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Subject: Greg Brown's Weekend Reading and Other Things.... 05/11/2014

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Attachments: The_States_With_the_Worst_Healthcare_Systems_OLGA_KHAZAN_The_Atlantic_MAY_1_2014.docx;
Breaking_down_the_climate_report_by_region_Mariano_Castillo_CNN_May_7_2014.docx;
Palin_goes_too_far_Again_David_Perry_CNN_Politics_May_1_2014.docx;
All_Science_Is_Wrong_Concludes_Esteemed_Fox_News_Panel_Jonathan_Chait_Huff_Post_05_09_2014.docx;
GOP_Hypocrisy_Outraged_Over_Benghazi_Silent_on_Iraq_Jay_Parini_Daily_Beast_May_11_2014.docx; Queen_Latifah_bio.docx

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DEAR FRIEND.....



WHY ISN'T ANYONE LISTENING

As a liberal Democrat who is interested in politics as well as the welfare of my fellow men/women, I often find myself watching *Moyers & Company*, *Frontline* and *Hardball with Chris Matthews* and on the April 29th show Chris Matthews closed with the following:

MATTHEWS: Let me finish tonight with these war hawks who seize on every world conflict, whatever the sides, to root for American engagement. It seems there is no war that can't use military action or the threat of it. In their alarmist world view, this country must forever be aiming its guns at someone, somewhere, demanding they follow our orders. Well, the effect of this posture, as we've learned in tragedies, is to transform every regional difference into a loaded weapon. We set up a demand, an ultimatum, to use an old war, where term, when that`s not met, we have no choice but to act. Load her up. Argue that Saddam Hussein`s possession of WMD constitutes a cause for war. Then accuse him of having them and then it`s on to Baghdad.

Do the same with Iran, in Libya, and Syria, and Russia and what God knows what other nation. Then, cock the hammer. If they don`t do what we demand they do, we start the war drums. Well, this has been the Geronimo talk before and after the hell and stupidity of Iraq. Ever since Vietnam, the neoconservatives and the militarist hawks have pushed this line. If a country fails to act the way we`d like, we start war talk. We are always one thumb to nose away from battle. Well, this is the world of Dick Cheney, the American Enterprise Institute and those killers of the keyboard, those chicken hawks who send others to battle while they man the op-ed pages. Well, President Obama did a great job in calling them out for what they are -- warriors without swords, hawks without wings, patriots by the page, soldiers of the sound bite. That`s HARDBALL for now. Thanks for being with us.

 SARAH PALIN NRA

When Sarah Palin commented, at this last week's national National Rifle Association convention, **"...waterboarding is how we baptize terrorists,"** she did worse than offend, worse than degrade human beings, worse than stir up a group of weapon-advocates. She did so in the Name of God. The fact that the NRA would allow someone to promote fundamentalism at their convention is a violation of their civic responsibility and a threat to human rights on a national scale. Most faith traditions incorporate water's restorative power. The Muslim ritual ablution of Wudu, the Jewish Mikveh ritual bath, the Hindu ritual immersions in the River Ganges, and the Christian practice of baptism, each point to renewal, transformation, and life. How dare the NRA tolerate -- worse, amplify -- hatred garbed in religious symbolism. As CNN's David Perry wrote in the article -- **Palin Goes Too Far, Again** -- this was not a joke or an accident and is not new rhetoric -- it is just pure barbaric hatred.

Leave aside the fact, which Palin consistently ignores, that torture has been proven ineffective in acquiring actionable intelligence. Leave aside the illegality of torture, affirmed by the United States' signature on the **UN Convention Against Torture**, which stipulates, *"No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture."* Leave aside the partisan semantics of what actually constitutes torture in the first place. That has all been settled beyond question, and is not the source of my outrage at the NRA. We have to wonder how God and guns merged especially when people are talking about torture -- and waterboarding is torture and was definitely thought so when the Japanese used in during WWII.

Faith traditions consider torture to be a desecration of the image of God, which is why groups like **T'ruah: The Rabbinical Call for Human Rights** and **NRCAT (National Religious**

Campaign Against Torture) have been marshalling religious leaders to address the moral question of torture. The National Rifle Association consistently grants fundamentalists a platform for spewing hatred and promoting the tools of war, using the Second Amendment to garner financial gain. They are using talking heads and patriotism to feed their greed, and the human cost is growing beyond 31,000 annual U.S. gun violence deaths. Fueled by demagogues like Sarah Palin, the NRA's social impact is immeasurable. **Witnessing Sarah Palin's ignorance and venom paired with the NRA's profitability is both terrifying and offensive.** And more terrifying is that someone like Sarah Palin was almost one heartbeat from being President of the United States.

A Few Fascinating Quotes

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End The War On Drugs, Say Nobel Prize-Winning Economists

Read LSE's full report here: [REPORT-FINAL-WEB.pdf](#)

WAR is failure. So after a decades-long global war on drugs a new report endorsed by five **Nobel Prize**-winning economists concludes that it has failed and it's time to shift the focus from mass incarceration to public health and human rights. The report, titled "**Ending the Drug Wars**" and put together by the **London School of Economics' IDEAS Center**, looks at the high costs and unintended consequences of drug prohibitions on public health and safety, national security and law enforcement. *"The pursuit of a militarized and enforcement-led global 'war on drugs' strategy has produced enormous negative outcomes and collateral damage,"* says the 82-page report. *"These include mass incarceration in the US, highly repressive policies in Asia, vast corruption and political destabilization in Afghanistan and West Africa, immense violence in Latin America, an HIV epidemic in Russia, an acute global shortage of pain medication and the propagation of systematic human rights abuses around the world."*

