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**Subject:** Fwd: Greg Brown's Weekend Reading and Other Things.... 12/23/12

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**Attachments:** That\_Terrible\_Trillion\_Paul\_Krugman\_NYT\_December\_16,\_2012.pdf;  
A\_Tax\_Reform\_to\_Cut\_Complexity,\_Increase\_Fairness\_Lawrence\_Summers\_TWP\_\_December\_16,\_2012.pdf;  
I\_am\_Adam\_Lanza's\_Mother\_Liza\_Long\_The\_Blue\_Review\_12\_17\_12.pdf;  
Twelve\_facts\_about\_guns\_and\_mass\_shootings\_in\_the\_United\_States\_Ezra\_Klein\_TWP\_December\_15,\_2012.pdf; Do\_concealed-weapon\_laws\_result\_in\_less\_crime\_Glenn\_Kessler\_TWP\_December\_17,\_2012.pdf;  
South\_Africa\_Since\_Mandela\_Bill\_Keller\_NYT\_December\_16,\_2012.pdf;  
In\_Other\_Countries,\_Laws\_Are\_Strict\_and\_Work\_NYT\_Editorial\_December\_17,\_2012.pdf;  
; Slavery's\_Global\_Comeback\_JJ\_Gould\_The\_Atlantic\_December\_19,\_2012.pdf;  
After\_Recession,\_More\_Young\_Adults\_Are\_Living\_on\_Street\_Susan\_Saulny\_December\_18,\_2012.pdf; National\_Rifle\_-\_Selling\_-\_Association\_NYT\_Editorial\_December\_20,\_2012.pdf;  
NRA\_Press\_Conference,\_Wayne\_LaPierre\_Calls\_For\_Armed\_Police\_Officers\_At\_Every\_School\_Philip\_Elliott\_Huff\_Post\_12\_21\_12.pdf;  
Civilian\_analysts\_gained\_Petraeus's\_ear\_while\_he\_was\_commander\_in\_Afghanistan\_Rajiv\_Chandrasekaran\_December\_18,\_2012.pdf

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## Dear Friends.....

*As most of you know, week ago Friday there was an horrific national tragedy — the murder of 20 children and six adults at Sandy Hook Elementary School in New Town, Connecticut — has ignited a new discussion on violence in America. As a result, in kitchens and coffee shops across the country, we tearfully debate the many faces of violence in America: gun culture, media violence, lack of mental health services, overt and covert wars abroad, religion, politics and the way we raise our children.*

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In a study by the **Harvard School of Public Health** this year researchers found a broad array of evidence indicating that gun availability is a risk factor for homicide, both in the United States and across 26 high-income countries. Case-control studies, ecological time-series and cross-sectional studies indicated that in homes, cities, states and regions in the US, where there are more guns, both men and women are at higher risk for homicide, particularly firearm homicide. And in countries where they have imposed strict gun control laws they work. In Japan, which has very strict laws, only 11 people killed with guns in 2008, compared with 12,000 deaths by firearms that year in the United States. And firearm homicides in Australia dropped 59 percent between 1995 and 2006 after strict gun laws were enacted. **"One guy tries to use a shoe-bomb and now everyone at the airport has to take off their shoes, while there have 31 school shootings since Columbine, but no change....."** Obviously guns alone don't kill but there is empirical evidence that stricter gun laws reduce gun violence, so if we are afraid of *shoe-bombers*, (although no one in the world have been killed by one), shouldn't we consider imposing stronger gun laws since 12,000 Americans die each year as a result of gun violence.

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As Conservative Joe Scarborough said on Monday on his **MSMBC** show, **Morning Joe**, the massacre in Newtown had forced him to rethink his "long-held" belief about gun rights. In a lengthy monologue, Scarborough talked about how shaken up he had been by the killing of 20 children at Sandy Hook Elementary School on Friday. He

noted that his children's ages averaged that of some of the murdered victims. *"From this day forward, nothing can ever be the same again,"* he said. *"... Let this be our true landmark ... politicians can no longer be allowed to defend the status quo."*

He said that he was a *"conservative Republican"* who had been solidly aligned with the NRA during his time in Congress, and had previously held libertarian views on the Second Amendment. But he added that Friday *"changed everything"*: *"I knew that day that the ideologies of my past career were no longer relevant to the future that I want, that I demand for my children. Friday changed everything. It must change everything. We all must begin anew and demand that Washington's old way of doing business is no longer acceptable. Entertainment moguls don't have an absolute right to glorify murder while spreading mayhem in young minds across America. And our Bill of Rights does not guarantee gun manufacturers the absolute right to sell military-style, high-caliber, semi-automatic combat assault rifles with high-capacity magazines to whoever the hell they want."*

*It is time for Congress to put children before deadly dogmas. It's time for politicians to start focusing more on protecting our schoolyards than putting together their next fundraiser. It's time for Washington to stop trying to win endless wars overseas when we're losing the war at home ... For the sake of my four children and yours, I choose life and I choose change."*

**Joe Scarborough: Newtown Shooting Made 'Ideologies Of My Past' On Guns Irrelevant (video):**

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/12/17/joe-scarborough-newtown-shooting\\_n\\_2315100.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/12/17/joe-scarborough-newtown-shooting_n_2315100.html) I urge you to see this video.

The society now can go in one of two directions. Either we will just accept periodic shooting sprees as one of those unfortunate things that must be lived with -- like, say, the periodic flooding and death that results from global climate change? If we go that route, even our sweetest, safest elementary schools will be turned into fortresses. The remnants of our open society will be turned into a surveillance society. We will solve our unemployment problem by hiring millions more armed guards. Alternatively, we can finally get serious about gun control. But the leadership has to come from the president. Barack Obama has a gift for moving public sentiment. If ever there were a moment to use it, on behalf on murdered first graders and others who might be spared, that moment is now.

