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Subject: Greg Brown's Weekend Reading and Other Things.... 12/8/2013

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DEAR FRIEND.....



Nelson Mandela, who died on Thursday at age 95, fully deserved the legendary stature he enjoyed around the world for the last quarter-century of his life.

He was one of the most extraordinary liberation leaders Africa, or any other continent, ever produced. Not only did he lead his people to triumph over the deeply entrenched system of apartheid that enforced racial segregation in every area of South African life; he achieved this victory without the blood bath so many had predicted and feared.

And, as South Africa's first president elected by the full democratic franchise of all its people, he presided over a landmark Truth and Reconciliation process that finally allowed apartheid's victims a measure of official recognition and acknowledgment of their suffering. Mr. Mandela's enormous strength of character steeled him for his long struggle and ultimate victory over apartheid. Even deeper resources of political wisdom and courage steered him toward the course of constructive reconciliation over destructive vengeance.

Mr. Mandela did not, of course, achieve all of this on his own. The movement he led, the African National Congress, was sustained by lesser-known activists and martyrs, many of whom did not live to see the day of victory they had dreamed of for so long. And the country's peaceful transition owes a huge debt to the apartheid era's last white president, F. W. de Klerk, who in 1990 ordered an end to Mr. Mandela's 27-year imprisonment and negotiated with him and others the terms of the political transition. Three years later, Mr. Mandela and Mr. de Klerk shared the Nobel Peace Prize.

Having spent the prime years of his life in prison, Mr. Mandela was already 75 when he first took office as president in 1994, 80 when he retired in 1999.

His successors, even those he personally supported, have, sadly, not been his equals. South Africa today faces many challenging problems. Scandalous mismanagement of the H.I.V./AIDS epidemic by Thabo Mbeki brought widespread, unnecessary suffering. South Africa under Mr. Mbeki and Jacob Zuma, the current president, has failed to provide the enlightened regional leadership many had expected and has helped sustain the murderous Robert Mugabe in power in neighboring Zimbabwe. Most ominously, the end of apartheid did not, and still has not, brought an end to the deep poverty of millions of its victims.

It will be up to a new generation of South African leaders to resolve these problems. All of them will owe a historic debt to Nelson Mandela.

NEW YORK TIMES EDITORIAL BOARD

I had been going to South Africa since 1974 but I didn't meet Nelson Mandela until I helped my dear friend Oz Scott hold the Los Angeles welcoming for Nelson Mandela and his ANC comrades at the USC Coliseum in June 1991 which attracted an estimated 88,000 revelers and another 45,000 who listened over speakers in the parking areas to our three and a half musical celebration televised around the world. And only then the meeting was just a brief hello and handshake. But I did get to know him several years later when I started spending a lot of time in South Africa in 1994, launching ACTEL (satellite telecommunications business) across the African continent. When told that I had been one of

the organizers of his LA event and had been coming to South Africa for two decades, he immediately invited me into his circle. But what really impressed me was his clarity and vision that not only was he President, his job was to represent everyone..... rich, poor, black, white, African, Asian, Xhosa, Zulu, supporters and foes in one family where privilege was based on need and its responsibly was selfless. Of all of the people whom I have met over my life-time "*Madiba*" was and is #1. Like Mahatma Gandhi, Winston Churchill, Martin Luther King, JFK and Deng Xiaoping..... Nelson Mandela rein as a giant among mere mortals. Attached, please find the obituary in the **New York Times** by Bill Keller – ***Nelson Mandela, South Africa's Liberator as Prisoner and President, Dies at 95.***

As **Wikipedia** will tell you, ***Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela*** was a South African anti-apartheid revolutionary, politician and philanthropist who served as President of South Africa from 1994 to 1999. But he was so much more. He was the soul and conscience of "*the possible.*" He was a natty dresser, who made the Mandela Shirt the chic Dashiki of his generation. He was a man who definitely loved women and they were always around him. But he loved children too. And years later when we met again in the 2000s and I mentioned that I had seen him but felt that he was too busy to disturb, he admonished me for not saying hello. He was a former boxer who cursed like a sailor and would forcefully explain to a subordinate that their role was to serve the people and if they were not up to the task, find other employment. At the same time should you have done everything possible but still come up short, he would praise you for trying and with that encouragement you would continue to do more. To Nelson Mandela, every South African was a member of his family. And you knew he loved you. Because he loved people. He loved life. Like my brother Jan likes to say, "*Even a blind man knows when he is standing in the sun*", so just being in his presence was always inspirational. As a result, he understood that the biggest reward was giving. Because of this, he made the entire world a better place. And although he was the *Father Modern of South Africa*, his life serves and always will, as a beacon of hope for social justice and humanity around the world.

Mandela Taught a Continent to Forgive

During his trial, in lieu of testimony, he delivered a speech from the dock on April 20, 1964. "*I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities,*" he said. "*It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if need be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.*" Yet, the man insisted on forgiveness. "*To go to prison because of your convictions and be prepared to suffer for what you believe in, is something worthwhile. It is an achievement for a man to do his duty on earth irrespective of the consequences.*" Feb. 11, 1990, the miraculous happened; Mandela was released.

By the time I finally came face to face with Nelson Mandela, he had already been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and elected president of a land in which he and all other black people had previously been refused suffrage. He had become an icon, not only of hope, but also of the possibility for healing. I was relatively new to politics then, a Member of Parliament and minister of communications. It was my first time in Cape Town. I had stayed out late with friends and was waiting to take the lift up to my hotel room. When the doors opened, there was Mandela. I took a step back, and froze. As he exited, Mandela glanced in my direction and nodded. I could not return the gesture. I couldn't move, not even to blink. I just stood there in awe, thinking: here was the man for whom we had marched, sung and wept; the man from the black-and-white photograph. Here was the man who had created a new moral compass for South Africa and, as a matter of course, the entire continent.

It is no coincidence that in the years since Mandela's release so much of Africa has turned toward democracy and the rule of law. His utilization of peace as a vehicle of liberation showed Africa that if we were to move beyond the divisiveness caused by colonization, and the pain of our self-inflicted wounds, compassion and forgiveness must play a role in governance. Countries, like people, must acknowledge the trauma they have experienced, and they must find a way to reconcile, to make what was broken whole again. That night, as I watched Mandela walk past me, I understood that his story, the long walk to freedom, was also Africa's story. The indignation that once permeated our continent has been replaced by inspiration. The undercurrent of pessimism resulting from the onslaught of maladies — wars, coups, disease, poverty and oppression — has given way to a steadily increasing sense of possibility. It wasn't just Nelson Mandela who was transformed during those years of his imprisonment. We all were. And Africa is all the better because of that.

