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**Subject:** Greg Brown's Weekend Reading and Other Things.... 11/03/2013

**Date:** Sun, 03 Nov 2013 11:38:50 +0000

**Attachments:** First\_admit\_the\_problem\_EJ\_Dionne\_TWP\_October\_27,\_2013.docx;  
Why\_is\_broadband\_more\_expensive\_in\_the\_US\_By\_Tom\_Geoghegan\_BBC\_News\_October\_27,\_2013.docx;  
About\_7,500\_Children\_Are\_Admitted\_To\_U.S.\_Hospitals\_Every\_Year\_With\_Gun\_Injuries\_Huff\_Post\_10\_28\_2013.docx; Baghdad's\_Burning...  
\_And\_It's\_Kind\_of\_Our\_Fault\_YOCHI\_DREAZEN\_Foreign\_Policy\_10\_28=5F2013.docx  
;  
Eurozone\_Jobless\_Rate\_Holds\_Steady\_At\_Record\_High\_Of\_12.2\_Percent\_10\_30\_2013.docx;  
Could\_New\_York\_City\_Subways\_Survive\_Another\_Hurricane\_Robert\_Sullivan\_NYT\_October\_23,\_2013.docx;  
The\_Truth\_About\_Those\_Canceled\_Health\_Plans\_Jeffrey\_Young\_Huff\_Post\_11\_01\_2013.docx; Peter\_Tosh\_bio.docx;  
Move\_over\_Bob\_Marley,\_Peter\_Tosh\_is\_finally\_getting\_the\_recognition\_he\_deserves\_Ian\_Burrell\_The\_Independent\_November\_2,\_2013.docx;  
Four\_days,\_four\_massacres,\_21\_dead\_--  
\_and\_as\_always,\_few\_answers\_Matt\_Pearce\_LATimes\_10\_30\_2013.docx;  
For\_the\_first\_time\_in\_at\_least\_seven\_years,\_four\_mass\_murders\_took\_place\_in\_four\_days\_USA\_Today\_10\_30\_2013.docx

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

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**DEAR FRIEND.....**

## An Obituary printed in the London Times

**Common Sense** isn't all that common.

Today we mourn the passing of a beloved old friend, **Common Sense**, who has been with us for many years. No one knows for sure how old he was, since his birth records were long ago lost in bureaucratic red tape. He will be remembered as having cultivated such valuable lessons as:

- Knowing when to come in out of the rain;
- Why the early bird gets the worm;
- Life isn't always fair;
- And maybe it was my fault.

**Common Sense** lived by simple, sound financial policies (don't spend more than you can earn) and reliable strategies (adults, not children, are in charge).

His health began to deteriorate rapidly when well-intentioned but overbearing regulations were set in place. Reports of a 6-year-old boy charged with sexual harassment for kissing a classmate; teens suspended from school for using mouthwash after lunch; and a teacher fired for reprimanding an unruly student, only worsened his condition.

**Common Sense** lost ground when parents attacked teachers for doing the job that they themselves had failed to do in disciplining their unruly children.

It declined even further when schools were required to get parental consent to administer sun lotion or an aspirin to a student; but could not inform parents when a student became pregnant and wanted to have an abortion.

But it truly tanked when Wayne LaPierre, President of the National Rifle Association publicly suggested that if there were more guns in schools, children will be safer, when experts will tell you that people living in households that have guns, are five times likely to be the victims of gun violence.

**Common Sense** lost the will to live as the churches became businesses; and criminals received better treatment than their victims.

**Common Sense** took a beating when you couldn't defend yourself from a burglar in your own home and the burglar could sue you for assault.

**Common Sense** was given a body blow when a twenty-nine year old man who profiled, stalked, followed, got out of his car and accosted a seventeen year old boy walking home on a winter evening from a local convenience store with skittles and ice tea and then claimed to be the victim.

**Common Sense** was lost when politicians refused to accept the science of climate change supported by more than 17,000 scientific papers while demanding that schools teach that the world was created in seven days as stated in the Bible.

Further evidence of this was last week's comment by North Carolina elected official Rep. Pittman said that "*President Obama is not a traitor because he hasn't done one thing to harm in Kenya,*" to garner applause.....

**Common Sense** finally gave up the will to live, after a woman failed to realize that a steaming cup of coffee was hot. She spilled a little in her lap, and was promptly awarded a huge settlement.

**Common Sense** was preceded in death,

- by his parents, Truth and Trust,
- by his wife, Discretion,
- by his daughter, Responsibility,
- by his son, Reason,

- and by his community, Tolerance.

He is survived by his 7 stepbrothers;

- I Know My Rights

- I Want It Now
- Someone Else Is To Blame
- I'm A Victim
- Pay me for Doing Nothing
  
- It's the Government's fault
  
- And if none of these work..... Blame the 47%, Muslims, Immigrants or Obama

Not many attended his funeral because so few realized he was gone. If you still remember him, pass this on. If not, join the majority and do nothing.

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 Lou Reed

**Lou Reed** (March 2, 1942 – October 27, 2013)

Every so often there is a song that punctuates a period of time or an event in your life and for me one of the songs is Lou Reed's "**Walk on the Wild Side**." If only for this, he will always be in my Pantheon of musical gratitude. Last Sunday, October 27, 2013, Lou Reed died of complications from a liver transplant that he had in May at the age of 71. Reed was a rock pioneer who went from record label songwriter to a founding member of the short-lived but innovative and influential Velvet Underground. The band and Reed's solo work tackled taboo topics like drug addiction, paranoia and sexual deviancy in songs that were largely spare, muscular and often saturated in feedback. Other than "**Walk on the Wild Side**" Reed lack the mainstream commercial success that his cult status would suggest. Performers from David Bowie to R.E.M. and U2 have cited them as inspiration, and the Velvet Underground was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1996. And anyone who spent a evening at Max's Kansas City will tell you that no song mirrored its story and that of the counter-culture in New York City, than Lou Reed's "**Walk on the Wild Side**." Echoing the musician Steven Tyler, "**RIP TO A GREAT FRIEND A FELLOW MUSICIAN. FROM MAXES TO THE MASSES YOU MADE THE WORLD SING. I LOVE YOU LOU!**"

Lou Reed – **Walk on the Wild Side** -- <http://youtu.be/4wNknGIKkoA>

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A big story like the government shutdown and debt ceiling debacle tends to push things that often matter off the front pages and TV. Here is just one that got almost no attention. A survey out last week showed that nearly half the students in the nation's public schools, 48% come from families so poor that they qualify for free or reduced priced meals. And even more disgraceful is that a majority of students now qualify for food subsidies in 17 states across the South and West. And echoing Bob Shaffer the moderator on **CBS's FACE THE NATION**, Sunday morning news program said last week, "*I like to see our elected officials focus on how we can fix things like that..... Because I losing interest on who wins the partisan games.*"

What happened in America? Where is the tolerance? Empathy? Concern for one's fellow man/woman? The common man? Less fortunate? Those in need? Our elderly? Our children? Our neighbors? Friends? Institutions? Ronald Reagan was wrong. The problem isn't government, its people? People who lack tolerance, empathy and concern for others. People who don't understand that every time we drill for oil or mine minerals, we are taking from future generations. People who don't understand that cutting taxes isn't building an economy. People who don't care as long as they get theirs. People who pit Christians against Muslims, Blacks against Browns and haves against the have-nots. When did Investment Bankers, Celebrity Hairdressers and news about the Kardarhians become more important than school teachers, fire fighters, nurses and police?

As Bill Maher asked last week on his **HBO** show, ***Real Time with Bill Maher*** – When did the American dream become this pathway to indentured servitude, this economic death spiral where workers get paid next to nothing so they can only afford to buy next to nothing, so businesses are forced to sell cheaper and cheaper sh\*t? Walmart employees can only afford to shop at Walmart. McDonald's workers can only afford to eat at McDonald's. And Hooters waitresses have to wear shirts they grew out of years ago.

And, look, even if you're not moved by the "*don't be such a heartless prick*" argument, consider the fact that most fast-food workers, whose average age, by the way, now is 29 -- not talking about kids -- are on some form of public assistance. Which is not surprising. When even working people can't make enough to live, they take money from the government in the form of food stamps, school lunches, housing assistance, daycare.

This is the welfare that conservatives hate. But, they never stop to think if we raised the minimum wage and forced McDonald's and Walmart to pay their employees enough to eat, we, the taxpayers, wouldn't have to pick up the slack. This is the question the right has to answer: do you want smaller government with less handouts, or do you want a low minimum wage? Because you cannot have both. If Colonel Sanders isn't going to pay the lady behind the counter enough to live on, then Uncle Sam has to. And I, for one, am getting a little tired of helping highly-profitable companies pay their workers.

I would like to summarize this ad-lib by pointing out that as a society, we have lost clarity. It has to be.... How else can one explain advocating tax breaks for the rich, while cutting food programs for the poor, especially when 48% of Americans need food subsidies in order to survive and 20% of our children go to bed hungry? And you don't have to believe in God to recognize that this is a travesty..... This is wrong.....

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There is a murder epidemic in America, which is being ignored by politicians in both major political parties on both the federal and state level. Murder sprees are now the new norm, feeding the mayhem and murder report on the nightly news. But the real Big Ugly is that there is no public outrage.

**A recent example:** Monday night a 36-year-old man went on a killing spree in Terrell, Texas that left at least five people dead. The shootings began around 5 p.m. Monday when police started finding bodies. The first victim was discovered in a home with a bullet wound to the head. Officers were investigating that death when they received word of an arson and a second body nearby. A friend of the suspect was shot at in a third location, but was not injured. Around 10:30 p.m., police found two more victims shot to death inside a home. Authorities also discovered a 3-year-old child at the location, uninjured in bed. Three of the victims were women and two were men. Early Tuesday morning, police arrested Charles Everett Brownlow Jr., after an hours-long manhunt and a high-speed chase – Brownlow was spotted by a helicopter, then crashed his car and fled into a wooded area where he was later apprehended. At this time, a motive for the slayings is unknown.

