

From: Gregory Brown <[REDACTED]>

To: undisclosed-recipients;

Bcc: jeevacation@gmail.com

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How_A_Teacher_Encouraged_Her_Students_With_An_'F'_Rita_Pierson_TED_Weekends_05_06_2013.pdf;
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DEAR FRIEND.....

Teachers don't make a lot of money. And they are usually not deemed worthy of news coverage unless there is a scandal or a strike. Most of the time, their major accomplishments are only shared with colleagues and family members and not the media. Even then the celebration is often cut short by some catastrophe the next day. Yet, in spite of the highs and lows, many teachers cannot think of another profession that brings them both joy and challenge on a daily basis.

In the spring of her career, Rita Pierson found herself questioning the choice of her life's work because the students did not appear to be motivated, the paperwork was overwhelming and the constant change of educational direction was discouraging. Still, Rita could not seem bring herself to do anything else. "Next year", she would say. "Next year I will switch jobs, make more money and have far less stress." Next year just never came. She am now in year 40. And while Rita is no longer in the classroom or at the schoolhouse, she remains an educator. Pierson, "it finally dawned on me that there was no other profession that would let me change children's minds and have an impact on their future, long after the school day and school year were over." For every student that finally "got it," for every rookie teacher that said, "you inspired me to stay," Rita explains that this affirmation was more rewarding than anything else.

Pierson: I was on a plane recently and the flight attendant asked my name. When I told him, he said, "I knew that was you! You taught at my elementary school. You made me take my cap off in the building and told me I was handsome." He then paused and said: "I think I kept my hat on until you saw me, just so I could get that compliment. Thank you for making me feel special." I don't think he

realized how special he made me feel that day. There have been so many former students over the years that have made me realize the sustaining power of relationships.

I most certainly realize the extreme importance of being a competent teacher. Unfortunately, far too many in our ranks are unqualified and poorly trained. Many are working tirelessly to rectify that. But while we address what we teach and when we teach it, we must not forget to include how we deliver those lessons. Unless there is a connection between teacher, student and lesson, learning becomes tiresome to all involved. Veteran educator, James Comer, states that, "*No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship.*" Yet, the value of relationships is often downplayed or ignored completely in teacher preparation programs. Even more disturbing is the lack of useable information on the relationship building process. There is the belief among some that camaraderie between teachers and students leads to unprofessional familiarity or places the teacher in a weakened position in the classroom. Nothing could be further from the truth. Strong relationships encourage learner exploration, dialogue, confidence, and mutual respect.

I made it my business to know everything I could about my students. Where they lived and with whom, how often they changed schools, how many siblings they had, whether or not they lived in a house or an apartment, whether there was trauma or drama in the household. I went on home visits and shopped in the neighborhood stores so I could be certain to run into my students and the folk they lived with. (Some of my best parent conferences were held on the produce aisle at the grocery store). Many may consider my actions extreme. I called it "*preparation for what might lie ahead.*" Teaching and learning is often hindered by the details not found in school records. There is an African proverb that states: "*The best time to make a friend is when you don't need one.*" I was being proactive. It is advice I always give to others.

The more you know about a person, the easier it is to develop an alliance (if that is your intention). Positive, healthy relationships rely on clear communication. Without it, misunderstandings occur and intentions are misinterpreted. I wanted an open pathway to learning, so I was open to their questions, as well.

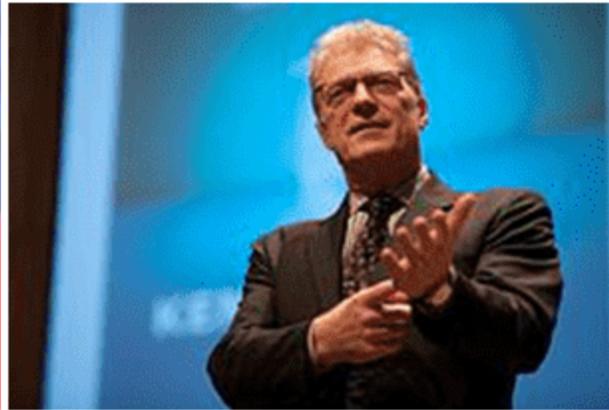
We have now entered an age where nothing is private and secrets are hard to keep. Your "*friends*" are counted by simply clicking a button. Face to face interactions are seen by many as unnecessary and time-consuming. Of course, we can do just about anything online, including teaching and learning. But I guess I am just old school. I want to look into your eyes when the answer finally dawns on you. I want to hear that inflection in your voice when you are angry with me. I want to see the smile on your face when you forgive me. I want to share in the joy when we both realize that we make a good team.

Rita F. Pierson

Every successful student had at least one teacher like Rita Pierson. I had several teachers who believed in me to the point that it inspired me ("that I am somebody"), to believe in myself.... I wish that we celebrated our great teachers to the same degree that we celebrate great athletes, as this might encourage more teacher to reach out for greatness and thus inspire more students.... I urge everyone to take time to view this video, just so educators like this know that their dedication is appreciated and that they too are Somebody..... Greg Brown

Web Link: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rita-f-pierson/student-teacher-relationships_b_3203159.html

Please Watch the above Ted Talk with Rita Pierson: *How A Teacher Encouraged Her Students With An 'F'*



Surfing television this week I came across **TED Talks Education**, hosted by John Legend which premiered May 7, 2013 on PBS. Having discovered Rita Pierson earlier in the week I watch the last part of the show and the next day I went on-line and downloaded the entire show which starts with Rita Pierson (*which you can fast-forward if you have already seen her via the earlier web-link*) and continues with other educators and success stories including Geoffrey Canada, Bill Gates, Rita F. Pierson and Sir Ken Robinson. **TED Talks Education** is part of the **Corporation for Public Broadcasting's American Graduate initiative**. The **TED Talks Education** one-hour program brings together a diverse group of teachers and education advocates delivering short, high-impact talks on the theme of teaching and learning. The one thing that all of the speakers have in common is a deep commitment to addressing the high school dropout crisis. These original **TED Talks** are given by thoughtful leaders and as a 10th grade high-school dropout who somehow became the exception, I invite you to see the entire show: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/ted-talks-education/>

On May 2, 2013 in Omaha, Nebraska, "*the Oracle of Omaha*," billionaire Warren Buffett sat down with **Fortune Magazine's** Pattie Sellers to discuss the changing landscape for women in business. The billionaire Chairman and CEO of Berkshire Hathaway, said that *women are the key to America's prosperity* and that this point has been seriously neglected. He points out that our country's progress since 1976 has been mind-blowing beyond anything else the world has seen because of a political and economic system that unleashed human potential to an extraordinary degree, allowing Americans today to enjoy an abundance of goods and services that no one could have dreamed of just a few centuries ago.

See web-link: http://money.cnn.com/interactive/leadership/buffett-interview.fortune/?iid=F_F500M

His argument is that we accomplished this in part using only half of the country's talent, because for most of our country's history, women – whatever their abilities -- have been relegated to the sidelines and only in recent years have we begun to correct that problem. Despite the inspiring "*all men are created equal*" assertion in the Declaration of Independence, male supremacy quickly became enshrined in the Constitution. In Article II, dealing with the presidency, the 39 delegates who signed the document -- all men, naturally -- repeatedly used male pronouns. Which Buffet describes, "*in poker, they call that a tell.*" And although 133 years later in 1920, the U.S. softened its discrimination against women via the 19th Amendment, which gave them the right to vote. But that law scarcely budged attitudes and behaviors. In its wake, 33 men rose to the Supreme Court before Sandra Day O'Connor made the grade -- 61 years after the amendment was ratified. And for those of you who like numbers, the odds against that procession of males occurring by chance are more than 8 billion to one.