John Dramani Mahama: President of Ghana



As many of you know I am a huge fan of **Bill Moyers** who is an American journalist and liberal public commentator. He served as White House Press Secretary in the Johnson administration from 1965 to 1967. And he currently hosts a weekly news commentary show **Moyers & Company** on **PBS**, which I watch religiously and this week's show — **Zombie Politics and Casino Capitalism** — Bill spoke with author and scholar **Henry Giroux** better understand how/why our political system has turned people into zombies — *“people who are basically so caught up with surviving that they become like the walking dead — they lose their sense of agency, they lose their homes, they lose their jobs.”* Henry Giroux is the son of working class parents in Rhode Island who now holds the Global TV Network Chair in English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University in Canada. Henry Giroux's most recent book is **“Zombie Politics and Culture in the Age of Casino Capitalism”**.

Web Link: <http://billmoyers.com/episode/full-show-zombie-politics-and-casino-capitalism/>

Henry Giroux starts out with an opening salvo: What's at stake here is not just the fact that you have rich people who now control the economy and all the commanding institutions of society. What you have is basically a transgression against the very basic ideals of democracy. I mean, it's hard to imagine life beyond capitalism. You know, it's easier to imagine the death of the planet than it is to imagine the death of capitalism. To which Moyers asks, “There's a great urgency in your recent books and in the essays you've been posting online, a fierce urgency, almost as if you are writing with the doomsday clock ticking. What accounts for that?”

Giroux: Well, for me democracy is too important to allow it to be undermined in a way in which every vital institution that matters from the political process to the schools to the inequalities that, to the money being put into politics, I mean, all those things that make a democracy viable are in crisis. And the problem is the crisis, while we recognize in many ways is associated increasingly with the economic system, what we haven't gotten yet is that it should be accompanied by a crisis of ideas, that the stories that are being told about democracy are really about the swindle of fulfillment.

The swindle of fulfillment in that what the reigning elite in all of their diversity now tell the American people if not the rest of the world is that democracy is an excess. It doesn't really matter anymore, that we don't need social provisions, we don't need the welfare state, that the survival of the fittest is all that matters, that in fact society should mimic those values in ways that suggest a new narrative. I mean you have a consolidation of power that is so overwhelming, not just in its ability to control resources and drive the economy and redistribute wealth upward, but basically to provide the most fraudulent definition of what a democracy should be. I mean, the notion that profit making is the essence of democracy, the notion that economics is divorced from ethics, the notion that the only obligation of citizenship is consumerism, the notion that the welfare state is a pathology, that any form of dependency basically is disreputable and needs to be attacked, I mean, this is a vicious set of assumptions.

MOYERS: Are we close to equating democracy with capitalism? GIROUX: Oh, I mean, I think that's the biggest lie of all actually. The biggest lie of all is that capitalism is democracy. We have no way of understanding democracy outside of the market, just as we have no understanding of how to understand freedom outside of market values.

BILL MOYERS: Explain that. What do you mean "*outside of market values*?" HENRY GIROUX: I mean you know, when Margaret Thatcher married Ronald Reagan- BILL MOYERS: Metaphorically?

HENRY GIROUX: Metaphorically. Two things happened. 1) There was this assumption that the government was evil except when it regulated its power to benefit the rich. So it wasn't a matter of smashing the government as Reagan seemed to suggest, it was a matter of rearranging it and re-configuring it so it served the wealthy, the elites and the corporate, of course, you know, those who run mega corporations. But Thatcher said something else that's particularly interesting in this discussion. She said there's no such thing as society. There are only individuals and families. And so what we begin to see is the emergence of a kind of ethic, a survival of the fittest ethic that legitimates the most incredible forms of cruelty, that seems to suggest that freedom in this discourse of getting rid of society, getting rid of the social-- that discourse is really only about self-interest, that possessive individualism is now the only virtue that matters. So freedom, which is essential to any notion of democracy, now becomes nothing more than a matter of pursuing your own self interests. No society can survive under those conditions.

BILL MOYERS: So what is society? When you use it as an antithesis to what Margaret Thatcher said, what do you have in mind? What's the metaphor for--

HENRY GIROUX: I have in mind a society in which the wealth is shared, in which there is a mesh of organizations that are grounded in the social contract that takes seriously the mutual obligations that people have to each other. But more than anything else-- I'm sorry, but I want to echo something that FDR once said, When he said that, you know, you not only have to have personal freedoms and political freedoms, the right to vote the right to speak, you have to have social freedom. You have to

have the freedom from want, the freedom from poverty, the freedom from-- that comes with a lack of health care. Getting ahead cannot be the only motive that motivates people. You have to imagine what a good life is. But agency, the ability to do that, to have the capacity to basically be able to make decisions and learn how to govern and not just be governed--

BILL MOYERS: A citizen is a moral agent of--

HENRY GIROUX: A citizen is a political and moral agent who in fact has a shared sense of hope and responsibility to others and not just to him or herself. Under this system, democracy is basically like the lotto. You know, go in, you put a coin in, and if you're lucky, you win something. If you don't, then you become something else..... I mean, it's certainly not just about foolishness. It's about a kind of lunacy in which people lose themselves in a sense of power and greed and exceptionalism and nationalism in ways that so undercut the meaning of democracy and the meaning of justice that you have to sit back and ask yourself how could the following, for instance, take place? How could people who allegedly believe in democracy and the American Congress cut \$40 billion from a food stamp program, half of which those food stamps go to children? And you ask yourself how could that happen? I mean, how can you say no to a Medicaid program which is far from radical but at the same time offers poor people health benefits that could save their lives?

