

From: Gregory Brown <[REDACTED]>

To: undisclosed-recipients;

Bcc: jeevacation@gmail.com

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DEAR FRIEND.....



Last Sunday I began my Weekend Readings with a piece inspired by a poetic commentary from **CBS's** Bob Schieffer on **Face The Nation** commemorating the 50th anniversary of the assassination of titled – ***The weekend that America lost its innocence*** – "*several weeks ago, only those of us who were alive before that awful weekend can really know how much it changed America. We have been a confident nation. We had won World War II. We believed in our leaders. We came to see our Presidents as all but invincible. Because of television, we came to know John Kennedy and his family more intimately than any of his predecessors. Then in a matter of seconds, he was killed by a mad man. As the entire nation watched in horror and shock as the events of the weekend unfolded on television in real time, the first time that it ever happened, our national confidence was shaken to the core. That weekend began one of the most violent decades in our country's history--more assassinations, Vietnam, the beginnings of Watergate--a time that Americans came to question almost everything we had once taken for granted. As it always had, the nation rebounded from those dark days, but it was never quite the same. It was the weekend America lost its innocence.*"

Video Website: <http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=50157969n>

What followed was a barrage of rebuttals from both my Conservative and Liberal friends pointing out a number of flawed (disastrous) policies as evidence that America was far from innocent and our 35th President was far from perfect. But his greatest gift to the country and the world, was that in his three years on the world stage, inspired America, as well as the rest of the world like very few others. (*see attached, 2 rebuttals and exchanges*) Since I am sure that there may be others who feel the same, I would like to clarify the reason why I embraced Bob Schieffer's commentary. I was fourteen years old the day that JFK was assassinated and like almost everyone else I too remember where it was; Dr. Schulman's science lab, when it was announced over the school's PA system that the President had

been shot. And although I was only eleven when JFK was elected I personally felt the difference, as there was both a new sense of tolerance and optimism that even a black pre-teen age boy, growing up in the white area of my suburban town..... sensed.

And yes, most of the accomplishments attributed to the Kennedy's inspiration, such as the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and 1968, Voting Rights Act of 1965, Medicare, Medicaid, Head Start, National Endowment for the Arts and other Great Society programs happened under Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon who should be credited for largely ending segregated classes in the south, expanding revenue sharing, ending the draft, adding new anti-crime laws, starting the process of ending the Cold War, fighting against foreign oil price gouging, and implementing a broad environmental program (he is largely responsible for the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency)). And although the moon landing didn't happen until 1969 under President Nixon, it was a young President John F. Kennedy who on May 25, 1961 before a special joint session of Congress the announced a dramatic and ambitious goal of sending an American safely to the Moon before the end of the decade. This optimism began with Kennedy's presidential campaign slogan of *The New Frontier*. His 1960 campaign was premised on impatience with the quiet satisfactions of the Dwight Eisenhower years. Kennedy's emphasis on the "*vigor*" of a new generation ready for responsibility set the tone for social upheavals and generational conflicts later in the decade that would probably have surprised him. For all his emphasis on change and departures, Kennedy was speaking for a deep consensus in the country with the iconic challenge -- "*ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.*"

It is easy to forget that JFK's announcement/promise goal of sending an American safely to the Moon before the end of the decade was both dramatic and beyond the beyond ambitious. Especially when it was obvious that the Soviet Union was ahead in the '*space race*' because of the launch of Sputnik shock of 1957, the cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin had become the first human in space on April 12, 1961, greatly embarrassing the U.S. Under immense public pressure to catch up and move ahead, and after consulting with Vice President, NASA Administrator James Webb, and other officials, he concluded that landing an American on the Moon would be a very challenging technological feat, but an area of space exploration in which the U.S. actually had a potential lead. Thus the cold war is the primary contextual lens through which many historians now view Kennedy's speech. The enormous human efforts and expenditures to make what became Project Apollo a reality by 1969 – Only the construction of the Panama Canal in modern peacetime and the Manhattan Project in war were comparable in scope.

Today we live in world that is so cynical that our politicians pray for failure and do everything that they can delay, obstruct and kill government policies just so that they can deny success being credited to President and his administration. They refuse to confirm judicial appointments and won't even consider immigration reform or stronger gun laws, even though more than 10,000 Americans die each year from gun violence. And although I personally believe that Republicans are much more at fault because of their constant obstructionism, there is a certain amount of cynicism that should be attributed to my liberal friends too. So if there is one day to point to where the optimism ushered in with the election of John F. Kennedy, it was the day that he was shot. And the loss of innocence that both Bob Schieffer and I believe, is the slow erosion of that optimism, even if some of the perceived promise was naïve. People forget that like the Affordable Care Act website, the space race started with a number of NASA disasters. But with the support of the American public and our politicians working together, President Kennedy's promise was realized when on July 20, 1969, when Apollo 11 commander Neil Armstrong stepped off the Lunar Module's ladder and onto the Moon's surface.



We could do this today with healthcare, sustainable energy, reducing carbon emissions and other frontiers and challenges if we only believed. But in order to do this, we have to recapture that optimism and work together. We have to support policies that benefit the collective and just not the few at the top. We as a collective, have to be tolerant of others and their beliefs. There was a connection between the country embracing liberal social policies in the 1960s and the success of the Apollo Moon Landing. And there was a connection between JFK sending troops into the South to protect black students integrating white public school and the many accomplishments of the movement itself. The decade of the 1960s was seeded with the infectious optimism of 'Camelot' that permeated across the country and around the world. The moment that Walter Cronkite (*the most trusted voice in America*) said these immortal words, "**President Kennedy died at 1pm Central Standard Time, some 38 minutes ago,**" the promise his election ignited began to die, as he represented the best in us (hopes, ambition and the possibilities). And because his life was cut short and we don't know what the future would have been had he lived longer his dreams live on. He was only 46 years old. His administration lasted only 1000 days. And his is the sixth shortest stay in office. Yet he inspired us as a collective to be great, with the belief that one slave enslaves us all. Most of all he inspired endless possibilities that truly is the root of *American Exceptionalism*. President Kennedy may not have been the perfect President, but he was perfect for his time.

As a preamble to a piece below in this **Week's Readings** on Janet Yellen's confirmation as Chairman of the Federal Reserve before the US Senate Banking Committee, we have to ask ourselves why partisan purity become such a stalwart whereby institutions like the Federal Reserve which was created in part to protect Americans became the biggest unregulated institution in the country that protects the interests of Wall Street and the Big Banks, with the example of its *quantitative easing program*, which after the 2008 crisis really only benefited the big banks and allowed major Wall Street player including Goldman Sachs and GE capital to retroactively become banks, receiving TARP funding, relaxed regulations and other freebies – instead of policies which would have stimulated employment and lowering unemployment, helping millions of American families.

We have to ask ourselves why our politicians in both major parties cheer for failure, even when they know it hurt the country and distracts attention from the search for alternative solutions. We have to ask ourselves why are Republicans are doing whatever they can to destroy the Affordable Care Act and are taking so much pleasure in its web site launch debacle.

Although I opening denounced President George W. Bush's decision to attack Iraq, once he did I put my total support behind his success understanding that the perception of a defeat would seriously damage the psyche and international standing of the country. And although I totally disagree with Reagonomics, I hope that it would work because if it did the country as a whole would prosper. And although I am a died in the wool Democrat, I wish George W. Bush's Administration success with its promised of compassionate conservatism. And although, I have disagreed with Ronald Reagan since his days as the Governor of California, when I heard that he was shot, I was sadden and outraged that someone shot My President.

On Tuesday, November 12, 2013 there was another mass shooting in northeast Phoenix, Arizona. Four people were found dead, including the suspected gunman, in what appears to be a case of domestic violence. But where was the outrage? Where is the outrage that 15 million children go to sleep each

night in the wealthiest country in world hungry? Where is the outrage that almost 25% of Americans are either out of work, under-employed or working two or more jobs just to survive? I am also outraged when I watch Judge Judy and the both complainants are on public assistance and arguing about that the other litigant should pay them for their \$3000 of flat-screen televisions, X-Boxes and Play Station games.

And like Judge Judy, I am appalled that taxpayers are supporting these grifters. But then I understand why they feel entitled. They feel entitled because they perceive that everybody else is doing it. Wall Street is doing it by bundling complex derivatives and selling junk bonds. The big banks are doing it when they issue "*Liar Loans*." Universities are doing it when they pay coaches seven figure salaries yet suspend a student athlete for accepting an airline ticket so their parent can see them play. But most of all, the divisive destructive partisan culture in Washington where politicians, egged on by lobbyist and media pundits cheering for failure, without concern for the pain and suffering that failures causes to those caught in the middle, is why I understand that these small-time grifters, Welfare cheats, etc feel entitled.

As I mentioned earlier, I wish that Reagan's Trickle Down Economic policies had worked, but after thirty years of the American Middle Class being squeezed and growing inequality, what other proof is needed that cutting taxes on the rich and relaxing regulations on businesses and banks has been an abysmal failure. We spend more per-capita on healthcare yet we are ranked last of all industrialized countries. So why are Republicans so against Obamacare, which is based on Romneycare, which itself was proposed by The Heritage Group (*Conservative Republican think-tank*)?

Republicans like to talk about Benghazi, but ignore that they demanded government to cut costs to the point that guarding the US Consulate was awarded to a British company who offered the lowest bid. As my mother use to say, "You get what you pay for." Obviously, choosing the lowest bid didn't work out too well for Christopher Stevens and his associates. 25% of all of the people living in Texas are uninsured, yet Governor Rick Perry declined to participate in Obamacare even though it wasn't going to cost the state one dime during the first several years and then only 10% afterwards. Wouldn't it have been better that Texans were given the opportunity to access affordable healthcare, even if it only helped 5%?

As Deputy White House counsel Vince Foster wrote on July 20, 1993, about the culture in Washington DC before committing suicide, "***Here ruining people is considered sport.***" Why wasn't there any outraged then? And why has this culture been allowed to get worse? I watched Dick Cheney on one of the Sunday morning network news programs call President Obama a liar, with no response from the moderator. This is the same Dick Cheney who misled the country about Saddam Hussein having WMDs and the Iraqi war would pay for itself? Yes, President Obama may have missed spoke and even lied about people who currently have junk insurance might lose their policies. But this lie pales in comparison to the lies and deception that got us into wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. These lies pale in comparison to the fact that Cheney's misdeeds costs hundreds of thousands of lives and trillions of American taxpayer's dollars, destroying the infrastructure or an entire country of 25 million people, in addition to destabilizing the entire Middle East.

We have a culture now that no longer believes in the tenets of Democracy, when we cheered against extending a helping hand and criticize those who are unable to keep pace or have fallen through the cracks. I remember twenty years ago sitting with Ed Whitacre (later CEO of AT&T and General Motors, who started his career in 1963 as a 22 year-old facility engineer for Southwestern Bell) and his

buddies reminiscing about stringing the last three miles of phone line to a farm house in the hinterlands of rural Oklahoma one Christmas Eve. I mentioned this, because there was no way that this one phone line paid for itself. The expansion of telecommunications across the country was subsidized by millions of Americans in the urban areas and this helped make the United States become the envy of the rest of the world.

There was no outrage by New Yorkers that they phone bills subsidized expansion in the rural areas of Oklahoma, North Dakota and Montana. And everyone agrees that if this expansion had been obstructed, delayed or stopped the consequences would have hurt all Americans. The same is true about healthcare. Because if expansion of *wired communications* had been left up to moneyed interest alone, telecommunications in America would be as dysfunctional as healthcare, with probably 20% plus of the population still not covered. If you believe that Obamacare is flawed, why not insist on *Medicare for all*, or at least lowering the age of eligibility. Because the one thing that we know for a fact is that health cost under Medicare is 20% lower than under private-sector insurance. Also claiming that healthcare is going broke is a dishonest argument, when the truth is that if people paid a couple percent more it would be solvent forever.

But enough with my own partisanship piety and let's get back to my initial premise, we have to stop the partisan "*winner take all*" culture in politics and call out the people who are *haters* and *divisive*, as it is hurting the country and creating untold pain for tens of millions in America and possibly hundreds of millions around the world, *because when America sneezes other countries can end up with pneumonia*. Yes, people can be outraged but it shouldn't be because people who tried, made mistakes, when we are not offering solutions other than saying no. And as author and journalist, Doris Kerns Goodwin said a week ago, "*What's happening to our country when we're cheering for the other side's (failure)?*" This cheering for failure, should be left at the sports stadium and not be allowed in politics or in our culture.