In the article in **Fortune Magazine**, Buffett called women *the key to America's prosperity* writing, "*we've seen what we can be accomplished when we use 50 percent of our human capacity. If you visualize what 100 percent can do, you'll join me as an unbridled optimist about America's future.*" BUFFETT: *I think there should be more pushing forward, in terms of both the outer structure, but then I was also encouraging women not to hold themselves back.* Being a minority myself, who was excluded and at times prevented from fully participating in everything that the country offered and raised by a single mother who didn't discover opportunities until she was in her late 50s and early 60s, I am truly sympathetic to the plight of women in America.

As many of you may know.... in addition to shows like **Frontline** and **Moyers & Company**, one of my favorite television shows is "**Real Time with Bill Maher**" on HBO. And last week's panel included government affairs manager Mattie Duppler, who when asked if she was encouraged by April's jobs numbers and strong financial markets, instead of answering the question or giving some kudos to the President, her reply was that the President was wrong when he said that The Sequester would hurt the economy, even though most economists say that The Sequester and its run-up has already stifled more than 800,000 job growth. When told of these number like many Conservatives she cavalierly dismissed them, ignoring that these numbers are life and death issues to single mothers raising a children, long-term unemployed fathers, seniors who have exhausted their savings and high school and college graduates who no longer see sight of the American Dream, not to mention the millions of Americans who have already fallen through the cracks of society.

I understand holding the opposition "*in contempt*," because growing up in New York, Yankee and Red Sox supporters have held each other in contempt since its owner Harry Frazee sold Babe Ruth to the rival New York Yankees on December 26, 1919. But even though the Yankees–Red Sox rivalry is one of the oldest, (more than 100 years) most famous and fiercest rivalries in sports, after the bombing at the Boston Marathon, on April 17, 2013 a stadium full of Yankees fans stood arm in arm at the bottom of the third inning in the Bronx, singing along to '*Sweet Caroline*,' the Boston Red anthem, as a sign of respect and solidarity with arch rival Boston. But when you don't see harm to the real people's lives, beyond one's selfish goal of giving the President a black eye, it is easy for Conservatives like Mattie Duppler to dismiss the consequences of a self-imposed budgets cuts that everyone in Washington and in both political parties say is crazy. And for conservatives to down play the revival of the country's economy and deny the President kudos for this success, leads to both dysfunctionality and poor legislation. We have to change this environment of hyper-partisanship, where bringing down one's opponent has become sport in Washington, DC.

There is a misnomer in America is that seniors are living too high on the hog and to deal with the rising health costs and looming social security shortfall, benefits should be cut. The fact is that one in five

Americans age 65 and over — 18.5 percent — were working in 2012, and that percentage has been rising steadily for nearly 30 years. In 1985, only 10.8 percent of Americans 65 and older were still on the job, and in 1995, that figure was 12.1 percent. Both good news and bad news have contributed to this increase. The good news is that more seniors both can and want to work than in years past, as health care and medical science have extended their capabilities, and as the share of Americans in desk jobs has increased while the number on the factory floor has shrunk. A 2011 survey by the Society of Actuaries reported that 55 percent of working seniors said they had stayed employed because they wanted to stay active and involved. But the same survey also showed that 51 percent were working because they needed the money.

What advocates for reducing Social Security adjustments fail to consider is that corporate America's shift away from defined-benefit pensions to defined-contribution 401(k) plans — or to no retirement plans at all — diminishing seniors' non-Social Security income and made the very idea of retirement a far more risky prospect. Today, more than half of U.S. workers have no workplace retirement plan. Of those who do, just 35 percent still have defined-benefit pensions. In 1975, 88 percent of workers with workplace retirement plans had defined-benefit pensions. The shift from traditional pensions to 401(k)s is one of the main reasons most seniors aren't able to set aside enough income to guarantee a secure retirement. A 2010 survey by the Federal Reserve found that the median amount saved through 401(k)s by households approaching retirement was \$100,000 — not nearly enough to support those households through retirement years, as seniors' life expectancy increases. And as most Americans' wages continue to stagnate or decline, their ability to direct more of their income to 401(k)s diminishes even more.

With the eclipse of the defined-benefit pension, Social Security assumes an even greater role in the well-being of American seniors. But advocates of entitlement cuts don't even discuss the waning of other forms of retirement security: Listening to Alan Simpson, you'd never know that America's elderly aren't getting the monthly pension checks their parents got. And it's not as if those employers are suffering. Just as U.S. businesses have been able to raise the share of corporate profits to a half-century high by reducing the share of their workers' wages to a half-century low, so, too, their ability to reduce pension payments has contributed not just to their profits but also to the \$1.7 trillion in cash on which they are currently sitting.

A modest plan to enable seniors to retire when they wish, rather than having to work well into their 70s and even beyond: Require employers to put a small percentage of their revenue, and a small percentage of their workers' wages, into a private, portable, defined-benefit pension plan. To offset the increased costs, transfer the costs of paying for workers' health care from employers and employees to the government, and pay for the increased costs to the government with the kind of value-added tax that most European nations levy. (The tax burden is higher in Europe, but because the level of benefits is higher as well, the tax has wide public support.) Obviously the odds of enacting this type of program today in America is nil. But until we compensate for, or reverse, the abdication of corporate America from any major role in providing its workers with retirement security, we should lay off monkeying with Social Security to reduce the program's future payments, especially when so many companies have slashed their pensions or are under-funded.

In **The Washington Post** this week, *Letter to The Editor* under the heading — ***Losing Head Start makes the sequester scary.***

In his May 3 op-ed, "*Scare tactics didn't work,*" Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.) accused President Obama of conducting a "*sequester' scare campaign.*" Yet the senator — and all of us — should have been scared already, because the consequences suffered by our nation's poor children are far scarier than delayed flights.

By the end of the year, an estimated 70,000 preschoolers will lose places in **Head Start**. **Head Start** isn't simply day care. It's a specialized education program for preschoolers in need. Parents learn the difference between discipline and abuse. Teachers monitor kids for malnutrition. Children learn their letters, but also respect and love.

It actually saves our country money to make such an investment early in students' lives, so that we don't pay more in social services when problems are harder to fix. This problem affects all American parents when our children sit side by side in public schools.

Members of Congress need to cease finger-pointing and start fixing the harm we're doing to our most vulnerable citizens.

Cynthia Changyit Levin, Town and Country, Mo.

WEEKEND READING

Long before 9/11 and the bombing at the Boston Marathon, America survived Timothy McVeigh and *The Unabomber*. And long before Ted Kaczynski terrorized America from 1978 to 1995 and Timothy McVeigh bombed the Federal Building on April 19, 1995 that killed 168 including 19 children and injured more than 800 people, the *Weather Underground* issued a "State of War" proclamation in 1970. I remember all of this because on March 6, 1970 I was in the lobby of Rubin Hall (a NYU dormitory) at 35 Fifth Avenue in Manhattan's Greenwich Village at the time that the first bomb exploded in a townhouse at 18 West 11th Street and having gone to investigate, I coward with a friend in the doorway of The First Presbyterian Church across the street when the second and third bombs went off, blasting debris in every direction.

