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Inline-Images: image.png; image(1).png; image(2).png; image(3).png; image(4).png; image(5).png; image(6).png; image(7).png; image(8).png; image(9).png; image(10).png; image(11).png; image(12).png

DEAR FRIEND.....

Map: The Africa without Ebola



Ebola is a frightening, unpredictable disease. Nearly 5,000 West Africans have died from the current outbreak with more than 13,000 people thought infected. However, so far the problem remains largely limited to Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone. Two other countries, Nigeria and Senegal, have had cases, yet are now Ebola-free. The DR Congo had an outbreak of a different strain of Ebola that now looks like it might be contained. And while there has been one case of the disease in Mali, the patient died and no others have been confirmed at the time of writing -- though that may well change.

Despite clear geographical limits to the Ebola outbreak, many Americans seem confused. How else could you explain the two Rwandan children sent home from school in New Jersey, despite the fact their East African home country is Ebola-free (and further from West Africa than New Jersey is to Texas)? Or the resignation of a teacher in Kentucky due to a backlash to her traveling to Kenya? Or the significant cancellation of tourist trips to places like Kenya, Zimbabwe and South Africa? These countries are nowhere near the West African countries where Ebola is actually a problem. Frustrated by this, Anthony England, a British chemist who earned a doctorate at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and has spent a significant amount of time in sub-Saharan Africa, decided to make a map to help explain what countries currently have Ebola cases and which don't. You can see the map above.

Ignorance & misinformation is a big problem with Ebola. So a clueless Kentucky school causing the resignation of a teacher because she spent time in Kenya is just idiocy. And that idiocy leads to fear which leads to people like Chris Christie implementing nonsensical anti-science quarantine restrictions. Ebola in the U.S. is becoming a farce."

There are some caveats to the map. The map maker's decision to not include Mali or the DR Congo, despite the fact neither have been declared free of Ebola, has caused some thoughtful criticism. He writes that he understands the criticism, but his point still stands: *"There are only 3 problem countries, and the world needs to know that."* It's a fair point. Africa is a vast, under-covered continent and Westerners often have trouble understanding its geography. Earlier this year, **The Washington Post** ran an online quiz that asked our readers to name African nations. The results were not heartening as most earned failing grades with less than 4% earning perfect grades. In addition to geography the biggest ignorance in the US, is that only one individual has entered the country with Ebola other than several health-workers who handled infected patients yet there is a media fed hysteria that pales in comparison to the concern that most Americans have for the flu which actually kills more than 40,000 Americans each year and 30,000 from gunshot wounds. By the way what happen to all of the Ebola hysteria prior to the Midterm Election? And as of today there is not one case of Ebola in the United States and the number of infected in Liberia and elsewhere is receding..... As usual the out-of-control hysteria was another sham ploy by Republicans and Conservative Media used against the President and Democrats for partisan purposes..... Why else is it no longer longer on heavy rotation on FOX and other Conservative media the day after the Midterm Elections? And I am sorry to be partisan..... But this misuse of a serious situation was so obvious that it needed to be outed.....

For added perspective, it's worth looking at a map first published in 2010 by cartographer Kai Krause. Keep it in mind when thinking of Ebola and Africa.

The True Size of Africa

A small contribution in the fight against rampant inaccuracy, by Kai Krause
Graphic layout for visualization only (some countries are out and rotated)
But the conclusions are very accurate: refer to table below for exact data

COUNTRY	AREA x 1000 km ²
China	9.597
USA	9.629
India	3.287
Mexico	1.964
Peru	1.285
France	633
Spain	506
Papua New Guinea	462
Sweden	441
Japan	378
Germany	357
Norway	324
Italy	301
New Zealand	270
United Kingdom	243
Nepal	147
Bangladesh	144
Greece	132
TOTAL	30.102
AFRICA	30.221



Top 100 Countries

Area in square kilometers, Percentage of World Total
Sources: Britannica, Wikipedia, Almanac 2010

	AREA km ²	%	
1	Russia	17,098,242	11.50
2	Canada	9,984,670	6.33
3	China	9,596,961	6.30
4	USA	9,529,821	6.28
5	United States	9,529,821	6.28
6	Brazil	8,511,471	5.55
7	Australia	7,688,284	5.04
8	Argentina	2,381,229	1.55
9	Kazakhstan	2,124,693	1.37
10	Belgium	305,283	0.20
11	Spain	505,992	0.33
12	France	643,801	0.42
13	Germany	357,021	0.23
14	Italy	301,330	0.19
15	Japan	377,824	0.24
16	South Korea	100,459	0.06
17	Sweden	441,290	0.29
18	India	3,287,000	2.12
19	Mexico	1,964,000	1.28
20	Peru	1,285,000	0.84
21	China	9,597,000	6.29
22	USA	9,529,000	6.28
23	France	633,000	0.42
24	Spain	506,000	0.33
25	Papua New Guinea	462,000	0.30
26	Sweden	441,000	0.29
27	Japan	378,000	0.25
28	Germany	357,000	0.23
29	Norway	324,000	0.21
30	Italy	301,000	0.19
31	New Zealand	270,000	0.17
32	United Kingdom	243,000	0.16
33	Nepal	147,000	0.09
34	Bangladesh	144,000	0.09
35	Greece	132,000	0.08
36	TOTAL	30,102,000	19.78
37	AFRICA	30,221,000	19.84



In addition to the well known social issues of illiteracy and immaturity, there also should be such a concept as "inaccuracy", meaning insufficient geographical knowledge.

A survey with random American schoolkids let them guess the population and land area of their country. Not entirely unexpected, but still rather unsettling, the majority chose "1-2 billion" and "largest in the world", respectively.

Even with Asian and European college students, geographical estimates were often off by factors of 2-3. This is partly due to the highly distorted nature of the predominantly used mapping projections (such as Mercator).

A particularly extreme example is the worldwide misjudgement of the true size of Africa. This single image tries to embody the massive scale, which is larger than the USA, China, India, Japan and all of Europe..... combined!

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The Troubling Rise of Far-right Parties in the Europe



From the **French National Front** and the **Dutch Freedom** party headed by Geert Wilders, the growth in support for far-right, anti-European, anti-immigrant and anti-Semitic parties has been fed by the worst world recession since at least the 1930s – mass unemployment and falling living standards, made worse by the self-defeating austerity obsession of European leaders. Parties that skulked in the shadows, playing down their sympathies with fascism and Nazism are re-emerging, having given themselves a PR facelift. Marine Le Pen, leader of the French NF, plays down the anti-Semitic record of her party. The Dutch far-right leader has ploughed a slightly different furrow, mobilizing fear and hostility not against Jews but Muslim immigrants. Like Le Pen, Wilders focuses on the alleged cosmopolitan threat to national identity from the European Union. It is a chorus echoed in other countries by the **Danish People's Party**, the **Finns Party** and the Flemish **Vlaams Belang**, among others.

For now, the French and Dutch populists are carefully keeping their distance from openly neo-Nazi parties such as **Golden Dawn**, whose paramilitary *Sturmabteilung* has terrorized refugees and immigrants in Greece, and the swaggering Hungarian **Jobbik**, which targets the Roma minority. According to some pollsters, the far right might win as many as a third of European parliament seats in elections next May. That would still leave the center parties – **Christian Democrats**, **Social Democrats** and **Liberals** – with many more members. But for the European parliament to form a credible majority, all of these parties might well be forced much closer together than is good for democracy.

Such a situation would be unsettlingly reminiscent of 1936, when the center and the left – notably in France – temporarily halted the swing to fascism but formed an unprincipled and ineffective coalition. Its collapse on the eve of the Second World War accelerated the advent of Phillippe Petain's Nazi-collaborating regime. History does not normally repeat itself in an automatic fashion, but it would be foolish to take the risk. More worrying than the growth of the far right are the temporizing gestures to

the racists and anti-immigrants now coming from mainstream Conservative and even Liberal Democrat politicians and from some of the new "Blue Labor" ideologues. The warning from the likes of David Blunkett that hostility to Roma immigrants might lead to a popular "explosion" is reminiscent of Enoch Powell's rhetoric.

An antidote to the far right requires that the European left articulates and pursues a comprehensive alternative to economic stagnation, an ever-widening income and wealth gap and the degradation of our social standards, civil liberties and democratic rights. But that alternative has to be fought for at European as well as national and local levels, and will require more, not less, European integration. But time is running out, not only for the European Social Democrats, but also for the wider socialist left and the greens, to show they can create a counterbalance to the rightward drift of the center. Without that, the new far-right alliance may only have to hold together and wait for its hour to strike.

