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Subject: Greg Brown's Weekend Reading and Other Things.. 10/18/2015 (So many bounced back, I am sending it out again)

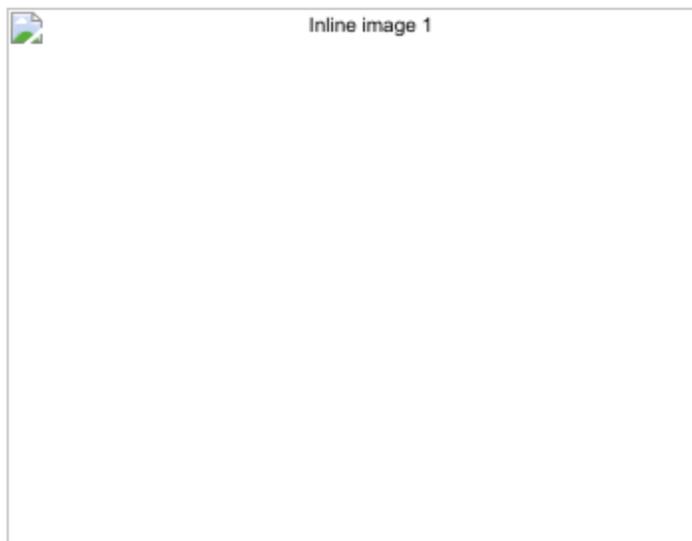
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DEAR FRIEND.....

The Myth of Ronald Reagan



So much is attributed to Ronald Reagan, starting with the release of the hostages in Teheran on the day that he took office when the truth is that the negotiations had been concluded by the Carter Administration weeks earlier which the Iranians held up the release until the day that Reagan took office as a last slap against the face of President Carter. Or that he won the Cold War, reduced the size of government, never raised taxes, cut deficits, strong on family values, did not give amnesty to illegal immigrants, understood foreign policy and was the champion of the Middle Class and Middle

America..... While almost all of this is so far from the truth that it is almost laughable. But then as my father use to say, "*History is always rewritten by the winners.*" And in this case the winners, the Modern Republican Conservatives under Ronald Reagan have liberally rewritten and altered his legacy to fit their agendas in his name.

What Ronald Reagan was really genius at was taking advantage of good fortune and obfuscating and at times ignoring the bad. Reagan believed that if you could improve the mood of the nation you could improve the nation and in many ways he was right. Reagan came into office believing that he had to revive the economy, raise the spirits of the people and most importantly rebuild the American military to stand up to the Communists, so that America could negotiate from a position of power. Reagan was also a staunch anti-Communist who truly believed that the Soviet Union was an evil Empire that must be confronted very aggressively.

Understanding that his Presidency wouldn't succeed if he didn't do something about the economy in his first year in office. The event that began to define his presidency was when he was shot during the assassination attempt by John W. Hinckley Jr. in March 1981, not just because he survive but the way he handled it with grace and elon and when he returned to the White House his popularity surged.

Reaganomics was the focus of Ronald Reagan's first term. The essence was: let the market be free, let the people who own the business do whatever they want, cut taxes and provide incentives to produce more. Except that the reality is that when you cut taxes really dramatically, the amount of money going into federal coffers is reduced therefore the federal government has to either cut spending or they are going to run a huge deficit. However the people around Reagan came up with the theory that you could cut taxes and this would boost/goose the economy so much you could actually increase proceeds at the same time and it would all work out. During the 1980 Presidential primaries, George Bush famously called it "*voodoo economics.*" Although later as Vice President Bush denied ever saying that. Thank God for video tape because 35 years later I found clips of him saying it during interviews.

There was a fundamental falsehood at the core of Reaganomics known as the "**Laffer Curve**" proposed by economist Arthur Laffer. The premise of the Laffer Curve is that increasing tax rates beyond a certain point is counter-productive for raising further tax revenue. The Laffer Curve was presented by the Reagan Administration as the intellectual support for the idea that reducing taxes would produce more revenues. Even today, Ronald Reagan supporters believe that he created the prototype of low taxes, less regulation, limited spending and smaller government as the economic nirvana.

One cannot be fair and in any historical valuation of Ronald Reagan, without looking at the damage that his economic policies did to the country. Reagan's fans like to say that he made America strong again after being greatly weaken in the 1960s and 1970s and that Reagan help rebuild American prestige, economic power and put it back on the path the growth. But the real benefits, as well as the tremendous cost have only became clear more recently. The essence of Reaganomics was a massive transfer of wealth towards the rich and away from the poor by cutting taxes overwhelmingly for the wealthiest and corporations that set in motion arguably the greatest government-led transfer of wealth in the direction of the top 2% of the country.

Ronald Reagan did cut taxes and of course the U.S. but at a cost of a series of dangerous and increasing budget deficits. Wikipedia defines Reaganomics as “a portmanteau of Reagan and economics attributed to Paul Harvey, refers to the economic policies promoted by U.S. President Ronald Reagan during the 1980s. These policies are commonly associated with supply-side economics, referred to as “*trickle-down economics*” by political opponents and free market economics by political advocates. The four pillars of Reagan’s economic policy were to reduce the growth of government spending, reduce the federal income tax and capital gains tax, reduce government regulation, and tighten the money supply in order to reduce inflation.” But then people are always more complicated than one issue or the mythology that grows up around them. And the mythology around our 40th President is unmatched.

In laymen’s speak, Reaganomics is based on this notion of so-called trickle-down economics that cutting taxes for the wealthiest Americans benefit everyone. As someone described, “*if you feed the horse enough oats the sparrow will survive on the highway.*” And, if you make rich people rich enough they will put crumbs today servants. Except that’s not what happens. One of the problems with “*trickle-down*” is that it’s not flood down and you don’t get a lot coming down to the middle class or the people below and one of the reasons why the middle class got squeezed.

What is most puzzling is that the Republican Party under Ronald Reagan became identified with family and small-town values, when in fact his policies did more to enrich the financial class in both coasts than Main Street America. Yet many Americans in the heartland of the country still believe that Ronald Reagan was on their side. Looking back at the real impact of his policies it’s hard to conclude that he was on their side or that many of his policies were in their interest. The reality is that during the Reagan Administration the business community got whatever they want, while their great enemy, *organized labor*, got its ass kicked starting with his firing of 11, 000 air traffic controllers in 1981. This is ironic since Reagan was once a union leader, yet the effect that his administration had on organized labor was devastating. The firing of the Air Traffic Controllers by Ronald Reagan signaled corporate America that it was open season on organized labor that still continues today.

The main impression that Ronald Reagan fostered is that government was fat and inefficient, too much government just got in the way of private business, deregulation is a good thing, and government was the enemy of prosperity and we should let the private sector take over because the markets would police themselves. A belief that still resonates with Conservatives today. Although Ronald Reagan promised to cut government (*education, welfare, food stamps*), at the same time he promise to increase the budget of the Department of Defense, which he did. Right after taking office Reagan told his Secretary of Defense to increase in order whatever was needed and not to worry about the budget. To justify the buildup of military spending Reagan’s supporters like to say that one of his most important accomplishments is that he restored America’s pride and confidence in itself as a result of its ability to project power ultimately across continents and across oceans.

A strong anti-Communist, Ronald Reagan believed that the Cold War was a contest between *freedom* and *un-freedom*. In one of his most famous speeches made in 1983 at Westminster in England, he described/labelled the Soviet Union as “*The Evil Empire*” making it clear that he didn’t want to settle with this Soviet Union, he wanted to defeat it. At the time that Reagan took office, America’s strategy in the Cold War dating back to the Eisenhower administration in the 1950s was fundamentally a long stalemate, based on the premise that no one really wanted to get engage in nuclear war that would destroy themselves as well as their enemy. As such, it give the impression that the Cold War was permanent, whereas Reagan said that the Cold War “*isn’t permanent*” and how does

the Cold War end, “*we win they lose.*” So for two years after Reagan first came into office the US virtually had no relations at all with the Soviet Union and people began to get very scared.

With little knowledge of the inner workings of the Soviet Union there was conflicting speculation about its true nature. There was some people in the CIA back then in the 70s who's saw signs of the Soviet's economy and technology falling far behind the U.S. While a number of people around Reagan had a different view – whereby the Soviet Union was investing more than the U.S. in its military, changing the balance of power between the two nations and a threat to our National security. Revisionist will tell you that the best form of defense spending is always wasted because whenever you find yourself in a situation where you have to use your military hardware and prowess it's a clear sign that you didn't spend enough and aside for it being an essential defensive system and the real purpose of Reagan's Star War Program (*Strategic Defense Initiative*) was that we wouldn't have to use it – which is one of the reasons why many Conservatives believe that Reagan's military spending contributed to the breakup of the Soviet Union.

The Star Wars missile technology was a proposed missile defense system intended to protect the United States from attack by ballistic strategic nuclear weapons (Intercontinental ballistic missiles and Submarine-launched ballistic missiles) that would shoot down incoming missiles from the Soviet Union and elsewhere. And more than one Ronald Reagan historian believe that his support of SDI may have been inspired by a movie that he was involved in an early 1940s called “Murder in the Air” about a weapon that could destroy weapons in the sky.

Although Reagan was certainly a believer and American military power, at the same time he was reluctant to send troops into harm's way. While he said many hawkish things during the eight years that he was in office, he only authorized three military actions; putting marines into the middle of the Lebanese war, where 241 U.S. Marines were killed in explosion, next was Grenada which definitely was not the threat that Reagan claimed and the third time was the 1986 bombing in Libya in response of the bombing of a discotheque in Berlin that killed several members of Muammar Gaddafi's family including one of his children and one of his wives. He was not a manic interventionists as many would have thought when he came into office.

He believed that America was being challenged by what a worldwide conspiracy of Communists with the objective of defeating Weston civilization and the United States and change the world in its own image. At that time many Americans were concerned about the United States getting involved in the war with the Soviet Union whereas Reagan advocated that anything was justified in order to win the Cold War. So the Reagan Administration did in a new sub rosa way, was to secretly support a lot of violent movements around the world in the name of resisting the Soviet menace, which including running covert operations independent of the U.S. Government and then to lied to Congress and the American people. The Reagan administration unabashedly supported insurrection around the world – Afghanistan, Cambodia, Angola, Central America and elsewhere causing the deaths and instability of tens of millions of people. Yet somehow, all of this has been glossed over by historians when this period is one of the ugliest in the history of our nation.

On October 5, 1986 an antiquated US cargo plane was shot down over southern Nicaragua by a surface to air missile. And that day when that plane got shot down not only broke open the fuselage of the plane it also broke open the interconnections of a whole covert operation/enterprise. It is important to focus on the Iran Contra scandal because it is the biggest window that we have into the Way Ronald Reagan actually thought. Within hours of the plane actually been shot down Vice President George

Bush's office received a telephone call from a resupply operative stating that the plane was missing and the CIA station chief in neighboring Costa Rica sent a coded message to Washington one warning tersely that the situation required immediate and necessary damage control. But the sole surviving crew member Eugene Hasenfus ending up beyond US control and in the hands of the Sandinistas.