The report urges the world's governments to reframe their drug policies around treatment and harm reduction rather than prosecution and prison. It is also aimed at the United Nations General Assembly, which is preparing to convene a special session on drug policy in 2016. The hope is to push the U.N. to encourage countries to develop their own policies, because the report declares the current one-size-fits-all approach has not proved to be effective. *"The UN must recognize its role is to assist states as they pursue best-practice policies based on scientific evidence, not undermine or counteract them,"* said Danny Quah, a professor of economics at LSE and a contributor to the report. *"If this alignment occurs, a new and effective international regime can emerge that effectively tackles the global drug problem."*

In addition to contributions from Quah and a dozen other foreign and drug policy experts, the report has been endorsed by five past winners of the **Nobel Prize in Economics**: Kenneth Arrow (1972), Sir Christopher Pissarides (2010), Thomas Schelling (2005), Vernon Smith (2002) and Oliver Williamson (2009). Also signing on to the report's foreword are a number of current and former international leaders, including George Shultz, secretary of state under President Ronald Reagan; Nick Clegg, British deputy prime minister; and Javier Solana, the former EU high representative for common foreign and security policy. Guatemalan President Otto Perez Molina, who has announced that his government may present a plan to legalize production of marijuana and opium poppies by the end of 2014, has also publicly backed the report. Molina plans to discuss the report at the U.N.

A recent Pew survey suggests that Americans may be ready to refocus the U.S. end of the drug war, with 67 percent favoring policies that would provide drug treatment. *"The drug war's failure has been recognized by public health professionals, security experts, human rights authorities and now some of the world's most respected economists,"* said John Collins, the **International Drug Policy Project** coordinator at **LSE IDEAS**. *"Leaders need to recognize that toeing the line on current drug control strategies comes with extraordinary human and financial costs to their citizens and economies."* Hopefully, governments will now listen to what many professionals have been saying for decades. **The War Against Drugs** only makes things worse as it doesn't address the underlying issues and the collateral damages that it creates worse unintended consequences.



Special Advisor to the White House – John Podesta

Tuesday the White House released the **National Climate Assessment (NCA) Report 2014** saying that -- Climate change is here and will only worsen. Get used to more flooding, wildfires and drought, depending on where you live. Cities and states across America already are spending lots of money to respond. Those are the take-home messages are part of President Barack Obama's second-term effort to prepare the nation for the impacts of a changing climate such as rising sea levels and increasingly erratic weather. **The National Climate Assessment** update said evidence of human-made climate change "continues to strengthen" and that "Americans are noticing changes all around them." "This is not some distant problem of the future," Obama told **NBC**, while John Holdren, who directs the **White House Office of Science and Technology Policy**, said climate change "already is affecting every region of the country and key sectors of the economy."

The report, more than 800 pages long, detailed how consequences of climate change could play out on several fronts, including infrastructure, water supplies, and agriculture. Climate impacts are already apparent in the United States, they are likely to worsen, and communities should begin factoring climate change into all kinds of decisions. From Hawaii to Maine, from the fishing industry to manufacturing, the report's 30 chapters emphasize that "evidence of human-induced climate change continues to strengthen and that impacts are increasing across the country." Severe weather and other impacts of climate change also increase the risk of disease transmission, decrease air quality and can increase mental health problems, among other effects, the report said. That could mean that over time the demand for certain medications could rise, for example, along with more severe seasonal allergies. And a changing climate that thrusts U.S. corn production further northward could alter the transportation patterns needed to move agricultural products to market, boosting road and rail construction.

Thirteen government departments and agencies, from the Agriculture Department to NASA, were part of the committee that compiled the report, which also includes academics, businesses, non-profit organizations and others. By highlighting issues in each corner of the country, the administration hopes to garner support for federal and state actions, including measures already under way and some that are pending. "They get that climate change is happening, they get that it is caused by human activity and support the solutions to climate change but they don't feel that sense of urgency," John Podesta, an adviser to President Barack Obama, told reporters Tuesday.

Unlike a major United Nations report on climate released earlier this year, which looked at North America as a whole, the vast U.S. report outlines in detail the effects on different geographic regions and segments of the economy. For example, while residents of the coastal Northeast could face bigger storm surges and coastal areas around the country risk more flooding, the southwestern United States is likely to confront more wildfires and severe water shortages. *"It will help put their own experiences in context, and we think that is important in generating interest and action on the issue,"* said Lyndsay Moseley, director of the **American Lung Association's Healthy Air** campaign.

Instead of climate change as a global problem or a future problem the report lays out climate change as a problem of today and how it is affecting us now. And these are the effects. Starting with the Northeast where 64 million people live and super storm Sandy and all of damage that are came from that and all of huge snowstorm that have slept through the Northeast in recent years, the report says that these weather events, extreme precipitation events will continue damaging our *infrastructure (roadways, railways, bridges and the electric supplies)*. Moving down to the Southeast, climate change is causing seas to overwhelm the low lying coastal areas (*these billion dollar weather events*) causing billions of dollars in damages from the Carolinas to Texas.

Not all is bad as climate change may produce a longer growing season in the Midwest where it is all about agriculture but the downside is that the growing season will be less predictable thus driving up the cost of food. Moving to the Great Plains the growing problem will be water scarcity. And the Southwest (*Southern California, Arizona, etc.*) are already experiencing a growing number of gigantic wildfires as things dry out and become less favorable for growing conditions. The sort of the same thing happens in the Northwest as climate change is responsible for insect infestation killing vast swaths of forest. As a result, no matter where you live in this country there is something in this report that should concern you. Attached, please find **CNN** article – ***Changes east to west: Breaking down the climate report by region*** and for the entire report – [REDACTED]



I just read an interesting article in **The Daily Beast** by Jay Parini — ***GOP Hypocrisy: Outraged Over Benghazi, Silent on Iraq*** — This week the House of Representatives established a select committee to investigate the attack on Benghazi that left four Americans dead in 2012. I couldn't help but wonder what these same legislators might have done had Barack Obama been president in 2003, and had the audacity of George W. Bush to attack a sovereign country that had no relevant connection to the 9/11 attacks with the result that nearly 5,000 Americans and well over 100,000 Iraqi civilians (*many of them women and children*) perished. Had Obama's war in Iraq also cost American taxpayers \$1.7 trillion, with another \$490 in veteran expenses (thus far) — with a total cost of \$6 trillion projected — I have no doubt that a select committee would long ago have sent him to the Hague for trial as a war criminal.

