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Subject: Greg Brown's Weekend Reading and Other Things.. 05/10/2015

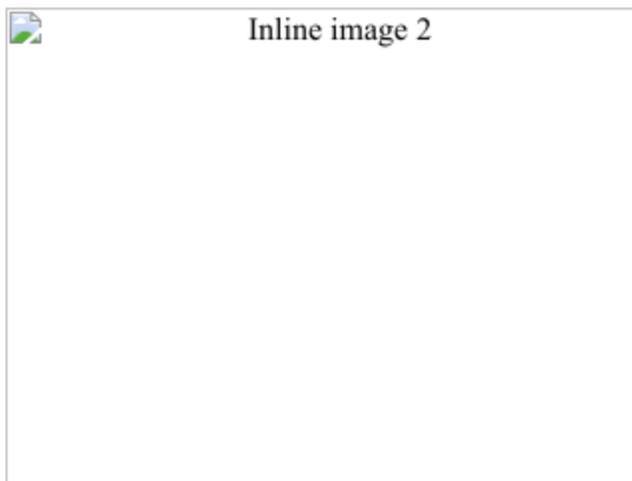
Date: Sun, 10 May 2015 07:56:19 +0000

Attachments: 10_Proven_Health_Benefits_of_Eggs_(No._1_is_My_Favorite)_Kris_Gunnars__Authority_Nutrition_April_10,_2015.docx; 7_Reasons_America_Is_Stuck_in_Never-Ending_War_William_Astore_TomDispatch_March_20,_2015.docx; Executing_the_Insane_Is_Against_the_Law_of_the_Land_So_Why_Do_We_Keep_Doing_It_Stephanie_Mencimer_Mother_Jones_Mar.Apr2015.docx; [REDACTED].23,_2015.docx; WHAT_WILL_IT_TAKE_TO_END_HOMELESSNESS_The_Urban_Institute_April_10,_2015.docx; Sam_&_Dave_-_bio.docx; The_Piano_Guys_bio.docx; The_Hale_Center_Theatre_bio.docx; U.S._Employers_Added_223,000_Jobs_in_April_Unemployment_Rate_5.4%_Nelson_Schwartz_TWP_05.08.15.docx

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DEAR FRIEND.....

Why War in America is the new normal.



It was launched immediately after the 9/11 attacks, and almost immediately became known as the **Global War on Terror**, or **GWOT**. Pentagon insiders called it "*the long war*," an open-ended, perhaps unending, conflict against nations and terror networks mainly of a radical Islamist bent. It saw the revival of counterinsurgency doctrine, buried in the aftermath of defeat in Vietnam, and a reinterpretation of that disaster as well. Over the years, its chief characteristic became ever clearer: a

"Groundhog Day" kind of repetition. Just when you thought it was over (Iraq, Afghanistan), just after victory (of a sort) was declared, it began again. Now, as we find ourselves enmeshed in **Iraq War 3.0**, what better way to memorialize the post-9/11 American way of war than through repetition. As such we need to ask ourselves why after almost fourteen years the **War On Terror** still ongoing, with the mission eternally unaccomplished and we have serious politicians suggesting that we bomb another country who hasn't attacked us. Military specialist **William Astore** wrote an article in **TomDispatch** on the top seven reasons why never-ending war is the new normal in America.

1. The privatization of war: The US military's recourse to private contractors has strengthened the profit motive for war-making and prolonged wars as well. Unlike the citizen-soldiers of past eras, the mobilized warrior corporations of America's new mercenary moment—the Halliburton/KBRs (nearly \$40 billion in contracts for the Iraq War alone), the DynCorps (\$4.1 billion to train 150,000 Iraqi police), and the Blackwater/Xe/Academis (\$1.3 billion in Iraq, along with boatloads of controversy)—have no incentive to demobilize. Like most corporations, their business model is based on profit through growth, and growth is most rapid when wars and preparations for more of them are the favored options in Washington.

"Freedom isn't free," as a popular conservative bumper sticker puts it, and neither is war and as the saying goes, "*He who pays the piper calls the tune,*" and today's mercenary corporations have been calling for a lot of military marches piping in \$138 billion in contracts for Iraq alone, according to the Financial Times. And if you think that the privatization of war must at least reduce government waste, think again: the Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan estimated in 2011 that fraud, waste, and abuse accounted for up to \$60 billion of the money spent in Iraq alone.

2. The embrace of the national security state by both major parties: Jimmy Carter was the last president to attempt to exercise any kind of control over the national security state. A former Navy nuclear engineer who had served under the demanding Admiral Hyman Rickover, Carter cancelled the B-1 bomber and fought for a US foreign policy based on human rights. Widely pilloried for talking about nuclear war with his young daughter Amy, Carter was further attacked for being "*weak*" on defense. His defeat by Ronald Reagan in 1980 inaugurated 12 years of dominance by Republican presidents that opened the financial floodgates for the Department of Defense. That taught Bill Clinton and the Democratic Leadership Council a lesson when it came to the wisdom of wrapping the national security state in a welcoming embrace, which they did. This expedient turn to the right by the Democrats in the Clinton years served as a temporary booster shot when it came to charges of being "*soft*" on defense—until Republicans upped the ante by going "*all-in*" on military crusades in the aftermath of 9/11.

Since his election in 2008, Barack Obama has done little to alter the course set by his predecessors. He, too, has chosen not to challenge Washington's prevailing catechism of war. Republicans have responded, however, not by muting their criticism, but by upping the ante yet again. How else to explain House Speaker John Boehner's invitation to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to address a joint session of Congress in March? That address promises to be a pep talk for the Republicans, as well as a smack down of the Obama administration and its "*appeasnik*" policies toward Iran and Islamic radicalism.

Serious oversight, let alone opposition to the national security state by Congress or a mainstream political party, has been missing in action for years and must now, in the wake of the Senate Torture

Report fiasco (from which the CIA emerged stronger, not weaker), be presumed dead. The recent midterm election triumph of Republican war hawks and the prospective lineup of candidates for president in 2016 does not bode well when it comes to reining in the national security state in any foreseeable future.

3. "Support Our Troops" as a substitute for thought. You've seen them everywhere: "*Support Our Troops*" stickers. In fact, the "*support*" in that slogan generally means acquiescence when it comes to American-style war. The truth is that we've turned the all-volunteer military into something like a foreign legion, deploying it again and again to our distant battle zones and driving it into the ground in wars that amount to strategic folly. Instead of admitting their mistakes, America's leaders have worked to obscure them by endlessly overpraising our "*warriors*" as so many universal heroes. This may salve our collective national conscience, but it's a form of cheap grace that saves no lives—and wins no wars.

Instead, this country needs to listen more carefully to its troops, especially the war critics who have risked their lives while fighting overseas. Organizations like Iraq Veterans Against the War and Veterans for Peace are good places to start.

4. Fighting a redacted war: War, like the recent Senate torture report, is redacted in America. Its horrors and mistakes are suppressed, its patriotic whistleblowers punished, even as the American people are kept in a demobilized state. The act of going to war no longer represents the will of the people, as represented by formal Congressional declarations of war as the US Constitution demands. Instead, in these years, Americans were told to go to Disney World (as George W. Bush suggested in the wake of 9/11) and keep shopping. They're encouraged not to pay too much attention to war's casualties and costs, especially when those costs involve foreigners with funny-sounding names (after all, they are, as American sniper Chris Kyle so indelicately put it in his book, just "savages").

Redacted war hides the true cost of a permanent state of killing from the American people, if not from foreign observers. Ignorance and apathy reign, even as a national security state that is essentially a shadow government equates its growth with your safety.

5. Threat inflation: There's nothing new about threat inflation. We saw plenty of it during the Cold War (nonexistent missile and bomber gaps, for example). Fear sells and we've had quite a dose of it in the twenty-first century, from ISIS to Ebola. But a more important truth is that fear is a mind-killer, a debate-stifler.

Back in September, for example, Senator Lindsey Graham warned that ISIS and its radical Islamic army was coming to America to kill us all. ISIS, of course, is a regional power with no ability to mount significant operations against the United States. But fear is so commonplace, so effectively stoked in this country that Americans routinely and wildly exaggerate the threat posed by al-Qaeda or ISIS or the bogeyman du jour. Astore: You'll excuse me for not shaking in my boots at the threat of ISIS coming to get me. Or of Sharia Law coming to my local town hall. With respect to such fears, America needs, as Hillary Clinton said in an admittedly different context, to "grow a pair."

6. Defining the world as a global battlefield: In fortress America, all realms have by now become battle spheres. Not only much of the planet, the seas, air, and space, as well as the country's borders and its increasingly up-armored police forces, but the world of thought, the insides of our minds. Think of the 17 intertwined intelligence outfits in "the US Intelligence Community" and their ongoing "surge" for information dominance across every mode of human communication, as well as the surveillance of everything. And don't forget the national security state's leading role in making cyber-war a reality. (Indeed, Washington launched the first cyberwar in history by deploying the Stuxnet computer worm against Iran.)

Think of all this as a global matrix that rests on war, empowering disaster capitalism and the corporate complexes that have formed around the Pentagon, the Department of Homeland Security, and that intelligence community. A militarized matrix doesn't blink at **\$1.45 trillion dollars** devoted to the F-35, a single under-performing jet fighter, nor at projections of \$355 billion over the next decade for "modernizing" the US nuclear arsenal, weapons that Barack Obama vowed to abolish in 2009.

7. The new "normal" in America is war: The 9/11 attacks happened more than 13 years ago, which means that no teenagers in America can truly remember a time when the country was at peace. "War time" is their normal; peace, a fairy tale.

What's truly "exceptional" in twenty-first-century America is any articulated vision of what a land at peace with itself and other nations might be like. Instead, war, backed by a diet of fear, is the backdrop against which the young have grown to adulthood. It's the background noise of their world, so much a part of their lives that they hardly recognize it for what it is. And that's the most insidious danger of them all.