In a report compiled by the NBC News research department on guns and crime, they say that every year more than 100,000 people are shot which equates to an average of 289 people being shot each day. Eighty-six of them die: 30 are murdered, 53 kill themselves, two die accidentally, and one is shot in a police intervention. Between 2000 and 2010, a total of 335,609 people died from guns -- more than the population of St. Louis, Mo. (318,069), Pittsburgh (307,484), Cincinnati, Ohio (296,223), Newark, N.J. (277,540), and Orlando, Fla. (243,195). One person is killed by a firearm every 17 minutes, 87 people are killed during an average day, and 609 are killed every week. (source: CDC)

#### Homicides by weapon:

Handguns comprised 72.5 percent of the firearms used in murder and non-negligent manslaughter incidents in 2011; 4.1 percent were with shotguns; 3.8 percent were with rifles; 18.5 percent were with unspecified firearms.

13.3 percent of homicides were done with knives or other cutting instruments.

5.8 percent of homicides were from the use of hands, fists, feet, etc. (source: FBI)

#### Guns and kids:

- 82 children under five years old died from firearms in 2010 compared with 58 law enforcement officers killed by firearms in the line of duty (sources: CDF, CDC, FBI)
- More kids ages 0-19 died from firearms every three days in 2010 than died in the 2012 Newtown, Conn., massacre (source: CDF, CDC)
- Nearly three times more kids (15,576) were injured by firearms in 2010 than the number of U.S. soldiers (5,247) wounded in action that year in the war in Afghanistan (source: CDF, CDC, Department of Defense)
- Half of all juveniles murdered in 2010 were killed with a firearm (source: Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention)

## 2013 Mass Shootings

**Sept. 16, 2013 - Washington, D.C. - 13 dead (including gunman):** Defense contract employee and former Navy reservist Aaron Alexis, 34, allegedly opened fire shortly after 8 a.m. inside building 197 in the Washington Navy Yard, killing 12 people and wounding more than a dozen others. Alexis was slain in a gun battle with police.

**Sept. 11, 2013 - Crab Orchard, Tenn. - 4 dead:** Jacob Allen Bennett, 26, was arrested in the shooting deaths of a woman and three teenagers. Their bodies were found in a car about 50 miles west of Knoxville, Tenn.

**August 14, 2013 - Oklahoma City, Okla. - 4 dead:** Daniel Livingston Green, 40, was arrested on four counts of first-degree murder, after his mother, sister and her two children were discovered fatally

shot inside their home.

**August 11, 2013 - Omaha, Neb. - 4 dead:** Nikko Jenkins, 26, was arrested for allegedly shooting four people in the head. Police say three of the four victims had no connection to Jenkins.

**Aug. 7, 2013 - Dallas - 4 dead:** Erbie Lee Bowser, 44, a former teacher and Dallas Mavericks hip-hop dancer, was charged with two counts of capital murder after police said he attacked the homes of his estranged wife and his girlfriend, killing both women and two of their children. Four additional people were wounded in the attacks.

**July 26, 2013 - Hialeah, Fla. - 7 dead:** Police say Pedro Vargas, 42, went on a shooting spree in his South Florida apartment complex, killing the building's two managers, a family of three, and a man returning from his son's boxing practice. Before the attack, Vargas called the police asking the dispatcher to run the license plate of a vehicle parked outside the building, after reporting he had been followed and threatened by people doing witchcraft.

**July 26, 2013 - Clarksburg, W. Va. - 4 dead:** Sidney Muller, 27, was arrested on four counts of first-degree murder for allegedly killing two individuals after a drug deal gone wrong. Muller allegedly then turned his weapon on two passersby, a father and his son who were delivering the local newspaper, killing them.

**June 7, 2013 - Santa Monica, Calif. - 5 dead (including gunman):** Police say John Zawahri, 23, armed with a homemade assault rifle and high-capacity magazines, killed his brother and father at their home and then headed to Santa Monica College, where he carjacked a woman, ordering her to drive him around while he fired at other people. The woman escaped unharmed but two other people were gunned down.

**May 11, 2013 - Waynesville, Ind. - 4 dead:** Four bodies were discovered in a home after a vicious killing that authorities said was a drug-related crime. One victim's son returned home to find the bodies and reported them to 911. Police say Samuel Sallee, 55, is the prime suspect in the case.

**May 10, 2013 - Fernley, Nev. - 5 dead:** Jeremiah Bean, 25, was arrested days after allegedly killing an elderly couple in their home, then a newspaper delivery man and another couple nearby. Police say the first attack went undetected, giving Bean the opportunity to commit the three others. He was arraigned on 19 counts, including first-degree murder, arson and burglary.

**April 24, 2013 - Manchester, Ill. - 5 dead:** Rick Odell Smith, 43, allegedly stormed a home, killing five members of the same family. Smith had been in a dispute with at least one of the victims, potentially over the custody of a child, police said. The five victims included a grandmother, her granddaughter, the granddaughter's boyfriend and their two children.

**April 21, 2013 - Federal Way, Wash. - 4 dead:** A domestic-violence homicide claimed three additional lives before the gunman was killed by responding officers. Police say Dennis Clark III, 27, shot and killed his girlfriend in their shared apartment before killing two witnesses in the building's parking lot and a third victim in another apartment.

**April 18, 2013 - Akron, Ohio - 4 dead:** Derrick Brantley and Deshanon Haywood, both 21, were each charged for the murder of four adults, two men and two women, who had been found shot in the head in a townhouse basement. Police say two guns were used.

**March 13, 2013 - Herkimer County, N.Y. - 4 dead:** In a shooting rampage that spanned two upstate New York villages, Kurt Meyers, 64, allegedly took the lives of four people. Police say Meyers first opened fire in a barber shop in Mohawk, killing two customers, one a retired corrections officer. The gunman then fled to an auto care business in neighboring Herkimer and fatally shot an employee and a customer who was a 23-year veteran of the state Department of Corrections. According to authorities, the gunman had no money, no job and was maxed out on his credit cards.

**Jan. 19, 2013 - Albuquerque, N.M. - 5 dead:** Nehemiah Griego, 15, is accused of killing both his parents and three younger siblings. According to police documents, Griego shot his mother while she slept, then killed his brother and sisters after they woke up. Griego told authorities he ambushed his father, who was returning home from work, with a semi-automatic rifle that his parents owned. All victims appeared to have gunshot wounds to the head. New Mexico authorities also report that the teen had planned to go to Walmart and randomly shoot people.

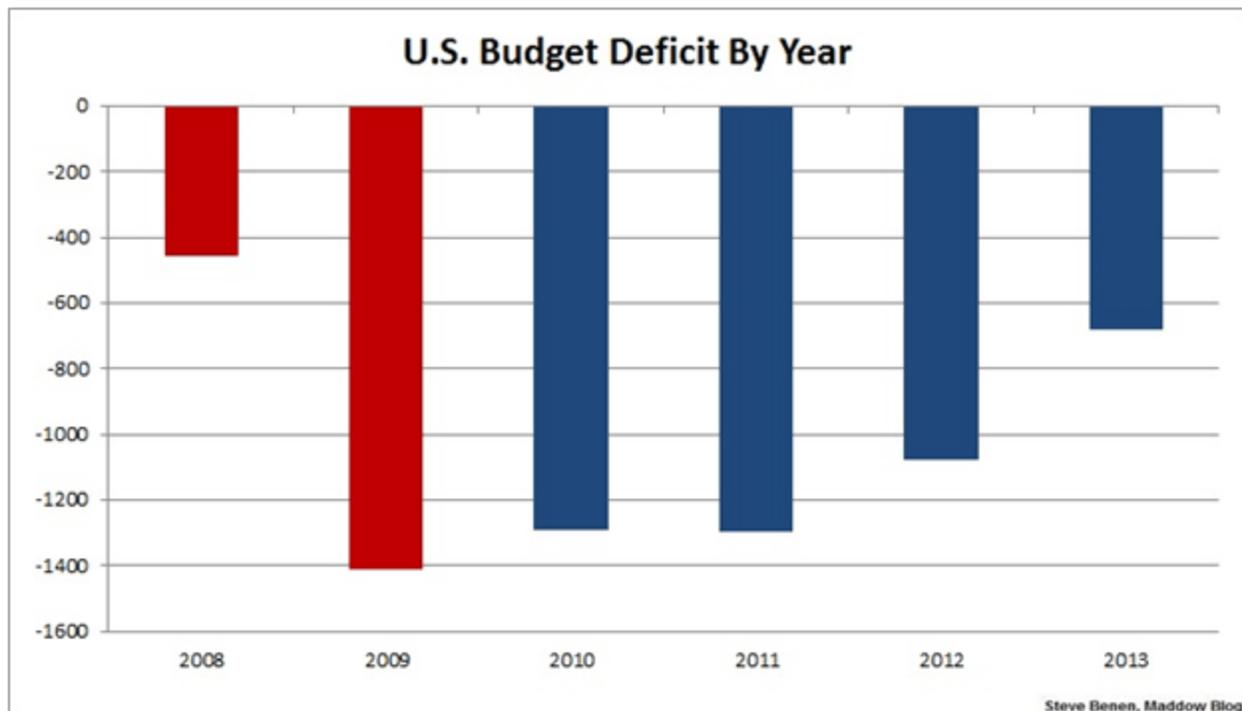
**Jan. 7, 2013 - Tulsa, Okla. - 4 dead:** Brothers Cedric Poore, 39, and James Poore (pictured), 32, are accused of killing four women, two of whom were twins. The victims, found in an apartment, were all mothers, and a 3-year-old boy was also found unharmed.

Since the mass shooting in Newtown on last December 14<sup>th</sup> using the most recent CDC estimates for yearly deaths by guns in the United States, it is likely that as of 10/29/2013, roughly 28,776 people have died from guns in the U.S. since the Newtown shootings. Compare that number to the number of deaths reported in the news in our interactive below, and you can see how undertold the story of gun violence in America actually is.

We have to ask why? And again, why aren't our public officials outraged? Doing something? Every half month approximately the same amount of people die from gun violence as on 9/11..... and we started two wars to avenge those terrorist attacks, not to mention the trillions of dollars spent fighting the War On Terrorism. In spite of what the NRA says, guns kill..... because the easy access to guns makes it more likely that they will be used to kill. Without a doubt, American needs to curtail access to guns, especially military grade weapons. Concurrently, we need to invest in mental health, because nothing is more dangerous than a crazy with a gun. Now that's common sense.....

