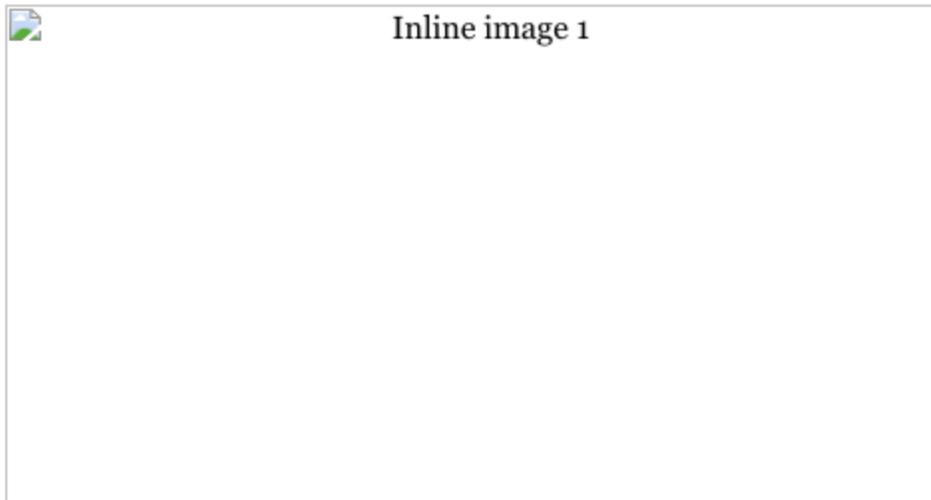
When bully tactics are successfully used, it becomes easy for others to follow the same pattern, even Bernie Sanders, who although not a bully but he is using the same false innuendo and bogus disinformation, when Hillary Clinton has more than two decades of public records for him pick apart. Candidates in both parties have sensed the mood and have adopted the rhetoric. Both Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders have arguably tapped into voters' frustration better than their opponents, saying that they are "very, very angry" and will "gladly accept the mantle of anger" while their rivals almost in unison admit that many Americans who are discouraged and angry because they are watching the American dream slipping away – and are looking for the reason why.

Americans are angry. They are angry about school shootings and taxes and mistreatment and undeserved privilege and discrimination and government. But they are also angry because politicians, political pundits and media encouraged and supported by special interest have employed fear to manipulate public opinion to the point that the institution controlling our government are totally dysfunctional. Angry people are poor communicators and even worse listeners. Their empathy is foreshortened, and they have trouble imagining the other's point of view. It makes people less healthy, and when both parties are angry, fewer are likely to find middle ground. If the only way people feel they will be heard is when they are angry, then our public discourse will be an arena for shouting past one another.

Some anger has uses. Without a push to do better, we would not have gotten to the pinnacle of living we have reached, where diseases have been subdued, literacy spread and hunger severely reduced. The restless drive to betterment has made unimaginable luxuries, such as having access to all human knowledge in your pocket, a commonplace even for many of the poor. Angry protests have often resulted in improved conditions. But when dissatisfaction becomes anger, it is less likely to be useful than polarizing and injurious. One of the things that we do know is that the country is not better off being as angry as it is today and coupled with fear is a prescription for fascism, anarchy and totalitarianism for the benefit for a few at the top of the food chain – and as we know from the last thirty-years, trickle down doesn't work especially coupled with fear.... ***And this is my rant of the week....***

WEEK's READINGS

This is Just Wrong



A Number of Companies Pay Zero Taxes but Congress Wants to get Them More

We hear from Conservatives that taxes is crippling American businesses yet U.S. corporate profits after taxes grew by 7.60% last year to more than \$1.784 trillion. And for small business (that earned less than \$10 million) with the top 15 industries – accounting and tax services takes the top spot on the list of the most profitable type of small business with a generous 18.4 percent net profit margin followed by real-estate services (15.2 percent), law firms (*14.5 percent*) and doctor's offices (*13 percent*), with the average net profit across all industries for this report's time period was 7.2 percent. While profit isn't the only matter for an entrepreneur or a business to consider -- other factors to consider are educated workforce, support infrastructure, governance, regulatory protection and how the business would fare during a recession – just some of the other things that both prosper from.

Just as average Americans are paying their taxes this week, it's been revealed once again that some of the country's richest and most profitable corporations paid \$0 in taxes last year, and many are even getting massive refunds. USA Today assembled a list of 27 multinational corporations that posted between \$56 million and \$4.6 billion in profits in 2015, yet got money back from the government

rather than paying federal taxes. Some of these corporations are household names, and they represent multiple industries ranging from media, to technology, to healthcare, to transportation.

Many of these negative tax bills are due to accounting loopholes that allow profitable global giants, like American Airlines, to write off losses amounting to billions of dollars. Even though American Airlines owed \$1.5 billion in federal taxes, the company successfully wrote off \$4.7 billion in losses, amounting to a \$3.2 billion refund from Uncle Sam. When adding up the refunds, these 27 companies — a mere snapshot of a much larger, systemic issue in the tax code — are responsible for over \$11 billion in tax revenue that would have otherwise gone to public services:

 Inline image 2

But this is just a small window into the culture of corporate tax avoidance, as over \$2.1 trillion in corporate profits is stashed in overseas tax havens. The way the U.S. tax system is set up, companies that book their profits in tax-free territories like Bermuda and the Cayman Islands can pay 0 percent tax rates on those profits as long as the money remains there. Some of the most well-known corporations famously avoid U.S. taxes by booking profits overseas, like Apple, Microsoft, Oracle, Qualcomm, JPMorgan & Chase, Citigroup, Bank of America, and Goldman Sachs. As bad as this is, top U.S. officials are contemplating a proposal that would further deplete the U.S. Treasury of badly needed tax revenue.

