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Subject: Greg Brown's Weekend Reading and Other Things.. 2/28/2016

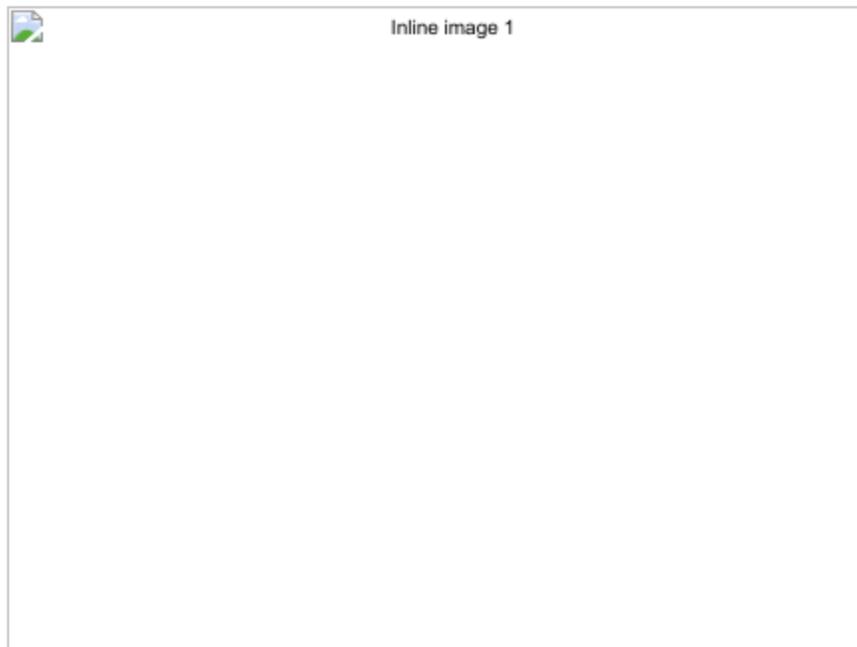
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DEAR FRIEND.....

The New Normal of Dirty Tricks



Dirty tricks are unethical, duplicitous, slanderous or illegal tactics employed to destroy or diminish the effectiveness of political or business opponents. The term "*dirty trick*" can also be used to refer to an underhanded technique to get ahead of an opponent (*such as sabotage or disregarding rules of engagement*). In politics the leaking secret information, digging into a candidate's past (*opposition research*) or exposing real conflicts between the image presented and the person behind the image are always subject to argument as to whether they are dirty tricks or truth-telling. When a candidate runs into trouble or roadblocks in his or her campaign that are traceable to the other side, he/she can easily charge their opponent with dirty tricks. Often, the candidate is right in this accusation, but one candidate's "*dirty trick*" is another's "*political strategy*". The distinction changes with the times. Of

course imputing the discovery of a past misdemeanor to the other side can be considered a "dirty trick" in its own right.

However, manufactured, irrelevant, cruel and incorrect rumors or outright lies or falsehoods designed to damage or destroy an opponent are easily described as dirty tricks. They serve to tie up the opponent into defending against and answering false charges rather than explaining their policies and platform.

Sometimes dirty tricks are not only aimed at slandering the opponent. Dishing the dirt against your candidate's opponent can be effective at alienating voters in order to turn them off from the entire project. These tactics may reduce turnout in order to assure your candidate gains by having his/her core voters show up at the polls; thus, an operative molds the outcome by angering everyone. The effort to lower an official's or a candidate's popularity in the polls is called "*driving the negatives*".

Political speech is protected by the Constitution of the United States and it is rare that a wronged candidate sues for slander after an election season is concluded. Laws were introduced in the UK to prevent untrue statements being made about candidates—see Miranda Grell for a 2007 case. Political candidates have been accused by their opponents of virtually every sin and crime ever described, from graft and vice to bribery and communism, polygamy, drug use, spousal abuse, fascism, pedophilia, miscegenation, adultery, stupidity, demagoguery, and support for nudism.

The story of dirty tricks in American politics begins with the first campaign for President of the United States, in the 1790s. Thomas Jefferson hired journalist and pamphleteer James Thomas Callender to slander his opponent, Alexander Hamilton. After a falling out, Callender turned on Jefferson and published attacks on his previous employer.

But in modern history the term Dirty Tricks is synonymous with the Watergate-gate when the Nixon Committee for the Re-Election of the President (*CRP, often mocked as CREEP*), a private, non-governmental campaign entity, used funds from its coffers to pay for, and later cover up, dirty tricks performed against opponents by Richard Nixon's employee, Donald Segretti. Segretti famously coined the term '*ratfucking*' for recruiting conservative members to infiltrate opposition groups (and/or misrepresent them through false flag activities) in order to undermine the effectiveness of such opposition. As a result of post-Watergate reform legislation, such activities are strictly regulated, though other private entities still may practice what has become commonly referred to as questionable or unethical dirty tricks.

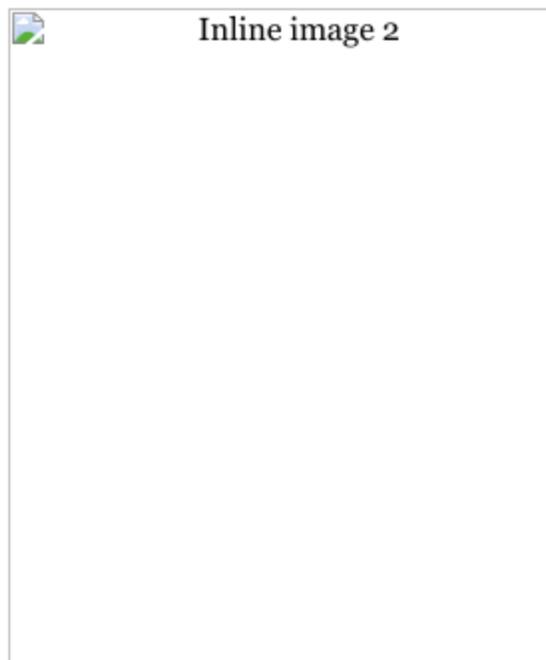
In the United Kingdom the term "*dirty tricks*" became, for a while, synonymous with the British Airways campaign against rival Virgin Atlantic and the wider business interest of the airline's chairman Richard Branson. British Airways, faced with likely defeat, apologized "*unreservedly*" in court and settled the case, giving £500,000 to Branson and a further £110,000 to his airline; further, BA was to pay the legal fees of up to £3 million. Branson divided his compensation among his staff, calling it the "*BA bonus*".