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# Budget deficit shrinks to five-year low



Republican Conservatives will tell you that after President Obama the #1 problem in America is the out of control government spending and growing deficit. When in reality the deficit is not growing; it's shrinking. **The AP** reported this week that for the first time in five years, the U.S. government has run a budget deficit below \$1 trillion. The government says the deficit for the 2013 budget year totaled \$680.3 billion, down from \$1.09 trillion in 2012. That's the smallest imbalance since 2008, when the government ran a \$458.6 billion deficit. Many congressional Republicans predicted tax increases on the wealthy that began in January would fail to lower the deficit, but as is usually the case, the opposite happened. The combination of new tax revenue and reduced spending did what exactly what was expected – it reduced the nation's budget shortfall.

While this shouldn't surprise anyone, the trend is a well-kept secret – national polling last year found that only 6% of Americans realize that the deficit is shrinking in the Obama era. Whether the public realizes it or not, the facts are not in dispute – the deficit is now down \$400 billion from last year, and down nearly \$800 billion from when President Obama took office. This is the fastest deficit reduction seen in the United States since the end of World War II. A number economist don't actually consider this good news. As many strongly believe the nation should be borrowing more, not less, taking advantage of low interest rates, investing heavily in infrastructure, creating millions of jobs, and leaving deficit reduction for another day. That said, if we're going to have a fiscal debate, it should be rooted in reality, not silly misconceptions. And the reality is, we're witnessing deficit reduction at a remarkable clip.

Still Republicans like House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-Va.) recently appeared on Fox News and when the discussion turned to the budget, the Virginia Republican said lawmakers should be *"focused on trying to deal with the ultimate problem, which is this growing deficit."* Without a doubt, the deficit is a problem that should be seriously addressed. And economist who is worth their salt will tell you that it will require both cutting spending and raising taxes and maybe in the short term spending money on the country's infrastructure to grow the economy. But focusing on a non-existent problem of a growing deficit, when it has been slashed by more than 40% over the past several years is a

distraction that the country can ill afford. And for those politicians who are still using this issue to promote their profile, do a serious disservice to our country. We have many serious problems and those are the ones that we should focus on.

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Can you really eat on a \$1.40 a meal or \$29 a week? Since the recession the request for food assistance has soared by more than 70%. With a record number of Americans relying on federal aid to put food on the table as of Friday, they will have to make do with less because the recession-era boost to food stamps funding officially expired. Benefits were reduced by about 5% on Nov. 1 for all of the nearly 47.7 million Americans on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). A family of four will now receive \$36 less each month because of the reduction, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. A household of eight would see benefits reduced \$65 a month. The average monthly benefit per household for all 50 states and the District of Columbia last year was \$278.

The cuts severely curtail the federal funds that have flowed into local communities and businesses through the states. Georgia, for example, will see total benefits cut by \$210 million, according to an analysis by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a left-leaning think tank. Illinois' share of the cut will be \$220 million. For Ohio, it's \$193 million. All told, \$5 billion less in food stamp benefits will be paid over the next year. The reductions will be acutely felt in states with a higher food stamp population, particularly in the dozen states where one in five residents is collecting benefits. Vulnerable populations will be especially affected. In New

York, more than 1 million elderly people or those with disabilities will feel the impact, according to the center's analysis. About 2.3 million children in both California and Texas will be affected.

The expiring benefits were always intended to be temporary, and some say calling the end of the benefits boost a "cut" is disingenuous. Congress approved a higher level of food stamp benefits for all recipients as part of the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act, the stimulus bill enacted in 2009. Although the economy has and is improving, demand for assistance remains at record levels — almost three times what it was in 2000. The cost of the program has ballooned as well. A decade ago, federal spending on food stamps topped \$20 billion annually. In the last fiscal year, the U.S. spent a record \$78.4 billion. In Washington and in many states, Republicans have backed efforts to curb spending, cut benefits and trim enrollment in SNAP. The persistent demand and skyrocketing costs have prompted calls from some policymakers to cut spending on the program. Others say reductions are premature and will hurt those still reeling from the recession.

But the real issue isn't money because the 16 day government shutdown, cost an estimated \$24 billion and Conservative Republicans didn't blink an eye. One in seven Americans rely on government assistance to feed themselves and their family. And it is estimated that as many as 15 million children go to bed hungry. The human costs of food insecurity should be a black eye to every American. Yet Conservatives are asking for another \$40 billion in cuts in food assistance programs. Something is wrong here.... We are gutting the safety net for the most vulnerable Americans.... Our children, elderly, disabled and poor. I am ashamed..... and if you are an American, so should you.

## THIS WEEK'S OFFERINGS

As E.J. Dionne wrote this week in **The Washington Post** in his op-ed – ***First, admit the problem*** – President Obama and the Democrats that nobody is talking about: They have been too fearful of confronting our country's three-year obsession with the wrong problem. And that the tea party's greatest victory: It has made the wrong problem the center of policy making. The wrong problem is the deficit. The right problem is sluggish growth and persistent unemployment. As Dionne points out that the paradox is that the deficit would be less challenging today if we had been less preoccupied with it since the 2010 elections. The deep cuts in government spending since then have slowed the very growth we need to make our way toward fiscal balance.

As Dionne says, relief may be on the way. More from political exhaustion than any change of heart, we may be about to take halting steps toward dealing with the issues we should have been grappling with in the first place. The president's defenders would assert that he has been careful all along to emphasize the need for short-term stimulus to get the economy moving and to insist that deficit reduction was his goal only for the longer run. That's true enough. But there are the words, and then there is the music. Since a Republican Party driven by tea party thinking managed to make government spending and deficits Washington's paramount concerns, the administration has backed off aggressive efforts to use government to pump much-needed energy into an economy whose tepid growth since the 2008 implosion has left 11.3 million Americans out of work.

By putting so much effort into negotiating a failed "*grand bargain*" with House Speaker John Boehner in 2011 and subsequently agreeing to the sharp, across-the-board cuts of the "sequester" to get out of a crisis, Obama contributed to the deficit chorus. Because of the fiscal tightening, our unemployment rate is probably a point higher than it would have been otherwise. We've done a heck of a job on the

deficit, reducing it from about 10 percent of the economy in 2009 to 4 percent now. We've done badly by the jobless. The administration would argue that it did a lot to avoid even more damage. It had to play the political hand dealt it by the 2010 elections while facing the overwhelming consensus among political elites that deficit reduction was urgent. The commission that Obama appointed, led by Erskine Bowles and Alan Simpson, spread this gospel with passion and zeal — even if both acknowledged, usually in much softer tones, that the economy still needed a short-term boost.

Of course, there should be no denying that we face fiscal challenges down the road. Over the next three decades or so, the retirement of baby boomers will be expensive. Most of the spending will be in health care expenditures under Medicare and Medicaid. In an environment free from crisis-mongering and hyper-partisanship, passage of the Affordable Care Act could have been seen as a first step toward what ought to be our goal: guaranteeing decent health-care coverage to all Americans, including the elderly, at a cost government can afford. And, by the way, no matter how successful we are at doing this, there is no way around the need for more government revenue as long as large numbers of baby boomers are around.

But all this should be the focus of a measured discussion over the next several years, not an excuse for a frenzy of cuts — especially reductions right now that are only dampening the recovery. When the house is still smoldering, you don't worry about how to cut your heating bill in the coming decades. Here's the good news. Congress is so sick of political chaos and failed quests for big budget deals that it might actually address the problem right in front of our noses. Rep. Paul Ryan, the House Budget Committee chair, spoke last week of the futility of shooting for a "*grand bargain*." This is a positive signal. And Obama now seems intent on pushing back against austerity. "*This obsession with cutting for the sake of cutting hasn't helped our economy grow*," he said on Friday. "*It's held it back*."

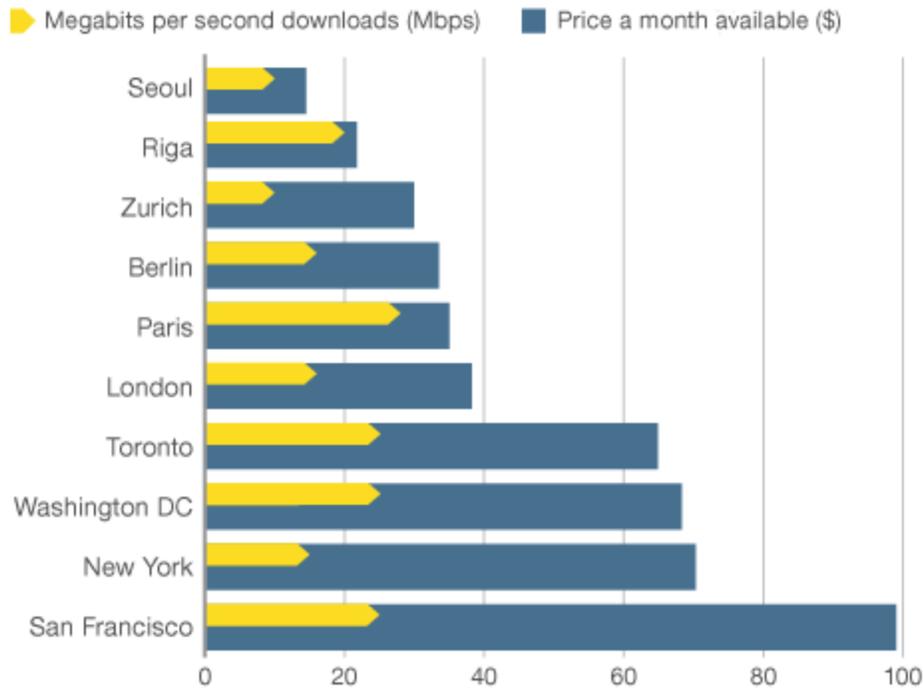
The most helpful thing Congress can do immediately is to get rid of the sequester cuts. A Congressional Budget Office study conducted at the request of Rep. Chris Van Hollen, the Budget Committee's ranking Democrat, found that if left in place, the automatic reductions could cost up to 1.6 million jobs next year. Allowing that to happen would be folly — and heartless, too. So let's douse the flames of slow growth and joblessness first. Government does better when it deals with one crisis at a time. The idea that we can cut the government budget to generate jobs is as stupid as it sounds. Like any other country America has to control government spending, but taking money out of a consumer based economy is going to reduce buying. We need to grow the economy and the best way to do this is by investing in upgrading the country's infrastructure which can't be outsourced to China. The President should forget any "*grand bargain*," and pursue a jobs program that is the right thing for America.