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**This week in Moyers & Company Bill urges us to remember the victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre by name. He also rejects the notion of doubling down on guns and body armor as a response, and encourages all of us to work hard on realistic and moral solutions.**

*"Laws are hard to come by, civilization just as hard" Bill says. "But democracy aims for a moral order as just as possible — which means laws that protect the weak, and not just the strong."*

Today I ask everyone to remember:

Charlotte Bacon, 6  
Daniel Barden, 7  
Rachel D'Avino, 29  
Olivia Engel, 6  
Josephine Gay, 7  
Ana Marquez-Greene, 6  
Dylan Hockley, 6

Dawn Hochsprung, 47  
Madeleine Hsu, 6  
Catherine Hubbard, 6  
Chase Kowalski, 7  
Jesse Lewis, 6  
James Mattioli, 6  
Grace McDonnell, 7  
Anne Marie Murphy, 52  
Emilie Parker, 6  
Jack Pinto, 6  
Noah Pozner, 6  
Caroline Previdi, 6  
Jessica Rekos, 6  
Avielle Richman, 6  
Lauren Rousseau, 30  
Mary Sherlach, 56  
Victoria Soto, 27  
Benjamin Wheeler, 6  
Allison Wyatt, 6

We have to reject stupidity – such as the state senator in Missouri, a life-time member of the National Rifle Association, who is pushing a bill to require that all first graders be enrolled in the NRA’s gun safety course. First-graders. Six and seven years old – and the state senator in Tennessee’s Republican legislature who wants to introduce a bill that would allow the state to pay for secretly armed teachers in classrooms – Arming teachers and bulletproofing kids is not the answer. Instead, we should embrace laws to register all guns. License all gun owners. Require stringent background checks. Get tough on assault weapons of any kind. Crack down on high-capacity ammunition as the President has now proposed. And then, enforce the laws. Because after the Newtown killings, a sixth-grader at an elementary school near Salt Lake City brought a gun to school, saying he wanted to protect himself and his friends. Instead, allegedly, he used it to threaten some classmates.

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If you’re reading this, the Mayans were wrong. Whereas the truth is that they would only have been wrong if they’d actually predicted the end of the world, which scholars are pretty sure they didn’t. The Maya were obsessed with time, which they saw as moving in vast cycles. They developed a sophisticated and accurate calendar, and the inscriptions indicate they calculated that a major time cycle — and thus, some people have inferred, the world — would end on Dec. 21, 2012. In the world of doomsday anticipation, there’s no better source of information than an ancient soothsayer. Anything written in hieroglyphics pretty much has to be true. But experts say the inscriptions in question had nothing to do with cosmic fate and everything to do with local politics. David Stuart, director of the Mesoamerica Center at the University of Texas — and discoverer of one of the two Dec. 21 references — has explained that the date represents the 13th turn of a long cycle known as a bak’tun. In 696 A.D., when the hieroglyphs were carved, the ruler Yuknoom Yich’aak K’ahk’ — standard pronunciation — was trying to enhance his power and legitimacy by associating his reign with an important turning of time’s vast wheel. All that happens on the appointed date is that the next cycle begins.

For the Last Days crowd, however, this was mere fine print. A new study finds that unbelievers make up the world’s third-biggest “religion.” And even if they didn’t, most of us do not worship the Mayan gods. While present-day descendants of the Maya were unconcerned — “The world will not end,” priest Alfonso Ek told USA Today — there was genuine panic in isolated parts of the non-Maya world. In Russia, there was so much hubbub over the Dec. 21 “prophecy” that a government minister felt compelled to announce that the planet was in no imminent peril. In some remote cities there was reportedly a run on supplies such as candles and dried foods. There was reportedly a bit of panic buying in parts of China, apparently sparked by the popularity there of the

Hollywood movie “2012” — a what-if blockbuster starring John Cusack that imagines all manner of earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods and other calamities. Supposedly, it all has to do with neutrinos from a solar flare that somehow heat up the Earth’s core.

For world-enders of a New Age bent, much of the focus was on the village of Bugarach in the French Pyrenees. It happens that a famous local mountain — the Pic de Bugarach — is flat-topped, like the Devil’s Tower in Wyoming, which was the setting for Steven Spielberg’s alien-encounter classic “*Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.” Some New Agers see Bugarach as another likely landing spot for extraterrestrials. And what better day for them to arrive than Dec. 21, 2012? The mayor of Bugarach feared such an invasion of free spirits wanting to be beamed up that he declared the whole mountain off-limits and dispatched police to enforce his edict.

We have to ask what is it that humans find so compelling about impending oblivion? Why, to some people, the prospect of sudden and utter doom seems almost comforting? But for some people it is probably due to boredom with their current lot in life. While for most people, one day is pretty much like the next. — What if something really big happened? — What if I were there to see it? How awesome would that be? We have always lived in apocalyptic times. As long as there has been a world, people have been expecting it to end. But so far it has entirely failed to oblige. Dorothy Parker noted this phenomenon. “*Eat and drink and laugh and lie,*” she wrote, “*Love the reeling midnight through. For tomorrow we may die — but, alas, we never do.*”

***So if you are reading this Happy New Bak’tun, everybody.***

## THIS WEEKEND'S READINGS

As Paul Krugman wrote in his article *The Terrible Trillion*, this week in **The New York Times**, that in dealing with the deficit, the trillion dollar number is so mindboggling that people get fixated on the number alone instead of dealing with underlying problems that are causing this huge deficit. Yes, America does have a long-run budget problem, thanks to our aging population and the rising cost of health care. However, the current deficit has nothing to do with that problem, and says nothing at all about the sustainability of our social insurance programs. Instead, it mainly reflects the depressed state of the economy — a depression that would be made even worse by attempts to shrink the deficit rapidly.

The first thing we need to ask is what a sustainable budget would look like. The answer is that in a growing economy, budgets don’t have to be balanced to be sustainable. Federal debt was higher at the end of the Clinton years than at the beginning — that is, the deficits of the Clinton administration’s early years outweighed the surpluses at the end. Yet because gross domestic product rose over those eight years, the best measure of our debt position, the ratio of debt to G.D.P., fell dramatically, from 49 to 33 percent.

Right now, given reasonable estimates of likely future growth and inflation, we would have a stable or declining ratio of debt to G.D.P. even if we had a [\\$400 billion deficit](#). You can argue that we should do better; but if the question is whether current deficits are sustainable, you should take \$400 billion off the table right away. That still leaves \$600 billion or so. What’s that about? It’s the depressed economy — full stop.

First of all, the weakness of the economy has led directly to lower revenues; when G.D.P. falls, the federal tax take falls too, and in fact always falls substantially more in percentage terms. On top of that, revenue is temporarily depressed by tax breaks, notably the payroll tax cut, that have been put in place to support the economy but will be withdrawn as soon as the economy is stronger (or, unfortunately, even before then). If you do the math, it seems likely that full economic recovery would raise revenue by at least \$450 billion.

Meanwhile, the depressed economy has also temporarily raised spending, because more people qualify for unemployment insurance and means-tested programs like food stamps and Medicaid. A reasonable estimate is that economic recovery would reduce federal spending on such programs by at least \$150 billion.

Putting all this together, it turns out that the trillion-dollar deficit isn’t a sign of unsustainable finances at all. Some of the deficit is in fact sustainable; just about all of the rest would go away if we had an economic recovery. And the prospects for economic recovery are looking pretty good right now — or would be looking good if it weren’t for the political risks posed by Republican hostage-taking. Housing is reviving, consumer debt is down, employment has improved steadily among prime-age workers. Unfortunately, this recovery

may well be derailed by the fiscal cliff and/or a confrontation over the debt ceiling; but this has nothing to do with the alleged unsustainability of the deficit.