And the new normal of Dirty Tricks surface again in this year's primaries when supporters of Ted Cruz called likely Republican voters in Iowa the day before the 2016 Presidential caucuses telling them that candidate Ben Carson was "*suspending his campaign*" and urge them to switch their votes to candidate Senator Cruz. Carson's disappointing fourth-place showing and Cruz's first-place win, led to both Ben Carson, Donald Trump and their supporters issuing angry responses.

But the new normal now includes the subterfuge of supporting weak candidates in the other party and spreading disinformation against strong candidates in the other party, to improve your candidates' chances later in the general election. An example of this was a Twitter post that included an image from "*The Simpsons*" showing Homer and his family basking in mountains of cash in their living room, followed by a report on Hillary Rodham Clinton's appearing at a fundraiser with a lobbyist from the Keystone fight. "*You expect different from a Clinton?*" one person responded on Twitter.

And from another: "*Did you need another reason not to vote for Hillary Clinton?*" Lost in the response was the source of the offending tweet.

It was not another environmental organization or even a liberal challenger to Mrs. Clinton. Instead, it was a conservative group called **America Rising PAC**, which is trying, with laser like focus, to weaken the woman who almost everyone believes will be the Democratic Party's candidate for president in 2016.



For months now, America Rising has sent out a steady stream of posts on social media attacking Mrs. Clinton, some of them specifically designed to be spotted, and shared, by liberals. The posts highlight critiques of her connections to Wall Street and the Clinton Foundation and feature images of Democrats like Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and Mayor Bill de Blasio of New York, interspersed with cartoon characters and pictures of Kevin Spacey, who plays the villain in "*House of Cards*." And as they are read and shared, an anti-Clinton narrative is reinforced.

America Rising is not the only conservative group attacking Mrs. Clinton from the left. Another is **American Crossroads**, the group started by *Karl Rove*, which has been sending out its own digital content, including one ad using a speech Ms. Warren gave at the New Populism Conference in Washington last May. *“Powerful interests have tried to capture Washington and rig the system in their favor,”* intones Ms. Warren, as images of Mrs. Clinton with foreign leaders flash by.

The new style digital campaign captures some basic facts about 21st century communication: Information travels at warp speed on social media, it is sometimes difficult to know where that information comes from, and most people like to read things with which they agree. The result, said Ken Goldstein, a professor of politics at the University of San Francisco who specializes in political advertising, is something more sophisticated. “Politics is usually basic math,” he said, “and this is a little bit of calculus, thinking a couple steps ahead.”

The tactic is making for some awkward moments online. The A.F.L.C.I.O. sent to its more than 60,000 followers an America Rising tweet praising its president, Richard L. Trumka, for a speech that was seen as challenging Mrs. Clinton on economic issues, only to take it down a few hours later, saying it was a mistake. Laura Hart Cole of Verbank, N.Y., whose father, Philip A. Hart, was a senator from Michigan and a liberal icon, was shocked to learn that she had, like Mr. McKibben, shared the meme from America Rising on Twitter. Republican groups, she said, *“have a history of sleazy tactics.”* But she added: *“I guess it’s fair. If what they’re saying is factual, then I guess it’s fair play. It’s a dirty game.”*

Conservative strategists and operatives say they are simply filling a vacuum on the far left, as well as applying the lesson they learned in 2012, when they watched in frustration as Mitt Romney was forced to expend time and resources in a protracted primary fight. By the time he secured his party’s nomination, President Obama hardly had to make the case that his opponent was a cold-hearted plutocrat; Republicans like Newt Gingrich had already made the argument for him in the primaries.

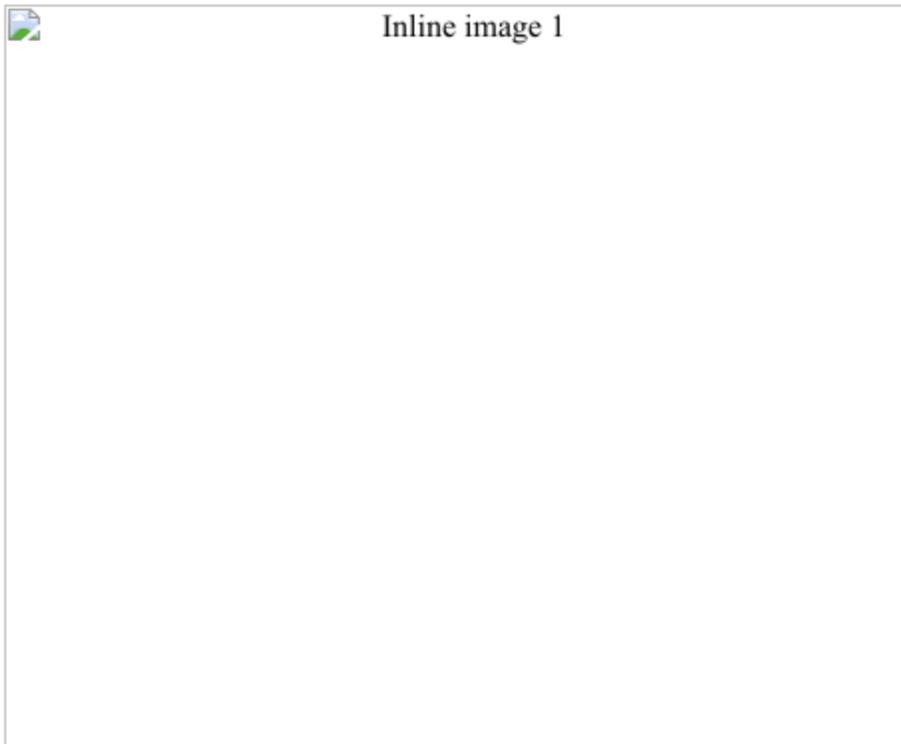
Few Republicans are more familiar with that nightmare than Matt Rhoades, who was Mr. Romney’s campaign manager. He founded America Rising in response to a recommendation contained in an autopsy of Romney’s failed presidential run that was ordered by the Republican National Committee. The group’s original goal was to compete with American Bridge, the Democratic opposition research group, but its focus under Mr. Rhoades has been to subject Mrs. Clinton to an ordeal similar to Mr. Romney’s.

“The idea is to make her life difficult in the primary and challenge her from the left,” said Colin Reed, America Rising’s executive director. “We don’t want her to enter the general election not having been pushed from the left, so if we have opportunities — creative ways, especially online — to push her from the left, we’ll do it just to show those folks who she needs to turn out that she’s not in line with them.”