How do you shut down public schools and say that charter schools and private schools are better because education is really not a right, it's an entitlement? How do you get a discourse governing the country that seems to suggest that anything public, public health, public transportation, public values, you know, public engagement is a pathology? Moyers; Let me answer that from the other side. They would say to you that we cut Medicaid or food stamps because they create dependency. We closed public schools because they aren't working, they aren't teaching. People are coming out not ready for life. To which Giroux responds, No, no, that's the answer that they give. I mean, and it's a mark of their insanity. I mean, that's precisely an answer that in my mind embodies a kind of psychosis that is so divorced-- is in such denial about power and how it works and is in such denial about their attempt at what I call individualize the social, in other words--

Giroux believes that unbridled capitalism is antithetical to democracy, equating it to the Survivor television series and the winner take all mentality, especially when the government supported by the larger social order takes no responsibility. Hence you can have an economic crisis caused by Wall Street with a media blaming the victims for exhausting their economic benefits or the Big Banks who issued *Liar Loans* blaming the housing crash on Fannie Mae, Freddie Mack and millions of Americans who were suckered into buying homes that they could not afford. And the worse abuse of unbridled capitalism is the trillion dollar that has been inflicted on our young in the form of student loans which created a generation of indentured servants or as he coined it the **Zero Generation**: zero jobs, zero hope, zero possibilities, zero employment.

Giroux: And it seems to me when a country turns its back on its young people because they figure in investments not long term investments, they can't be treated as simply commodities that are going to in some way provide an instant payback and extend the bottom line, they represent something more noble than that. They represent an indication of how the future is not going to mimic the present and what obligations people might have, social, political, moral and otherwise to allow that to happen, and we've defaulted on that possibility.

Giroux asks where is the outrage? Where is the outrage when you see policies being enacted today that are so cruel and so savage, wiping out a generation of young people, trying to eliminate public schools, eliminating health care, putting endless percentage of black and brown people in jail, destroying the environment and there's no public outrage. *"Has this market mentality, is it so powerful and that it's become so normalized, so taken for granted that the imagination, the collective imagination has been so stunted that it becomes difficult to challenge it anymore?"*

One of the reasons there is not as much outrage as might be expected is what he call ***"The suffocation of imagination?"*** And that the only kind of learning that matters is utterly instrumental, pragmatist. Therefore not knowing much is somehow a virtue. Not doing anything other than shop on *Black Friday* or *Cyber Monday* is somehow a virtue. Shutting down government is somehow a virtue. Attacking anyone who doesn't agree with your limited agenda is somehow bad. Being a community organizer is somehow bad. Being an intellectual. Republicans don't even want this in our Presidents. *"We don't need a president to tell us in what direction to go. We know what direction to go. We want the Ryan budget,"* he told **New York Magazine**. *"Pick a Republican with enough working digits to handle a pen to become president of the United States."* Grover Norquist.

We need intellectuals because Intellectuals are people who take pride in ideas. They work with ideas. They believe that ideas matter. They believe that there's no such thing as common sense, good sense or bad sense, but reflective sense. Why are so many Republicans against this? We need a reflective sense that holds intuitions and individuals accountable. We need policies that are based on the long-term needs of the collective and not on the short term goals of a very few at the top. We need rigorous accountability, critical interrogation and openness and this just can't be limited to someone trying to vote when an anonymous donor can give millions of dollar in political contributions.

We need a collective imagination – that imagination emerges when people find strength in collective organizations, when they find strength in each other. Believing that we can work together to produce commons in which we can share that raises everybody up and not just some people, that contributes to the world in a way that -- but a world that is we recognize is never just enough. Justice is never done. It's an endless struggle. And that there's joy in that struggle, because there's a sense of solidarity that brings us together around the most basic, most elemental and the most important of democratic values. With this said, I invite everyone to view this program on the web link above.



As someone who suffers from serious sleep apnea as well as snores like a *freight-train*, I often take notice of any treatments and new technology that addresses this problem that tens of millions of other Americans deal with on a nightly basis. So when a British friend recently sent me an article from **Mail Online** – High-tech plaster that tells you to stop snoring, which describes a sticky plaster worn under the chin at night which they say could banish snoring. It was developed to tackle sleep apnoea, in which the airways become blocked as muscles in the throat relax, interrupting breathing. It affects three million Britons.

The high-tech plaster contains a battery-powered transmitter that sends signals to a tiny implant (half the length of a matchstick) placed under the tongue. These signals tell the implant to stimulate the hypoglossal nerve, which sits under the tongue and is responsible for activating muscles around the throat. Stimulating it causes the muscles to contract, pulling the tongue forward and opening the airways. The plaster contains a transmitter that sends signals to a tiny implant under the tongue.

When we fall asleep, the muscles in the throat relax. For most of us, this does not pose a problem and the airways remain partially open. But with sleep apnoea, there is a complete collapse, shutting off breathing for at least ten seconds. Air vibrates against the soft tissue that stands in its way, causing the 'rasping' sound snorers make. Once the brain realizes breathing has stopped, it sends out a signal for the airway muscles to contract again, causing the sufferer to wake with a jolt.

In mild sleep apnoea, this can happen about once every ten minutes. If severe, sleep can be disturbed every couple of minutes. Few people remember waking up because they fall asleep again within seconds, but the cumulative effect is that they feel exhausted during the day, putting them at increased risk of accidents. Left untreated, sleep apnoea can raise the risk of high blood pressure and heart

attacks. Being overweight is a major risk factor, as excess fat round the neck can press down on the relaxed muscles, shutting off air flow.

The standard treatment is with **Continuous Positive Airway Pressure**, which involves wearing a mask over the nose and mouth during sleep. The mask gently pumps air into both, keeping the airways open. Although very effective, some people find the mask cumbersome, and up to a third never use it or take it off during the night. Other devices include dental splints, similar to a mouth-guard. These work by pulling the lower jaw forward so the airway cannot collapse. Left untreated, sleep apnoea can raise the risk of high blood pressure and heart attacks. In recent years, the idea of stimulating the hypoglossal nerve has attracted a lot of attention. One such therapy already exists but it involves a three-hour surgical procedure to implant a stimulator under the tongue and wire it up to a generator in the chest.

In contrast, it takes 15 minutes to insert the new tiny implant under the tongue using local anaesthetic. The generator is housed inside a specially made plaster that sticks underneath the chin and is about the size of a playing card. At the press of a button inside the plaster, the generator wirelessly transmits a signal to the implant. Although patients wear a new plaster every night (the battery lasts for up to ten hours), the implant itself - developed by **Nyxoah Ltd of Belgium** - is expected to last for 12 years. However, some implants need replacing after five. The new treatment is at an early stage and is entering clinical trials. Professor Jim Horne, from the **Sleep Research Centre at Loughborough University**, said it's not clear if it would benefit everyone with the condition. 'Half the cases of obstructive sleep apnoea are largely due to obesity,' he said. 'I'd like to know how this technique works with obese people, especially if there is a lot of fat under the chin.'