President Obama has proposed lowering the American corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 14 percent for any company that decides to “repatriate,” or bring home, any of the profits stashed overseas. Were all of the companies who store money this way to take advantage of such a proposal, it would amount to approximately \$400 billion in lost revenue. That money could fund roughly 7 years of tuition-free public college across the country. However, President George W. Bush tried this in 2005 and it failed miserably.

Last year, a slew of multinational corporations took advantage of Bush’s plan to grant a one-time tax holiday to corporate tax avoiders, when he temporarily lowered the rate from 35 percent to 5 percent. But rather than fulfilling their roles as “job creators” after the windfall, these companies ended up using the repatriated cash to buy back its stock, which enriches the stock options owned by executives, while simultaneously firing workers:

Allan Sloan at the Washington Post reported that Ford Motor Company, which lobbied for the legislation, announced 30,000 additional job cuts after saving anywhere between \$250m (Ford’s estimate) and \$850m (Sloan’s estimate) in federal taxes. A 2005 New York Times editorial chided Hewlett Packard’s decision to fire 14,500 workers (a decision made by former presidential candidate Carly Fiorina) while repatriating \$14.5bn in overseas profits.

While this is a widespread problem, there is a solution: Senator Bernie Sanders is campaigning on a promise to create 13 million new jobs by investing \$1 trillion in rebuilding American infrastructure. He would fund this by closing the corporate tax loopholes that allow multinationals to stash an estimated \$100 billion in overseas tax havens every year, amounting to \$1 trillion in savings over a decade. The problem is that due to fierce lobbying by Corporate America, even if Bernie is elected his promises will suffer the same fate as Obama and Bush’s endeavors to get these companies to pay their fair share of taxes. So when another politician tells you that high taxes is crippling business know that they are either misinformed or lying.

Fact checkers confirm Hillary Clinton is more honest than any of her 2016 opponents



The trendy knock on Hillary Clinton, even among those who acknowledge that she's the most capable and knowledgeable of the 2016 candidates for President, is the accusation that she's just not honest. Her opponents keep insisting that she can't be trusted, that she's not telling the truth, and that there is therefore no telling what she might do while in office. But whenever fact checkers look at what Clinton and her opponents are saying during this election cycle, she rates out as the most honest of the bunch.

It may come as a surprise considering how often her opponents have tried to ding her for honesty issues. But according to campaign-long data from respected fact checking entity **PolitiFact**, the picture looks very different. These sites only evaluate controversial or contentious claims made by each candidate, so if for instance they rate a candidate's statements as being "*true*" half the time, it doesn't mean the candidate is lying the other half the time. It's more accurately an indicator of what percentage of the time a candidate turns out to have been telling the truth when he or she is specifically accused of lying.

PolitiFact has rated **24%** of Hillary Clinton's contentious claims as receiving a perfect "*True*" score, which may not sound impressive until you consider that just **15%** of Bernie Sanders' contentious claims have rated out as "*True*". There are two other passable categories, "*Mostly True*" and "*Half True*." If you add up the numbers from the top three boxes, Clinton comes out at **72%** and Sanders comes out at **70%**, which are both robust scores. In the bottom two boxes, just **14%** of Clinton's challenged statements have rated out as "*False*" or "*Pants on Fire*" while Sanders has fallen into those bottom two boxes **15%** of the time.

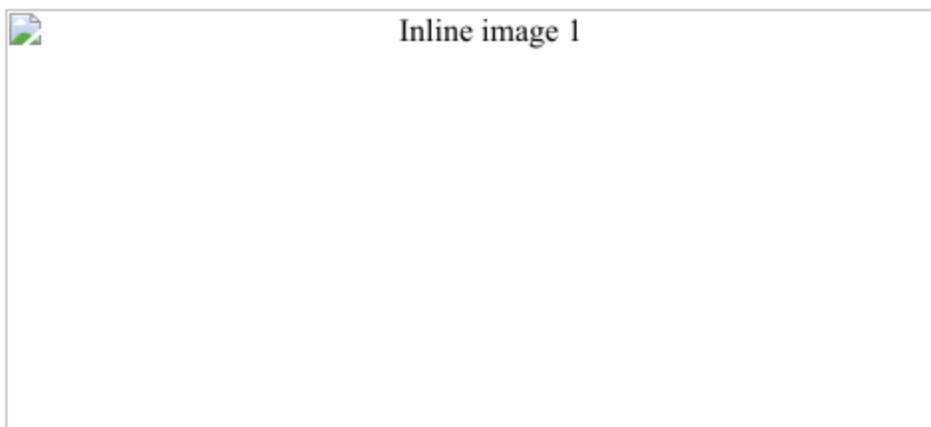
Again, lest you get jaded, it doesn't mean that either candidate is lying **14%** or **15%** of the time they open their mouths. This is merely a percentage of the most highly contested claims they've each made during this election. In other words, whenever Clinton or Sanders has been accused of lying, most of the time it turns out they were actually telling the truth. Objectively speaking, these are the two most

honest candidates in the race, with Clinton receiving the slight numerical edge. Now for contrast, let's take a look at the numbers for the top 2016 republican candidates.

It turns out Donald Trump's statements have only rated out as being fully "*True*" a mere **3%** of the time. In fact he rates out as "*False*" or "*Pants on Fire*" an astounding **61%** of the time. Ted Cruz is nearly as dishonest, rated "*True*" just **6%** of the time, and "*False*" or "*Pants on Fire*" **36%** of the time. So what does this tell us?

The factual bottom line is that Hillary Clinton is the most honest candidate in the 2016 election. Bernie Sanders is a close second, making them the two most comparatively "*honest*" politicians in the race. In contrast, Donald Trump rates out as nearly a pathological liar, and Cruz doesn't do much better. So much for the notion that Clinton is the one who can't be trusted. This false perception is largely a function of her longtime status as the clear frontrunner and expected winner, causing the other candidates to take the most shots at her honesty out of desperation. **But as the above numbers irrefutably spell out, when the others accuse Hillary of lying, it most often turns out they're the ones who are lying.**

By dailynewsbin – March 20, 2016



Sometimes I look around the fitness industry and think, "*What the hell are we all doing to ourselves?*" Why have we accepted workouts that are actually torturous? Why are women willing to wear modern-day corsets -- CORSETS! -- to achieve the "*perfect*" body?