No one thinks attacking Mrs. Clinton from the left is likely to turn the most liberal Democrats into Republican voters. But Steven Law, president of American Crossroads, said the goal was simply to erode what should be her natural core of support. *“It can diminish enthusiasm for Hillary among the base over time,”* he said. *“And if you diminish enthusiasm, lukewarm support can translate into lackluster fundraising and perhaps diminished turnout down the road.”*

I remember being taught in the 6th grade on how to read a newspaper, to understand the subtext of what is being written. Added to this today are criminals on every continent, who are trying everything that they can to steal our information and identities. Today, we have well financed special interest operatives whose job it is to spread disinformation, distortions and lies through innuendos, rumors and fabrications that is corrupting our political process without the public even knowing and the press saying little or nothing against his ugly practice.... And for those of you who claim that this goes with the territory of politics and thus fair game... Where I come from, fabrications and lying are neither fair nor moral. And whether you are a Republican, Democrat, Independent, Conservative or Liberal you should be angered and outraged because if you aren't, *this new normal will only get worse....*

So True



For those of you who don't believe, go to Flint, Michigan and drink the water...

Last Week Tonight with John Oliver: Voting (HBO)

Every American deserves an equal vote. But in some states, access to voting is becoming less and less equal.



Inline image 1

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

Two weeks ago was the first episode in 2016 of John Oliver's "Last Week Tonight" on HBO as he wasted no time going after Republican attempts to block access to the ballot box with restrictive voter ID laws. As Oliver put it, voting is "the cornerstone of American democracy -- the

unshakable principle that everyone should have an equal vote, even idiots... even this guy": "I know it's painful, but his vote should count as much as yours," Oliver said. While some states have made it easier for everyone to vote, others have taken a different approach.

The Republicans who back voter ID laws say they're designed to protect the integrity of the ballot, make sure people only vote once and guarantee that the person who shows up to vote is actually the person who is registered. In reality, those laws often disproportionately target minorities, who are less likely to have identification. Black voters are nearly twice as likely as whites to lack ID, and Latino voters are 2.42 times as likely to lack ID. An ID "*is just one of those things white people seem to be more likely to have, like a sunburn or an Oscar nomination,*" Oliver said.

But Oliver found that many of the same legislators who claim the law is about preventing voter fraud and impersonation don't actually follow those same rules when they vote. In some states, these lawmakers not only cast their own votes in legislative sessions, they also cast ballots on behalf of absent colleagues, a practice that's known as "*ghost votes.*" Tennessee lawmakers even have sticks to reach the voting buttons at nearby desks.

"If you are going to pervert democracy, could you at least do it with a less creepy stick?" Oliver suggested. *"That looks like what an evil leprechaun would use to beat a child."*

But the big ugly is that although dozens of Republican politicians claim the need of stronger voter ID laws to protect the integrity of the democratic process, when investigated by impartial organizations, not one case of rampant voter fraud has been discovered. The argument for new voter ID laws today, is the WMD farce in American politics, pushed by Republicans to deny the poor, minorities, students and elderly voters their right to vote and this too is an outrage that should not be tolerated. I invite you to view John Oliver's video via the above web link.

The Worst Congress Money Can Buy



As professor, historian and author Joseph A. Palermo wrote this week in The Washington Post – The Republican Senate's refusal even to consider President Obama's replacement for Antonin Scalia on the Supreme Court might finally bring into focus the level of their partisan nihilism. The congressional "*dysfunction*" trope imposes a false equivalency on the parties and thereby enables Republican obstructionism. But the Senate's blatant action not to allow the president to fill a vacancy on the high court makes their extremism more difficult to gloss over.

The Republican-controlled Congress is not "*dysfunctional*." It would "*function*" perfectly well if there were an occupant in the White House who gave the Republicans everything they wanted. With divided government they act like petulant children. Voices in the press decrying "*dysfunction*" render invisible the corporate oligarchy that has bought off the institution.

Whether attacking Planned Parenthood and women's reproductive rights, trying to privatize everything from the Veterans Administration to the U.S. Postal Service, handing over Social Security to Wall Street, selling off federal lands, obstructing everything President Obama does, or the million other hidden giveaways to banks, corporations, and the National Rifle Association -- all these actions drive home the point that we have the worst Congress money can buy.

We live in a time where the same ruling elites that have bought off the Congress are setting the parameters of our political debate. There's a stark disconnect between the people and the Congress today that is palpable, which goes a long way in explaining the extraordinary tone of this presidential election cycle.

Even in California where the labor unions are relatively strong and the politicians are relatively liberal there's still the false assumption imposed by profiteers and asset strippers that new investments in public sector institutions is a "*waste*" of tax dollars.

Since the final years of the catastrophic presidency of George W. Bush the anger has been stewing. Hillary Rodham Clinton's call for "*incremental change*" seems stuck in the 1990s and doesn't make much sense today (except in the Beltway Bubble).

Over the past seven years, President Obama has shown repeatedly that he's willing to work with the Republicans on all sorts of issues (even to the detriment of his own base) and that he was more than willing to meet them "*halfway*." But their aim was to defeat him politically; and after failing in 2012, they now want to destroy his legacy.

And what is the Republican agenda? We can see it playing out in the state of Wisconsin under Governor Scott Walker. Wisconsin under Walker is a blueprint for the kind of aggressive assault on the public sector the Republicans would love to impose on the whole country. Walker has ended the collective bargaining rights of public sector workers, slashed the budget for the University of Wisconsin, and decimated the civil service rules to give state workers about as much job security as Uber drivers.

There's no limit to the money Washington Republicans are willing to spend on crony capitalism, the military industrial complex, or in subsidies for oil, pharmaceutical, and agribusiness corporations. But when it comes to rebuilding the nation's bridges, roads, and water systems, or programs that benefit working people like paid leave, raising the minimum wage, or subsidized child care, then they start screaming about taxes, "*big government*," and budget deficits.

But even with all the partisan acrimony, when it comes to maintaining the Empire the "*dysfunction*" evaporates. Gargantuan "*defense*" bills sail through the Congress and end up on the president's desk where they're quickly signed into law. A model of legislative efficiency.

The two post-*Citizen United* midterm elections have been wipeouts for the Democrats. A few more election cycles marinated in this kind of money, along with a little more gerrymandering and voter suppression, and Karl Rove's dream of a "*permanent Republican majority*" can become our nightmare reality.

Unless Bernie Sanders can lead the political revolution he's been advocating, mobilize an angry citizenry, and put an end to this system of legalized bribery the plutocracy might become unstoppable. The time for Clinton-style incrementalism is over.

Over the past sixteen years since the flawed election that brought George W. Bush to power the only consolation prize between the terrorist attacks, wars, mass shootings, and recession was the election of the nation's first African American president. Young people have lived through these events and might be ready for a radical realignment of our politics that the pundit class simply cannot see. The young people who support the democratic socialist ideas of Bernie Sanders have little to lose in trying something new after their baby boomer parents and grandparents have so failed them.