It's sad to think how in our fury over Benghazi we've almost forgotten a recent war that destroyed so many families, nearly bankrupted this country (and may yet), and led to a hugely destabilized Iraq that no longer serves as a buffer to Iran. Needless to say, this terrible war was pursued under false pretenses, with huge amounts of government corruption — Houston-based company KBR alone (a spinoff from Halliburton, where Dick Cheney was chairman and CEO before becoming vice president) racked up charges of nearly \$40 billion during the war, making it (by far) the winner in the Iraq sweepstakes. In most banana republics, this would be cause for serious investigation; but not so much here, where our politicians (or their friends) are allowed to profit from armed invasions. Can it possibly be so that the U.S. Congress has ignored such obvious corruption while investigating over and over whether Susan Rice was given some edited "*talking points*" on Benghazi? Really?

Iraq now lies in ruins, and the U.S. has tens of thousands of enemies with a right to their anger. And the unintended consequence of this misadventure is the total destabilization of the Middle East, with the Iraqi government almost a client-state of its former enemy Iran, much like the relationship that Afghanistan has with its neighbor Pakistan. Meanwhile, Americans mourn the loss of so many brothers, fathers, uncles, sisters, and mothers. Many veterans lie in hospitals across the nation, dazed and confused. This war that somehow never found its way onto the books continues to drag on our economy. So why haven't we brought Bush and Cheney to Washington to answer some very hard questions under oath? We have serious problems in America and trying to find out why a one-time description on several Sunday morning news programs by one person in the Obama Administration is nowhere close to the top nor will it change anything other than muddy up Hillary Clinton should she run for President in 2016. Since Congress has time to investigate Benghazi, they should also create a House committee to study the unprovoked attack on Iraq which led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of innocent people. This is blatant evidence of the hypocrisy in the GOP's latest attempt to damage Hillary Clinton, President Obama and their legacies ***and this is my rant of the week.***

WEEK'S READINGS

Obama grins and roasts the press, himself, Republicans and Putin at 2014

White House Correspondence Dinner



President enjoys tradition of wise-cracks at the expense of his critics and himself at Correspondents Association dinner

On the 100 anniversary of its founding President Obama made fun of himself at the White House Correspondents Association dinner on Saturday, *the annual nerd-ball* schmooze-fest where Washington's media stars get comfy with a mix of political bigwigs and Hollywood beautiful people to celebrate a year of journalism. Obama, known for his comic timing and delivery, didn't disappoint. President Obama poked fun at the press, his political rivals and his own healthcare policy a week ago Saturday night, as he spoke at the **White House Correspondents' Association Dinner**.

Web Link: [\[Redacted\]](#)

In the annual tradition of the president offering a sendup of the press, his rivals and often himself, President Obama noted that House Republicans have been as tough on Speaker John A. Boehner (Ohio) as they had previously been on him. And one of MY FAVORITES: ***"Which proves that orange really is the new black,"*** he said, to roars from the audience of 2,600 or so members of the media, Congress, visiting celebrities and others at the Washington Hilton. He was, of course, poking fun at the preternaturally tan Boehner who is a frequent target of Washington punch lines. The technical problems with the government's health-care Web site provided the inspiration for one of the year's most popular movies, Obama said. Then the poster for the animated film ***"Frozen"*** appeared on the large television screens. Obama's routine at the dinner focused mostly on those likely to be vying for the 2016 presidential nominations. Fox News will miss him when he leaves office, he said, because ANOTHER FAVORITE: ***"it will be harder to convince the American people that Hillary was born in Kenya."***

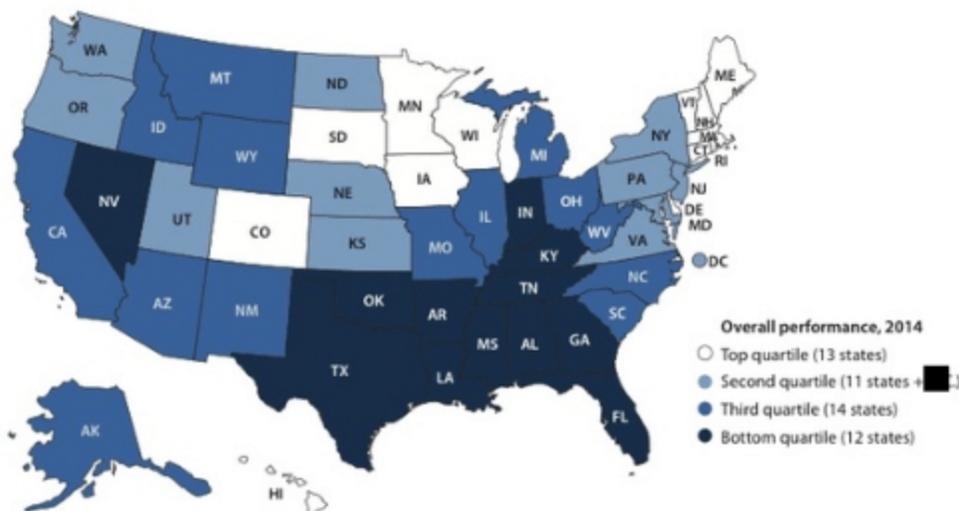


The White House Correspondents' Association (WHCA) is an organization of journalists who cover the White House and the President of the United States. The WHCA was founded on February 25, 1914, by journalists in response to an unfounded rumor that a Congressional committee would select which journalists could attend press conferences of President Woodrow Wilson. The WHCA operates

independently of the White House. Among the more notable issues handled by the WHCA are the credentialing process, access to the President and physical conditions in the White House press briefing rooms.