Far-right makes major gains in Europe in last decade

Europe sees huge growth in anti-Semitic parties, with some winning as much as 20% of votes by taking advantage of massive immigration influx and the devastating financial crisis. The rise of far-right politics in Europe reached new heights in last Monday's elections in Hungary when "**Jobbik**", the self-professed 'radical right-wing' political party which has often been accused of blatant anti-Semitism, won 20.54% of votes, making it the third largest party in the country and the single largest extreme right party in Europe. Hungary however, is not alone. In the last decade, in particular in the wake of the EU's economic crisis and ongoing influx of immigrants into Europe, the continent's far-right parties' popularity have made dramatic leaps. *"Anti-Semitism and xenophobia in Europe are always connected to citizen's financial difficulties,"* Professor of Political Science at Bar Ilan University Shmuel Sandler.

This is a review of the strongest and most prominent far-right parties in Europe.

Finland

The right-wing party "**The Finns**", born out of the party "The True Finns", was founded in 2005 and rose to popularity in Finland's 2011 elections when it garnered 19.1% of the vote (or 39 seats in the Finnish parliament). It is led by Timo Soini, and the win made Soini's "The Finns" the third largest political party in the country. The massive victory of "The Finns", a party that advocates opposition to the European Union, immigrants, NATO, and international aid, surpassed expectations at the polls on Election Day and caused the collapse of the Finland's political center. Soini, the party's leader, was one of the loudest opponents to the EU's austerity package to bail out Portugal from its financial crisis. Party members also voiced their opposition to circumcision and in 2012 called for a ban on the practice.

Austria

The far-right "**Freedom Party of Austria**" led by Heinz Christian Strache, won 22% of the votes in the country's last parliamentary elections. Strache took control of the party in 2005 and then-leader Jorg Haider left its ranks to create an additional right-wing group called the "Alliance for the Future of Austria" (BZO) which directly competed with Strache's "Freedom Party of Austria" in the elections. Both parties gained significant support in the polls thanks to an aggressive anti-immigration campaign they waged.

France

The "**National Front**" party in France led by Marine Le Pen is well known for its opposition to the European Union, as well as immigration. The party won control of 11 towns in local elections held just last week. Most of the towns that voted for the "National Front" in elections are located in the south of the country where anti-immigrant sentiment is strongest, but the party also made gains in support in some northern and eastern towns where homegrown French industry has been suffering. "The results prove that we can win on a large scale," Le Pen told reporters after learning of her party's impressive win in municipal elections. Her first move after the party's success in the election seemed to target Jews and Muslims. In an interview with RTL radio Le Pen said France would no longer provide non-pork meals for schoolchildren, claiming Kosher and Halal meals at schools go against the Christian values of the French nation.

Greece

"**Golden Dawn**", the far-right political party in Greece, won 18 of 300 seats of parliament in 2012 after receiving more than 6% of the vote, thus entering the Greece's house of representatives for the first time. The party success was premised on exploiting Greek disappointment at the country's large political parties, who were unable to save Greece from a massive financial recession. The leader of "Golden Dawn", Nikolaos Michaloliakos, has publicly denied the existence of crematoria and gas chambers in the Nazi death camps. The party, which has already been called neo-Nazi and fascist, was connected to a number of events generally labeled as hate crimes. The worst of these, was the murder of the popular, leftist Greek musician who was suspected of being killed by a party activist.

R.I.P.



One third of the group responsible for Hip-Hop's first hit, *Rapper's Delight*, **Big Bank Hank**, a member of the early Hip-Hop group the **Sugarhill Gang** has died of complications from cancer at age 57 this week. The group were responsible for one of the most popular rap songs of all time, *Rapper's Delight*. The musician died Tuesday at a hospital in Englewood, New Jersey, according to David Mallie, a business manager for two former members of the group, and Aree Booker, a funeral director with Eternity Funeral Services.

Big Bank Hank, whose real name was **Henry Jackson**, was born in the Bronx borough of New York. He was a part of the Sugarhill Gang in 1979 when it had hip-hop's first hit with *Rapper's Delight*. The song was released as hip-hop began to emerge as a genre, and landed in the top 40 on the Billboard charts. It also peaked at No 4 on the Hot Soul singles chart, now called the Hot R&B/Hip-Hop songs chart.

The Sugarhill Gang, which was formed in Englewood, also included **Guy O'Brien** (*Master Gee*) and **Michael Wright** (*Wonder Mike*). "So sad to hear about our brother's passing," O'Brien and Wright said in a statement issued through Mallie. "The three of us created musical history together with the release of *Rapper's Delight*. We will always remember traveling the world together and rocking the house. Rest in peace Big Bank."

A beefy, boisterous presence onstage, Hank handled vocals in the early to middle portion of "*Rapper's Delight*," which despite its extended length -- one version was more than 14 minutes long -- became the first rap song to reach the Top 40 on the U.S. Billboard charts. Jackson traded rhymes with bandmates "*Wonder Mike*" Wright and Guy "*Master Gee*" O'Brien and spoke some of the song's catchiest lines, including.... "***Ho-tel, mo-tel, Holiday Inn/If your girl starts acting up, then you take her friend.***"

Rapper's Delight became a success thanks in part to the late record label owner **Sylvia Robinson**, who released the song on **Sugar Hill Records**. Robinson, who was known as the "*mother of hip-hop*", died in 2011. After *Rapper's Delight*, the trio had minor successes with songs such as *Apache* and *8th Wonder*, but faded away. Their last album was a 1999 children's rap album, *Jump On It!*

O'Brien and Wright currently perform under the name *Rapper's Delight Experience Featuring Wonder Mike and Master Gee*, Mallie said. Robinson's son owns the Sugarhill Gang trademark, and O'Brien

and Wright haven't been able to perform under the name since 2010, he said. The pair were on good terms with Big Bank Hank before he died, Mallie said. Without a doubt, *Rapper's Delight* not only being the first major breakout Hip-Hop record it is easily the most important Rap Record ever. And if you are like me every time you hear *Rapper's Delight*, a cassette memory of a great party/dance time surfaces again, again and again. Rest In Peace my man Hank, because you truly are one of the OGs of Hip-Hop/Rap Music as well as a founding member of its Pantheon.....

Election 2014: Should Black Voters Keep Their Faith in Obama?



MY trainer, a 31-year-old black man, doesn't vote. It doesn't make any difference which party wins, he says. He doesn't believe that President Obama is really in charge.

I respect my trainer. An injury last year ended his professional boxing career. He sometimes works 12-hour days, exhorting client after client. He and his girlfriend have a 3-year-old daughter; he is supporting his girlfriend while she earns a master's degree. He himself did not go to college, but he got off the Harlem streets. He says that he saved himself from the player's life of his father, who is younger than I am.

His ambition, his sheer work ethic, make it disheartening for me to hear him say that the Illuminati, or the Trilateral Commission, or some secret council of white men straight out of Ishmael Reed's early satires, control our destinies. This is the kind of thing black nationalists used to say in the 1970s, when they argued that to join the system was to fall for the white man's con. To hear my young trainer give voice to such fatalism tells me how easily black people can lose faith in the democratic process, become disaffected, alienated, in spite of the amazing fact that there is a black man in the White House.

Nearly 50 years before Mr. Obama was first elected, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said that racist whites were not the only obstacles to the black vote. Black people had to overcome the intimidation and fear they had internalized after centuries of slavery and decades of Jim Crow. The black vote increased significantly after passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965. Civil rights organizations took an active role in the education of black voters, teaching them how to be comfortable with the exercise of the franchise. Black candidates won mayoral and congressional elections in the early 1970s, when the black population was concentrated in major cities. In the 1980s, black voters in the Democratic primaries made Jesse L. Jackson Sr.'s presidential bids more than symbolic. In the days of the Reagan and Bush backlashes, black candidates needed to have broad appeal, but the coalitions that elected Carol Moseley Braun a senator from Illinois, in 1992, Deval L. Patrick the governor of Massachusetts, in 2006, and Mr. Obama a senator, also from Illinois, in 2004, and then president, in 2008, had the black vote at their cores.

Black turnout outstripped white turnout in 2012, when Mr. Obama won every major demographic group — except white men. As the political scientist Martin L. Kilson notes in his recent book, “Transformation of the African American Intelligentsia, 1880-2012,” Mr. Obama stands at the apex of an African-American political class comprising 10,000 elected black officeholders in cities, counties and state legislatures, 43 members of the United States Congress, a black attorney general, a black national security adviser, black secretaries of homeland security and transportation, a black deputy White House chief of staff for policy, and other black policy makers and administrators. Yet — as Mr. Obama's critics on the left point out — conditions for black people over all have sunk back to what they had been around the time of Dr. King's assassination: more than a third of black children are born into poverty; there are more black men in the criminal justice system than there are black men in college; the median income of blacks has fallen; unemployment among blacks remains higher than the national average. As the former New York Times columnist Bob Herbert said, “We know all this, but no one seems to know how to turn things around.”