Which brings us back to ONE TRILLION DOLLARS.

We do indeed have a big budget deficit, and other things equal it would be better if the deficit were a lot smaller. But other things aren't equal; the deficit is a side-effect of an economic depression, and the first order of business should be to end that depression — which means, among other things, leaving the deficit alone for now. And you should recognize all the hyped-up talk about the deficit for what it is: yet another disingenuous attempt to scare and bully the body politic into abandoning programs that shield both poor and middle-class Americans from harm.

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As Lawrence Summers wrote in **The Washington Post** this past week in an op-ed titled, *A tax reform to cut complexity, increase fairness*, who makes several suggestions to the U.S. tax code to raise revenues, add fairness and reduce complexity.

So far the debate has focused on scaling back provisions of the tax code that have favored activities traditionally deemed valuable. There is talk of reducing relief for charitable contributions, taxes paid to state and local governments, home mortgages, employer-provided health insurance and more. Reasonable arguments can be made in each case. But taking only the “limit tax incentives” approach to reform has several major defects.

- **First**, if reform is designed to avoid perverse outcomes, such as the crushing of charitable contributions or more pressure on state budgets, then it will raise only limited amounts of revenue.
- **Second**, this approach will address very little of the code's complexity and is unlikely to do much for recovery, as it will do little to increase demand.
- **Third**, it will do little to address concerns about fairness because the richest taxpayers actually make relatively little use of deductions and credits.

What's needed is an element that has largely been absent to date: the numerous exclusions from the definition of adjusted gross income that enable the accumulation of great wealth with the payment of little or no taxes. The issue of the special capital gains treatment of carried interest — performance fee income for investment managers — is only the tip of a very large iceberg. Far too many provisions favor a small minority of very fortunate taxpayers. They effectively permit the accumulation of wealth to go substantially underreported on income and estate tax returns, which forces the federal government to consider excessive increases in tax rates if it is to reach any given revenue target.

Whether their primary concern is preserving incentives for small businesses, closing prospective budget deficits or protecting the social safety net, all parties should be able to agree that it should not be possible to accumulate and transfer large fortunes while almost entirely avoiding taxation. Yet this is all too possible today.

Here are some issues the Obama administration and Congress should consider in light of the magnitude of prospective deficits and the extraordinary good fortune of those at the top of the income distribution:

- Current valuation practices built into the tax code make it possible for investment partners to end up with \$50 million or more in tax-free individual retirement accounts when most Americans are constrained by a \$5,000 annual contribution limit.
- Our estate tax system is broken. Assets passed to relatives or other personal relations are often badly misvalued relative to what they cost on an open market. The total wealth of American households is estimated at more than \$60 trillion. It is heavily concentrated in very few hands. An estimated \$1.2 trillion, or 2 percent, is passed down each year, mostly from the very rich. Yet estate and gift taxes raise less than \$12 billion, or 1 percent of this figure, annually.
- If a family's home rises in value by more than a \$500,000 exclusion over the course of its dwelling, then the owners pay capital gains tax on the difference between the value now and the value at purchase. But real estate investment operators, who sell properties whose value is measured in the hundreds of millions — if not billions — of dollars, are able to take tax deductions for “depreciation” on their properties. They are then able to sell these properties at an appreciated price while avoiding capital gains tax through what

is known as a "like kind exchange." This is in fact a sale. Why should international companies be able to locate the lion's share of their foreign income in low-tax jurisdictions such as Bermuda, the Netherlands and Ireland and avoid paying taxes?

There are sound arguments for a preferential rate on capital gains. But is there real justification for allowing those who do not need to sell their assets to finance retirement to avoid capital gains taxes entirely by including them in their estates?

These rules that permit the taxes of the most fortunate Americans to be far less than commensurate with their good fortune have the virtue of being relatively comprehensible. Many others, involving issues such as derivative accounting, pooled interests and leveraged leases, are neither easily explainable nor easily justified.

The failure to tax capital gains at the point of death costs the federal government about \$50 billion a year. Since its removal would raise money in the future, and induce earlier and greater realizations of capital gains in the short term, its removal would probably add more than \$500 billion over a 10-year period. I believe it is plausible to raise \$1 trillion over the next 10 years by going after provisions that cause what adds to wealth and spending not to be regarded as income.

***It is said that the greatest scandals are not the illegal things that people do but the things that are legal. This is surely true with respect to a tax code in urgent need of reform.***

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Three days before 20 year-old Adam Lanza killed his mother, then opened fire on a classroom full of Connecticut kindergartners, writer Liza Long's 13-year old son Michael (name changed) missed his bus because he was wearing the wrong color pants.

*"I can wear these pants," he said, his tone increasingly belligerent, the black-hole pupils of his eyes swallowing the blue irises. "They are navy blue," I told him. "Your school's dress code says black or khaki pants only." "They told me I could wear these," he insisted. "You're a stupid bitch. I can wear whatever pants I want to. This is America. I have rights!" "You can't wear whatever pants you want to," I said, my tone affable, reasonable. "And you definitely cannot call me a stupid bitch. You're grounded from electronics for the rest of the day. Now get in the car, and I will take you to school."*

Liza Long lives with a son who is mentally ill. She loves her son. But he terrifies her.

*"A few weeks ago, Michael pulled a knife and threatened to kill me and then himself after I asked him to return his overdue library books. His 7 and 9 year old siblings knew the safety plan—they ran to the car and locked the doors before I even asked them to. I managed to get the knife from Michael, then methodically collected all the sharp objects in the house into a single Tupperware container that now travels with me. Through it all, he continued to scream insults at me and threaten to kill or hurt me. That conflict ended with three burly police officers and a paramedic wrestling my son onto a gurney for an expensive ambulance ride to the local emergency room. The mental hospital didn't have any beds that day, and Michael calmed down nicely in the ER, so they sent us home with a prescription for Zyprexa and a follow-up visit with a local pediatric psychiatrist. We still don't know what's wrong with Michael. Autism spectrum, ADHD, Oppositional Defiant or Intermittent Explosive Disorder have all been tossed around at various meetings with probation officers and social workers and counselors and teachers and school administrators. He's been on a slew of antipsychotic and mood altering pharmaceuticals, a Russian novel of behavioral plans. Nothing seems to work. At the start of seventh grade, Michael was accepted to an accelerated program for highly gifted math and science students. His IQ is off the charts. When he's in a good mood, he will gladly bend your ear on subjects ranging from Greek mythology to the differences between Einsteinian and Newtonian physics to Doctor Who. He's in a good mood most of the time. But when he's not, watch out. And it's impossible to predict what will set him off.*

*This problem is too big for me to handle on my own. Sometimes there are no good options. So you just pray for grace and trust that in hindsight, it will all make sense.*

*I am sharing this story because I am Adam Lanza's mother. I am Dylan Klebold's and Eric Harris's mother. I am James Holmes's mother. I am Jared Loughner's mother. I am Seung-Hui Cho's mother. And these boys—and their*

mothers—need help. In the wake of another horrific national tragedy, it's easy to talk about guns. But it's time to talk about mental illness.