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In the country that created broadband, this week in **BBC News** Tom Geoghegan wrote – ***Why is broadband more expensive in the US?*** – Because home broadband in the US costs far more than elsewhere. And at high speeds, it costs nearly three times as much as in the UK and France, and more than five times as much as in South Korea. *But why?* The price of basic broadband, TV and phone packages - or bundles as they are known - is much higher in American cities than elsewhere, suggests the New America Foundation think tank, which compared hundreds of available packages worldwide. Looking at some of the cheaper ones available in certain cities, at lower to mid download speeds, San Francisco (\$99/£61), New York (\$70) and Washington DC (\$68) dwarf London (\$38), Paris (\$35) and Seoul (\$15).

## Cost of broadband/TV/phone packages around the world



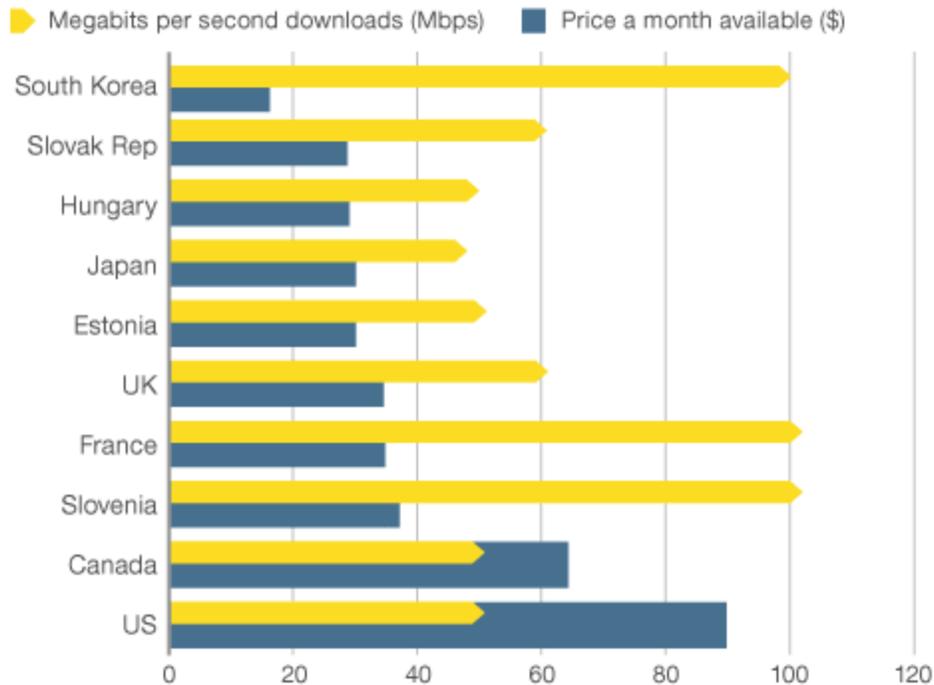
Note: \$ reflects cost of living (purchasing power parity)

Source: New America Foundation

This research echoes the findings of another report earlier in the summer by the OECD, which compared countries in terms of their broadband-only prices. Across all 10 download speeds and capacities, it consistently ranked the US near the bottom. For instance, at high speeds of 45 Mbps and over, the OECD report has the US ranked 30th out of 33 countries, with an average price of \$90 a month. With phone and TV thrown in, plus some premium channels, these packages often cost \$200. *"Americans pay so much because they don't have a choice,"* says Susan Crawford, a former special assistant to President Barack Obama on science, technology and innovation policy. And although there are several national companies, local markets tend to be dominated by just one or two main providers. *"We deregulated high-speed internet access 10 years ago and since then we've seen enormous consolidation and monopolies, so left to their own devices, companies that supply internet access will charge high prices, because they face neither competition nor oversight."*

## Countries with high-speed broadband

45 megabits per second or more



Note: \$ reflects cost of living (purchasing power parity)

Source: OECD

Two-thirds get their broadband via their television cables, she says, because the DSL (digital subscriber line) service provided by phone companies over copper lines can't compete with cable speeds, while wireless and satellite services are subject to low usage caps. San Francisco seems to be particularly expensive. Mitch Evans pays \$200 a month for internet, TV and unlimited voice phone calls. *"I guess I've just become used to it after 23 years here in the Bay Area. I know the cost of living here is very high, but for me it's a small price to pay for such a beautiful and wonderful place to call home."* Buck Wallander, a recent arrival in the city, pays \$120 a month for a television and broadband package provided by Xfinity/Comcast, plus \$7 a month to "rent" the modem. He says he had little choice in selecting a provider because the only other cable television company was directv, which didn't offer any internet service. His internet speed is "entry-level" with a cap on usage. He says he's pretty satisfied with the service but resents leasing the modem. *"That's like a rental car company charging customers an extra \$7 fee per month to include the steering wheel."*

Elsewhere in the US, there is a patchwork of other options. In Kansas City, Kansas, residents are enjoying a high-speed fibre network, supplied by Google, at a price of \$70 a month for a gigabit (1,000 Mbps) internet-only service. And there's a slower 5 Mbps download speed for free for seven years to those who pay \$300 up front. Google now has Austin, Texas, and Provo, Utah, in its sights, too. Verizon also has a super fast fibre network, Fios, available to 10% of US households. About 150 cities across the US have internet access supplied by public utility companies. In Chattanooga, Tennessee, electricity company EPB became an internet service provider four years ago. After expanding its existing fibre network which it used to control the grid, it now offers a one gigabit service for \$70 a month.

What the suppliers say

- Verizon said it provided good value - a triple-play bundle FiOS including high-speed, fibre 500 Mbps internet for roughly \$100 to \$125 per month, before taxes, fees and other charges for set-top box rentals and premium channels
- Comcast said it had increased speeds 12 times in 11 years. *"We offer a 105 Mbps service today to more than 50 million homes across the US in 39 states plus the District of Columbia. We also offer our fastest speed tier, 505 Mbps, to millions of homes in the north-east of the United States."*
- Time Warner Cable said entry-level pricing for broadband was the second lowest in the world. *"Competition is robust and growing, with American consumers enjoying meaningful choices among providers, speeds and pricing. The US broadband network is strong and is only getting stronger."*

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These new services have had a positive impact on prices, says Chris Mitchell, director of telecommunications at the Institute for Local Self-Reliance. *"When a community builds its own network it enters the market with a lower price than the incumbents had been offering. Often the incumbent then lowers their price - often even further than the municipal network is offering - so when a community starts offering a service the prices typically drop."* In Lafayette, Louisiana, \$35 can get you 15Mbps from the municipal internet service. But only one in 10 US cities have public electricity utilities and 19 states have discouraged or banned communities from building these networks, says Mitchell.

For Susan Crawford, author of *Captive Audience*, higher prices have created a digital divide which excludes poor Americans from quality internet access. And there are economic implications too. *"The 2008 banking crisis demonstrated what happens when we allow banks to act out of pure self interest. The communications crisis in America is less visible but also destructive of America's ability to function on the global stage."* Like electricity, she says, internet access should be available equally to all at reasonable prices so that every other sector of US industry and society can flourish.

Rick Karr, who made a PBS documentary in which he travelled to the UK to find out why prices were lower, says that the critical moment came when the British regulator Ofcom forced British Telecom to allow other companies to use its copper telephone wires going to and from homes. But US regulators took a different approach. Rather than encouraging competition between operators using the same network, the US encouraged competition between different infrastructure owners - big companies that could afford to build their own networks. Some believe that UK-style regulation is bad for competition and innovation, however, and suggest that the US is already one of the world leaders in broadband. Several studies show the US with broadband speeds as good as anyone, says Brian Dietz of the NCTA, the trade association for the US cable companies. High performing states like Vermont, New Hampshire and Delaware have faster average speeds than Japan, he says. And 96.3% of US households have access to wired broadband.

It's also very difficult to fairly make international comparisons on price, he says. *"Building broadband networks in a country with the sheer size and diverse geography of the US is definitely a factor when comparing but despite these challenges, the US is a leader in global broadband by any objective measure."* The critics should take a broader view, says Scott Cleland, chairman of NetCompetition, a pro-competition e-forum supported by broadband interests.

In Europe, people are selling different capacities at different prices, but the US encourages different technologies and a diversity of choice - people can choose phone, cable, wireless or satellite, he says. And suppliers can get a return from their investment which can be ploughed back into improving the infrastructure - \$1.2 trillion has been reinvested since the mid-1990s. But in Europe the funds aren't there, so it's Europe that is lagging behind on 4G and fibre, Cleland argues. *"We may be paying more in your eyes today but we are building for tomorrow and the long-term."* The US is the only country in the world that provides a fast streaming cable service to everyone, he says. Moaning about it, he thinks, is like complaining you only have access to a Rolls-Royce when you also have Fords, Chevys and Cadillacs to choose from.

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Diana Aguilar holds a photo of her 6-year-old daughter Aliyah Shell during a press conference at the U.S. Capitol, calling for gun reform legislation on Sept. 18, 2013. Aliyah died after sustaining multiple gunshot wounds outside her home in Chicago in 2012.

Every year more than 7,000 children with gunshot wounds are admitted to hospitals in the United States, according to a new study that was presented Sunday at the American Academy of Pediatrics National Conference and Exhibition in Orlando, Fla. The report, entitled "United States Gunshot Violence: Disturbing Trends," found that approximately 7,500 children are admitted to hospitals annually for the treatment of injuries sustained from guns. Researchers say that more than 500 of these children die because of their injuries.

Reviewing about 36 million pediatric hospital admissions from 1997, 2000, 2003, 2006 and 2009 for the study, the researchers found that the number of kids hospitalized from gunshot wounds has been rising. "Between 1997 and 2009, hospitalizations from gunshot wounds increased from 4,270 to 7,730, and in-hospital deaths from 317 to 503," according to a news release on the academy's official website. Dr. Arin Madenci, one of the study's authors, says that handguns were most often to blame for these hospitalizations. "Handguns account for the majority of childhood gunshot wounds and this number appears to be increasing over the last decade," Madenci said in a statement posted on the academy's site. "Furthermore, states with higher percentages of household firearm ownership also tended to have higher proportions of childhood gunshot wounds, especially those occurring in the home."