How do we inoculate our children against such a permanent state of war and the war state itself? I have one simple suggestion: just stop it. All of it. Stop making war a never-ending part of our lives and stop celebrating it, too. War should be the realm of the extreme, of the abnormal. It should be the death of normalcy, not the dreary norm. And as Astore says, "***It's never too soon, America, to enlist in that next good fight!***"

Clean Air Act and Dirty Coal at the Supreme Court



Inline image 8

The name of the law at issue before the Supreme Court on Wednesday is the Clean Air Act. It is not the Coal Industry Protection Act, despite what that industry's advocates seem to want the justices to believe. Congress passed the legislation in 1970 and substantially strengthened it in 1990 to safeguard human health from air pollution generated by power plants, vehicles, incinerators and other sources.

One of the most toxic of these pollutants is mercury, a heavy metal that accumulates in waterways and the fish Americans eat. While mercury is particularly dangerous to the vulnerable, developing brains and nervous systems of young children and fetuses, the Environmental Protection Agency estimates that improved air quality standards prevent the premature deaths of as many as 11,000 Americans each year from exposure to mercury and other toxic air pollutants.

In 2012, the agency issued a rule ordering coal-fired power plants, which are far and away the single biggest source of these emissions, to adopt technology to reduce them. The coal industry sued the government for the same reason it has countless times over the decades: Cleaning up pollution costs money. Business owners and other industry backers argue that the law requires the E.P.A. to weigh those costs against any potential health benefits of a regulation.

Industry supporters point to a single phrase in the law — that the agency must regulate pollutants only when “appropriate and necessary” — to mean that if a regulation would cost too much in their eyes, it's not appropriate. But the agency does consider the financial impact of its regulations later in the process, when it sets the actual emissions standards. At the beginning of the process, when it is deciding whether a substance like mercury endangers human health and thus must be regulated — which the law requires it to do — cost is not a factor.

Plenty of evidence suggests this is how the law was designed to work. In line with its fundamental goal of protecting health, it never says costs to business are to be considered at the outset. And even if “appropriate” could be read in more than one way, courts as a rule defer to reasonable agency interpretations of statutory language.

The coal industry, however, argues that costs must be considered at the outset because, it says, they are central to the question of whether to regulate at all. In this case, reducing mercury emissions is expected to cost almost \$10 billion, but the industry says it will provide at most \$4 million to \$6 million in benefits. That is an absurdly low range based on a single statistic: the estimated increase in lifetime earnings for people whose I.Q.s will presumably be higher if their prenatal mercury exposure is lower.

According to the E.P.A., the benefits of an overall reduction in mercury and other toxic air pollutants that the new standards would achieve should be valued at between \$37 billion and \$90 billion. The vast discrepancies in these various estimates show that standard cost-benefit analyses can never precisely account for environmental risks to public health. Given that reality, why should the cost of any uncertainty always fall on the American public, rather than on the industries that create the health risks to begin with?

Coal industry backers, notably the Senate's majority leader, Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, view every regulation, whether aimed at protecting human lives or the future of the planet, as nothing more than a "war on coal." But profits and human health are not mutually exclusive. To the contrary, the technology to meet the E.P.A.'s new mercury standards is already in place at most coal-fired power plants nationwide.

Burning coal is a dirty business, but it can be made cleaner. The federal law balances the need for affordable electricity with reduction of significant threats to human health. The Supreme Court has upheld the E.P.A.'s authority to carry out that law's purpose with broad discretion. There is no reason to upset that deliberate balance, or unreasonably limit the agency's authority, now.

The New York Times – EDITORIAL BOARD – March 23, 2015

GOOD NEWS

U.S. Employers Add Solid 223,000 Jobs, Unemployment Rate Falls To 7-Year Low



Inline image 1

U.S. employers added 223,000 jobs in April, a solid gain that suggests that the economy may be recovering after stumbling at the start of the year. The Labor Department said Friday that the unemployment rate dipped to 5.4 percent from 5.5 percent in March. That is the lowest rate since May 2008, six months into the Great Recession, helping to ease worries that the economy was on the brink of another extended slowdown after a bleak winter in which the overall economy stalled.

Yet the report included signs of sluggishness: March's weak job gain was revised sharply down to just 85,000 from 126,000. In the past three months, employers have added 191,000 positions, a decent gain but down from last year's average of 260,000. Oil and gas drillers, which have struggled under the weight of lower energy prices, shed jobs for a fourth straight month.

But in an encouraging sign, construction companies, which include many higher-paying positions, added jobs at a healthy pace in April. The job growth isn't yet boosting paychecks much. Average hourly wages rose just 3 cents in April to \$24.87. Wages have risen 2.2 percent in the past 12 months, about the same modest year-over-year increase as in the past six years. Despite the jump in hiring in April, there are indications of a *'feast-or-famine'* job market, with some sectors vastly outperforming others.

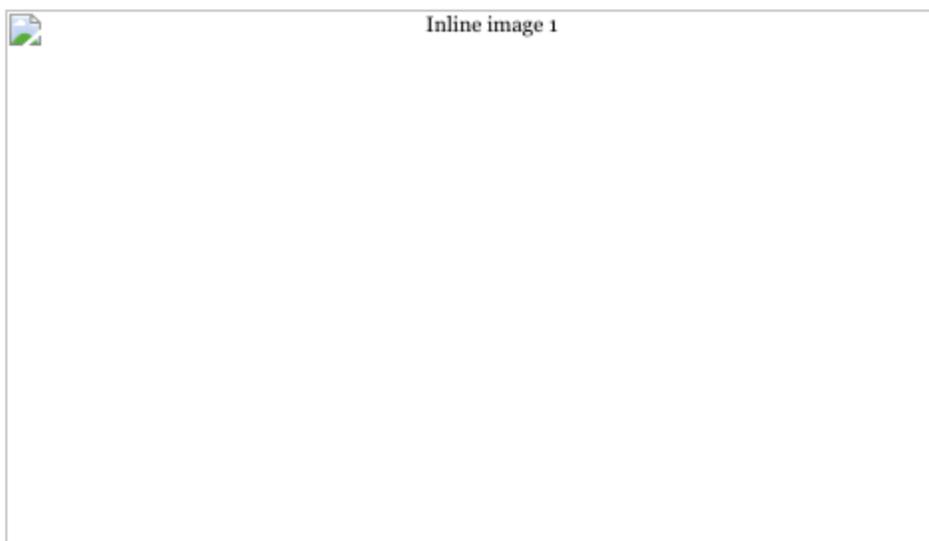
Construction has been gaining steam, thanks to a reasonably healthy housing sector and a spring rebound in hiring after very wintry weather in many parts of the country forced some building projects to be delayed. Builders hired 45,000 workers last month. Similarly, the professional and business services category has been strong, adding 62,000 jobs in April, reflecting financial sector strength and continued demand for collegeeducated, white-collar workers. Health care was another source of gains, adding 55,600 positions. In just the last three months, the health care sector has gained nearly 125,000 jobs.

On the other hand, with oil prices way down from where they were a year ago, drillers and other oil patch employers have been shedding jobs. Energy prices have ticked higher recently, as have gasoline costs, but energy companies including drillers and employers in the Labor Department's support for oil and gas operations category continued to shed workers, cutting more than 10,000 jobs in April.

Underscoring the uncertain picture, the government said in a separate report on Friday that wholesale inventories rose more slowly than expected in March. With businesses restocking shelves less aggressively, experts at Barclays and Macroeconomic Advisers revised their estimate for economic activity in the first quarter downward on Friday to show a contraction of 0.6 percent, even worse than the Commerce Department's initial estimate of a tiny 0.2 increase. Still these numbers should be viewed favorably as the economy has been growing positively for almost six years without interruption. ***I would call that Good News...***

Screwed Again

Greece's poor are back to where they were in 1980



While the rich international bankers in Europe and America booked billions of dollars in fees by extending loans to Greece, it appears that Greece's poor are back to where they were in 1980. In the last seven years, Greece's economic collapse has wiped out all the progress its poor had made in the 28 years before that. Now there are a lot of ways to think about how historic Greece's recession has been. Its economy has fallen about as much as the U.S.'s did during the Great Depression. Its unemployment rate peaked at 28 percent. And, as Derek Thompson points out, its cities have become filled with smog during the winters, because its people can't afford to heat their homes any other way than burning whatever they can get their hands on. But think about this last one. It probably gets us the closest to having a real idea what it's been like to live through Greece's slump.

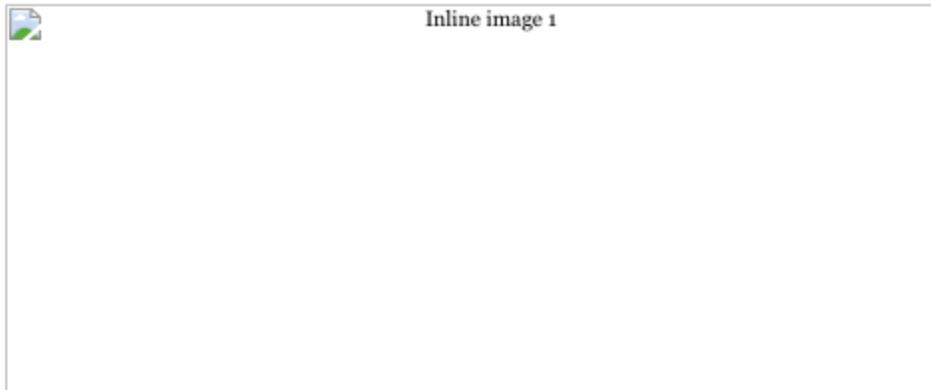
Well, other than the chart above. It shows how much money Greek people from the richest to the poorest 10 percent have had after accounting for taxes and inflation the past 40 years. The simple story, as you can see, is that there was a big jump for everybody after the junta was pushed out in 1974, a big stagnation from the mid-80s to the mid-90s, an even bigger jump, especially for the rich, after that, and then a big crash that's erased 30 years of gains — or more. Greece's rich have done a little better than the rest, with their real disposable incomes "only" falling to 1985 levels. But its poor have fallen even further, all the way back to where they were in 1980.

That's why it's no exaggeration to say that Greece really does have a humanitarian crisis on its hands. The left-wing Syriza government has made this a priority — they want food stamps for the hungry, healthcare for the sick, and electricity for people who can't afford to keep on the lights — but even with a limited victory in its first round of negotiations with Europe, it's not clear where the money's going to come from. Or if it will even have what it needs to pay back its creditors. It hasn't helped that all this political uncertainty has killed what was a nascent recovery — which in this case, was a very relative term — and sent its economy back down again.