According to Mother Jones, since 1982, 61 mass murders involving firearms have occurred throughout the country. Of these, 43 of the killers were white males, and only one was a woman. Mother Jones focused on whether the killers obtained their guns legally (most did). But this highly visible sign of mental illness should lead us to consider how many people in the U.S. live in fear, like I do. When I asked my son's social worker about my options, he said that the only thing I could do was to get Michael charged with a crime. "If he's back in the system, they'll create a paper trail," he said. "That's the only way you're ever going to get anything done. No one will pay attention to you unless you've got charges."

I don't believe my son belongs in jail. The chaotic environment exacerbates Michael's sensitivity to sensory stimuli and doesn't deal with the underlying pathology. But it seems like the United States is using prison as the solution of choice for mentally ill people. According to Human Rights Watch, the number of mentally ill inmates in U.S. prisons quadrupled from 2000 to 2006, and it continues to rise—in fact, the rate of inmate mental illness is five times greater (56 percent) than in the non-incarcerated population.

With state-run treatment centers and hospitals shuttered, prison is now the last resort for the mentally ill—Rikers Island, the LA County Jail and Cook County Jail in Illinois housed the nation's largest treatment centers in 2011. No one wants to send a 13-year old genius who loves Harry Potter and his snuggle animal collection to jail. But our society, with its stigma on mental illness and its broken healthcare system, does not provide us with other options. Then another tortured soul shoots up a fast food restaurant. A mall. A kindergarten classroom. And we wring our hands and say, "Something must be done." Something must be done. It's time for a meaningful, nation-wide conversation about mental health. That's the only way our nation can ever truly heal."

**Liza Long:** God help me. God help Michael. God help us all.  
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As Ezra Klein wrote in his article **Twelve facts about guns and mass shootings in the United States** this week in **The Washington Post** – here are the facts:

- 1. Shooting sprees are not rare in the United States:** Since 1982, there have been at least 61 mass murders carried out with firearms across the country, with the killings unfolding in 30 states from Massachusetts to Hawaii. And in most cases, the killers had obtained their weapons legally.
- 2. 15 of the 25 worst mass shootings in the last 50 years took place in the United States:** In second place is Finland, with two entries.
- 3. Lots of guns don't necessarily mean lots of shootings, examples being Israel and Switzerland:** In recent years both have tightened their gun laws substantially,
- 4. Of the 11 deadliest shootings in the US, five have happened from 2007 onward:** That doesn't include Friday's shooting in Sandy Hook, Connecticut whose death toll at 27, would make it the second-deadliest mass shooting in US history.
- 5. America is an unusually violent country. But we're not as violent as we used to be:** Death due to assault is half of its all time high in the mid-1970s, but more than triple that of developed countries and more than four times if you take out Estonia, Mexico and Brazil.
- 6. The South is the most violent region in the United States:** There are 7.1 per 1000 assault deaths in the South verses a low of 4.2 per 1000 in the Northeast.

**7. Gun ownership in the United States is declining overall:** Currently approximately around 44% down from almost 51% in 1970 for legal gun ownership.

**8. More guns tend to mean more homicide:** The Harvard Injury Control Research Center found that there's substantial evidence that indicates more guns means more murders.

**9. States with stricter gun control laws have fewer deaths from gun-related violence:** Last year, economist Richard did a study that States with tighter gun control laws appear to have fewer gun-related deaths, even when Higher populations, more stress, more immigrants, and more mental illness were factored in.

**10. Gun control, in general, has not been politically popular:** "The percentage in favor of making the laws governing the sale of firearms 'more strict' fell from 78% in 1990 to 62% in 1995, and 51% in 2007," [reports](#) Gallup. "In the most recent reading, Gallup in 2010 found 44% in favor of stricter laws. I am sure that there is more support for gun control since last Friday's latest shooting.

**11. But particular policies to control guns often are:** An August CNN/ORC poll asked respondents whether they favor or oppose a number of specific policies to restrict gun ownership. And when you drill down to that level, many policies, including banning the manufacture and possession of semi-automatic rifles, are popular.

**12. Shootings don't tend to substantially affect views on gun control: After the shootings:** Even after the mass shootings at Virginia Tech in 2004, Tucson, Arizona in 2011 and in Aurora, Colorado in July 2012 there has been little change in support for more gun control laws. **WHY?**

Only with gun violence do we respond to repeated tragedies by saying that mourning is acceptable but discussing how to prevent more tragedies is not. "Too soon," howl supporters of loose gun laws. But as others have observed, talking about how to stop mass shootings in the aftermath of a string of mass shootings isn't "too soon." It's much too late. Ezra Klein

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**Last Sunday on "Fox News Sunday,"** (Dec. 16, 2012) Rep. Louie Gohmert (R-Tex.) said: *"The facts are every time guns have been allowed, concealed-carry has been allowed, the crime rate has gone down."* Gohmert said of slain principal Dawn Hochsprung: *"I wish to God she had had an M-4 [assault rifle] in her office, locked up so when she heard gunfire, she pulls it out and she didn't have to lunge heroically with nothing in her hands, but she takes him out, takes his head off before he can kill those precious kids."*

First of all, wasn't the first victim of the shooting rampage last Friday – Nancy Lanza, was killed by her own gun and shot by her own son whom she lived in the same house with. In **The Washington Post** this week Glenn Kessler, gave Representative Gohmert **Three Pinocchios:** Gohmert's statement was declarative and sweeping: *"The facts are every time guns have been allowed, concealed-carry has been allowed, the crime rate has gone down."*

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Of all of the people that I have met in my life, there is no one more special than Nelson Mandela and I am sure this is true for everyone else (from Bill Clinton, Michael Jackson to Bono) who was gifted the opportunity to meet him as well. As Bill Keller wrote in his article **South Africa Since Mandela** this week in **The Washington Post** – IN 1994, shortly after Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as the first president of all South Africans, one of the local newspapers ran an interview with him under a huge, boldface headline: "MANDELA: I'M NOT

'MESSIAH.' " That this would be considered banner news testified to the degree of myth and the unreality of expectations that attended the man.