Citing Madenci's research, **NBC News** writes that 80 percent of the gun injuries were inflicted by handguns. Given these statistics, Madenci says implementing policies to reduce the number of firearms, specifically handguns, in homes could help limit the number of children injured by guns. *"Based on our research, we know that there is a clear correlation between household gun ownership -- and gun safety practices -- and childhood gunshot wounds in the home on a large scale,"* Madenci told **Discovery News**. Gun-ownership advocate Alan Gottlieb told NBC News that while he doesn't find fault with the study's findings, he says that any conversation about guns and gun ownership should encompass both pros and cons. Specifically, he pointed out that guns not only injure and kill, but also save lives. *"When you look at the number of people who are alive today or who didn't have to be hospitalized because they weren't a victim -- and the money saved on that -- you have to look at that side of the equation to get good public policy,"* he said.

Gottlieb, chairman of the Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms, added that he agreed with Madenci that debate about policies regarding handguns may be necessary. At least 9,900 gun-related deaths in the United States have been reported by the media since mid-December, when more than two dozen people -- including 20 children -- were shot to death at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., according to Slate's gun deaths tally project. More than 640 of these victims have reportedly been teenagers or children. According to a January report in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, guns kill twice as many children and young people as cancer, five times as many as heart disease, and 15 times as many as infections. Please feel free to read the article in **The Huffington Post** -- **About 7,500 Children Are Admitted To U.S. Hospitals Every Year With Gun Injuries: Study**. Why isn't anything being done?

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History often repeats itself and two years after the last American combat troops left Iraq, the country is in flames. The violence raging there poses a serious policy challenge for the Obama administration --

and offers a cautionary tale of what could happen in Afghanistan if all American troops are withdrawn from that country as well. This past week, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki visits Washington to plead for American help in his fight against the Islamist militants who have killed more than 5,000 Iraqis since the start of the year, including roughly 600 this month alone. On Sunday, a spate of car bombings killed at least 60 Iraqi civilians and security personnel, pushing this year's death toll to levels not seen since the height of the country's civil war.

There's a painful irony to Maliki's trip. In the fall of 2011, the Obama administration and the Maliki government were locked in negotiations over a pact that would have cleared the way for a continued U.S. military presence in the country by guaranteeing the Americans full immunity from criminal prosecution. Obama yanked all U.S. combat troops out of the country when Maliki made clear that he wouldn't or couldn't deliver such an agreement. Two years later, Maliki is desperately trying to turn back the clock and get Washington to increase its security cooperation with his government.

Afghanistan is not Iraq, but Afghan President Hamid Karzai is facing a similar dilemma when it comes to the future U.S. military presence in his country. Washington is demanding that Afghanistan give its troops the kind of immunity it wanted in Iraq, and Karzai -- like Maliki -- is publicly opposed to providing it. The impasse has led the Obama administration to consider something that would have been unthinkable even a few months ago: a complete withdrawal of all American combat troops from Afghanistan, the original battlefield of the war on terror.

The Obama administration has made no secret of its desire to get out of Afghanistan, which many senior military and civilian officials increasingly see as a lost cause. Even if the White House orders a complete military withdrawal, however, Iraq's rapid deterioration suggests that the U.S. should look for creative ways of helping Afghanistan fill the void that would be left behind. That could include helping Kabul recruit -- and pay for -- Western contractors that specialize in intelligence collection and analysis, a vitally important part of counter-terrorism. Washington and its allies could also make it easier for Afghanistan to contract with firms that handle logistics like the deliveries of gasoline and ammunition, both areas where the Afghans have severe shortcomings.

Karzai is a master negotiator who has remained in power for more than a decade by knowing exactly how far he could push the U.S. without triggering a total break between Washington and Kabul. This time around, though, Karzai's intransigence on the troop issue could give the White House a final reason to leave. *"Never underestimate the capacity of foreign leaders to misunderstand where we really do have red lines,"* said Douglas Ollivant, a retired Army officer who served as the Iraq director at the National Security Council during both the Bush and Obama administrations and recently spent a year in Afghanistan. *"Maliki thought we might settle for something less than guaranteed immunity, and he was wrong. Karzai might also misunderstand that this is a red line for us."*

It wasn't supposed to play out this way in either country. In Iraq, a bilateral agreement in 2008 between Maliki and then-President George W. Bush called for all U.S. ground troops to leave Iraq at the end of 2011, a deadline that few officials in either country thought would be enforced. As late as the fall of 2011, senior U.S. military officers were still privately saying that they expected a deal that would allow 8,000-15,000 troops to remain in Iraq indefinitely. They were wrong: when Maliki wouldn't budge on the immunity issue, Obama stunned the Pentagon by ordering all U.S. troops out of the country by December 31st, 2011.

The withdrawal had an immediate impact on Iraq's nascent military. In a flash, the Iraqis lost the embedded American military trainers who were living with, and fighting alongside, many of their most elite combat personnel. The specialized U.S. military personnel who were helping the Iraqis collect and analyze battlefield intelligence were also pulled out of the country, sharply reducing the amount of information Iraqi security personnel had about key al-Qaeda leaders or potential future attacks.

It's impossible to say how much of Iraq's current carnage could have been prevented by a continued U.S. military presence in the country, but a pair of retired officers with long experience in the country said the withdrawal of elite Special Operations Forces like the Navy SEALs and the Army's Delta Force made it significantly harder for the Iraqis to track down and kill individual militants. The withdrawal also meant that Iraqi troops were no longer receiving video footage from U.S. drones and surveillance aircraft. Iraq recently asked the U.S. to send the drone aircraft back to the country, but the White House said no.

Karzai could get a similar cold shoulder from the administration, which has made clear that it's running out of patience with Karzai's dithering over a troop immunity deal. Secretary of State John Kerry spent two days in Kabul earlier this month trying to get Karzai to budge, but the Afghan leader said he opposed giving troops protecting from Afghan law and would instead refer the matter to a gathering of key Afghan tribal and religious leaders known as a Loya Jirga.

The Obama administration wanted to close the Afghan deal by the end of October, a deadline which now seems impossible, and White House officials are now openly saying that they might pull all U.S. troops out of Afghanistan at the end of 2014, when most foreign troops are already set to leave the country.

A full U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan could be even more damaging to Karzai's military than it was to Maliki's. When U.S. troops left Iraq in 2011, the Iraqi military was relatively well-trained and well-armed. The Iraqis didn't have advanced U.S. warplanes or attack helicopters, but they had Humvees, armored vehicles and significant numbers of soldiers who were ready to fight. Baghdad has since announced plans to buy more than \$10 billion of advanced American aircraft or armaments, though the purchases have been held up in Congress.

Karzai's forces are far less prepared to operate on their own. The Afghan military suffers from such high rates of illiteracy and attrition that commanders have to spend significant amounts of time teaching their troops rudimentary reading skills and recruiting new personnel to replace those who quit. The Afghan military also has virtually no logistical systems in place, which means that troops in remote parts of the country can't get spare parts or proper quantities of fuel and ammunition.

Maliki's arrival Friday is a cautionary tale for the White House as well. Thousands of American troops lost their lives in Iraq, and tens of thousands returned home with severe physical or psychological wounds. Successive presidential administrations said the enormous human toll had bought Iraq a chance at a stable future free of the al Qaeda attacks that had terrorized the country for years. Those security gains have vanished, however, and Washington now faces the real possibility that many of the American deaths will prove to have been in vain.

The U.S. hasn't lost as many troops in Afghanistan, but nearly 2,300 troops have given their lives to oust al Qaeda from the country and leave behind an Afghan military that is strong enough to prevent the militants from returning. Those missions will be difficult even if U.S. troops remain in the country; they may be almost impossible if all Western troops leave.

In the end, though, the decision about whether U.S. troops stay in Afghanistan will be made by Karzai, just as the one about whether U.S. troops stayed in Iraq was made by Maliki. Karzai might want to take a close look at the chaos in Iraq before he makes up his mind. Irrespective of what Karzai or Maliki would like, President Obama should let them solve their own country's problem, because believing that we can solve their problems is totally delusional and a fool's errand. Especially when both administrations are in the stratosphere of corruption with political leaders and their friends enriching themselves with tens (*if not hundreds*) of billions in American taxpayer's dollars. Please feel free to read Yocki Dreazen's **Foreign Policy** article – ***Baghdad's Burning... And It's (Kind of) Our Fault***. Our military intrusion in both Afghanistan and Iraq was stupid policy to begin with and to continue is as Eisenstein said; Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different results. So why continue?

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#### Eurozone Jobless Rate

According to an article by the **Associate Press** – ***Eurozone Jobless Rate Holds Steady At Record High Of 12.2 Percent*** – Official figures show the unemployment rate in the 17-nation eurozone remained unchanged in September at a record high of 12.2 percent. **Eurostat**, the European Union's statistics agency, said Thursday the number of unemployed rose by 60,000 to 19.45 million. The jobless rate for those aged under 25 edged up to 24.1 percent from 24 percent in August. The agency says the unemployment rate for the wider 28-nation European Union remained unchanged at 11 percent. A year earlier, the September unemployment rate was 11.6 percent for the eurozone and 10.6 percent for the EU-28. The eurozone's economy grew by 0.3 percent in the second quarter compared with the previous three-month period, bringing it out of a recession that saw six straight quarterly declines.

#### **Euro Area Countries With High Unemployment**

- #1. Greece (27.2%)
- #2. Spain (26.7%)
- #3 Portugal (17.5%)
- #4 Slovakia (14.5%)
- #5. Latvia (14.3%)
- #6: Cyprus (14.2%)
- #7: Ireland (14.1%)
- #9: Bulgaria (12.6%)
- #8: Lithuania (13.1%)

#10: Italy (11.5%)

Compared to the Eurozone, both unemployment and economic growth numbers are much better in the U.S. And on many ways the US economy is doing as well if not better than in many other industrialized countries, including Japan and Brazil. As I point out time and again the United States has many problems and faces many challenges. In today's partisan political environment often missed are our strengths. Yes, the economies of China and India are growing at a better clip than here in the US, and there are more new millionaires in Moscow than in any other city in the world, but even with its crowded freeways, crumbling infrastructure, dysfunctional government, embarrassing crime rate and still growing in inequality, I chose to live in sunny Southern California, where even those who rely on community soup kitchens have cell phones a Black American community activist, who was raised by a single mother and his white grandparents somehow made it from Occidental College to the White House without the assistance of nepotism. *God.... Isn't the US great a great country? And if you believe what I believe, I urge you to celebrate it too....*

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We have to wonder why Conservative Republicans are so afraid of science. On Tuesday, Rachel Maddow posed this question on her **MSNBC** show and here is a rough transcript of the segment on this issue.