It's going to be a long, long time before Greece is back to where it was in 2008. But at some point it will, right? And the problem with this is that until then poor Greeks will have to suffer like very few citizens in industrialized countries while the bankers who pushed the loans that are the root problem today in the country blame the victims as if they had a choice. Chancellor Merkel and the bankers you are trying to protect.... **Shame on you... And where is your compassion?**

Why Baltimore Is Burning

"If our society really want to solve the problem, we could." – President Barack Obama



Any people with nothing to lose will destroy anything in their way. Like anything. Any people who feel as if their lives are not valued, like they are second-class citizens at best, will not be stopped until they've made their point. And as Dr. Martin Luther King said 50 years ago, *"A riot is the language of the unheard."*

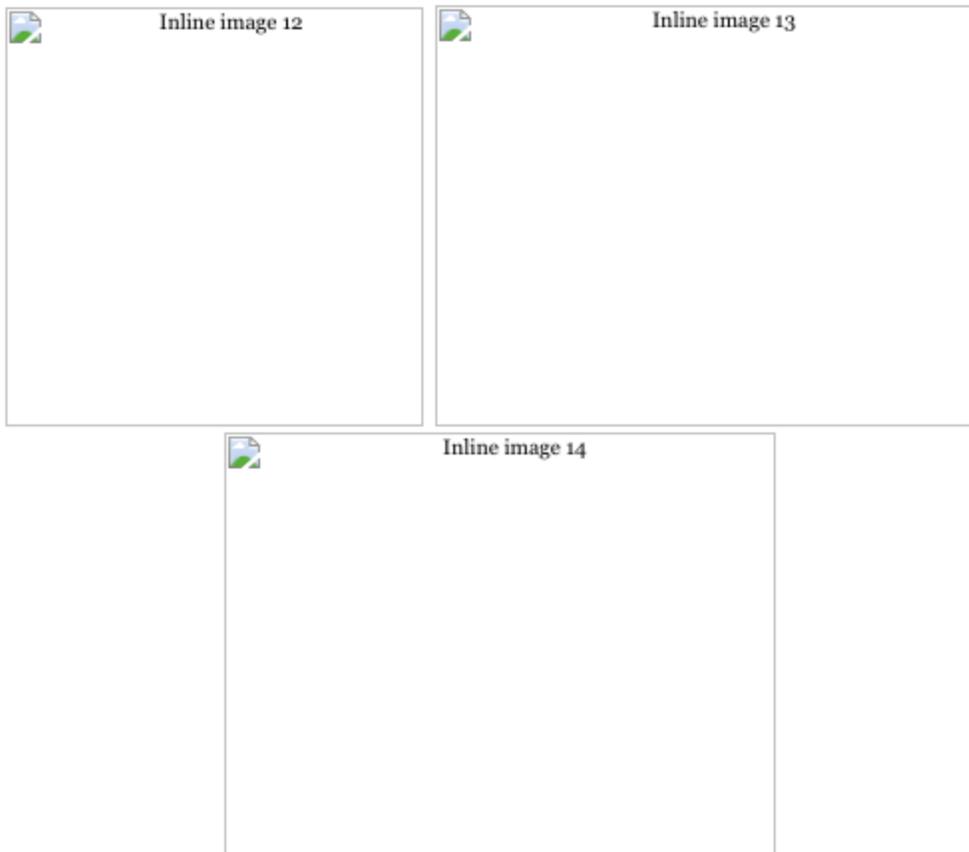
If you came of age in one of America's poor inner cities like I did, then you know that we are good, decent people: in spite of no money, no resources, little to no services, run down schools, landlord who only came around to collect rent, and madness and mayhem everywhere, amongst each other -- from abusive police officers, and from corrupt politicians and crooked preachers -- we still made a way out of no way. We worked hard, we partied hard, we laughed hard, we barbecued hard, we drank hard, we smoked hard, and we praised God, hard.

Imagine if George Zimmerman had gone vigilante on a White youth with a hoodie in that same gated Florida complex. Imagine White parents having to teach their children how to conduct themselves if ever confronted by the police. Imagine that Aiyana Stanley Jones was a little 7-year-old White girl instead of a little 7-year-old Black girl, shot by the police as she slept on a sofa with her grandmother, in a botched raid? It would be a national outrage.

Baltimore is burning because America is burning with racism, with hate, with violence. Baltimore is burning because far too many of us are on the sidelines doing nothing to affect change, or have become numb as the abnormal has become normal. Baltimore is burning because very few of us are committed to real leadership, to a real agenda with consistent and real political, economic, and cultural strategies for those American communities most under siege, most vulnerable. Policing them to death is not the solution. Putting them in prison is not the solution. And, clearly, ignoring them is not the solution.

Kevin Powell – Huffington Post – April 28, 2015

The Ugly Face of Homelessness in America



One of the truly ugly stories in America is that today in the U.S., more than 3.5 million people experience homelessness each year. 35% of the homeless population are families with children, which is the fastest growing segment of the homeless population. 23% are U.S. military veterans.

Homelessness in America is a “revolving-door” crisis. Many people exit homelessness quickly, but many more individuals become homeless every day. During a given year’s, four or five times as many

people experience homelessness as are homeless on any particular day. On any given day, at least 800,000 people are homeless in the United States, including about 200,000 children in homeless families. Calculations from different sources show that at least 3.5 million people experienced homelessness at some time during an average year. Because more families with children than unpartnered people enter and leave homelessness during a year, families represent a relatively large share of the annual population. As a result, during a typical year, between 900,000 and 1.4 million children are homeless with their families.

Personal difficulties, such as mental disabilities or job loss, often increase vulnerability to homelessness, but they cannot explain the high number of people who fall into homelessness every year. And housing market trends indicate that the situation is getting worse rather than better. Current levels of housing costs, coupled with low-wage jobs and economic contraction, could push even the working poor out of their homes. Although the availability of homeless services increased significantly during the past decade, meeting the needs of people once they become homeless is not enough.

A concerted national strategy is needed to prevent homelessness, and to end quickly discrete episodes of homelessness if they become inevitable. That strategy must include new housing resources as well as community-building strategies that address the societal factors contributing to homelessness. Each community must work to supply affordable housing, improve schools, and provide support services for those in need. Only strategies that address systemic problems as well as provide emergency relief can eliminate homelessness in this country.

If housing were inexpensive, or people could earn enough to afford housing, very few individuals would face homelessness. But housing costs have risen steadily across the country, and they have skyrocketed in many areas. Further, the inability to afford housing is concentrated among households with incomes below the poverty level, whose members account for the vast majority of people entering homelessness. At the same time, people with little education or job training find it increasingly difficult to earn enough money to raise their incomes above the poverty level, even if they are employed full-time and work overtime.

Once structural factors have created the conditions for homelessness, personal factors can increase a person's vulnerability to losing his or her home. Many factors can make a poor person more susceptible to homelessness, including limited education or skills training, mental or physical disability, lack of family to rely on (e.g., after being placed in foster care), and alcohol or drug abuse. But without the presence of structural fault lines, these personal vulnerabilities could not produce today's high level of homelessness.

Public policies may moderate the effects of both structural and personal factors to prevent homelessness. Some European countries guarantee their citizens housing, and many provide supports for families (e.g., infant and child care and income subsidies) well beyond those available in the United States. Universal health insurance is also available in most European countries. These safety net programs reduce the probability of homelessness, even in places where housing costs are high and wages are low, because they ease the pressure on household budgets.

In the United States, dramatic reductions in federally supported housing over the past 20 years, coupled with the current reductions in safety net programs, place individuals and families squeezed by high housing costs and with few resources at high risk of homelessness. As such a certain proportion of these people will experience at least a brief episode during which they lack a place to live. If they are struggling with substance abuse, mental illness, or both, and reside in an area where housing is increasingly beyond the reach of low-wage worker households, then homelessness is likely.

On any given day, the adult population using homeless assistance programs consists mostly of men by themselves (61 percent). Another 15 percent are women by themselves, 15 percent are households with children, and 9 percent are people with another adult but not with children.² Because families are mostly likely to qualify for public assistance programs, they are less likely than individuals to be homeless, or to be homeless for long. Unattached adults are not eligible for most safety net programs, so they are more likely to be homeless and to experience long or repeated spells of homelessness.

In terms of racial and ethnic composition, little difference exists between homeless families and single adults. About equal proportions (40 to 41 percent) are African American and white, 11 to 12 percent are Hispanic, 6 to 8 percent are Native American, and 1 percent are another race. The high representation of minorities in the homeless population compared with housed people stems from their higher likelihood of being very poor and has no correlation to their race or ethnicity. Geographically, 71 percent of homeless people who rely on homeless assistance programs reside in central cities, 21 percent in suburban or urban fringe areas, and 9 percent in rural areas.

Half of all homeless adults receive less than \$300 per month—in income, putting them at about 30 to 40 percent of the federal poverty level. In addition, 62 percent have at least a high school diploma, and 44 percent did some work for pay in the month before being surveyed, although only 13 percent held a regular job. Almost half get one or more means-tested public benefits, with food stamps by far the most common type of assistance. Homeless families' welfare eligibility accounts, in part, for the level of income they report; most single people's ineligibility for welfare helps explain their very low incomes.

Disabilities

Many homeless adults have physical and other types of disabilities. Almost half (46 percent) reported chronic physical conditions. Problems with alcohol, drugs, and mental health among homeless people are well documented and often occur together. Among adults using homeless services, 31 percent reported a combination of mental health and substance abuse problems (alcohol and/or drugs) within the past year. An additional 17 percent reported problems with drugs and/or alcohol problems, but no mental health problems. Further, 12 percent reported only problems with alcohol, and 15 percent reported only mental health problems. Only one in four homeless adults did not report any mental health or substance abuse problems during the past year.

Childhood Homelessness

The homeless population includes not only adults but also the children these adults bring with them into homelessness. One-fourth of homeless people are children in homeless families. These children are much more likely than housed children to experience serious difficulties, including physical, cognitive, emotional, and mental problems. Further, childhood homelessness translates into a greater risk of homelessness in adulthood. Most children living with homeless parents are very young (42 percent are under age 6) and are therefore physically and emotionally vulnerable in the event of

household disruptions. Children living with homeless parents, however, are not the only children affected by homelessness. Three out of five homeless people are parents, and half these parents have at least one child age 17 or younger. But only one in four of these children lives with the homeless parent.