Mandela is now 94 and hospitalized, recovering from gallstone surgery and a lung infection. But his most valuable gift to South Africa was a culture of patient compromise. He did not triumph over apartheid by spending 27 years in prison and then cashing in his moral superiority. He triumphed by spending 27 years in prison and then doing an elaborate deal with the men who put him there — a deal that temporarily protected the jobs, the lands and the industrial wealth of the white minority, a deal that made the disenfranchised majority wait patiently for their reparations, a deal that minimized the flight of white capital and expertise and averted a prolonged blood bath. He was, in short, a politician, of a sort that was rare in the African National Congress then and is in woefully short supply today, here and in Washington: a politician with high purpose, a clear eye on the future, an immense generosity of spirit and deep reserves of discipline and resourcefulness.

For what he left in his wake was not really a government yet, or even a genuine political party, but a liberation movement, with the mentality, customs and culture of constant struggle. History tells us that such liberation movements do not so easily make the transition to stable democracies. Think of the heritage Tito, the tyranny of Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe, the long nightmare of the Bolsheviks or Kwame Nkrumah's descent into authoritarian rule in Ghana. Examples abound. Even our own revolution required a civil war to settle things. Liberation movements are held together and defined by what they are against. The African National Congress, which is marking its centenary year, was from its early days a conglomeration of interests and ideologies, from rainbow-coalition idealists to black nationalists who chanted for the blood of white farmers, from Communists to Westernizers, from guilt-ridden white liberals to power-hungry opportunists. It had exile factions and in-country factions, prison factions and underground factions. It was inevitable that, once the shared enemy of white oppression was conquered, they would fall to quarreling over the direction and the spoils.

I watched this first hand, as he was denied his first-choice of Cyril Ramaphosa as his deputy and successor and being a party man (compromiser) settled for Thabo Mbeki whom it is said, he didn't like or trust.

But he remained a party man at heart — to such an extent that he let the party elders choose as his first deputy president and successor a man, Thabo Mbeki, whom Mandela did not much like or trust. (It was rumored that after retiring, Mandela took sensitive conversations outdoors because he believed Mbeki had bugged his home.) Mbeki was not as awful a president as he expanded a safety net to a lot of desperate people, and contributed to a first-world business climate that made outside investors feel welcome. But ultimately he fell into a kind of paranoid isolation — the most horrifying symptom being his insistence that the rampaging [South African AIDS crisis](#) was a white-invented myth. The party [stripped him of his office](#) in a grotesque ritual humiliation — the kind of knives-out display that is customary for liberation parties feeling their power. On top of this, like Larry Holmes who followed Muhammad Ali there was little chance for Mbeki to ever fill Mandela's shoes and everyone knew this adding to his paranoia.

Mbeki's successor Jacob Zuma, singular accomplishment has been to make Mbeki look like a paragon of virtue, having diverted many millions of dollars of state money and special-interest largess to enlarge a [lavish homestead](#) in a region, Nkandla. The newspaper headlines in South Africa post daily scream of scandal, beginning at the very top with President. One crude measure of South Africa's moral decline is to compare Zuma's fortress — helicopter pad, tennis courts and soccer field, planned underground bunkers — with the retirement refuge Mandela built, its blueprint copied from the warden's cottage at the prison on Robin Island — for the very Mandela-esque reason that the floor plan was familiar.

Liberation movements — prizing ends over means — are not always particular about their friends or scrupulous about their transactions. President Mandela left no record of being on the take, but he was always accessible to the businessmen who tithed to the A.N.C. And yes he turned a blind eye to regimes (Kaddafi, Mugabe, dos Santos) that backed the A.N.C. in exile. In the 18 years since coming to power the A.N.C. government has created a substantial black middle class and a smaller, conspicuous cadre of black privilege. But it has not — perhaps could not have — significantly narrowed the gulf between the shack-dwelling underclass and everyone else. This inequality breeds serious resentment, violent protests over undelivered services, strikes, fatalism. The urgent question now is whether the movement that is Mandela's bequest to his country can mature into a more credible government before the public runs out of its famous patience and starts looking for a new messiah.

**Finally:** Having been going to South Africa since 1975, unlike Bill Keller, I have yet to meet a Black in South Africa who speak of apartheid times with nostalgia. ***"I beg you to accept that there is no people on Earth who would not prefer their own bad government to the good government of an alien power"..... Mahatma Gandhi***

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In the Editorial — ***In Other Countries, Laws Are Strict and Work*** — in the **New York Times** this week they point to a Harvard School of Public Health study of 26 developed countries that wherever there are more firearms, there are more homicides. In the case of the United States, exponentially more: the American murder rate is roughly 15 times that of other wealthy countries,

which have much tougher laws controlling private ownership of guns. There's another important difference between this country and the rest of the world. Other nations have suffered similar rampages, but they have reacted quickly to impose new and stricter gun laws.

Australia is an excellent example. In 1996, a "pathetic social misfit," as a judge described the lone gunman, killed 35 people with a spray of bullets from semiautomatic weapons. Within weeks, the Australian government was working on gun reform laws that banned assault weapons and shotguns, tightened licensing and financed gun amnesty and buyback programs. At the time, the prime minister, John Howard, said, "We do not want the American disease imported into Australia." The laws have worked. The American Journal of Law and Economics reported in 2010 that firearm homicides in Australia dropped 59 percent between 1995 and 2006. In the 18 years before the 1996 laws, there were 13 gun massacres resulting in 102 deaths, according to Harvard researchers, with none in that category since.

Similarly, after 16 children and their teacher were killed by a gunman in Dunblane, Scotland, in 1996, the British government banned all private ownership of automatic weapons and virtually all handguns. Those changes gave Britain some of the toughest gun control laws in the developed world on top of already strict rules. Hours of exhaustive paperwork are required if anyone wants to own even a shotgun or rifle for hunting. The result has been a decline in murders involving firearms.

In Japan, which has very strict laws, only 11 people killed with guns in 2008, compared with 12,000 deaths by firearms that year in the United States — a huge disparity even accounting for the difference in population. As Mayor Michael Bloomberg stressed on Monday while ratcheting up his national antigun campaign, "We are the only industrialized country that has this problem. In the whole world, the only one." NYT: Americans do not have to settle for that.

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Although it is the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and slavery in almost everywhere was abolished in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century as J.J. Gould wrote this week in his article *Slavery's Global Comeback* in *The Atlantic*, it is.... And it is coming back big time. Contemporary slavery is real, and it's terribly common -- across Southeast Asia, and around the world.

It is said that today the global slave population is somewhere between 20 to 30 million people. Most of these people are in sedentary forms of slavery, such as hereditary collateral-debt bondage. Although a large percentage having been unwittingly trafficked though the promise of opportunity by predators through varying combinations of deception and coercion, very mobile, very dynamic, leveraging communications and logistics in the same basic way modern businesses do generally. After the earthquake of 2010 devastated Haiti, Hispaniola was quickly overrun with opportunistic traffickers targeting children to sell into domestic slavery or brothels.