The Shame of American Health Care

By THE NEW YORK TIMES EDITORIAL BOARD

Even as Americans struggle with the changes required by health care reform, an international survey released last week by the Commonwealth Fund, a research organization, shows why change is so necessary.

The report found that by virtually all measures of cost, access to care and ease of dealing with insurance problems, Americans fared poorly compared with people in other advanced countries. The survey covered 20,000 adults in the United States and 10 other industrial nations — Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Britain, all of which put in place universal or near-universal health coverage decades ago. The United States spends far more than any of these countries on a per capita basis and as a percent of the national economy.

For that, it gets meager results. Some 37 percent of American adults went without recommended care, did not see a doctor when sick or failed to fill prescriptions in the past year because of costs, compared with 4 percent in Britain and 6 percent in Sweden. Nearly a quarter of American adults could not pay medical bills or had serious problems paying them compared with less than 13 percent in France and 7 percent or less in five other countries. Even Americans who were insured for the entire year were more likely than adults abroad to forgo care because of costs, an indication of how skimpy some insurance policies are.

When Americans got sick, they had to wait longer than people in most of the other countries to get help. Fewer than half were able to get same-day or next-day appointments with a doctor or nurse; one in four had to wait six days or longer. (Only Canada fared worse on both counts.) But Americans got quicker access to specialists than adults in all but two other countries.

The complexity of the American insurance system is also an issue. Some 32 percent of consumers spent a lot of time on insurance paperwork or in disputes with their insurer over denials of payment for services they thought were covered.

The Affordable Care Act was created to address these problems by covering tens of millions of uninsured people and providing subsidies to help many of them pay for policies; by setting limits on the out-of-pocket costs that patients must bear; and by requiring that all policies cover specified benefits.

Americans are understandably frustrated with the Obama administration's failure to produce a functioning website. President Obama's erroneous statements that all people who like their current insurance policies can keep them — not true for many people buying insurance in the individual market — has added to anger and misunderstanding. The reform law, however imperfect, is needed to bring the dysfunctional American health care system up to levels already achieved in other advanced nations.

"The change Obama announced yesterday to the people who have crummy crappy F...up plans want to keep them, what I call 'hospital gown policies' because plainly your ass is not covered. And one reason why he had to do this is because Bill Clinton open his big fat vegan mouth and said Obama should let people keep their crappy insurance even if it screws up the whole system. You know if you are a Democrat, the Clintons are a pre-existing condition."

Bill Maher in his opening monologue last week on his **HBO** show *REAL TIME*: November 15, 2013

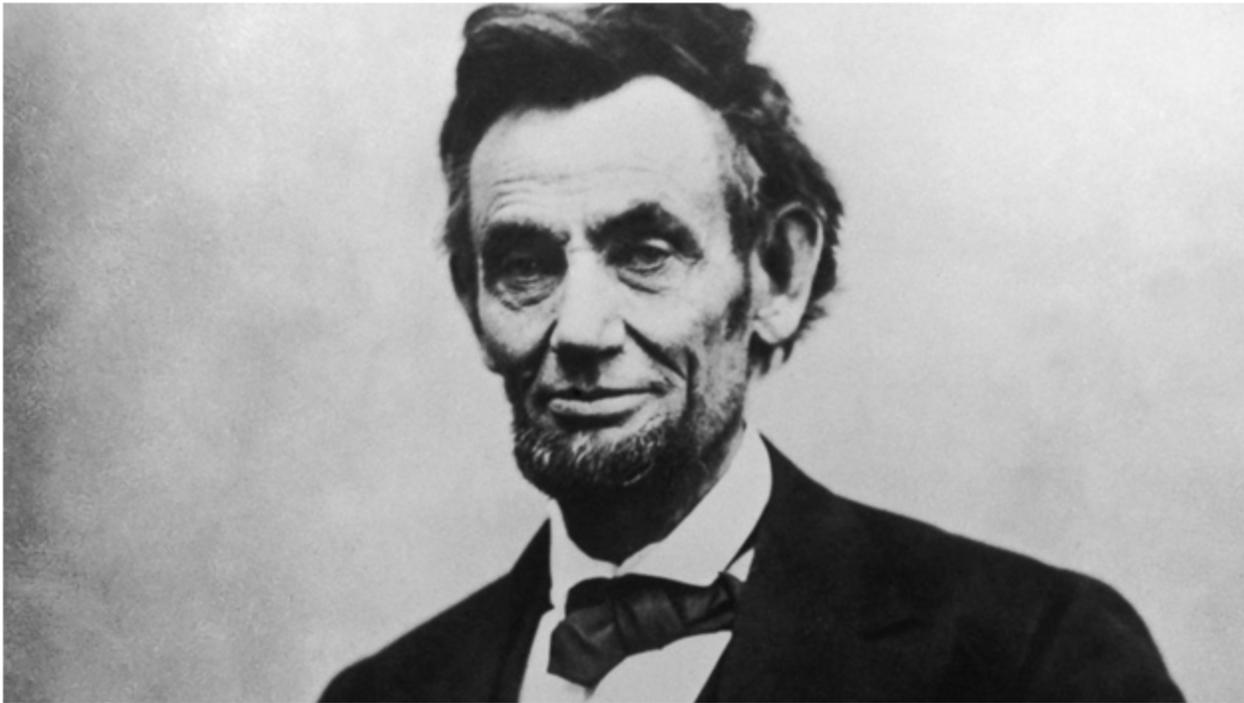
Last Tuesday in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania marked the 150th anniversary of the **Gettysburg Address**, thousands gathered at the national cemetery to remember President Abraham Lincoln's call for "*a new birth of freedom*." The U.S. Marine Band played some of the same songs played when it accompanied Lincoln to Gettysburg for the dedication of the cemetery that holds many of the Union soldiers killed in

the decisive Civil War battle four months earlier. A Lincoln impersonator, hatless and wearing white gloves, recited the address Tuesday with a Kentucky twang. But the emotional highlight came when 16 people, some with flags in their lapels, stood at a railing in the front row before the stage and raised their right hands to take the oath of citizenship from Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia. The United States, Scalia told the gathering, is "*a nation of immigrants*" who came seeking opportunity and freedom. "*That freedom is not free, as the dead who rest here can attest,*" Scalia said.

The Gettysburg Address is a speech by U.S. President Abraham Lincoln, one of the best-known and greatest in American history. It was delivered by Lincoln during the American Civil War, on the afternoon of Thursday, November 19, 1863, at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, four and a half months after the Union armies defeated those of the Confederacy at the Battle of Gettysburg. Abraham Lincoln's carefully crafted address, secondary to other presentations that day, came to be regarded as one of the greatest speeches in American history. In just over two minutes, Lincoln reiterated the principles of human equality espoused by the Declaration of Independence and proclaimed the Civil War as a struggle for the preservation of the Union sundered by the secession crisis, with "*a new birth of freedom,*" that would bring true equality to all of its citizens. Lincoln also redefined the Civil War as a struggle not just for the Union, but also for the principle of human equality.

Beginning with the now-iconic phrase "*Four score and seven years ago*" — referring to the Declaration of Independence, written at the start of the American Revolution in 1776 — Lincoln examined the founding principles of the United States in the context of the Civil War, and memorialized the sacrifices of those who gave their lives at Gettysburg and extolled virtues for the listeners (and the nation) to ensure the survival of America's representative democracy, that "*government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.*" Despite the speech's prominent place in the history and popular culture of the United States, the exact wording and location of the speech are disputed. The five known manuscripts of the Gettysburg Address differ in a number of details and also differ from contemporary newspaper reprints of the speech. Modern scholarship locates the speakers' platform 40 yards (or more) away from the Traditional Site within Soldiers' National Cemetery at the Soldiers' National Monument and entirely within private, adjacent Evergreen Cemetery.

Gettysburg Address: Text of President Lincoln's Nov. 19, 1863 speech



There are several variations of the address. Here's the one that's etched into the walls of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington:

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate -- we can not consecrate -- we can not hallow -- this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract.

The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us -- that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion -- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain -- that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom -- and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

As Chris Matthews said this week on his **MSNBC** show **HARDBALL**: The dirty little secret of American politics today is that this battle between President Obama and his enemies is not a contest of achievement. No, it's a battle between a president who wants to do great things -- extend health care to the tens of millions of working people, many of them poor, ending two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and preventing a third war with Iran -- and almost totally negative force arrayed and barking against him, a campaign of verbal terror and negativity aimed at denying tens of millions decent health care, denying immigrants the chance to become citizens, denying people of other sexual orientations and identities an equal chance to provide for themselves, obviously, also denying marriage equality. It's a strange, unbalanced battle between a man who wants to do great things and an enemy aimed at ensuring he does not. It's a tale of a political party that once freed the slaves and battled the monopolies, built the transcontinental railroad and created scientific agriculture to the land grant colleges reduced now to playing jackal in the moonlight.

To which his guest Howard Fineman, editorial director of the **Huffington Post Media Group** and an **MSNBC** political analyst replied: The president's enemies have tried to destroy, kill, defund, block or destroy everything in his program. The president, in contrast, has made it his goal to fight to extend rights to minorities, the uninsured and the oppressed. His opponents are trying to take away these rights. Here are just three examples of how this works. The opponents of the president prevented millions of people from having access to health care under the law.

They've waged a three-dozen-state war aimed to suppress voting rights of minorities, especially African-Americans. And they've systematically derailed anything that would extend the principles of equality and fairness, whether it be health care, sexual orientation and identity, or the right to marry. Let's look at the first one of these segments. Republicans in 24 states now have rejected the expansion of Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act as part of a blatant attempt, I think, to destroy the law. As a result, there are more than five million low-income working Americans, many of them in Republican-controlled states, whose access to the insurance under the law has been voided. by the far right. Astonishingly, preventing people from getting insurance is now a badge of conservative honor by Tea Parties like Rand Paul. Here's Senator Paul on **CNN** just yesterday attacking Governor Chris Christie of New Jersey for his decision to expand Medicaid in New Jersey.

Republicans have spent millions and millions of dollars spreading rumors and innuendos about all of the reasons in an attempt to delay, derail and kill the Affordable Care Act. From all the negative coverage of the health care roll-out, you would think it had been a disaster from coast to coast. But there are more than a few health care success stories out there emerging, by the way, in states around the country where Republicans -- or at least vicious Republicans -- aren't actually working to sabotage the law. **The Los Angeles Times**, in an article headlined "**Health Care Plan Enrollment Surges in Some States After Rocky Rollout.**" Well, here's what we learned. California's Covered California program is having -- quote -- "*incredible momentum in enrollment.*" *Washington State is -- quote -- "on track to easily exceed October enrollment."* In Minnesota -- quote -- "*Enrollment for the second half of October triple rate of first half.*" In Kentucky, whose Democratic governor we have had on the program, is outperforming enrollment estimates. And in Connecticut, a survey of those who used the state exchange showed a satisfaction level of 96.5 percent. What do these states have in common?

Well, for starters, they all set up their own state health care exchanges, which is how the Affordable Care Act was supposed to work in the first place, rather than rely on a big federal exchange. They also expanded Medicaid coverage, as they were supposed to. And perhaps the most important point, they

all have Democratic governors trying to make it work, who have not been working at every turn to block a program that is actually of course the law of the land.

Republican governors who are all about state's rights with Bobby Jindal and Rick Perry (*whose state has the highest rate of people with health insurance in the country, with the largest number of children without health insurance and the highest rate of poor adults without health insurance, with more than 852,000 children in Texas not having health insurance in 2012*), choosing not to set up health care exchanges in their states, thus denying their residents access from affordable healthcare. The week in an article in the **New York Times**, Republican leaders admitted that they are not going to advocate any new policies (solutions), and just engage in "oversight" which is code for a search and destroy in an attempt to scuttle health reform. They have no healthcare plan. They have no solutions other than to keep the status quo. It is easy to see that these people are against everything while standing for nothing, other than making the Obama Administration a failed Presidency.

Bill Maher Puts The Kennedy vs. Reagan Debate To Rest



Web Link: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/11/23/bill-maher-jfk-kennedy-vs-ronald-regan-video_n_4329327.html

Bill Maher delivered an impressive comparison of John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan on Friday Night's "**Real Time**," concluding of course that JFK wins the competition, hands down.

Maher understands that politics is tribal, and Republicans will never feel the way Democrats do about JFK, but he wants to know: *"Can we at least agree that Kennedy was cooler?"*

"I mean, sorry, but our liberal icon was a smart, sexy war hero who said he wanted to go to the Moon. Yours was an old fuddy-duddy who tried to rock denim."