Meanwhile, researchers in Seoul, South Korea, have found that leaving a night light (*or in my case the television*) on can lead to waking up frequently. In a small study of ten volunteers, having lights on led to a drop in slow wave sleep, which has been associated with an increased risk of high blood pressure. The study, published in **Sleep Medicine**, was 'the first evidence that light exposure during the night can alter neurophysiology during sleep', researchers said.

It could be you and I am sure that you have friends who truly believe that they can multi-task. We now know that this isn't true. Humans are much like my dog Tillie who despite of all of her training and the fact that she has one of the nicest disposition of any dog whom I owned or met, the moment that she sees a squirrel all is lost. We actually see this in politics, asked most Republicans about Obama, even if it is only about the fact that he pardon Popcorn the Turkey on Thanksgiving, you will somehow receive a rant how *Obamacare* is destroying the country's economy, even though the DOW, NASDAQ and S&P hit historic record highs, the country has enjoyed 35 months of positive growth and the economy is definitely stronger than it was four years ago. But let's get back to the premise of this piece is memory and cognition and why you really can't trust your memory as we see a lot less and miss a lot more than we think we do. Last week in **The Huffington Post**, Jon Hotchkiss wrote an interesting piece – **Be Less Stupid** – with several simple tests that easily illustrate how easy and much we miss either because we casually take something for granted or because our minds are unable to process the immense amount of information that it is constantly receiving. Here are several simple examples.

Above, the world's most famous painting, the *Mona Lisa*, by **Leonardo di Vinci** (1503). Assuming you're over the age of 10 (or so), you have likely seen this picture hundreds upon hundreds of times. It's the one painting everyone knows by name. In fact, when you just looked at it, your brain recognized it instantly. You didn't have to think if you've seen it. Or try and remember. You looked at it for a fraction of a second and you immediately knew, "that's the *Mona Lisa*." Now, instead of looking at it for a fraction of a second -- and then relying on recreating the image in your mind's eye -- I want you to really look at it. Study it. Look at the curls of her hair. Pretty, right? That's an oddly long neck, too, right? Is she smiling or frowning? In the background, there's a lake. What lake? Do you see it now? Do you see something out of place? Do you see something that doesn't belong? No?

Keep looking... it's in the lake, over her right shoulder. Now you see it, right? It's the Loch Ness monster. Huh? What? Is that supposed to be there? No. No it's not. Before I explain why you didn't see the *Loch Ness monster* the first time you looked at the painting, a monster that is obvious upon a second look, try this other experiment. Watch the video below (It's very short, 16 seconds) and count the number of blue and red dots that you see. That's it (be sure the video starts at 00:00).

DOT TEST Web Link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cMqYIPuqsjE>

How many blue dots did you count? If you counted six, that's right. What about the red dots? Did you also count six? Actually, the correct number of red dots was seven. There were six blue dots and eight red dots. By a show of hands, did anyone see anything else? Yes? No? Go back to the video and pause at the seven second mark. It's OK. I'll wait because the same thing happened to me.....

Yup. It was Stevie Wonder. And you didn't see him (at least you most likely didn't see him). OK. So what gives? Why didn't you see legendary R&B star, Stevie Wonder? Before I explain, look at this photo. It's the author or the original article, Jon Hotchkiss. Notice anything odd?

Don't be upset if you missed the thing that's amiss. It took his wife of nearly 20 years three days to notice that the entire right side of his face is shaved, along with about 15 percent of my mustache on the right side, along with the "*connective follicles*" that join the mustache on the right to the beard below.

 2013-11-26-IMG_4680.jpg

No Bias. No Bullshit. Just Science & Fact. Why did you miss all of these things? Turns out, you don't actually see everything you see. Meaning, your eyes observe and take in much more information than your brain computes... So, there's stuff you see, that you don't actually see... because you're not specifically focused on it. For example, our experiment with colored dots above. Because you were so focused on counting the dots, you missed Stevie Wonder. You also didn't catch the *Loch Ness monster* in the painting of the *Mona Lisa* because of something psychologists call "*inattention blindness*." When you recognize something familiar -- say the *Mona Lisa* -- you spend less time focused on it and rely on your memory to recompose the image in your mind's eye. Unfortunately, this approach often leads to missing things we would have seen, had we spent more time focused.

Jon Hotchkiss: Finally, you likely didn't notice my half-ass beard because of a phenomenon psychologists refer to as "*change blindness*." It turns out, our perception abilities are not finely tuned to recognize unexpected or out of the ordinary changes in our comfortable everyday surroundings. In the case of my beard, the people I engaged with at home, the bank, the supermarket, the deli, the bakery, the hardware store, the pizzeria (among several others), were not expecting me to have an oddly groomed beard and mustache, so in the moments we engaged face to face, nothing seemed out of the ordinary to them. In fact, over the four days, only one person noticed. A good friend.

The problem we all encounter from not getting the specifics correct from what we see is that we commit to choices and decisions based on partial information. We think we've seen 100 percent of one thing or another... when, in fact, we've only seen say 70 percent. Then, we rely on 70 percent of information with 100 percent certainty to make decisions, which, when made badly, can cost us time, money, energy, emotional capital, etc. Here's just one example. The frazzled eye-witness who is certain he got a look at a burglary in progress might tell the police the perpetrator drove off in a yellow pickup truck, when in reality, it was a Hybrid Prius Taxi. *BE LESS STUPID*

So, how can you be less stupid? Imagine a run-of-the-mill situation -- say a stroll down your block -- maybe you process, oh, let's say, 70 percent of what you see. Now, the accuracy of your perception drops considerably when you divide the focus of your attention. For example, if you're walking down the block while listening to music on your headphones, or while texting a friend. So: You can be less stupid by being keenly aware of your limitations when it comes to what you see and taking those limitations into account when you make decisions based on what you are just "*certain*" you know.



Also WATCH the **TED TALK: *Why Your Memories Can't Be Trusted***

Web Site: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/tedtalks/mystery-of-memory_b_4159290.html?utm_hp_ref=memory

You can trust your own memory -- right? Wrong. Psychologist Elizabeth Loftus shares decades of research showing that when it comes to remembering things, what we swear is fact is often fiction... and sometimes, the consequences of trusting our own memories are life and death. Loftus studies "*False Memories*." She says memories are constructive and re-constructive and like a Wikipedia page, "*you can go in and change it and so can other people*." She started her study twenty years ago by showing people pictures of simulated crimes and activities and asking them what they remembered. And by insinuating certain words in leading questions her studies showed that people would affirm things that actually didn't happen in the videos or were not in the pictures that they were shown.