An Okinawan-Japanese high school classmate of the president's explained to me after the first inaugural that in Hawaii everyone is a mongrel, and where you come from doesn't matter. But once the young Mr. Obama went to Los Angeles for college, and was treated as a black youth by the police, he understood what his brave white mother had made him learn during all those mornings of reading black history before school in Indonesia.

Some people want to say that Mr. Obama somehow isn't with blacks, because he does not descend from people who were enslaved. He is the son of an immigrant — a Kenyan graduate student who was just passing through. Those who say that that somehow makes him different, or less black, don't know enough about the violence and oppression of colonialism. Class doesn't determine how black people feel about Mr. Obama. Who supports him in black America and who doesn't is largely a generational question. Just as my father was jealous of and ambivalent about Mr. Obama, because Mr. Obama had achieved something that blacks of the G.I. Bill generation had not thought possible, so young black people like my trainer miss in the president the performance and tone that historical footage of the civil rights era has subtly led them to expect of black leaders — an impassioned challenger of the system, someone coming from the outside.

I am 60 years old — how did that happen? — and to me, what Mr. Obama has accomplished is far from insignificant: He saved us from economic meltdown, he got us out of Iraq and Afghanistan, and he signed the Affordable Care Act. He would perhaps be the first to admit we still have far to go. Because I am an old head now, I can accept incremental change, even value it. I voted for him, though I know he

is more of a capitalist than I am. I voted for him twice, though in my heart I cannot forgive him for turning to economics advisers like Lawrence H. Summers (whom I despise).

And I am dismayed by those who are obsessed by the mysteries of Mr. Obama's personality, by his distance, his opacity. Nobody can make him lose his cool, just as nobody can move him from the center. So long as he occupies the middle ground as president, the Republicans are forced to stay on the right. Most of the world is relieved that the president of the United States is a man of integrity and intelligence. But here he is described as a flawed politician, a man not cut out for trench warfare, not the man for our historical moment. His early notion that the country could reconcile in him because of his personal story is dismissed as naïve.

Mr. Obama is criticized for not having done more for black people — not because they are black people, but because they are among his party's most loyal supporters. Yet many whites resent or are afraid of those moments when the president seems to be taking the black side, speaking from the black point of view. Black people in turn can be frustrated that the black point of view is always ghettoized, never allowed to be, simply, the American point of view — especially when the issue at hand is about social justice. Historically, blacks have looked to the federal government for protection against the doctrine of states' rights, a euphemism for the reactionary in American politics. But Mr. Obama's experience in office has shown blacks the limits of executive power.

All my adult life, the argument in black America concerning electoral politics has been about trusting the system, wondering if trying to be a part of the mainstream was possible or worth it. To join the larger society involves a loss, the sacrifice of authentic blackness, some black people would say. Throughout black American history, white people have demanded that black people prove their readiness to become full citizens, which is why I really don't like it when President Obama or Bill Cosby chastises blacks for their behavior. As James Baldwin so often said: He wasn't the problem, white people were the problem. There are white Americans who cannot forgive him for having won. They can't handle the fact that a black man is in charge of the money, of so much patronage and power. Black people didn't shut down the government; white people did. To such whites, it's a matter of ownership, not partnership.

If who wins doesn't matter, then Republicans on the right would not be trying to suppress the black vote. They, too, have heard what the demographics promise. Single mothers now account for a third of eligible voters; most newborns are members of a "minority" group. Republicans have gerrymandered districts so that they can win the House without the Latino vote, and districts have also been redrawn so as to reduce the impact of the black vote either by spreading it around or confining it. Conservative opposition to inclusive democracy has not changed in substance since the immigrant vote was routinely suppressed, along with the black vote, in the late 19th century, back when voter registration days in New York could just so happen to fall on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur (as I learned from the historian Alexander Keyssar). The vote, power elites contended, was a privilege, not a right. Distrust of direct democracy is as much an American tradition as the quest for freedom.

The shooting in Ferguson, Mo., did not leave the news, because demonstrators stayed in the streets, just as Occupy Wall Street movement brought up the urgent matter of wage and wealth inequality and has not let the subject go. Maybe we are at the beginning of another age of activism on the part of youth. In Europe, disaffection from the major political parties has benefited far-right politicians. In America, the rabid Tea Party is the beneficiary. Mr. Obama said somewhere that troublemakers were

catalysts for positive change, while others were caretakers of that change. History will remember him as the calm president who steered the nation through dangerous waters.

DARRYL PINCKNEY – NOV. 4, 2014 – New York Times

Like Darryl Pinckney's trainer when I was 31, I didn't vote. And again like Pinckney's trainer I did not believe that it made a difference which party wins or that that any President really was in charge. I also worked twelve and fourteen days and my ambition and work ethic bordered on obsession. The only difference was I didn't think that it was the Illuminati or the Trilateral Commission running the President because by that time, I knew that our Presidents were more and more at the beck and call to special interest, whether that be Wall Street, Big Three Automakers the defense industry or the major oil companies and for the last thirty-plus years, the NRA. In fact, I didn't vote until I was in my 50s even though I was eligible to vote in 1970 because I didn't want to do jury duty.

It was the opportunity to vote for Barack Obama that inspired me to vote for the first and again for the second time. He inspired me as he did to millions of other Americans. Although I didn't vote, I regularly supported Black candidates across the country. From Carl Stokes in Cleveland, Harold Washington in Chicago, Maynard Jackson in Atlanta, Ken Gibson in Newark and Carol Moseley Braun in Illinois to name a few. In fact I turned down several opportunities to meet Barack Obama when he first came to Northern California to fund raise when he ran for his senate seat, telling the host that it was a waste of time and money backing a Black Muslim named Barack Hussein Obama. By the time I was convince that he had a slim chance of winning the Presidency a dinner invitation was \$28,000.

What made most Black candidates whether they were seeking the mayor's job in a big city or a state-wide seat in the Senate or as a Governor it took a coalition to get them elected and it usually began with a strong core of Black voters. Black turnout outstripped white turnout in 2012, when Mr. Obama won every major demographic group — except white men. I grew up when there were still lynching in the South and whites believe that Blacks did not have the intellect to coach in the Major Leagues or play the position of quarterback. So to witness a Black man named Barack Hussein Obama take the oath for the office of the President of the United States brought tears to my eyes.... As like anyone my age we never thought that we would live to see it.

Even before his election there was a concerted effort by Whites to disqualify him with many demanding to see his long-form birth certificate, he was a Moslem, Reverend Wright or that he somehow wasn't really Black enough, in hope that he would pull out his Mike Tyson to confirm their worst fears and form a White backlash or that Black voters might lose their enthusiasm for him and not vote. Obviously that didn't work. Neither were their efforts to kill Black turnout by making it difficult for them to vote, as Black voters in Florida and elsewhere travel long distances and sometimes stood in lines for hours just to vote. That's passion and not only did they turn out in 2008 they turned out again in 2012 making Barack Obama being the only person who got more than 51% of the vote since FDR. So why then do so many white candidates not mine this proven voter pool? Instead, they distance themselves from the President hoping somehow Black voters were brave the same obstacles for them.

I agree with Pinckney who says that he is dismayed by those who are obsessed by the mysteries of Mr. Obama's personality, by his distance, his opacity. Nobody can make him lose his cool, just as nobody can move him from the center. So long as he occupies the middle ground as president, the Republicans are forced to stay on the right. Most of the world is relieved that the president of the United States is a man of integrity and intelligence. But here he is described as a flawed politician, a man not cut out for trench warfare, not the man for our historical moment. His early notion that the country could reconcile in him because of his personal story is dismissed as naïve.

This is the person who got the first meaningful healthcare bill passed in more than a half of century that has added 10 million more to the insurance rolls, in addition to ensuring that everyone can get insurance even those with pre-existing conditions and health cost has risen less than before it was enacted. He has cut the deficit in half. Allowed policies that has more than doubled the production of crude oil to almost 9 million barrels a day. Under his stewardship, inflation is nil, unemployment is now 5.9%, we have enjoyed 60 straight months of growth and the economy now growing at more than 3%, we no-longer have boots on the ground in Iraq, the US auto industry was saved, so was Wall Street and the major banks and bin Laden is dead. Yet President Obama gets no credit, or these positives are dismissed as unimportant. Republicans were able to convince voters that Obama is responsible for all of our ills and deserves credit for none of our successes. And I definitely agree with Pinckney that history will remember Barrack Obama as the calm president who steered the nation through dangerous waters.

GREAT ECONOMIC NEWS

 A job seeker fills out an application during a career fair. | Getty

U.S. employers add 214K jobs; rate falls to 5.8 percent

Three days after voters registered their sourness about the U.S. economy, on November 7, 2014 the government said that employers added a solid 214,000 jobs in October, extending the healthiest pace of hiring in eight years. The Labor Department also said 31,000 more jobs were added in August and September than it had previously estimated. Employers have now added at least 200,000 jobs for nine straight months, the longest such stretch since 1995. Also growth was broad based, gains in food and drink jobs, retail, healthcare and business services. The burst of hiring lowered the unemployment rate to 5.8 percent from 5.9 percent. It's the lowest rate since July 2008. Along with the job gains, economic growth has accelerated this year. Yet despite the improvement, Midterm voters identified economic anxiety as their top concern in Tuesday's elections.