"Don Draper vs. Rooster Cogburn," and *"James Bond vs. Matlock"* are just a few of the other ways Maher compared the two political idols. He thoroughly explained why Kennedy's style, friends (*The Rat Pack*), and era (the 60s) were all more favorable than Reagan's -- and Maher has pictures of himself from the 80s to prove it.

*"... One reason that we looked uglier in the 80s is because we were uglier. It was when the Baby Boomers the generation that was supposed to be different, just gave up and sold-out completely. Kennedy's time was the time of **"ask not what your country can do for you."** Reagan's time was the time of **"greed is good."***

"JFK was far from perfect, but he was a true wit and a sex machine, and he knew how to wear a pair of shades. Reagan was an amiable square in a cowboy hat who had sex with a woman he called "Mommy"." Kennedy was James Bond. Reagan was Matlock. Love him or hate him we win. Republicans can call Reagan their Kennedy all they want but that's like calling Miller High-Lite *"The Champagne of Beers."* It's why calling someone your Kennedy will never really cut it, because our Kennedy is Kennedy.

THIS WEEK'S READINGS



According to an article this week in **Reuters** – This year is the seventh warmest since records began in 1850 with a trend to weather extremes and the impact of storms such as Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines aggravated by rising sea levels, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said on Wednesday. A build-up of manmade greenhouse gases in the atmosphere meant a warmer future was now inevitable, WMO Secretary-General Michel Jarraud said in a statement on the sidelines of U.N. climate talks among almost 200 nations in Warsaw.

The WMO, giving a provisional overview, said the first nine months of the year tied with the same period of 2003 as seventh warmest, with average global land and ocean surface temperatures 0.48°C (0.86°F) above the 1961-1990 average. *"This year once again continues the underlying, long-term trend,"* towards higher temperatures caused by global warming, Jarraud said. The WMO said it was likely to end among the top 10 warmest years since records began in 1850. Among extremes have been super typhoon Haiyan, one of the most intense storms in history that smashed into the Philippines last Friday. President Benigno Aquino said local officials had overstated the loss of life, which was closer to 2,000 or 2,500 than the 10,000 previously estimated. His comments, however, drew scepticism from some aid workers.

AUSTRALIA HEATWAVE

Other extremes this year have included record heatwaves in Australia and floods from Sudan to Europe, the WMO said. Japan had its warmest summer on record. Apparently bucking a warming trend, sea ice around Antarctica expanded to a record extent. But the WMO said: *"Wind patterns and ocean currents tend to isolate Antarctica from global weather patterns, keeping it cold."* In September, The United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) raised the

probability that mankind was the main cause of warming since 1950 to at least 95 percent from 90 in a previous assessment in 2007.

It predicted impacts including more heatwaves, downpours and rising sea levels. *"2010 was the warmest year on record, ahead of 2005 and 1998,"* the WMO said. The IPCC said the pace of temperature rises at the Earth's surface has slowed slightly in recent years in what the panel called a *"hiatus"* that may be linked to big natural variations and factors such as the ocean absorbing more heat. The WMO said that individual tropical cyclones, such as Haiyan, could not be directly attributed to the effects of climate change. But *"higher sea levels are already making coastal populations more vulnerable to storm surges. We saw this with tragic consequences in the Philippines,"* Jarraud said. Seas have risen by about 20 cms (8 inches) in the past century. As of early November 2013, there had been 86 tropical cyclones, from typhoons to Atlantic hurricanes, closing in on the 1981-2010 average of 89 storms, the WMO said. (Reporting By Alister Doyle; editing by Ralph Boulton)

Web Link: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2507719/The-world-explained-maps-revealing-need-know.html>

In addition to the video on the above web link, please find below five examples of the chaos that man-made climate change is causing.

According to a **2011 U.S. Interior Department** report, *"annual flows in three prominent river basins - the Colorado, Rio Grande and San Joaquin - could decline by as much [as] 8 percent to 14 percent over the next four decades,"* reported the **Associated Press**. Expected changes in temperature and precipitation are likely to alter river flows *"with increased flooding possible in the winter due to early snow-melt and water shortages in the summer due to reductions in spring and summer runoffs."* Along with deforestation, climate change also poses a serious threat to South America's Amazon rain-forest. A 2009 study from the **U.K. Met Office** found that a global temperature rise of four degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels would cause 85 percent of the Amazon to die off in the next 100 years. Even a two degree Celsius rise would kill 20 to 40 percent of the rain-forest, reported **The Guardian**. In May, The Club of Rome think tank predicted a global average temperatures rise of *"2 degrees Celsius by 2052 and a 2.8 degree rise by 2080,"* reported Reuters. Jorgen Randers, author of the club's report, said, *"It is unlikely that governments will pass necessary regulation to force the markets to allocate more money into climate-friendly solutions, and (we) must not assume that markets will work for the benefit of humankind."* He added, *"We are emitting twice as much greenhouse gases every year as are absorbed by the world's forests and oceans. This overshoot will worsen and will peak in 2030."*

Bad news for allergy sufferers -- climate change, and specifically warmer temperatures, may bring more pollen and ragweed, according to a 2011 study from the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York. Along with allergies, a changing climate may be tied to more infectious diseases. According to one study, climate change could affect wild bird migratory patterns, increasing the chances for human flu pandemics. Illnesses like Lyme disease could also become more prominent.

As average temperatures rise over the course of this century, states in the Southern U.S. are expected to see a greater number of days with temperatures over 90 degrees Fahrenheit each year. And as global temperatures rise this century, sea levels are also expected to increase. South Florida may be hit particularly hard. According to a 2012 report from New Jersey-based nonprofit Climate Central,

thousands of New York City residents may be at risk for severe coastal flooding as a result of climate change. Climate Central explains, "the NY metro area hosts the nation's highest-density populations vulnerable to sea level rise." They argue, "the funnel shape of New York Harbor has the potential to magnify storm surges already supplemented by sea level rise, threatening widespread areas of New York City."

If greenhouse gas emissions are not reduced, global sea levels could rise over three feet by 2100, with a six foot rise possible. The U.S. Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming notes: This threatens to submerge Florida's coastal communities and economies since roughly 9 percent of the state is within 5 feet of the existing sea level. Rising sea level also threatens the beaches, wetlands, and mangrove forests that surround the state. University of Florida professor Jack Putz said in 2008, "People have a hard time accepting that this is happening here," reported the Tampa Bay Times. Seeing dead palm trees and other impacts "brings a global problem right into our own back yard," he added.

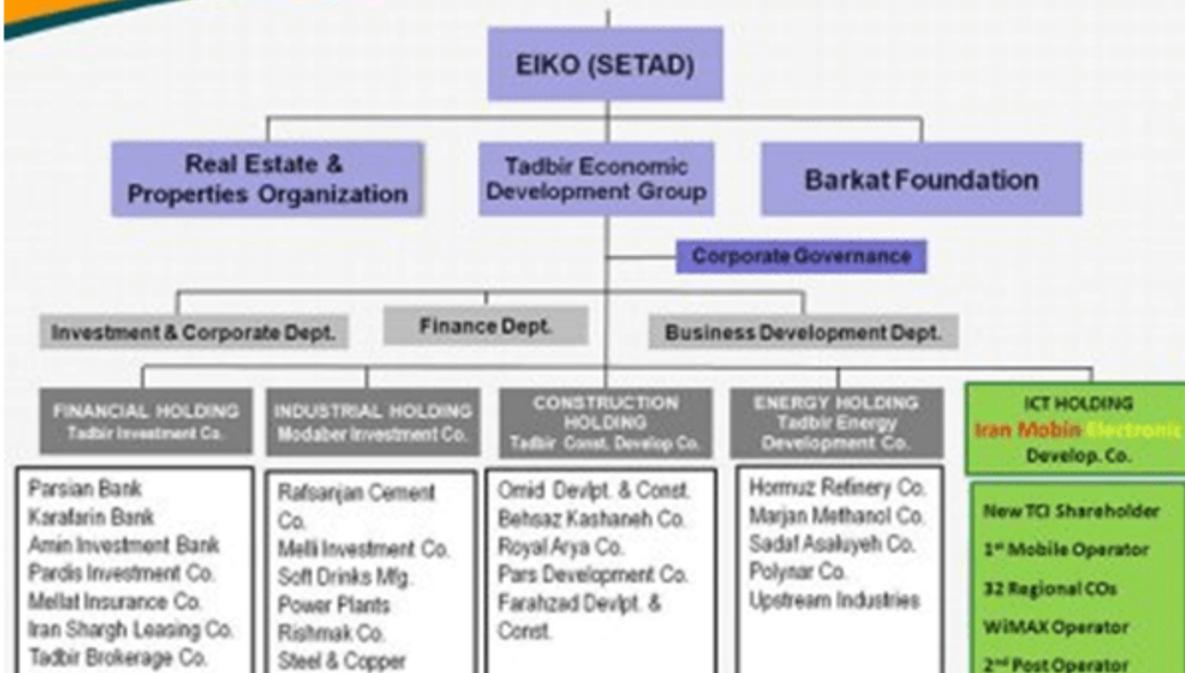
As humans increase atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations, oceans absorb some of the CO₂. The resulting drop in ocean pH, known as ocean acidification, has been called climate change's "*equally evil twin*" by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration chief Jane Lubchenco. Coral reefs, which are an invaluable part of marine ecosystems and tourism economies, are threatened by ocean warming and acidification. At the 2012 International Coral Reef Symposium in Cairns, Australia, 2,600 scientists signed a petition calling for international action to preserve global coral reefs, reported the **BBC**. Noting that 25 to 30 percent of the world's reefs are already "*severely degraded*," the statement asserts that "climate-related stressors [represent] an unprecedented challenge for the future of coral reefs and to the services they provide to people." A recent report from the World Resources Institute found that the Coral Triangle, an important area from central Southeast Asia to the edge of the western Pacific with many reefs, is threatened at a rate far greater than the global average.



Last week **Reuters** published a three-part (six-months) investigation into the financial empire of Iranian Supreme Leader **Ayatollah Ali Khamenei**, which was built based on billions of dollars in property seized from Iranian citizens through an organization called Setad. As a result Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei controls a business empire worth around \$95 billion - a sum exceeding the value of his oil-rich nation's current annual petroleum exports. Little is known about **Setad** even though it is one of the keys to the Iranian leader's enduring power and now holds stakes in nearly every sector of Iranian industry, including finance, oil, telecommunications, the production of birth-control pills and even ostrich farming. **Setad** has built its empire on the systematic seizure of thousands of properties belonging to ordinary Iranians - members of religious minorities, Shi'ite Muslims, business people and Iranians living abroad.

The Reuters investigation documents how Setad has amassed a giant portfolio of real estate by claiming in Iranian courts, sometimes falsely, that the properties are abandoned. The organization now holds a court-ordered monopoly on taking property in the name of the supreme leader, and regularly sells the seized properties at auction or seeks to extract payments from the original owners. The organization's full name in Persian is "**Setad Ejraiye Farmane Hazrate Emam**" - Headquarters for Executing the Order of the Imam. The name refers to an edict signed by the Islamic Republic's first leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, shortly before his death in 1989. His order spawned an entity intended to manage and sell properties abandoned in the chaotic years after the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

An organizational chart labeled "**SETAD at a Glance**," prepared in 2010 by one of Setad's companies and seen by Reuters, illustrates how big it had grown. The document shows holdings in major banks, a brokerage, an insurance company, power plants, energy and construction firms, a refinery, a cement company and soft drinks manufacturing. Today, **Setad's** vast operations provide an independent source of revenue and patronage for Supreme Leader Khamenei, even as the West squeezes the Iranian economy harder with sanctions in an attempt to end the nuclear-development program he controls.



According to one of its co-founders, **Setad** was created to help the poor and war veterans and was meant to exist for just two years. Almost a quarter-century on, **Setad** has morphed into a business juggernaut with real estate, corporate stakes and other assets. While Setad controls a charitable foundation, it's not clear how much money goes to charity. Under Khamenei, the organization has expanded its corporate holdings, buying stakes in dozens of Iranian companies, both private and public, with the stated goal of creating an Iranian conglomerate to boost the country's economic growth. The supreme leader, judges and parliament over the years have issued a series of bureaucratic edicts, constitutional interpretations and judicial decisions bolstering Setad. *"No supervisory organization can question its property,"* said Naghi Mahmoudi, an Iranian lawyer who left Iran in 2010 and now lives in Germany.