The States With the Worst Healthcare Systems

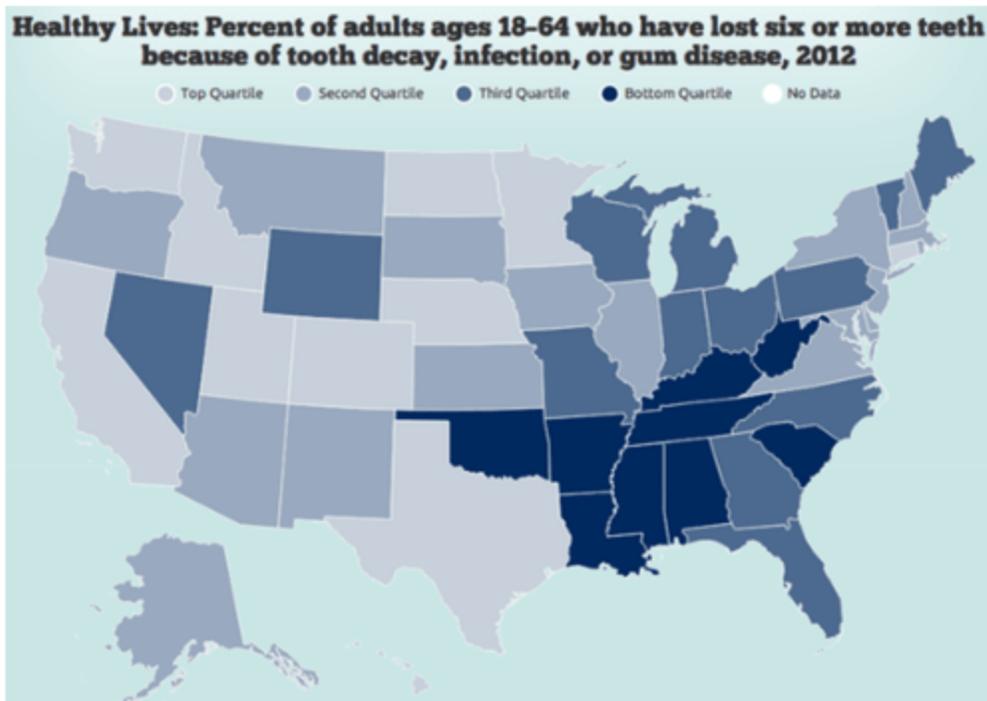
Nearly a quarter of West Virginians have lost six or more teeth, and other findings from a new Commonwealth Fund report.



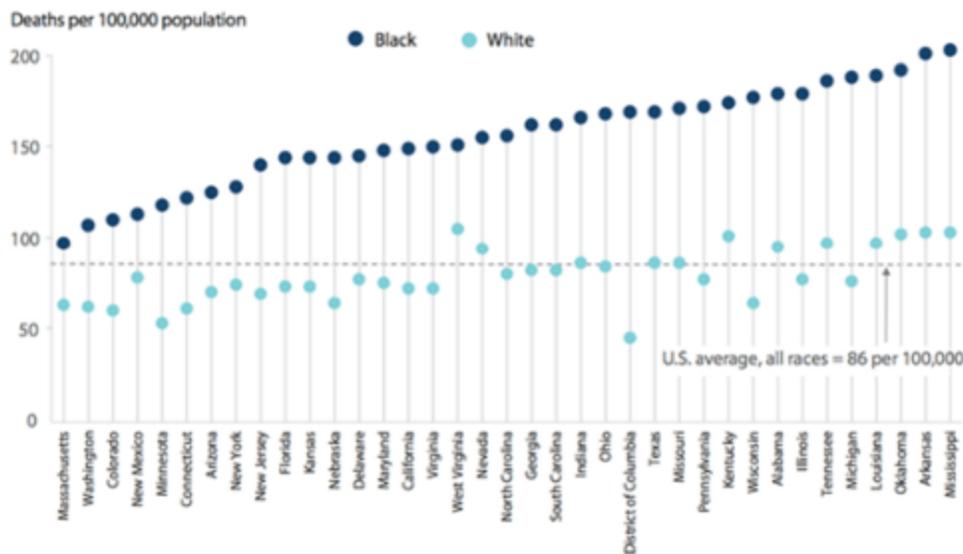
Minnesota has the nation's best-performing healthcare system, according to a Commonwealth Fund ranking released this week, and Massachusetts, Vermont, and New Hampshire are tied for second. Mississippi ranks last, just as it did on the previous ranking in 2009. Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Arkansas round out the bottom of the list.

For the ranking, the Commonwealth Fund relied on 42 different metrics that gauged everything from insurance coverage to avoidable hospital stays to vaccination rates, at the systemic level; and from obesity rates to how many adults have lost six or more teeth, at the individual level.

Here's the tooth map:



Almost all states either stagnated or declined in performance since the survey was performed five years ago, and once again, Southern states scored especially poorly across all of the dimensions. What's more, there were wide mortality differences between black and white residents of several states in the Deep South. "Racial and ethnic minorities in Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, Mississippi, and North Carolina faced some of the widest disparities relative to the national average across all of the indicators assessed in our Equity dimension," the group wrote.



Demographically, Mississippi is already at a disadvantage. A black man in Mississippi has a shorter life expectancy than the average American did in 1960. The state has an obesity rate of 35 percent, one of the highest poverty rates in the country, and just one abortion clinic. Healthcare in Mississippi and in other Southern states is unlikely to become more equitable anytime soon, however. As the study authors note, 16 of the states in the bottom half of the ranking have opted not to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act to adults making up to 138 percent of the federal poverty level.