Without precedence, for sheer size sandy was the largest single storm system to ever form in the Atlantic Ocean and it was aiming toward the most densely populated part of the United States and our nation's largest city and that city raced like any others, to get ready for this gigantic storm. New York sent out evacuation orders for people living in flood zones. They built sandbag walls in front of office buildings. They shut down the subway systems. They even lock the doors of the historic Grand Central terminal train station. But for all the desperate measures to protect great big New York from a storm that was even bigger than even the idea of Gotham, there was one place that they needed to protect even most desperately of all... Harlem... which is surrounded by the Hudson, Harlem and East rivers and underneath are the subway tunnels, as well as the arteries for water, electricity and the telecommunications grid connecting the island of Manhattan to the Bronx mainland and the boroughs of Queens and Brooklyn. These tunnels and grids act essentially as veins and arteries in the city. And if the Harlem River surged over its banks turning the subway stations and tunnels into its tributaries, it would flood the entire Eastside of Manhattan. And that route into the subways was exactly where Sandy was due to send the Harlem River unless somehow the city could figure a way to stop it. Unless transit workers could come up with a solution the potential devastation was unimaginable. So they tried.

Days before the storm, anticipating a huge water surge, carpenters began collecting lumber, hammering together an ad-hoc plywood and cement dam in front of the open mouth of the 145 Street subway station and tunnel that the Harlem River was set to surge right down. Initially they put together a dam that was five feet high, but something happened that made them realize that five feet was not high enough and that they needed to get the dam even taller. When the city workers who were trying to stop the Harlem River from storming through that tunnel and drowning the eastern side of Manhattan consulted the National Weather Service, looked at the latest weather forecast and specifically the SLOSH maps (*sea, lake and overland surges from hurricanes*). From looking at all that data they realized that a five foot dam wasn't going to be enough and that they needed to build an 8 1/2 feet high dam if they hoped "to hold back the Harlem River with such a strength that it was going to endure."

So in the last hours before the storm hit they built it as best as they could with the limited time left. The wall endured, it held back the Harlem River, with 3 inches to spare. The forecast was accurate within 3 inches to what they needed it to be. As hard as the devastation of Sandy caused when it hit the biggest city in America, if not for that subway wall, the devastation would have been unimaginable times more. Think about it, if scientists had not accurately calculated the risks before the storm down to the last 3 inches. We as taxpayers paid for that scientific work to be done. It was done correctly and because those transit workers knew to use that data and knew that they needed to build that wall, not five feet tall but eight and a half feet tall, a large part of the largest city in this country was saved. The science worked. And as Rachel Maddow pointed out this week on her **MSNBC** show *"when you have a great big hurricane coming your way, maybe signs is easier to trust. Because if you have ever lived through a hurricane, big snow storm or wildfire or flood, you know what it is means to check the weather every day like your life depends on it because sometimes it does, your need for accurate scientific information is immediate and clear. But when science sometimes telling you something that's unsettling and your viability and existence depends on it, then a reliance on science can be easily mixed up with politics."*

The city of North Fork Virginia is home to the largest naval base on earth. That naval station is there in part because North Fork, Virginia sits right beside the water. And because the Atlantic Ocean has been rising, North Fork, Virginia sometimes sits in the water. As North Fork continues to experience rising high tides, with storms seeming to come with more and more fury.... during these times the city is experiencing more and more flooding. As such, they're taking it very seriously.... raising roads, moving homes away from some of the shorelines to avoid devastation from future storms.

For the Democratic mayor in North Fork Virginia the situation is obvious, the climate is changing, the Seas are rising and the seas are predicted to rise between two to three feet on the Virginia coast over the next century. So in a low-lying City Virginia coast, something drastically has to be done. Many local and state politicians understand that they are going to have to adapt to protect life and property.

But that simple reality for some people in Virginia is not that obvious. When word got out the Virginia lawmakers were considering a study that rising sea levels and the affect that had in the state, local Tea Party groups in Virginia claimed that the whole process was based on *"fraudulent information."* The talk of rising seas cause by climate change to them, was another manifestation of United Nations mind-control plot. Quoting a Virginia Tea Party leader, *"I feel that if we fail to reverse this the sovereignty of America will soon disappear."* So in Virginia the solution to this problem of conservatives objecting to even studying the rising sea levels, was try to not upset the Tea Party People by not talking about it too loud. What they did instead, was to edit words that the Tea Party were upset about out of what they were doing. Republicans in Virginia's state legislature objected to the words *"sea level rise"* and *"climate change"*, saying that they were left-wing terms. They objected to those words appearing in the bill that would study those things in the state. Instead, today Virginia scientist only study the more politically correct sounding *"phenomenon of re current flooding,"* taking the buzz words out of the document to appease Tea Party conservatives.

Down the coast from Virginia, the state of North Carolina is seeing the effects of the same sea level rise. And like Virginia there were many in the state who were pretty sure that they have to do something about it. But unlike in Virginia in North Carolina until recently was governed by Democrats and under Democrats commissioned official plan to study the effects of climate change on the state. In 2010 the official Coastal Resources Commission of North Carolina considered the effects of climate change on the state and predicted a frightening rise of sea levels of 39 inches, more than 3 feet. But

that was under Democrats in 2010. In 2010 Republicans captured the state legislature for the first time since

reconstruction and once they were in charge they decided but you can stop rising sea levels if you refuse to believe in them. The North Carolina Senate said the 39 inch rise was too much to contemplate. They decided, never mind the science, the rise would at most be only 8 inches. Last year Republicans captured the governorship as well and now the state has abandoned plans for dealing with climate change all together.

We are accustomed to Conservatives pretending that science doesn't exist. We have seen a congressman on the House Science Committee (Paul Brown) saying, "*that evolution is a lie straight from the pit of hell.*" But this thing of state governments declaring themselves immune from science for planning purposes..... *is stupidity on another level*, as the consequences of getting it wrong is so big when using science could help mitigate a substantial part of the potential devastation. When science suggested that the Harlem River could surge 8 feet high, the transit authority worker built an 8 and a half with high wall and by doing so they saved a city. That was science, the same kind of science from some of the same scientists who are warning the states that do not want to believe them that the floods that are coming.

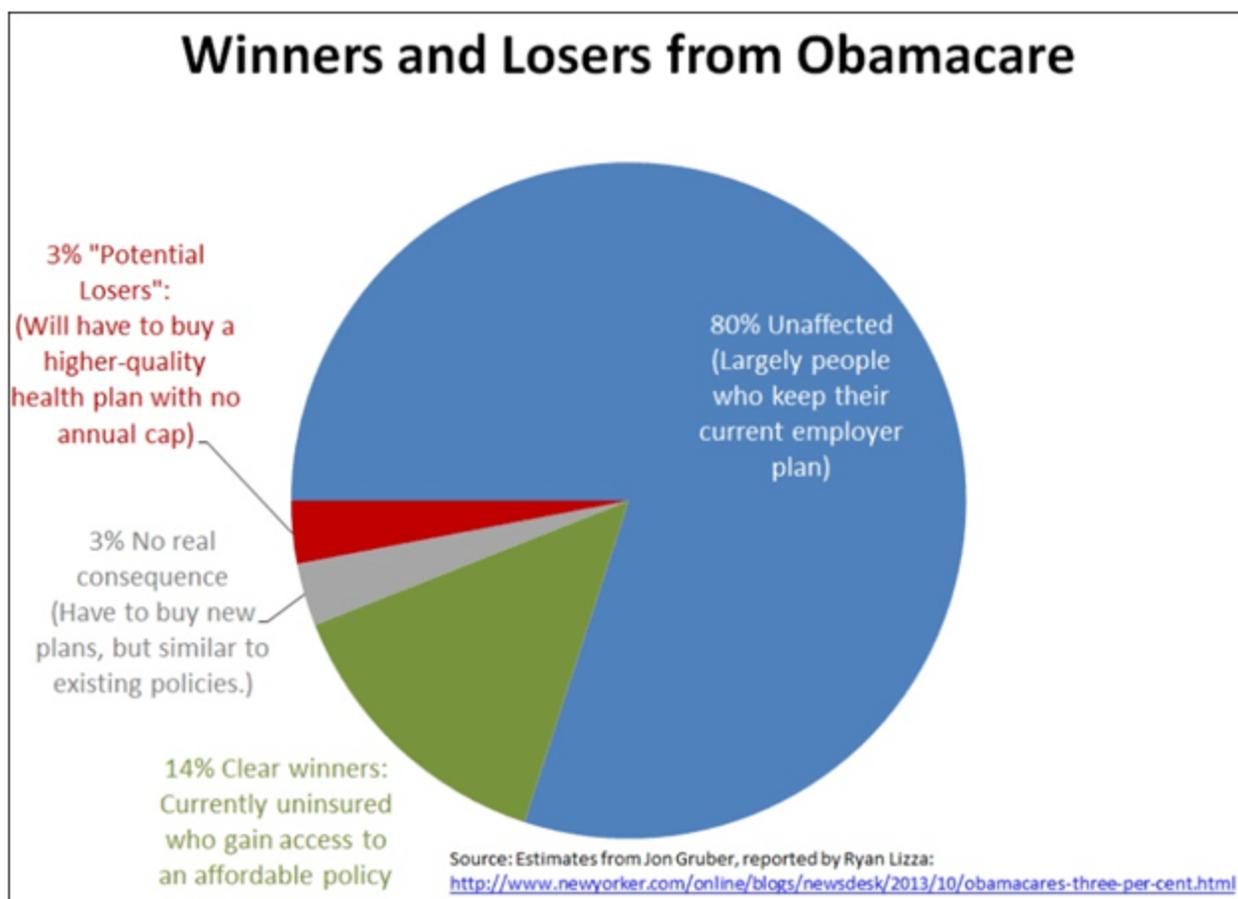
For the past two years the state of Nebraska has endured a historic drought, crops failed, cattle died, wells dried up and at one point 95 percent of them Nebraska was considered in a state of extreme drought. Before the drought, Nebraska experienced extreme flooding. As a result of Nebraska experiencing extreme weather event changes, this spring a state legislator suggested that the legislature take a serious look. He call for scientists to study historical climate variability and change. And even though Nebraska's legislature is seen as non-partisan since legislators are not affiliated to political parties, by the time is Bill had passed (*about the studying the effects of climate change in the state*) the study had been changed so that it could only be about "*cyclical climate change,*" which suggests not that the world is not getting warmer as scientists say, but just that we're going through some ups and downs. The bill was so stripped of meaning that almost all of Nebraska's scientists announced that they didn't want to take part in the study, due to the fact it excluded the role of humans in changing the climate and how the climate is changing.