When Eugene Hasenfus was interrogated by the Sandinista it was the beginning of the end of the Iran Contra affair, as it was the beginning of the public's awareness of what the scandal actually was. The Sandinistas then paraded Hasenfus in front of television cameras where he told the world about the US government's covert arms supply operations. There was an immediate effort to cover up by the White House as the Hasenfus interviews circulated around the world, with President Reagan going on camera proclaiming that the U.S. had "*absolutely nothing to do with the plane that the was claimed to have shot down over Nicaragua,*" – even though clearly there was some sort of U.S. connection. But the Sandinistas were able to provide detail information on how this operation was being supported by not only the CIA but also by vice President George Bush's office – because in the debris of the plane they found evidence, including business cards of retired CIA agents, retired generals, American contractors to the U.S. Government, in addition to people who held contracts to move aid to refugees that identified the very same planes was also moving arms to the Contras as well as cocaine, marijuana and other illegal drugs on return trips.

In the beginning of Reagan's first term the Administration believed that the Soviet Union was trying to establish a beachhead in Central America.

In response, people in the White House organized a group they called the Contras, financed by the CIA. During their war against the Nicaraguan government and neighboring El Salvador, the Contras committed a large number of human rights violations, including using terrorist tactics and carrying out more than 1300 terrorist attacks. These actions were frequently carried out systematically as a part of the strategy of the contras. Supporters of the Contras tried to minimize these violations, particularly the Reagan administration, which engaged in a campaign of *white propaganda* to alter public opinion in favor of the contras proclaiming them "*freedom fighters.*" When the truth was that they operated as thugs indiscriminately assassinating people. Eventually, Congress voted two laws to put a lid on financing the Contras.... Basically saying "*No More Aid to the Contras.*"

With Congress blocking further contra aid, the Reagan administration sought to arrange funding and military supplies by means of third countries and private sources. Between 1984 and 1986, \$34 million from third countries and \$2.7 million from private sources were raised this way. The secret contra assistance was run by the National Security Council, with Officer Lt. Col. Oliver North in charge. Using third-party funds, North created an organization called "*The Enterprise*" which served as the secret arm of the NSC staff that had its own airplanes, pilots, airfield, ship, operatives and secret Swiss bank accounts. It also received assistance from personnel from other government agencies, especially from CIA personnel in Central America. This operation functioned, however, without any of the accountability required of U.S. government activities. The Enterprise's efforts culminated in the Iran-Contra Affair of 1986–1987, which facilitated contra funding through the proceeds of arms sales to Iran.

In one meeting at the White House that included all of the top Administration officials, as well as the President, Vice President, Head of the CIA, Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State and Chief of Staff, Ronald Reagan got up saying, "*we are going to raise money for the Contras, above the objections of several in the meeting who told him that what he was both illegal and an impeachable offense.*" Reagan responded by saying, "*I don't care*" ending the meeting with a wonderful quote "if

such a story gets out we all will be hanging by our thumbs in front of the White House until people find out who did it".

Some of the supporters of the Reagan legacy like to claim that this all started when he met with the families of American hostages in Lebanon and was so touch that when told we could get them released if we sold Iran arms, his stand soften. But this was the same person who campaign on the slogan that he would never negotiate with terrorists or sell arms to terrorist states. His son Ron Reagan believes that whether it was the right thing or wrong thing to do, his father who had been a lifeguard in his teens and early 20s was motivated by his instinct to save lives. But we live in a nation of laws and that no one is above the law including a beloved President, because when we don't live up to this, we are no longer a nation of laws.

Yet knowing this was untrue, somehow President Reagan went on national television saying that the United States had not shipped weapons to Iran as part of a ransom payment for the release of Americans held in Lebanon, claiming that those charges are utterly false. Reagan, *"we did not I repeat did not trade weapons or anything else for hostages."* But in the fall of 1986, Iran and Contra came together. Reagan tried his best to obfuscate the truth, giving his Attorney General Edwin Meese the job of trying to explain the conundrum. After immense pressure coming from all sides over several months, Reagan finally went in front of the American people saying that although the facts show that it happened, *"in his heart he felt that he didn't."*

Iran Contra was the first real crack in Reagan's image, as up until that point the media coverage and public backing that he was getting was really supportive..... But then how could this man who was such a great leader trade arms for hostages to fund off-the-books foreign policy? Especially when this was clearly illegal and 90% of the American people believed that was wrong. Think about it, 90% of the American people don't agree on anything. Under the fear of possible impeachment, Reagan's advisors worked hard to refocus all of the attention to the one-part that Reagan had plausible deniability, since he had not been specifically briefed by Oliver North who then became the fall guy for the Administration. As Oliver North said years later, *"the diversion worked."* After Oliver North's scalp was sacrificed interest in the story fizzled out. But the reality is that the Iran Contra scandal happened on his watch, so whether or not he knew, was gullible or malign, it was his responsibility. But the more serious charge is that he perverted the US Constitution.

As someone who met President Reagan several times I can attest that he was blessed with a great capacity for exuding affection to the public around him. When you were with him you felt no agenda or manipulation. As someone described, *"A gentle soul."* Even his detractors will concede that he was really nice guy although those close to him say in private he was most ordinary, absence of introspection and curiosity with few if any close friend other than his wife Nancy. Obviously he was more than that because over his five years in the public, he showed that he was a canny guy who knew how to change when the situation changed.

Still this is a person who believed that *"poor people were poor because it was their fault,"* said his son Ron Reagan and *"homeless were homeless by choice"* which Reagan said in a television interview. This is strange because Reagan's father and older brother were put to work by the Roosevelt Administration during the Great Depression which saved their family financially. And he was a former union leader, however he showed little empathy for the masses while being very sympathetic one on one.

It is said that due to Reagan's bellicose foreign-policy, and in particular the nuclear saber rattling with the Soviet Union, we came very close to a nuclear war in the 1980s. But Reagan's rhetoric on nuclear weapons began to change in 1984. Preparing to run for reelection there were political reasons for this change, as it begins to take on a life of its own, with this Cold War warrior now talking about peace. Then when Mikhail Gorbachev came to power 1985 promising reform in the Soviet Union, Reagan felt that this new leader was a person that he could do business with. So when Gorbachev suggested that he was willing to get rid of the Soviet Union's nuclear arsenal, serious discussions began. The only thing that stopped both countries from signing this accord which would have resulted with both countries destroying their arsenals, was Reagan's unwillingness to give up the U.S. Star Wars program and as a result the agreement was never consummated. One of the biggest missed opportunities of the Reagan Administration.

Ronald Reagan gave possibly his famous "*tear down the wall*" speech at the Brandenburg Gate near the Berlin Wall on June 12, 1987, commemorating the 750th anniversary of Berlin. While at this time he was receiving a lot of flak from conservatives who saw him as an appeaser (comparing him to Neville Chamberlain), for talking to Gorbachev and for having summit meetings in Geneva, Reykjavík, Washington, Moscow and New York. Yet today that speech has become the centerpiece of the Conservative legend of how "*Ronald Reagan Won the Cold War*" – that he told Gorbachev "*to tear down this wall*" and two years later the wall came down. When in reality, the truth is much more complicated, as other factors caused the wall to come down and the Soviet Union to come apart, although mythological, it is the core of how many people think of Ronald Reagan today.

A giant mythology has developed around Ronald Reagan. Developed by people who want to control the direction of the country's national affairs. People like Grover Norquist and his allies are myth makers. They are trying to finish a revolution that they feel Reagan started. They invoke his name at every opportunity. They impute to him qualities that he didn't possess – profound wisdom, good governance, deep religiously, love with all human beings and protected the country's borders against illegal immigrants. These same Conservatives conveniently forget that Ronald Reagan raised taxes on the Middle Class, dramatically raised the country's deficit, raided the Social Security Trust fund to offset his tax breaks for the rich, gave amnesty to almost three million illegal immigrants and the size of government grew under his watch.

The myth of Ronald Reagan has become an ideology for Conservatives which is both very powerful and dangerous. One of the reasons why the U.S. is struggling today with deficits, is because Ronald Reagan legitimized them. To believe that having uncontrolled deficits is okay or even a good idea or even something to put over on the rest of the world, you can thank Ronald Reagan. Except that evidence around the world today, shows us that if you run big deficits it catches up with you, and it doesn't matter how good you make people feel about the country or how much prestige on the international stage because at the end of the day, you will be asked to pay your bills and if you can't.... like a house of cards your economy will falter, if not collapse.

What can people possibly mean when they say they want America to "*return*" to being a country ruled by the values of Ronald Reagan? When was this blissful time when thrift and hard work were rewarded and the government knew its place? Certainly not when Reagan was actually president. Because under President Reagan (1981–89), the size of the federal government increased by any measure. Executive-branch civilian employment, which covers almost everything except the uniformed military and the Postal Service, was 2.109 million in 1981 and 2.129 million in 1989. Total

federal-government employment rose during this period from 4.9 million to 5.3 million. Reagan inherited a federal budget of \$599 billion in revenue, \$678 billion in spending, and a deficit of \$79 billion. He left office with a federal budget of \$909 billion in revenue, a little less than \$1.1 trillion in spending, and a deficit of \$155 billion.

Although he was an impressive and successful President for the most part Ronald Reagan was flesh, not marble and definitely not the God that many Conservatives have turned him into for the convenience of the Modern Conservative Movement. Yes, he was a skillful intuitive master politician whose greatest skill was that he could sell the dream and as a result was nicknamed "*The Great Communicator*." As his son Ron said, Ronald Reagan was both smarter and better than many people on the left think, and definitely a lot less of a giant than many people on the right claim. But one of Reagan's greatest shortcomings is that he easily obfuscated the truth and at times lied for political usefulness. While Jimmy Carter warned the country that we needed to conserve, Ronald Reagan said that we don't have to sacrifice. We don't have to get by with less. There is plenty of oil, an infinite supply. Deficits don't matter. Giving money to the rich and big corporations will generate more wealth for everyone. Trust me. And many people did. After leaving office dementia came on Reagan quickly so there is little to say about his post-presidential years.

Aside from man-made climate change and global pollution, almost all of the most serious problems that we face are not from outside of our borders. As the greatest problems we face are inside of our great country. But one of our principal impediments is that we have committed ourselves to the pursuit of freedom where our definition of freedom is simply false. We have convinced ourselves that though the piling up of material goods and indulging the appetites of a consumer society that by going down that road we will best be able to find life, liberty and happiness – we delude ourselves by ignoring facts and rewriting history. Nowhere is this more evident than the myth that has been built around Ronald Reagan. Today almost all of the contenders running in the current 2016 Republican primary are still supporting *supply-side* economic policies, claiming that they worked under Ronald Reagan which isn't true but still gets lots of applause with Conservative audiences. As such, this is why his myth is so dangerous.