Her studies show that if you feed people misinformation you can distort, contaminate or change their memory. I chose to write this piece because misinformation is everywhere. The President was born in Kenya and was somehow sent to America to destroy democracy. Giving tax breaks to the rich will somehow enable their increased wealth to trickle down the rest of us. Attacking Iraq has somehow brought stability to the Middle East and if we hadn't the world would be in a less safer place. And Trayvon Martin somehow caused his own death... Greed is Good. Mission Accomplished. Yellow

cake. Satan is real. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac created the housing crash. Glass-Steagall caused the financial markets crash five years ago. **All Bull....** As a result, the collective memories of *White America* somehow can reminisce about the 1950s as "*the good old days*," without remembering McCarthyism, Emmitt Till, segregation, The Cold War or that almost 15% of America still didn't have indoor plumbing.

Dr. Loftus studies has shown that you can plant false memories that affect behavior. And today we have ambitious and unscrupulous politicians, political think tanks, lobbyist, unprincipled companies, ideologues and cable television pundits who plant all types of lies, disinformation, and innuendoes to further their own agendas and self-interest at the cost of the collective public, poor, children and elderly. How else can you explain why so many people and our political representatives rooting for failure for everything..... Healthcare..... Diplomatic talks.... Obama's Presidency..... Etc. As Dr. Loftus says at the end of the video, ***Memory like liberty is a fragile thing.*** And anything that is fragile has to be protected.

THIS WEEK'S READINGS



This week the American political activist **Ralph Nader** who came to prominence in 1965 with the publication of his book ***Unsafe at Any Speed***, which was a critique of the safety record of American automobile manufacturers in general, most famously the Chevrolet Corvair and a huge supporter of healthcare reform when he co-founded the Health Research Group with Dr. Sidney M. Wolfe in 1971 which he headed until June 2013 when he retired. Most of all, like myself and many other Progressives, Ralph Nader is a strong supporter of a universal single payer national health care system in the United States, much like the healthcare system in neighboring Canada. As such he is a hater of Obamacare as it is both inefficient and a give away to insurance companies whose number one priority is profits instead of patient care and covers all citizens from the cradle to the grave – not as an entitlement but as a right.

21 Ways Canada's Single-Payer System Beats Obamacare

By Ralph Nader,

Reader Supported News -- 01 December 13

Canadian style single-payer healthcare is simple, affordable, comprehensive and universal—dream on, America.

Dear America:

Costly complexity is baked into Obamacare. No health insurance system is without problems but Canadian style single-payer full Medicare for all is simple, affordable, comprehensive and universal.

In the early 1960s, President Lyndon Johnson enrolled 20 million elderly Americans into Medicare in six months. There were no websites. They did it with index cards!

Below please find 21 Ways the Canadian Health Care System is Better than Obamacare.

Repeal Obamacare and replace it with the much more efficient single-payer, everybody in, nobody out, free choice of doctor and hospital.

Love, Canada

Number 21:

In Canada, everyone is covered automatically at birth – everybody in, nobody out.

In the United States, under Obamacare, 31 million Americans will still be uninsured by 2023 and millions more will remain underinsured.

Number 20:

In Canada, the health system is designed to put people, not profits, first.

In the United States, Obamacare will do little to curb insurance industry profits and will actually enhance insurance industry profits.

Number 19:

In Canada, coverage is not tied to a job or dependent on your income – rich and poor are in the same system, the best guaranty of quality.

In the United States, under Obamacare, much still depends on your job or income. Lose your job or lose your income, and you might lose your existing health insurance or have to settle for lesser coverage.

Number 18:

In Canada, health care coverage stays with you for your entire life.

In the United States, under Obamacare, for tens of millions of Americans, health care coverage stays with you for as long as you can afford your share.

Number 17:

In Canada, you can freely choose your doctors and hospitals and keep them. There are no lists of “in-network” vendors and no extra hidden charges for going “out of network.”

In the United States, under Obamacare, the in-network list of places where you can get treated is shrinking – thus restricting freedom of choice – and if you want to go out of network, you pay for it.

Number 16:

In Canada, the health care system is funded by income, sales and corporate taxes that, combined, are much lower than what Americans pay in premiums.

In the United States, under Obamacare, for thousands of Americans, it’s pay or die – if you can’t pay, you die. That’s why many thousands will still die every year under Obamacare from lack of health insurance to get diagnosed and treated in time.

Number 15:

In Canada, there are no complex hospital or doctor bills. In fact, usually you don’t even see a bill.

In the United States, under Obamacare, hospital and doctor bills will still be terribly complex, making it impossible to discover the many costly overcharges.

Number 14:

In Canada, costs are controlled. Canada pays 10 percent of its GDP for its health care system, covering everyone.

In the United States, under Obamacare, costs continue to skyrocket. The U.S. currently pays 18 percent of its GDP and still doesn't cover tens of millions of people.

Number 13:

In Canada, it is unheard of for anyone to go bankrupt due to health care costs.

In the United States, under Obamacare, health care driven bankruptcy will continue to plague Americans.

Number 12:

In Canada, simplicity leads to major savings in administrative costs and overhead.

In the United States, under Obamacare, complexity will lead to ratcheting up administrative costs and overhead.

Number 11:

In Canada, when you go to a doctor or hospital the first thing they ask you is: "What's wrong?"

In the United States, the first thing they ask you is: "What kind of insurance do you have?"

Number 10:

In Canada, the government negotiates drug prices so they are more affordable.

In the United States, under Obamacare, Congress made it specifically illegal for the government to negotiate drug prices for volume purchases, so they remain unaffordable.

Number 9:

In Canada, the government health care funds are not profitably diverted to the top one percent.

In the United States, under Obamacare, health care funds will continue to flow to the top. In 2012, CEOs at six of the largest insurance companies in the U.S. received a total of \$83.3 million in pay, plus benefits.

Number 8:

In Canada, there are no necessary co-pays or deductibles.

In the United States, under Obamacare, the deductibles and co-pays will continue to be unaffordable for many millions of Americans.

Number 7:

In Canada, the health care system contributes to social solidarity and national pride.

In the United States, Obamacare is divisive, with rich and poor in different systems and tens of millions left out or with sorely limited benefits.

Number 6:

In Canada, delays in health care are not due to the cost of insurance.

In the United States, under Obamacare, patients without health insurance or who are underinsured will continue to delay or forgo care and put their lives at risk.