The climatologist at Nebraska University's acclaimed National Drought Mitigation Center, said he would "*not be comfortable circulating a steady proposal to his peers if it excluded the role of humans.*" The Nebraska state climatologist, Al Dutcher told the committee assigned by the legislature that he didn't want his name on the bill because it was "*being used as a political pawn.*" That was the scene in Nebraska last week, with the states own scientists saying leave us out of this non-science, fake science being used for political purposes. Still that study is going forward even though the lawmaker who first call for it, (to look at the effects of climate change), pleaded with fellow legislators saying , "*that the politics in the legislator maybe interfering with the purpose of the and intent of the LB583*" law.

From there she interviewed Nebraska State Senator, Ken Haar who sponsored the Climate Study bill in his state to try to understand why his fellow legislators felt that they needed to cherry-pick what data should be studied and what not, thus distorting the underlying science in the study and not trying to use the best science available on the changing climate in Nebraska. This is especially alarming, when scientist are predicting that by 2050 the average temperature in Nebraska will increase by 4 degrees and by the end of the century 8 degrees, which will have a huge impact on an agricultural state like Nebraska.

One often thinks of Nebraska as a practical place, because of its stances on land and conservation issues being that so much of the state depends on its natural resources for economic purposes. So why does this embarrassing denial and perversion of science exist? Senator Haag tried to say that it was the committee who members chose to omit any study of human involvement in climate change and not the entire legislator, citing that 32 of the 48 legislators voted in favor of the final bill. But the bill was only limited to the study of natural causes, like volcanos, earthquakes, solar flares, etc. As such, Senator Haar admitted the bill is an embarrassment. Therefore, in Nebraska you can study climate change as long as you limit it to volcanos, earthquakes and solar flares..... How ridiculous.... Thank you Rachel Maddow for again shining a light on politicians who pursue ignorance, as a result of ideology purity. This is not a Republican, Democrat, Conservative or Liberal thing.... **It is about common sense....**

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Republicans have tried to stop, obstruct, gut and delegitimize the Affordable Healthcare Act, first by labeling it Obamacare and then be actively doing everything that they could to distort the facts surrounding it..... ie Sarah Palin's "death panels." Then there were the undeniable problems with the Federal Government website. So instead of looking for ways to fix the problems, Republicans used the opportunity to suggest that implementation should be delayed. Now the latest talk is about people receiving letters from their health insurance carriers canceling their policies because of Obamacare. Another bullshit maneuver. First of all, every year insurance companies cancel millions of policies for various reasons. So what is the truth?

First off, the Affordable Healthcare Act affects a pretty small sliver of the U.S. population: the people who buy health insurance directly, rather than the 80 percent who get it from their jobs or a government program like Medicare or Medicaid, or the 15 percent who have no health insurance at all. Estimates vary, but the Census Bureau says this figure is about 4 percent of Americans, which comes to about 11 million people. A lot of those folks are finding out that the health insurance plans they have this year aren't going to be sold anymore. How many? Hard to say, with reports ranging from a few hundred thousand to millions. (And their coverage isn't changing today; it's changing next year.)

The fact is, some health insurance on the market today is just lousy. That's a big reason why even people who have insurance can go bankrupt when their medical bills start piling up. Health insurance you bought for yourself before might have been (or seemed) perfectly okay, but there's a good chance it had big holes in it -- the kind people tend to only find out about when they incur expensive doctor and hospital bills. And if you have a pre-existing condition, or you're older, or you're a woman, you have been paying more for that insurance.

The law standardizes health insurance plans by mandating that they cover a basic set of benefits, including hospitalizations, prescription drugs and maternity care that many insurance products on today's market don't. Obamacare also limits total annual out-of-pocket expenses to \$6,350 for a single person, in order to protect people against going broke when they get sick. This disruption is happening despite President Obama saying over and over and over again, "*If you like your plan, you can keep your plan.*" That's obviously not true for everybody, and could never have been true under a law that shakes up the insurance market by getting rid of insurance with lesser benefits and weaker financial protections.

Therefore these new changes were made for a reason, so that insurance policies cover at least basic things.

And although this may not be consolation if you've gotten one of those nasty letters from your insurance company, but plans getting dropped is nothing new. Neither are big rate hikes. For one thing, health insurance companies never before needed a reason to discontinue unprofitable plans, kick people off, change benefits or raise prices -- those things happen every year, even to people with really good job-based health benefits. On the individual health insurance market, plans typically are sold with one-year contracts. After that, the insurance companies could practically do whatever they wanted (though they had to offer you an alternative, like they're doing now). According to a 2004 study, only 17 percent of consumers in this market kept the same plan for two years or more (**Washington Post**). This is going to happen next year, and the year after that, ad infinitum. On the bright side, Obamacare regulations guarantee that even if one particular health plan disappears, there will be others -- and probably more than were sold in your local market before. And the standardized benefit packages mean you'll have a good idea of what you're buying.

Yes, some premiums are going up but there are a whole bunch of reasons why a health plan might cost more under Obamacare than before, starting with the more generous benefits and stronger financial protections. But there's more to it than just that. A big part of what's going on here is that people on the individual market before Obamacare were benefitting from the fact that health insurers could exclude sick people (or charge them sky-high rates) and even dump them when they became ill or injured. This kept companies' medical expenses low, which meant their healthy customers could pay

less. That's a sweetheart deal -- until the inevitable day when you, the healthy person, become a sick person. And in the past women could be charged more than men, and older people could be charged five times (or even more) the prices quoted for younger people.

Under the new system, these costs get spread around more. This is basically how employer-sponsored health benefits have always worked. Usually, these health insurance letters also tell customers which of the company's new products they can buy instead. These plans often come with higher prices -- sometimes a lot higher. But you don't have to buy these plans. The most important thing to do is shop around. Your current health insurance company isn't necessarily offering you the best deal. And some of the horror stories we've been seeing in the news turn out not to be quite true. The bottom line is that some people will pay more and some will pay less.

Obamacare's health insurance exchanges include every qualified health plan sold in your local area and the prices vary a lot, so before signing off on that big rate increase or deciding to go uninsured, find out what you can get instead. Another thing your health insurance company probably isn't telling you is that you may be able to get help paying for your insurance through Obamacare's tax credits, which are available to anyone who earns up to four times the federal poverty level, or about \$46,000 for a single person this year.

As for the Obamacare website, eventually it will be fixed. As humorist Bill Maher pointed out last week on his **HBO** show, ***Real Time With Bill Maher***, Americans have been waiting for 50 years since the last major healthcare legislation was enacted so waiting for a few days, weeks or months to get affordable healthcare, that accepts everyone, including those with pre-existing conditions (*like myself*), that won't bankrupt you and your family if there is a catastrophic health issue, allows parents to keep their children on the family policy until they are 26, provides preventive care, as well as financial assistance in the form of tax credits for those in need and most of all it doesn't allow a representative from your insurance company to deny care. Again, the Affordable Healthcare Act is far from perfect, but it is a definite improvement over the status quo.

\*\*\*\*\*



*Mingdong Chen is arraigned in Brooklyn criminal court on Monday.*

Last week nineteen people died in four mass killings over four days, the latest in a spate of tragedies showcasing shockingly familiar patterns of violence. It's the first time in at least seven years that four mass murders happened within four days, according to a **USA TODAY** database that began collecting information in 2006. Killers in three incidents went after those closest to them, the most common form of violence, while one man killed his neighbors. The nature and number of these deaths worry some but experts say the recent killings, while highly unusual, illustrate the random nature of mass murders. *"It makes me very angry and very sad,"* said Hollie Ayers, whose ex-husband shot her four times and killed their two-year old son Michael, before committing suicide in March. *"In a developed country, this is probably one of the scariest things that you can hear and read about."*

Wednesday, Ayers went to Washington, D.C. with a group organized by Mayors Against Illegal Guns. She and others including Senator Richard Blumenthal and Senator Chris Murphy urged Congress to pass stronger gun laws and require background checks on private and online sales of firearms. She believes the changes will prevent killings like the succession of violence that recently gripped four states. Mingdong Chen, 25, a Chinese immigrant, is charged with stabbing his cousin's wife and her four children to death on Saturday in New York. That same day in Arizona, Michael Dante Guzzo used his pump-action shotgun on his next-door neighbors -- a family of four, police said. Charles Everett Brownlow Jr. was arrested in Texas after allegedly killing his mother, aunt and three others on Monday. The next day, Bryan Sweatt allegedly shot his ex-girlfriend and four others in South Carolina.

*"Four mass killings within four days is unusual,"* said Grant Duwe, a criminologist with the Minnesota Department of Corrections who wrote a book on mass murders between 1900 and 1999. "It certainly does exceed the norm of what we see within a given month or week. But, it's too early to say whether the total number of cases is higher than what we would see on average." About 30 mass killings happen each year, Duwe said.

This year, 121 people have died in 26 mass killings, according to **USA TODAY's** database. Last year, 133 people died in 22 mass killings. The incidents happen about every 13 days, statistics show. This year, on April 28, July 26 and April 18th two mass killings happened on the same day. In February 2008, four mass killings happened in five days. These numbers are part of the reason Jack Levin, a sociology and criminology professor at **Boston's Northeastern University**, isn't surprised that four mass killings happened in such a short time. *"Murders don't distribute themselves evenly over a 12-month period,"* Levin said. *"Just because we see four occurring in proximity to each other doesn't mean we are suffering through an epidemic of mass murders but that's what people will think."*

That type of thinking disturbs Kim Gandy, president and CEO of the National Network to End Domestic Violence. *"The idea that it is not statistically significant to have 19 people die in a couple of days really tells you the enormity of this problem,"* she said. Though statistics might not show such killings as abnormal, Gandy explained that murders have long lasting effects that can ruin people's lives and reverberate through family generations.

The numbers support her stance.

Some 40 percent of mass killings involved one family member killing another, Levin said. Often, a father, husband or boyfriend has some sort of struggle either with losing a job, custody of a child or the love of a significant other and decides to murder. In other cases, a child might kill their parents and siblings. *"In many cases, the motive in a family annihilation is revenge,"* Levin said. *"The killer believes his victims are responsible for his miseries in life and decides to get even through the barrel of a gun or through a stabbing."* He added that people rarely think of their family members as potential assailants because they know and trust the person.