Others are children literally sold by parents or relatives in order to pay off debt or to lessen their economic burden. The highest ratios of slaves worldwide are from South and Southeast Asia, along with China, Russia, Albania, Belarus, and Romania. There is a significant slave presence across North Africa and the Middle East, including Lebanon. There is also a major slave trade in Africa. Descent-based slavery persists in Mauritania, where children of slaves are passed on to their slave-holders' children. And then there is the North Korean gulag system, which holds 200,000 people, is essentially a constellation of slave-labor camps.

As pervasive as contemporary slavery is, it only came into focus as a global issue until recently. There are a couple of big reasons why -- one having to do with the scale of the problem, the other with the idea of slavery itself. In which case, assuming even the rough accuracy of 27 million, there are likely more slaves in the world today than there have been at any other time in human history. For some quick perspective on that point: Over the entire 350 years of the transatlantic slave trade, 13.5 million people were taken out of Africa, meaning there are twice as many enslaved right now as there had been in that whole 350-year span.

Right after the end of the Cold War, people in Western cities -- in Berlin, Paris, Amsterdam, London, New York -- started noticing something pronounced about migration patterns out of the just-collapsed Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc: The "immigrants" were disproportionately young women and girls. It didn't take much time to realize that they were prostitutes, while it took much longer to understand that they weren't operating freely; and that criminals were trafficking them out of Eurasia effectively as black-market goods, like opium or Kalashnikovs. Slavery is such an ugly word that for "*gender-based violence*" or "*rape as a weapon of war*" to describe what goes on in eastern Congo -- rape becomes the more comfortable word than slavery. As such over the past 15 years, "*trafficking in persons*" and "*human trafficking*" have been used as umbrella terms for activities involved when someone obtains or holds a person in compelled service.

Slavery today is driven by the same political, technological, and economic forces as globalization itself.

Although slavery has been around since the birth of mankind, there have been three major anti-slavery movements in the modern era prior to the nascent contemporary one. The first was started in 1787 by Anti-Slavery International -- or as it was called at the time, the *Society for Effecting the Termination of the Slave Trade* -- in London. Twenty years later, the slave trade in the British Empire was finished. This worked completely through social mobilization; in fact, it was one of the first major social movements in the West.

The second anti-slavery movement was marked by the most decisive moral leadership in U.S. history, but it was also thwarted by a total social division between the North and the South, with virtually total Southern intransigence, and culminated an enormous war that resulted in upward of three-quarters of a million deaths and new troubles for the United States' former slaves that have cast a long shadow since.

The third movement is less well known but offers a precedent for contemporary abolitionism that may be in some ways as compelling as the first. This was the global movement, which included luminaries like Mark Twain and Sarah Bernhardt, against the enslavement of between 5 and 10 million people in the Congo as the personal property of King Leopold II of Belgium. The purpose of this enslavement was to feed new technologies, particularly pneumatic rubber tires.

What stopped this movement was the new technology of the portable cameras that enabled abolitionists to do magic-lantern shows/documentaries in big theaters across Europe and America -- detailing the destitution in the Congo and the routine physical mutilation of slaves who failed to meet their "rubber quotas," which truly freaked viewers out and helped mobilize the public broadly. After this anti-slavery campaign captured the photos it captured and showed them, Leopold, who had completely denied everything until then -- and he could, because there was no way to prove what he was doing -- gave up, ended the enslavement, and, in 1908, relinquished the Congo to the Belgian government.

As for the fourth, the most optimistic view says that as massive as slavery is today, it's also on the edge of its own extinction, needing only the right push. If the global slave population is 27 million, it's still 27 million out of a total of 7 billion, making it -- and here's the paradox -- the smallest fraction of the global population to be enslaved ever. If slavery generates between \$30 billion and \$45 billion a year to the global economy, it's a big industry, but it also amounts to the smallest ratio of the global economy ever represented by slave labor and slave output. While slavery has grown in absolute terms, it's shrunk in relative terms, and so, the theory goes, it's increasingly vulnerable. But the fact that there is around 30 million humans living in absolute slavery/forced labor and the more than 100 million plus living in "*near slavery*" in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century should be seen as a disease akin to Small Pox and Polio that has to be eradicated as soon as possible. .... And by keeping a light on slavery in every or in any form will hasten its eradication.

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As Susan Saulny wrote this week in **The New York Times** – *After Recession, More Young Adults Are Living on Street*. Across the country, tens of thousands of underemployed and jobless young people, many with college credits or work histories, are struggling to house themselves in the wake of the recession, which has left workers between the ages of 18 and 24 with the highest unemployment rate of all adults.

Those who can move back home with their parents — the so-called boomerang set — are the lucky ones. But that is not an option for those whose families have been hit hard by the economy, including Mr. Taylor, whose mother is barely scraping by while working in a laundromat. Without a stable home address, they are an elusive group that mostly couch surfs or sleeps hidden away in cars or other private places, hoping to avoid the lasting stigma of public homelessness during what they hope will be a temporary predicament.

These young adults are the new face of a national homeless population, one that poverty experts and case workers say is growing. Yet the problem is mostly invisible. Most cities and states, focusing on homeless families, have not made special efforts to identify young adults, who tend to shy away from ordinary shelters out of fear of being victimized by an older, chronically homeless population. The unemployment rate and the number of young adults who cannot afford college “point to the fact there is a dramatic increase in homelessness” in that age group, said Barbara Poppe, the executive director of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness.

The Obama administration has begun an initiative with nine communities, most of them big cities, to seek out those between 18 and 24 who are without a consistent home address. New York, Houston, Los Angeles, Cleveland and Boston are among the cities included in the effort.

Los Angeles first attempted a count of young adults living on the street in 2011. It found 3,600, but the city had shelter capacity for only 17 percent of them. “The rest are left to their own devices,” said Michael Arnold, the executive director of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. “*And when you start adding in those who are couch surfing and staying with friends, that number increases exponentially.*” Boston also attempted counts in 2010 and 2011. The homeless young adult population seeking shelter grew 3 percentage points to 12 percent of the 6,000 homeless people served over that period.

For generations, services for the homeless were directed to two groups: dependent children and older people. There was scant attention focused on what experts now call “transitional age youth” — young adults whose needs are distinct.

“I see them coming back day after day, more defeated, more tired out, wondering, ‘*When will it be my turn?*’” said Kristine Cunningham, executive director of Roots. “*And it’s heartbreaking. This is the age when you want to show the world you have value.*” They need more than just clean clothes and shelter to move into a secure adulthood, experts say. “*They want a way out,*” said Ms. Poppe, whose agency is also gathering evidence on what kinds of programs and outreach work best. “*They want an opportunity to develop skills so they are marketable in the long term.*” “*A more individualized approach seems to work,*” she added.