The Chickens Have Come Home to Roost

White Supremacists Mobilize For Donald Trump



What does it mean when white supremacist groups, including white nationalist and former Ku Klux Klan Grand Wizard, David Duke, are working to mobilize racists to get out the vote for the preemptive Republican 2016 Presidential nominee, Donald Trump? On Wednesday, David Duke, encouraged his radio show listeners to volunteer for Trump's campaign. "*Call Donald Trump's headquarters and volunteer," he said on the "David Duke Radio Program."* At Trump campaign offices, he said, "*you're gonna meet people who are going to have the same kind of mindset that you have.*"

On December 4, 1963 in a speech, Malcolm X once warned America "*the chickens have come home to roost*" – is evidence that the consequences of the overt hatred against President Obama and minorities trumpeted by Trump, Nugent, talk radio, Tea Bag Movement and Republicans has led to the divisive dysfunction of our national government and the call of going back to white supremacy. And like any disease this hatred is now even being directed against candidates within the Republican Party because of their Hispanic heritage.

In Minnesota and Vermont, a white supremacist super PAC called the American National Super PAC has begun circulating a robocall in support of Trump. "*The white race is dying out in America and Europe because we are afraid to be called 'racist,'*" says William Johnson, the leader of the white nationalist American Freedom Party. He goes on to bemoan "*gradual genocide against the white race,*" and how few "*schools anymore have beautiful white children as the majority.*" He signs off by telling recipients, "***Don't vote for a Cuban. Vote for Donald Trump.***"

And yes, Johnson is not affiliated in any way with the Trump campaign, and Trump has distanced himself from Johnson's views including promising to return a \$250 contribution Johnson made to his campaign. But Trump's response to the white supremacists backing him is hardly enough to put them off, said Mark Potok, senior fellow at the Southern Poverty Law Center, a nonprofit that monitors hate groups. "Trump has 'quote unquote' repudiated these groups, but only in the most milquetoast way imaginable," Potok said in an interview. "The fact is that white nationalists are mobilizing for Trump whether he likes it or not."

Trump's habit of retweeting messages posted by white supremacists, sharing them with his 6.4 million Twitter followers, hasn't helped matters. Like Johnson, Duke framed the GOP primary as a contest between Trump and two people of color, Sens. Marco Rubio (Fla.) and Ted Cruz (Texas). *"Voting for these people, voting against Donald Trump at this point is really treason to your heritage,"* Duke said Wednesday. And while he doesn't agree with everything Trump says, he told listeners, *"I do support his candidacy, and I support voting for him as a strategic action. I hope he does everything we hope he will do."* Potok said Duke's backing carries a lot of weight in white supremacist circles. "David Duke is the most important self-described white nationalist intellectual out there today, and what he says is still very influential."

On white nationalist websites, analysts are portraying Trump's candidacy as a rebellion by white supremacists against the mainstream conservative movement. As a writer calling himself Gregory Hood recently wrote in the national Raddix Journal, *"The conservative movement is trying to keep its White serfs trapped on the conservative plantation. They know if 'Trumpian nationalism' triumphs, a more authentic form of White Identity politics can't be far behind."*

This isn't the first time white supremacists have seized on Trump's candidacy. In December, Rachel Pendergraft, the national organizer for the Knights Party, a Ku Klux Klan affiliate, said Trump's bid for the White House had opened up new ways for her group to recruit like-minded people. *"One of the things that our organization really stresses with our membership is we want them to educate themselves on issues, but we also want them to be able to learn how to open up a conversation with other people,"* said Pendergraft. Trump, she said, was a perfect conversation starter for people to begin talking about issues like immigration and demographic changes underway in America.

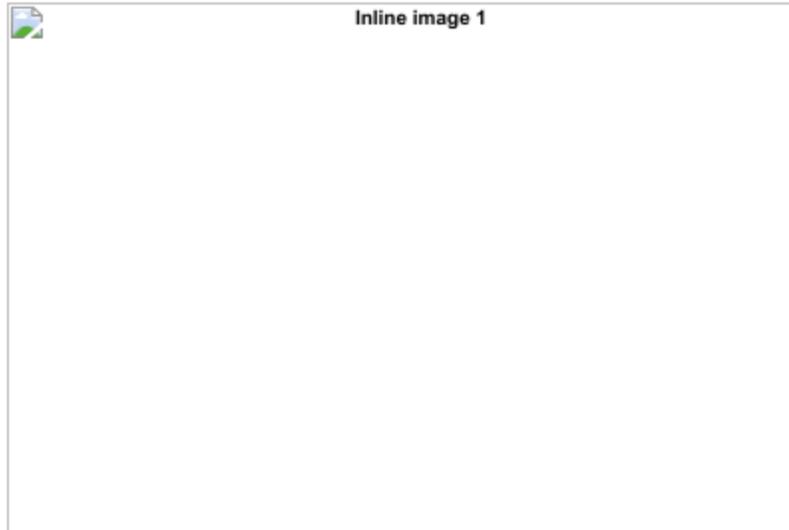
As the Republican race moved into states where Jim Crow segregation was the law of the land for more than a century, the influence of overt racism and the white nationalist movement, combined with some of Trump's rhetoric, have made it more acceptable to hold aggressively anti-immigrant and xenophobic views. *"With Trump, white supremacists understand that he's not exactly a white nationalist, like them, but they applaud his hard right positions on matters that are important to them,"* said Potok. *"From their point of view, it's almost better that he's not a full on white nationalist, because now he has a better chance at winning a major office."*

To many voters, the GOP nominating contest increasingly looks like a three-way race between two Hispanic men and a white man, leaving little doubt as to which candidate is most likely to win the pro-white vote. As a serial liar, rampant xenophobe, racist, misogynist, birther and bully who has repeatedly pledged to ban all Muslims -- 1.6 billion members of an entire religion -- from entering the U.S. and votes for Trump could be seen as endorsement of white supremacist groups, including white nationalist and the Ku Klux Klan who have proclaimed the leading GOP presidential candidate as someone representing their views and interest who repeats their messages -- and therefore, possibly the ugliest reality in this current presidential election cycle **and is my rant of the week....**