Children of homeless mothers are much more likely to stay with their homeless parent (54 percent) than are children of homeless fathers (7 percent). Children of homeless fathers typically live with their mothers outside of homelessness. Children not living with their homeless mothers tend to live with relatives other than their fathers (46 percent) or in foster care (19 percent). A period in foster care is a strong predictor of future homelessness.

Patterns of Homelessness

Clearly, homeless people's lives differ in many ways. The pattern of a person's homelessness reveals much information about how to intervene and ways to reduce or eliminate such episodes. People who are homeless for the first time and experiencing a single crisis may need relatively simple remedies, such as rental assistance, help negotiating with landlords, or referrals to public benefits or services. Persons with repeated or long episodes of homelessness, however, are likely to need considerably more support for longer periods of time.

WHAT WILL END HOMELESSNESS

With adequate housing resources, homelessness can also be averted for the many people who approach the homeless service system because they do not know where else to turn. Communities throughout the country that have committed such resources have developed a variety of effective programs to prevent homelessness, including

- Programs that negotiate with landlords and help with bad credit histories;
- Housing trust funds, rental assistance programs, and access to funds that can solve a household's short-term problems, such as paying back rent, security deposits, and other moving expenses;
- Programs that encourage developers to build or renovate attractive, accessible properties; and help managers ensure good maintenance and repair; and
- Programs that help people develop personal and family financial management skills, establish or reestablish good credit and rental histories, and retain housing.

When a community ensures that housing within reasonable price ranges exists, offers its members living-wage jobs, provides quality schooling to develop individuals' capacity to hold good jobs, and offers other supports for families and individuals, people can maintain stable housing. But far too few communities have these resources or are positioned to provide them. The answer? Put simply:

- Rebuild communities, especially the most troubled ones;
- Build more housing and subsidize the costs to make it affordable to people with incomes below the poverty level;
- Help more people afford housing, by providing them with better schools, better training, and better jobs; and
- Prevent the next generation of children from experiencing homelessness.

Without these basic building blocks of a civil society, we are creating an underclass of persistently poor people vulnerable to homelessness. The costs of this neglect are too high in terms of both individual lives and public dollars for health, mental health, and correctional institutions. It is more effective, more humane, and ultimately more fiscally prudent to invest in prevention and support that leads to self-sufficiency and independence among all residents.

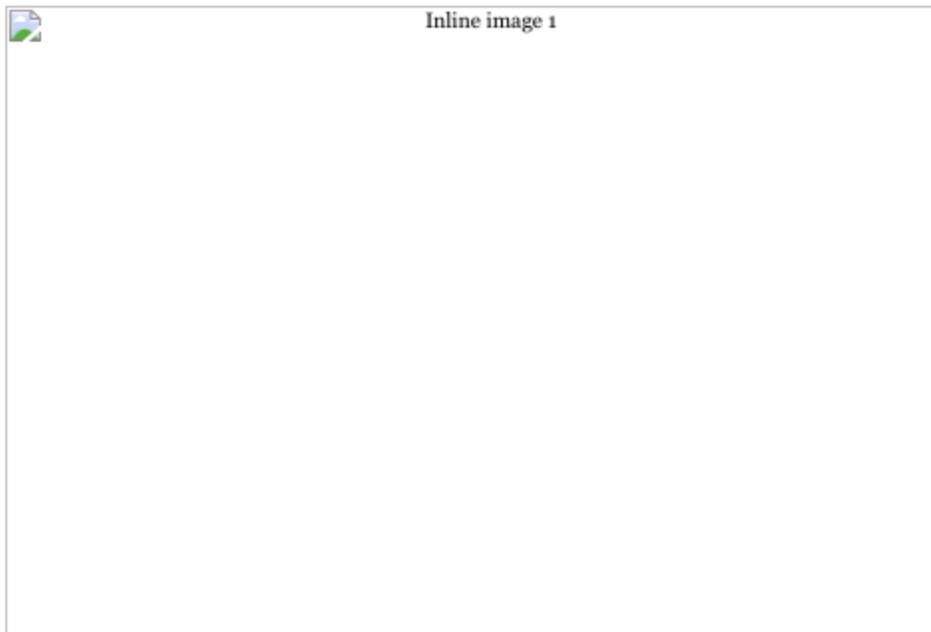
SUMMARY

Recent years show an all-time high in child homelessness in America, amounting to one child in every 30, according to a comprehensive state-by-state report that blames the nation's high poverty rate, the lack of affordable housing and the impacts of pervasive domestic violence. Titled "***America's Youngest Outcasts***," the report being issued by the **National Center on Family Homelessness** calculates that nearly 2.5 million American children were homeless at some point in 2013. The number is based on the **Department of Education's** latest count of 1.3 million homeless children in public schools, supplemented by estimates of homeless pre-school children not counted by the DOE. The problem is particularly severe in California, which has one-eighth of the U.S. population but accounts for more than one-fifth of the homeless children with a tally of nearly 527,000. Therefore until homeless in America is eradicated these children, elderly, people with disabilities and the working poor will be vulnerable to the prospective of being homeless and for this to be possible in the richest country in the world is unconscionable and immoral ***and this is my rant of the week....***

WEEK'S READINGS

ASTROTURF

And we are not talking about fake grass



The first time that I heard the term **Astroturf** used for something other than “*substitute/synthetic grass*” was when a friend recently sent me a **TEDx** talk at the **University of Nevada** by veteran investigative journalist **Sharyl Attkisson** who described **Afroturf** as fake grassroots movements

funded by political, corporate, or other special interests to very effectively manipulate and distort media messages. Attkisson who was an award-winning correspondent for **CBS News**, is currently writing a book entitled **Stonewalled** (Harper Collins), which addresses the unseen influences of corporations and special interests on the information and images the public receives every day in the news and elsewhere.

Campaigns & Elections magazine defines **Astroturf** as a "*grassroots program that involves the instant manufacturing of public support for a point of view in which either uninformed activists are recruited or means of deception are used to recruit them.*" Journalist William Greider has coined his own term to describe corporate grassroots organizing. He calls it "*democracy for hire.*" Senator Lloyd Bentsen, himself a long-time Washington and Wall Street insider, is credited with coining the term "**Astroturf Lobbying**" to describe the synthetic grassroots movements that now can be manufactured for a fee by companies like Beckel Cowan, Bivings Group, Bonner & Associates, Burson-Marsteller, Davies Communications, DCI Group, Direct Impact, Hill & Knowlton, Issue Dynamics Inc., National Grassroots & Communications or Optima Direct.

Unlike genuine grassroots activism which tends to be money-poor but people-rich, **Astroturf** campaigns are typically people-poor but cash-rich. Funded heavily by corporate largesse, they use sophisticated computer databases, telephone banks and hired organizers to rope less-informed activists into sending letters to their elected officials or engaging in other actions that create the appearance of grassroots support for their client's cause.

Astroturf techniques have been used to:

- block the transfer of federal licenses that WorldCom uses for its long distance and Internet services by Issue Dynamics Inc. using non-profit groups like the United Church of Christ
- defeat the Clinton administration's proposed health care reform, through a front group called "Rx Partners" created by the Beckel Cowan PR firm, and the Coalition for Health Insurance Choices, created by public relations consultant Blair Childs
- harass environmentalists through the Wise Use movement
- loosen automobile fuel efficiency standards
- support clear-cutting American forests, through a front group called Citizens to Protect the Pacific Northwest and Northern California Economy
- oppose restrictions on smoking in public places, through a front group called National Smokers Alliance, which was created by Burson-Marsteller
- generate a dossier of news-clips orchestrated by Edelman to assist Microsoft lobbyists persuade U.S. state attorney generals not to join a class action against the company.

The Gray Panthers & Verizon

Sometimes genuine grassroots organizations are recruited into corporate-funded campaigns. In June 2003, for example, the Gray Panthers participated in protests against WorldCom that were funded largely by the telecommunications company's competitors such as Verizon.

According to the Gray Panthers, this reflected a policy decision that the organization made prior to and independently of its funding. However, an article in the Washington Post raised questions about failures to publicly disclose the corporate funding which paid for full-page advertisements that the

Gray Panthers took out in several major newspapers that called on the federal government to stop doing business with WorldCom. The ads said they were paid for the Gray Panthers but did not mention that Issue Dynamics Inc. (IDI), a PR firm that specializes in "grassroots PR," had provided most of the \$200,000 it cost to place the ads. Verizon spokesman Eric Rabe has declined to say how much the company is paying IDI, and Gray Panthers Executive Director Timothy Fuller has declined to say how much of the funding for its "Corporate Accountability" project comes from IDI.

Notwithstanding the egregious nature of WorldCom's corporate crimes, the lack of transparency in these funding arrangements by WorldCom's corporate competitors raises the question of whether the Gray Panthers campaign should be considered genuine grassroots or an Astroturf.

NeoCon Astroturf

The rise of the Super PAC has formalized funding for many political groups that would otherwise have little or no financial support. **Crossroads GPS** (Grassroots Policy Strategies), the sub-Super PAC of Karl Rove's American Crossroads, lists no grassroots groups that it backs, but funded more than \$9.7M of anti-Obama television ads by Larry McCarthy, known for the Willie Horton Ad that helped tank Democratic presidential candidate Michael Dukakis in the 2012 election campaign cycle.

Libertarian Astroturf

Groups like "**Americans for Prosperity**" (AFP) are largely funded by very wealthy Americans like the Koch Brothers, who use AFP to engage unwitting voters in doing their bidding to bust unions, further deregulate energy industries, and avoid the imposition of regulation in commodities trading. AFP spends generously to elect Tea Party candidates, and has been a primary funder of controversial Wisconsin governor Scott Walker's election and bid to avoid a recall after his crusade to break union negotiating power for government workers in his state. The Kochs are classic Libertarians who see the government as the source of all ill, and desire to dismantle it to its bare functioning minimums, allowing capitalists free reign to do as they will. The Kochs father was a key player in the John Birch Society and David Koch was the Vice Presidential candidate in 1980 for the Libertarian Party.