I say all of this because Islamic zealots are just the latest crazies to use bombs as a way to get their point across. I remember London in the 1970s when the IRA bombed Hilton Hotel, Harrods Department Store during Christmas shopping, which killed six people include three police officers on Saturday 17 December 1983 and the Brighton Hotel bombing which killed 5 and injured several others in an attempt by the IRA to kill Margaret Thatcher. From Algiers, Beirut, Karachi, Bogotá, Mumbai, Columbo, Moscow, Bali, Nairobi, Manila and Madrid terrorist (or freedom fighters) depending on your point of view. And long before Arabs were bombing Palestine, in an attempt to establish a Jewish State, Zionist led by future Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin bombed the King David Hotel, killing 91 people of various nationalities.

The problem is that when you follow American media, it is easy to believe that bombing is unique to Arabs and Muslims, when in fact the truth is that over the past 100 years more than 102 million people have been killed in the name of religion, of which only 2 million were killed by Islamic terrorists world-wide. To put this number in perspective the Khmer Rouge under Pol Pot, killed more 2 million of their own people in Cambodia and more than 3 million people have died in the Democratic Republic of Congo during the past decade. Combining ignorance, religiosity, poor reasoning and intolerance, whether it is called ethnic cleansing, fatwa, fight for freedom, purity, One People One Nation, nationalism or in the name of God, people from all religions and persuasions are killing other people.

Also, we have to stop calling every knuckhead an *enemy combatant*. The Boston Marathon Bombers didn't have a plan or disguises and were caught because these evil geniuses made a pit-stop to pick up some Red Bull and did not foresee that the Boston Marathon would be photograph. As Bill Mayer said, "why call every murder an enemy combatant, because it is like calling everyone in porn a Porn Star." Just the term *enemy combatant* romanticizes them too much. In 2002 the **London Times** did a story describing Osama bin Laden living in a labyrinth of underground tunnels with 1000 heavily armed troupes offices, computers, generators and secret passages. When Donald Rumsfeld

was shown this rendering at the time his reply, *"it's not just one of those, there are many of those,"* when in fact there were zero of those. And when the Navy Seals found bin Laden he was living in isolation in a stucco two story building without phones, guards or sophisticated weapons.

After 9/11 we were shell-shock and did not know what kind of enemy we were dealing with -- 12 years later we have a much better idea, **losers**. F-ups, idiots. *The Times Square bomber* couldn't even make gasoline explode, and locked himself out of his car bomb. *The Shoe Bomber* couldn't light his shoes on fire. *The Underwear Bomber* couldn't ignite his own underwear, not to mention that he was traveling on a one-way ticket, with no money, no coat going to Detroit in the winter, under his real name, Mohammed Kubule. *The Liberty Seven* were put away for their plan to blow up the Sears Tower, even though they didn't even have a gun, plan, explosives or detonators. *The Fort Dix Six* filmed themselves shouting and shouting about Allah and were caught when they took the tape to Circuit City to have it transferred to DVD.

As Maher summarized in his show last week, the fact that almost all of our credible threats have been losers who couldn't shoot straight, since 9/11 our ever expanding Homeland Security Department has gotten \$790 billion dollars. Why? Bin Laden's plan was never to kill us all but to scare us into over reacting into destroying ourselves. Because if there is one thing that these terrorists have proved that they can blow up, is our balance sheet. Paraphrasing Chris Rock on the death of Tupac & Notorious B.I.G., *"Some people are running around saying 'Tupac was assassinated. Biggie Smalls was assassinated.' No, no, no, no. JFK was assassinated. Martin Luther King Jr was assassinated. Malcolm X was assassinated. Those two n*ggas got SHOT!"* And as Ruslan Tsarni described his nephews (Tsarnaev brothers), *"their losers."* Although a bunch of crazies have killed 3018 American civilians since 9/11 in the name of religion, our response of spending almost \$800 billion to stop *enemy combatants*, is as ridiculous as calling the shooting of the aforementioned rappers assassinations, especially when 30,000 Americans die each year from gun violence and congress won't even pass gun control legislation which could prevent crazy people from buying guns.

Being a news junkie who spends 10 hours a day on the computer, when bored I often surf the web and this week an article caught my eye in **The Washington Post** by Ed O'Keefe and Aaron Blake – ***Is Ted Cruz eligible to run for president?*** To be honest, I really don't know all that much about Ted Cruz other than he is a Texas Republican Senator who just arrived in Washington in January and already is the subject of rampant speculation that he will be a presidential candidate in 2016, particularly after his recent visit to the early-primary state of South Carolina. But as the article points out complicating the calculus is that Cruz, 42, was born in Canada, raising questions about whether he is even eligible to seek the presidency. As a darling of the Tea Party, this has to be a dilemma for the 'birther' faction, who still today believe that Barack Obama is not a legitimate President, claiming that he was born in Kenya.

The Constitution states the president must be a *"natural-born citizen."* Cruz's mother was a U.S. citizen when he was born (his father was born in Cuba) and current law extends citizenship to anyone born to a U.S. citizen, regardless of where the birth takes place. The question is whether U.S. citizenship is the same thing as being a *"natural-born citizen."* There is no doubt about Cruz's birthplace, as his spokesman Catherine Frazier said last Monday that the senator *"is a U.S. citizen by birth, having been born in Calgary to an American-born mother."* And although Canada is closer than Kenya or Hawaii, why aren't birthers upset?

Cruz would not be the first presidential candidate to face questions of eligibility. Democrats in 1967 suggested that Republican George Romney would not be eligible to serve as president, because he was born to U.S. citizens in Mexico. But a **New York Law Journal** piece at the time, argued forcefully that he would be eligible, which seemed to put the issue to rest. Ultimately, Romney's primary campaign imploded based on comments he made about the Vietnam War. More recently, Sen. John

McCain (R-Ariz.), who was born in the Panama Canal Zone to U.S. citizens, faced questions about his eligibility when he earned the GOP nomination in 2008. The Senate passed a resolution stating that McCain was indeed a natural-born citizen after he secured his party's nomination. The issue of eligibility dates back to Chester A. Arthur, who began facing questions of his eligibility after becoming president in 1881. Democrats claimed that Arthur, a Republican, wasn't born in the northern reaches of Vermont as he maintained but in a far southern section of Canada.

The nonpartisan Congressional Research Service has even weighed in on the issue, writing in November 2011 that people born to U.S. citizens in foreign countries "*most likely*" qualify as natural-born citizens. I have to ask the question, why Republican candidates for President can be born outside of the American borders, without Donald Trump demanding to see the long-form of their birth certificates, when these same critics maintain that Barrack Obama's presidency is illegitimate. Aside from the hyper-partisan atmosphere in today's politics, I have to believe that the color of his skin plays a much larger part in the denial by many Conservatives than most non-minorities, including Democrats and Independents would like to acknowledge. And until Donald Trump's demands Cruz's birth certificate, I will forever call him and other birthers – racist bigots – because they are....

This week in **Rolling Stone Magazine**, investigative journalist Matt Taibbi writes – ***Too-Big-to-Fail Takes Another Body Blow***, saying that minds are changing on *Too Big to Fail*. A month ago, it was just something in the air. Now, it looks like we're headed for a real legislative confrontation.

And many, in the finance sector freaking. Because, last week, on April 24th, Democratic Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio and Louisiana Republican David Vitter introduced legislation called the "*Terminating Bailouts for Taxpayer Fairness Act of 2013 Act*," or the "Brown-Vitter TBTF Act" for short. The bill is a gun, aimed directly at the head of the *Too-Big-To-Fail* beast.

During the Dodd-Frank negotiations a few years ago, Brown teamed up with Delaware Democrat Ted Kaufman to introduce an amendment that would have physically capped the size of the biggest banks.