WEEK'S READINGS

I love Bernie's message but I am voting for Hillary

Here's why



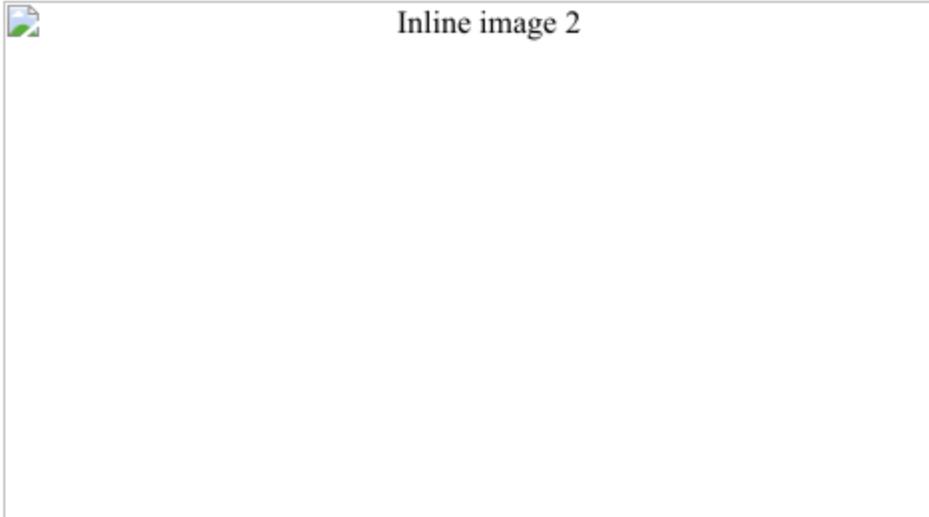
Although I will definitely be voting for Hillary Clinton, I truly believe that America owes a big debt to Bernie Sanders because in the age of worshipping wealth and celebrity Sanders single issue of combating economic inequality is one of the most important challenges that the United States faces today if it wants to prosper and continue offering the American Dream to everyone, in spite of race, religion and social standing. As a result, even though I am a supporter of Hillary Clinton, I believe that Bernie's message is too important to be ignored whomever becomes our next President.

Benjamin Studebaker recently wrote – We have a tendency in American politics to focus too much on individuals and personal narratives, especially in presidential campaigns. Who's in touch with ordinary people? Who is experienced? Who is a nice person? Who connects better with different identity groups? Who would you like to have a beer with? This is in large part because many democrats like to think of Hillary and Bernie as different flavors of the same Democratic Party popcorn. Consequently they mostly just pay attention to which candidate they feel they can more readily identify with. But Sanders and Clinton represent two very different ideologies. Each of these ideologies wants control of the Democratic Party so that this party's resources can be used to advance a different conception of what a good society looks like. This is not a matter of taste and these are not flavors of popcorn.

Bernie Sanders describes himself as a democratic socialist—he connects himself politically with Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson, with the New Deal and the Great Society. To understand what that means, we need to know the history of this ideology. Under Calvin Coolidge's right wing economic policy in the 1920's, economic inequality in the United States spiked:



Inline image 2



The left in the 1930's understood rising inequality as the core cause of the Great Depression. Because wealth was concentrating in the hands of the top 1%, the amount of investment steadily increased while the amount of consumption stagnated. Whenever there is too little consumption to support the level of investment in the economy, investors struggle to find profitable places to invest their money. Investment is usually a positive thing—it helps businesses increase their production and create jobs. But with consumption weak, businesses have little reason to increase their production, because no one will buy the additional goods and services provided. So instead, businesses that receive investment tend to reinvest that money rather than use it to grow. That investment circulates through the financial system and accumulates in speculative bubbles—places like the stock market, housing market, commodities market, or various foreign markets. These assets become massively overvalued until one day, the markets recognize the overvaluation. The assets collapse in value and the bubble bursts. People relying on these assets to pay off other debts get into serious trouble, and a contagion can spread throughout the economy with horrifying consequences.

As you can see in the chart, between the 1930's and the 1970's, the United States drastically reduced economic inequality. It redistributed wealth from the top to the middle and the bottom, resulting in consistent wage increases and consequently consistent consumption increases. This allowed investment to be put to effective use—because the bottom and the middle were rising, they were able to support the additional spending that business owners needed to successfully expand. This was accomplished through a series of policies that if they were proposed today, would strike most Americans as socialist—Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, welfare, strong union rights, high minimum wages, high marginal tax rates on the wealthy (*with a 90% top rate under Eisenhower*), and strong enforcement of financial regulations and anti-trust laws.

Democratic presidential candidates that can be associated with this ideological tradition include Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Adlai Stevenson, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Hubert Humphrey, and George McGovern. That's it. Starting with Jimmy Carter in 1976, the Democratic Party became something different, something that was no longer ideologically continuous with this. Even the Republican Party to a large degree acknowledged the need for these policies during this period—Eisenhower and Nixon supported and even extended parts of this system that kept investment and consumption in balance.

But what happened in the 1970's in detail elsewhere – the short version is that in the 70's there were two oil shocks, in which the price of oil went up very rapidly (the OPEC embargo in the early 70's and the Iranian Revolution at the end of the decade). Rising oil prices created stagflation, because they

drastically increased the price of goods over a very short span of time. This reduced consumption, damaging economic growth, while simultaneously leading governments to increase wages in an attempt to prevent workers from rapidly losing purchasing power, creating inflation. To solve this problem, governments needed to stabilize oil prices or reduce dependency on foreign oil. They also could have allowed real wages to fall temporarily until that was accomplished (in tandem with a strong social safety net to protect those at the bottom of the wage scale).

Instead what happened is that the right co-opted the oil crisis to claim that the entire project of balancing investment with consumption was fundamentally mistaken, that the problem was that there was not enough investment and too much consumption. The right embarks on a political platform of reducing union power, reducing the real value of the minimum wage, cutting welfare spending, reducing taxes on the wealthy, and deregulating the financial sector. Inequality, which in the US bottomed out in 1978, began rising rapidly and during the new millennium has frequently approached depression-era levels, having the same harmful effects on consumption that it had in the early 20th century and creating the same endemic risk of bubbles and financial crises.

Many people think that it is the Republican Party alone that is responsible for this, but beginning in 1976 with Jimmy Carter, the Democratic Party was captured by this same ideology, which in academic circles is often referred to as neo-liberalism. It is now largely forgotten that it was Carter, not Reagan, who began deregulating the market. Indeed, during the 1976 democratic primary, there was an ABC movement – *Anybody But Carter*. Democrats who remained committed to the party's egalitarian ideology rightly feared that Carter was too right wing and would effectively strip the party of its historical commitment to the continuation and expansion of the legacy of FDR and LBJ. However, they ran too many candidates against Carter, splitting the left vote and allowing Carter to win the nomination.