That suggests the improvement hasn't yet been felt by many Americans. Nearly 60 percent of voters said they thought the economy was stagnating or worsening. Only one-third saw it as improving. The picture has still improved enough that the Federal Reserve announced last month that it was ending its bond purchase program, which had been intended to lower interest rates and stimulate economic growth. At the same time, better hiring and growth have barely boosted paychecks for the vast majority of earners. Adjusted for inflation, average hourly pay rose just 0.3 percent over the 12 months

that ended in September, according to government data. And what wage gains have occurred have benefited mainly the wealthiest. Average income grew 10 percent from 2010 through 2013 for the wealthiest one-tenth of Americans, after adjusting for inflation, according to the Fed. For everyone else, incomes stagnated or declined causing many workers to have to work two and three part time jobs.

Analysts say the economic expansion remains strong enough to support the current pace of hiring. Over the past six months, the economy has grown at a 4.1 percent annual rate. U.S. manufacturers are expanding at the fastest pace in three years, according to a survey by the Institute for Supply Management, a trade group. A measure of new orders showed that factory output will likely continue to grow in coming months. A separate survey by the ISM found that retailers, restaurants and other service companies grew at a healthy pace last month. Home sales rose in September at their fastest rate this year, a sign that housing could pick up after a sluggish performance for most of this year.

After China the United States has the strongest and most robust economy of any of the major industrialized countries in the world. The country's economy is growing above 3% annually, unemployment has sank to 5.8% which is the lowest number in seven years as it has had 61 straight months of growth. And inflation is almost non-existent. Although Republicans castigating President Obama and his policies have claimed that the economy is bad these numbers are contrary to the fact that the US economy not only is in good shape it is growing even stronger. And for those of you who still don't believe this, just try to find a parking space at your closet WalMart or Costco on any weekend. Again, it is difficult to understand why so many difficult were afraid to run on this record..... Because if Mitt Romney were President, Republicans would be lamenting that these achievements are better than any of those during the Reagan years.



President Barack Obama, second left, and Chinese President Xi Jinping, second right, walk together at Zhongnanhai leaders compound before their private dinner, Tuesday, Nov. 11, 2014. The others walking with them are their translators.

Wednesday, President Obama and Chinese President Xi Jinping — the leaders of the world's largest emitters of carbon dioxide, representing about 45 percent of global greenhouse-gas emissions — announced a serious, historic, achievable commitments on emissions over the next two decades. According to the plan, the United States will double the pace of its carbon reduction efforts before 2025, by that point reducing emissions 26 percent to 28 percent from 2005 levels. China, meanwhile, will cap its carbon dioxide output around 2030 and will try to halt its rising emissions sooner than that.

Immediately Republicans slammed the agreement. Incoming Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) claimed Wednesday that the deal would allow China to “*do nothing at all for 16 years.*” In fact, achieving that cap will require significant new effort. China will meet its goal in part by ramping up its use of non-fossil-fuel energy, including nuclear, hydro, wind and solar power, to about 20 percent of its total energy use.

That commitment is astonishing in scope; the generating capacity of the clean-energy infrastructure China intends to build would nearly equal the installed capacity of the entire U.S. electrical system, the White House reckons. Already China has been experimenting with market-based carbon pricing programs and requiring its economy to waste less energy. Experts expect these efforts to expand.

The Obama administration says it can put the nation on this path under existing executive authorities, without further congressional approval. We say “further” because Congress gave the president formidable powers to combat air pollution in the Clean Air Act and elsewhere; as the Supreme Court has confirmed, Mr. Obama has strong statutory authority to act unilaterally on greenhouse-gas emissions. Of course, it would be easier and less expensive if Congress enacted a more efficient anti-carbon policy, such as a fully rebated carbon tax, to achieve similar or greater reductions. But that's not likely to happen soon.

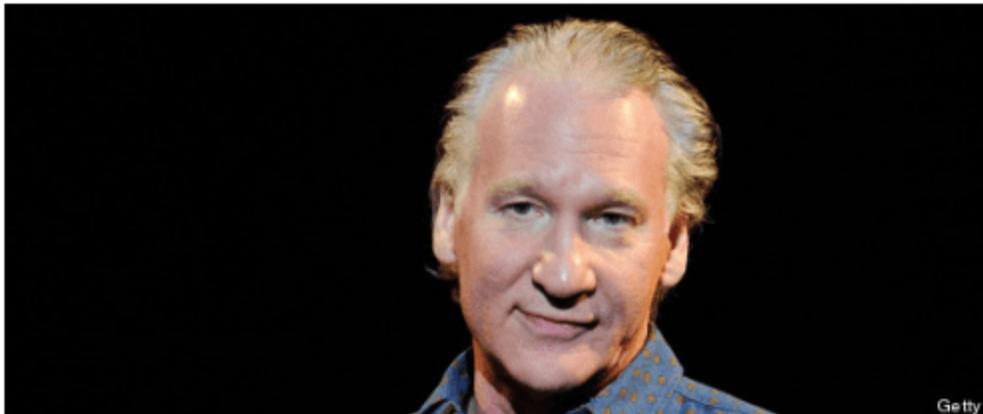
There is some give in the various commitments: Each specifies imprecise targets or approximate amounts of time in which to reach them. The level at which China eventually caps its emissions is also crucial, and unstipulated. Wherever that is, it will take deeper reductions over longer periods of time by both countries to respond to climate change adequately.

But more important than the details is the fact that China and the United States are finally leading on global warming, connecting the two largest pieces of an international climate puzzle that has been an ugly mess. Other nations will have confidence that they, too, will not be sacrificing in vain if and when they cut their emissions. Also, big developing countries, such as India, that have done too little should find it harder to avoid acting.

But Republicans who attack the President no matter what he does, never think of the long game. Because as Fareed Zakaria points out in an op-ed last week in **The Washington Post** — ***China's growing clout*** — China's economy is nearly 16 percent and rising, now almost four times the size of Japan's and five times that of Germany. At the same time the Russians are trying to make inroads with China to mend fences and weaken the United States' relationship with China.

Republicans often say that the President should abandon his big initiatives and just do the small things that both parties agree. Isn't this what President Obama is now doing with his counterpart President Xi Jinping in China? More importantly with this first historic small step other larger steps can happen. As **The Washington Post** wrote in the editorial – ***The U.S. and China reach a landmark climate deal*** – It took Republican leaders almost no time to attack the agreement, and they might need to wait only a few years to roll it back, if they win the presidency in the next election. That would be a mistake even larger in scale than Mr. Obama's achievement in Beijing.

Free Speech Under Fire On American Campuses



I remember the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley led by Mario Savio challenging the campus' restrictions on free expression. This initial one-institution protest inspired young people to demand the loosing of restriction of expression on other campuses across the country. In many ways several years later it also led to student protests against the War in Viet Nam as college students everywhere embraced their voice to fight against injustices where ever they saw them. So when students recently attempted revocation of **HBO Real Time** host Bill Maher's invitation to deliver **UC Berkeley's** fall commencement, I agreed with many other Progressives that this form of suppression not only threatens the institution's proud legacy, it is also a disturbing nationwide trend of campus censorship.

Maher, 58, was invited in August by a committee of undergraduate students, called "*The Californians*" who for years selected commencement speakers. The Cornell educated social satirist, Emmy nominee and stand-up comedian is known for his biting, often mocking, commentary on important public issues, like religious and political hypocrisy. He has personally felt the sting of controversy when his ABC show was dropped in 2002 after he opined: We have been the cowards. Lobbing cruise missiles from two thousand miles away. That's cowardly. Staying in the airplane when it hits the building. Say what you want about it. Not cowardly. You're right.

And he courted controversy again, on his October 3 HBO show when he and fellow atheist and neuroscientist Sam Harris got into a heated debate on Islam with Berkeley born actor Ben

Affleck. Affleck called Maher's homogenous views on Islam "gross and racist." Affleck rightly stated that Maher's criticism of Islam was an exercise of "painting the whole religion with that broad brush." Maher pointedly responded, "It's the only religion that acts like the mafia that will f*****g kill you if you say the wrong thing, draw the wrong picture or write the wrong book. There's a reason why Ayaan Hirsi Ali needs bodyguards 24/7..." Harris, added, "We have to acknowledge that Islam has doctrines like jihad and martyrdom and death to apostates, which are central to the faith in the way that they aren't in other faiths." Harris also insultingly called the faith "the mother lode of bad ideas." Maher has consistently maintained that the American left has been hypocritical in how it treats Islam on such issues as gender and sexual orientation equality, free expression, and religious conversion.