Do We Really Need another Proxy War?



On 30 September 2015, Russia launched its first airstrikes in Syria against targets in Rastan, Talbiseh, and Zafaraniya in Homs province of Syria. Pundits in the West were miffed because Moscow gave the United States a one-hour advanced notice of its operations. The Homs area is crucial to President Bashar al-Assad's control of western Syria. Insurgent control of the area would separate the coastal cities of Latakia (where Russian aircraft are based) and Tartous where Russia operates a naval facility from Damascus. Within several weeks Russia had doubled air attacks to 60 a day. But early on Washington and its allies in the war for regime change in Syria blasted Russia for attacking moderate forces in Syria. Except that that these moderate forces turns out to be affiliated with Al Qaeda.

After 14 years of invoking Al Qaeda terrorism as the all-purpose bogeyman for justifying wars abroad and repression at home, Washington is now coming to the defense of the group in Syria, seeking to preserve it as a military force for overthrowing the Syrian government and thereby weakening both Russia and Iran. Russia's intervention is unquestionably directed at preventing the fall of the Syrian government to the onslaught of attacks by Islamist Sunni sectarian militias armed to the teeth and funded with billions of dollars by Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey and Western powers, all under the guiding hand of the US Central Intelligence Agency. Western critics are claiming that the airstrikes ordered by Moscow are ratcheting up the threat of military confrontation with the US, which is continuing to conduct its own bombing raids in Syria together with a "coalition" consisting primarily of the reactionary Sunni oil sheikdoms. France has also begun its own independent air campaign over its former colonial possession. They say that the Russian intervention will not provide a progressive way out of the Syrian crisis because it is directed toward the defense of the interests of Bashar al-Assad, whom they describe as parasitic and a war criminal. However, for Washington and its allies to condemn Russia for military "escalation" and acting to "fuel extremism and radicalization" in Syria is the height of hypocrisy.

The brutal civil war that has claimed the lives of up to 300,000 Syrians and turned many millions more into refugees and displaced persons was instigated, funded and armed by the US, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other Western powers. They sought to repeat the "success" registered by the US-NATO war

in Libya, which ended in the toppling and murder of its secular leader Muammar Gaddafi and the plunging of the country into a bloody war between rival militias and governments, along with economic, political and social disintegration that continues to this day. Meanwhile, Qatar and Saudi Arabia are reported to have organized the shipment of planeloads of weapons to Turkish airbases for distribution to the Sunni Islamist militias. With the prodding of the U.S. and EU, the reactionary oil monarchies are demanding that the Syrian civil war end in the deposing of Assad and the installation of a puppet regime more amendable to their interests. While voicing support for a negotiated settlement, Washington's aim also remains regime change, placing it and Russia, the world's two largest nuclear powers, on a collision course.

The truth is that Russia has been ally of Syria since 1956, and has continued to support the Syrian government since the Syrian Civil War began in 2011, with military aid in the form of weaponry, training, and military advisors. In October 2011 and again February 2012, Russia blocked Western-backed resolutions in the United Nations Security Council because those resolutions left the possibility of sanctions, or even military intervention, against the Syrian Assad government open. The Russian government has stated that the Syrian Civil War was caused by the US and allies pushing for "a so-called democratic revolution" in Syria by arming and training "so-called moderate Syrian opposition" groups," which can't be denied. In September 2015, the Russian Federation Council approved the use of Russian military in Syria to fight terrorist groups, ISIL or 'the Islamic State' in particular, at a request from the Syrian President Bashar Assad. Russian and Western officials stated that Russian strikes targeted not only ISIL, but other rebel groups in the Army of Conquest coalition including al-Nusra, al-Qaeda's Syrian branch. As of today Russia claim is that it wants a united front against ISIL that includes the Assad government. While Western powers have argued that the Assad government shouldn't have a place in a coalition against ISIL.

The Big Danger

Today, American antitank missiles supplied to Syrian rebels are playing an unexpectedly prominent role in shaping the Syrian battlefield, giving the conflict the semblance of a proxy war between the United States and Russia, despite President Obama's express desire to avoid one. The U.S.-made BGM-71 TOW missiles were delivered under a two-year-old covert program coordinated between the United States and its allies to help vetted Free Syrian Army groups in their fight against President Bashar al-Assad. Now that Russia has entered the war in support of Assad, they are taking on a greater significance than was originally intended. So successful have they been in driving rebel gains in northwestern Syria that rebels call the missile the "*Assad Tamer*," a play on the word Assad, which means lion. And in recent days they have been used with great success to slow the Russian-backed offensive aimed at recapturing ground from the rebels.

Two weeks ago, when Syrian troops launched their first offensive backed by the might of Russia's military, dozens of videos have been posted on YouTube showing rebels firing the U.S.-made missiles at Russian-made tanks and armored vehicles belonging to the Syrian army. Appearing as twirling balls of light, they zigzag across the Syrian countryside until they find and blast their target in a ball of flame. The rebels claim they took out 24 tanks and armored vehicles on the first day, and the toll has risen daily since then. "*It was a tank massacre*," said Capt. Mustafa Moarati, whose Tajamu al-Izza group says it destroyed seven tanks and armored. With the Captain claiming that more missiles are on the way and Russia supplying armaments to the Assad Government these activities echo the role played by U.S.-supplied Stinger anti-aircraft missiles in forcing the Soviet Union to withdraw from Afghanistan in the 1980s that ended up with a Taliban Government.

“The rebels happen to have a lot of TOWs in their inventory. The regime happened to attack them with Russian support. I don’t see it as a proxy war by decision.”

– Jeff White

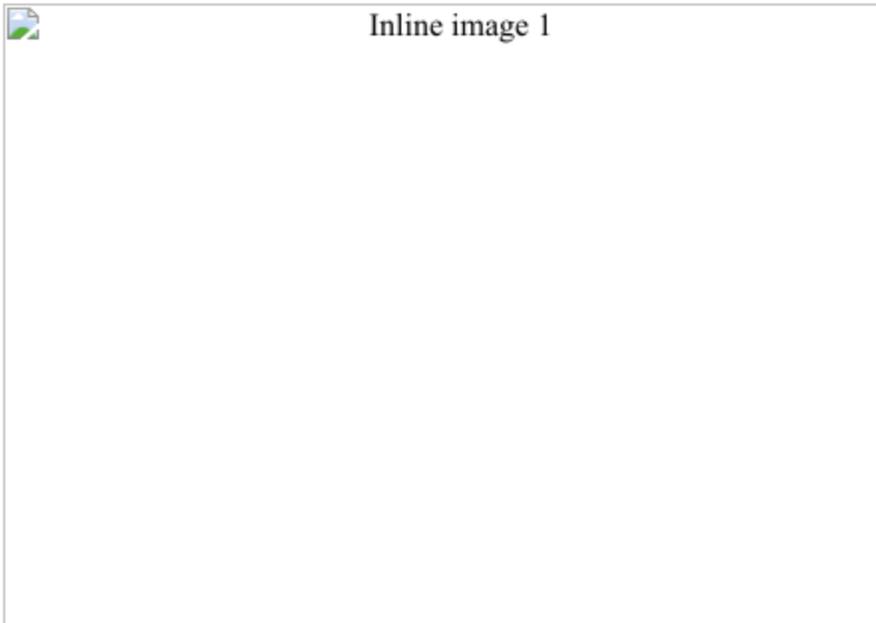
Do we need another proxy war between Washington and Moscow, despite Obama’s insistence this month that *“we’re not going to make Syria into a proxy war between the United States and Russia?”* And to claim as Jeff White of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy that, *“It’s a proxy war by happenstance,”* is both nonsense as well as a slippery slope into another prolonged proxy war and possibly rekindling a new Cold War. Moreover, having spent tens of millions of dollars equipping and training moderate forces with disastrous results, do we really think that in removing Assad we are going to end up with a stable democracy? Let’s look at our results in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. More importantly, we haven’t been able to *“fix”* the mess we instigated in Syria thus far. Therefore, why not let Russia do it and if successful, give Putin the props. Proxy wars are dangerous and more often change little if anything other than add misery to the lives of millions of innocent civilians. So do we really need another.....

Democratic debate puts GOP clown show to shame: “Makes the Republican debate look like the real kids table”

The debate offered a vivid contrast with the GOP. But what the hell was up with Jim Webb, Twitter wonders



Inline image 1



While 22 million people may not have tuned into CNN (as the Democratic debate garnered 15.3 viewers) for last week's Democratic debate in Las Vegas like they had for the second Republican debate at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library last month, Twitter was just as lively without the circus that is the Republican presidential field (the Trump-led top-tier and the kiddie table undercard).

I am sure that most on the right agreed that this first Democratic debate last night was dull as dirt: No fireworks, no pizzazz. The candidates didn't insult each other's looks or tell gory tales of mayhem or brag about their poll numbers. In fact, they did the opposite. They behaved like human beings. When the debate moderators insisted on discussing the most tedious beltway obsession since Al Gore and the Buddhist temple — Hillary Clinton's emails — Bernie Sanders drew huge applause from the audience, and no doubt from every Democrat watching the debate at home, when he said:

"I think the Secretary is right. And that is I think the American people are sick and tired of hearing about your damn emails."

And that was the end of that. With the exception of some eccentric moments from former senators Jim Webb and Lincoln Chafee, the Democrats held a lively debate about ideas and exchanged views on how to deal with problems facing the country. They talked about guns and college debt and Syria and Social Security and much more. Not one of them looked like deer in the headlights, clueless about the subject at hand (*something that happened frequently in the GOP debates*), nor did they weirdly launch into their stump speeches at the slightest provocation.

Truth be told, they all seemed somewhat ... normal. (Or at least as normal as any politician can be.) And that is the last thing the Republicans wanted anyone to see. After all, some people who aren't deluded by Fox News and talk radio might then remember that this is serious business, and the GOP can't have that.

One never knows how these things will go, but at the very least one hopes that a majority of the Americans are still looking for someone sane and sober to run the country. It may not be as entertaining as Donald Trump raving about his wall or Carly Fiorina delivering a torrent of gruesome accusations against Planned Parenthood, but it's important. There was little suspense — after all nobody was waiting with bated breath to see what crazy thing one of these candidates would say next. What they got instead was a stage full of experienced public servants with deep knowledge of government policy.

If there's one thing that was made obvious last night, it's that the GOP is one big heaping mess of a political party right now. The contrast between it and the Democrats couldn't be sharper and not just in the presidential race. After all, the backdrop of last night's event was a drama happening in the Capitol in which House Republicans can't agree on who should be Speaker. How do they expect, then, to bring the entire country together under one president? It's laughable. They're laughable. The candidates on the stage last night in Las Vegas, on the other hand, were serious.