The amendment was bold and righteous but was slaughtered on the floor by a 61-33 margin, undermined by leaders of both parties - 27 Democrats voted against it. Brown-Vitter offers a different and, in a way, more elegant solution to the problem than Brown-Kaufman. Rather than impose size limits, it simply insists that banks with over \$500 billion in assets maintain higher capital reserves than are currently required. If enacted, companies like J.P. Morgan Chase, Wells Fargo, Morgan Stanley, Goldman Sachs, Citigroup and Bank of America will have to keep capital reserves of about 15 percent, about twice the current amount.

The bill only has such tough requirements for just those few megabanks, which sounds unfair, except that the aim of the bill, precisely, is to level the playing field. Right now, the biggest U.S. banks enjoy a massive inherent market advantage in that they're able to borrow money far more cheaply than other banks, because everybody on earth knows the government will never let them fail and will always bail them out in a pinch, making their debt essentially U.S.-government guaranteed. Studies have shown that these banks borrow money at about 0.8 percent more cheaply than other banks, and that this implicit government subsidy is worth about \$83 billion a year just to the top 10 banks in America.

This bill would essentially wipe out that hidden subsidy and make the banks bailout-proof. And as soon as Brown-Vitter was introduced, a very interesting thing happened. The Independent Community Bankers of America, or ICBA, issued a press release boosting the bill. "*ICBA strongly supports this legislation*," the release read, "*and urges all community banks to join the association in advocating passage of legislation to end too-big-to-fail.*"

This was a big thing. It was the first time since the crisis that a prominent financial industry group opposed the will of the TBTF banks. I remember covering Dodd-Frank and being told by a number of members in the House and the Senate that the sentiment of many community bankers was for

breaking up or at least curtailing the power of companies like Chase and Bank of America, but that the community banking lobby was not yet prepared to take that step. But now, after the London Whale, the LIBOR scandal, the outrageous HSBC settlement and nearly five years of rapacious market-dominating behavior by these state-backed banks, the community banks have finally split off from TBTF. Even Sandy Weill. Weill, the man for whom the Glass-Steagall Act was repealed back in the nineties, so that his already-completed Citigroup merger could be legalized, came out last year and said we have to break up the banks.

Tabbi: Naturally, there was going to be a response to Brown-Vitter from Wall Street. And we got it last week, shockingly not from one of the banks or a lobbying firm connected to the banks, but from the Standard and Poor's ratings agency - supposedly a strict, humorlessly conservative auditor that should always abhor risk and look favorably upon greater safety and security. The very fact that such a company came out against a bill forcing banks to have safer balance sheets is in itself absolute proof of how completely fucked and corrupt our current system is. The S&P report, entitled "Brown-Vitter Bill: Game-Changing Regulation For U.S. Banks", is so incredibly hysterical in its tone that, reading it, one cannot help but deduce that people on Wall Street are genuinely afraid of this bill. The paper essentially hints that forcing banks to retain more capital could lead to world financial collapse, the onset of a new Ice Age, mammoths roaming Nebraska, etc. *"The ratings implications of the Brown-Vitter bill, if enacted, for all U.S. banks would be neutral to negative,"* the report read. In the second paragraph, it reads: If congress enacts the bill as proposed, Standard and Poor's Ratings Services would have concerns about the economic impact on banks' creditworthiness stemming from the transition to substantially higher capital requirements.

Having a ratings agency bent to monopolistic bank influence give a bad rating to a piece of legislation designed to . . . curb monopolistic bank influence is a bad surrealistic joke, like a Rene Magritte take on lobbying - Ceci n'est pas une Too-Big-To-Fail! Remember, one of the primary causes of the financial crisis in the first place was the corruption of the independent ratings agencies. In the crisis years, companies like S&P and Moody's and Fitch were so desperate to avoid losing business from the big investment banks (who paid the ratings firms to rate products like mortgage-backed securities) that these companies often gave embarrassingly overenthusiastic grades to a generation of toxic assets. The Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission in its final report placed blame for the crisis squarely on the shoulders of these firms. *"The three credit rating agencies were key enablers of the financial meltdown. The mortgage-related securities at the heart of the crisis could not have been marketed and sold without their seal of approval,"* the FCIC report read. *"This crisis could not have happened without the rating agencies."*

Intellectually compromised ratings agencies were guilty before, when they were too quick to help Too-Big-To-Fail banks sell bad products into the world marketplace. Now, an intellectually-compromised ratings agency is helping sell the very Too-Big-To-Fail system in an attempt to beat back a reform bill - an agency that once stated explicitly that it does not take public positions on legislation. *When the referees are compromised, the game is fixed.* In this case when the game is fixed, the public suffers, while the fat cats who perpetuated the malfeasance or played fast and loose with other people's money ("OPM") receive outrageous compensation packages based on short-term gains, knowing that the businesses that they run are too big to fail and no one will hold them personally responsible for any loses. Hopefully Brown-Vitters will change this and hats off to Matt Taibbi and others who are shining a light on this most important issue.

This week in **Bloomberg** in an article by Robert Tuttle & Chong Pooi Koon – **Qatar Bank No.1 Supplanting Singapore as Canada Slips**. The tiny Persian Gulf nation of Qatar controls vast gas and oil deposits that feed billions of dollars annually into the state Treasury and as a result of its

petroleum riches, it is the wealthiest nation per capita in the world, according to the International Monetary Fund, with an averaged 13 percent annual growth during the five years through 2012. The Qatar Investment Authority, a sovereign wealth fund, has big stakes in Agricultural Bank of China Ltd., Barclays Plc (BARC), Credit Suisse Group AG (CSGN) and Tiffany & Co (TIF). It owns London department store Harrods outright. As Qatar's government has spread its financial wings, the country's biggest financial institution, Qatar National Bank SAQ (QNBK), has been at its side. Under Ali Shareef Al Emadi, its chief executive officer since 2005, QNB has become the largest lender in the Middle East and one of the most profitable. Even as the bank has expanded, Al Emadi has maintained QNB'S capital base and aversion to risk. As a result, based on its performance in fiscal year 2012, Qatar National Bank is #1 in **Bloomberg Markets'** third annual ranking of the world's strongest banks.

Also attached is a list compiled by Bloomberg, ranking the top 20 strongest banks in the world. What is surprising about this list is not that a oil sheikdom is the home of the **Strongest Bank in The World**, but that only two American banks are included in this list; Citibank #9 and JP Morgan at #15. While Canada is the home of five banks in the Top 20, Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce #3, Royal Bank of Canada #4, Bank of Nova Scotia #7, Toronto-Dominion Bank #8 and the National Bank of Canada at #17. China has four banks in the Top 20 if the Hang Seng at #10 is included. Tied with America are Singapore and Sweden two banks in the Top 20. And the only other countries with banks in the Top 20 are Malaysia and Turkey. So where is Germany, France, UK and Switzerland?

The strongest-bank ranking includes lenders with at least \$100 billion in assets -- something QNB achieved for the first time in 2012 with a series of acquisitions in the Mideast and North Africa that gave it a foothold in 25 countries. The ranking weighs and combines five criteria, including Tier 1 capital compared with risk-weighted assets; nonperforming assets against total assets; and efficiency, a measure of costs against revenues. Tier 1 capital consists of a bank's cash reserves, common equity and some classes of preferred stock, all of which combine to act as a shock absorber against losses when the economy hits a rough patch. QNB joins a ranking whose top tier is dominated for a third year by Asian and Canadian lenders. Singapore's Oversea-Chinese Banking Corp. (OCBC), #1 the past two years, dropped to #2 in 2012.