A Partial Transcript of Attkisson's TEDx Talk

Attkisson starts her talk with a fictitious story about a cholesterol lowering drug that she called Cholestra. The study says Cholestra is so effective that doctors should consider prescribing to adults and have high cholesterol problems. It is so good to be true that you decide to do something of your own research. You do it Google search you consult social media Facebook and Twitter you look at Wikipedia Web MD and you in a peer reviewed published medical journal. It all confirms how effective the Cholestra drug is. And although you do you run across a few negative comments that Cholestra could have a potential linked to cancer, you dismiss these because medical experts call the cancer link a myth, and say that those who think that there is a link are quacks or cranks or nuts. Finally you learn that your own doctor recently attended a medical seminar confirming how effective Cholestra is. So he sends you off with a prescription for some free samples.

You've really done your homework. But what if all isn't as it seems. What if the reality you found is false. A carefully constructed narrative by unseen special interest designed to manipulate your opinion. A Truman Showesk ultimate reality all around you. Complacency in the news media combined with incredibly powerful propaganda and publicity forces mean we sometimes get little of the truth. Special interest have unlimited time and money to figure out new ways to spin us while cloaking their role. Surreptitious Astroturf methods are now more important to these interests than traditional lobbying of Congress. There is now an entire industry built around it in Washington. Again - What is Astroturf?

It's a perversion of grassroots, as in fake grassroots. Astroturf is when political, corporate or other special interest disguise themselves and publish blogs, start Facebook and Twitter accounts, publish ads, letters to the editor or simply post comments online to try to fool you into thinking that independent or grassroots movement is speaking. The whole point of Astroturf is to try to give the impression us that there is widespread support for or against an agenda when there is not. Astroturf seeks to manipulate you into changing your opinion by making you feel that you are an outlier when you are not.

One example is the Washington Redskins name. Without taking a position on the controversy Attkisson says " if you are looking at news media coverage over the past year well looking at social media you probably have concluded that most Americans find the name offensive and think that it ought to be changed. But what if I told you that 71 percent of Americans say the name should not be changed. That's more than two-thirds." Astroturfers seek to controversialize those who disagree with them. They attack news organizations that publish stories that they don't like. Whistleblowers who tell the truth. Politicians who dare to ask the tough questions. And journalist who have the audacity to report on all of it.

Sometimes Astroturfers simply shove intentionally so much confusing and conflicting information into the mix that you are left to throw up your hands and disregard all of it including the truth. Drown out a link between medicine and a harmful side effect.... say that vaccines and autism... by throwing a bunch of conflicting paid for studies, surveys and experts into the mix confusing the truth beyond recognition. And then there is Wikipedia. Astroturf's dream come true. Billed as the free encyclopedia that everyone can have and anyone can edit, the reality can't be more different. Anonymous Wikipedia editors control and co-op pages on behalf of special interest. They forbid and reverse edits that go against their agenda. They skew and delete information in blatant violation of Wikipedia is own established policies with impunity.

Try adding a footnoted fact or correcting a fact error on one of these monitored Wikipedia pages of poof, sometimes within a matter of seconds you will find your edit is reversed. In 2012 famed author Philip Roth try to correct a major fact error about the inspiration behind one of his book character cited on a Wikipedia page. But no matter how hard he tried Wikipedia's editors would not allow it. They kept reverting the efforts back to the false information. When Roth finally reached a person the Wikipedia, which is not an easy task and tried to find out what was going wrong, they told him that he simply was not considered a credible source on himself.

A few weeks later there was a huge scandal when Wikipedia officials got caught offering a PR service a skewed and edited information on behalf of paid publicity seeking clients in opposition to Wikipedia's supposed policies. And this may be why when a medical study look at medical conditions described in Wikipedia pages and compare the actual peer reviewed published research Wikipedia contradicted

medical research 90 percent of the time. Attkisson: *"You may never fully trust what you read on Wikipedia again, nor should you."*

Attkisson: Now let's go back to that fictitious Cholestra example and all of the research that you did. It turns out that the Facebook and Twitter accounts you found so positive were actually written by paid professionals hired by the drug company to promote the drug. The Wikipedia page had been monitored by an agenda editor also paid by the drug company. The drug company also arranged to optimize Google search engine results. So it was no accident that you stumbled across that positive nonprofit that all of those positive comments. The nonprofit was of course secretly funded and funded by the drug company. The drug company also financed that positive study and used its power editorially to control and omit any mention of cancer as a possible side effect.

Once more each and every doctor who publicly touted Cholestra or called the cancer link a myth or ridiculed critics as paranoid, cranks and quacks or served on a government advisory board that approved the drug, each of those doctors is actually a paid consultant for the drug company. As for your own doctor, the medical lecture he attended that had all of those positive evaluations was in fact like many continuing medical education classes sponsored by the drug company. And when the news reported on that positive study it didn't mention any of that. And this fictitious story is an excellent example of how Astroturf is used without any traces of the sponsor's fingerprints.

People may be asking what can they do, after doing their homework/research and what chance do they have to separate fact from fiction, especially if seasoned journalists with years of experience can so easily be fooled. Attkisson offers several strategies for people to recognize signs of propaganda and Astroturf. And she says that once you know what to look for you will be able to recognize Astroturf almost everywhere.

Hallmarks of Astroturf

Ask Your Doctor.... is the catch phrase promoted by the pharmaceutical industry because they know that if they can get your foot into the doctor's office to discuss an anomaly, you are very likely to be prescribed the latest drug being marketed.

Use of Inflammatory Language.... such as cranks, quacks, nuts, liars, paranoid, pseudo and conspiracy.

Astroturfers Often Claim To Debunk Myths.... that aren't myths at all...

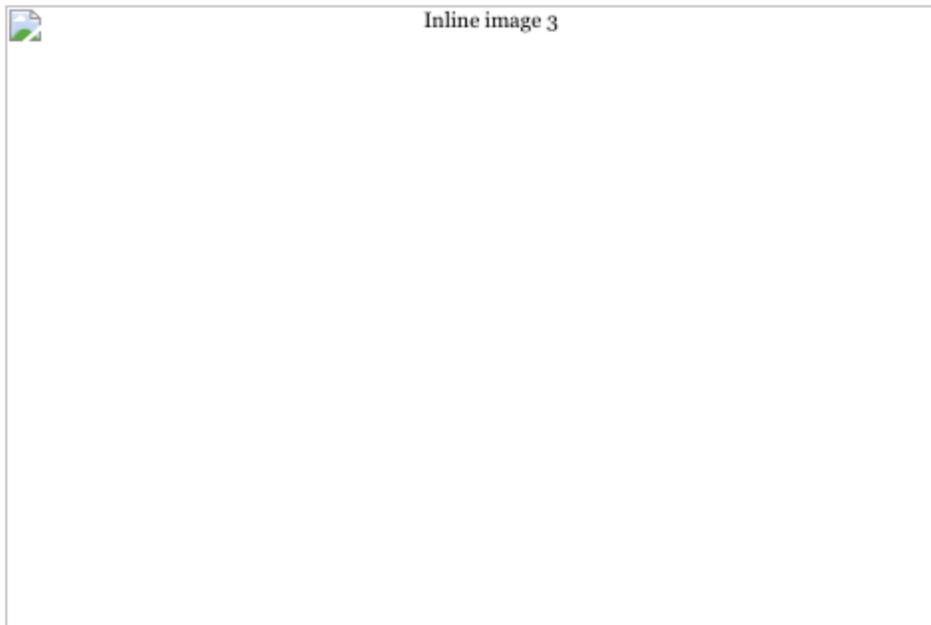
Use Of Charged Language Test Well... When people hear that something is a myth, maybe they find it on Snopes.... they instantly declare themselves too smart to fall for it. But what if the whole notion of the myth, is itself a myth and you and Snopes fell for that.

Beware When Interest Attack An Issue.... by controversializing and attacking the people, personalities and organizations surrounding it rather than addressing the facts that could be Astroturf.

Attkisson says most of all, Astroturfers tend to reserve all of their public skepticism for those exposing wrong doing, rather than the wrong doers. So instead of questioning authority, they question those who question authority.

Attkisson ends her talk by saying that with this, hopefully people might see things a little more clearly. Sort of like taking off your glasses, wiping, cleaning and then putting them back on to discover how foggy they have been all along.

Climate-change deniers are in retreat



As Dana Millbank recently wrote in a. op-ed in **The Washington Post – *There is no denying it: Climate-change deniers are in retreat.*** What began as a subtle shift away from the claim that man-made global warming is not a threat to the planet has lately turned into a stampede. The latest attempt to deny denial comes from the conservative American Legislative Exchange Council, a powerful group that pushes for states to pass laws that are often drafted by industry. As Washington Post journalists Tom Hamburger, Joby Warrick and Chris Mooney recently report, ALEC is not only insisting that it doesn't deny climate change — it's threatening to sue those who suggest otherwise.

The group, which suffered the highly visible defection of Google because of its global-warming stance and an exodus of other top corporate members, sent letters to Common Cause and the League of Conservation Voters instructing them to *“remove all false or misleading material”* alleging ALEC questions global-warming theory. The problem for ALEC is that as recently as 2013, it was still

reaffirming “*model legislation*” calling on states to consider “*legitimate and scientifically defensible alternative hypotheses*” to the “mainstream scientific positions” on climate. The proposed legislation states that there is “*a great deal of scientific uncertainty*” about the matter and suggests states treat possible beneficial effects of carbon “in an evenhanded manner.”

The turnabout at ALEC follows an about-face at the Heartland Institute, a libertarian outfit that embraces a description of it as “the world’s most prominent think tank promoting skepticism about man-made climate change.” But on Christmas Eve, Justin Haskins, a blogger and editor at Heartland, penned an article for the conservative journal Human Events declaring: “The real debate is not whether man is, in some way, contributing to climate change; it’s true that the science is settled on that point in favor of the alarmists.”