And one of the problems that I have is that instead of focusing on the issues discussed in the debate much of the media pundit's discussion was centered around who won, with most major media claiming

Hillary and social media and Republican commentators anointing Bernie the winner. But as Joan Walsh wrote in **The Nation – *Who Won the Democratic Debate? Progressives, Hands Down*** – as all of the Democratic candidates shifted left thanks to its base and for the first time in American history a national television audience was exposed to a serious discussion about capitalism vs. socialism, expanding Social Security, providing debt-free college, protecting reproductive rights, and jailing bankers.

Hillary Clinton, Sen. Bernie Sanders and former Maryland governor Martin O'Malley all had good nights, with debate performances strong enough to let each candidate's supporters legitimately spin the night as a "win," as they did. Progressives had a good night, too. The differences between Clinton and Sanders were made clearer, but not bitter. Again, Sanders delivered the best line of the night, in defense of Clinton. "*The American people are sick and tired of hearing about your damn e-mails.*" But that's Sanders: He knows the e-mail "scandal" isn't a scandal at all, and he said so. Sanders's moral denunciation of the media's fixation on Clinton's e-mail to the neglect of real issues seemed to chase the issue from the stage, at least for the night. And that was good for Clinton. She was relaxed, but passionate; as [REDACTED]. Guttenplan writes, "*she seems to have figured out how to look presidential without seeming entitled—at least on television.*"

She defended her shift left on many issues as coming to terms with reality. When CNN's Anderson Cooper confronted her with a statement she made recently about being a "moderate," Clinton retorted: "[REDACTED] *a progressive, but a progressive who likes to get things done.*" That sums up Clinton's pitch. Sanders's best moment, on his own behalf, was, typically, less about him. "*Congress does not regulate Wall Street; Wall Street regulates Congress,*" he declared to cheers, as he politely ripped Clinton for failing to support the restoration of Glass-Steagall banking regulations.

According to social-media mentions and search data, Sanders generated the broadest curiosity, if not appeal. But in some ways Clinton was playing to an audience of one—Vice President Joe Biden—and she did very well. She did not self-destruct; quite the opposite. She proved that the Democrats don't need a (*white*) man on a white horse to come in and save them from her candidacy. And Sanders proved the party, and the nation, has a real choice – between a center-left reformer and a (*peaceful*) left-wing revolutionary. And as Walsh asked, "Is there room for another center-left politician, however beloved?"

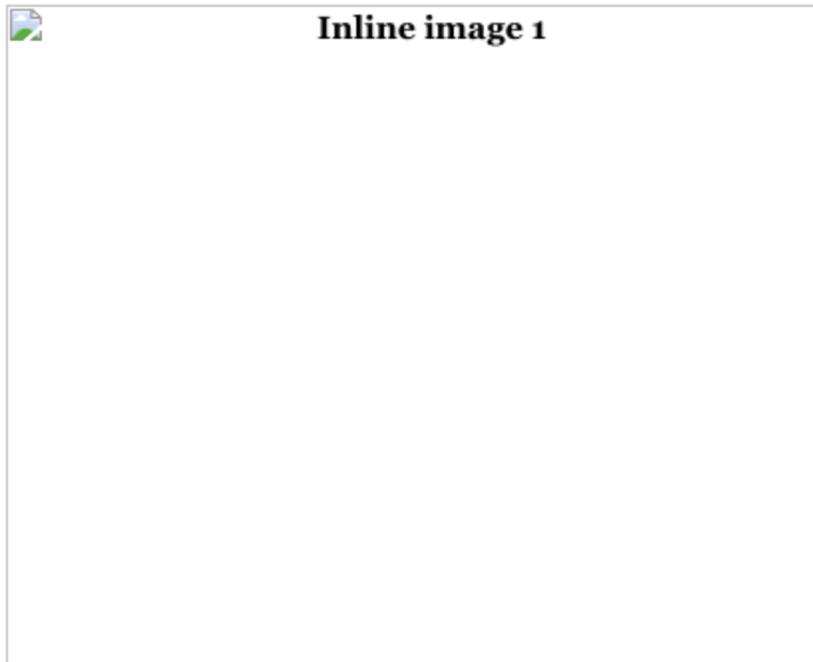
There were real differences on display Tuesday night. Sanders wants free college—he pitched it, correctly, as the 21st-century version of free high-school education. Clinton thinks even working-class families should contribute to what she called the education "*compact.*" He called for expanding Social Security broadly; she supported raising benefits for the poorest families, but wasn't as strong as Sanders. He correctly criticized her call for a no-fly zone in Syria, and once again rapped her vote to authorize the use of military force in Iraq. And it's also worth noting that it was the lone woman on stage—Clinton—who argued most forcefully for equal pay, paid family leave, and reproductive rights, and who brought up the shameful attacks on Planned Parenthood. The men are all agreed on the issue; but it was Hillary who led.

With the exception for guns, as Sanders tried to defend his pro-gun record, all of the candidates favored stronger regulations on Wall Street and climate change, as well as pushing for less gunboat diplomacy, more diversity and protection of the safety net for the elderly, children and poor. As such, where I come from the real winner of the Democratic debate was not only Progressives but also the

American people as it showed that all political debates don't have to be clown shows, absent of facts, reason, hatred and real issues.

UConn student arrested after Mac & Cheese fiasco also arrested twice as UMass student in 2014

Luckily He Was White



Web Link: <https://youtu.be/ovD178AhhSc>

Did you see the **YouTube** video titled "***Drunk Kid Wants Mac and Cheese***"? It went viral on earlier this month. It's been watched all over the world. Did you laugh at the UConn student demanding his favorite jalapeno-flavored drunk food? Did you think the belligerent, slurring and entitled kid was funny? If you did, let me tell you why you're wrong. The video stars an enraged underage student who was refused service by UConn's student Union for allegedly carrying an open container of alcohol around the food court. In the nine-minute video, the 19-year-old white male calls the manager of the food court a string of expletives. He makes insulting attacks on the manager's employment position "*your job is a fucking joke.*" He went on to call the workers other personal insults, "*fucking idiot,*" "*fag*" and "*retard.*" While during the whole episode, the manager exhibits incredible self-control, poise and professionalism. Finally, the student escalates to multiple short spurts of physical violence until he is finally subdued by the manager and another employee and arrested.

This video just went viral and it shows another example of the privileged arrogance of our youth. The video shows Luke Gatti a student at the University of Connecticut from Bayville, New York, demanding a bacon-jalapeño mac and cheese after being denied entry because he drunkenly brought an open beer into the food court. After approximately five minutes of declaration of his rights as an American citizen, some uncomfortable close-talking and repeated shoving of the manager, Gatti was taken to the floor by food court employees and held until he was arrested by a police officer. But then Gatti's big mouth and bad attitude also got him into trouble last year — when he was then enrolled at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, Mass.

According to police records, it then turns out that Gatti was arrested twice in Amherst the previous year. It was not Gatti's first (or second) brush with the law. Gatti was arrested in September 2014 for disorderly conduct following a raucous party in Amherst. Court filings said that Gatti "*raised his left hand in a 'hook-em-horns'-like gesture*" and called arresting officer Richard MacLean -- *who is white* - **the N-word**. For this he was given four months of probation. Then less than two weeks later, Gatti was charged with disorderly conduct and assault and battery on a police officer following another party. "*I'm a little concerned you're going to pull a trifecta before the month is over,*" Judge John Payne told him.

Sure, the abstract idea of a public tantrum over macaroni and cheese is hilarious. Think of John Belushi in the "*Animal House*" food fight scene. And in all fairness, I can attest to the fact that the mac and cheese is delicious, especially when you have a drunk munchies requirement. But this video is terrifying, not amusing. The issues at play here are the ones that lead in every kind of wrong direction.

Let's start with this: Dozens of people are standing around laughing while another human being is being verbally and physically assaulted. A room full of able-bodied young adults are audience members; none of them steps up to help. They're elbowing each other, taking pictures and smirking. I'm sure the incident didn't make that great of a Snapchat.

Second, a 19-year-old felt entitled to be venomous in public, simply because he was on a college campus. Even more disturbing is the fact that a young person felt entitled to be violent, simply because he didn't get what he wanted. The student's first argument to the manager is "*Isn't this America?*" and he repeatedly offers to pay. Yes, this is America, where rich, educated, white men of any age can often get what they want, regardless of their behavior, especially when they have enough money. If he was this upset about being refused macaroni because of this conduct, I can't imagine how he will react when it costs him a job thanks to the Internet.

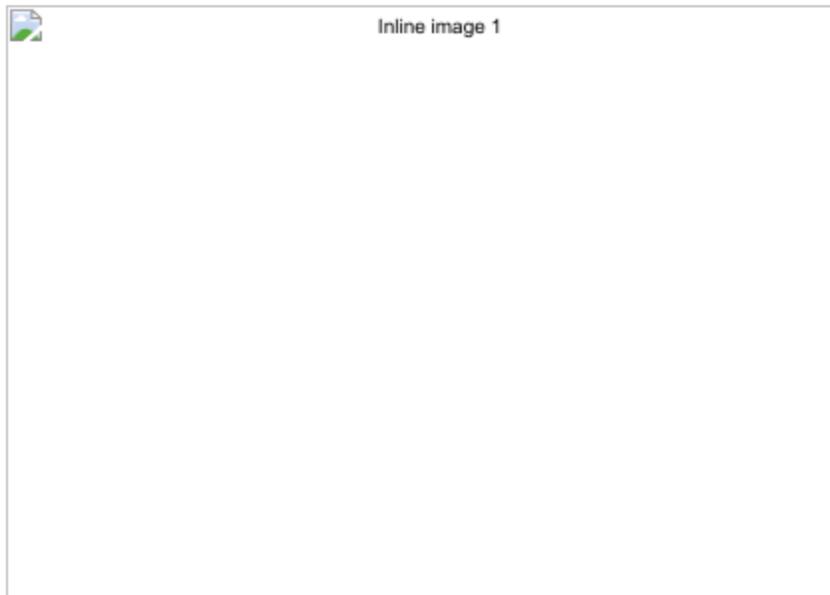
Finally, a young person felt superior to an authority figure, presumably because that authority figure works in food service. Rather than exhibiting what the University of Connecticut President Susan Herbst calls "*civility*," many students treat the staff who serve them, in sickness and sobriety, with astounding disrespect. The manager, who in the video makes every effort to not involve the police and to end the incident quietly, afforded the student much more leniency than would ever be found outside the coddled shelter of Storrs, Connecticut. In return, he receives shoves to the stomach.

Some people may think this is funny because it's a drunken kid demanding snack food.

Imagine this outburst wasn't just about mac and cheese.