In Mississippi, for example, "Medicaid eligibility for non-disabled adults is limited to parents with incomes below 29 percent of poverty, or about \$6,800 a year for a family of four, and adults without dependent children remain ineligible regardless of their income," as the Kaiser Family Foundation

points out. Those Mississippians making between 100 percent of the federal poverty level, or \$23,850 for a family of four, and 400 percent, can qualify for subsidies to buy health insurance on the exchanges. But 30 percent of uninsured Mississippians fall into the "coverage gap" between the state's current income cutoff for Medicaid and the federal cutoff for health insurance subsidies. They don't qualify for any kind of financial help to buy health insurance and are likely to remain uninsured. Mississippi also had the largest percentage of adults who went without medical care because of cost issues, according to the Commonwealth Fund report.

In an editorial in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* last week, the Commonwealth Fund's Douglas McCarthy and David Radley highlighted Medicaid expansion as one way to bridge the North-South healthcare divide. "If all states participate in Medicaid expansions, the geographic divide documented by the scorecard might narrow," they wrote. "However, if many states do not, the divide could widen in the future."



Overlook by almost everyone in the American press was that Al Qaeda Chief Ayman Al-Zawahri has publicly admitted that al Qaeda's entry into Syria's civil war caused **"a political disaster"** for Islamist militants there, the movement's global leader al-Zawahri said in a video message, urging the faction to redouble its efforts in Iraq instead. Zawahri has repeatedly tried to end infighting between the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and another al Qaeda-aligned group, the Nusra Front. He said on Friday in a message translated by SITE Monitoring that if ISIL had accepted his decision not to get involved in Syria and had instead worked to *"busy itself with Iraq, which needs double its efforts"* then it could have avoided the *"waterfall of blood"* caused by militant infighting. ISIL militants joined the conflict in Syria last year and unilaterally declared they were taking over the Nusra Front, which had won the admiration of many rebels fighting Syria's President Bashar al-Assad for its battlefield prowess.

Zawahri, who has run al Qaeda since Osama bin Laden was killed in April 2011, accused ISIL's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, of *"sedition"* and said rebel disunity had been handed *"on a plate of gold"* to Assad, the ultimate target of all Sunni Islamist groups in Syria. Zawahri said Baghdadi should instead redouble his efforts against the Iraqi government, led by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki who is a Shi'ite - an Islamic sect regarded by al Qaeda as heretical. Shi'ism is the dominant sect in Iran. He said that toppling Assad would *"cause the elimination of more than half of the Iranian power alliance that seeks to establish a Shi'ite state from Afghanistan to south Lebanon"*. On Wednesday the United

States said al Qaeda's core organization in Pakistan, led by Zawahri, had been severely degraded, but that the movement's affiliates in Africa and the Middle East were becoming more autonomous and aggressive. The leadership of Al Qaeda and Al-Zawahri are learning the lesson that cross border intervention can have unintended consequences as the locals whom you support may be crazier than you.....

Last week in the **New York Times** economist Paul Krugman wrote a scathing op-ed — ***Inventing a Failure*** — on how House Republicans released a deliberately misleading report on the status of health reform, crudely rigging the numbers to sustain the illusion of failure in the face of unexpected success.... Asking readers “*are you shocked?*”

Krugman: You aren't, but you should be. Mainstream politicians didn't always try to advance their agenda through lies, damned lies and — in this case — bogus statistics. And the fact that this has become standard operating procedure for a major party bodes ill for America's future.

About that report: The really big policy news of 2014, at least so far, is the spectacular recovery of the Affordable Care Act from its stumbling start, thanks to an extraordinary late surge that took enrollment beyond early projections. The age mix of enrollees has improved; insurance companies are broadly satisfied with the risk pool. Multiple independent surveys confirm that the percentage of Americans without health insurance has already declined substantially, and there's every reason to believe that over the next two years the act will meet its overall goals, except in states that refuse to expand Medicaid.

This is a problem for Republicans, who have bet the ranch on the proposition that health reform is an unfixable failure. “*Nobody can make Obamacare work,*” declared Eric Cantor, the House majority leader, a couple of weeks ago (when it was already obvious that it was working pretty well). How can they respond to good news? Well, they could graciously admit that they were wrong, and offer constructive suggestions about how to make the law work even better. Oh, sorry —

I forgot that I wasn't writing jokes for the White House Correspondents' Dinner.

No, they have in fact continued to do what they've been doing ever since the news on Obamacare started turning positive: sling as much mud as possible at health reform, in the hope that some of it sticks. Premiums were soaring, they declared, when they have actually come in below projections. Millions of people were losing coverage, they insisted, when the great bulk of those whose policies were canceled simply replaced them with new policies. The Obama administration was cooking the books, they cried (projection, anyone?). And, of course, they keep peddling horror stories about people suffering terribly from Obamacare, not one of which has actually withstood scrutiny.

Now comes the latest claim — that many of the people who signed up for insurance aren't actually paying their premiums. Obviously this claim is part of a continuing pattern. It also, however, involves a change in tactics. Previous attacks on Obamacare were pretty much fact-free; this time the claim was backed by an actual survey purporting to show that a third of enrollees hadn't paid their first premium.

But the survey was rigged. (Are you surprised?) It asked insurers how many enrollees had paid their first premium; it ignored the fact that the first premium wasn't even due for the millions of people who

signed up for insurance after March 15.

And the fact that the survey was so transparently rigged is a smoking gun, proving that the attacks on Obamacare aren't just bogus; they're deliberately bogus. The staffers who set up that survey knew enough about the numbers to skew them, which meant that they have to have known that Obamacare is actually doing O.K.