But two obstacles stand in the way: young adults, eager for independence, are reluctant to admit that they need help and housing. And shelters designed with young adults in mind — those with career and trauma counseling, and education and training programs — are usually small. Roots holds only 35 people, and a nightly lottery decides who gets a spot, which includes meals, laundry services and counseling. It is expanding to 45 beds. Anna Wiley, 20, and her boyfriend, Bobby Jollineau, 24, spent several nights at Roots two weeks ago, but were unable to get in one night in November. “*We ended up sleeping outside,*” Mr. Jollineau said. “*I have a sleeping pad and a really warm sleeping bag. There’s*

*a couple of nooks and crannies that are safe around here, but you have to be careful. It can make for a rough night."*

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**In response to the mass shooting that killed 20 children and 6 staff at an elementary school in Connecticut a week ago Friday**, the National Rifle Association's top lobbyist, Wayne LaPierre, said at a Washington news conference that, quote, **"The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun."** The 4.3 million-member National Rifle Association largely disappeared from public debate after the shootings in Newtown, Conn., choosing atypical silence as a strategy as the nation sought answers after the rampage. The NRA took down its Facebook page and kept silent on Twitter. Unlike its actions in the wake of other mass shootings, the group did not put out a statement of condolence for the victims while simultaneously defending the rights of gun owners. LaPierre called on Congress **"to appropriate whatever is necessary to put armed police officers in every single school in this nation."** In his remarks, LaPierre suggested that guards could be drawn from a pool of qualified private citizens who would work with law enforcement officials. He offered NRA help — *"free of charge"* — in setting up such a program and training the guards. The reaction to the NRA's press conference was immediate — and unsurprising in its incredulity. *"The NRA leadership is wildly out of touch with its own members, responsible gun owners and the American public who want to close dangerous loopholes and enact common-sense gun safety reform,"* said New Jersey Democratic Sen. Frank Lautenberg.

Again, Mr. LaPierre said the Newtown killing spree *"might"* have been averted if the killer had been confronted by an armed security guard. It's far more likely that there would have been a dead armed security guard — just as there would have been even more carnage if civilians had started firing weapons in the Aurora movie theater.

In the 62 mass-murder cases over 30 years examined recently by the magazine Mother Jones, not one was stopped by an armed civilian. We have known for many years that a sheriff's deputy was at Columbine High School in 1999 and fired at one of the two killers while 11 of their 13 victims were still alive. He missed four times. People like Mr. LaPierre want us to believe that civilians can be trained to use lethal force with cold precision in moments of fear and crisis. That requires a willful ignorance about the facts. Police officers know that firing a weapon is a huge risk; that's why they avoid doing it. **In August, New York City police officers opened fire on a gunman outside the Empire State Building. They killed him and wounded nine bystanders.**

Since the slayings, President Barack Obama has demanded *"real action, right now"* against U.S. gun violence and called on the NRA to join the effort. Moving quickly after several congressional gun-rights supporters said they would consider new legislation to control firearms, the president said this week he wants proposals on reducing gun violence that he can take to Congress by January. Obama has already asked Congress to reinstate an assault weapons ban that expired in 2004 and pass legislation that would end a provision that allows people to purchase firearms from private parties without a background check. Obama also has indicated that he wants Congress to pursue the possibility of limiting high-capacity magazines.

On Friday's Morning Joe show on MSNBC, Kansas Rep. Tim Huelskamp on Friday after the congressman accused the MSNBC host and other gun control advocates of pushing *"a political agenda"* in wake of the Sandy Hook tragedy. After clashing with the hosts about fiscal cliff negotiations, co-host Mika Brzezinski asked the congressman if he thought it was time to reconsider his stance on laws pertaining to assault weapons. Huelskamp said that as a congressman, he was bothered by how individuals politicized the tragedy *"so quickly."* Huelskamp said that the country has a *"cultural program."* He added, **"It's not a gun problem; it's a people problem."**

In recent years, the N.R.A. has aggressively lobbied federal and state governments to dilute or eliminate numerous regulations on gun ownership. And the clearest beneficiary has been the gun industry — sales of firearms and ammunition have grown 5.7 percent a year since 2007, to nearly \$12 billion this year, according to IBISWorld, a market research firm. Despite the recession, arms sales have been growing so fast that domestic manufacturers haven't been able to keep up. Imports of arms have grown 3.6 percent a year in the last five years. The industry has, in turn, been a big supporter of the N.R.A. It has contributed between \$14.7 million and \$38.9 million to an N.R.A.-corporate-giving campaign since 2005, according to a report published last year by the Violence Policy Center, a nonprofit group that advocates greater gun control. The estimate is based on a study of the N.R.A.'s *"Ring of Freedom"* program and very likely understates the industry's total financial support for the association, which does not publicly disclose a comprehensive list of its donors and how much they have given.

Officials from the N.R.A. have repeatedly said their main goal is to protect the Second Amendment rights of rank-and-file members who like to hunt or want guns for protection. But that claim is at odds with surveys that show a majority of N.R.A. members and a majority of American gun owners often support restrictions on gun sales and ownership that the N.R.A. has bitterly fought. For instance, a 2009 poll commissioned by Mayors Against Illegal Guns found that 69 percent of N.R.A. members would support requiring all sellers at gun shows to conduct background checks of prospective buyers, which they do not have to do now and which the N.R.A. has steadfastly argued against. If lawful gun owners are willing to subject themselves to background checks, why is the association resisting? Its position

appears only to serve the interest of gun makers and dealers who want to increase sales even if it means having dangerous weapons fall into the hands of criminals and violent individuals.

The Big Ugly is that businesses and special-interest groups often cloak their profit motives in the garb of constitutional rights — think Big Tobacco and its opposition to restrictions on smoking in public places and bold warnings on cigarette packages. The Supreme Court has made clear that the right to bear arms is not absolute and is subject to regulations and controls. Yet the N.R.A. clings to its groundless arguments that tough regulations violate the Second Amendment. Many of those arguments serve no purpose other than to increase the sales of guns and bullets. Just like the First Amendment doesn't cover/allow a person to yell fire in a crowded theater, I am sure that the framers of our Constitution didn't envision or want the Second Amendment to allow anyone in America to walk around with a military grade assault weapons..... And the recommendation by Wayne LaPierre that armed Police officers should be stationed in every school is the most ridiculous idea since Herman Cain's 9-9-9 solution to address the country's economic woes. See the **New York Times'** Editorial – **National Rifle (Selling) Association.**

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Rajiv Chandrasekaran wrote this front page article ***“Civilians held Petraeus’s ear in the war zone”*** in **The Washington Post** that questioned the access and influence Gen. David H. Petraeus accorded to civilians while he was running the Afghan war. It focused on Frederick and Kimberly Kagan, a husband-and-wife team of hawkish military analysts, put their jobs at influential Washington think tanks on hold for almost a year to work for Gen. David H. Petraeus when he was the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan. Provided desks, e-mail accounts and top-level security clearances in Kabul, they pored through classified intelligence reports, participated in senior-level strategy sessions and probed the assessments of field officers in order to advise Petraeus about how to fight the war differently. They received zero dollars compensation from the U.S. government for their efforts, which often involved 18-hour workdays, seven days a week and dangerous battlefield visits? Although Fred Kagan said he and his wife wanted no pay in part to remain “completely independent,” the extraordinary arrangement raises new questions about the access and influence Petraeus accorded to civilian friends while he was running the Afghan war.