Look, many of the current fitness trends are quite positive, focusing on balance and moderation while embracing a healthy lifestyle. But there are always those other trends -- the ones that give fitness a bad name -- and they're the ones that need to stop.



Inline image 2

Run streaks

Run streaks are like the cardio version of single-exercise challenges. They basically encourage people to run every single day, racking up as many consecutive running days as humanly possible. There's even a freakin' United States Running Streak Association where members have run daily for everything from just over a year to more than 46 years straight. The latter is about 17,000 days, if you want to take a moment to envision the hell of doing anything for that long.

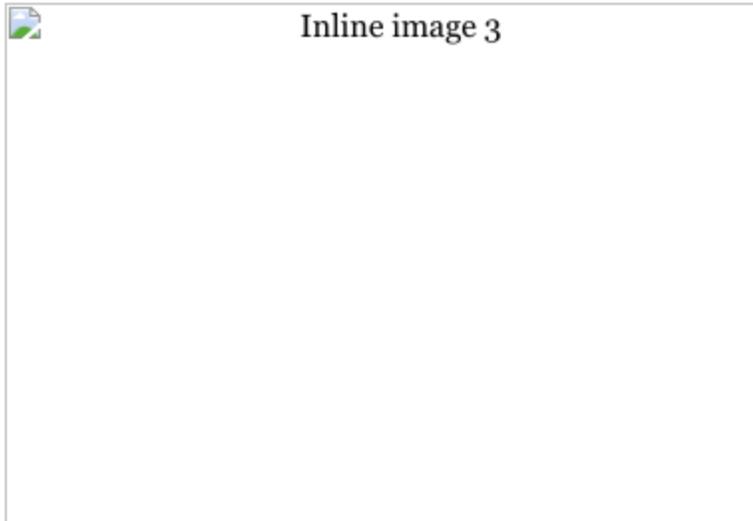
Running isn't the problem per se. Amanda Nyx, a former collegiate athlete and certified fitness instructor, says, "*Many people don't understand how to do it safely or at an appropriate level for themselves.*" FYI, running for more than 17,000 days isn't appropriate for most people (as you'll see from the fact that only one person has done it). Days off for recovery are important. If you want to set running goals, great. Just don't aim to run every day for the foreseeable future.

Workouts that develop "*long, lean*" muscles

This trend gets a facelift every couple years, but the basic gist never changes: to get a "*long, lean*" body (or the latest marketing tool, the "*dancer's body*"), you absolutely must lift super-light weights a million times.

Like running, these high-rep, low-weight workouts aren't necessarily bad. Barre workouts, the Tracy Anderson Method, and even some cycling studios incorporate the tactic into their programs, but Jennifer McAmis, a fitness instructor and personal trainer, explains the problem is with the implication. If light weight-training means a long, toned body, heavy weight-training must mean a bulky body, right?

The type of body you achieve through training relies on many factors, including diet and whether your goal is to develop strength or build mass, and it tends to pigeonhole women into one style of training and men into another. Also, muscle length is fixed. You're not going to get longer muscles by doing one form of training or another.



Single-exercise "challenges"

Remember the "*plank-a-day*" challenge from a few years back? Planks may not be taking the Internet by storm like they once did, but other, similar challenges have taken their place. For instance, monthly challenges focused on nothing but squats, push-ups, or burpees.

Rachael Novello, a personal trainer and fitness coach, points out that focusing on nothing but one exercise to "*get your dream body*" isn't the way to go. It keeps the myth of spot reduction alive, giving people the impression that they can look hot in a pair of cut-offs by doing nothing but squatting all day. Sure, you may be able to strengthen and tone your glutes and quads, but if you aren't simultaneously watching your diet and incorporating conditioning work into your routine, you're never going to get the results you're looking for.

Sarah Parker, another certified trainer, expands on the root of the problem: "*Talk about overuse injuries!*" If you're racking up 250 burpees or push-ups or squats or whatever the challenge is, the stress you're placing on specific muscle groups is significant. Will you inevitably get an injury? Maybe, maybe not, but you definitely increase the probability.

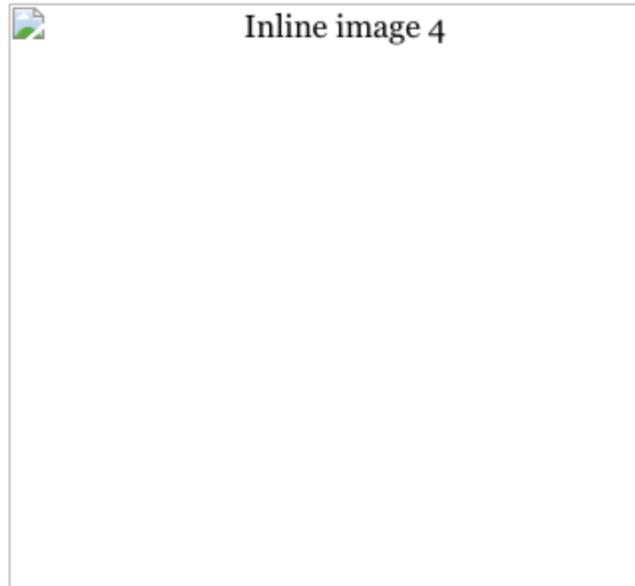
Sadistic races and workouts

It's one thing to work hard during a workout. It's an entirely different thing to quite literally be pushed to the brink of breaking yourself for the sake of... what, exactly? Races where people voluntarily crawl through electrified puddles of mud, or training facilities that push participants to the edge of rhabdomyolysis are downright idiotic. You point me toward a trainer or workout that subscribes to the "*No pain, no gain*" rhetoric, and I'll point to a trainer or workout that needs to stop.