Imagine all of the circumstances in this scenario, but instead "***the someone***" demanding the mac and cheese was Freddie Gray or Michael Brown. I am sure that the outcome would have been different even if their parent had the ability to continually bail them out, as was the case with Mr. Gatti. There is an out of control privilege in America that has to be changed. The fact that George Zimmerman is carrying around a "*trophy*" photo of the body of Trayvon Martin that he claims to have inadvertently retweeted last week -- was an accident, and that he has "*nothing to apologize for,*" is further evidence why there is a genuine need for the "Black Lives Matter" movement, because few in the main stream so this as an outrage. Now imagine an unrelenting, entitled and privileged perpetrator. Imagine if, even when if others are present, no one intervenes. And then imagine that when they do, all that happens is a slap on wrist of the perpetrator. Finally, imagine if O.J. Simpson carried a photo of the bodies of his dead wife and Ron Goldman and you felt no outrage. If you can, then you would be more out of touch as Ben Carson, who at least in this case would be outraged.

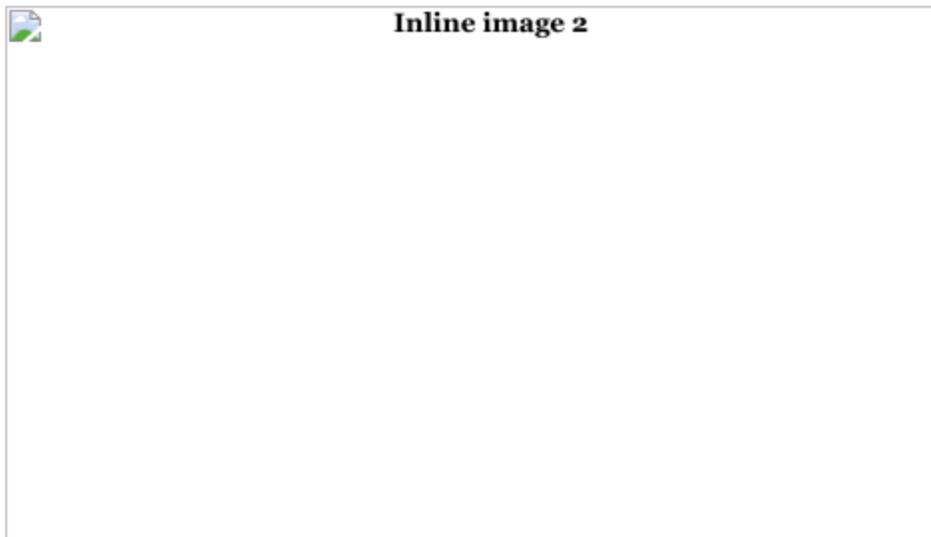
What Happened to Free Speech on College Campuses?



Although I was in high school in New York, I remember and was excited (to the point of traveling to San Francisco in 1966) by the **Free Speech Movement** which took place during the 1964–65 academic year on the campus of the University of California, Berkeley under the informal leadership of students Mario Savio, Jack Weinberg, Michael Rossman, Brian Turner, Bettina Aptheker, Steve Weissman, Art Goldberg, Jackie Goldberg, and others. In protests unprecedented in scope, students insisted that the university administration lift the ban of on-campus political activities and acknowledge the students' right to free speech and academic freedom establishing Sproul Hall and the surrounding Sproul Plaza as one of the epicenters of the counter-culture movement. But what happen? Because in today's political correctness a person can no longer criticize Israel without being called anti-Semitic or Islam without being called an Islamophobia or listen to a Republican

Conservative in a liberal college or discuss why Black Lives Matter in certain Christian colleges in the South. Why? Isn't that what universities are – exploring opposing ideas and developing new concepts.

Evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins, a famously outspoken atheist, said two weeks ago that the trend of students pushing to disinvite speakers on college campuses is a "betrayal" of the Free Speech Movement of the 1960s. Dawkins, speaking with Bill Maher on **HBO's "Real Time,"** discussed the idea of "regressive leftism" and how typically liberal crowds -- like college students -- have acted in non-liberal ways. Dawkins drawing on the Free Speech Movement commented – "*What a betrayal we're seeing now with campuses all over the Western world over -- America and Britain -- are denying people the right to come and speak on campuses. If you can't speak your mind on a university campus, where can you? I mean, that's what universities are about,*" Dawkins declared.



Real Time with Bill Maher: Richard Dawkins – web link: https://youtu.be/LvvQJ_zsL1U

As for hate speeches – Bigoted speech is symptomatic of a huge problem in our country; it is not the problem itself. Everybody, when they come to college, brings with them the values, biases and assumptions they learned while growing up in society, so it's unrealistic to think that punishing speech is going to rid campuses of the attitudes that gave rise to the speech in the first place. Banning bigoted speech won't end bigotry, even if it might chill some of the crudest expressions. The mindset that produced the speech lives on and may even reassert itself in more virulent forms. Speech codes, by simply deterring students from saying out loud what they will continue to think in private, merely drive biases underground where they can't be addressed. In 1990, when Brown University expelled a student for shouting racist epithets one night on the campus, the institution accomplished nothing in the way of exposing the bankruptcy of racist ideas. Finally the best way to counter hate is through education, working through the underlying issues.

By the way, if you are in college and someone says something during this class that offends your belief system, or contradicts ideas you believe to

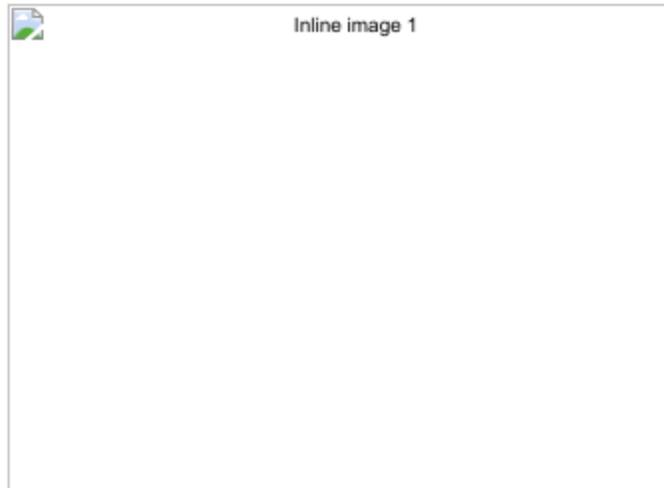
be true, or otherwise makes you uncomfortable, isn't that what education is about, because when your core beliefs haven't been challenged at least once during your time at university, then you or your university are not doing it right. We can't allow colleges and universities to become places of intolerance. Safe spaces are an expression of the conviction, increasingly prevalent among college

students, that their schools should keep them from being “*bombarded*” by discomfiting or distressing viewpoints.

As such, universities have a responsibility to create an environment that fosters tolerance and mutual respect among members of the campus community, an environment in which all students can exercise their right to participate fully in campus life without being discriminated against. Even when you believe that you are listening to ignorance you can learn. So when I see liberal institutions feel threaten by free speech, it breaks my heart because I remember the price that people paid for that right which due to self-righteousness is being denied to others, many of whom I actually disagree with but should have to right to speak their mind. As such the growing lack of Free Speech in our schools, on college campuses and in society in general ***is my rant of the week....***

WEEK'S READINGS

Why Is The GOP The Only Climate-Science-Denying Party In The World?



We have to stop being polite to idiots in Congress and those knuckleheads who still deny that the science that is sounding the alarm that Climate Change is real and if we don't do something soon we reach a tipping point that we substantially change the world as we know it today. Yet several weeks ago Jeb Bush proposed to eliminate the Obama administration's regulation of carbon pollution, and, in keeping with his self-styled goal of “*growth at all cost,*” proposes to make any further climate regulation essentially impossible. In any other democracy in the world, a Jeb Bush would be an isolated loon, operating outside the major parties, perhaps carrying on at conferences with fellow cranks, but having no prospects of seeing his vision carried out in government. But the United States is different. Here in America, ideas like Bush's fit comfortably within one of the two major political

parties. Indeed, the greatest barrier to Bush claiming his party's nomination is the quite possibly justified sense that he is too sober and moderate to suit the GOP.

Of all the major conservative parties in the democratic world, the Republican Party stands alone in its denial of the legitimacy of climate science. Indeed, the Republican Party stands alone in its conviction that no national or international response to climate change is needed. To the extent that the party is divided on the issue, the gap separates candidates who openly dismiss climate science as a hoax, and those who, shying away from the political risks of blatant ignorance, instead couch their stance in the alleged impossibility of international action.

A new paper by Sondre Båtstrand studies the climate-change positions of electoral manifestos for the conservative parties in nine democracies, and finds the GOP truly stands apart. Opposition to any mitigation of greenhouse-gas emissions, he finds, *"is only the case with the U.S. Republican Party, and hence not representative of conservative parties as a party family."* For instance, the Swedish conservative party "stresses the necessity of international cooperation and binding treaties to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions, with the European Union and emissions trading as essentials."

Okay, you might say, that's just Sweden. But all of the other non-American conservative platforms follow similar themes. Germany's conservative platform declares, *"Climate Change threatens the very foundations of our existence and the chances of development of the next generations."* Canada's, writes Båtstrand, *"presents both past and future measures on climate change. The past measures are regulations on electricity production, research and development on clean energy (including carbon capture and storage), and international cooperation and agreements including support for adaptation in developing countries."* Even coal-rich Australia has a conservative party that endorses action to limit climate change. All of this is to suggest that the influence of the fossil-fuel industry alone cannot explain the right's brick-wall opposition to any steps to reduce emissions within the United States. Oil in Canada and coal in Australia both account for a far larger share of their countries' economies (which are less than a tenth as large as the U.S. economy) than any fossil-fuel reserves in the United States.

Nor can a fealty to free-market theory alone explain the change, either. Free-market ideology traditionally recognizes a role for government when it comes to *"externalities,"* or actions that impose costs on others. Pollution is the most classic case of an externality — a factory whose production pollutes the air, or a local stream, should have to pay the cost. Even F.A. Hayek, in the anti-statist polemic *The Road to Serfdom*, conceded, *"Nor can certain harmful effects of deforestation, or of some methods of farming, or of the smoke and noise of factories, be confined to the owner of the property in question or to those who are willing to submit to the damage for an agreed compensation. In such instances we must find some substitute for the regulation by the price mechanism."* Now, Hayek offered this concession to the role of government in the course of advocating for a pricing mechanism for externalities, rather than a crude ban. But he was recognizing that even the purest libertarians must concede the need for collective action of some kind when it comes to things like pollution.

It is also worth noting that the Republican Party used to fit in with the pattern of other international conservative parties. The Nixon administration created the Environmental Protection Agency and passed the Clean Air Act. The first Bush administration passed amendments strengthening it. Both of those presidents are considered, correctly, to be aliens to the conservative movement. The conservative movement has always opposed environmental regulation, and Republican leaders since the first President Bush — the GOP Congress since the era of Newt Gingrich, George W. Bush, and the current

Republican presidential field — have followed conservative thinking. Indeed, administrators of the EPA from previous Republican administrations have endorsed Obama’s climate program, but they lack any influence or even legitimacy within the party today.

Rabid opposition is not the only quality that sets the GOP apart from other major conservative parties. The fervent commitment to supply-side economics is also an almost uniquely American idea. The GOP is the only major democratic party in the world that opposes the principle of universal health insurance. The virulence of anti-government ideology in the United States has no parallel anywhere in the world.