Bill Clinton took the party even further to the right. In 1992 he ran on the promise to “*end welfare as we know it*”, a total repudiation of the FDR/LBJ legacy. With the help of republicans, Clinton was eventually successful in drastically cutting the welfare program. Clinton also signed important deregulatory bills into law, like the Commodities Futures Modernization Act and the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act. Most economists blame one or both of these pieces of legislation with directly facilitating the housing crisis in 2008 (*there is a robust debate about which one is more important, with economists like Paul Krugman leaning toward CFMA as the more important one while Robert Reich argues GLBA*). Hillary Clinton supported these measures during the 1990's and has in some cases continued to voice support for them. Bill signed all of this legislation into law. Bernie Sanders was against welfare reform and GLBA at the time (he voted for CFMA—it was snuck into an 11,000 page omnibus spending bill at the last minute).

The 2008 primary between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama is sometimes billed as if it were a contest between two ideologies, but the most prominent difference between them was the vote on the Iraq War. On economic policy, there never was a substantive difference. The major economic legislation passed under Obama (*Dodd-Frank and the Affordable Care Act*) did not address the structural inequality problem that the Democratic Party of the 30's, 40's, 50's, 60's and early 70's existed to confront.

Wealth inequality, which decreased under FDR, Truman, JFK, and LBJ, increased under Carter, Clinton, and Obama:



Inline image 3

On economic policy, contemporary establishment democrats have more in common with contemporary republicans than they do with the FDR/LBJ democrats. Carter and Clinton took the party away from economic progressives. The Democratic Party, which was once the party that saw economic inequality and poverty as the core causes of economic instability, now sees inequality and poverty as largely irrelevant. Instead of eliminating inequality and poverty to fuel the capitalist system and produce strong economic growth, establishment democrats now largely agree with establishment republicans that the problem is a lack of support for business investment.

So Bernie Sanders is not merely running to attempt to implement a set of idealistic policies that a republican-controlled congress is likely to block. He is running to take the Democratic Party back from an establishment that ignores the fundamental systemic economic problems that lead to wage stagnation and economic crisis. Those who say that the Democratic Party cannot be reclaimed by the FDR/LBJ types or that if it is reclaimed it will flounder in elections against the GOP are thinking too small.

In the 1968 and 1976 republican primaries, this guy called Ronald Reagan was running to take the Republican Party back from the Richard Nixon types who went along with the democrats on welfare and regulation in a bid to return the republicans to their 1920's Calvin Coolidge roots. At the time, Reagan's plan was considered madcap – everyone in the 60's and 70's knew that hard right Coolidge style economics leads to depression and crisis. But the stagflation in the 70's created an opportunity for Reagan to convince republicans and eventually the country as a whole to fully embrace a totally different ideology that was much closer to Coolidge's politics than it was Eisenhower's or Nixon's. In the years since 2008, many Americans, in particular young people, are willing to consider the possibility that neoliberalism—the economic ideology espoused by both the post-Reagan republicans and the post-Carter Clinton-era democrats – is fundamentally flawed and must be revised or potentially replaced entirely.

This can only happen if democrats recognize that Bernie Sanders is not just a slightly more left-wing fellow traveler of Clinton's. This is not a contest to see who will lead the democrats, it's a contest to see what kind of party the democrats are going to be in the coming decades, what ideology and what interests, causes, and issues the Democratic Party will prioritize. This makes it far more important than any other recent primary election. The last time a democratic primary was this important, it was 1976. Only this time, instead of *Anybody But Carter or Anybody But Clinton*, the left has Bernie

Sanders—one representative candidate that it is really excited about. The chance may not come again for quite some time.

I agree with Studebaker that Hillary Clinton is a neo-liberal building on the legacy of Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton. But unlike Studebaker, I believe that Hillary Clinton does understand the pivotal role inequality plays in creating economic crisis and reducing economic growth, and like most liberals she didn't think that basing a political campaign on economic inequality was not a winning proposition. Even Senator Barack Obama's message of Hope and Change in 2008 didn't believe that economic inequality was a strong enough issue to base his 2008 campaign on.

I am sure that she understands that inequality is the core structural factor in economic crisis and that growth in real wages and incomes is required for robust, sustainable economic growth. And it does matter which one is more experienced, or which one's policies are more likely to pass congress, or which one is more likely to win a general election, or which one is a man and which one is a woman. This is not about just this election, or just the next four years. This is about who will be the stronger candidate especially in light of the current vacancy in the U.S. Supreme Court. This is not about ideological paradigms or the choice between flavors of popcorn. Yes, Bernie Sanders' message is probably the issue in politics today but electability is more important than message because if you don't win the election, your message won't ever be implemented. As such, I support Hillary Clinton because it is highly unlikely that a Democratic Socialist is electable in the United States although in 2008 I was wrong about the chances of a first-term senator named Barrack Hussein Obama....

Also, like Progressive economist Paul Krugman, I believe that Bernie's promises, no different from Reagan's tax cuts require voodoo economics, because his logic behind expanding the social safety net which I would love to see without coming clean to the cost, requires fuzzy math and no different from the fuzzy math from supply-siders on the right.

The Death of the Republican Party

(And I truly hope that this doesn't happen)



Inline image 1

I'm writing to you today to announce the death of the Republican Party. It is no longer a living, vital, animate organization.

It died in 2016. RIP.

It has been replaced by warring tribes:

Evangelicals opposed to abortion, gay marriage, and science.

Libertarians opposed to any government constraint on private behavior.

Market fundamentalists convinced the "free market" can do no wrong.

Corporate and Wall Street titans seeking bailouts, subsidies, special tax loopholes, and other forms of crony capitalism.

Billionaires craving even more of the nation's wealth than they already own.

And white working-class *Trumpoids* who love Donald and are becoming convinced the greatest threats to their well-being are Muslims, blacks, and Mexicans.

Each of these tribes has its own separate political organization, its own distinct sources of campaign funding, its own unique ideology – and its own candidate.

What's left is a lifeless shell called the Republican Party. But the Grand Old Party inside the shell is no more.

I, for one, regret its passing. Our nation needs political parties to connect up different groups of Americans, sift through prospective candidates, deliberate over priorities, identify common principles, and forge a platform.

The Republican Party used to do these things. Sometimes it did them easily, as when it came together behind William McKinley and Teddy Roosevelt in 1900, Calvin Coolidge in 1924, and Ronald Reagan in 1980.

Sometimes it did them with difficulty, as when it strained to choose Abraham Lincoln in 1860, Barry Goldwater in 1964, and Mitt Romney in 2012.

But there was always enough of a Republican Party to do these important tasks - to span the divides, give force and expression to a set of core beliefs, and come up with a candidate around whom Party regulars could enthusiastically rally.

No longer. And that's a huge problem for the rest of us.