Waist training and any other workout "*shortcut*"

What the hell, ladies? I thought we got rid of corsets years ago because, you know, they suck. And there are legitimate risks to waist training, especially if you see it as a shortcut for weight loss. Christie Joyce, a certified trainer and fitness instructor, can't stand the practice, saying, "*There's nothing that trains your waist like good ol' healthy eating and exercise.*"

It's not like waist training is the only culprit, it just happens to be one of the most recent offenders. Weight-loss supplements, ab belts, and sweat suits are a few of the other shortcuts people have been turning to for years to try to bypass the legitimate challenge of eating well and working out. Sadly, they don't work, and even when they lead to short-term gains, they don't boost your health in a way that supports long-term results.

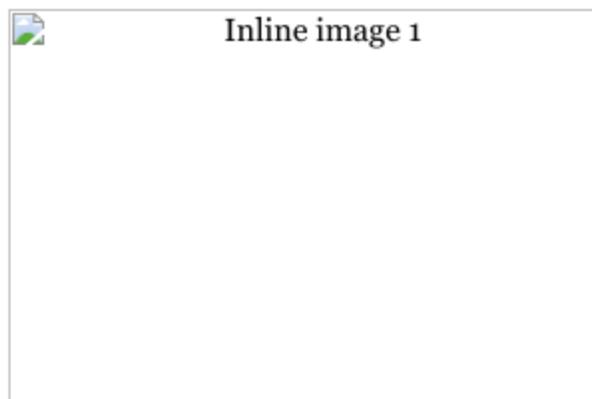


Celebrity or Insta-celebrity workout programs

I'm sorry, but just because you've landed a few movie roles or you have 2 million followers on Instagram doesn't make you a fitness expert. People actually go to school for that. For a lot of years. Whenever celebrities or social media stars come out with workouts or act as health gurus without any actual certifications to back them up, I want to strangle whatever money-grubbing producer allowed it to happen. Novello says it best, "*Just 'cause they're famous doesn't mean they're qualified!*"

Laura Williams – Thrillist Health – March 2016

Are Egg Yolks Good or Bad?



Egg white omelets and other yolk-free recipes have become synonymous with “*healthy*” to many. But if you toss out your egg yolks, you’re also tossing out some of the most nutritious parts of the egg. For instance, egg yolks (but not whites) contain vitamins A, D, E and K along with omega-3 fats. Compared to the whites, egg yolks also contain more beneficial folate and vitamin B12. The yolks also contain far more of the nutrient choline than the whites, and all of the antioxidants lutein and zeaxanthin. Egg yolks have been unfairly vilified for decades because they contain cholesterol and saturated fat. But contrary to the prevailing nutritional dogma that such dietary components need to be avoided, the cholesterol and saturated fat in animal foods like egg yolks are quite beneficial for your health.

Cholesterol-Rich Foods Tend to Be Among the Best for Your Health

Many of the healthiest foods happen to be rich in cholesterol (and saturated fats). Cholesterol has been demonized since the early 1950s, following the popularization of Ancel Keys, Ph.D.'s flawed research. But cholesterol has many health benefits. It plays a key role in regulating protein pathways involved in cell signaling and may also regulate other cellular processes, for instance. It's already known that cholesterol plays a critical role within your cell membranes, but research suggests cholesterol also interacts with proteins inside your cells, adding even more importance. Your body is composed of trillions of cells that need to interact with each other.

Cholesterol is one of the molecules that allow for these interactions to take place. For example, cholesterol is the precursor to bile acids, so without sufficient amounts of cholesterol, your digestive system can be adversely affected. It also plays an essential role in your brain, which contains about 25 percent of the cholesterol in your body. It is critical for synapse formation, i.e. the connections between your neurons, which allow you to think, learn new things, and form memories.

Eating Cholesterol-Rich Foods Doesn't Lead to High Cholesterol

One egg yolk contains about 210 milligrams (mg) of cholesterol, which is why public health agencies have long suggested Americans limit their intake. This is a highly flawed recommendation on multiple levels; for starters, “*high*” cholesterol does not cause heart disease, and beyond that, eating cholesterol-rich food doesn't cause your cholesterol levels to increase.

Cleveland Clinic cardiologist Dr. Steven Nissen estimates that only 20 percent of your blood cholesterol levels come from your diet. The rest of the cholesterol in your body is produced by your liver, which it makes because your body needs cholesterol. One survey of South Carolina adults found no correlation of blood cholesterol levels with so-called “*bad*” dietary habits, such as consumption of red meat, animal fats, butter, eggs, whole milk, bacon, sausage, and cheese. Consumption of more than six eggs per week also does not increase your risk of stroke and ischemic stroke, for instance.

Egg Yolks Have Little to No Impact on Cholesterol Levels for Most People

Further, eating two eggs a day does not adversely affect endothelial function (an aggregate measure of cardiac risk) in healthy adults, supporting the view that dietary cholesterol may be far less detrimental to cardiovascular health than previously thought. According to Chris Masterjohn, who received his Ph.D. in nutritional sciences from the University of Connecticut:

"Since we cannot possibly eat enough cholesterol to use for our bodies' daily functions, our bodies make their own. When we eat more foods rich in this compound, our bodies make less.

If we deprive ourselves of foods high in cholesterol — such as eggs, butter, and liver — our body revs up its cholesterol synthesis. The end result is that, for most of us, eating foods high in cholesterol has very little impact on our blood cholesterol levels.

In seventy percent of the population, foods rich in cholesterol such as eggs cause only a subtle increase in cholesterol levels or none at all. In the other thirty percent, these foods do cause a rise in blood cholesterol levels.