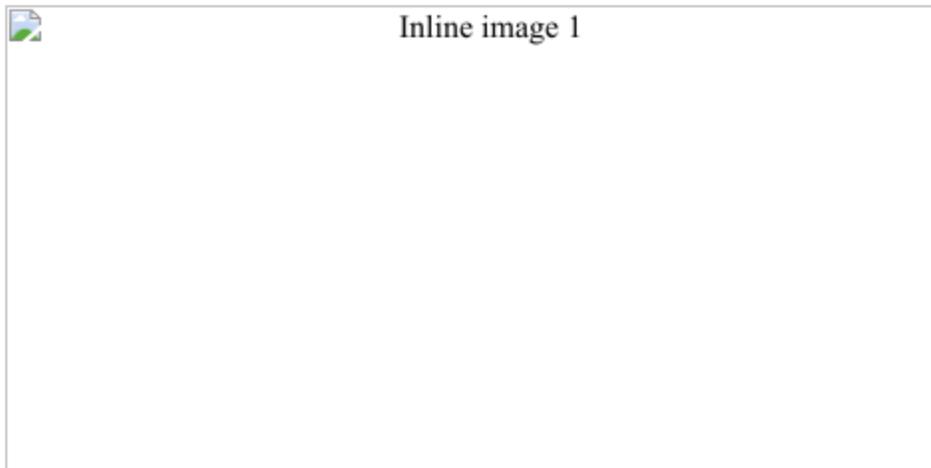
And so the “*moderate*” Republican climate position is that action is pointless, since countries like China will never reduce their own emissions. The more right-wing position within the party — endorsed by the party’s leading presidential candidate and the chairmen of the science committees in both houses — is that thousands of climate scientists worldwide have secretly coordinated a massive hoax. And then the even more conservative position, advocated by the second-leading candidate in the polls, holds not only that climate science is a massive hoax, but so are evolution and the big bang. The “*moderate*” candidates are still, by international standards, rabid extremists. It is the nature of long-standing arrangements to dull our sense of the peculiar, to make the bizarre seem ordinary. From a global standpoint, the entire Republican Party has lost its collective mind.

Jonathan Chait – Daily Intelligencer – September 28, 2015

Think about it, these people see themselves as protectors, yet they choose to ignore humanity’s greatest threat. So why aren’t they being shamed into reality?

FACTORY FARMS

Industry Fights for Right to Produce Foods in Ways That Can Seriously Hurt You



One of Smithfield’s factory farms in North Carolina

The food industry goes to great lengths to uphold the illusion that your food is grown in an idyllic farm setting. And one of the biggest secrets that farms no longer exist in America. Most of the animals that we eat are grown in giant hidden factories. The reality is quite different, as revealed in the featured video, shot by Mark Devries.

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

Using spy drones, he's been investigating the environmental impact of confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs) since 2012. In the featured clip, he's flying over one of Smithfield's factory farms — the largest pork producer in the world. Several warehouse-style buildings are lined up next to a giant open air cesspool the size of four football fields, filled with the excrement from the thousands of pigs housed in the buildings.

Pig CAFOs — A Well-Hidden Health Threat

The vast majority of the nearly 112 million pigs raised for food in the United States are raised in factory farms such as the one shown in the video. As noted by Devries, there are 2,000 pig CAFOs in North Carolina alone. The highest concentration of hog farms in the US is found in Duplin County, where an estimated eight million hogs produce about 14 billion gallons of waste each year. On a national level, cattle, dairy cows, hog, and poultry CAFOs produce about 300 million tons of manure annually.

The average hog farm generates as much waste as a medium-sized city, but they certainly don't have to dispose of it like one. When the cesspool of toxic waste is full, it must be emptied, and to do that, they simply spray it across the landscape using a high-pressure hose that shoots it out like a fine mist. Runoff from the spray-irrigated fields ends up choking nearby waterways with algae blooms, and can contaminate ground water.

As the spray drifts downwind, it causes all sorts of problems for those unfortunate enough to live there. First of all, there's the stench. Living in the vicinity of a CAFO is akin to living next to a landfill or a chemical factory. People can't open their windows or hang laundry out to dry. It's not unusual for people to report the fumes coming from the CAFOs are so bad they can't make it from their house to their car without stopping to retch. Headaches, eye irritation, and nausea are commonplace. But this isn't only a matter of bad odor and temporary side effects though; it's a serious health threat.

Living Near a Factory Farm Can Be Hazardous to Your Health — and People Are Starting to Recognize It

Manure contains over 160 different known pathogens, viruses, and bacteria. The waste in these cesspools can also contain varying amounts of:

- Barn cleaners and other cleaning chemicals

- Herbicides like Roundup, which is in the animal feed
- Antibiotics
- Hormones
- Municipal and/or industrial wastes

The noxious emissions from spray-irrigation of manure (which also contain elevated levels of ammonias and hydrogen sulfide fumes) have been linked to decreased lung function, cardiovascular ailments, neurological problems, asthma, reduced immune function, and premature death.

Research by Peter Goldsmith of the University of Illinois reveals that public disgust with and distrust of CAFOs has now reached significant levels. As reported on John Ikerd's blog:

“People in Illinois who participate in public hearings consistently indicate they have ‘no confidence’ in Illinois laws regulating CAFOs or the government officials who are supposed to enforce CAFO regulations.

Goldsmith revealed that ‘70 percent of the individuals opposed the proposed facilities and 89 percent of statements made by local residents and other interested citizens challenged the legitimacy of proposed CAFOs.’

He found a mere ‘5 percent of the residents supported CAFOs’ – the vast majority of supporters being outside consultants for CAFO operators and government officials.”

Faced with Damning Evidence, Big Ag Turns from Science to Emotional Appeals

From the beginning, there were people opposed to the industrialization of agriculture, and in years past the industry's public relations campaigns revolved around science.

The opposition was invariably accused of acting from a place of emotions rather than sound scientific evidence.

Ironically, as the scientific evidence has dramatically mounted against industrial farming methods, the industry has altered their approach to appeal to people's emotions instead, and PR experts have noted that the “scientific approach” has lost its effectiveness when it comes to shaping public opinion.

As just one example of the damning research published over the past several years, an extensive 2.5 year-long study of industrial livestock production commissioned by the Pew Charitable Trusts concluded that:

“The current industrial farm animal production (IFAP) system often poses unacceptable risks to public health, the environment, and the welfare of the animals themselves.”

To increase confidence and trust in industrial agriculture, the industry has launched a multi-million dollar campaign to present modern farmers in an attractive and environmentally responsible light.

But the facts speak for themselves. CAFOs and large-scale monocropping of junk food ingredients (corn and soy), have become a driving force of environmental destruction and threatens human health in more ways than one.

Antibiotic-Resistant Disease, Another Health Hazard Associated with CAFOs

Animals raised in factory farm settings are not only kept under horrific living conditions. They're also fed an unnatural diet and drugs, which has environmental ramifications (spreading antibiotic-resistant bacteria into soil and water, for example), and affect the health of the animals and the humans who eat them.

The widespread use of antibiotics for non-medical purposes has spawned superbugs resistant to many of the antibiotics used in human medicine, and for a number of years now, experts have been warning we may soon enter an era where we have no effective antibiotics left. This would spell the end of modern medicine as we know it.

Antibiotic-resistant diseases have steadily risen, and now claim the life of about 23,000 Americans each year. Hospitals are notorious hotbeds for drug-resistant disease, and hospital-acquired infections now affect one in 25 patients. Certain medical instruments, such as duodenoscopes and colonoscopes, have been implicated in a number of hospital-acquired drug-resistant outbreaks, the most recent one reported by Huntington Memorial Hospital.

Children exposed to antibiotics during childhood also have an increased risk of health problems in adulthood, including a 50 percent increased risk of type 2 diabetes, according to recent research, and CAFO animal products may actually be a primary source of antibiotics for most people. CAFO meat may also be a source of potentially lethal infections — not simply because you're eating antibiotics and therefore building resistance, but because the meat is frequently tainted with drug-resistant bacteria that can cause disease if the meat is improperly handled or undercooked.

For example, researchers have compared E.coli samples found on supermarket meat with E.coli samples collected from patients with drug-resistant urinary tract infections (UTI), genetically linking more than 100 antibiotic-resistant UTIs to tainted supermarket meat products.

As reported by National Geographic, *Klebsiella pneumoniae* is another foodborne bacterial hazard that can cause pneumonia, bloodstream infections, and meningitis, and it too is becoming increasingly resistant to antibiotics. Overall, antibiotic-resistant infections have a price tag of more than \$35 billion in societal costs in the US alone.

Industry Fights to Avoid Antibiotic Use Reporting

As reported by AgriPulse, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a proposal¹⁴ this past May to track antibiotic sales on a species-by-species basis, but is receiving strong opposition from the industry. At present, drug-makers report total sales of individual drugs only. Breaking down where these drugs eventually end up would help the FDA evaluate the links between usage patterns and antibiotic-resistance trends, allowing them to take more targeted action to curb the spread of antibiotic-resistance.

According to the obviously heavily conflicted industry, such data “would be difficult to produce, misleading, and would likely be used unfairly to target segments of the industry.” The industry is also opposed to using estimates in lieu of firm data. Industry groups opposing the FDA’s proposal include the Animal Health Institute, which represents drugmakers, and the American Feed Industry Association.

While collecting this kind of data would be a step in the right direction, it will not necessarily provide a complete picture, as it still would not differentiate between medical necessity and growth promotion usage, for example. Still, it would certainly be better than the existing flawed system.

Drug makers have been asked to voluntarily restrict the usage of antibiotics that are medically important in human medicine by disallowing their use for growth promotion purposes. But this approach, big surprise, has not made any dent in this problem. FDA data shows that usage of medically important antibiotics in livestock increased by three percent between 2012 and 2013. In total, antibiotic usage in agriculture rose by 20 percent between 2009 and 2013, and this is entirely the wrong direction we need to be going.

Medical Use of Antibiotics Also Needs to Change

While the vast majority of antibiotics sold end up being used in food animals, the use of antibiotics in human medicine also needs to be restricted. In the UK, Professor Mark Baker with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is calling for disciplinary action against doctors who prescribe too many antibiotics.

He also warns that patients who refuse to listen to the sensible advice of their doctors, and insist on getting an antibiotic when they really don’t need one are creating problems both for themselves and society at large. In an ongoing effort to combat the overuse of antimicrobial drugs (which includes

antibiotics, antivirals, antifungals, and antiparasitics) in medicine, NICE recently released updated prescription guidelines for children and adults.

The guidelines are part of a broad-scope Antimicrobial Stewardship program, and include the recommendation for health care facilities to monitor antimicrobial resistance, and to review rates and trends of antimicrobial drug prescriptions and resistance. It also acknowledges the pressure many doctors receive from their patients, and addresses patient education on the appropriate use of these drugs (as just one example, you cannot treat a viral infection with an antibiotic, as it only works on bacteria).