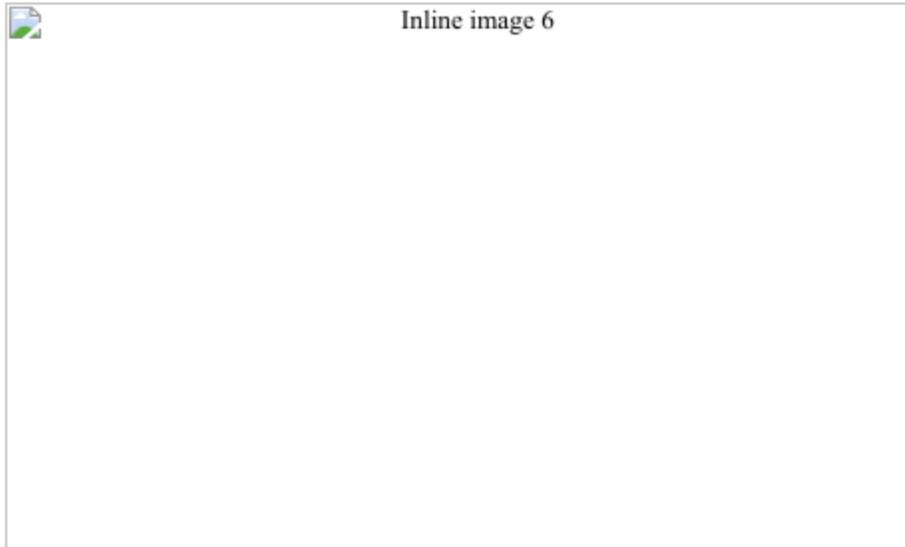
Haskins called it “a rather extreme position to say that we ought to allow dangerous pollutants to destroy the only planet we know of that can completely sustain human life,” and he suggested work on “technologies that can reduce CO2 emissions without destroying whole economies.” To be sure, this is a tactical retreat, and you shouldn’t expect conservative groups to start lining up in favor of a carbon tax. Rather, they’re resorting to more defensible arguments that don’t make them sound like flat-earthers. Millbank quotes energy lobbyist Scott Segal saying that “***the science issue just isn’t as salient as it once was.***” Instead, Segal talks about the cost and viability of proposed regulations.

It’s likely no coincidence that the shift is occurring as the Obama administration approaches a June target to finalize rules on power-plant emissions. Those who oppose regulation are wise to abandon a position that holds little public appeal; a healthy majority of Americans accept that global warming is real, and a New York Times poll earlier this year found that even half of Republicans support government action to address it. More and more conservative officeholders are embracing the “I am not a scientist” agnosticism on climate change rather than skepticism. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, House Speaker John Boehner and presidential candidates Bobby Jindal and Marco Rubio have adopted this response, and Rubio has joined Mitt Romney and Chuck Grassley in embracing the less assailable position that U.S. efforts to restrict carbon are pointless without similar efforts across the globe.

Certainly, figures such as Senate Environment Committee Chairman Jim Inhofe (who calls man-made warming a “hoax”) and presidential candidate Ted Cruz (who fancies himself a modern-day Galileo opposing the “global-warming alarmists”) are not about to change. But as corporations abandon the untenable position of denial, ideologues will be forced to do the same. Southern Co., an operator of coal-fired power plants, decided to drop funding for a Smithsonian scientist who challenged climate-change theory but failed to disclose that his work was funded by fossil-fuel interests. ALEC’s declining skepticism also comes as even oil companies such as Occidental Petroleum and BP quit the group.

At ALEC’s December meeting, a climate-change contrarian got applause for declaring in his presentation that “*carbon dioxide is not a pollutant. It is a benefit. It is the very elixir of life.*” For politicians and climate-denial groups, the elixir of life is money. Now that corporations are becoming reluctant to bankroll crazy theories, the surrender of climate-change deniers will follow. ***And I am sure that this is a good thing....***

Israel killed more Palestinians in 2014 than in any other year since 1967



More than 2,300 Palestinians killed and more than 17,000 injured, according to annual report by UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

If you are keeping score, Israel killed more Palestinian civilians in 2014 than in any other year since the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip began in 1967, a UN report has said. Israel's activities in the Gaza Strip, West Bank and East Jerusalem resulted in the deaths of 2,314 Palestinians and 17,125 injuries, compared with 39 deaths and 3,964 injuries in 2013, according to the annual report (pdf) by the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The conflict in Gaza in July and August was largely responsible for the dramatic increase in fatalities. It claimed the lives of 2,220 Gazans, of whom 1,492 were civilians, 605 militants and 123 unverified. More than 11,000 people were injured and about 500,000 Palestinians were internally displaced at the height of the conflict. About 100,000 remain so.

There was also a sharp rise in fatalities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, where 58 Palestinians were killed and 6,028 injured – the highest number of fatalities in incidents involving Israeli forces since 2007 and the highest number of injuries since 2005. Most of the incidents took place in the second half of the year, following the abduction and murder of Mohammed Abu Khdeir, which led to daily riots and protests in East Jerusalem. Khdeir, a 16-year-old Palestinian, was kidnapped and killed in July, following the abduction and murder of three Israeli teenagers the previous month.

The report, entitled *Fragmented Lives*, documents an increase in the number of Palestinians injured, incarcerated and displaced, compared with the two previous years. It notes an increase in the Israeli armed forces' use of live ammunition, which accounted for almost all fatalities and 18% of injuries. Palestinian attacks against Israeli civilians – mostly settlers – and security forces also rose in 2014, with Israeli fatalities increasing from four to 12. Incidents of settler violence resulting in Palestinian casualties and injuries increased, but the number of incidents leading to Palestinian property and land being damaged decreased.

The number of Palestinians held in administrative detention by Israeli authorities increased by 24% in 2014, but decreased when it came to children. A monthly average of 185 were held last year compared with 197 in 2013, a decrease of 6%. No children under 14 years old were held in military detention in 2014. At least that's a good thing. But something is wrong when any country can kill more than 2300 people of which more than half are innocent civilians and more than 500 children and there is no outrage anywhere in the West. And to my Israeli friends please do not let this happen again...

Executing the Insane Is Against the Law of the Land. So Why Do We Keep Doing It?



In last month's **Mother Jones Magazine**, writer Stephanie Mencimer starts an article with the story of Scott Panetti who shaved his head, donned camo fatigues, and fatally shot his in-laws in front of his estranged wife and daughter before piling up furniture and valuables in his yard in Fredericksburg, Texas, and then spraying it all down with water to get rid of the devil he was sure had possessed the house. And this was hardly the first time he'd done something bizarre. Starting in his early 20s, Panetti had been diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia, delusions, auditory hallucinations, and manic depression — he was hospitalized at least 14 times. Two years prior to the murders, he was involuntarily committed after swinging a cavalry sword at his wife and daughter. After he turned himself in for the 1992 killings, he blamed the crime on "**Sarge**," one of several personalities he was convinced shared his body. The state charged him with capital murder.

The trial was a farce. Over even the prosecutor's objections, Judge Stephen Ables, let Panetti act as his own lawyer, and allowed him to continue representing himself after he went off his anti-psychotic medication. The defendant showed up in court decked out in what a family friend described as a 1920s-era cowboy outfit: "He wore a large hat and a huge bandanna. He wore weird boots with stirrups — the pants were tucked in at the calf," she later testified. "He looked like a clown." Standing before the jury, Panetti called himself "**Sarge**" and rambled incoherently for hours about everything from the

TV show Quincy, M.E. to castrating a horse, with little interference from the judge — who did, however, intercede to question the relevance of belt buckles. In addition to his veterinarian, Panetti subpoenaed Jesus, John F. Kennedy, and the pope, and issued a stream-of-consciousness description of the crime:

Sarge is gone. No more Sarge. Sonja and Birdie. Birdie and Sonja. Joe, Amanda lying kitchen, here, there, blood. No, leave. Scott, remember exactly what Sarge did. Shot the lock. Walked in the kitchen. Sonja, where's Birdie? Sonja here. Joe, bayonet, door, Amanda. Boom, boom, blood, blood. Demons. It's hard to blame the jury that sentenced Panetti to die. At the time, Texas had no option for life without parole, and some of the jurors stated they were scared he'd get out someday. But whether or not Texas executes a schizophrenic man isn't simply about that man and his crimes. It's about the moral ground on which America's legal system rests.

That's essentially what the United States Supreme Court ruled in the 1986 case of ***Ford v. Wainwright***. Citing centuries of English common-law precedent, the court pronounced that a civilized society cannot condone the execution of a person with so weak a grasp on reality that killing him, as Justice Thurgood Marshall concluded for the majority, "has questionable retributive value, presents no example to others, and thus has no deterrence value, and simply offends humanity... Whether the aim is to protect the condemned from fear and pain without comfort of understanding, or to protect the dignity of society itself from the barbarity of exacting mindless vengeance," the Constitution forbids it as cruel and unusual punishment.

How is it, then, that Scott Panetti has spent nearly two decades on death row, even though the justices have since reaffirmed the ban on executing the insane — in a ruling on his specific case? How is it that he came within eight hours of lethal injection this past December, only to be saved by a last-minute stay? And how is it that numerous seriously mentally ill people have been put to death in recent years, in defiance of the law of the land?

The short answer is that, despite its lofty rhetoric, the Supreme Court punted on how states should determine whether someone is sane enough to be killed. In fact, were it not for the persuasive powers of Marshall, who had handled capital cases as an NAACP lawyer, the court wouldn't have even taken the Ford case — let alone cast five votes in the petitioner's favor. But Marshall couldn't convince the holdouts, including Justice William Rehnquist, who pointed out in his dissent that death row inmates were liable to simply fake mental illness. Giving them an opportunity for a pre-execution sanity hearing, he wrote, "offers an invitation to those who have nothing to lose by accepting it to advance entirely spurious claims of insanity."

In the end, the court offered little guidance on how to define insanity for legal purposes. Marshall had suggested that a prisoner too impaired to assist in his own defense could not be executed. But the legal test that most of the lower courts ultimately adopted was that of Justice Lewis Powell: The offender had to be "unaware of the punishment they're about to suffer and why they are to suffer it." That is "an extremely low standard," explains Phillip Resnick, the director of forensic psychiatry at Case Western Reserve University's medical school. "You can be quite psychotic and still know those two things."