Without a Republican Party, nothing stands between us and a veritable Star Wars barroom of self-proclaimed wanna-be's.

Without a Party, anyone runs who's able to raise (*or already possesses*) the requisite money – even if he happens to be a pathological narcissist who has never before held public office, even if he's a knave detested by all his Republican colleagues.

Without a Republican Party, it's just us and them. And one of them could even become the next President of the United States.

Robert Reich – Huffington Post – 02/15/2016

Have we been wrong about the benefits of Vitamin D?

Has the sun gone down on Vitamin D?



Inline image 1

Everyone loves D, the sunshine vitamin. Doctors, patients and the media have been enamored with vitamin D supplements for decades. As well as their clear benefit in curing severe vitamin D deficiencies, endless headlines hail their magical ability to reduce a vast range of conditions from dementia to cancer.

Medical specialists such as myself have been promoting supplements to our patients with osteoporosis and other bone problems for decades. Many food products contain artificially added vitamin D with the aim of preventing fractures and falls and improving muscle strength although the vitamin also has been claimed to boost the immune system and reduce ageing. I used to sometimes take vitamin D myself and recommended it to my family to survive sun-starved winters.

However, a new paper on the risks that vitamin D may pose finally has convinced me that I was wrong. My view on vitamin supplements and the multi-billion dollar industry behind them altered radically after I began researching my book, *The Diet Myth*, in 2013. The industry and its PR is supported by celebrities who reportedly have high-dose vitamins drip fed into their veins, and around 50% of Americans and Britons take them regularly. But surprisingly, there is a lack of evidence to support the health benefit claims of virtually all vitamin supplements on the market.

One study based on the large SELECT trial suggested that supplements such as vitamin E and selenium actually increased prostate cancer in some men. And last year massive analyses combining 27 studies on half a million people concluded that taking vitamin and mineral supplements regularly failed to prevent cancer or heart disease. Not only are they a waste of money for the majority of us – but if taken in excessive quantities they can actually hasten an early death, increasing your risk of heart disease and cancer.

Virtually no vitamins or supplements have actually been shown to have any benefit in proper randomized trials in normal people without severe deficiencies. Rare exceptions have been lutein nutrients for macular degeneration, a common cause of blindness – and vitamin D, the golden boy of vitamins.

Since the 1980s, researchers (including myself) have written thousands of papers, associating a lack of our favorite vitamin with over 137 diseases. A 2014 BMJ report, however, found these links mainly to be spurious.

Won't do you any harm?

Our genetic makeup influences vitamin D levels. We can use this information to tell if naturally low vitamin D levels might actually increase the risk of disease (rather than be a consequence of it). The evidence so far suggests (with the possible exception of multiple sclerosis and some cancers) that low vitamin D levels are either irrelevant or merely a marker of the disease.

Until now we haven't worried about giving people extra vitamin D because we thought "it might help anyway and of course (as it's a vitamin) doesn't do you any harm". With our increasing knowledge, we should now know better. Recent studies in the last five years have suggested that even calcium supplements as well as being ineffective in preventing fracture can increase the risk of heart disease.

While several studies in normal people failed to find any protective effects from vitamin D, others have been more worrying. One 2015 randomized study of 409 elderly people in Finland suggested that vitamin D failed to offer any benefits compared to placebo or exercise – and that fracture rates were, in fact, slightly higher.

The usual prescribed dose in most countries is 800 to 1,000 units per day (so 24,000-30,000 units per month). However, two randomized trials found that at around 40,000 to 60,000 units per month Vitamin D effectively became a dangerous substance.

One study involving over 2,000 elderly Australians, which was largely ignored at the time, and the one just published found that patients given high doses of vitamin D or those on lower doses that increased vitamin D blood levels within the optimal range (as defined by bone specialists) had a 20-30% increased rate of fractures and falls compared to those on low doses or who failed to reach "optimal blood levels".

Tim Spector – The Independent – January 7, 2016

Nature's Delicious Answer to Help Men do the Wild Ting

Men who eat these foods and exercise are less likely to experience Erectile Dysfunction



Inline image 1

Eating foods that are rich in certain flavonoids has been associated with a reduced risk of erectile dysfunction in men, especially those under 70, according to research from **Harvard University** and the University of East Anglia published today in **The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition**. Of the different flavonoids, anthocyanins (*found in blueberries, cherries, blackberries, radishes and blackcurrant*), and flavanones and flavones (*found in citrus fruits*) were found to offer the greatest benefits in preventing the condition, according to a new release on the study.

According to the **Cleveland Clinic**, as many as 52 percent of all men experience occasional erectile dysfunction. That number jumps to 70 percent of men over the age of 70. Men who take certain medications, have diabetes and/or heart disease are at a higher risk. Exercise has also been known to reduce ED risk, and this new study found that combining exercise with flavonoid-rich foods could decrease the risk of developing erectile dysfunction by 21 percent.

Lead researcher Professor Aedin Cassidy from UEA was quoted in a press release saying, "*We already knew that intake of certain foods high in flavonoids may reduce the risk of conditions including diabetes and cardiovascular disease. This is the first study to look at the association between flavonoids and erectile dysfunction, which affects up to half of all middle-aged and older men.*" Even today, there are still a lot of myths surrounding erectile dysfunction. Not only is it more common than people realize, but it also could suggest a serious underlying medical issue. Therefore, it's an issue that should be checked by a doctor.

The new study involved more than 50,000 middle-aged men. The researchers took into account a range of factors including weight, level of physical activity, the amount of caffeine consumed, and whether the participants smoked. The research was also restricted to men in good health.

More than one-third of the men reported suffering new onset erectile dysfunction. But those who consumed a diet rich in anthocyanins, flavones and flavanones were less likely to suffer the condition. The top sources of anthocyanins, flavones and flavanones are strawberries, blueberries, red wine, apples, pears, and citrus products.

As someone who is definitely under 70 and eats blueberries, strawberries, blackberries and other citrus fruits on a dail basis I hope that the study is accurate. But for those of you who don't eat these fruits on a regular basis what are you waiting for? Because somewhere there is a farmers' market that is open today or if not, sometime this week...

THIS WEEK'S QUOTE



THIS IS BRILLIANT



Web Link: <https://www.facebook.com/amine.sela/videos/10203517248725779/>

And don't ask me how he does it... but it's great.....