Calls for similar stewardship programs have been made in the US. As reported by Reuters:¹⁶ “[C]loser coordination between healthcare facilities and public health departments could save 37,000 US lives over five years by preventing infections from antibiotic-resistant germs...” In addition to the 23,000 deaths that occur from drug-resistant infections in the US each year, another two million people contract a drug-resistant illness.

According to the CDC, if health agencies were to notify hospitals and nursing homes of drug-resistant outbreaks, it could help reduce the spread by each facility taking stricter precautions. Ditto for when a hospital transports an infected patient to another facility. The receiving facility should be notified of the infection and take appropriate action to prevent transmission. In cases of an outbreak, the facility should also use diagnostic tests to determine if other patients might be asymptomatic carriers.

Safer Food Sources

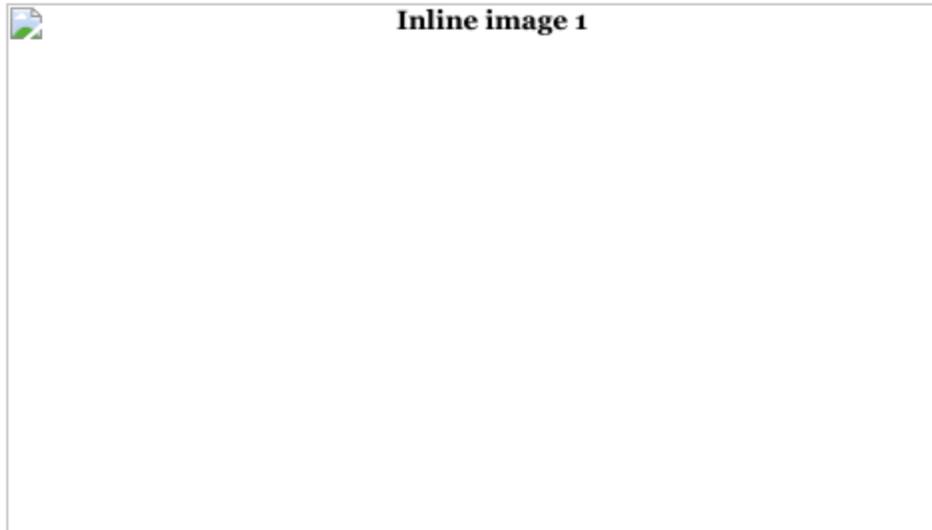
I encourage you to support the small family farms in your area, particularly organic farms that respect the laws of nature and use the relationships between animals, plants, insects, soil, water, and habitat to create synergistic, self-supporting, non-polluting, and GMO-free ecosystems. Whether you do so for ethical, environmental, or health reasons – or all of the above – the closer you can get to the "backyard barnyard," the better. Ideally, get your meat, chickens, and eggs from smaller community farms with free-ranging animals, organically fed, and locally marketed.

This is the way food has been raised and distributed for centuries... before it was corrupted by politics, corporate greed, and the blaring arrogance of the food industry. You can do this not only by visiting the farm directly, if you have one nearby, but also by taking part in farmer's markets and community-supported agriculture programs. Organizations that can help you locate raw and farm-fresh foods in the vicinity of where you live include:

 Inline image 2

Five myths about refugees and migrants

It is more complicated than at first thought



Web Link: <http://wapo.st/1j41Pd2>

Tragic images of refugees and migrants desperately seeking safety in Europe have shocked the world. The continent is facing its worst population displacement crisis since World War II. Its response has been far from coherent: Policies change nearly daily, people ping-pong between borders while politicians cry blame, and thousands drown in the Mediterranean while others are saved. Given this chaos, many myths about migrants and refugees persist. Debunking these misconceptions can lead to better policies to improve human rights.

1. This is a migrant crisis, not a refugee crisis.

It's both. The people flooding into Europe can be sorted roughly into three groups: refugees, economic migrants and those fleeing violence. Many media outlets, including The Washington Post, have used the terms interchangeably. But the difference is not just a matter of semantics. It determines whether someone can legally stay or be sent home.

Under international law — and the asylum laws of the United States and most Western countries — the term “*refugees*” refers to a very narrow group of people. Legally, a refugee is someone who has fled his country because of a well-founded fear of persecution on the basis of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. No state, regardless of whether it has signed the . Refugee

Convention, can return a refugee to a place where her life would be endangered.

“*Migrant*,” by contrast, is a term with no meaning in international law. In common parlance, it is used to describe people seeking work opportunities. States have no legal obligations to migrants — they are free to deny them entry or deport them. So when European politicians lump together all those at their borders as “migrants,” they imply that their nations owe those people nothing.

Although the term “*refugee*” is also commonly used to refer to people fleeing war, most of those trying to escape violence in Syria and elsewhere are legally not refugees and are ineligible for asylum, because the threat to their safety is not specific enough to meet the legal definition. Some states will choose to grant them temporary protection. But only 54 percent of Syrian asylum seekers in Europe last year, for example, were granted asylum. The rest may be sent back into the war zone.

2. The migrants and refugees present a security threat.

Politicians and news media figures on both sides of the Atlantic have perpetuated this myth. “*Given the sheer magnitude of the migration, it is a virtual certainty that terrorist organizations are taking advantage of the crisis to insinuate themselves into Europe,*” journalist Ian Tuttle wrote for the National Review in a typical assessment.

Yes, in theory, terrorists could exploit the same porous borders exposed by human smugglers. But in practice, they are unlikely to use migration routes to infiltrate Europe — and checks are in place to catch them if they try.

As Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch, has argued, well-funded terrorist groups have no need to embark on complicated and dangerous schemes to get to Europe. Anyone who can simply take a plane is unlikely to risk his life by using a smuggler. And indeed, many foreign fighters already have European citizenship.

Moreover, Europe has plenty of experience handling asylum applications from residents of states known to harbor terrorists, Iraq and Afghanistan prominent among them. If Islamic State fighters or other people plotting terrorism try to enter that way, stringent background checks are in place to help weed them out.

3. Overly generous rescue operations encourage more refugees and migrants.

In October 2013, Italy launched Operation Mare Nostrum, a search-and-rescue operation for migrants crossing the Mediterranean. The program saved more than 130,000 people from a watery grave. Yet it had fierce critics. “*We do not support planned search-and-rescue operations in the Mediterranean,*” Britain’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office minister of state, Baroness Anelay, said last year. “We believe that they create an unintended ‘*pull factor*,’ encouraging more migrants to attempt the dangerous sea crossing and thereby leading to more tragic and unnecessary deaths.”

But Mediterranean migration is driven by human desperation, not by Europe's willingness to rescue. When Mare Nostrum was suspended in October 2014 and superseded by a smaller-budget E.U. operation that kept close to the Italian shores, migration flows continued unabated — and the death toll increased. From January through the end of April, 1,721 migrants and refugees died crossing the Mediterranean, setting 2015 up for a record death toll. Then, because Europe began providing more funding, boats and planes to the effort, and started patrolling a broader swath of sea, the death toll dramatically dropped to 99 between April 27 and June 29. Still, an estimated 2,500 people had died this year crossing the Mediterranean as of the end of August.

4. Europe is hostile to the migrants and refugees.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban wrote that his country must “*defend our borders*” from people who were “*raised in another religion, and represent a radically different culture.*” While his comments are extreme, they reflect anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant sentiment in Europe. According to a 2014 Pew survey, 63 percent of Italians, 50 percent of Poles, 53 percent of Greeks, 33 percent of Germans, 27 percent of French and 26 percent of Brits view Muslims unfavorably. Meanwhile, Hungary and Bulgaria are sealing borders with walls and fences; Estonia, Macedonia and Ukraine have similar plans.

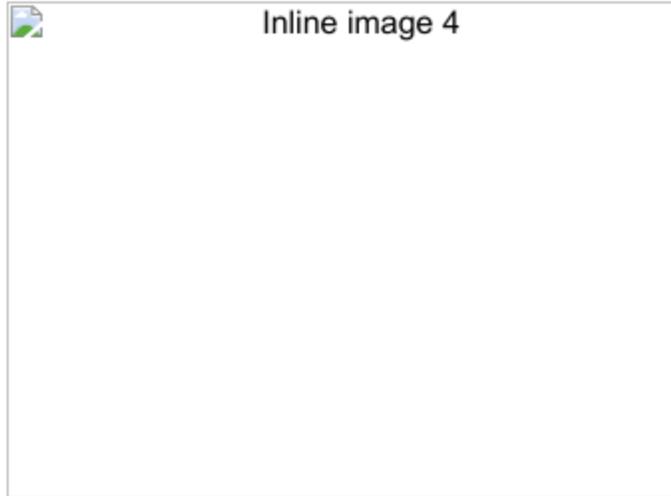
But while some of the poorer nations and former Soviet bloc countries have been especially hostile, Europe's wealthier states have been relatively generous. The European Union on Tuesday adopted a plan to resettle 120,000 asylum seekers, over the objections of Hungary, Romania, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. That's on top of the tens of thousands of people to whom Western European countries granted asylum or offered temporary protection in 2014. Germany has been the most generous: It took in 40,560 asylum seekers last year and expects to receive as many as 800,000 this year. And Sweden has been granting permanent residency to all asylum seekers from Syria.

5. Wealthy Persian Gulf states have not been doing their part.

As Amnesty International and other prominent groups have noted, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain “*have offered zero resettlement places to Syrian refugees.*” None of those countries are signatories to the Refugee Convention, and all have asylum systems that are weak or absent. It would be difficult for them to suddenly recognize people as refugees and permanently resettle them.

But Gulf States have assisted in other ways. They have donated to support the [REDACTED] refugee agency's efforts in countries neighboring Syria. They have welcomed large numbers of foreign workers, including 2 million to 3 million Syrians, many of whom arrived since the war began. And they have quietly renewed the visas of Syrian workers so that they don't have to return to Syria. Saudi Arabia also says it has given Syrians free health care and education, and has granted permanent residency to hundreds of thousands of them. Other Syrian workers in the gulf have more tenuous legal status, since they can be fired and sent home at any time. For some, though, conditions in the Gulf States may be better than what they would face elsewhere.

Top 10 Foods for a Better Mood



The food we eat can be an excellent source of vitamins, nutrients, and antioxidants. Growing research supports that the quality of our food is not only important to our physical health but also for our mood and can influence depression and anxiety. Our Westernized so-called "cafeteria" diet unfortunately is calorie-loaded, nutrient-poor, and highly processed, leaving us with extra calories without real nutrition. Animal studies have found that a diet high in fat, sugar and processed foods leads to higher rates of anxiety and depression. Foods that are high in sugar, fat, and sodium are also very addictive and particularly comforting. In fact, evolution has probably set us up this way. Researchers have even found that high-fat, high-sugar foods or "comfort foods" temporarily improve mood and relieve anxiety and depression but then create a cycle of self-medication with non-nutritious foods.