Number 5:

In Canada, nobody dies due to lack of health insurance.

In the United States, under Obamacare, many thousands will continue to die every year due to lack of health insurance.

Number 4:

In Canada, an increasing majority supports their health care system, which costs half as much, per person, as in

the United States. And in Canada, everyone is covered.

In the United States, a majority – many for different reasons – oppose Obamacare.

Number 3:

In Canada, the tax payments to fund the health care system are progressive – the lowest 20 percent pays 6 percent of income into the system while the highest 20 percent pays 8 percent.

In the United States, under Obamacare, the poor pay a larger share of their income for health care than the affluent.

Number 2:

In Canada, the administration of the system is simple. You get a health care card when you are born. And you swipe it when you go to a doctor or hospital. End of story.

In the United States, Obamacare's 2,500 pages plus regulations (the Canadian Medicare Bill was 13 pages) is so complex that then Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi said before passage "we have to pass the bill so that you can find out what is in it."

Number 1:

In Canada, the majority of citizens love their health care system.

In the United States, the majority of citizens, physicians, and nurses prefer the Canadian type system – single-payer, free choice of doctor and hospital, everybody in, nobody out.

Unlike Ralph Nader, I believe that although Obamacare is less than ideal, it is better than what it replaced and denying that it is a major step in the right direction is as divisive as its critics who are trying to kill it in the name of "excess socialism". But then it was a self-righteous egocentric Ralph Nader whose third party Presidential candidacy in 2000 that enabled George W. Bush to defeat Al Gore by 537 votes, because Nader received 97,421 votes, which led to claims that he was responsible for Gore's defeat. Nader, both in his book *Crashing the Party* and on his website, states: "*In the year 2000, exit polls reported that 25% of my voters would have voted for Bush, 38% would have voted for Gore and the rest would not have voted at all.*" Which would net a 13%, 12,665 votes, advantage for Gore over Bush.

It is easy to speculate that if Al Gore had won, America most likely would have never rushed into wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and that the financial and housing markets meltdown enabled by Bush/Cheney blind-eyed economic policies that un-cuffed Wall Street and the big banks might not have happened. Both show that burning down the house on principle, can have huge negative consequences. With this said, hopefully one day Americans will have a universal single payer national health care system similar to Canada that places patient health before profits.

As Economist and Nobel laureate Paul Krugman pointed out last week in **The New York Times** – **Obamacare's Secret Success** – that the Affordable Care Act/Obamacare isn't just about a website or providing access to more people or subsidizing premiums or allowing people with pre-existing conditions to get and keep their health insurance. It was also supposed to be about "*bending the curve*" – slowing the seemingly inexorable rise in health costs. And although much of the Belthway establishment scoffed at the promise of cost savings. It appears that Obamacare has dramatically slowed down the out-of-control rise of health costs. Wow.... *even this is hard for me "a supporter" to believe.....*

So what aspects of Obamacare might be causing health costs to slow? One clear answer is the act's reduction in Medicare "*overpayments*" — mainly a reduction in the subsidies to private insurers offering Medicare Advantage Plans, but also cuts in some provider payments. A less certain but likely source of savings involves changes in the way Medicare pays for services. The program now penalizes hospitals if many of their patients end up being readmitted soon after being released — an indicator of poor care — and readmission rates have, in fact, fallen substantially. Medicare is also encouraging a shift from fee-for-service, in which doctors and hospitals get paid by the procedure, to "*accountable care*," in which health organizations get rewarded for overall success in improving care while controlling costs.

Furthermore, there's evidence that Medicare savings "*spill over*" to the rest of the health care system — that when Medicare manages to slow cost growth, private insurance gets cheaper, too. And the biggest savings may be yet to come. The Independent Payment Advisory Board, a panel with the power to impose cost-saving measures (subject to Congressional overrides) if Medicare spending grows above target, hasn't yet been established, in part because of the near-certainty that any appointments to the board would be filibustered by Republicans yelling about "*death panels*." Now that the filibuster has been reformed, the board can come into being.

As Krugman says: The news on health costs is, in short, remarkably good. You won't hear much about this good news until and unless the Obamacare website gets fixed. But under the surface, health reform is starting to look like a bigger success than even its most ardent advocates expected.

The cavernous partisan divide over U.S. global power — in one chart

By Sean Sullivan

Most Republicans say the United States is a less powerful player on the global stage compared to a decade ago, while most Democrats disagree, according to a new poll released Tuesday.

Seventy-four percent of Republicans say the United States plays a less important and powerful role as a world leader compared to 10 years ago, according to the survey, which was conducted by the Pew Research Center in conjunction with the Council on Foreign Relations. By comparison, just 33 percent of Democrats say the same thing. Independents fall in between at 55 percent.

Wide Partisan Gap in Views of U.S. Global Power; Most Democrats Say U.S. Is Less Respected

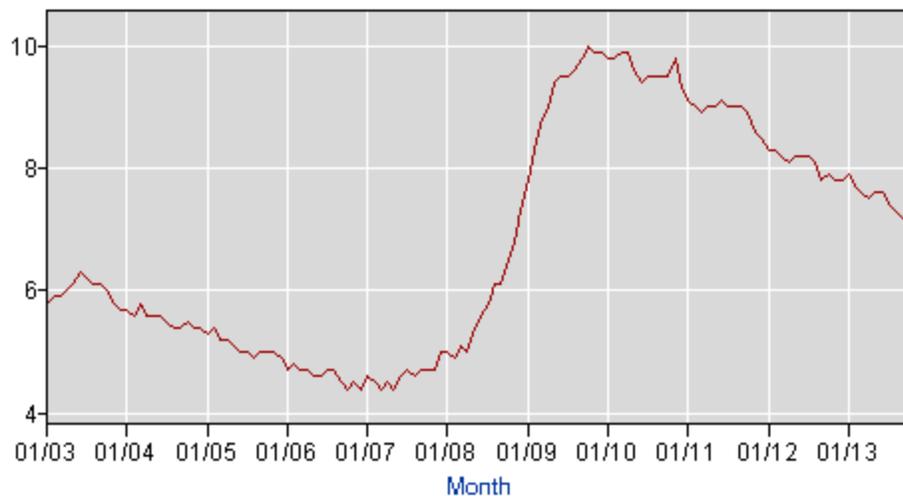
% saying U.S. plays less important and powerful role as world leader than 10 years ago ...	Early Sept 2001	July 2004	Nov 2009	Nov 2013
Total	26	20	41	53
Republican	21	8	50	74
Democrat	28	27	29	33
Independent	27	23	45	55
Rep-Dem diff.	-7	-19	+21	+41