Setad's total worth is difficult to pinpoint because of the secrecy of its accounts. Reuters estimates it at around \$95 billion, made up of about \$52 billion in real estate and \$43 billion in corporate holdings. The estimate is based on an analysis of statements by **Setad** officials, data from the Tehran Stock Exchange and company websites, and information from the U.S. Treasury Department. The amount is roughly 40 percent bigger than Iran's total oil exports last year, which totaled \$67.4 billion, according to the International Monetary Fund:

* The U.S. Treasury Department assessed Rey Investment Co, controlled by Setad, as worth about \$40 billion in 2010, the year Setad took control of it. (The Treasury did not put an overall value on **Setad**).

* Through a subsidiary, Setad bought a 19 percent stake in Telecommunication Co of Iran, the country's largest telecom provider, for about \$3 billion.

* **Reuters** also identified at least 24 publicly traded companies not named in the recent Treasury sanctions in which Setad, or a company it invested in, held a minority stake. At the current official exchange rate, those investments are worth more than \$400 million, according to valuations from the Tehran Stock Exchange and data gleaned from the exchange and company websites.

* **Reuters** further identified 14 companies **Setad** has investments in - often through other businesses - that couldn't be valued because they are not publicly traded.

The Revolutionary Guards, the powerful military unit tasked with protecting Iran from both domestic and foreign threats, has long held a pivotal role in the country's economy, with extensive holdings in defense, construction and oil industries, according to the U.S. State Department. Setad gives the supreme leader a significant financial resource of his own, one that greatly adds to his power. Khamenei appoints **Setad's** board of directors but delegates management of the organization to others, according to one former employee. This person said the supreme leader is primarily concerned about one thing: its annual profits, which he uses to fund his bureaucracy.

As Iran's top cleric, Khamenei has final say on all governmental matters. His purview includes his nation's controversial nuclear program, which was the subject of intense negotiations between Iranian and international diplomats in Geneva that ended Sunday without an agreement. It is Khamenei who will set Iran's course in the nuclear talks and other recent efforts by the new president, Hassan Rouhani, to improve relations with Washington. The investigation into **Setad** shows that as well as political power and military force there is a third dimension to Khamenei's power: economic might. The revenue stream generated by **Setad** helps explain why he has not only held on for 24 years but also in some ways has more control than even his revered predecessor. **Setad** gives him the financial means to operate independently of parliament and the national budget, insulating him from Iran's messy factional infighting.

Like any other mogul heading a large conglomerate Khamenei appears to have acquiesced to the economic pressures intensified by the US and European sanctions. With Iran deriving more than 70% of the country's income from crude oil sales over the past two years oil exports have fallen by around 60 percent as European and most Asian buyers reduced imports because. Iran now earns around \$100 million from oil sales a day, down from \$250 million two years ago. This same scenario has replayed itself on almost every other business group own and/or operated by **Setad**, in particular its energy exports and its banks. Growth slowed to 3 percent in 2011, and the economy shrank 1.9 percent in 2012. There is no evidence that Khamenei is tapping Setad to enrich himself. But Setad has empowered him. Through **Setad**, Khamenei has at his disposal financial resources whose value rivals the holdings of the shah, the Western-backed monarch who was overthrown in 1979.

Setad's expansion appears to continue. In May, its charitable foundation, Barakat, announced it was entering "*into new pharmaceutical fields*," including biotechnology, nanotechnology and gene therapy. The charity runs a unit called Barakat Pharmaceutical Co that, according to the unit's website, has more than 20 subsidiaries and had more than \$1 billion in sales in 2011. One of Barakat Pharmaceutical's units is ATI Pharmed Pharmaceutical Co. Barakat Pharmaceutical describes ATI as a joint venture between it and a Swiss company, Stragen Pharma SA, to produce oral contraceptives. ATI's website displays information about a number of Stragen products that the Iranian company says it has licensed to produce in Iran. It is not clear whether production has begun. Officials at Geneva-based Stragen - which according to Barakat Pharmaceutical owns 34 percent of ATI - didn't respond to requests for comment.

Last October, Khamenei warned that family planning would lead to an aging population. *"One of the mistakes that we made - and I am also responsible for this mistake - is that the issue of limiting the population growth should have been stopped from the decade of the '70s (1991 in the Western calendar) onward,"* he said in a speech. *"Families and the youth must increase the birth rate, increase the population,"* he continued. *"This limiting of children in homes, the way it is today, is a mistake."* The business empire controlled by Iran's supreme leader had grown so large that it now owned companies whose products Khamenei opposes. That expansion was the direct result of a legal strategy that came from the very top. And although The Shah has been dead for more than three decades, when it comes to thirst for power at the top and unmitigated greed, nothing seems to have really changed.



As more and more Americans who are part of the **"Baby Boomer Generation"** (born between 1946 and 1964) reach retirement age a number of gambles that many of them have made to survive the worst recession since the **Great Depression** (1929-39), the number of workers borrowing from their 401(k) retirement accounts has reached a 10-year high. The result being is that Americans are facing a retirement crisis and as **PBS's** premiere investigative program, **FRONTLINE** proclaimed in its recent show — ***The Retirement Gamble*** — the statistics are grim. Half of all Americans say they can't afford to save for retirement — The average retirement fund has lost \$12,000. One third have next to no retirement savings at all — creating the need for many Americans to work longer and save more for retirement. Today if you are in your early 30s, economists say that you should put 10% to 15% of your salary in a retirement account each year, to maintain your standard of living.

One of the people profiled in the show was 67 year-old Bob Wood, who is semi-retired, with a part-time income of \$25,000 and retirement savings of \$500,000. *"You know, I consider myself middle class. I don't have the luxury of a couple million dollars in savings. The cost of living's going up. Your water bill goes up, your utility bill goes up, your gas bill goes up, your food goes up. Retirees are getting stressed because their nest eggs, their savings, are not producing any income for them, so they're all wondering where they're going to make ends meet. I'm fortunate I can live at a higher standard because I have a little bit of a nest egg in my retirement savings. But others, they're at poverty level."*

Another was 65 year-old Martin Smith who said that he started saving for his retirement in his last 20s but along the way he started dipping into his nest-egg “**IRA and 401(k)**” — not once, but several times. And now, like millions of other Baby Boomers, he doesn't have enough saved enough. Financial advisers say, that the key to your retirement working out is having enough return on your assets. Mr. Smith cites a number of reasons; most of his savings when to pay of his children's education, a divorce and that the financial crash of 2008 didn't help, either. As a result, Smith says that he is now planning to work full-time as long as he possibly can, at least to the age of 70 and then part-time between 70 to 75. These days, many Baby Boomers are planning to delay their retirement. Some may never stop working. It's hard. Without knowing exactly how long you're going to live, it's difficult to guess how much you need to put away.

Retirement Plan Consultant, Brooks Hamilton, advises her clients that at retirement, to be OK, you need 10 or 12 times pay, and maybe 15. So if you make \$100,000 a year, you need \$1.5 million to be OK. You need to save more. You need to start sooner. You can't start work when you're 20 or 22 and decide to get serious about this in your 40s. The boat has sailed. Like many others Smith invested his retirement monies by buying stock. Today, Americans entrust over \$10 trillion to thousands of big and small financial service providers. Because there is so many choices, unless you are a professional it is extremely difficult to understand anything beyond the basic pitch. Roughly half of companies offer a 401(k). But if you work for a small business, chances are you might not. And for those people and for the self-employed, there are things you can do on you own, like the Individual Retirement Account. Except that it's entirely confusing. So where does one begin?

401 (k) plans were create in the 1980s. And today about 60 million Americans have signed up for their company 401(k) plan. Because of the complexity of the plans due to pages and pages of boiler-plate, that is usually only inserted to protect those who are managing and selling the plans, leaving most people confused and dumbfounded. Teacher Crystal Mendez, *“I really was kind of clueless. I didn't know what I wanted to invest in. I really didn't know anything about it. I had learned somewhere — some — I had heard something about, if you're young, you should be more willing to take risk. You have time. So other than that, I really knew nothing.”* Former Sales Manager Mark Featherston “they showed you the plan. You either had your choices between an aggressive investment, moderate, or conservative. You know, there was nobody there managing my money. It was all up to me. As Prof. Teresa Ghilarducci of **The New School** in New York City says, “the 401(k) is one of the only products that Americans buy that they don't know the price of it. It's also one of the products that Americans buy that they don't even know its quality. It's one of the products that Americans buy that they don't know its danger. And it's because the industry, the mutual fund industry, have been able to protect themselves against regulation that would expose the danger and price of their products.”

It used to be much easier. In 1970, 42 percent of employees had a pension, a guarantee by your employer that you would get a good percentage of your salary and benefits upon retirement. And with a retirement plan and a few dollars saved, most retirees didn't have to worry about much. Workers didn't have to figure out how to manage their own savings plan. It was done for them. It was very simple. The employee really didn't know any of the mechanics behind it. They just knew when they came close to retirement that they were promised a benefit, so a secure income over their entire life. So they had this income until they died. It was a great system. The problem was that over the last decade, the rules of the game changed. What changed was that people started living longer. New accounting rules, global competition and market volatility, too, affected the cost of maintaining a pension plan. Yes, from the employer standpoint, the old system became an expensive system. But at least they knew how to manage investment risk and they had the know how to manage longevity risk.

But since it wasn't a money-maker for corporations, many look for ways to get out of the pension business. It was then that corporations found a new loophole in the internal revenue code. What essentially happens is that the 401(k) comes in in the late '70s, early '80s. It starts as a corporate tax dodge, basically. It's, if you're a high earner, you're going to put some of your money aside. Nobody ever thought that this was going to apply to the rest of us, at least no-one said pointed this out. So not quite by design, a new retirement system was born. Big brokerages and banks saw an opportunity to expand their business and helped employers set up and run their new plans. They promoted the arrangement as a win for everyone.

From the individual perspective, the 401(k) actually opened up the opportunity to save for retirement for many individuals who worked for businesses that didn't have a pension. As it also allowed them to have a portable, vested amount of money that they could take with them, as Americans started changing jobs more frequently. But corporate America used it as a way to get out of the business of providing pensions and shift the burden to employees. And while some employers contribute to employees' 401(k) plans, all of the risks fall on the individual. 401(k) plans really place the burden on the individual participant to have an adequate retirement. And the vast majority of ordinary people don't know how to do that. It's a very complex task.

Picking and choosing the right investments requires very careful handling — Enter the mutual fund industry. People in the mutual fund industry realized that there was a huge opportunity here, right? I mean, not only could they sell their mutual funds, you know, directly to investors, but they could make the mutual funds the very foundation of the 401(k) plans. In 1981, nobody knew what a 401(k) was. By 1989 it's in the lexicon. It's being written about. It's being talked about. Throughout the '90s and now all large employers effectively have plans in place. People are participating. It continues to grow from there.