In contrast, a Mediterranean diet high in fish, olive oil, nuts, and whole grains has been linked to lower rates of depression. One study found that people who followed a Mediterranean diet for 4 years reduced their risk of depression by 40-60 percent. Another study found that using a diet rich in green leafy vegetables and berries called "*MIND*" (Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay) -- a hybrid of a Mediterranean diet and a diet for people with high blood pressure-- was linked to lower rates of Alzheimer's disease. Want to boost your mood with food?

Try these top 10 "*brain-healthy*" foods:

- 1. Leafy greens.** Leafy greens like kale and bok choy contain folate, calcium, magnesium, and vitamin K. Folate has been used as a supplement to improve depression. Leafy greens also contain compounds that help the liver process toxins better.
- 2. Mussels, Oysters.** Oysters and shellfish have high content of Vitamin B12. Vitamin B12 is important for neurotransmitters in the brain and nerves, and a deficiency can lead to depression and anxiety. Vitamin B12 supplementation has been found to improve depression. If you are vegan or

vegetarian, you want to ensure you're getting enough vitamin B12 because it's mainly found in meat, dairy, and eggs. It's important to find alternative sources of vitamin B12.

3. Fish and Fish Oil. Studies have found that high fish consumption reduces depression. This may in part be due to the fact that fish is a good source of omega-3 fatty acids, an effective supplement to treatment for depression. For omega-3 fatty acid supplements, most studies for mood use 1 to 2 grams daily, and there should be more eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) than docosahexanoic acid (DHA) when you look at the label.

In order to avoid mercury exposure found in fish, pregnant women should be careful regarding how much and types of fish they eat. The Food and Drug Administration recommends that pregnant women avoid: 1) tilefish, 2) shark, 3) swordfish, and 4) king mackerel. Pregnant women can, however, eat up to 12 ounces of other types of fish per week.

4. Walnuts, Almonds, Hazelnuts. Nuts are a good source of Vitamin E. You can have them raw or unsalted. One study found that a Mediterranean diet supplemented with 30 grams of mixed nuts (walnuts, almonds, hazelnuts) daily led to less depression.

5. Blueberries and other berries. Berries, especially blueberries, have been found to protect the brain. In one study, eating two servings of blueberries a week was linked to a reduction in the risk of Alzheimer's disease by 35%.

6. Lentils, chickpeas, beans. Legumes like lentils and chickpeas contain high levels of folate and zinc, both of which have been used as effective supplements for treating depression. Beans like black eyed peas also contain high levels of folate. Getting enough zinc is particularly important for vegetarians and vegans since the absorption of zinc can be reduced by 50 percent from phytates, which are found in plants.

7. Dark Chocolate, raw cacao powder or nibs. Dark chocolate and raw cacao (powder from unroasted cocoa beans) contains cocoa polyphenols, a type of antioxidant found in plants, has been found to improve calmness and contentedness in a study where people received dark chocolate drink mix. Raw cacao nibs and powder do not contain added sugars and can be used in smoothies. Cocoa and raw cacao powder can contain toxic heavy metals, depending on the brand, so check with sites like Consumer Labs.

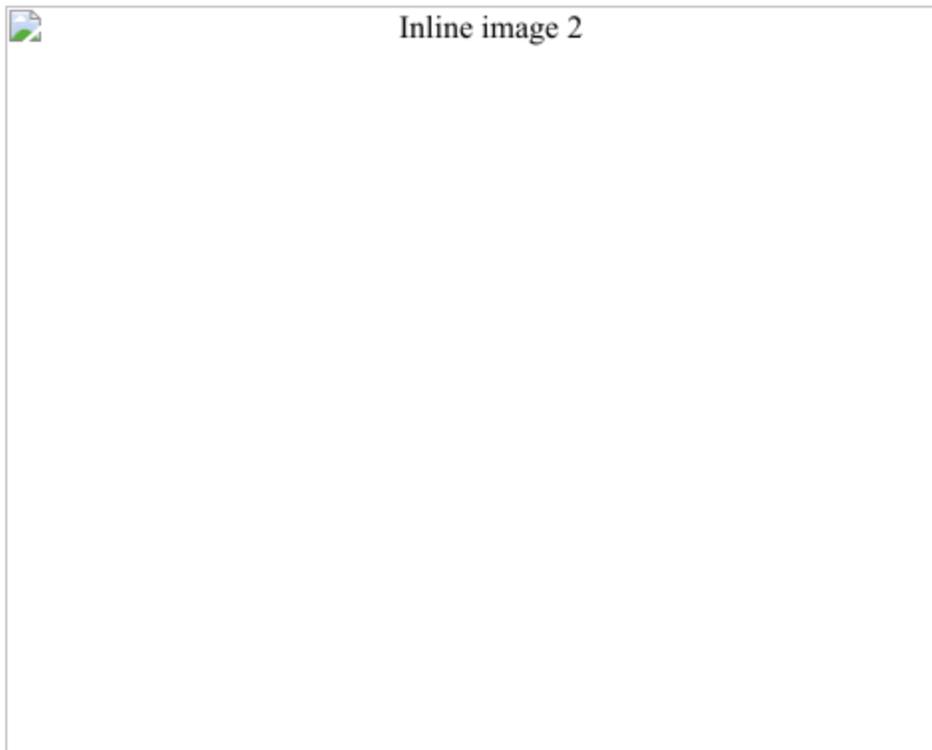
8. Pumpkin seeds. A quarter cup of pumpkin seeds contains almost half the daily recommended dose for magnesium, an essential mineral to protect you from depression and anxiety. Pumpkin seeds also contain zinc, plant-based omega-3 fatty acids, and tryptophan, which help promote sleep.

9. Fermented Foods and Probiotics. Scientific research is shedding light on the important link between the bacteria in the gut (your so-called "second brain") and your mood. Fermented foods like kimchi and sauerkraut contain probiotics and have been found to reduce social anxiety. Fermented foods and probiotics can also help with depression and anxiety. Mice who were on probiotics behaved

like they had taken Prozac. Probiotic powder supplements have also been shown to reduce negative thoughts during sad moods.

10. Turmeric. The active ingredient in turmeric is curcumin, an anti-inflammatory compound that has been found to help antidepressants be more effective in treating depression. You can drink it in tea or add it to your everyday dishes like chili or pasta sauce.

THIS WEEK'S QUOTE



THIS IS BRILLIANT

Wiener Cello Ensemble 5 1 Bolero 1



Inline image 1

Web Link:



Wonderful... Wonderful... Wonderful...

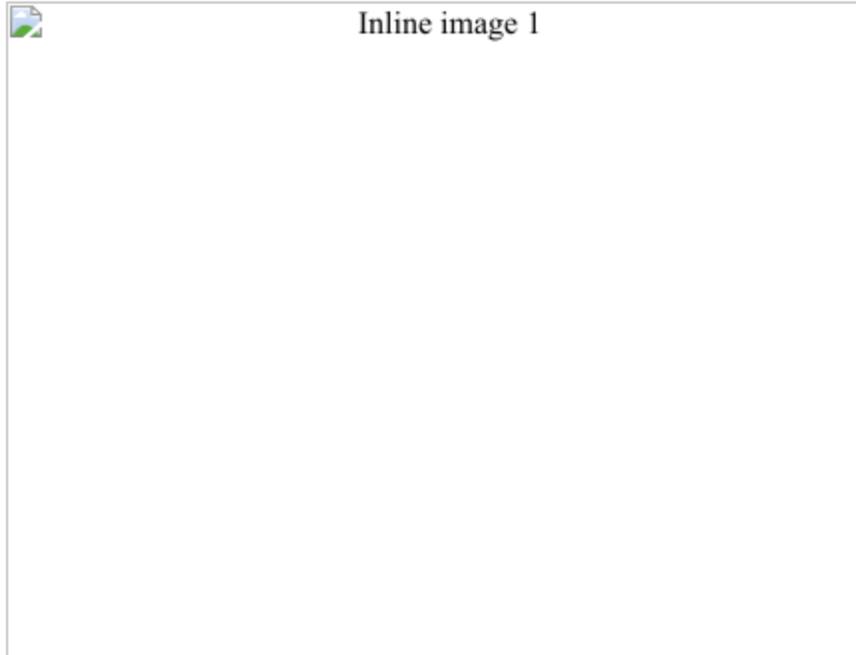
THINK ABOUT THIS

Can You See a Difference Between These Two Women?



Inline image 1

BEST VIDEO OF THE WEEK



.... Pretty Cool

THIS WEEK'S MUSIC

Sam Cooke



Inline image 1

This week I invite you to enjoy the music of “King of Soul” Mr. Sam Cooke – an American recording artist, singer-songwriter and entrepreneur generally considered among the greatest of all time. Influential as both a singer and composer he is commonly known for his distinctive vocals and importance within popular music. His pioneering contributions to soul music contributed to the rise of Aretha Franklin, Bobby Womack, Al Green, Curtis Mayfield, Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye, Billy Preston and popularized the likes of Otis Redding and James Brown. AllMusic biographer Bruce Eder wrote that Cooke was "*the inventor of soul music*", and possessed "*an incredible natural singing voice and a smooth, effortless delivery that has never been surpassed.*" He was a prolific songwriter and wrote most of the songs he recorded. He also had a hand in overseeing some of the song arrangements. In spite of releasing mostly singles, he released a well-received blues-inflected LP in 1963, **Night Beat**, and his most critically acclaimed studio album, *Ain't That Good News*, which featured five singles, in 1964.

Cooke had 30 U.S. top 40 hits between 1957 and 1964, plus three more posthumously. Major hits like "*You Send Me*", "*A Change Is Gonna Come*", "*Cupid*", "*Chain Gang*", "*Wonderful World*", and "*Twistin' the Night Away*" are some of his most popular songs. Cooke was also among the first modern black performers and composers to attend to the business side of his musical career. He founded both a record label and a publishing company as an extension of his careers as a singer and composer. He also took an active part in the Civil Rights Movement. At the age of 33 and the height of his fame on December 11, 1964, Sam Cooke was fatally shot by Bertha Franklin, the manager of the Hacienda Motel in Los Angeles, California. After an inquest, the courts ruled Cooke's death to be a justifiable homicide. Since that time, the circumstances of his death have been called into question by Cooke's family and his wide circle of friends and acquaintances.

Since his death Sam Cook has received a number of posthumous honors.

- In 1986, Cooke was inducted as a charter member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.
- In 1987, Cooke was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame.
- In 1999, Cooke was honored with the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award, and in 2004, Rolling Stone ranked him 16th on its list of the "*100 Greatest Artists of All Time*".
- In 2008, Cooke was named the fourth "*Greatest Singer of All Time*" by Rolling Stone.

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

Sincerely,

Greg Brown

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Gregory Brown
Chairman & CEO
GlobalCast Partners, LLC