Some of Canada's banks also fell, as the industry was hit by ratings downgrades and hurt by a slowing economy and an increasingly risky housing sector. An exception was Bank of Nova Scotia (BNS), or Scotiabank, which moved up to #7 from #18. In regional rankings, three of the top five European banks are Swedish, while all four of the strongest banks in South America are in Brazil. David Knutson, a senior analyst at Legal & General Investment Management America, says the Federal Reserve gets the credit, for refusing to allow Citibank to dissipate its capital through share buybacks and dividend, which is the only reason why it is on the list at #9.

Obviously, the Qatar National Bank is an exception, The bank's chairman, Yousef Kamal, is the country's finance minister. It's 50 percent owned by the QIA, the \$100 billion fund that absorbs much of the country's oil and gas revenues. Bigger than all other publicly listed domestic lenders combined, QNB provided 66 percent of loans to the government and government-owned entities last year, while state agencies accounted for more than half of deposits, according to data provided by the bank. "The bank is essentially an extension of the state," says Akber Khan, director of asset management at Al Rayan Investment in Doha. "Any concerns about future capital adequacy or balance sheet strength are entirely redundant."

While the bank benefited from the government's purchase of its real estate investments after the 2008 financial crisis, it didn't receive a government capital increase as other local lenders had. QNB'S profits have risen by an average of 27 percent a year during the past five years. QNB has become a global financial force, driven to do business outside the country in part by the small size of its home market. Qatar's population is 1.9 million, and just 20 percent of its residents are native Qataris. As economic

turmoil gripped the world, other banks shrank into their home territories, Al Emadi says. "We've done completely the other way around," he says.

During 2012, the bank purchased stakes in Iraqi and Libyan lenders. In March 2013, it bought the Egyptian branch of France's Societe Generale SA (GLE) for \$2.45 billion. In April 2012, it sought to acquire Turkey's Denizbank AS; it lost out to Moscow-based OAO Sberbank. In 2011, QNB acquired a controlling stake in Indonesia's PT Bank Kesawan. Indonesia is the home market for PT Indosat, which is controlled by QNB customer Qatar Telecom QSC. The Qatar phone company recently changed its name to Ooredoo. "QNB's profits have doubled in the last three years," Khan says. "For very rapid growth to continue, growth outside Qatar will be necessary."

The article says that Canadian banks have lost a little of their luster, because even though five of the six biggest Canadian banks are among the 20 strongest, only two -- Scotiabank (BNS) and Royal Bank of Canada -- improved their positions. Toronto-Dominion Bank (TD) fell to #8 from #4. Still, Toronto-Dominion CEO Ed Clark says nothing has changed. "Every year, our stress tests tell us we're stronger than the previous year," he says. That's in part because the bank continues to avoid areas like structured finance, he says and "you don't have to go out on the risk curve to look after the shareholder, and it's a foolish bet to do that." We have to ask if Wall Street's unbridled pursuit of short-term profits in its never ending drive to goose quarterly profits is the reason why only two American banks are in the **Top 20 Strongest Banks in the World**.

The world as we know it has change last Sunday, when according to this video released by Defense Distributed, the controversial company pushing for D-I-Y weapons, the world's first 3D printed gun fired its first shot. Cody Wilson, of Defense Distributed, the company behind *The Liberator*, told the **BBC** that he is not concerned with the potential harm the gun could cause. He said, "I recognize the tool might be used to harm other people - that's what the tool is - it's a gun. But I don't think that's a reason to not do it - or a reason not to put it out there."

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/06/3d-printed-gun-fired_n_3222669.html?ir=Technology

Defense Distributed's goals, as displayed on its website, are the following:

To defend the civil liberty of popular access to arms as guaranteed by the United States Constitution and affirmed by the United States Supreme Court, through facilitating global access to, and the collaborative production of, information and knowledge related to the 3D printing of arms; and to publish and distribute, at no cost to the public, such information and knowledge in promotion of the public interest. Though 3D printing is still a fairly nascent technology, its growth is expected to be widespread. Staples expects to offer them in stores next month. Anyone interested in building a gun, then, could go to Defense Distributed's site and download the CAD file to get started.

The worst part? It's legal. Donna Sellers of the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, told the **BBC** that "a person can manufacture a firearm for their own use" in the U.S. The horror of 3D printed guns stands in sharp contrast to some of the more amazing benefits 3D printing could bring, including the ability to revolutionize medicine. Is it worth the risk? *The thing with technology, once the genie is out of the bottle there is no way to put it back. So for those who are fighting against gun control, they now may be forced to rescind their opposition, when they understand that sometime in the future any crazy with a 3-D printer will be able to download the technology, make a gun and use it use it for unlawful purposes.*

In an article in the **New York Times** this week, Jackie Calmes and Jonathan Weisman wrote — ***Economists See Deficit Emphasis as Impeding Recovery*** — saying that the nation’s unemployment rate would probably be nearly a point lower, roughly 6.5 percent, and economic growth almost two points higher this year if Washington had not cut spending and raised taxes, according to private-sector and government economists. The consensus about the result is clear: Immediate deficit reduction is a drag on full economic recovery. Hardly a day goes by when either government analysts or the macroeconomists and financial forecasters who advise investors and businesses without reporting on the latest signs of economic growth — in housing, consumer spending, business investment. But they usually add that things would be better but for the fiscal policy out of Washington. Currently, tax increases and especially spending cuts, these critics say, take money from an economy that still needs some stimulus now, and is getting it only through the expansionary monetary policy of the Federal Reserve.

“Fiscal tightening is hurting,” Ian Shepherdson, chief economist of Pantheon Macroeconomic Advisors, wrote to clients recently. The investment bank Jefferies wrote of *“ongoing fiscal mismanagement”* in its midyear report on Tuesday, and noted that while the recovery and expansion would be four years old next month, reduced government spending *“has detracted from growth in five of past seven quarters.”* Because of a series of compromises between the President and Congressional Republicans, annual discretionary spending for domestic and military programs will be reduced to the lowest level in half a century. As for revenues, Mr. Obama forced Republicans to acquiesce in January to higher taxes from wealthy Americans. But worse, in the macroeconomists’ view, both parties agreed not to extend a two-year-old cut in Americans’ payroll taxes for Social Security, reducing their spending money.

During the past five years, the president has fought unsuccessfully to combine deficit reduction, including spending cuts and tax increases, with spending increases and targeted tax cuts for job-creation initiatives in areas like infrastructure, manufacturing, research and education. This is a formula closer to what most economists now propose. But Republicans have insisted on spending cuts alone and smaller government as the key to economic growth. With the President calling these cuts, *“self-inflicted wounds.”* *“The only way the problem does get fixed is if both parties sit down and they say, ‘How are we going to make sure that we’re reducing our deficit sensibly?’”* he said last week at a news conference. *“How are we making sure that we’re investing in things like rebuilding our airports and our roads and our bridges, and investing in early childhood education, basic research — all the things that are going to help us grow?”* Mr. Obama added, *“I cannot force Republicans to embrace those common-sense solutions.”*

According to estimates by Moody’s Analytics, recent fiscal tightening through budget cuts and tax increases will slow economic growth for 2013 by about 1.2 percentage points and prevent the unemployment rate from falling to 6.1 percent by the end of the year. Several other economists and forecasters, including Pantheon Macroeconomic Advisers and IHS Global Insight, have come to similar conclusions.