First of all, it fires up the base. After this latest exercise in deception, we can be fairly sure that Republican leaders know perfectly well that Obamacare has failed to fail. But the party faithful don't. Like anyone who writes about these issues, I get vast amounts of mail from people who know, just know, that insurance premiums are skyrocketing, that far more people have lost insurance because of Obummercare than have gained it, that all the horror stories are real, and that anyone who says otherwise is just a liberal shill.

Beyond that, the constant harping on alleged failure works as innuendo even if each individual claim collapses in the face of evidence. A recent poll by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that a majority of Americans know that more than eight million people enrolled in health exchanges; but it also found a majority of respondents believing that this was below expectations, and that the law was working badly.

So Republicans are spreading disinformation about health reform because it works, and because they can — there is no sign that they pay any political price when their accusations are proved false. And that observation should scare you. What happens to the Congressional Budget Office if a party that has learned that lying about numbers works takes full control of Congress? What happens if it regains the White House, too? Nothing good, that's for sure.



One of the scariest phrases in military jargon has to be unintended consequences. An example of unintended consequences is the United States arming Mujahideen forces and Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan in the 1980s only to face the same forces and weapons itself in 2001. And probably a better example is the Bush/Cheney administration's miscalculations of the benefits of regime change in Iraq. Because of instead of giving us access to cheap crude oil, stabilizing the Middle East and isolating al Qaeda and Iran, the exact opposite happened on all three, not to mention 9/11 as well as the embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania by al Qaeda in 1998.

This week in **The Daily Beast** Bruce Riedel wrote an interesting article – ***Syria's Terror Blowback Threatens Europe and the United States*** – pointing out that the Afghan war of the 1980s gave us al Qaeda and the Syrian war of today may spawn something worse as the flow of foreign fighters to Syria to join the war against Bashar Assad's dictatorship is becoming the largest in the history of the global jihad, and the Syrian battleground is on the way to outstripping the 1980s Afghan war against the Soviets as a training ground for Islamic militants. Security services around the world are becoming increasingly alarmed at the implications for the safety of their citizens.

American intelligence officials now put the number of foreign fighters who have gone to Syria since the war began in 2011 at between 8,000 and 10,000. Other sources put the total even higher, up to 12,000. The largest contingent is probably Saudis. Saudi sources put the number of their citizens who have gone to wage jihad in Syria at 1,200, of whom 300 are reported to have died on the battlefield. Jordanian sources report about a thousand Jordanians have gone to fight in their northern neighbor. Figures for other Arab countries are largely unavailable. There are no coherent governments counting the flow of fighters from broken states like Yemen, Libya or Iraq, but we know from previous experience they are likely sources of jihadists.

Virtually every country in Western Europe has reported that some of its Muslim citizens have gone to Syria. A small but significant number have died in the war and become martyrs back in the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, and other states with sizable Muslim minorities. Even tiny Luxembourg has had one jihadi martyr already. Americans are now fighting in Syria as well. In comparison, the war against the Soviet 40th Red Army in Afghanistan in the 1980s attracted an estimated 20,000 foreign volunteers over a decade, according to the estimate of the American intelligence community when the Russians retreated from Afghanistan in 1989. So Afghanistan attracted more volunteers, but over a longer time period. If Syria continues to attract foreign fighters at the rate we have seen so far and the civil war goes on for a decade, the Syrian war is all but certain to be an even larger factory for extremism than Afghanistan.

Syria is worrisome in other ways as well. Many of the so-called Arab Afghans who came to Pakistan and Afghanistan in the 1980s were labeled "*tourist jihadis*" at the time. Considerable numbers of the Arab and other Muslim volunteers in the '80s never actually crossed the border from Pakistan into Afghanistan to fight the Russians. They got their pictures taken with an AK47 assault rifle in the Afghan refugee camps and the training bases of the mujahedin in Pakistan, endured a few months hardship and then they went home to boast of their "*experience*" in jihad. Understand that foreign fighters are often the most fanatical on the battlefield and among jihadis they probably make up the majority of suicide bombers.

Even those who did fight against the Russians played only a marginal role in determining the outcome of the war. The best estimate available of the total number of Arab Afghans who died on the battlefield in the 1980s is no more than 500. Over a million Afghans died in the war. The vast bulk of the fighting

was done by thousands of Afghan mujahedin backed by several hundred Pakistani intelligence officers from the ISI and Pakistan Special Forces commandoes. With a few notable exceptions (Osama bin Laden being the most important) the Arab Afghans were not regarded by either the mujahedin or the ISI as serious contributors to the war effort. They were good for fundraising, medical services and public relations purposes, not combat.

That is not the case in Syria today. Foreign fighters are a mainstay of the rebellion against Assad. Especially in the extremist factions like al Qaeda's Al Nusra Front or the even more radical Islamic State of Iraq and al Shams group (expelled from al Qaeda this winter for its extremism), the foreign volunteers are a major source of manpower for the war. The foreign fighters are often the most fanatical on the battlefield. They probably make up the majority of suicide bombers. In Afghanistan in the 1980s there were no suicide bombers—the mujahedin then did not feel that was a heroic way to fight or die.

The blowback from the Afghan war was massive and enduring. As early as 1991 Algerian veterans of the Afghan war were a critical ingredient in starting the Algerian civil war that ultimately claimed an estimated 150,000 lives. Afghan veterans in Egypt played a role in the wave of terror that swept Cairo and other Egyptian cities in the 1990s. The Who's Who of the Global Jihad is full of Afghan war veterans from bin Laden to his successor, the Egyptian Ayman Zawahiri, who was a doctor in the refugee camps during the war. Of course the most dangerous blowback of the war was the role it played in creating the ideology of global jihad.