% saying U.S. is less respected by other countries than in the past ...	July 2004	May 2008	Nov 2009	Nov 2013
Total	67	71	56	70
Republican	47	60	68	80
Democrat	80	81	49	56
Independent	74	72	59	74
Rep-Dem diff.	-33	-21	+19	+24

Source: America's Place in the World 2013. General public: PEW 3. (Omnibus). Q23.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

The public's opinion may be shaped by the identity of the commander in chief. Under President Obama, it's no surprise that Republicans' views of the United States's position in the world as diminished. During the Iraq war in 2004 led by then-President George W. Bush, the situation was reversed, with Democrats viewing the United States as playing a less important part on the international stage. While there are also differences on the question of whether the United States is less respected by other countries compared to the past, it's worth noting that majorities of Republicans, Democrats and independents all say that it is.



Last week the government announced the lowest jobless rate in 5 Years. After years of frustrating fits and starts in the wake of the financial crisis and the Great Recession, the United States economy finally appears to be generating jobs at a healthier, more sustainable pace that many analysts now think will continue into 2014. The official unemployment rate fell in November to its lowest level since 2008,

with employers have hired at least 200,000 workers in three of the last four months, including 203,000 in November. By contrast, as recently as July, when the economy seemed stuck in yet another summer swoon, only 89,000 new jobs were created. The better-than-expected data from the **Labor Department** on Friday follows other hopeful economic indicators this week, including an upward revision for economic growth in the third quarter on Thursday and an uptick in manufacturing reported on Monday.

The 7 percent unemployment rate last month — down from its most recent peak of 10 percent in October 2009 — is the best reading since President Obama took office, providing one bright spot for a White House beleaguered on many other fronts. The unemployment rate was 7.3 percent in December 2008, the month before Mr. Obama was inaugurated. *“The headwinds are fading and the tailwinds are gaining strength,”* said Michael Hanson, senior United States economist at Bank of America Merrill Lynch, ticking off sources of growth like pent-up demand for automobiles, a rebounding housing sector and the surging stock market. The stock market rose by more than 1 percent after the jobs report, as traders concluded that the prospect of higher employment and faster economic growth outweighed the increased likelihood that the Federal Reserve would soon begin easing back on its stimulus efforts.

While the current level is well above the 5 percent rate that economists consider closer to full employment. At the current rate of job creation, unemployment would fall to 6.4 percent by the end of 2014, and still be around 5.7 percent in late 2015. Despite the overall improvement in the employment picture, the situation remains desperate for many American workers and those seeking jobs. Still for people with less than a high school diploma, for example, the jobless rate last month stood at 10.8 percent. For African-Americans, it was 12.5 percent, or nearly twice what it was for whites. And there was little to no improvement was seen in the fate of the long-term unemployed, either, with the ranks of people who have been seeking jobs for more than 27 weeks actually rising slightly in November to 4.06 million. Employers remain wary of workers with long gaps in their résumés, and skills erode the longer people are out of a job.

Still, unlike some other months that presented decidedly contradictory signals, many of the underlying factors identified by government statisticians at least pointed in the right direction. Hourly earnings, as well as the length of the typical workweek, both increased. The overall labor participation rate, while still low by historical standards, rose two-tenths of a percentage point to 63 percent. At the same time, jobs were added to a broad range of sectors, rather than restricted to a few, lower-paying areas. Manufacturing, closely watched because its ups and downs serve as a bellwether of the overall economy, added 27,000 workers. Besides that jump, Mr. Gapen of Barclays said he was also glad to see that the construction sector gained jobs for the third month in a row, indicating that housing continues to rebound.

Wall Street has rallied since legislators veered away from the precipice in October, and that trend continued on Friday. The **Standard & Poor's** 500-stock index surged 20.06 points, or 1.1 percent, to 1,805.09, its biggest increase in four weeks. **The Dow** Jones industrial average rose 198.69 points, or 1.3 percent, to finish the week at 16,020.20, while the **Nasdaq** composite climbed 29.36 points, or 0.7 percent, to 4,062.52. In the market for government bonds, the price of the benchmark 10-year Treasury note rose 5/32 to 99 3/32, and its yield dipped to 2.86 percent from 2.87 late Thursday. For all the optimism generated by Friday's report on the labor market as well as the buoyant mood on Wall Street as the year draws to a close, 2013 is nonetheless expected to end with more of a whimper than a bang.

One reason is a strong buildup in inventories during the summer that is likely to hold back production while companies work off their excess stock of goods on shelves and in warehouses. Hours after the job numbers came out, one widely followed forecasting firm, Macroeconomic Advisers, cut its estimate for growth in overall economic activity for the final three months of 2013 to just 1.3 percent, compared with 3.6 percent in the third quarter. *"We haven't gotten to a place where consumers are experiencing solid wage gains,"* said Ms. Coronado of BNP Paribas. The good news is that the decline in unemployment reflected a pickup in hiring rather than a shrinking labor force, which has pushed down the jobless rate in previous months. An estimated 455,000 people joined the job market in November. Those who already are employed got a boost last month, as well. The average work week increased, and average hourly pay went up 4 cents. Over the year, wages have risen 2 percent. As a result one can hope that these months of solid gains will lead to a raising hope that the recovery is finally ready for takeoff.

The President on Inequality



President Barack Obama speaks about the economy and growing economic inequality, Wednesday, Dec. 4, 2013, at the Town Hall Education Arts Recreation Campus in Washington

Web Link: <http://bcove.me/1bmb5j27> and Transcript attached.

The issues that have obsessed Washington for the last few months — the government shutdown, the broken health care website, the unrelentingly bitter tone of a stalemated Congress — mean very little to most Americans. For a broad swath of the country, what matters hasn't changed since the recession, and it is economic anxiety. Six in 10 workers in a **Washington Post** poll last week said they were worried about losing their jobs, the highest number in decades. Many of the millions who are unemployed have reached new depths of despair.

On Wednesday, in one of his strongest economic speeches, President Obama pushed past all the distractions of his opponents and addressed the core of those fears. He will spend the rest of his presidency, he said, on *“the defining challenge of our time:”* reducing economic inequality and improving upward mobility.