It is enticing to hear that if you start saving \$300 a month when you're 23, and you can retire a millionaire. Especially when the mutual funds boom happened in lockstep with the roaring bull market of the '80s and '90s. Mutual funds were charging high management fees, but nobody seemed to care. The returns were great. So no one thinks about, "*How much is this costing me*" when they're earning 15 or 20 percent. Star mutual fund managers like Fidelity Magellan's Peter Lynch encouraged all of us to jump in. "*You shouldn't be intimidated. Everyone can do well in the stock market. You have the skills. You have the intelligence. It doesn't require any education. All you have to have is patience, do a little research, and you've got it.*"

The problem is that like most plans things hasn't worked out that way. Because as Deep Throat (of Watergate fame in the 1970s) advised, "*follow the money.*" 40% of all of the profits over the last four years in America went to Wall Street, and as a result there are 376,000 millionaires living in New York City. And when the bubble burst in 2000 and 2008/9, tens of millions of Americans saw much of their retirement nest egg evaporate, enabling billionaires, family—offices, international sovereign wealth and hedge funds buy cheap, with the top 1% soaking up 108% of incomes since 2009 of the entire country. But the biggest looming problem facing Baby Boomers (which the **FRONTLINE** show pointed out) is that tens of millions of Americans, dipped into the 401 (k) and other retirement plans to weather the housing crash and 2009 recession and will have to work late into their 70s if not until their death. I invite you to view ***The Retirement Gamble***:

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/retirement-gamble/>



Last week I read an article in **The Huffington Post** by Richard Eskow – ***The Hearing: Reality, Delusion, and the Federal Reserve*** – which centered around Janet Yellen appearance before the Senate banking committee on November 14, 2013 for a hearing on her confirmation as the Chairman of the US Federal Reserve Bank. The current atmosphere of partisan politics a number of senators interrogated her about the plans that you would do once confirmed. Yellen, a mainstream economist, isn't likely to transform it into the central bank our nation needs. That may take a political mandate -- one we're not likely to see soon in our corporate-dominated political process. The real reason for this is that the Fed has become far too deeply embedded with the banking industry. This can be seen in its board structure, as well as in its policies. Of the likely candidates to lead it, Janet Yellen was almost certainly the best of them. But that list was overly restricted by limitations -- in both economic imagination and political courage. As Ylan Q. Mui wrote an op-ed in **The Washington Post**, "*Janet Yellen will be a good Chair for today's Federal Reserve. But the Federal Reserve needs to change.*"

Many politicians expect little from the Fed because they think it has less power and flexibility than it does. For its part, the right thinks it has exercised more power than it has. Yellen won't transform anybody's view of the Fed, but at least she has a sense of the gravity of our ongoing economic situation. Too bad the same can't be said for some of the senators who interrogated her Thursday. Ranking Republican Sen. Mike Crapo set the tone for his party in his opening statements by complaining about the Fed's "*unprecedented policies*" in response to the ongoing economic crisis -- without ever discussing the crisis itself. That crisis was, and still is, unprecedented in modern history. Crapo pressed the nominee on "*normalization*." He didn't use the phrase to refer to a "*return to normal employment levels*," but rather to ask when the Fed would end its efforts to repair the economy. He also asked Yellen how she would "fix" Dodd/Frank, by which he presumably wanted to know how she would remove some of its regulatory safeguards, and complained about stimulus spending (which is outside the Fed's authority).

Sen. Richard Shelby complained at length about the stimulus, and rather gratuitously complained that "quantitative easing" was a made-up phrase. That may have been the silliest moment of the entire hearing, since all economic terms are made-up phrases. (But none are more made-up or fantastic than "trickle down" and "supply side.") Sen. Bob Corker suggested that quantitative easing is nothing more than a way for bankers to make easy money, which of course it is (although Yellen noted that it also made life easier for middle-class homeowners). But Corker never offered any constructive solutions to our ongoing economic problems -- and as far as this writer knows, he never has. Sen. Pat Toomey also joined the chorus, fretting about savings accounts for middle class households (most of whom have more immediate problems and beating up Yellen and the Federal Reserve for an economic situation that's in large part the result of GOP inaction and obstructionism.

Those were the Republicans. What about the Democrats? In his (considerably briefer) opening statement, committee chair Sen. Tim Johnson pointed out that Ms. Yellen *"has devoted a large portion of her professional and academic career to studying the labor market, unemployment, monetary policy, and the economy."* He also noted she was *"the first Fed official, in 2005, to describe the rise in housing prices as a bubble that might damage the economy."* She sounds like a good candidate to me. Eskow: *"In other words, Johnson had a firmer grasp on reality than his GOP counterpart."*

Sen. Jon Tester noted a lack of transparency in hearings of the Financial Stability Oversight Council. Sen. Johnson also mentioned the issue of transparency. Yellen was asked if she would support the Federal Reserve transparency bill introduced by Sen. Rand Paul. Democrats seemed to be the only people at the hearing interested in the issue of transparency, a topic which should have enjoyed bipartisan consensus. It's not just that Paul is a libertarian conservative, or that his Republican father joined with Sen. Bernie Sanders to push for a Fed audit -- a move which should be celebrated across the political spectrum. That's one reason why Republicans should have been pushing for transparency. More importantly, transparency is also a key element of efficient markets, according to economic theory. So why weren't conservatives, who claim to believe in the *"wisdom of markets,"* pushing for it? Yellen said she didn't support the Rand Paul bill because she wanted the Fed to remain independent. Since the Fed is itself a creation of Congress, this might've been her weakest moment. So maybe she is not the perfect candidate.



Not knowing much about the Federal Reserve, I look it up. The Federal Reserve System (also known as the Federal Reserve, and informally as the Fed) is the central banking system of the United States. It was created on December 23, 1913, (and turns 100 years-old next month) with the enactment of the Federal Reserve Act, largely in response to a series of financial panics, particularly a severe panic in 1907. Over time, the roles and responsibilities of the Federal Reserve System have expanded and its structure has evolved. Events such as the Great Depression were major factors leading to changes in the system.

The U.S. Congress established three key objectives for monetary policy in the Federal Reserve Act: Maximum employment, stable prices, and moderate long-term interest rates. The first two objectives are sometimes referred to as the Federal Reserve's dual mandate. Its duties have expanded over the years, and today, according to official Federal Reserve documentation, include conducting the nation's monetary policy, supervising and regulating banking institutions, maintaining the stability of the financial system and providing financial services to depository institutions, the U.S. government, and foreign official institutions. The Fed also conducts research into the economy and releases numerous publications, such as the Beige Book.

The Federal Reserve System's structure is composed of the presidentially appointed Board of Governors (or Federal Reserve Board), the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC), twelve regional Federal Reserve Banks located in major cities throughout the nation, numerous privately owned U.S. member banks and various advisory councils. The FOMC is the committee responsible for setting monetary policy and consists of all seven members of the Board of Governors and the twelve regional bank presidents, though only five bank presidents vote at any given time (the president of the New York Fed and four others who rotate through one-year terms). The Federal Reserve System has both private and public components, and was designed to serve the interests of both the general public and private bankers. The result is a structure that is considered unique among central banks. It is also unusual in that an entity outside of the central bank, namely the United States Department of the Treasury, creates the currency used. According to the Board of Governors, the Federal Reserve System "is considered an independent central bank because its monetary policy decisions do not have to be approved by the President or anyone else in the executive or legislative branches of government, it does not receive funding appropriated by the Congress, and the terms of the members of the Board of Governors span multiple presidential and congressional terms."

The authority of the Federal Reserve System is derived from statutes enacted by the U.S. Congress and the System is subject to congressional oversight. The members of the Board of Governors, including its chairman and vice-chairman, are chosen by the President and confirmed by the Senate. The federal government sets the salaries of the Board's seven governors. Nationally chartered commercial banks are required to hold stock in the Federal Reserve Bank of their region; this entitles them to elect some of the members of the board of the regional Federal Reserve Bank. Thus the Federal Reserve System has both public and private aspects. The U.S. Government receives all of the system's annual profits, after a statutory dividend of 6% on member banks' capital investment is paid, and an account surplus is maintained. In 2010, the Federal Reserve made a profit of \$82 billion and transferred \$79 billion to the U.S. Treasury. This was followed at the end of 2011 with a transfer of \$77 billion in profits to the U.S. Treasury Department.

Which gets us to the limited frame of Thursday's discussion, and of most discussions of the Federal Reserve. As we said earlier, the bank is a creation of Congress. It has a very clear dual mandate: to manage monetary policy, and to keep employment at acceptable levels. For far too long it has ignored the employment side of its mandate (a mandate which Bernanke did not mention for quite some time after the crisis began). When it came to saving Wall Street, the Fed showed remarkable ingenuity and flexibility after the 2008 crisis. It allowed both Goldman Sachs and GE capital to retroactively become banks, for example, which placed them under its mandate and allowed it to rescue them. It began the "unprecedented" quantitative easing program, which continues to this day.

Yet when it came to the other half of its mandate -- employment -- that flexibility and creativity seems to disappear. It could have promoted community banks and public banking. It could have linked its infusion of funds into the banking system with a requirement that banks begin a responsible lending program, especially to small and medium-sized businesses which could become the engines of job growth. It could still do those things. Instead it has flooded the banks with capital, allowing them to prosper for quite some time without offering many economically constructive loans. That benefited Wall Street much more than it benefited Main Street. The Federal Reserve was created in a sense as The People's Bank. But the problem is that the Fed is no longer The People's Bank, as the current Chairman Ben Bernanke and his recent predecessors are products of Wall Street and as such more inclined to protect it, even if it is at the expense of most Americans and changing the head and not the culture and structure won't help.



Last week in the **New York Times** Steven Lee Meyers and Nicolas Kulish wrote an interesting article on the new growing political fight under what they titled – ***Growing Clamor About Inequities of Climate Crisis***. The article focused on the concerns by a number of scientist, economists and GMOs on how to address and compensate poorer nations like Bangladesh, Sudan, Myanmar and the Philippines, which in 2012 (a year before Typhoon Haiyan), was added into the top 3 countries at most risk affected by climate-related weather catastrophes according to Berlin-based environmental organization Germanwatch. From the time a scientific consensus emerged that human activity was changing the climate, it has been understood that the nations that contributed least to the problem would be hurt the most. Now, as the possible consequences of climate change have surged – from the typhoons that have raked the Philippines and India this year to the droughts in Africa, to rising sea levels that threaten to submerge entire island nations – no consensus has emerged over how to rectify what many call “*climate injustice*.”

Growing demands to address the issue became an emotionally charged flash point at negotiations at the 19th conference of the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**, over past two weeks in Warsaw, Poland, when a several developing nations launched an impassioned attack on the failure of the world's richest countries to live up to their climate change pledges in the wake of the disaster in the Philippines, as a result of moves by several major economies to backtrack on commitments over carbon emissions – positioning the world's poorest and most wealthy states on a collision course.

Recent decisions by the governments of Australia, Japan and Canada to downgrade their efforts over climate change have caused panic among those states most affected by global warming, who fear others will follow as they rearrange their priorities during the downturn. Most recently, Japan has announced it will backtrack on its pledge to reduce its emission cuts from 25% to 3.8% by 2020 on the basis that it had to close its nuclear reactors after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami. Australia, which is not sending a minister to this weekend's talks, signaled it may weaken its targets and is repealing domestic carbon laws following the election of a conservative government. Canada has pulled out of the Kyoto accord, which committed major industrial economies to reducing their annual CO₂ emissions to below 1990 levels.

China's lead negotiator at the Warsaw talks, Su Wei, said: *"I do not have any words to describe my dismay at Japan's decision."* He criticised Europe for showing a lack of ambition to cut emissions further, adding: *"They talk about ratcheting up ambition, but rather they would have to ratchet up to ambition from zero ambition."* When the highest-level talks start at the summit on Monday, attended by representatives from 195 countries, including energy secretary Ed Davey, the developing world sought confirmation from states such as Britain that they will not follow the path of Japan and others. David Cameron's comments last weekend in which he backed carbon emission cuts and suggested that there was growing evidence of a link between manmade climate change and disasters such as Typhoon Haiyan, will inevitably be used to pressure others to offer similar assurances.

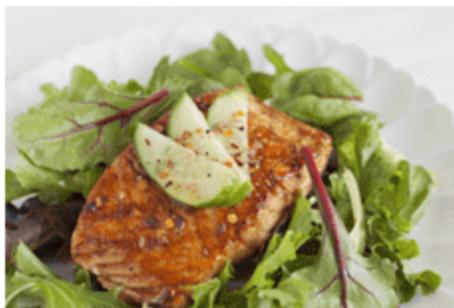
In addition, the developing world demanded that the rich western nations commit to establishing a compensation scheme for future extreme weather events, as the impact of global warming is increasingly felt. And they wanted firm signals that rich countries intend to find at least \$100bn a year by 2020 to help them to adapt their countries to severe climate extremes. China and 132 nations that are part of the G77 block of developing countries have expressed dismay that rich countries had refused to discuss a proposal for scientists to calculate emissions since the start of the Industrial Revolution.

And Ambassador Jose Antonio Marcondes de Carvalho of Brazil, who initially proposed the talks, said: *"We were shocked, very much surprised by their rejection and dismissal. It is puzzling. We need to understand why they have rejected it. Developing countries are doing vastly more to reduce their emissions than Annexe 1 [rich] countries."* Members of the Disaster Emergencies Committee, which co-ordinates British aid efforts, also warned leaders that the disaster offers a glimpse of the future if urgent action is not taken. Aid agencies including Christian Aid, Cafod, Care International, Oxfam and Tearfund said ministers meeting in the Polish capital must act urgently because climate change is likely to make such extreme weather events more common in the future, putting millions more lives at risk.