Further muddying the waters, the Supreme Court left the interpretation of its ruling to state court judges, who are often elected and who can share the public's misconceptions about psychiatric illness—

not understanding, for instance, that even highly delusional people can seem normal in certain settings. Prosecutors in Panetti's case recently exploited this misunderstanding by citing lucid snippets from a taped conversation with his visiting parents to argue that he is not insane, even though, in the same conversation, you can hear that he is delusional. "The law is still basing decisions on folk psychology," notes Christopher Slobogin, a professor of law and psychiatry at Vanderbilt University. Some judges, he says, "worry that mental illness is this very wide-ranging concept that could apply to a huge percentage of the population depending on how it's defined."

The result of all of this ambiguity has been a steady stream of executions of profoundly mentally ill people, some of whom — like Nollie Lee Martin, a Florida man executed in 1992 — were literally missing pieces of their brains. According to a study published in the *Hastings Law Journal* this past June, 18 of the 100 most recently executed convicts had been diagnosed with schizophrenia, PTSD, or bipolar disorder. Another 36 had other serious mental-health problems or chronic addictions that in some cases had rendered them psychotic.

FOLLOWING HIS CONVICTION, Panetti tried to waive his right to a lawyer for the appeal (a move akin to suicide), but Judge Ables ruled him too mentally incompetent to make that choice. After many more appeals, Ables set a 2004 execution date and ruled, without a hearing, that Panetti was sane enough to die. The case ultimately landed before the Supreme Court, where Texas Solicitor General Ted Cruz (now the state's junior US senator) defended the state's right to execute Panetti.

In 2007, the court ruled 5-4 that Judge Ables not only had unjustly denied Panetti a hearing on his mental state, but that the federal court reviewing the decision had applied an incompetency standard that was too restrictive. It wasn't enough that Panetti knew the state was going to execute him for the murders of his in-laws, the court said. After all, it acknowledged, Panetti could regurgitate these facts. But he also sincerely believed that the state wanted to execute him to stop him from preaching the Gospel.

Writing for the majority, Justice Anthony Kennedy proclaimed, "A prisoner's awareness of the State's rationale for an execution is not the same as a rational understanding of it." The 5th Circuit Court of Appeals had ignored the reality that "gross delusions stemming from a severe mental disorder may put that awareness in a context so far removed from reality that the punishment can serve no proper purpose." The 5th Circuit was ordered to further investigate Panetti's mental state based on this new "rational understanding" standard.

But the Supreme Court's attempt to codify and expand upon the vague guidelines it set out in the *Ford* case has made little difference in practice. Judges often ignore the new guidelines, or rule in a way that simply reiterates *Ford*. Cornell law professor John Blume recently did some number crunching involving "Ford claims," the last-ditch defense petitions arguing that a person is too insane to be executed. He found that the Panetti decision had little impact on the outcomes, especially in the states with the most active death chambers.

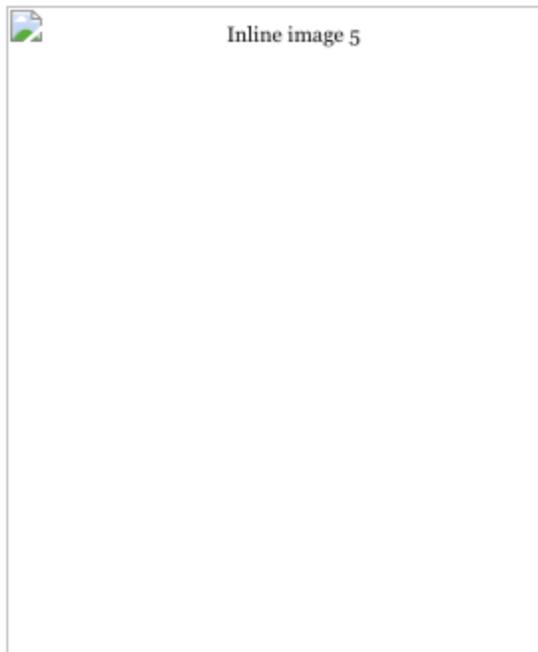
Florida, third in the nation in executions last year, has never found anybody too insane to execute. Nor have Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, or Utah. In Texas, the most prolific killer of convicts, the last time a prisoner prevailed on such a claim was back in 2006, a year before the Panetti decision—which so far hasn't even saved Panetti himself. So how do judges decide whether a prisoner is too delusional for a civilized society to execute? Often, it turns out, they rely on psychiatrists whose recommendations

seem to have little basis in science — hired guns whose testimony can give pro-death-penalty jurists cover for rulings that otherwise would seem to contradict the dictates of the Supreme Court.

Consider Dr. Alan Waldman, a forensic psychiatrist and neurologist whose testimony has helped send at least three mentally ill men to their demise, and whom Texas hired to evaluate Panetti in advance of a 2008 hearing on the prisoner's fitness for execution. Waldman spent his early career working in various hospitals and clinics, including a stint with the Florida Department of Corrections. Today, he works in private practice and serves as an expert witness for both prosecutors and defense lawyers, holding himself out as an expert in the detection of malingering — feigning or exaggerating symptoms of illness — although he admitted during the Panetti hearing that he'd never published anything on the subject in a peer-reviewed journal. In fact, the only published work since 1993 listed in Waldman's public resume is an article in a prosecutors' newsletter.

Mencimer then tells the story of Thomas Provenzano, an Orlando man who signed documents "Jesus Christ" and showed pictures of Jesus to his nephews and nieces. "That's me," he'd whisper. "A five-year-old kid could tell my brother had mental problems," his sister, Catherine Forbes said. In the mid-1970s, Provenzano checked himself into a mental hospital because he was hearing voices. He was eventually released, but his behavior grew increasingly bizarre, to the point where his sister begged the doctors to have him committed. (They demurred.) In 1983, he was arrested for disorderly conduct after screaming obscenities at pedestrians and leading police on a car chase. Following the arrest, he started dressing like Rambo and hanging out at the courthouse, obsessing over his legal file and the officers who'd apprehended him. In early 1984, he smuggled three guns into an Orlando courthouse, where he shot and killed one man and critically injured two other people before an officer shot him in the back. In the ambulance en route to the hospital, he yelled, "I am the son of God! You can't kill me." Provenzano spent more than 15 years on death row sleeping under his cot with a box on his head because he was hearing voices. But the Florida Supreme Court sided with Waldman, and Provenzano was executed in June 2000. As for Panetti, he remains on death row, growing increasingly paranoid and delusional, according to court filings, as he waits for a panel of federal judges to decide whether the Supreme Court case bearing his name might, in fact, apply to him.

Eggs: The Super-Food



If you are like me, eggs are probably part of your breakfast. Good news, because eggs are among the few foods that I would classify as “***superfoods***.” They are loaded with nutrients, some of which are rare in the modern diet. Here are 10 health benefits of eggs that have been confirmed in human studies.

1. Eggs Are Incredibly Nutritious

Eggs are among the most nutritious foods on the planet. A whole egg contains all the nutrients required to turn a single cell into a baby chicken.

A single large boiled egg contains:

- **Vitamin A:** 6% of the RDA.
- **Folate:** 5% of the RDA.
- **Vitamin B5:** 7% of the RDA.
- **Vitamin B12:** 9% of the RDA.
- **Vitamin B2:** 15% of the RDA.
- **Phosphorus:** 9% of the RDA.
- **Selenium:** 22% of the RDA.
- Eggs also contain decent amounts of Vitamin D, Vitamin E, Vitamin K, Vitamin B6, Calcium and Zinc.

This is coming with 77 calories, 6 grams of protein and 5 grams of healthy fats. Eggs also contain various other trace nutrients that are important for health. Really... eggs are pretty much

the **perfect** food, they contain a little bit of almost every nutrient we need. If you can get your hands on pastured or Omega-3 enriched eggs, then these are even better. They have more Omega-3s and are much higher in Vitamin A and E. **Bottom Line:** Whole eggs are among the most nutritious foods on the planet, containing a little bit of almost every nutrient we need. Omega-3 enriched and/or pastured eggs are even healthier. For more information please feel free to download the attached **Authority Nutrition** article ***10 Proven Health Benefits of Eggs (No. 1 is My Favorite)*** by Kris Gunnars.

THIS WEEK'S QUOTES

America used to say that if you work full time you won't live in poverty. But that's not true any longer. We can change that. Raise the minimum wage and left families out of poverty. And it would.

Senator Elizabeth Warren (D) Massachusetts - April 10, 2015

BEST VIDEO OF THE WEEK

The Piano Guys....



Inline image 4

Web Link: <http://thepianoguys.com/portfolio/i-want-you-bach/>

As the write-up the above video on YouTube asks: What if the harpsichord from the 1770s hit headlong into the talk box from 1970s? What if J.S. Bach and Jackson 5 met up and just jammed?

Would they jive? Can you dig it? These are the kind of far out questions we asked ourselves as we laid down these licks and cut this film. The Hale Center Theatre in Salt Lake City decided to put together a gig with two wigs in dandy attire and two hep-cats in some funkadelic threads to see if it would fly. (Incidentally, Steve's 1770/1970 alter egos are "Sir Reginald von Sharp" and "Scooby" while Jon's are "Duke Johann van Keymeister" and "Phil.")

Presenting... "I Want You Bach" – Jackson 5's funky "I Want You Back" mashed-up with 5 illustrious themes written by J.S. Bach. All the sounds you hear were created by the instruments shown – including the words "I Want You Back/Bach" simulated by a "talk box" (popularly used in the 1970's, but never with a cello!) Here's how it works: Steve plays cello notes through a micro speaker built into a foot pedal, the sound then travels through a tube and into his mouth where he shapes the notes into actual words. (Google "talk box" to learn more – it's pretty groovy.) To anyone's knowledge the likes of electric cello, grand piano, harpsichord, Baroque cello, talk box, and kick drum have never gigged together. Until now. It's totally the battle of the 70's – the 1770s and the 1970s...can you dig?

Phil is tickling the ivories of a custom-built hybrid grand piano, while Scooby shreds on a custom 5-stringed electric cello complete with a sidecar kick drum. Conversely, Sir Reginald is playing a circa-1700-replica Baroque cello (no "why don't you fix it?" jokes, please), and Duke Johann is playing an actual harpsichord that was built and designed by Hale Centre Theatre. In fact, nearly everything you see in this video was provided by Hale Centre Theatre – from the sinking Piano/Cello platform down to the disco duds of Scooby and Phil opposite the Scarlett Pimpernel robes arrayed upon Johann and Sir Reggie.