Please feel free to download the graphs illustrating the about:

<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/05/09/us/fiscal-policies-take-a-toll.html?ref=us>

In an article this week in **The Washington Post**, writer Matt Miller — ***Dow 15,000 and the retirement crisis ahead*** — says that although the Dow’s cracked 15,000 and the S&P is at record highs, this largess will not help a large number of Americans because they don’t have savings of stocks. And beyond the jobs crisis, a schools crisis, an immigration crisis, an infrastructure crisis, an inequality crisis and a college affordability crisis, the next looming crisis is *the retirement crisis*. Miller says that the retirement crisis begins with a savings crisis. Consider: According to research summarized recently by the New America Foundation, *“nearly half of Americans (43.6%) do not have*

enough savings to cover basic expenses if they were to lose their source of stable income. These 132.1 million 'liquid asset poor' Americans include many members of the middle class and upper middle class: more than a quarter of households earning between \$55,465 and \$90,000 per year — the entire range of which is above the median household income of \$50,054 — have less than three months of liquid savings. Over 30% of all households do not have a savings account at all."

Furthermore, Miller says that millions of families who earn more than the median income have less than three months of savings put aside. Millions of people are living paycheck to paycheck. Families who at least owned their own houses have had their net worth eviscerated by the housing meltdown, which blew out the backstop on which countless Americans depend. And in a 2011 study found that half of American families couldn't put their hands on \$2000 within 30 days if an emergency struck. As the authors wrote, that \$2000 amount "*reflects the order of magnitude of the cost of an unanticipated major car repair, a large co-payment on a medical expense, legal expenses, or a home repair.*" Miller then asks, "*how do we think these families will fare when they're not just grinding their way through a short-term squeeze but eventually trying to support themselves in retirement at anything close to their standard of living when they were working?*"

We've become "*two Americas.*" This divide in moods and fates is never clearer than at times when markets hit new peaks. Some of us rejoice. But most of us barely notice because the "*good news*" is irrelevant. A decade of hype about "*the ownership society*" hasn't changed the fact that the vast majority of Americans have precious little saved or invested. Instead, years of wage stagnation, plus soaring prices for the ingredients of middle-class life (such as care or college tuition) has made the crunch — and the disconnect between the two Americas — stark. Obviously Americans need to become thriftier, as Asian nations are. If you're young, that's good counsel. But if you're 59 and under-saved or 62 and unemployed it's a little late. Miller points out that both the social and fiscal debates have totally ignored this impending problem, especially when kids are moving back home when they graduate and can't find work. And soon, grandma and grandpa are going to be moving in, too. As such, Miller says that there's a reckoning ahead that policymakers and the news media haven't begun to think clearly about — or focus the public on.

Already America has 50 million citizens living in poverty. And with the growing inequality of income/wealth and some of the above predicaments still looming on the horizon that could negatively affect the retirement crisis, both Congress and The President needs to work together for the greater good of the country to address this situation. Since pensions and savings won't come close to delivering adequate retirement income. Miller suggests the we add a new universal flat benefit to Social Security to supplement the earnings-based benefit that exists now. And that this new flat benefit would roughly equal the poverty line; when combined with the existing system, the average worker would have 60 percent of his or her working-age income replaced, versus 40 percent today. And one way to fund it would be through a chunk of the proceeds from the value-added tax that's almost certainly coming in an aging America. Canada, Japan and Luxembourg apparently do something like this today. But to be honest, *I am not sure about this*, but we have to do something about the growing number of retirees, who do not have sufficient savings (whether due to exhaustion of savings or because they didn't or never saved enough).

If you want to know why Washington is so dysfunctional beyond partisan bickering lets look at what happen to Dodd-Frank Reform Bill. Out-numbered *20 to 1* by bank lobbyist the new **Dodd-Frank Finance Reform Law** has been under siege by Wall Street lobbyist intent on weakening, delaying and dismantling it, while lobbyist for consumer groups are few. Case in point, in 2012 the Top Five Consumer Protection Groups defending Dodd-Frank only were able to send *20 lobbyist* to Capitol Hill, while the top five finance Industry Groups trying to destroy Dodd-Frank sent *406 lobbyist* to Capitol Hill. Furthermore Consumer Advocates can't compete with Wall Street when it comes to money either, as the Top 5 Financial Industry Groups *spent \$163.7 million*, against *\$3,581.800 spent*

by the Top 5 Consumer Industry groups in 2012. And this money difference buys allot more face time with Regulatory Agencies. Between July 2010 and April 2013 the Top Five Consumer Protection Groups had *116 meetings* with Regulatory Agencies, while the Top Five Banks had *901 meetings* with the same government agencies. For more information please see the attached article from **The Nation – How Wall Street Defanged Dodd-Frank**, to see how battalions of regulatory lawyers burrowed deep in the federal bureaucracy to foil financial reform.

This week's *New York Magazine*, in an article by Jonathan Chait — ***The Facts Are In and Paul Ryan Is Wrong*** — the title speaks for itself. Changes in the way we think about the world are not “news” in the classic sense — they occur gradually, without discrete events to signal them. But they matter, two such developments have come together recently, both reported in the **New York Times**. The first is the collapse of intellectual support for the notion that immediate austerity can boost economic growth. The second is a growing consensus that health-care-cost inflation is slowing for deep structural reasons, rather than having undergone a mere temporary dip from the recession. These trends have something in common: *They blow to smithereens the intellectual foundations of the Obama-era Republican policy agenda.*

During the last four years, the hoary Republican nostrums of lower taxes, spending, and regulation have cohered into a specific view of the world. Paul Ryan has been the leading figure in defining this view and persuading the entire party, almost without exception, to fall in line behind it. The Ryan worldview is that the United States is heading toward a massive debt crisis, that the crisis is driven primarily by rising health-care costs, and only his plan stands any chance of alleviating it. Ryan has expounded this view over and over:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=IUCxDufMrGY#!

Ryan's *Path to Prosperity* solution has been debunked in Europe to the point, that even many Republican faithful are downplaying austerity and instead are looking for flaws and mistakes in foreign policy as instruments to attack the Obama Administration. The doctrine of expansionary austerity — the premise that we must cut deficits not just eventually but immediately — has suffered a series of disastrous reversals. It has failed repeatedly in Europe, and its most prestigious academic basis, a paper by Harvard's Carmen Reinhart and Kenneth Rogoff, was exposed for a series of fundamental errors. A **New York Times** article this week represented a watershed, baldly stating in its headline, as the entire macroeconomic forecasting field has understood all along, that the short-term deficit was too low, no longer a counterintuitive dissent but a clear and barely contested reality.

Less visible, and possibly more interesting, is the growing mass of evidence that the health-care-cost inflation problem is indeed solvable. Both Republicans and Democrats agree that health-care costs, which have historically risen far faster than general inflation, pose the central threat to long-term fiscal stability. *The Affordable Care Act* attempted to control it at the same time as it expanded coverage to the uninsured. Republicans like Ryan, like to say that Obamacare's cost control's consist only in the minds of the Independent Payment Advisory Board — “*unelected, unaccountable bureaucrats,*” as Ryan calls them. In fact, the law created a wide slew of reforms intended to attack health-care inflation from every possible angle. The law created bundled payments, so that Medicare would pay hospitals or groups of doctors based on quality, not quantity, of care. It penalized hospitals that have to readmit patients owing to shoddy work (they previously would enjoy a second payday for doing so), taxed high-cost health-insurance plans, encouraged electronic medical records and research on effective treatments, and many other things. Nobody believed every one of these experiments would work perfectly. The idea was to try as many promising reforms as possible, and health-care wonks expressed cautious optimism that the law contained a wide breadth of them. Over the last few years, health-care inflation has indeed decelerated — far more deeply than even the most optimistic backers

of the law dare hoped. The federal budget for Medicare and Medicaid in 2020 is now projected to be 15 percent lower than forecasters expected a few years ago.