The telecast also prompted a student-led petition that generated thousands of signatures in support of revoking Maher's invitation. The petition argued that Maher's religious bigotry and "dangerous rhetoric" ran counter to the campus community:

The students at the University of California at Berkeley represent a diverse array of students from all walks of life. Every semester a commencement speaker is given the privilege of inspiring a class of talented and capable students. This year, UC Berkeley has chosen to invite Bill Maher to speak. Bill Maher is a blatant bigot and racist who has no respect for the values UC Berkeley students and administration stand for. In a time where climate is a priority for all on campus, we cannot invite an individual who himself perpetuates a dangerous learning environment. Bill Maher's public statements on various religions and cultures are offensive and his dangerous rhetoric has found its way into our campus communities. Too many students are marginalized by his remarks and if the University were to bring this individual as a commencement speaker they would not be supporting these historically marginalized communities.

I totally agree with Ben Affleck and last month did a piece in my Weekly Offerings explaining why I felt what Mather and Harris was saying not only was racist it was grossly offensive as it painted 1.6 billion Moslems with the same brush of the most radical elements in their religion. And I definitely disagree with the students at UC Berkeley who are trying to stop Bill Maher from speaking at their December Commencement. As Brian Levin pointed out in the **Huffington Post** last month – In the US Supreme Court's decision in *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624 (1943), invalidating compulsory school flag salutes, they said:

If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion, or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein. If there are any circumstances which permit an exception, they do not now occur to us.

For fifty years, the University of California, Berkeley, was the vanguard of the free speech movement and free expression. There has been a disturbing, often de facto, censorship of important, yet controversial speakers, by a community of progressives, to which I belong. The targets are often controversial speakers, some of whom are conservatives. Just this month three time Pulitzer Prize winner **Washington Post** photojournalist Michel du Cille was disinvited from Syracuse University over fear that he covered Ebola in Africa three weeks earlier. Other censored folks include former NYPD Commissioner Ray Kelley, former Secretary of State Condelezza Rice, International Monetary Fund Christine Lagard, columnist George Will, and ironically former UC Berkeley Chancellor Robert Birgeneau.

The UC Berkeley Chancellor on Wednesday thoughtfully announced that the administration was rejecting the committee's reversal of their previous decision:

The UC Berkeley administration cannot and will not accept this decision, which appears to have been based solely on Mr. Maher's opinions and beliefs, which he conveyed through constitutionally protected speech. For that reason Chancellor Dirks has decided that the invitation will stand, and he looks forward to welcoming Mr. Maher to the Berkeley campus. It should be noted that this decision does not constitute an endorsement of any of Mr. Maher's prior statements: indeed, the administration's position on Mr. Maher's opinions and perspectives is irrelevant in this context, since we fully respect and support his right to express them. More broadly, this university has not in the past and will not in the future shy away from hosting speakers who some deem provocative.

Free speech principles have protected numerous other wackjobs to speak freely at UC campus events. Imam Musa blamed the government for 9/11 and Jews for the slave trade at a UC, Irvine, lecture.v Despite a record of virulent anti-Semitism, Mohammad al Asi was invited to speak in the UC system. Al Asi has argued that thousands of Israeli Jews skipped work to escape 9/11. The erudite humanist and promoter of Holocaust denier Nazi Ahmed Huber has also written: *"It is precisely what qualifies Yahud [Jews] for displacement, dispossession and depression. That is why they have been stamped with shame, mortification and the wrath of the Almighty."* In a 2001 Washington, D.C. speech he stated: *"We have a psychosis in the Jewish community that is unable to coexist equally and brotherly with other human beings."*

Yet another controversial speaker invited to both the University and UC, Irvine was firebrand convert Yvonne Ridley. She wrote that the mastermind of the Chechen school massacre was a *"fearless"* martyr who led an *"admirable"* struggle. She also called hook handed British extremist Abu Hamza al Masri *"quite sweet, really,"* while criticizing his moderate Muslim detractors. He was recently convicted in federal district court of 11 counts of terrorism. She further wrote that a series of hotel bombings included not only a wedding party with Americans, but also *"martyrdom operations"* at Jordanian bars where *"we know alcohol is strictly haram, it's an Islamic ruling which the King of Jordan chooses to openly ignore, and in a Muslim country."*

Although I totally disagree with Bill Maher's comments on Islam I unequivocally champion his right to speak bluntly on these same topics of Islam and violence. And while countering Islamophobia is a priority for any university, so is the protection of free speech, even that, like Maher's with which I so profoundly disagree. This spring, it has been disturbing to see a number of college commencement speakers withdraw -- or have their invitations rescinded -- after protests from students and -- as well, shockingly -- from senior faculty and administrators who should know better.... In each case, liberals silenced a voice -- and denied an honorary degree -- to individuals they deemed politically objectionable. This trend of intolerance is an outrage which is why it is important that we Progressives/Liberals and everyone else for that matter be open to listen to others even those who we disagree ***and this is my rant of the week....***

WEEK'S READINGS

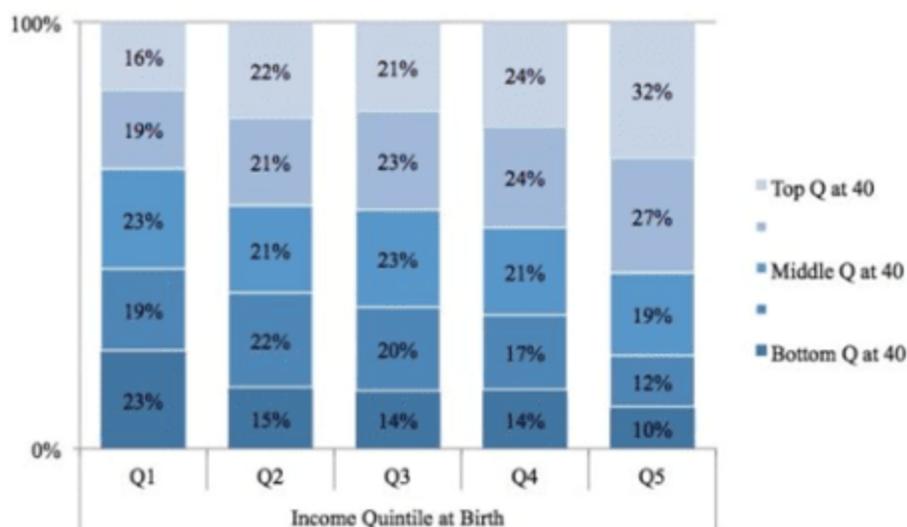
Next Time Someone Says 'White Privilege Isn't Real,' Show Them This



Think white privilege doesn't exist in America? Consider just how much the color of a child's skin changes his or her odds of escaping poverty later in life. Roughly 16 percent of white children born into the poorest one-fifth of U.S. families will rise to become a member of the top one-fifth by the time they turn 40 years old, according to a new study by Brookings Institution researchers for the Boston Federal Reserve. Those are fairly bleak odds, but for poor black children the odds of making it to the top are even longer: Only 3 percent of black children born into the poorest one-fifth of families will ever make the leap to the top income group, according to the study.

Even if they don't always make it to the top of the income ladder, poor whites escape the worst forms of poverty more often than poor blacks. Only 23 percent of poor white children will still be counted among the poorest Americans when they turn 40, while a whopping 51 percent of poor black children will, the researchers found. This chart shows the social mobility levels for white Americans. The horizontal axis shows where families start out on the income ladder, and the vertical axis shows the percentage of children from those families that end up at each income level by the age of 40.

Figure 9: Social mobility matrix, white Americans

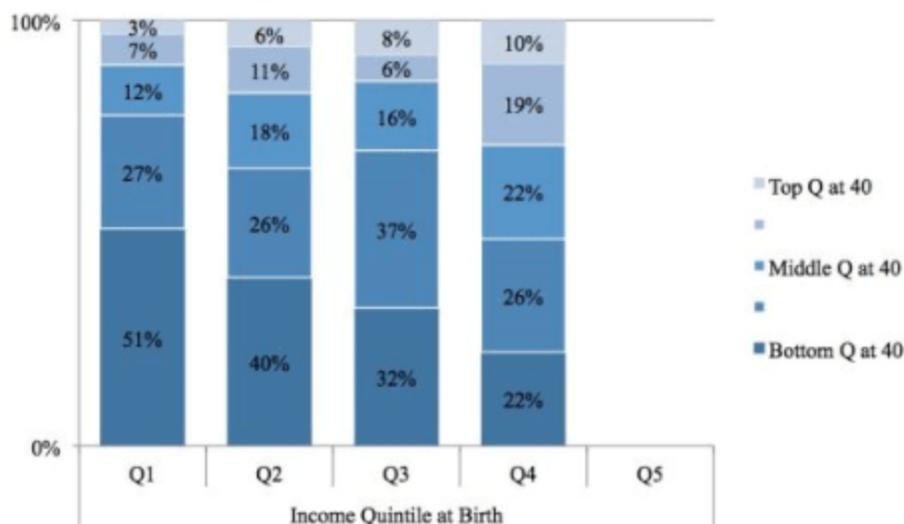


Source: Author's calculations.