Despite this, research has never established any clear relationship between the consumption of dietary cholesterol and the risk for heart disease ... Raising cholesterol levels is not necessarily a bad thing either."

U.S. Dietary Guidelines Remove Dietary Cholesterol Limit

If you're still worried about the cholesterol in egg yolks, take a look at the newly released 2015 U.S. Dietary Guidelines. As recently as 2010, U.S. dietary guidelines described cholesterol-rich foods as "*foods and food components to reduce.*" They advised people to eat less than 300 milligrams (mg) per day, despite mounting evidence that dietary cholesterol has very little to do with cholesterol levels in your body. The latest guidelines have finally removed this misguided suggestion, and they even added egg yolks to the list of suggested sources of protein. Dietitian Lisa Drayer told CNN:

"If you connect the dots together scientifically, we don't believe there is a strong influence between dietary cholesterol and blood cholesterol ... So the government advice is catching up to the science."

The long-overdue change came at the advice of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC), which finally acknowledged what the science shows, which is that "cholesterol is not considered a nutrient of concern for over consumption." Dr. Luc Djoussé, an associate professor at Harvard Medical School and Brigham and Women's Hospital, who has conducted research on heart disease and eggs, further told TIME, "Dietary cholesterol does not translate into high levels of blood cholesterol."

More Research Shows Eating Eggs Doesn't Raise Heart Risks

According to a new study published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, even carriers of the ApoE4 gene, which makes them highly susceptible to heart disease, egg and cholesterol intake was not associated with an increased risk of coronary artery disease. The men in the study consumed an average of 2,800 mg of cholesterol a week via their diets, more than 25 percent of which came from eating an average of four eggs a week. No association was found between the consumption of cholesterol or eggs and heart disease, either in ApoE4 carriers or non-carriers.

Carotid artery thickness, which is a measure of atherosclerosis, was also not associated with cholesterol consumption. Jyrki K. Virtanen, Ph.D. an adjunct professor of epidemiology at the University of Eastern Finland and the study's lead author, told The New York Times:

“Moderate intake of cholesterol ... doesn't seem to increase the risk of heart disease, even among those people at higher risk.”

On the contrary, separate research found dietary cholesterol from eggs led to increases in beneficial HDL (high-density lipoprotein) cholesterol. This is the "good" cholesterol that helps keep cholesterol away from your arteries and remove any excess from arterial plaque, which may help to prevent heart disease.

Superstar Nutrients Are Plentiful in Egg Yolks

When you eat egg yolks, you're providing your body with valuable nutrients, including the following:

Choline

Choline is a B vitamin known for its role in brain development. It's a precursor to the neurotransmitter acetylcholine, which plays a role in both muscle control and memory. Choline is also important for the health of your cell membranes and has anti-inflammatory properties. An estimated 90 percent of the U.S. population may be deficient in choline. Some of the symptoms associated with low levels include memory problems, lethargy and persistent brain fog. Your body can only synthesize small amounts of this nutrient, so you need to get it from your diet. One egg yolk contains nearly 215 mg of choline.

Lutein and Zeaxanthin

Lutein and zeaxanthin are carotenoids. Zeaxanthin is an antioxidant carotenoid found in your retina, but it cannot be made by your body, so you must get it from your diet. Lutein is found in your macular pigment, which helps protect your central vision and aids in blue light absorption.

Both zeaxanthin and lutein are also found in high concentrations in your macula lutea, the small central part of your retina responsible for detailed central vision. Together, they're believed to serve two primary roles that are particularly valuable for your vision health:

1. To absorb excess photon energy
2. Quench free-radicals before they damage your lipid membranes

While there's no recommended daily intake for lutein and zeaxanthin, studies have found health benefits for lutein at a dose of 10 mg per day, and at 2 mg/day for zeaxanthin. One egg yolk contains about 0.2 mg of lutein and zeaxanthin. Egg yolks are also an excellent source of healthy fat and protein, while providing you with vitamins that many Americans are lacking. According to Masterjohn, eating egg yolks may even be an ideal way to resolve common nutrient deficiencies, including vitamins A, E and B6, copper, calcium and folate.

What's the Best Way to Prepare Eggs?

Eggs are so good for you that you can easily eat one dozen eggs per week, which is actually a simple and cost-effective way to add valuable nutrition to your diet — provided you cook them properly or, more aptly, don't cook them. The best way to consume eggs, provided they come from a high-quality source, is to not cook them at all, which is why my advanced nutrition plan recommends eating your eggs raw. In the beginner plan, however, eggs are still included, and you can prepare them anyway you like them. Less "*well done*" eggs are vastly preferable, such as poached, soft-boiled, or over-easy with very runny yolks.

It's important to consume egg yolks that are only lightly cooked, as the heat will damage many of the highly perishable nutrients in the yolk. Two raw egg yolks have antioxidant properties equivalent to half a serving of cranberries (25 grams) and almost twice as many as an apple. But the antioxidant properties are reduced by about 50 percent when the eggs are fried or boiled, and reduced even more if they're microwaved.

Additionally, the cholesterol in the yolk can be oxidized with high temperatures, especially when it is in contact with the iron present in the whites and cooked, as in scrambled eggs, and such oxidation contributes to chronic inflammation in your body. For this reason, scrambled eggs are one of the worst ways to prepare eggs if you want them to be healthy.

Organic and Free-Range: Choose Your Eggs Wisely

Even before you master how to cook your eggs properly, it's important to choose eggs from a high-quality source. Free-range or "*pastured*" organic eggs are far superior when it comes to nutrient content, while conventionally raised eggs are far more likely to be contaminated with disease-causing bacteria such as salmonella.

An egg is considered organic if the chicken was only fed organic food, which means it will not have accumulated high levels of pesticides from the grains (mostly GM corn) fed to typical chickens. Ideally, the chicken should have access to the outdoors where it can consume its natural diet.