“I am convinced that the decisions we make on these issues over the next few years,” he said, *“will determine whether or not our children will grow up in an America where opportunity is real.”*

An American child born into the lowest 20 percent income level has a less than a 1-in-20 chance of making it to the top, as Mr. Obama pointed out. But one born in the top 20 percent has a 2-in-3 chance of staying there. And the top 10 percent now takes half of the national income, up from a third in 1979. That's a level of inequality on par with Jamaica and Argentina, and such concentrated wealth leads to more frequent recessions, higher household debt and growing cynicism and despondency.

That cynicism is often expressed in a lack of faith in government's ability to do anything about the problem. This view ignores how much inequality has been made worse in the past few decades by government decisions. The emphasis on cutting taxes and spending that began in the Reagan years is a direct cause of economic insecurity now. It has led, for example, to education cuts that have harmed children in low-income school districts. Reversing those decisions can still have an enormous impact.

Mr. Obama did not reveal a sheaf of new ideas in his speech. But he did remind listeners of the many good ideas he has proposed about inequality over the years, most of which have been blocked by Republican opposition. A higher minimum wage would have an immediate effect on the buying power of millions of workers, stimulating growth and employment. Greater spending on high-quality preschool, a new emphasis on career and technical education and affordable higher education would all help to lower the barriers to economic mobility. Stronger collective-bargaining laws and nondiscrimination protections would help restore a balance in workplaces now tilted strongly toward employers.

And the Affordable Care Act, as Mr. Obama said forcefully, has enhanced security for millions of people who were previously uninsured or who lived in fear of losing their policies because of illness. *“This law is going to work,”* he said, *“and for the sake of our economic security, it needs to work.”* It will reduce personal bankruptcies, he said, cut sick time and keep children healthier and performing better in school.

What he should have added was the need to raise tax revenue, which is crucial to making the kinds of investments big enough to have a real effect on growth. The tax code must be overhauled to eliminate

the absurdly generous breaks given to those at the very top — an idea that Mr. Obama has campaigned on but rarely brings up, given the implacable Republican opposition. But the president did issue a clear challenge to his opponents. Where are the Republican ideas for reducing the income gap? Most in the party don't even recognize it as a problem. "You owe it to the American people to tell us what you are for," he said, "not just what you're against." The silence from Republicans explains why economic inequality is rising.

NEW YORK TIMES EDITORIAL BOARD

Nelson Mandela

The Life of Nelson Mandela, 1918-2013

Nelson Mandela web link: <http://nyti.ms/19kaRH5>

A great loss for mankind whom is in the Pantheon of inspiration

"He was our father, our mother, our everything."

[NUMFUNDO MATLI](#), 28, a housekeeper, on Nelson Mandela.

INTERESTING TED TALK VIDEO

The Truth About Stress

Attach is a link to an interesting video by Stanford University psychologist Kelly McGonigal who is a leader in the growing field of "science-help." Through books, articles, courses and workshops, McGonigal works to help us understand and implement the latest scientific findings in psychology, neuroscience and medicine. Straddling the worlds of research and practice, McGonigal holds positions in both the Stanford Graduate School of Business and the School of Medicine. Her most recent book, ***The Willpower Instinct***, explores the latest research on motivation, temptation and procrastination, as well as what it takes to transform habits, persevere at challenges and make a successful change. She is now researching a new book about the "upside of stress," which will look at both why stress is good for us, and what makes us good at stress. In her words: "The old understanding of stress as a unhelpful relic of our animal instincts is being replaced by the understanding that stress actually makes us socially smart -- it's what allows us to be fully human."

WATCH: Turns Out, We May Have Gotten the Science of Stress Completely Wrong

Web Link: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/tedtalks/kelly-mcgonigal-science-of-stress_b_4319669.html

Stop stressing about stress! Psychologist Kelly McGonigal shares new research showing that it's our thinking about stress, rather than stress itself, that affects our health. In other words, if you think stress will kill you... it just might. Find out how to make stress your friend.

GREAT MAGIC TRICK

If you like magic tricks/illusions please feel free to enjoy this video on the web link below.

Web Link: http://www.youtube.com/embed/BCJhRfwylSI?feature=player_detailpage

THIS WEEK'S QUOTE

Only a fool goes to war when it can be avoided.....

Eugene Robinson

THIS WEEK'S MUSIC

On the week of the death of Nelson Mandela and in the spirit, soul and conscience of "*The Possible*." Mandela was a skillful politician whose policy of reconciliation saved the country from a blood bath and ushered it into a period of democracy, human rights and tolerance. He should also be admired for his compassion and generosity, values that are not usually associated with politicians, as well as his integrity and loyalty. With this said, I invite you this week to enjoy the music of South Africa.

Hugh Masekela – **Mandela** -- <http://youtu.be/XKck8o5xzaM>

Hugh Masekela – **STIMELA / Coal Train** -- <http://youtu.be/cPxmmMpfG88>

Hugh Masekela – **Grazing In The Grass** -- <http://youtu.be/UKcGCOEb28>

Hugh Masekela – **Old People, Old Folks** -- http://youtu.be/7JJY71_Zf5g

Miriam Makeba – **Soweto Blues** -- <http://youtu.be/p-rjWoFg4QM>

Miriam Makeba *Live* – **Africa Is Where My Heart Lies** -- http://youtu.be/rXij_oAxUaA

Miriam Makeba & Paul Simon – **Under African Skies** -- <http://youtu.be/yLVhjdZEsZU>

Miriam Makeba – **Malaika** -- <http://youtu.be/bCh58peMl98>

Miriam Makeba with Hugh Masekela – **South Africa freedom song** -- <http://youtu.be/oJiqvPMQXAc>

Abdullah Ibrahim (*Dollar Brand*) – **Soweto** -- <http://youtu.be/izJYZhZgkMg>

Abdullah Ibrahim & Ekaya – **Water from an Ancient World** -- <http://youtu.be/Rt1ZAtC9TUY>

Abdullah Ibrahim & Johnny Dyani – **Namhanje** -- http://youtu.be/j1_IosjObOQ

Johnny Clegg (*with Nelson Mandela*) – **Asimbonanga** -- <http://youtu.be/BGS7SpI7obY>

Soweto Gospel Choir – **Nkosi Sikelel** (*South African National Anthem*) -- <http://youtu.be/tTtINHRja4k>

Nkosi Sikeleli Africa -- http://youtu.be/cBKNXsFI_3s

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

Sincerely,

Greg Brown

--

Gregory Brown
Chairman & CEO
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