But what was most interesting in the article was the attached short video clearly explaining why global warming is causing sea levels to rise and storms to become more intense. I invite you to watch the video whatever your stance is on the aforementioned issue:

Web Link: <http://nyti.ms/18e3ELW> and <http://www.nytimes.com/video/science/100000002555638/the-future-of-storms.html?hpw&rref=science>

Because whether or not you feel that industrialized countries should help poorer countries pay for rising damage of more intense storms and shifting weather patterns, the science is absolutely and undisputedly clear. Climate change is real and (universally accepted) has been intensified by man-made carbon emissions. And the intensity of coming storms and shifting weather patterns will place increased pressure on some of the poorest nations – so what should be done, if any? But to claim support of democracy and not address growing inequality, even that caused by climate change, is hypocritical and definitely not something anyone who claims to believe in God should not ignore.



[Make Over Your Diet in One Week: 7 Days of Healthier Meals](#)

Stocking your fridge and pantry with the right foods is crucial for eating better, but you also want to keep your menu from getting stale or boring. So, we asked nutrition experts for a week of meal ideas that meet the government's dietary standards, and are delicious and fresh too. Now get cooking!

An Easy Overhaul of Your Family's Meal Plan

If there were ever a good time to revamp your family's diet, it's now. According to recent estimates, most Americans may be obese by 2030 if current trends continue. To help Americans figure out how to build a better diet, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) last year retired the well-recognized, but confusing food pyramid and adopted a new healthy-eating icon: the colorful MyPlate, which is divided more clearly and simply into the basic food groups. The MyPlate guide, which is based on the

2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, looks like your standard dinner plate, quartered into sections: fruits, vegetables, grains and protein. A smaller circle appears next to the plate, representing dairy.

Day 1: Eat More Whole Grains

Whole grains are better for you than refined ones, because they contain the entire intact grain kernel and lots of fiber and nutrition. The USDA recommends replacing refined grains in your diet with whole-grain breads, pastas, crackers and cereals. To make sure you're buying the right products, check ingredient labels and make sure the word "whole" comes before each grain. Here's a day's worth of sample menus, incorporating whole grains, from Janet Brill, a registered dietitian and author of *Cholesterol Down: 10 Simple Steps to Lower Your Cholesterol in 4 Weeks — Without Prescription Drugs*.

Day 2: Sneak in More Fruits and Veggies

Fruits and veggies should make up half your plate, and the USDA recommends getting a 2.5 cups of vegetables and 2 cups of fruit each day. Eating cooked veggies or drinking vegetable juice counts, but there are lots of other easy ways to incorporate more of the good stuff into your meals.

Private chef, holistic nutritionist and Food Matters NYC founder Tricia Williams uses frozen fruits to whip up breakfast smoothies, for instance. Even a staple food like rice can be full of added veggies like red and yellow peppers, carrots and scallions, according to Williams. Check out her sample menu, below.

Day 3: Vary Your Proteins

When it comes to protein, you have more options than you think: meat, poultry, seafood, beans and peas, eggs, processed soy products, nuts and seeds are all part of the MyPlate protein category. The USDA recommends mixing up your menu to get the widest variety of nutrients, and opting for lean versions of meat products. Dawn Jackson Blatner, a Chicago-based registered dietitian and author of the book *The Flexitarian Diet*, likes to use beans as a staple protein. Who says beans have to be reserved for side dishes?

Day 4: Switch to Low-Fat Dairy

Skim and 1% milk are lower in fat and calories, but boast the same amount of calcium and nutrients as whole milk. And, remember, milk is but one dairy source of calcium: you can add low- or nonfat yogurt to smoothies, or eat yogurt with cereal to pack in nutrients in the morning. At lunch, try sprinkling low-fat cheese into your quesadilla, Brill suggests.

Day 5: Lower Your Sodium

Most Americans are consuming too much salt, largely from eating restaurant-prepared meals and processed foods. So, the more meals you make at home — with whole, fresh ingredients — the better. No time for that, you say? There are still ways you can cut your sodium intake: the USDA advises reading labels closely for low-sodium ingredients at the grocery store, and use super-salty condiments like salad dressings, soy sauce and ketchup sparingly. If your taste buds miss the salt, sub in other spices and flavors like black pepper, curry, rosemary, basil, ginger and lemon juice. Sharon Palmer, a registered dietitian and author of *The Plant-Powered Diet*, keeps her meals and flavors fun

by substituting unusual ingredients, such as quinoa instead of oatmeal in the morning and a Mediterranean couscous salad instead of rice with her low-sodium vegetable soup at lunch.

Day 6: Be Choosy About Cooking Oils

Oils are not a food group, but they're commonly used in cooking and provide essential fatty acids. Most cooking oils like olive oil, canola oil and safflower oil contain polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats that are healthy if consumed in small doses. Note: a single tablespoon of oil contains about 120 calories.

Day 7: Eat More Seafood

Once you get the hang of cooking fish, it'll be easy to meet the USDA's recommendation to eat seafood twice a week. Brill is a big fan of salmon, which is an easy fish to roast, broil or grill. Not only is it tasty, but it's high in omega-3 fatty acids, which help protect your heart and nervous system, as well as keep you mentally sharp. Brill suggests a simple, flavorful marinade of mustard and herbs.



Sometimes a political policy can have dire consequences. And no better example is China's longtime 1-child policy to counter overpopulation. Last week the Chinese government announced that it is easing its one-child family restrictions and abolish "re-education through labor" camps, significantly

curtailing two policies that for decades have defined the state's power to control citizens' lives, the Communist Party said Friday. The changes were announced in a party decision that also laid out broad and potentially far-reaching proposals to restructure the economy by encouraging greater private participation in finance, vowing market competition in several important parts of the economy, and promising farmers better property protection and compensation for confiscated land. Senior party officials, led by President Xi Jinping, endorsed the 60 initiatives at a four-day Central Committee conference that ended Tuesday, but details were released Friday. Mr. Xi described the document as a bold call for economic renewal, social improvement and patriotic nation-building — all under the firm control of one-party rule.

Mr. Xi, who assumed China's top party leadership post a year ago and the presidency eight months ago, has tried to project an image as a leader who can pursue a potentially conflicting agenda: making China's economy more responsive to market forces and giving its people greater social and economic freedom while fortifying traditional one-party rule. For months, analysts have speculated about the economic policies that could be introduced at the meeting. But the planned changes to population policy and punishment, two areas where overhauls have been debated, and delayed, for years, gave the decision significance beyond the economy. They could stir public expectations of even bolder changes under Mr. Xi and Prime Minister Li Keqiang in the decade they are likely to spend in office.

For decades, most urban couples have been restricted to having one child. That has been changing fitfully, with rules on the books that couples can have two children if both parents are single children. But that policy will now be further relaxed nationwide. Many rural couples already have two children, and some have more. If carried through, the relaxation would be the first significant nationwide easing of family size restrictions that have been in place since the 1970s. He estimated the policy could lead to one million to two million more births in China every year, on top of the approximately 15 million births a year now. China experts believe that this is a middle step toward allowing all couples to have two children, and eventually taking away the state's hand. Still this shift is historical. It's fundamental. To change the mentality of the society of policy makers has taken people more than a decade.

The one-child restrictions were introduced to deal with official fears that China's population would devour too many resources and suffocate growth. But they have created public ire and international criticism over forced abortions, and have created a population of 1.34 billion, according to a 2010 census, that is aging relatively rapidly, even before China establishes a firm foothold in prosperity. Experts have for years urged some relaxation of the controls.

The party leaders also confirmed an announcement made earlier this year, and then abruptly retracted, that they intend to abolish re-education through labor, which since the 1950s has empowered police authorities to imprison people without any real judicial review. Experts and officials have debated whether to adjust or abolish the system of camps since the 1980s. Now abolition is closer. Re-education through labor was introduced under Mao Zedong to lock away those considered political opponents, and it expanded into a system of incarceration holding more than 100,000 people, many of them working in prison factories and on farms. Sentences are determined by the police, and defendants have scant chance to appeal imprisonment that can last up to four years.

The document gives no date for bringing labor re-education to an end, or for introducing the changes to family planning policy. And there is the possibility that the government will delay or dilute the changes, or introduce similar restrictions under another name. The decision also leaves in place labor

camps that are part of the general penal system for those convicted in court. In a country that carries out more executions than the rest of the world combined, the document pledged to gradually reduce the number of crimes that can result in the death penalty. But it gave no details about which crimes may be affected.

Under Mr. Xi, the government has pursued a broad crackdown on political dissent, critical opinion and rumors on the Internet, and perceived ideological threats. But the decision promised fairer and more predictable treatment from the police and the courts, hinting at support for long-discussed measures intended to make judges more independent of the local officials in their jurisdictions. The bulk of the Central Committee decision dwelt on economic changes intended to rejuvenate growth by encouraging private investment, more efficient use of bank capital and the leasing of land by farmers into larger, more viable holdings.

The most important changes propose to reduce risks and distortions in government finances, which give local administrations many tasks but relatively few sources of revenue, forcing them to rely on taking land from farmers for relatively little compensation. Other proposals include introducing more market-based pricing into areas such as energy and water. But these changes could encounter resistance from government ministries, large state-owned companies, local governments and consumers potentially hurt by price rises. *"They've gone a long way to meet market expectations, and everyone is going to look at implementation,"* said Stephen Green, head of Greater China research for the banking and financial services company Standard Chartered.

DAILY NEWS

NEW YORK'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER



4 STARS FOR 'HUNGER'
SEE PAGE 31

Will someone please **STAND THEIR GROUND** with this **MENACE!**



CANO'S CRAZY CLAIM
SEE SPORTS

Trayvon killer arrested for pointing gun at girlfriend
SEE PAGE 5



NOT GUILTY!

Play



Jackpot Is **\$165 Million!**

Hey, you never know.

Website: <http://www.cnn.com/2013/11/19/justice/florida-george-zimmerman-arrest/>

For all of you who believed that then 28 year-old George Zimmerman's **“stand your ground”** 2012 jury acquittal of the killing of an unarmed black seventeen year-old walking home on a rainy winter night alone was justified or a reasonable verdict, two years later it has become more and more evident that Zimmerman is not the mild mannered victim portrayed by his attorneys. Since the acquittal, Zimmerman has had a number of other brushes with the law. On Monday Zimmerman was arrested in Seminole County, Fla., and charged with assault, after a dispute at his girlfriend's home. The arrest occurred shortly after a domestic disturbance involving Zimmerman's girlfriend, law enforcement officials said. George Zimmerman walked out of jail on Tuesday after posting a \$9000 bail and agreeing to give up his guns and wear an electronic monitor.

Prior to this Zimmerman and his estranged wife were involved in a domestic dispute in September just days after Shellie Zimmerman filed divorce papers, but police later said no charges were filed against either of them because of a lack of evidence. Zimmerman has also been pulled over three times for traffic stops since his acquittal. He was ticketed for doing 60 mph in a 45 mph zone in Lake Mary in September and was given a warning by a state trooper along Interstate 95 for having a tag cover and windows that were too darkly tinted. He was also stopped near Dallas in July and was given a warning for speeding. In 2005, Zimmerman had to take anger management courses after he was accused of

attacking an undercover officer who was trying to arrest Zimmerman's friend. Later that year, Zimmerman's former fiancée filed for a restraining order against him, alleging domestic violence. Zimmerman responded by requesting a restraining order against her. Both requests were granted. No criminal charges were filed.

Zimmerman was charged Monday with aggravated assault, battery and criminal mischief after his 27-year-old girlfriend called 911. Samantha Scheibe claimed Zimmerman had smashed a glass table, threatened her with a shotgun and ultimately pushed her out of the house she rented. Scheibe told deputies the ordeal started with a verbal argument and that she asked Zimmerman to leave the house. Her account in the arrest report says he began packing his belongings, including a shotgun and an assault rifle. She says she began putting his things in the living room and outside the house, and he became upset. At that point, the report says, he took the shotgun out of its case. Zimmerman told his girlfriend to leave and smashed a pair of her sunglasses as she walked toward the front door, the report says. Scheibe told deputies he pushed her out of the house when she got close to the door.

In a front page article, even the Conservative leaning **New York Daily News** had seen enough of Zimmerman's bad behavior with at Tuesday morning picture and headline – ***Will Someone Please Stand Their Ground With This Mence!*** As one person tweeted, ***"I still don't understand what Trayvon was supposed to do."*** Just from his recent behavior is now obvious to almost everyone that Zimmerman is a disturbed individual, but long before Trayvon Martin's tragic death, Zimmerman had been arrested for attacking a police officer among other offences, yet when he was arrested on Monday, his girlfriend said that he had a handgun, shotgun and an automatic assault rifle in his possession. If this is true, we need to ask what is wrong with our gun laws? And why does this obviously troubled individual still allowed to own and carry a dangerous weapon?