Testing has confirmed that true free-range eggs are far more nutritious than commercially raised eggs, likely due to the differences in diet between free-ranging, pastured hens and commercially farmed hens. In one egg-testing project, Mother Earth News compared the official U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) nutrient data for commercial eggs with eggs from hens raised on pasture and found that the latter typically contains:

- 2 to 3 times more vitamin A
- 2 times more omega-3 fatty acids
- 3 times more vitamin E
- 7 times more beta-carotene

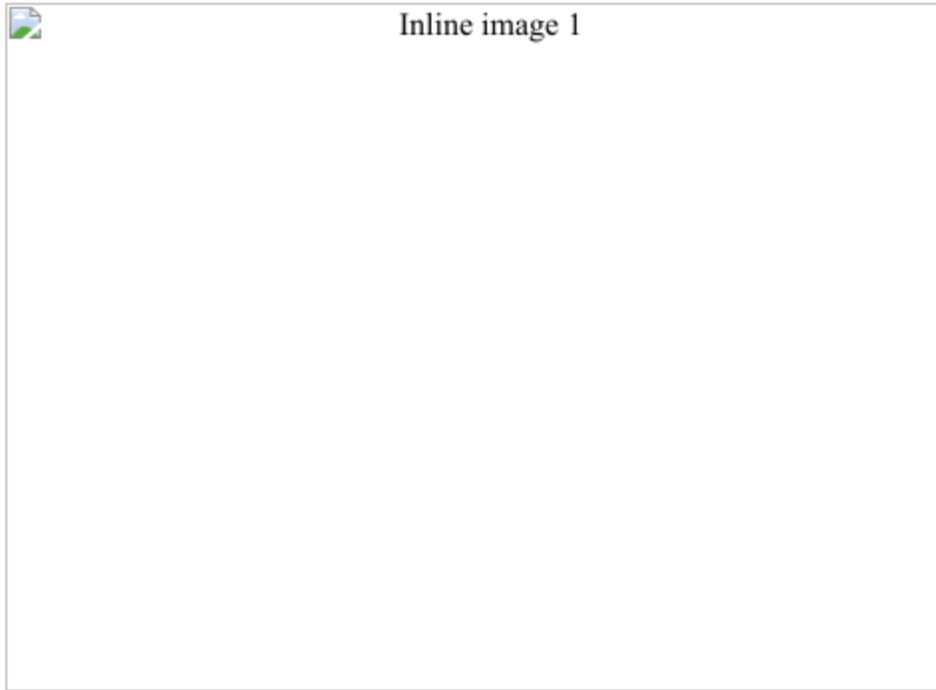
If you're purchasing your eggs from a supermarket, be aware that labels can be very deceptive. The definitions of "*free-range*" are such that the commercial egg industry can run industrial farm egg-laying facilities and still call them "*free-range*" eggs, despite the fact that the birds' foraging conditions are far from what you'd call natural.

The Highest-Quality Egg Yolks Are Bright Orange, Not Yellow

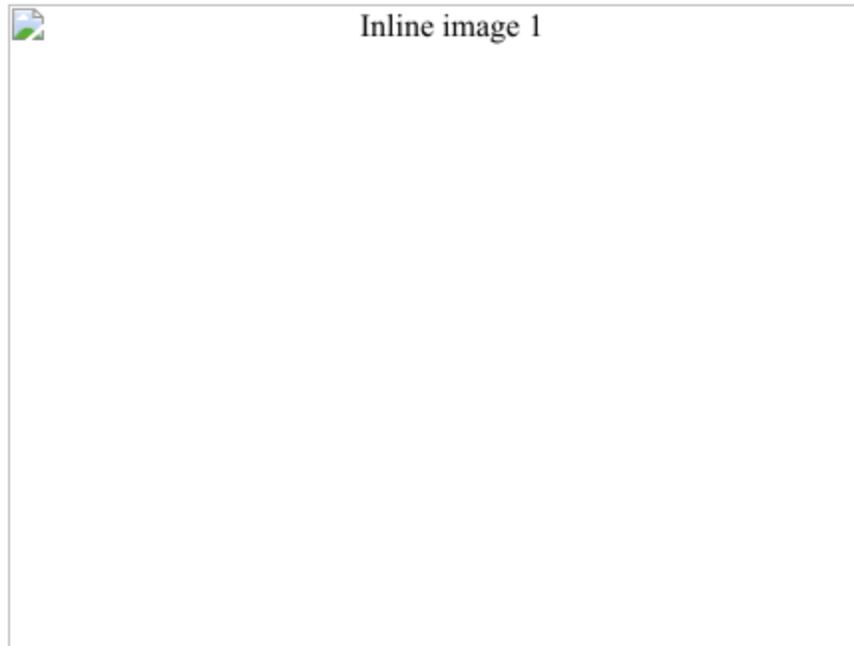
The key to finding truly free-range, pastured eggs is to buy your eggs locally. This is typically even preferable to organic eggs from the grocery store. If you live in an urban area, visiting the local health food stores is typically the quickest route to finding the high-quality local egg sources. You can tell your eggs are free range or pastured by the color of the egg yolk. Foraged hens produce eggs with bright orange yolks. Dull, pale yellow yolks are a sure sign you're getting eggs from caged hens that are not allowed to forage for their natural diet. So in answer to the question, "*Are egg yolks good or bad?*"—the answer is a resounding good.