The father of that ideology was an Afghan war veteran, Abdallah Azzam, a Palestinian who was bin Laden's first partner in attracting foreign fighters to come to Afghanistan. Few volunteers in the 1980s came from the Muslim Diaspora in Europe and North America. Now there are dozens of fighters in Syria who have American and European passports and will come home if they survive the war. For the intelligence and security services of the Western allies the specter of dozens of battle-hardened, experienced fanatics returning to their homes full of anger and resentment is a very deeply troubling one.

The Six Principles of the New Populism (and the Establishment's Nightmare)



Robert Reich -- Huffington Post -- 05/06/2014

More Americans than ever believe the economy is rigged in favor of Wall Street and big business and their enablers in Washington. We're five years into a so-called recovery that's been a bonanza for the rich but a bust for the middle class. *"The game is rigged and the American people know that. They get it right down to their toes,"* says Senator Elizabeth Warren. Which is fueling a new populism on both the left and the right. While still far apart, neo-populists on both sides are bending toward one another and against the establishment. Who made the following comments? (**Hint:** Not Warren, and not Bernie Sanders.)

- A. We "cannot be the party of fat cats, rich people, and Wall Street."
- B. "The rich and powerful, those who walk the corridors of power, are getting fat and happy..."
- C. "If you come to Washington and serve in Congress, there should be a lifetime ban on lobbying."
- D. "Washington promoted moral hazard by protecting Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, which privatized profits and socialized losses."
- E. "When you had the chance to stand up for Americans' privacy, did you?"
- F. "The people who wake up at night thinking of which new country they want to bomb, which new country they want to be involved in, they don't like restraint. They don't like reluctance to go to war."

(**Answers:** A. Rand Paul, B. Ted Cruz, C. Ted Cruz, D. House Republican Joe Hensarling, E. House Republican Justin Amash, F. Rand Paul)

You might doubt the sincerity behind some of these statements, but they wouldn't have been uttered if the crowds didn't respond enthusiastically – and that's the point. Republican populism is growing, as is the Democratic version, because the public wants it. And it's not only the rhetoric that's converging. Populists on the right and left are also coming together around six principles:

1. Cut the biggest Wall Street banks down to a size where they're no longer too big to fail. Left populists have been advocating this since the Street's bailout now they're being joined by populists on the right. David Camp, House Ways and Means Committee chair, recently proposed an extra 3.5 percent quarterly tax on the assets of the biggest Wall Street banks (giving them an incentive to trim

down). Louisiana Republican Senator David Vitter wants to break up the big banks, as does conservative pundit George Will. "There is nothing conservative about bailing out Wall Street," says Rand Paul.

2. Resurrect the Glass-Steagall Act, separating investment from commercial banking and thereby preventing companies from gambling with their depositors' money. Elizabeth Warren has introduced such legislation, and John McCain co-sponsored it. Tea Partiers are strongly supportive, and critical of establishment Republicans for not getting behind it. "It is disappointing that progressive collectivists are leading the effort for a return to a law that served well for decades," writes the Tea Party Tribune. "Of course, the establishment political class would never admit that their financial donors and patrons must hinder their unbridled trading strategies."

3. End corporate welfare -- including subsidies to big oil, big agribusiness, big pharma, Wall Street, and the Ex-Im Bank. Populists on the left have long been urging this; right-wing populists are joining in. Republican David Camp's proposed tax reforms would kill dozens of targeted tax breaks. Says Ted Cruz: "We need to eliminate corporate welfare and crony capitalism."

4. Stop the National Security Agency from spying on Americans. Bernie Sanders and other populists on the left have led this charge but right-wing populists are close behind. House Republican Justin Amash's amendment, that would have defunded NSA programs engaging in bulk-data collection, garnered 111 Democrats and 94 Republicans last year, highlighting the new populist divide in both parties. Rand Paul could be channeling Sanders when he warns: "Your rights, especially your right to privacy, is under assault... if you own a cellphone, you're under surveillance."

5. Scale back American interventions overseas. Populists on the left have long been uncomfortable with American forays overseas. Rand Paul is leaning in the same direction. Paul also tends toward conspiratorial views about American interventionism. Shortly before he took office he was caught on video claiming that former vice president Dick Cheney pushed the Iraq War because of his ties to Halliburton.

6. Oppose trade agreements crafted by big corporations. Two decades ago Democrats and Republicans enacted the North American Free Trade Agreement. Since then populists in both parties have mounted increasing opposition to such agreements. The Trans-Pacific Partnership, drafted in secret by a handful of major corporations, is facing so strong a backlash from both Democrats and tea party Republicans that it's nearly dead. "The Tea Party movement does not support the Trans-Pacific Partnership," says Judson Philips, president of Tea Party Nation. "Special interest and big corporations are being given a seat at the table" while average Americans are excluded.

Left and right-wing populists remain deeply divided over the role of government. Even so, the major fault line in American politics seems to be shifting, from Democrat versus Republican, to populist versus establishment -- those who think the game is rigged versus those who do the rigging. In this month's Republican primaries, tea partiers continue their battle against establishment Republicans. But the major test will be 2016 when both parties pick their presidential candidates. Ted Cruz and Rand Paul are already vying to take on Republican establishment favorites Jeb Bush or Chris Christie. Elizabeth Warren says she won't run in the Democratic primaries, presumably against Hillary Clinton, but rumors abound. Bernie Sanders hints he might.

Wall Street and big business Republicans are already signaling they'd prefer a Democratic establishment candidate over a Republican populist. Dozens of major GOP donors, Wall Street Republicans, and corporate lobbyists have told Politico that if Jeb Bush decides against running and Chris Christie doesn't recover politically, they'll support Hillary Clinton. "The darkest secret in the big money world of the Republican coastal elite is that the most palatable alternative to a nominee such as Senator Ted Cruz of Texas or Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky would be Clinton," concludes Politico.