Web Link: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/11/21/shellie-zimmerman_n_4316412.html

In an interview (see the above web link) on Thursday with Katie Couric, Shellie Zimmerman the estranged wife of George Zimmerman's described how she hopes there are ***"no more casualties"*** caused by her husband's erratic behavior, as he is now acting ***"like a monster."*** ***"He's 'Like A Ticking Time Bomb."*** It is now obvious to even his strongest supporters and family members that this infamous neighborhood watch guard, needs to be guarded to protect the public, but then Trayvon Martin could have told you this if he were still alive.



One of the greatest disappointments that I have with President Obama is his support to continue U.S. war efforts in Afghanistan, which during the 2008 Presidential election campaign, he called “**the good war**” verses “**the bad war**” in Iraq. My belief is that an invasive war in any country who hasn’t attacked us, is not only over-kill, it is stupid. Remember in the craze after 9/11, the US excuse for attacking Afghanistan was because they had refused to turnover one man, Osama bin Laden. We have to *wonder* “*where were the adults,*” when this decision was made. Today it is estimated that the War in Afghanistan has cost more than \$675 billion and still growing more than \$10.45 million every hour. And since we are not including costs like as the medical treatment for the hundreds of thousands of service men and women that will be required for decades, it is estimated that the total costs for both wars in Afghanistan and in Iraq will be somewhere in the neighborhood of \$6 trillion plus. This does not count the devastation that these two unprovoked wars have costs in both countries and the pain and lives their citizens. America use to laugh at the Soviet Union for getting bogged down in their senseless war in Afghanistan, only to make the same mistake. We have to ask, what kind of hubris and ignorance did this take?

The biggest disappointment that I have with the Obama Administration is not the Affordable Healthcare Act website launch debacle. It is that for some idiotic reason, the wise men and women in the Obama Administration chose to continue this insane un-winnable war that in the greater scheme of things means nothing and will accomplish even less. And after letting Americans and the rest of the world believe that we were finally getting out of catastrophe mistake, the US and Afghan governments are about to sign a new “*security agreement*” (open-ended military commitment) that will keep US military outposts in Afghanistan for many years to come, with American taxpayers paying to support hundreds of thousands of Afghan security forces. Afghanistan is already the longest war in US history and now a bunch of idiots in the Obama Administration wants to continue it. One of the smartest thing that that Soviet Union ever did, was to accept that going into Afghanistan was a mistake and to leave as quietly as they could. And their departure hasn’t hurt them in anyway.

The 25-page “*Security and Defense Cooperation Agreement Between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan*” is a sweeping document, vague in places, highly specific in others, defining everything from the types of future missions US troops would be allowed to conduct in Afghanistan, to the use of radios and the taxation of American soldiers and contractors. The bilateral security agreement will be debated this week in Kabul by around 2,500 village elders, academics and officials in a traditional Loya Jirga. While the Loya Jirga is strictly consultative, Afghan President Hamid Karzai has said he won’t sign it without the Jirga’s approval. The copy of the draft -- the full text is available here -- is dated July 25, 2013. As a working draft, it is particularly revealing because it shows the back and forth negotiations, as US and Afghan officials

added words and struck out paragraphs. The changes are marked by annotations still revealed in the text. The document is a work in progress. US officials say there have been more changes since July. The draft, however, does indicate the scope of this possible agreement with major implications for Washington, Kabul, US troops and the continuation of America's longest war.

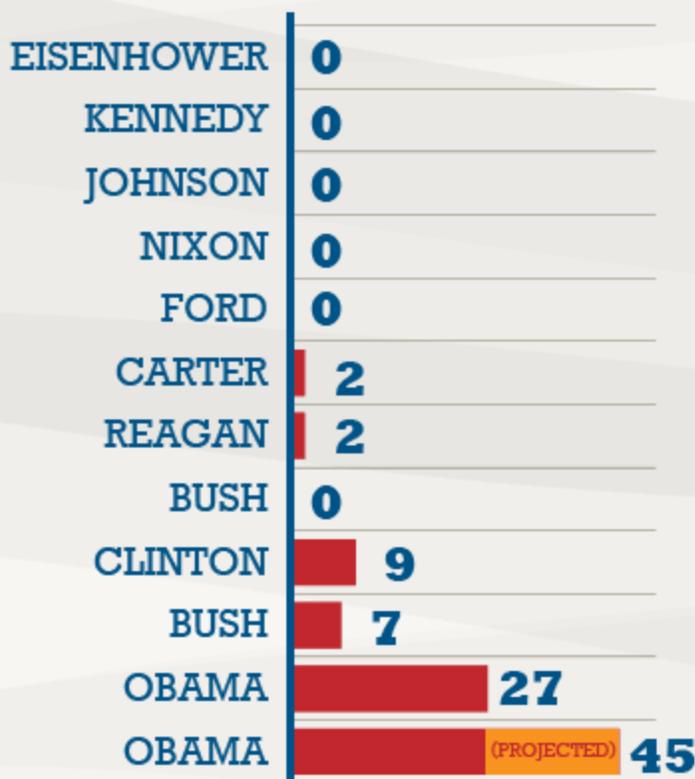
Taken as a whole, the document describes a basic US-Afghan exchange. Afghanistan would allow Washington to operate military bases to train Afghan forces and conduct counter-terrorism operations against al-Qaeda after the current mission ends in 2014. For that foothold in this volatile mountain region wedged between Pakistan and Iran, the United States would agree to sustain and equip Afghanistan's large security force, which the government in Kabul currently cannot afford. The deal, according to the text, would take effect on January 1, 2015 and "*shall remain in force until the end of 2024 and beyond.*" It could be terminated by either Washington or Kabul with two years advance written notice. There is however what US officials believe is a contradiction in the July draft, which would effectively ask American troops to provide training and confront al-Qaeda from the confines of bases. While it says operations against al-Qaeda may be necessary, it also says US troops will not be allowed to make arrests or enter Afghan homes. For more details please feel free to look at the attached **NBC** article by Richard Engel – ***Endless Afghanistan? US-Afghan agreement would keep troops in place and funds flowing, perhaps indefinitely.***

Normally, I would go into the guts of this agreement but I feel that the premise is so misguided and flawed that it would be a waste of time. Afghan terrorist aren't attacking Russians, even though the Soviet Union invaded, occupied and supported hostiles in the country for more than a decade. Maybe if we just left the country and the region allowing the people and their governments find their own solutions, Islamic terrorist will disappear. We have to stop deceiving ourselves in believing that we can protect everyone on the planet and our way is the best way for everyone else. And even if you believe as Winston Churchill once said – "***Democracy is the worst form of government except for all those others that have been tried.***" – We tend to forget how messy and dysfunctional democracy can be in its infancy. Remember the French Revolution, the American Civil War, Juan and Eva Perón in Argentina, as well as the US efforts that led to the overthrow of democratically elected governments in Iran, Congo, Brazil, Ghana, Iraq, Chile, Argentina, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Venezuela and Honduras. George Bush going into Afghanistan was a huge mistake and Obama staying is even worse, because if we are not willing to accept our mistakes we are destined to repeat them.



Half the nominees filibustered in the history of the United States were blocked by Republicans during the Obama administration; of 23 district court nominees filibustered in U.S. history, 20 were Obama's nominees; and even judges that have broad bipartisan support have had to wait nearly 100 days longer, on average, than President George W. Bush's nominees. And unable to get Republicans to change their policy of saying no to everything even in the less partisan Senate, Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) pulled the trigger Thursday, deploying a parliamentary procedure dubbed the **"nuclear option"** to change Senate rules to pass most executive and judicial nominees by a simple majority vote. The Senate voted 52 to 48 for the move, with just three Democrats declining to go along with the rarely used maneuver. The result is that from now until the Senate passes a new rule, executive branch nominees and judges nominated for all courts except the Supreme Court will be able to pass off the floor and take their seats on the bench with the approval of a simple majority of senators. They will no longer have to jump the traditional hurdle of 60 votes, which has increasingly proven a barrier to confirmation during the Obama administration.

FILIBUSTERS ON EXECUTIVE NOMINEES



Source: Cloture votes compiled by People for the American Way

Reid opened debate in the morning by saying that it has become "*so, so very obvious*" that the Senate is broken and in need of rules reform. He rolled through a series of statistics intended to demonstrate that the level of obstruction under President Barack Obama outpaced any historical precedent. "*It's time to change before this institution becomes obsolete,*" Reid said, before citing scripture -- "*One must not break his word*" -- in accusing Minority Leader McConnell (R-Ky.) of breaking his promise to work in a more bipartisan fashion. McConnell responded to Reid by changing the subject to the Affordable Care Act and accusing Democrats of trying to distract Americans from the law's troubled roll-out. Getting around to fidelity, McConnell noted that Reid had said in July that "*we're not touching judges,*" yet he was now choosing to do so. Reid casually brushed off his suit coat and sat down. McConnell compared the alleged duplicity to another Democratic piece of rhetoric. "*If you like the rules of the Senate, you can keep them,*" he quipped, as the GOP side laughed heartily, which encouraged a pleased McConnell to turn directly to his colleagues and repeat the joke.



John McCain, who has been in the middle of the three or four previous deals to defuse the trigger, met with Harry Reid Wednesday to discuss the issue, but aides reported no progress. Last time this happened — a fight that culminated with a three-plus-hour marathon closed-door meeting of almost all 100 senators in the Old Senate Chamber — Democrats gave the Republicans an opt-out: confirm a bunch of nominees to the NLRB etc. McCain rounded up enough Republicans to support those nominees and the issue was defused. This time around, Democrats have pushed three nominees to the crucial D.C. circuit court, which handles most of the critical cases on interpreting federal law. The Rs say the court — which tilts toward GOP-appointed judges at the moment — doesn't need any more judges. And McCain's gang of GOP senators agreed, blocking all 3 of Obama's nominees.

Dems feel they've no other options, aside going nuclear. What does that entail? It means changing the chamber's precedents and rules on a simple majority vote, something that has never happened in the roughly 225-year history of the so-called world's greatest deliberative body. That's because the Senate has always considered itself a "*continuing body*" since only a third of its members are elected every two years, and its rules live on through each and every Congress. (The House is different and adopts new rules at the start of each Congress every two years, and even adopts rules for how to consider each and every major piece of legislation.) Because of this historical impact, when the simple majority rules change was proposed about decade ago — by the Republican majority at the time, trying to overcome a Democratic-led filibuster blockade — GOP Senator Trent Lott dubbed it the "*nuclear option*." At the time, Reid was minority leader and promised that the "*nuclear fallout*" would be even more gridlock in a chamber that is already, well, slow moving. But a McCain-led "*Gang of 14*" averted that crisis, which was finally defused in May 2005 after a few years of war drums.

As Eugene Robinson pointed out this week in an op-ed in **The Washington Post** — **Democrats were forced to go 'nuclear' at last** — as a result of Republicans rampant abuse of the filibuster to block almost any judicial appointments submitted by the Obama Administration. Again: In the past

month, Republicans used the filibuster to block three of President Obama's nominees to serve on the 11-seat Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, often described as the second most powerful court in the land. There was no suggestion that any of the nominees — Patricia Millett, Cornelia "Nina" Pillard and Robert L. Wilkins — was in any way unqualified to sit on the court. There was no hint of controversy or scandal. There was no good reason to reject any of them, yet Republicans decided to filibuster all three. And since the Democratic majority controls just 55 votes, short of the 60 needed to break a filibuster, three long-vacant seats on the D.C. court remained unfilled. There is a stated reason, an ideological reason and a real reason for this pattern of GOP intransigence, each more bogus than the last.

The stated reason is that the judges are not needed because the understaffed court is managing to handle its workload. This is a smoke screen, not an argument. There was no such attempt to set ad hoc standards of jurisprudential productivity when George W. Bush was choosing the nominees. The ideological reason is that, without the three nominees, the court is balanced: Four of its judges are Republican appointees, four are Democratic appointees. Obama, by naming these judges, is allegedly trying to "pack" the court with liberals. But this view, which the GOP can't be serious about, is a nullification of the way the system is supposed to work. The three seats on the court are vacant. The president who happens to be in office when vacancies arise gets to name qualified replacements, which Obama has done. If Republicans want to appoint more judges, they should win more presidential elections. The real reason is that the Republican political strategy for working with Obama is not to work with him at all. Whatever Obama favors, the GOP opposes. Simple as that.