By Dr. Mercola – February 29, 2016

THIS WEEK'S QUOTE



THIS IS BEYOND WONDERFUL



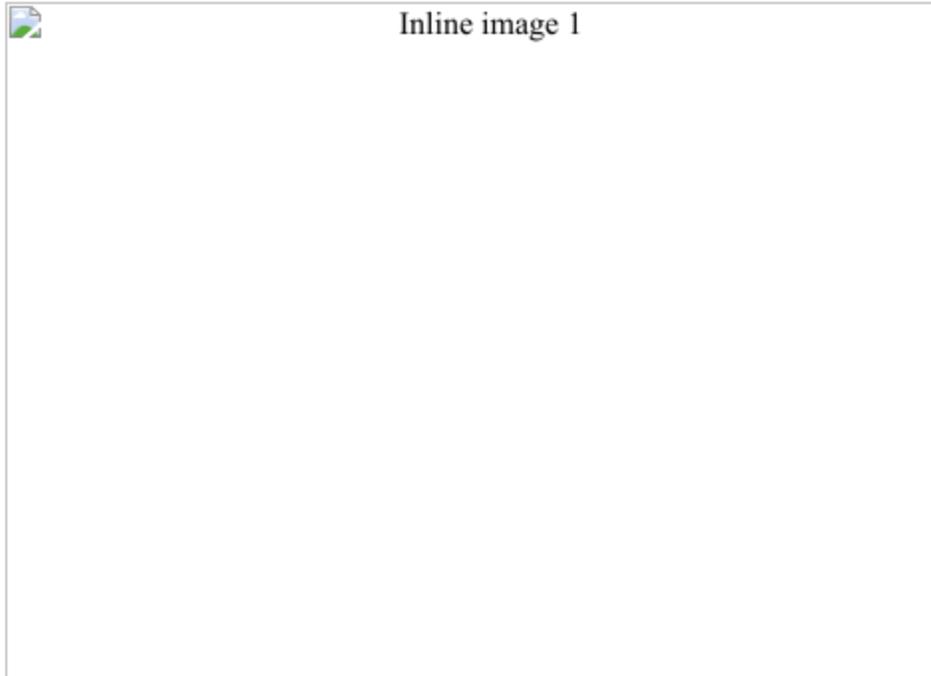
Web Link: <https://www.facebook.com/Abiyamo/videos/502386453205276/>

For Those Who Do Not Know How Great Michael Jackson Was, *Enjoy.... Enjoy....
Enjoy....*

THINK ABOUT THIS

Be grateful for what you have!

Web Link: <https://www.facebook.com/brightside/videos/861895883939156/>



In today's material world most of us forget how to be grateful.... Let this be a reminder.... *Enjoy....*

BEST VIDEO OF THE WEEK

2015 World Figure-8, 3 Hour Enduro Opening Laps



Inline image 1

Web Link: <https://youtu.be/wZKqhvch3mU>

I have seen some crazy stuff and this is near the top.....

THIS WEEK'S MUSIC

Merle Haggard



Inline image 1

This week you are invited to enjoy the music of one of the giant's in American Music who died this past Wednesday -- the legendary **Merle Ronald Haggard** who was born during the Great Depression in Bakersfield, California on April 6, 1937. Haggard was a singer, songwriter, guitarist, fiddler, and instrumentalist. Along with Buck Owens, Haggard and his band **the Strangers** helped create the Bakersfield sound, which is characterized by the twang of Fender Telecaster and the unique mix with the traditional country steel guitar sound, new vocal harmony styles in which the words are minimal, and a rough edge not heard on the more polished Nashville sound recordings of the same era.

Haggard's childhood was troubled after the death of his father, and he was incarcerated several times in his youth. He managed to turn his life around and launch a successful country music career, gaining popularity with his songs about the working class that occasionally contained themes contrary to the prevailing anti-Vietnam War subject matter of much popular music of the time. Between the 1960s and the 1980s, he had 38 number one hits on the US country charts, several of which also made the Billboard all-genre singles chart. During the 1970s, Haggard became aligned with the growing outlaw country movement, and he continued to release successful albums through the 1990s and into the 2000s.

Haggard's father died of a brain hemorrhage in 1945, an event that deeply affected him during his childhood, and the rest of his life. To support the family, his mother worked as a bookkeeper. His brother, Lowell, gave Haggard his used guitar as a gift when he was 12 years old. Haggard learned to play alone, with the records he had at home, influenced by Bob Wills, Lefty Frizzell and Hank Williams. As his mother was absent due to work, Haggard became progressively rebellious. His mother sent him for a weekend to a juvenile detention center to change his attitude, which worsened.

Haggard committed a number of minor offenses, such as thefts and writing bad checks. He was sent to a juvenile detention center for shoplifting in 1950. When he was 14, Haggard ran away to Texas with his friend Bob Teague. He rode freight trains and hitchhiked throughout the state. When he returned the same year, he and his friend were arrested for robbery. Haggard and Teague were released when the real robbers were found. Haggard was later sent to the juvenile detention center, from which he and his friend escaped again to Modesto, California. He worked a series of laborer jobs, including driving a potato truck, being a short order cook, a hay pitcher, and an oil well shooter.

His debut performance was with Teague in a Modesto bar named "Fun Center", being paid US\$5, with free beer. He returned to Bakersfield in 1951, and was again arrested for truancy and petty larceny and sent to a juvenile detention center. After another escape, he was sent to the Preston School of Industry, a high-security installation. He was released 15 months later, but was sent back after beating a local boy during a burglary attempt. After his release, Haggard and Teague saw Lefty Frizzell in concert. After hearing Haggard sing along to his songs backstage, Frizzell refused to sing unless Haggard would be allowed to sing first. He sang songs that were well received by the audience. Due to the positive reception, Haggard decided to pursue a career in music. While working as a farmhand or in oil fields, he played in nightclubs. He eventually landed a spot on the local television show *Chuck Wagon*, in 1956.