Reeves and Sawhill

As you can see, the poorest white Americans have a decent shot of ending up in a higher tier than their parents -- 58 percent of white children from the poorest families end up in one of the top three income brackets. But for black Americans, escaping poverty is far more difficult:

Figure 8: Social mobility matrix, black Americans



Note: The sample size is too small to calculate a matrix for those born in the top income quintile.

Source: Author's calculations.

Reeves and Sawhill

Just 22 percent of the poorest black children manage to get into the top three income brackets by the time they are 40. And note that there aren't even enough black families in the top income bracket to do statistically significant analysis. The findings in the paper, co-authored by Brookings economists Richard V. Reeves and Isabel V. Sawhill, run counter to the beliefs of some, like Fox News host Bill O'Reilly, who argue that racism in this country has diminished to the point that white privilege no longer exists. O'Reilly visited The Daily Show last week and argued that any person, regardless of race, can get rich in America so long as they work hard.

But opportunities for success are clearly not that simple, for a host of reasons: The myriad legacies of slavery and Jim Crow, decades of racist housing policies, educational disparities, employment discrimination, and a race-fueled War on Drugs. Where you start in life financially matters a lot, too: If you're born in the poorest 20 percent of families of any race, yet still earn a college degree, you have roughly the same chance of being stuck in the poorest bracket as rich high-school dropouts do of staying in the richest bracket (16 and 14 percent, respectively). Upward mobility is a much harder climb than it would seem. And for people of privilege to say that they made it on their own usually this is not the case because where you start often signals where you will end. And by the way 7-year-old Aiyana Stanley-Jones above was shot to death in 2010 during a botched police raid in search of a murder suspect and no one was found at fault.

By Kevin Short: 10/21/2014 Huffington Post



As someone who never graduated from high school and didn't get a GED, although I did attend New York University for a while, I was drawn to Noah Berlatsky's recent article in **The Atlantic** – ***What Can You Really Do With a Degree in the Arts?*** One of the reasons why I never graduated high school or got a college degree was that during both I was on a mission to get real life experience and build a career. And after several years this pathway proved extremely successful because I hooked up with two other ultra-ambitious teenagers and the sum of the three proved to be much greater than the individual parts especially compared to my peers at NYU who were often in BA programs trying to find themselves.

Wikipedia describes higher education in the United States as an optional final stage of formal learning following secondary education. Higher education, also referred to as post-secondary education, third stage, third level, or tertiary education occurs most commonly at one of the 4,599 Title IV degree-granting institutions, either colleges or universities in the country. These may be public universities, private universities, liberal arts colleges, or community colleges. High visibility issues include greater use of the Internet, such as massive open online courses, competency-based education, cutbacks in state spending, rapidly rising tuition and increasing student loans.

Strong research and funding have helped make United States colleges and universities among the world's most prestigious, making them particularly attractive to international students, professors and researchers in the pursuit of academic excellence. As of 2011, the latest figures available in 2014, the US has a total of 4,599 Title IV-eligible, degree-granting institutions: 2,870 4-year institutions and 1,729 2-year institutions. The US had 21 million students in higher education, roughly 5.7% of the total population. About 13 million of these students were enrolled full-time which was 81,000 students lower than 2010. In 2009, 21.3 percent of the adult population above 18 years had attended college, but had no degree, 7.5 percent held an associate's degree, 17.6 percent held a bachelor's degree, and 10.3 percent held a graduate or professional degree. The historical gender gap had practically vanished. New England and Colorado had the highest proportion of college graduates, and the South Central states the lowest.

A US Department of Education longitudinal survey of 15,000 high school students in 2002, and again in 2012 at age 27, found that 84% of the 27-year-olds had some college education, but only 34% achieved a bachelor's degree or higher; 79% owe some money for college and 55% owe more than \$10,000; college dropouts were three times more likely to be unemployed than those who finished college; 40% spent some time unemployed and 23% were unemployed for six months or more; and 79% earned less than \$40,000 per year.

But getting back to Berlatsky's question, was his B.A. in creative writing of any use? Because although he has a sort of have a career in the arts (his words not mine) as he does earn a living writing, it was not the type of writing they prepared him for at Oberlin College. Rather than poetry or fiction or even creative nonfiction, he writes entries for business encyclopedias, creates items for high school and elementary standardized tests, and does the occasional online study guide for Stephen King novels. Even when it comes to the critical writing, it's for publications like **The Atlantic** where he believes that his English classes and second major in history, were better preparation than anything he learned in his college writers' workshops.

And his experience isn't that unusual. In fact, according to a recent report by BFAMFAPhd, a degree in the arts only very rarely leads to a career in the arts. **Artists Report Back: A National Study on the Lives of Arts Graduates and Working Artists** uses 2012 Census Data to get a picture of artistic career paths. The data isn't perfect: For example, the report says that it "*looked at bachelors degrees in music, drama and theater arts, film, video and photographic arts, art history and criticism, studio arts, and visual and performing arts*" — which would mean that folks like me with a creative writing degree aren't counted as having arts degrees, even though writers are counted by the survey as working artists. Still, even with such limitations, the results are startling. Out of the 2 million art graduates in the nation, only 200,000, or 10 percent, earn their living primarily as artists. The vast majority who get arts degrees, then, are like me. They may work in an arts-related profession (as, for example, as art or music teachers), but they aren't working artists.

Even more strikingly, people without arts degrees are becoming working artists. Only 15.8 percent of working artists have a B.A. or B.F.A. The rest have a range of college credentials — in communications (9.3 percent), social sciences (9.3 percent), or the liberal arts (7.9 percent), to name the three largest groups. And 40 percent of working artists didn't graduate from college. Berlatsky singles out two examples, Arthur Chu with an undergrad degree was in history, (sort of a working artist depending on your definition) as he now does voiceover work, generally for corporate and explainer videos, though he's also done radio commercials and voicing for the Web Series *Erfworld*, as well as some improv comedy and community theater, which he considers a hobby/part-time career. He attributes this to his lack of training in the arts which he feels is a disadvantage. Now the truth could be that he lacks talent.

Berlatsky's other example is Nikole Beckwith who went directly into an arts career without getting a degree and now is actor, screenwriter, and director. Beckwith attended a Sudbury School in Massachusetts, where there is no set curriculum and students organize and pursue their own education. The emphasis on self-motivation and seeking out learning helped her enormously in her career, she told me. It also helped that she had been pursuing theater since she was 9. After high school, she just kept acting and doing theater work and teaching theater and improv; she was co-director of a small theater company by the time she was 25. Beckwith says, "*being an actor in New York not having gone through some kind of program ... it was so hard. It was impossible.*" And without any college connections in the theater world, no one would have given her a part, as her extensive experience in New England theater, was largely seen as irrelevant.

The good news for her was that she able to keep trying was because she was not paying back massive loans. "I forget that I'm one of the only people I know who isn't slogging through major college debt," she said. "Instead of having [to work all the time] I was able to audition and send things out and be writing and working and be trying to find out where my best foothold was in an industry that meant so much to me." She was ultimately able to start making a living as a screenwriter.

It is obvious, that arts programs are not necessary for arts careers as these programs often do a poor job in explaining to students what their futures are going to look like. This is especially problematic considering that 7 of the 10 most expensive schools in the country are arts schools. Rather than get a generic BA education college students should focus their education in journalism, educational writing or criticism as options. Because the only real career path for students in BA programs is to continue on to advance degrees so that they can teach, which is more than an honorable career if you can get it.

Obviously the best BA programs can be valuable as they develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, along with intellectual curiosity, creativity, and an amazing work ethic. But most programs don't really do this and many students use the BA programs as a way to coast through college, instead of finding and developing a skill set. And given the expense of a B.A., and the likelihood that a degree in the arts will not lead directly to a career in the arts, art school programs need to be a lot more honest with their students. And as Berlatsky also points out, there is a hesitancy to talk about money and economic issues, especially when artists are in school, in a space where they're supposed to develop their practice without being influenced by the market. But there needs to be a way to allow young artists to grow as artists in a space that gives them distance from the pressure of the art market, while also being realistic about their economic lives after graduation. This is especially true when they're starting their post-graduation lives burdened by student loan debt.