Echoing the sentiment of Harry Reid that enough is enough, President Barack Obama on Thursday endorsed the move by Democrats to revamp Senate filibuster rules to make it easier for the majority party to confirm nominees. *"I support the step a majority of senators took to change the way that Washington is doing business. More specifically, the way the Senate does business,"* Obama said during remarks in the White House briefing room. *"The vote today, I think, is an indication that a majority of senators believe, as I believe, that enough is enough."* The president said Republicans have harmed the economy and democracy itself by routinely leaning on the filibuster to prevent his nominees from getting votes. As of Thursday, 21 of his nominees are either currently being filibustered or were filibustered and withdrew. He conceded that both parties have used the filibuster to prevent a president's nominees from advancing, but said the current level of obstruction *"just isn't normal."* We shall now see how Republicans respond to Reid's pulling of the nuclear trigger.

Thomas Friedman this week wrote a telling op-ed in the **New York Times** — ***Let's Make a Deal*** — in response to Israel and Sunni Saudi Arabia coming together concert to stymie a major foreign policy initiative of a sitting U.S. president to broker an agreement with the Shiite Persian government of Iran. Friedman points out that this new Israeli-Sunni Arab cooperation is not based on any sort of reconciliation, but on the tribal tradition that *my enemy's enemy is my friend* — and the enemy is Iran, which has been steadily laying the groundwork to build a nuclear weapon. Diplomats and ministers from Israel and the Israel lobby have been working Congress, while officials from Arab Gulf states have been telling the Obama administration directly the same message: how much they oppose the proposed deal that Secretary of State John Kerry and the foreign ministers of France, Britain, Russia, China and Germany have drafted to trade limited sanctions relief in return for Iran starting to roll back its nuclear program.

Freidman: "I don't begrudge Israel and the Arabs their skepticism, but we still should not let them stop a deal. If you're not skeptical about Iran, you're not paying attention. Iran has lied and cheated its way to the precipice of building a bomb, and without tough economic sanctions — sanctions that President Obama engineered but which Netanyahu and the Arab states played a key role in driving — Iran would not be at the negotiating table. I also understand the specific concerns of the Gulf Arabs, which I'd summarize as: "It looks to us as if you want to do this deal and then get out of the region — and leave behind an Iran that will only become economically more powerful, at a time when it already has enormous malign influence in Syria, Iraq, in Lebanon through Hezbollah, and in Bahrain."

I get it, but I also don't think we'd just abandon them. In the long run, the deal Kerry is trying to forge with Iran is good for us and our allies for four reasons:

1) In return for very limited sanctions relief, the deal is expected to freeze all of Iran's nuclear bomb-making technologies, roll back some of them and put in place an unprecedented, intrusive inspection regime, while maintaining all the key oil sanctions so Iran will still be hurting aplenty. This way Iran can't "build a bomb and talk" at the same time (the way Israel builds more settlements while it negotiates with Palestinians). Iran freezes and rolls back part of its program now, while we negotiate a full deal to lift sanctions in return for Iran agreeing to restrictions that make it impossible for it to break out with a nuclear weapon.

2) While, Netanyahu believes more sanctions will get Iran to surrender every piece of its nuclear technology, Iran experts say that is highly unlikely.

3) Iran has already mastered the technology to make a bomb (and polls show that this is very popular with Iranians). There is no way to completely eliminate every piece of Iran's nuclear technology unless you wipe every brain clean there.

4) The only lasting security lies in an internal transformation in Iran, which can only come with more openness. Kerry's deal would roll back Iran's nuclear program, while also strengthening more moderate tendencies in Iran. Maybe that will go nowhere, or maybe it will lead to more internal changes. It's worth a carefully constructed test.

Freidman in summary: *"If Israel kills this U.S.-led deal, then the only option is military. How many Americans or NATO allies will go for bombing Iran after Netanyahu has blocked the best effort to explore a credible diplomatic alternative? Not many. That means only Israel will have a military option. If Israel uses it, it may set Iran back, but it will also set Iran free to rush to a bomb. Is Israel ready to bomb Iran every six months?"* The truth is that the Israelis and the Saudis could be right. But we won't never know if we don't do everything that we can to prove them wrong because optimism is the first step in achieving any success. And to castigate these current negotiations as spurious, when representatives from Iran, US and other nations are still moving forward toward a positive solution is both disingenuous and divisive, and should not be tolerated when these same obstructionist are looking for us to fight their wars.... We need a serious solution in the Middle East that cuts through hundreds and thousands of years of tribal, ethnic prejudices and hostilities.... And despite the many obstacles, it has to start with a handshake and hope.

INTERESTING FUTURE TECHNOLOGY

Straddling Bus - Hong Kong conceptual mass transit

Imagine one day you're driving on the road, then one huge "moving tunnel" flying overhead, carrying hundreds of people, you may think it is dream, but it is true, soon this incredible Straddling Bus (3D Bus) will appear on streets, straddled over two lanes with hollowed lower part, so cars can pass through, compared with Subway, Straddling Bus has lower cost, shorter construction period and same passenger capacity, it's more economical way of future urban traffic. From this video, you will see how it works, you will be shocked by this innovative way of transportation.

Web Link: http://www.youtube.com/watch_popup?v=t1gTzc7-lbQ&feature=player_embedded

The Straddling Bus may never been introduced commercially in this configuration but the video shows that there are a number of wide-range options to help us solve our growing traffic congestion. Although the picture-phone that AT&T introduced at the 1964 World's Fair in New York City was never widely accepted, today tens of millions of people converse every day via, cellphones, iPads and Skype based on the same principles. Please enjoy the video.

SOMETHING FUN

I love the website, **MailOnline** because you can always find something interesting that is not covered in the main-stream media. This week it has a piece – *The world explained: Maps*, revealing everything you need to know, from the longest straight line you can possibly sail, to where rubber ducks wash up if you dump them in the sea – From the longest line you can sail to the average price of a Big Mac or the world's most common surnames, these maps show how we lead our lives – and maybe how we should. One map displays where in the world there is the highest risk of drought, while another show where on the rolling seas you run are most likely to run into pirates, serving as a warning to those who live there. Rather unsurprisingly, Jones is the most common surname in the Welsh Valleys, and, as one map shows, you will not be the only Papadopoulos in Athens.

Web Link: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2507719/The-world-explained-maps-revealing-need-know.html>

Please check out the above weblink to see everything you need to know, explained in maps revealing everything you need to know by **Mail Online**.

THIS WEEK'S QUOTE

What's sad to me is that for two weeks on one hand the Democrats are saying, hooray, the Republicans screwed up the government shutdown, right, it's good for us. Now the Republicans are

saying, hooray, the president screwed up the roll-out of Obamacare. The problem is people were hurt in both instances. People were hurt by the government shutdown, they're hurt by the roll-out. What's happening to our country when we're cheering for the other side's (failure)?

Doris Kerns Goodwin on **NBC's *Face The Nation***, November 10, 2013

SOMETHING SPECIAL

I Want To Have A Baby



I want to have a baby..... But not a normal baby

I want to have a designer baby..... A Prada baby a baby by Coco Chanel.... Eyes by Versace hair by Pantene Pro-V Swatch teeth Windows XB Pentium chip Exceleton parts

No smart baby..... NO

I want to have a baby with breast implants

A Botox baby with 20/20 rims and leather interior Gatorade blood Nike soosh Red Cross logo a baby that I can do donate to charity

A baby that cares..... NO

I need a baby that's a trend.... A Baby that comes back with a cash back guarantee.... I need to be with a website with a CD burner vintage post modern digital voice recognition quartz moving hard baby with a retirement plan

I need a baby with 12 different ringtones call waiting to text messaging a Gothly overpriced overhyped made in Indonesia with slave labor baby

I need a baby to give me the light and pass the drugs, oh, oh, oh...

I need a baby that blazing like hip hop and R&B

I need a baby to hangs out with Jay Z

I need to baby with a black album

I need a baby with a white album

I need a baby with a gray album

I need about me that's not even a baby

I need a baby I believe is a baby because the baby went platinum

I need a Che Guevara baby

I need a baby to believe the revolution

No, I need a baby that believes in nothing

I need a vegetarian tofu eating baby a fat free low carb high-fiber baby

I need a baby with nuclear potential

I need something

I need anything

I need something, something to keep me distracted

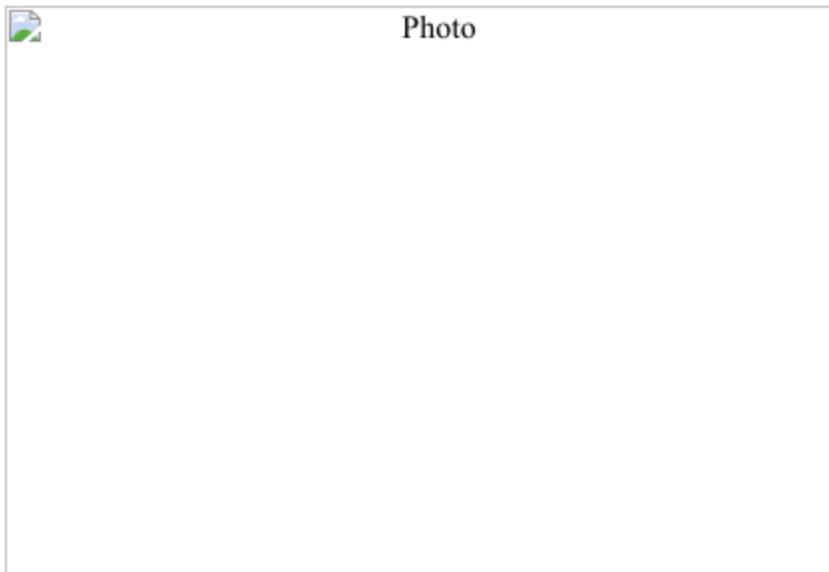
Something to prevent me from feeling other people's pain

Something to keep me believing that this is the best that humanity can do

I need a baby..... so I won't have to deal with *reality*.....

Ainsley Burrows ---- **Web Link:** http://youtu.be/6pnTa_bCphY

THIS WEEK'S MUSIC



Wednesday would have been the 71st birthday of **Jimi Hendrix** and as many of you know, he is one of my favorite people in life, whom I first met one early morning when we both sought refuge from a rainy downpour on 6th Avenue and 12th Street in Greenwich Village in New York City in the late 1960s. We became friends, as I grew to see him as an older brother. One of my highlights in life was to accompany him to Germany and London on the spur of the moment. Like on November 22, 1963, I remember the day that I heard on a morning newscast that Hendrix had died in London. And as I openly wept, my companion who was a 19 year-old NYU coed tried to soothe my angst by saying that he died as "*The King of Rock*" and this iconic position would always be. Last month, **PBS** premiered a wonderful two-hour documentary on ***Hendrix, Hear My Train A Comin'*** which contains previously unseen performance footage and home movies taken by Hendrix, as an extensive number of photographs, drawings, family letters and more, providing new insight into the musician's personality and genius.

The two-hour film uses Hendrix's own words to tell his story, illustrated through archival interviews and illuminated with commentary from family, well-known friends and musicians including Paul McCartney, band members Noel Redding, Mitch Mitchell, Billy Cox, long-time sound engineer Eddie Kramer; Steve Winwood, Vernon Reid, Billy Gibbons, Dweezil Zappa and Dave Mason. The film also features revealing glimpses into Jimi and his era from the three women closest to him: Linda Keith (the girlfriend who introduced Jimi to future manager Chas Chandler), Faye Pridgon (who befriended Hendrix in Harlem in the early 1960s) and Colette Mimram (one of the era's most influential fashion trendsetters who provided inspiration for Hendrix's signature look and created such memorable stage costumes as the beaded jacket Hendrix famously wore at Woodstock). Among the previously unseen treasures in ***Hear My Train A Comin'*** is recently uncovered film footage of Hendrix at the 1968 Miami Pop Festival.

American Masters: *Jimi Hendrix – Hear My Train A Comin'* is a production of Fuse Films and **THIRTEEN's *American Masters*** in association with **WNET**. Bob Smeaton is director. I invite everyone to view: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/episodes/jimi-hendrix/film-jimi-hendrix-hear-my-train-a-comin/2756/>

I hope that you have enjoyed this week's offerings and wish you a wonderful Thanksgiving and a

great week.

Sincerely,

Greg Brown

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Gregory Brown
Chairman & CEO
GlobalCast Partners, LLC