The key thing is that the conservative program since 2009 has hinged on the absolute truth of both these provisions: The certainty of the imminent debt crisis, and the certainty that Obamacare would worsen rather than ameliorate it, under-girded the party's entire strategy. It is not merely the ideological extremism but Ryan's dialectical certainty that the welfare state will collapse upon itself that has driven the party's refusal to compromise. Why not meet Obama halfway, see what we have learned in a few years' time? Because, having wrote, that half-measures "*would make real reforms less likely, by letting our leaders persuade themselves they have dealt with entitlements when in fact they would have only bought a little time.*" There is no point in buying time to learn more about the nature and scale of the problem when your ideology has already furnished the answer. Still, Ryan has undergone no revision whatsoever. The debt crisis is "*irrefutably happening,*" Ryan insisted recently. "*Obamacare will collapse under its own weight.*" Ryan and his party are so certain of these foundations his worldview rests upon that he/they can't even fathom that he may be wrong. *And when you don't believe that there is a possibility of you being wrong, you often are.....*

Why are hospital costs so high? The short answer is because hospitals can charge whatever they want to and over the past ten years we have seen hospital charges out-pace their costs. In 2000, they were *two and a half times* the allowable costs by Medicare. And in 2010, they were 3.6 times greater than Medicare's costs. And for the uninsured the disparity is much greater, due that the insurances negotiate a discount, whereas the uninsured are charged the full rate. Healthcare is not a market, so hospitals can and do charge whatever they want. The reality is that big insurance companies have more bargaining power to negotiate lower prices than smaller insurance companies, with individuals getting shafted. This results with the big guys getting the best deals, the little guys getting terrible deals and individuals who are the smallest guys of all, paying the most. When asked whose the blame? Everyone. The Insurance industry. Hospitals. But mostly the government, because in every other industrialized country there is some form of non-profit national health insurance, which completely eliminates the problem of the uninsured as everyone is covered, therefore hospitals are paid in a much more rational way without any system of bargaining, prices and lots of money is not wasted on negotiations and complexity.

And although a number of hospitals are good at providing uncompensated care or taking care of patients who don't have insurance or can't pay, many hospitals will not see you or will get rid of you right away if you don't have insurance coverage. So it is not just the high bills that the uninsured face because many hospitals won't take care of them. And yes, hospitals pick up allot of the tab for people who can't pay their bills which they offset by passing them on to insurance companies and those who can pay by raising prices. As such there is a serious problem because almost 50 million Americans don't have insurance coverage and those with the least negotiating power (*the uninsured*) end up paying the highest prices in hospitals. And although Obamacare will help, there will still be as many as 30 million Americans still uninsured when Obamacare is fully implemented. And when asked -- the people who are uninsured, most of them say it is because they can't afford it.

For those who have lost their insurance coverage, a test that under insurance was \$100 but after losing their insurance, the same test could be \$400. And when you are uninsured some hospitals will charge patients for ridiculous things when you are hospitalize, such as laundry fees, Kleenex, food or anything that they give you or provide a service for they can charge you. And since most people don't ask for itemize bills (or in the frame of mind to deal with them), they really don't know what they paying for, as charges piles up. And when they get a huge bill, it really doesn't matter because at the end of the day they have to pay it. These charges can be, \$25 for a box of Kleenex, \$40 in laundering fees, \$40 for food, all these you usually take for granted and only when you look at the itemized bill do you

realized that you have been charged. And because you want the best care possible, people usually go along with it.

To cover hospital overhead, we shouldn't be sending patients who are usually still recovering hospital bills. Other industrialized countries like Canada, Australia and France pay their hospitals out of their national budget based on the cost of running the hospital (just like we pay our fire departments). They should receive monthly payments direct from the government so they don't have to send patients itemize bills. Yes, taking care of people's health problems is expensive but it doesn't have to be as expensive as it is in the US, which spends twice as much on healthcare per person as in Canada, Australia or in Western Europe, which all have non-profit national health/single payer healthcare. And depending on the state hospital costs can widely differ. While the average hospital costs is 3.6, in Maryland it is 1.3 because the state imposes costs regulations, in Nevada hospital costs are 5 to 1 and in New Jersey it is almost 5 times Medicare's allowable costs.

And for those with chronic illnesses or life-threatening diseases like cancer, insurance companies try their best to minimize treatments or kick them to the curb as quickly as possible. As such, 62% of all personal bankruptcies in the United States are due in part to medical illness or medical bills. And many of these people had Medicaid, Medicare and private insurance. But those with private insurance, often had such loopholes, that between co-payments, deductibles and treatments that weren't covered these individuals exhausted their savings and were forced into personal bankruptcy. As a result, millions of Americans facing serious illness are confronted with huge medical bills that is not their fault, but still they have to pay. This doesn't include the millions of Americans who lost their insurance coverage when they loss their jobs during the recent recession and the many millions who are working part-time without company-paid/sponsored insurance.

Finally, giving people insurance under Obamacare won't reduce hospital/healthcare costs, without a fundamental restructuring of our healthcare system. And to do this, we don't have to recreate the wheel. Both Canada and Australia, whose healthcare is rated much higher than the US, have single-payer non-profit national healthcare, which is half the cost per capita as in the US. And for those people and businesses who want more than the basic healthcare, they can purchase additional private insurance coverage, often referred to *Cadillac plans*.... Obviously this would reduce both business and pension fund costs, as well as provide universal healthcare for every American. And the additional costs could be spread across the entire population by adding a 1% addition to the federal taxes, which would be offset by employees no-longer having to pay hundreds of dollars monthly in co-payments. So why aren't we doing this? For more information please see attached **Huffington Post's** article – *Hospital Prices No Longer Secret As New Data Reveals Bewildering System, Staggering Cost Differences*.

Web site: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/08/hospital-prices-cost-differences_n_3232678.html?utm_hp_ref=mostpopular#slide=1919656

WORDS OF WISDOM

Life is Like a Cup of Coffee.... please download the video to see why.....

http://www.flickspire.com/_videos/flash/LILC/LILC.swf

POLITICIANS

We hang petty thieves and appoint the bigger thieves to public office.
~Aesop, Greek slave & fable author

Those who are too smart to engage in politics are punished by being governed by those who are dumber.

~Plato, ancient Greek Philosopher

Politicians are the same all over. They promise to build a bridge even where there is no river.

~Nikita Khrushchev, Russian Soviet politician

When I was a boy I was told that anybody could become PM; I'm beginning to believe it.

~Quoted in 'Clarence Darrow for the Defense' by Irving Stone.

Politicians are people who, when they see light at the end of the tunnel, go out and buy some more tunnel.

~John Quinton, American actor/writer

Politics is the gentle art of getting votes from the poor and campaign funds from the rich, by promising to protect each from the other.

~Oscar Ameringer, "the Mark Twain of American Socialism."

I offered my opponents a deal: "if they stop telling lies about me, I will stop telling the truth about them".

~Adlai Stevenson, campaign speech, 1952..

A politician is a fellow who will lay down your life for his country.

~Texas Guinan. 19th century American businessman

I have come to the conclusion that politics is too serious a matter to be left to the politicians.

~Charles de Gaulle, French general & politician

Instead of giving a politician the keys to the city, it might be better to change the locks.

~Doug Larson (English middle-distance runner who won gold medals at the 1924Olympic Games in Paris, 1902-1981)

What happens if a politician drowns in a river? That is pollution.

What happens if all of them drown? That is solution!!!