São Paulo Brazil

As journalist and columnist Thomas Friedman wrote in an op-ed in the **New York Times** — **The World is Fast** — with a sub-heading — **Recent Elections Missed the Biggest Challenge of All** — Moore's Law, the theory that the speed and power of microchips will double every two years, is, as Andrew McAfee and Erik Brynjolfsson post in their book, "**The Second Machine Age**," so relentlessly increasing the power of software, computers and robots that they're now replacing many more traditional white- and blue-collar jobs, while spinning off new ones — all of which require more skills. And the rapid growth of carbon in our atmosphere and environmental degradation and deforestation because of population growth on earth — the only home we have — are destabilizing Mother Nature's ecosystems faster.

Friedman says that we are in the middle of three "*climate changes*" at once: one digital, one ecological, one geo-economical. That's why strong states are being stressed, weak ones are blowing up and Americans are feeling anxious that no one has a quick fix to ease their anxiety. And they're right. The only fix involves big, hard things that can only be built together over time: resilient infrastructure, affordable health care, more start-ups and lifelong learning opportunities for new jobs, immigration policies that attract talent, sustainable environments, manageable debt and governing institutions adapted to the new speed.

Like you I thought that this op-ed was about just about the Mid-Term Election here in the United States but it wasn't. He explained that San Paulo, South America's biggest and wealthiest city may run out of water by mid-November if it doesn't rain soon. São Paulo, a Brazilian megacity of 20 million people, is suffering its worst drought in at least 80 years, with key reservoirs that supply the city dried up after an unusually dry year. And this was reported by **Reuters** on October 24, 2014. Think about it that and let me say it again São Paulo is running out of water.

José Maria Cardoso da Silva, a Brazilian and senior adviser at Conservation International, explains: The drought hit a landscape that had been stripped of 80 percent of the natural forest along the Serra da Cantareira watersheds that feed six artificial reservoirs sustaining São Paulo. The Cantareira supplies nearly half of São Paulo's water. The forests and wetlands have been replaced by farm fields, pastures and eucalyptus plantations. So today the pipes and reservoirs that gather the water are still in place, but the natural infrastructure of forests and watersheds has been badly degraded. The drought exposed it all. *"Natural forests act like giant sponges soaking up rain and gradually releasing it into streams,"* he said. *"They also protect watercourses and maintain water quality by reducing sediment and filtering pollutants. The forest loss in Cantareira increased erosion, caused the decline in water quality, and changed seasonal water flows, reducing the resilience of the entire system against climatic extreme events."* The Cantareira system has fallen below 12 percent of capacity.

Deforestation increased under Brazil's newly re-elected president, Dilma Rousseff and this was barely an issue in Brazil's election. Yet Reuters quoted Antonio Nobre, a leading climate scientist at Brazil's National Space Research Institute, arguing that *"global warming and the deforestation of the Amazon are altering the climate in the region by drastically reducing the release of billions of liters of water by rainforest trees. 'Humidity that comes from the Amazon in the form of vapor clouds — what we call 'flying rivers' — has dropped dramatically, contributing to this devastating situation we are living today,'"* Nobre said.

Paul Gilding, the Australian environmentalist and author of *"The Great Disruption,"* emailed from Brazil to say that the lack of a serious Brazilian response *"reinforces to me that we're not going to respond to the big global issues until they hit the economy. It's hard to imagine a stronger example than a city of 20 million people running out of water. Yet despite the clear threat, the main response is 'we hope it rains.' Why such denial? Because the implications of acceptance are so significant, and we know in our hearts there's no going back once you end denial. It would demand that the country face up to the urgency of reversing rather than slowing deforestation"* and *"the need to prepare the country for the risks that a changing climate presents."* And as Friedman pointed out — when changes in the market, Mother Nature and Moore's Law all get this fast, opportunities and stresses abound. One day, we'll have an election about how we cushion, exploit and adapt to them — an election to make America and Americans more resilient. One day. Because the American Midterm Election definitely wasn't that.....

Which Foods are the Worst for the Environment?



For the UNESCO Institute for Water Education, researchers calculated the water footprint of many of the foods we eat. Like tomatoes, which use 25 gallons per pound. One tomato requires 13 gallons of water. Click through for the water footprint of 58 other foods.

“We see lakes disappearing, groundwater levels decline. Rivers are empty before they reach the sea, and many rivers are heavily polluted. Those problems relate to the fact that so much water is consumed and polluted for our daily consumer goods, particularly food.” That’s how Arjen Y. Hoekstra, a water management professor at **University of Twente in the Netherlands**, answered the question: Why do we care about how much water is needed to create the foods we eat? Hoekstra studies the human water footprint a great deal. He recently wrote the book. He’s published a number of papers on the subject, including a recent one in the journal. And for the **UNESCO Institute for Water Education**, he and a colleague calculated many of the foods we eat. They looked at a food’s total water footprint in all parts of the supply chain. *“The water footprint is measured by quantifying the volumes of water consumed or polluted, and that are therefore not available for other purposes,”* he explained.

Unsurprisingly, meats are the worst offenders. “For most people, it’s still hard to believe that one kg of beef requires — as a global average — 15,400 liters of water,” Hoekstra told [weather.com](http://www.weather.com). That’s more than 1,850 gallons for a single pound. Here’s another example: The average footprint per calorie of is five times that of cereals and starchy roots, according to the **Water Footprint Network**. Fruits and vegetables fare better, but some are better than others still. A pound of asparagus, for example, requires almost 260 gallons of water. The same bulk of spinach requires just 35. Nuts, perhaps unexpectedly, rank high on the list, with a pound of shelled almonds needing 1,930 gallons, cashews needing 1,700 gallons and pistachios needing about 1,365 gallons. The stats are intended to raise awareness, Hoekstra said. “Once we know the water footprint of a product, we can compare it to what is reasonable. For many products on the market, the water footprint can easily be halved if better technologies were used in the different steps of the supply chain.”

It’s also on our shoulders, he said, meaning eating a healthy, sustainable diet that contains less of the foods that weigh heavily on our environmental resources. Where do your favorites bites land in terms of water consumption? Click through the slideshow above to find out. Below is water consumption for a sampling and a web link that profiles all 59 of them:

<http://www.weather.com/news/science/environment/how-bad-are-foods-we-eat-20141020>

Garlic = 71 gallons/lb.

Grapes = 73 gallons/lb. One glass of wine require about 30 gallons of water.
Lemons and limes = 77 gallons/lb.
Bananas = 95 gallons/lb. One banana requires 42 gallons of water.
Artichokes = 98 gallons/lb.
Apples = 99 gallons/lb. One apple requires 33 gallons of water.
Blueberries = 101 gallons/lb.
Orange juice = 122 gallons/lb.
Potato chips = 125 gallons/lb.
Corn = 146 gallons/lb.
Pizza = 151 gallons/lb.
Barley = 170 gallons/lb.
Cherries = 192 gallons/lb.
Rice = 200 gallons/lb.
Raw sugar cane = 214 gallons/lb.
Wheat = 219 gallons/lb.
Avocado = 238 gallons/lb.
Asparagus = 258 gallons/lb.
Garlic powder = 270 gallons/lb.
Raisin = 292 gallons/lb.
Coconut = 322 gallons/lb.
Cheese = 381 gallons/lb.
Eggs = 396 gallons/lb.
Chickpea = 501 gallons/lb.
Beef = 1,850 gallons/lb.
Coffee, roasted = 2,270 gallons/lb. A single cup of coffee requires 34 gallons of water.
Vanilla bean = 15,180 gallons/lb.

Michele Berger -- Oct 21, 2014 -- The Weather Channel

The world's biggest economic problem

Deflation in the euro zone is all too close and extremely dangerous



THE world economy is not in good shape. The news from America and Britain has been reasonably positive, but Japan's economy is struggling and China's growth is now slower than at any time since 2009. Unpredictable dangers abound, particularly from the Ebola epidemic, which has killed thousands in West Africa and jangled nerves far beyond. But the biggest economic threat, by far, comes from continental Europe. Now that German growth has stumbled, the euro area is on the verge of tipping into its third recession in six years. Its leaders have squandered two years of respite, granted by the pledge of Mario Draghi, the European Central Bank's president, to do "*whatever it takes*" to save the single currency. The French and the Italians have dodged structural reforms, while the Germans have insisted on too much austerity. Prices are falling in eight European countries. The zone's overall inflation rate has slipped to 0.3% and may well go into outright decline next year. A region that makes up almost a fifth of world output is marching towards stagnation and deflation and this is a serious problem. And as one could say..... *the parrot is on life-support.....*

Optimists, both inside and outside Europe, often cite the example of Japan. It fell into deflation in the late-1990s, with unpleasant but not apocalyptic consequences for both itself and the world economy. But the euro zone poses far greater risks. Unlike Japan, the euro zone is not an isolated case: from China to America inflation is worryingly low, and slipping. And, unlike Japan, which has a homogenous, stoic society, the euro area cannot hang together through years of economic sclerosis and falling prices. As debt burdens soar from Italy to Greece, investors will take fright, populist politicians will gain ground, and — sooner rather than later — the euro will collapse. Although many Europeans, especially the Germans, have been brought up to fear inflation, deflation can be still more savage. If people and firms expect prices to fall, they stop spending, and as demand sinks, loan defaults rise. That was what happened in the Great Depression, with especially dire consequences in Germany in the early 1930s.