Petraeus also allowed his biographer-turned-paramour, Paula Broadwell, to read sensitive documents and accompany him on trips. But the entree granted the Kagans, whose think-tank work has been embraced by Republican politicians, went even further. The four-star general made the Kagans de facto senior advisers, a status that afforded them numerous private meetings in his office, priority travel across the war zone and the ability to read highly secretive transcripts of intercepted Taliban communications, according to current and former senior U.S. military and civilian officials who served in the headquarters at the time.

The Kagans used those privileges to advocate substantive changes in the U.S. war plan, including a harder-edged approach than some U.S. officers advocated in combating the Haqqani network, a Taliban faction in eastern Afghanistan, the officials said. This pro-bono relationship, which is now being scrutinized by military lawyers, yielded valuable benefits for the general and the couple. The Kagans’ proximity to Petraeus, the country’s most-famous living general, provided an incentive for defense contractors to contribute to Kim Kagan’s think tank. For Petraeus, embracing two respected national security analysts in GOP circles helped to shore up support for the war among Republican leaders on Capitol Hill.

As war-zone volunteers, the Kagans were not bound by stringent rules that apply to military personnel and private contractors. They could raise concerns directly with Petraeus, instead of going through subordinate officers, and were free to speak their minds without repercussion. Some military officers and civilian U.S. government employees in Kabul praised the couple’s contributions — one general noted that “they did the work of 20 intelligence analysts.” Others expressed deep unease about their activities in the headquarters, particularly because of their affiliations and advocacy in Washington. Fred Hagan, who works at the conservative American Enterprise Institute, was one of the intellectual architects of President George W. Bush’s troop surge in Iraq and has sided with the Republican Party on many national security issues. Kim Kagan runs the Institute for the Study of War, which favors on aggressive U.S. foreign policy. The Kagans supported President Obama’s decision to order a surge in Afghanistan, but they later broke with the White House on the subject of troop reductions. Both argue against any significant drawdown in forces there next year.

Petraeus's successor, Gen. John R. Allen, allowed the Kagans to stay at the headquarters for his first few months on the job last year and permitted them to return for two additional short visits. After the couple's most recent trip in September, they provided a briefing on the war and other foreign policy matters to the Republican vice-presidential candidate, Rep. Paul Ryan of Wisconsin. The Kagans said they continued to receive salaries from their think tanks while in Afghanistan. Kim Kagan's institute is funded in part by large defense contractors. During Petraeus's tenure in Kabul, she sent out a letter soliciting contributions so the organization could continue its military work, according to two people who saw the letter.

The Kagans' volunteerism was an open secret at the headquarters, and it bred suspicion. Some officers questioned whether they funneled confidential information to Republican politicians — the Kagans said they did not. Others worried that the couple was serving as in-house spies for Petraeus. Allen, who succeeded Petraeus in July 2011, did not want to continue his predecessor's arrangement with the Kagans, but he also did not want to upset them. Allen allowed them to stay for a few months. Two subsequent visits were kept to less than a month, according to a senior official in the Allen headquarters. But the question that Rajiv's article asks, should civilians paid by outside interests have unprecedented access to the theater of war to push their employers agendas?

## TWEET OF THE WEEK

*"One guy tries to use a shoe bomb and now everyone at the airport has to take off their shoes while there have 31 school shootings since Columbine, but no change....."*

**Tweet from Michelle Law**

## STUPIDITY OF THE WEEK

In the last 44 years since Robert Kennedy was assassinated on June 4, 1968 by a deranged gunman in the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, more Americans have died from gun fire than died in all of the wars in this Country's history from the Revolutionary War to the Civil War, World War 1, World War 2, the Korean War, Viet Nam, Afghanistan and Iraq wars. -- Reason would allow you to believe that this is because (although we only are 5% of the World's population) we there are more than half the guns than the rest of the World combined. *And the RNA's answer to the fact 12,000 people die each year from gun fire and that America has the highest incidence of Gun Violence in the World, is that everyone carry a gun and that congress put armed guards in Schools to protect our children.....*

## THIS WEEK'S MUSIC

In the spirit of Christmas this week's music is a selection of Christmas songs starting with Nat King Cole's *The Christmas Song* and ending with the great Ray Charles's gospel rendition of the same. Also, included is *What A Wonderful World* by Louis Armstrong as it is truly a wonderful for most of us on this planet of ours and whether or not you are religious please use this moment of reflection to give thanks to all around you that made this year special to you. Additionally, in the spirit of the holiday season, whatever you can allocate please use this opportunity to share it with those less fortunate. Please enjoy.....

Nat King Cole – *The Christmas Song* – [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_kQ1PCP6B0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_kQ1PCP6B0)

Patti Labelle – *O Holy Night* – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pB2Ya4VTGgI>

Kirk Franklin – *Christmas - Jesus Is The Reason For The Season* – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2mDE3c7hH60>

Kirk Franklin – *There's No Christmas Without You* – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qAmni-ceYsU>

JAMES BROWN – *Soulful Christmas* – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WcQJj7d18eA>

Snoop Dogg – *Santa Claus Goes Straight To The Ghetto* – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jYqSn0c8xok>

Frank Sinatra – *White Christmas* – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F90U55aCO3Y>

Luther Vandross – *This Is Christmas* – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=trFv63cMk4M>

Louis Armstrong – *Winter Wonderland* – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vH6yp0JfUIw>

Aretha franklin – *Christmas Joy to the world* – [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccte\\_N1mO3s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccte_N1mO3s)

Ohio Players – *Happy Holidays, Pts. 1-2* – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lbwcnzKKBgc>

Louis Armstrong – *What A Wonderful World* – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5TwT69i1IU>

Donny Hathaway - *This Christmas* – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pj1mVUEHeUE>

The Whispers – *This Christmas* – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dR8SodGRiKM>

Kurtis Blow – *Christmas Rappin' (Original Version) 1979* – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9xUFnGWWtoQ>

Beyoncé – *Silent Night* – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-eqJwRkDsSw>

*Ray Charles Celebrates A Gospel Christmas* – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EH93LFbNJIw>

*I hope that you enjoyed this weekend's offerings and I wish you all a wonderful Christmas and a great New Year...*

*Sincerely,  
Greg Brown*

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Gregory Brown  
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