~ My friend Harvey

THIS WEEK'S QUOTE

WARREN BUFFETT: We've Made A 'Terrible Mistake' With Treatment Of Women In America

I think that -- I think we've made a terrible mistake in this country and a lot of other countries, too, but in not using all of our talent. I mean, if we said we were only going to let people, men 5'10", or below engage, in three or four occupations, it would be regarded as totally nutty. And for decades, centuries, we relegated women to just a few occupations. And we did not fully use the talent that's available. And we're making progress, but we have got a ways to go.

WARREN BUFFETT

THIS WEEK'S MUSIC

Having met with more than 50 heads of state, (including four American Presidents), gone to **Buckingham Palace**, **Élysée Palace** and the **White House** several times and traveled around the world with *Mohammed Ali*, *Adnan Khashoggi*, *Quincy Jones* and *Michael Jackson*, but when asked what was the important moment in my social development, the answer is always, “**when Mickey Ruskin gave me a house charge account at Max’s Kansas City in 1969,**” as it signaled that “**I Had Arrived.**” I first met Mickey when he owned *The Ninth Circle* (a hamburger place with peanuts shells on the floor) in *Greenwich Village, New York* and remember when he first told me that he was opening a new bar on Lower Park Avenue, across from *Union Square*, which was an area in 1965 that had no real clubs or bars, and definitely no nightlife. I remember taking my step daughter Denise to Max’s for lunch when she was three and four years old, as it had great hamburgers. And I remember being included as a charter member of the “black booth” which was the last big table before the stairs, that was reserved for the hip black guys who came to Max’s nightly. Finally, I remember waking up at home and taking a taxi down to Max’s so that I could make ‘last call’ much like a drug addict in need of a fix, so that I wouldn’t miss anything. And at 4am, the bartenders would jump over the bar with baseball bats to encourage patrons to leave saying, “*you don’t have to go home but you have to leave here.*” During his hey days, Max’s was the #1 bar in the world, akin to Studio 54 during its hey days when it was the #1 disco in the world. And if there is an anthem of Max’s it is Lou Reed’s ***Walk on the Wild Side***. And if you left Max’s at 4am alone, the anthem was Dr. John’s ***Right Place Wrong Time.*** ‘***Walk on The Wild Side,***’ is the story of Max’s Kansas City and those of us came to age during its rein.

The great thing about Max’s was its diversity. Like Steve Rubel at Studio 54 later, Mickey Ruskin didn’t care if you were rich or famous. Yes, he would cater to the *Rich & Famous*, but at no time would he give your group (in my case the Black Booth), table to a celebrity, no matter how famous or wealthy. Max’s also allowed you to drop the shackles of where you came from and inspired you, as Jimi Hendrix use to say, “*let your freak flag fly.*” But back to Max’s diversity, it is because being one of the few lunch restaurants in Union Square, (that was affordable and not a dive), it attracted the people who worked in the surrounding office buildings for lunch. Its evenings started early with union workers and their reps dropping in for drinks after work. When they petered out, people who normally couldn’t get in, would start arriving for dinner at 7 or 8 pm. By then 10 PM the artists, photographers along with their models and regulars like me would come to spend the next five or six hours. And as we use to say, after midnight the freaks would come out to give everyone a show. The regulars at the Black Booth, were Harvey Hanson (*owner of Albion Plus and the store that introduce platform shoes to America*), Gladstone “Stoney” Ford (a Harvard graduate and first black executive at ABC Television), John Ford (fashion photographer), writer Ismael Reed, Vernon who was a well known jewelry designer and me (owner of a up-and-coming film & television production company, *Greg Brown & The Johnson Gang*). And although I had hung out at Max’s with the likes of Jimi Hendrix, Richie Havens, Al Kooper, Johnny Winter, Marcello Mastroianni, Costa-Gavras and the Rolling Stones (somehow ending up in Boston as a member of their entourage) my credentials were truly cemented when prompted by cat-calls from my table-mates, (having once told them I met/hungout Jannis Joplin in San Francisco), when several years later she show up and Mickey sat her and her lead guitarist a little table in the middle of the room, to preempt the embarrassment, I went over to say hello and returned to everyone’s amazement carrying her scissored around my waste, gushing how happy she was to see me again and asking if she could join our table.



Most of all, being the youngest member in *'the black booth'* I remember many other great nights of camaraderie that help me shape my masculinity and openness to others, as there was always a continuing parade of counter-culture freaks in costume marching between the front and back rooms, where John Chamberlain oversaw the artist table in the big round table in the front and Andy Warhol held court at the corner round table in the back with Ultra Violet, Candy Darling, Jackie Curtis, Rocco, Lou Reed, Iggy Pop and others. I remember seeing Bruce Springsteen, Bob Marley, Tim Buckley, Garland Jeffery's, Odetta, Country Joe, Jae Mason and others who played upstairs in the backroom at Max's. I remember when John Chamberlain's tab passed \$20,000, he paid for it with artwork and then gave a party for the entire bar. Max's was the place that not only did I learned *how to be cool* and where I honed "my game" to meet women. And because I was both a friend of Mickey Ruskin's and had a spot at the *Black Booth*, I was able to introduce a number of my friends to Max's, and many are still friends today. Max's was where I met Warhol, Larry Rivers, Robert Rauschenberg, Jim Rosenquist, Willie Smith, Frosty Myers, John Chamberlain, Robert Indiana, Philip Glass, William S. Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, the New York Dolls and the Velvet Underground. I remember one drunken night a decade after Max's closed being at Columbus Restaurant on Manhattan's Westside, commiserating with David Bowie, who when he asked where did we first meet, I answered "*Max's Kansas City and with your with your huge red hair, monkey fur collar, psychedelic spandex paints, and knee-high red platform boots, I thought that you were the strangest thing that I had ever seen.*"

Bowie remember that night and replied, "*I wasn't that strange. I was just dressed up because I was meeting Iggy Pop and Iggy is the one who was strange.*" Please enjoy this week's music as it is an homage to my favorite of all time, **Max's Kansas City**.

Bruce Springsteen — *Live at Max's Kansas City 1972* -- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kHKsuZsP5Ys>

Lou Reed — *Walk on the Wild Side* (Live in 1972) -- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lqxe9hiQYI4>

Odetta — *House of the Rising Sun* -- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hzc20VmMC18>

Johnny Thunders — *So Alone* -- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4CG2fmsxVDo>

Bob Marley & The Wailers — *Stir it Up* (Live at Max's Kansas City 1973) -- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jeJDtnhzSHc>

Bob Marley — *Don't rock my boat* live at Max's Kansas City 1973 -- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eyuFeFQrZMc>

Dr. John — *Right Place Wrong Time* -- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HT4RainY-IY>

The Velvet Underground — *Pale Blue Eyes* (Live) -- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SpMSC-eRWpc>

The Velvet Underground — *Candy Says* (Live at Max's Kansas City) -- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jGo0FXPFvmE>

Garland Jeffrey's — *Wild in the Streets* -- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3RzBZsOeqQQ>

Tim Buckley — *Hallelujah* -- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y8AWFf7EAc4>

Billy Preston — *Round in Circles* - Midnight Special -- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LDehYXK131g>

Chambers Brothers — *Time Has Come Today* -- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CsBwBct0_5U

Bruce Springsteen — *Growing up* -- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7dy7RTicVr0>

Ike & Tina Turner — *Proud Mary* -- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I_MqvP3VL74

Lou Reed — *Walk on the Wild Side* -- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4wNknGIKkoA>

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

Sincerely,

Greg Brown

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Gregory Brown
Chairman & CEO
GlobalCast Partners, LLC

US: [REDACTED]
Tel: [REDACTED]
Fax: [REDACTED]
Skype: [REDACTED]