The performance was filmed this using 4K resolution (a huge step up from 1080p and quickly becoming the new "high def"), allowing for more freedom and flexibility to zoom in and out of static shots (which helped us create the illusion that two different versions of Jon and Steve were jamming together.)

BACKGROUND: The Piano Guys are an American musical group consisting of Jon Schmidt, Steven Sharp Nelson, Paul Anderson, and Al van der Beek. They gained popularity through YouTube, where they posted piano and cello renditions of popular songs and classical music. Schmidt and Nelson's music is accompanied by professional-quality videos shot and edited by Paul Anderson and formerly by Tel Stewart. Their first four major-label albums The Piano Guys, The Piano Guys 2, A Family Christmas, and Wonders each reached number one on the Billboard New Age Albums and Classical Albums charts. The Piano Guys' newest album Wonders was released on October 7, 2014

Hale Centre Theatre

3333 South Decker Lake Drive (2200 West)

West Valley City, UT 84119

CREDITS

“I Want You Back” as performed by Michael Jackson and Jackson 5, written by The Corporation
Arrangement written and produced by Al van der Beek, Jon Schmidt & Steven Sharp Nelson

Also inspired by the following Johann Sebastian Bach pieces: Brandenburg Concertos No. 3 & 5, Two
Part Invention No. 8, Minuet in G, Bourrée, and Gavotte from the French Suite No. 5

Performed by

Jon Schmidt: Piano & harpsichord

Steven Sharp Nelson: Baroque cello, electric cello, talk box, cello percussion, percussion, & vocal
textures

Al van der Beek: Vocal textures & percussion

Recorded, mixed, & mastered by Al van der Beek at TPG Studios, Utah

Video filmed & produced by Paul Anderson & Shaye Scott

If you enjoy the video you owe a debt of gratitude and a HEAVY shout out to the Hale Centre Theatre for providing the set, the elaborate costumes, the harpsichord, the descending piano/cello cage and, most of all, the friendliest professional team of stage people in the business! If you are ever in Utah, you HAVE to see a production there: <https://www.hct.org>. And then Thank the amazing HALE PEOPLE!

Hale Center Theatre Crew:

Theatre Producers – Mark & Sally Dietlein

Scenic Designer – Kacey Udy

Props Mistress & Set Dresser – Michelle Jensen

Props Assistant – Jennifer Taylor

Production Assistant – Jamie Sanduk

Stage Manager – Jimmy Smolka

Lighting Designer & Body Double – Adam Flitton

Costume Designer – Brooke Wilkins

Wig & Make Up Designer – Krissa Lent & Trisha Ison

Costumer – Peggy Willis

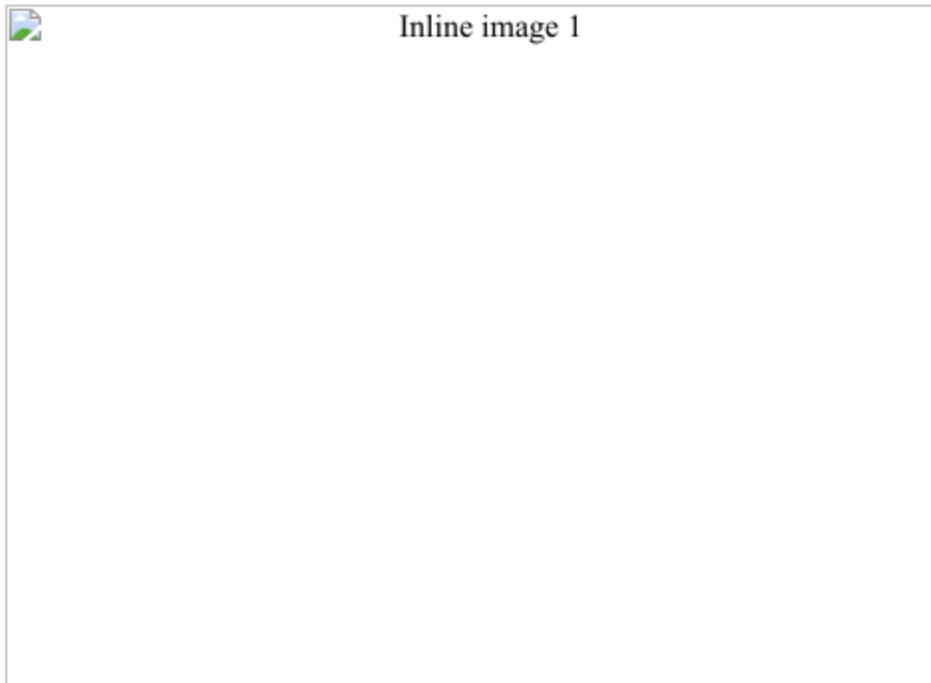
Sound Engineer – Shane Steel

Carpenter & Body Double – Ryan White

Carpenters & Engineers – Rob Kinmont, Kelby Merton, & Brian Loth

THIS WEEK'S MUSIC

Sam & Dave



This week I would like to invite you to enjoy the music of **Sam & Dave** – the American soul and R&B duo who performed together from 1961 through to 1981. The tenor (*higher*) voice was **Samuel David Moore** (*born Samuel David Hicks on October 12, 1935*), and the baritone/tenor (*lower*) voice was **Dave Prater** (*May 9, 1937 – April 9, 1988*). In my neighborhood, from the mid-1960s into the early 1970s when you went to a house party and the host wanted people to dance a sure fired bet was to play one of Sam & Dave's hits because there was no way that you could just sit quietly or just finger-pop.

Sam & Dave are members of the **Rock and Roll Hall of Fame**, **the Grammy Hall of Fame**, **the Vocal Group Hall of Fame**, and **are Grammy Award** and multiple gold record award winning artists. According to the **Rock & Roll Hall of Fame**, Sam & Dave were the most successful soul duo, and brought the sounds of the black gospel church to pop music with their call-and-response records. Recorded primarily at Stax Records in Memphis, Tennessee, from 1965 through 1968, these included "*Soul Man*", "*Hold On, I'm Comin'*", "*You Don't Know Like I Know*", "*I Thank You*", "*When Something is Wrong with My Baby*", "*Wrap It Up*", and many other Southern Soul classics. Except for Aretha

Franklin, no soul act during Sam & Dave's Stax years (1965–1968) had more consistent R&B chart success, including 10 consecutive top 20 singles and 3 consecutive top 10 LPs.

Their crossover charts appeal (*13 straight appearances and 2 top 10 singles*) helped to pave the way for the acceptance of soul music by white pop audiences, and their song "*Soul Man*" was one of the first songs by a black group to top the pop charts using the word "*soul*", helping define the genre. "*Soul Man*" was a number one Pop Hit (Cashbox: November 11, 1967) and has been recognized as one of the most influential songs of the past 50 years by the Grammy Hall of Fame, the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, Rolling Stone magazine, and RIAA Songs of the Century. "*Soul Man*" was featured as the soundtrack and title for a 1986 film and also a 1997–1998 television series, and ***Soul Men*** was a 2008 feature film.

Nicknamed "**Double Dynamite**", "**The Sultans of Sweat**", and "**The Dynamic Duo**" for their gritty, gospel-infused performances, Sam & Dave were one of the greatest live acts of the 1960s. They were an influence on many future musicians, including Bruce Springsteen, Al Green, Tom Petty, Phil Collins, Michael Jackson, Elvis Costello, The Jam, Teddy Pendergrass, Billy Joel and Steve Winwood. The **Blues Brothers**, who helped create a resurgence of popularity for soul, R&B, and blues in the 1980s, were influenced by Sam & Dave – their biggest hit was a cover of "*Soul Man*", and their act and stage show had many similarities to the duo.

With this said I invite you to enjoy the music of **Mr. Sam & Dave** because if you like the real roots of R&B you will not be disappointed and don't be embarrassed if you find yourself finger-popping alone on your own reminiscing.... **Enjoy....**

Sam & Dave – ***Hold on I'm Coming*** -- <https://youtu.be/kOLBUtbF8qM>

Sam & Dave – ***Soul Man*** -- <https://youtu.be/pYh-LwbUwoQ>

Sam & Dave – ***When Something is Wrong With My Baby*** -- <https://youtu.be/T246rhSoHes>

Sam & Dave – ***You Don't Know Like I Know*** -- <https://youtu.be/KJulwIdx9BM>

Sam & Dave – ***Wrap It Up*** -- <https://youtu.be/EcyTB4GIKq4>

Sam & Dave – ***Wonderful World*** -- https://youtu.be/dWA6AgOnl_Y

Sam & Dave – ***Don't Pull Your Love*** -- <https://youtu.be/OqpDmOzrLbk>

Sam & Dave – ***Mustang Sally*** -- <https://youtu.be/S4inTIin83E>

Sam & Dave – ***Soul Sister, Brown Sugar*** -- <https://youtu.be/VTdD4gli3LI>

Sam & Dave – ***I Thank You*** -- <https://youtu.be/WxQM7GXA8Tc>

Sam & Dave – ***Don't Turn Your Heater Down*** -- <https://youtu.be/n746fVG7dlw>

Sam & Dave – ***Blame Me But Don't Blame My Heart*** -- <https://youtu.be/w5h5GYVKpMI>

Sam & Dave – ***A Place Nobody Can Find*** -- <https://youtu.be/IkiODG9-ZGo>

Sam & Dave – *I Can't Stand Up* -- <https://youtu.be/wmjCfcIKxC4>

Sam & Dave – *You Don't Know What You Mean To Me* -- <https://youtu.be/Aob5EtjogLE>

Sam & Dave – *Gimme Some Lovin'* -- <https://youtu.be/IUU6Azk4Yao>

Bonus Track

The Blues Brothers – *Soul Man* [Saturday Night Live 1978] -- <https://youtu.be/koGt7Oiczf8>

I hope that you enjoyed this week's offering and wish you and yours a great week and a very Happy Mother's Day to you and to your mom....

Sincerely,

Greg Brown

--

Gregory Brown
Chairman & CEO
GlobalCast Partners, LLC

US: [REDACTED]
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Fax: [REDACTED]
Skype: [REDACTED]