For Christy Salters Martin, who was stabbed and shot by her estranged husband in 2010, the issue was domestic violence. A former professional boxer, Martin said she kept quiet about her abusive husband to protect her career. Like Ayers, she was on Capitol Hill Wednesday asking lawmakers to make getting a gun tougher. *"For 20 years my husband had been telling me if I ever left him, he would kill me,"* she said. *"People have to pay close attention to family members."* See attached **USA Today** article – ***For the first time in at least seven years, four mass murders took place in four days.*** Also please feel free to read Matt Pearce's article in the **Los Angeles Times** – ***Four days, four massacres, 21 dead -- and as always, few answers.***

**In Phoenix:** a disturbed pharmacist and former financial blogger, who had argued with his neighbors over their barking dogs, took his shotgun next door and killed four members of the Moore family -- plus two of their dogs -- before killing himself Saturday morning.

**In Brooklyn, N.Y.:** a troubled Chinese immigrant, said to be jealous of his relatives' success in the United States, stands accused of slaughtering a cousin-in-law and her four small children with a butcher knife at their apartment on Saturday night.

**In Terrell, Texas:** a small-time criminal is accused of unleashing eight hours of terror on the town of Terrell on Monday night, killing five people in four locations -- his mother, his aunt, two

acquaintances and a convenience-store worker -- before his arrest after a high-speed chase.

**In Greenwood, S.C.:** an unknown man, who called 911 to say he was planning on hurting himself, hung up and instead apparently killed three adults, two children, and then himself in what officials think may be a domestic-violence-related incident. Greenwood County Sheriff Tony Davis told reporters it might be the worst crime scene he'd seen in 40 years of police work.



Both were written before a deranged gunman 23 year old *Paul Anthony Ciancia*, (above) went on a rampage at the Los Angeles International Airport on Friday, killing a TSA agent and wounding three others.

## THIS WEEK'S QUOTE

Americans have waited 70 years for affordable healthcare, but if the website takes more than an hour, *F – it .....* I am watching a cat video.

Bill Maher (comedian)

## COMIC RELIEF

### The Secret Of The " X " letter in maths"

For those of you who need or would like a bit of comic relief..... please enjoy this TED TALKS video.....

Click here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sXRjk6JOkCE&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sXRjk6JOkCE&feature=youtube_gdata_player)

## AMAZING CARD TRICK

Click Video Website: <https://youtube.googleapis.com/v/Uh0CMcLiRkw%26feature=share>

**A Card Trick I Have Never Seen Before.....**

**Right in the heart of Times Square ! Just click on the deck of cards, brilliant!**

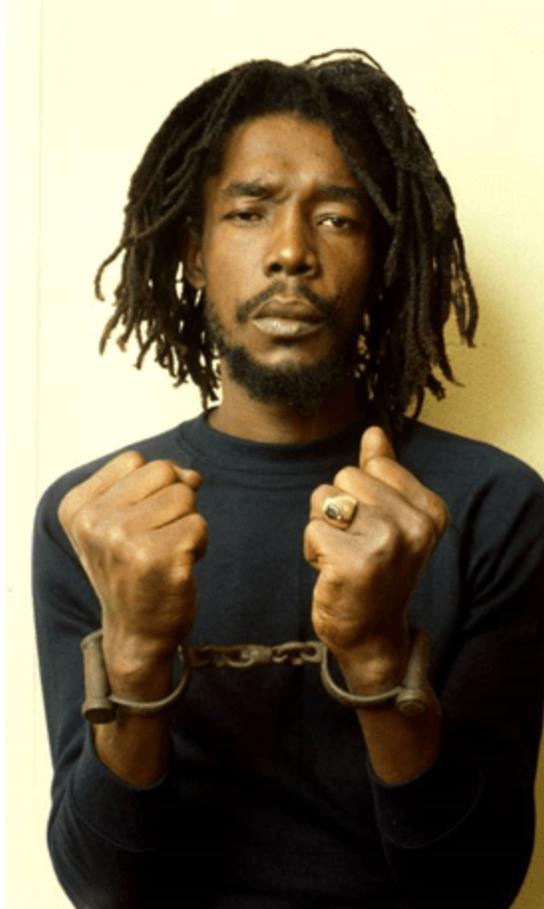
## AMAZING VIDEO

### World History in Two Minutes

That's a little over 4 images per second. You will not have an opportunity to see and understand each image. Just look and allow the images to wash over you. it is quite an experience. Two minute history lesson. Don't blink!

Weblink: [http://www.youtube.com/watch\\_popup?v=MrqgD\\_Tsy4Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch_popup?v=MrqgD_Tsy4Q)

## THIS WEEK'S MUSIC



This week I would like to share the music of Peter Tosh, OM (born Winston Hubert McIntosh, 19 October 1944 – 11 September 1987) was a Jamaican reggae musician who was a core member of the band The Wailers (1963–1974), and who afterwards had a successful solo career as well as being a promoter of Rastafari. Tosh was born in Grange Hill, Jamaica, and was raised by his aunt. He began to sing and learn guitar at an early age, inspired by American radio stations. After a notable career with The Wailers and as a solo musician, he was murdered in his home during a robbery. Peter Tosh was

not a man of peace. He was a revolutionary. "Peace," he told the feverish 40,000-strong crowd at the famous One Love Peace Concert in 1978, is "the diploma you get in the cemetery", written on your tombstone: "Rest in Peace!"



Tosh was a founding member of the Wailers, forming the three-man core of the group with Bob Marley and Bunny "Wailer" Livingston. Hard-hitting solo albums like *"Equal Rights"* and his work with the Wailers helped make homegrown reggae music known internationally. He was cut down at age 42 in 1987, murdered by robbers in his Jamaican home. The always outspoken, defiant Tosh was known for forcefully denouncing apartheid, government corruption and calling for the legalisation of marijuana. Musical colleagues and fans say the lanky, baritone singer and guitarist was a mesmerising performer with a charismatic, larger-than-life personality.

 Peter Tosh

Tosh is perhaps reggae's most controversial figure. During the government-organized One Love Peace Concert of 1978, Tosh publicly accused Jamaica's political leaders and the middle class of backing police brutality and politically charged gang warfare amid a legendary 20-minute diatribe. The Jamaican media severely criticised Tosh for the speech, delivered to an audience that included 200 foreign journalists and the prime minister. For his uncompromising views and his insistence on openly smoking marijuana, the Rastafarian musician was severely beaten by police on several occasions, sustaining 32 stitches in his head, a broken rib, a fractured arm, and a punctured spleen during these altercations, according to former manager Herbie Miller.



Tosh believed in action. Standing 6ft 4in in his black beret and often wielding a guitar shaped in the form of an M16 assault rifle, he was the most militant member of the world's greatest reggae band, The Wailers. Next to him, Bob Marley looked like a mere pop star. He knew what he was doing that charged evening as he strode to the microphone in his black martial arts uniform and put his life on the line in one of the most passionate and dangerous political speeches ever given by a musician. Addressing Jamaica's two leading politicians, Prime Minister Michael Manley and Edward Seaga, the Leader of the Opposition, as they sat before him at a time when the country was being rent apart by murderous political gun battles in its poorest districts, Tosh warned: "*Hungry people are angry people*". Retribution was inevitable, and came five months later. He was taken into a police station and beaten relentlessly until his skull cracked open and the hand he attempted to shield himself with was broken. He only survived by playing dead.



On 11 September 1987, just after Tosh had returned to his home in Jamaica, a three-man gang came to his house demanding money. Tosh replied that he did not have any with him but the gang did not believe him. They stayed at his residence for several hours and tortured him in an attempt to extort money from Tosh. During this time, Tosh's associates came to his house to greet him because of his return to Jamaica. As people arrived, the gunmen became more and more frustrated, especially the chief thug, Dennis "Leppo" Lobban, a man whom Tosh had previously befriended and tried to help find work after a long jail sentence. Tosh said he did not have any money in the house, after which Lobban put a gun to Tosh's head and shot once, killing him. The other gunmen began shooting, wounding several other people and also killing disc jockeys Doc Brown and Jeff "Free I" Dixon. Leppo surrendered to the authorities. He was sentenced to death, but his sentence was commuted in 1995 and he remains in jail. The other two gunmen were never identified by name. In August 2012 it was announced that Tosh would be posthumously awarded Jamaica's fourth highest honour, the Order of Merit, in October that year. I invite you all to enjoy the music of Mr. Peter Tosh..

Peter Tosh – **Legalize It** -- <http://youtu.be/ABc8ciT5QLs>

Peter Tosh – **Stepping Razor** -- <http://youtu.be/aLJFRgE4Ywk>

Peter Tosh – **Glass House** -- [http://youtu.be/jW3j\\_KXufPE](http://youtu.be/jW3j_KXufPE)

Peter Tosh – **Johnny B. Goode** -- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ABfYZ6qxet8&feature=share&list=PLAE40DEB49810DB30>

Peter Tosh – **Mama Africa** -- [http://youtu.be/o\\_hXTNP3W2A](http://youtu.be/o_hXTNP3W2A)

Peter Tosh – **Equal Rights** -- <http://youtu.be/NUOQldJqbj0>

Peter Tosh – **Apartheid** -- <http://youtu.be/ljOvXC2BAoY>

Peter Tosh – **Lesson In My Life** -- <http://youtu.be/k-Hy3gymWZ8>

Peter Tosh – **Not Gonna Give It Up** -- <http://youtu.be/Cz0lOpSKVy8>

Peter Tosh – **Wanted Dread and Alive** -- <http://youtu.be/vAz1Dw-VCp8>

Peter Tosh – **I Am That I Am** -- <http://youtu.be/nukwmvqmSv4>

Peter Tosh & Mick Jagger – **Walk And Don't Look Back** -- [http://youtu.be/3o4Fgh0KW\\_4](http://youtu.be/3o4Fgh0KW_4) & <http://youtu.be/IKkw8IgkoqM>

Peter Tosh **"Live At The Ritz: New York, USA"** -- <http://youtu.be/KBd9q-MF-oE>

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

Sincerely,

Greg Brown

--  
Gregory Brown  
Chairman & CEO  
GlobalCast Partners, LLC