THINK ABOUT THIS



Inline image 1

BEST VIDEO OF THE WEEK

Trump Meets the Honeymooners



Inline image 1

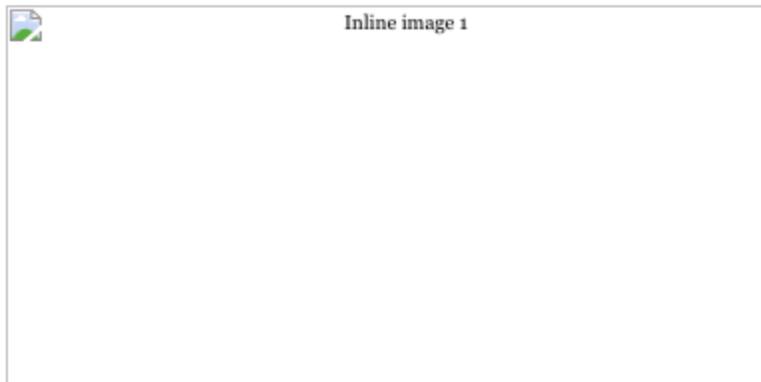
Although fellow New Yorker, Alice might have been nice to Donald Trump's bravo Ralph Kramden would have definitely called him on his BULLS#%T....

Web link: <https://www.facebook.com/oz.scott/posts/10208844015802586>

Totally Hilarious... enjoy....

THIS WEEK'S MUSIC

Miss Sassy – *The Divine One* – Ms. Sarah Vaughan



This week you are invited to enjoy the wonderful music of Ms. **Sarah Lois Vaughan**, (March 27, 1924 – April 3, 1990), an American jazz singer, described by music critic Scott Yanow as having "*one of the most wondrous voices of the 20th century.*" Possessed with one of the most wondrous voices of the 20th century and nicknamed "**Sassy**" and "**The Divine One**", Sarah Vaughan ranks with Ella Fitzgerald and Billie Holiday in the very top echelon of female jazz singers. She often gave the impression that with her wide range, perfectly controlled vibrato, and wide expressive abilities, she could do anything she wanted with her voice.

Born in Newark, NJ, Vaughan sang in church as a child and had extensive piano lessons from 1931-39; she developed into a capable keyboardist. After she won an amateur contest at the **Apollo Theater**, she was hired for the Earl Hines big band as a singer and second vocalist. When lifelong friend Billy Eckstine broke away to form his own orchestra, Vaughan joined him, making her recording debut. She loved being with Eckstine's orchestra, where she became influenced by a couple of his sidemen, Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, both of whom had also been with Hines during her stint. Vaughan was one of the first singers to fully incorporate bop phrasing in her singing, and to have the vocal chops to pull it off on the level of a Parker and Gillespie.

Other than a few months with John Kirby from 1945-46, Sarah Vaughan spent the remainder of her career as a solo star. Although she looked a bit awkward in 1945 (her first husband George Treadwell would greatly assist her with her appearance), there was no denying her incredible voice. She made several early sessions for Continental: a December 31, 1944 date highlighted by her vocal version of "A Night in Tunisia," which was called "Interlude," and a May 25, 1945 session for that label that had Gillespie and Parker as sidemen. However, it was her 1946-48 selections for Musicraft (which included "If You Could See Me Now," "Tenderly" and "It's Magic") that found her rapidly gaining maturity and adding bop-oriented phrasing to popular songs. Signed to Columbia where she recorded during 1949-53, "Sassy" continued to build on her popularity. Although some of those sessions were quite commercial, eight classic selections cut with Jimmy Jones' band during May 18-19, 1950 (an octet including Miles Davis) showed that she could sing jazz with the best.

During the 1950s, Vaughan recorded middle-of-the-road pop material with orchestras for Mercury, and jazz dates (including Sarah Vaughan, a memorable collaboration with Clifford Brown) for the label's subsidiary, EmArcy. Later record label associations included Roulette (1960-64), back with Mercury (1963-67), and after a surprising four years off records, Mainstream (1971-74). Through the years, Vaughan's voice deepened a bit, but never lost its power, flexibility or range. She was a masterful scat singer and was able to out-swing nearly everyone (except for Ella). Vaughan was with Norman Granz's Pablo label from 1977-82, and only during her last few years did her recording career falter a bit, with only two forgettable efforts after 1982.

In her later years her voice was described as a "burnished contralto" and as her voice deepened with age her lower register was described as having "shades from a gruff baritone into a rich, juicy contralto". Her use of her contralto register was likened to "dipping into a deep, mysterious well to scoop up a trove of buried riches." Musicologist Henry Pleasants noted that "Vaughan who sings easily down to a contralto low D, ascends to a pure and accurate [soprano] high C." And up until near the end, Vaughan remained a world traveler, singing and partying into all hours of the night with her miraculous voice staying in prime form. **With this... you are again invited to enjoy the music of "one of the best that ever was" – Miss Sassy herself, the incomparable Sarah Vaughn.**

Sarah Vaughn – **Misty** -- <https://www.facebook.com/linda.kennedy.372661/posts/10204131635009770>
and <https://youtu.be/yJ-9IBZaydQ>

Sarah Vaughan – **Over the Rainbow** -- <https://youtu.be/389fPqjTi9M>

Sarah Vaughan – **Send in the Clowns** -- <https://youtu.be/6Sy-5AEXW5g>

Sarah Vaughan – **Summertime** -- <https://youtu.be/mmfX0rE6CQ>

Sarah Vaughan – **Alfie** -- <https://youtu.be/iFEPiAakTHM>

Sarah Vaughan – **Tenderly** -- https://youtu.be/qNi6M_A9AzU

Sarah Vaughan – **Gershwin Medley** -- <https://youtu.be/YYo5Ss8pRFk>

Sarah Vaughan – **Everything Must Change** -- <https://youtu.be/vcFk6SFX5GM>

Sarah Vaughan – **Bill Bailey, Won't You Please Come Home** -- <https://youtu.be/T6ccPEsODiE>

Sarah Vaughan – ***The More I See You*** -- <https://youtu.be/rLZkezRkJtw>

Sarah Vaughan – ***Lover Man*** -- <https://youtu.be/ynC0711OHPY>

Sarah Vaughan – ***And I Love Her*** -- <https://youtu.be/MnZiIW2QW0A>

Sarah Vaughan – ***Fool on The Hill*** -- <https://youtu.be/DTXDb4ksvsY>

Sarah Vaughan – ***A House Is Not A Home*** -- <https://youtu.be/vDtQzuqtrtg>

Sarah Vaughan – ***"Vocal Acrobatics"*** -- <https://youtu.be/SMYVtAoBDJ0>

Sarah Vaughan & Billy Eckstine – ***Body & Soul / Dedicated To You*** -- <https://youtu.be/R9pGmOUUwho>

BONUS

Count Basie & Sara Vaughan – in Carnegie Hall -- <https://youtu.be/xLHD8BR8w0o>

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

Sincerely,

Greg Brown

--

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