Married and plagued by financial issues, he was arrested in 1957 shortly after he tried to rob a Bakersfield roadhouse. He was sent to Bakersfield Jail, and was transferred after an escape attempt to San Quentin Prison on February 21, 1958. While in prison, Haggard discovered that his wife was expecting a child from another man, which pressed him psychologically. He was fired from a series of

prison jobs, and planned to escape along with another inmate nicknamed "*Rabbit*". Haggard was convinced not to escape by fellow inmates. Haggard started to run a gambling and brewing racket with his cellmate. After he was caught drunk, he was sent for a week to solitary confinement where he encountered Caryl Chessman, an author and death row inmate. Meanwhile, "*Rabbit*" had successfully escaped, only to shoot a police officer and return to San Quentin for execution.

Chessman's predicament, along with the execution of "*Rabbit*", inspired Haggard to turn his life around. Haggard soon earned a high school equivalency diploma and kept a steady job in the prison's textile plant, while also playing for the prison's country music band, attributing a 1958 performance by Johnny Cash at the prison as his main inspiration to join it. He was released from San Quentin on parole in 1960. In 1972, after Haggard had become an established country music star, then-California Governor Ronald Reagan granted Haggard a full and unconditional pardon for his past crimes.

During his long career, Haggard received numerous awards from the **Academy of Country Music**, **Country Music Association**, and **National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences** (*Grammy Awards*). He was inducted into the **Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame** in 1977, the **Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum** in 1994, and the Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame in 1997. In 2006, he received a **Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award**, and was also honored as a **BMI Icon at the 54th annual BMI Pop Awards** that same year. During his songwriting career up to that time, Haggard had earned **48 BMI Country Awards, nine BMI Pop Awards, a BMI R&B Award**, and **16 BMI "Million-Air"** awards, all from a catalog of songs that added up to over 25 million performances.

Haggard accepted a **Kennedy Center Honor** on December 4, 2010 from the John F. **Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts** in recognition of his lifetime achievement and "*outstanding contribution to American culture*". The following day he was honored at a gala in Washington, D.C. with musical performances by Kris Kristofferson, Willie Nelson, Sheryl Crow, Vince Gill, Jamey Johnson, Kid Rock, Miranda Lambert and Brad Paisley; this tribute was featured on the December 28, 2010 CBS telecast of the **Kennedy Center Honors**. Haggard **died on April 6, 2016** — his **79th birthday** — at his ranch in Northern California, after having recently suffered from pneumonia.

As someone who grew up in R&B music, graduated to jazz in my teens and explored Rock, Disco, Hip Hop and International Music from then on, I really didn't know and therefore hadn't appreciated the music of Merle Haggard. So during an evening of tequila shots with friends several days ago, I was challenged to cover him in my Weekend Offerings as a tribute to his passing. Like many of my generation I appreciated and enjoyed the cross-over Country hits of Johnny Cash, Charlie Daniels, Ray Charles, Willie Nelson and others, but most Country music didn't speak to me and therefore, although I knew the names of Hank William, Loretta Lynn, George Jones, George Strait, Dolly Parton and Garth Brooks they aren't on my iPod. But after researching Merle Haggard for this piece, I have grown to appreciate that he is one of the greats in American Music and I hope that you agree..... So with this said, you are again invited to enjoy the music of an American Music Giant.... ***The legendary Mr. Merle Haggard....***

Merle Haggard — ***Okie From Muskogee*** -- <https://youtu.be/-iYY2FQHFwE>

Merle Haggard — ***Are The Good Times Really Over*** -- <https://youtu.be/eFHJ41ktt3Q>

Merle Haggard – ***I think I'll Just Stay Here and Drink*** -- <https://youtu.be/kmbOqORivWM>

Merle Haggard – ***Mama Tried*** -- https://youtu.be/loT_pYzi3Vw

Merle Haggard – ***That's the way loves goes*** -- <https://youtu.be/MVRIeIAJn0>

Merle Haggard – ***Silver Wings*** -- <https://youtu.be/w99UIu9N44w>

Merle Haggard – ***Twinkle Twinkle Lucky Star*** -- <https://youtu.be/AfGqJzacgQU>

Merle Haggard – ***Listening To The Wind*** -- <https://youtu.be/WWJNqLY9bzM>

Merle Haggard – ***Where Did America Go*** -- <https://youtu.be/DgFIX3qUkU4>

Merle Haggard – ***Working Man Blues*** -- <https://youtu.be/fbEstJ98TcM>

Merle Haggard – ***Misery And Gin*** -- <https://youtu.be/yNTWW1y1x0M>

Merle Haggard – ***Today I Started Loving You Again*** -- https://youtu.be/aILGaYsv_bc

Merle Haggard – ***I'm A White Boy*** -- <https://youtu.be/epnqisvSCwo>

Merle Haggard – ***Sing Me back Home*** -- https://youtu.be/KDDyyDjWM_0

Merle Haggard – ***Branded Man*** -- <https://youtu.be/W-ER-yo1V3s>

Merle Haggard – ***The Fightin' Side Of Me*** -- <https://youtu.be/ZHAFmFsb9XM>

Willie Nelson & Merle Haggard – ***It's All Going to Pot*** -- <https://youtu.be/tuMDG5RvdXs>

Willie Nelson and Merle Haggard – ***Pancho and Lefty*** -- <https://youtu.be/iloyrVt7EM>

Merle Haggard & George Jones – ***The Way I Am*** -- <https://youtu.be/kxnDEd3vln0>

Merle Haggard & George Jones – ***Must've Been Drunk*** -- <https://youtu.be/FDKw4VbRBhQ>

Kennedy Center Honors Merle Haggard Dec 28,2010 -- <https://youtu.be/MJKx-qR3qkM>

BONUS

Merle Haggard & Marty Robbins – ***Merle Sings Marty*** -- <https://youtu.be/Ng5bPhCHAI8>

Merle Haggard – impersonations of Marty Robbins, Hank Snow, Johnny Cash & Buck Owens -- https://youtu.be/_ipNJGwA1kM

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

Sincerely,

Greg Brown

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Gregory Brown
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