So it is worrying that, of the 46 countries whose central banks target inflation, 30 are below their target. Some price falls are welcome. Tumbling oil prices, in particular, have given consumers'

incomes a boost. But slowing prices and stagnant wages owe more to weak demand in the economy and roughly 45m workers are jobless in the rich OECD countries. Investors are starting to expect lower inflation even in economies, such as America's, that are growing at reasonable rates. Worse, short-term interest rates are close to zero in many economies, so central banks cannot cut them to boost spending. The only ammunition comes from quantitative easing and other forms of printing money. The global lowinflation threat is a good reason for most central banks to keep monetary policy loose. It is also, in the longer term, a prompt to look at revising inflation targets a shade upwards. But the immediate problem is the euro area.

Continental Europe's economy has plenty of big underlying weaknesses, from poor demography to heavy debt and sclerotic labor markets. But it has also made enormous policy mistakes. France, Italy and Germany have all eschewed growth-enhancing structural reforms. The euro zone is particularly vulnerable to deflation because of Germany's insistence on too much fiscal austerity and the ECB's timidity. Even now, with economies contracting, Germany is still obsessed with deficit reduction for all governments, while its opposition to monetary easing has meant that the ECB, to the obvious despair of Mr. Draghi, has done far less than other big central banks in terms of quantitative easing (notwithstanding this week's move to start buying "covered bonds"). If there was ever logic to this incrementalism, it has run out. As budgets shrink and the ECB struggles to convince people that it can stop prices slipping, a descent into deflation seems all too probable. Signs of stress are beginning to appear in both the markets and politics. Bond yields in Greece have risen sharply, as support for the left-wing Syriza party has surged. France and Germany are trading rhetorical blows over a new budget proposal coming out of Paris.

If Europe is to stop its economy getting worse, it will have to stop its self-destructive behavior. The ECB needs to start buying sovereign bonds. Germany's chancellor, Angela Merkel, should allow France and Italy to slow the pace of their fiscal cuts; in return, those countries should accelerate structural reforms. Germany, which can borrow money at negative real interest rates, could spend more building infrastructure at home.

That would help, but not be enough. It is a bit like the early years of the euro debacle, before Mr. Draghi's *whatever-it-takes* pledge, when half-solutions only fed the crisis. Something radical is needed. The hitch is that European law bans many textbook solutions, such as ECB purchases of newly issued government bonds. The best legal option is to couple a dramatic increase in infrastructure spending with bond-buying by the ECB. Thus the European Investment Bank could launch a big (say €300 billion, or \$383 billion) expansion in investments such as faster cross-border rail links or more integrated electricity grids — and raise the money by issuing bonds, which the ECB could buy in the secondary market. Another possibility would be to redefine the EU's deficit rules to exclude investment spending, which would allow governments to run bigger deficits, again with the ECB providing a backstop.

Behind all this sits a problem of political will. Mrs. Merkel and the Germans seem prepared to take action only when the single currency is on the verge of catastrophe. Throughout Europe people are hurting — in Italy and Spain youth unemployment is above 40%. Voters vented their fury with the established order in the EU's parliamentary elections earlier this summer, and got very little change. Another descent into the abyss will test their patience. And once deflation has an economy in its jaws, it is very hard to shake off. Europe's leaders are running out of time. ***And if they do.... what will that mean to the rest of the world?***

THIS WEEK'S QUOTE

Triumph of the Wrong

The biggest secret of the Republican triumph surely lies in the discovery that obstructionism bordering on sabotage is a winning political strategy. From Day 1 of the Obama administration, Mr. McConnell and his colleagues have done everything they could to undermine effective policy, in particular blocking every effort to do the obvious thing — boost infrastructure spending — in a time of low interest rates and high unemployment. This was, it turned out, bad for America but good for Republicans. Most voters don't know much about policy details, nor do they understand the legislative process. So all they saw was that the man in the White House wasn't delivering prosperity — and they punished his party.

Paul Krugman – November 6, 2014 – New York Times

BEST VIDEO OF THE WEEK

Fun on the NY Subway



Have you ever seen two people beg in the same subway car at the same time?

Web Link: https://www.youtube.com/embed/47e3yjA_4uc?feature=player_embedded

Maybe it has been a long time since you have been on the New-York Subway.....

THIS IS BRILLIANT

Interesting montage of photo film with faces and other images that blend together using morphing....

Web Link: <http://youtu.be/foqGirKxbvk>

Enjoy.... Enjoy.... Enjoy....

THIS WEEK'S MUSIC

Jack Bruce



As a result of his death last month at the age of 71 I would like to share the music of Symon Asher "Jack" Bruce (14 May 1943 – 25 October 2014) who was a Scottish musician and composer, known as a founder member of the British psychedelic rock power trio Cream in the late 1960s. He maintained a solo career that spanned several decades, and also played in several musical groups. Known as a vocalist and bass guitarist, Bruce was also a songwriter. He was trained as a classical cellist, and considered himself a jazz musician, although much of his catalogue of compositions and recordings tended toward blues and rock and roll. **The Sunday Times** stated "... many consider him to be one of the greatest bass players of all time."

As one-third of one of rock's greatest trios, along with guitarist Eric Clapton and drummer Ginger Baker, Bruce was the voice and songwriter behind classic tracks like "*White Room*," "*SWLABR*," and "*Sunshine of Your Love*," which Bruce co-wrote with Clapton. Considered to be the first rock "*supergroup*," Cream pumped out four studio albums in three years – three of which landed on **Rolling Stone's 500 Greatest Albums of All Time** – before going their separate ways. The band reunited briefly in 1993 for their Rock Hall induction, then again in for a triumphant series of 2005 concerts at London's Royal Albert Hall and New York's Madison Square Garden. In 2006, Bruce and his Cream mates received the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award. Bruce also occasionally served as a member of Ringo Starr's All-Starr Band and collaborated on the title track of Frank Zappa's *Apostrophe*.

Following Cream's breakup in 1968, Bruce kick-started a long solo career with 1969's *Songs of a Tailor*. He would release over a dozen solo LPs over the next 45 years, including his latest album titled *Silver Rails* in March 2014. "*I quite like to just enjoy my life. I'm thrilled to make this album. I put my heart and soul into it, and I'm very pleased with the way it came out,*" Bruce told Rolling Stone of his new album in April. Cream also landed on **Rolling Stone's** list of the **100 Greatest Artists**, and in an ode to the trio written by Roger Waters, the Pink Floyd bassist writes, "*Then there's Jack Bruce – probably the most musically gifted bass player who's ever been.*" As someone who came to age in the late 1960s weaned on American R&B, Jazz and British Rock bands which included the Beatles, Stones, Who, Yardbirds, Led Zeppelin and Cream. Jack Bruce was one of the central musical figures of that period and a true British Rock & Roller in every way that you can imagine. So with this said ***I invite you to enjoy the music of Mr. Jack Bruce and please also enjoy the Bonus track with Mick Taylor as it is sweet.....***

Cream – ***Sunshine Of Your Love*** -- <http://youtu.be/pwDooJUeKqM>

Cream – ***Strange Brew*** -- <http://youtu.be/hftgytmgQgE>

Cream – **White Room** -- http://youtu.be/dCcoopX_pFA
Cream – **Crossroads** -- <http://youtu.be/oHO-CKfxvHo>
Cream – **Stormy Monday** -- <http://youtu.be/X5IdtqFf95g>
Cream – **Born Under A Bad Sign** -- <http://youtu.be/uEGVtbgYx2I>
Cream – **Toad** -- <http://youtu.be/4GzeoPxDKgQ>
Cream – **SWLABR** -- <http://youtu.be/WinudLsJr1Q> and http://youtu.be/D_Fr7Y6e_sc
Cream – **I Feel Free** -- http://youtu.be/Qb_UuoE TNWk
Cream – **Badge** -- <http://youtu.be/EeGyQIgvSVo>
Jack Bruce – **The Politician** -- <http://youtu.be/iPMYkMtOoXk>
Jack Bruce – **Rope Ladder to the Moon** -- <http://youtu.be/lJ-P4Yb73-o>
Jack Bruce – **Theme From An Imaginary Western** -- http://youtu.be/YguY_jUDXRs
Jack Bruce – **Green and Blue** -- <http://youtu.be/Z6jfw1K8xEE>
Jack Bruce – **I'm So Glad / Spoonful** -- <http://youtu.be/e3oidF79XfM>
Mick Taylor & Jack Bruce – **Without a word** -- <http://youtu.be/ue39ojgasNg>

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

Sincerely,

Greg Brown

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