Says a top Republican-leaning Wall Street lawyer, "it's Rand Paul or Ted Cruz versus someone like Elizabeth Warren that would be everybody's worst nightmare." Everybody on Wall Street and in corporate suites, that is. And the "nightmare" may not occur in 2016. But if current trends continue, some similar "nightmare" is likely within the decade. If the American establishment wants to remain the establishment it will need to respond to the anxiety that's fueling the new populism rather than fight it.



If you really want more evidence on what's wrong with media in America you only have to look at **FOX News** where last week two conservatives intellectuals, George F. Will and Charles Krauthammer appeared on a **Fox News All-Star Panel** discussing the **U.S. National Climate Assessment** that was just released by the White House, which they dismissed with various irritable mental gestures. Their evasions and misstatements, clothed in faux-erudition, offer a useful entrance point to study the current state of the right-wing mind.

There is no issue where educated ignorance is on more perfect display than watching the conservative movement confront scientific evidence of climate change. Educated ignorance is not the same thing as

the regular kind of ignorance. It takes real talent to master. George F. Will and Charles Krauthammer are two of the intellectual giants of the right, former winners of the **Bradley Foundation's \$250,000** annual prize, **Washington Post** columnists, and **Fox News All-Star** panelists. They numbered among the select conservative intellectuals chosen to dine with newly elected president Barack Obama in 2009.

What follows is an annotated analysis of Will and Krauthammer's remarks, the intellectual quality of which starts off low, and grows increasingly and even frighteningly so as the program progresses. After a brief introduction of the climate report, we begin with Krauthammer:

What they tell you is that you should be scared about what's happening today. Of course, if it's very cold in the winter, they blame it, here in the northeast, they blame it on global warming, and the report says that global warming makes summers hotter and winters are generally shorter and warmer.

In one sentence, Krauthammer claims "*they*" blame every cold winter on climate change, but does not identify who "*they*" is. In the next sentence, he correctly says that the climate assessment links climate change with shorter, warmer winters in the United States, negating his previous point. Any scientific theory that explains everything explains nothing, and no matter what happens in climate is unpleasant, the word for that is weather, it's attributed to global warming. If we continue global warming up here in the northeast, we're going to freeze to death.

It is not clear what Krauthammer means when he says climate science "*explains everything.*" Climate science is an attempt to model the complex impact of heat-trapping gasses in the atmosphere. It does not attempt to explain "everything" more than, say, the Theory of Gravity does. (In fact, it attempts to explain less, as it contains more room for unpredictability.) It is also impossible to understand exactly what Krauthammer's line about freezing to death even means. The report does in fact describe dangerous and costly impacts in the Northeast:

"Heat waves, coastal flooding, and river flooding will pose a growing challenge to the region's environmental, social, and economic systems. This will increase the vulnerability of the region's residents, especially its most disadvantaged populations. Infrastructure will be increasingly compromised by climate-related hazards, including sea level rise, coastal flooding, and intense precipitation events. Agriculture, fisheries, and ecosystems will be increasingly compromised over the next century by climate change impacts. Farmers can explore new crop options, but these adaptations are not cost- or risk-free. Moreover, inequities exist in adaptive capacity, which could be overwhelmed by changing climate."

Krauthammer goes on to endorse comments by Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell:

But the most important element is what McConnell was talking about, the negligible gains. Assume they are right about global warming, assume that it is all caused by man. The United States has reduced carbon emissions since 2006 more than any other country on earth. We are right now at 1992 levels, according to the International

Energy Agency, and yet carbon emissions have gone up globally. Why? We don't control the emissions of the other 96 percent of humanity, especially China and India. As we dismantle the coal plants in our country, China and India together are adding one coal-fired plant every week. The net effect is to shift the U.S. coal energy generating industry from here to India and China. It will have zero effect. If we could have a pact with other countries in which everybody would reduce their emissions, I would sign on. In the absence of it, all that we're doing is committing economic suicide in the name of do-goodism that will not do an iota of good.

Krauthammer asserts, with an air of unassailable confidence, that reducing U.S. greenhouse gas emissions will have no significant impact on worldwide greenhouse gas emissions, because "*we don't control the emissions of the other 96 percent of humanity.*" Krauthammer's implication that 96 percent of the greenhouse gas problem lies beyond the direct control of the United States is untrue, since, while the United States may only account for 4 percent of the world's population, it emits 16 percent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions:

The strategy to limit climate change does not assume that limiting American emissions is a sufficient step to mitigate catastrophic climate change. It assumes it is a necessary step to mitigate catastrophic climate change. Countries like India and China have, in fact, taken steps to reduce their energy intensiveness. Given that those countries' per capita greenhouse gas emissions are a small fraction of ours, there is no plausible or defensible path to securing an international agreement without a commitment by the countries with the highest per-capita emissions, like the U.S., to participate.

After an interlude from others on the panel, George Will jumps in:

There is, however, no evidence for the increase in extreme weather.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change found otherwise in 2011:

There is evidence that some extremes have changed as a result of anthropogenic influences, including increases in atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases. It is likely that anthropogenic influences have led to warming of extreme daily minimum and maximum temperatures at the global scale. There is medium confidence that anthropogenic influences have contributed to intensification of extreme precipitation at the global scale. It is likely that there has been an anthropogenic influence on increasing extreme coastal high water due to an increase in mean sea level. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration concluded, somewhat more conclusively, "Human influences are having an impact on some extreme weather and climate events."

Will continues:

I own a home on an island in South Carolina looking south in the direction of hurricanes, and after Katrina I was really interested when they said this is a harbinger of increased hurricane activity, which since then has plummeted.

The chance of a hurricane striking a given location is extremely variable. The lack of major hurricanes striking the United States since 2005 is attributable to luck. It does not contradict any major scientific conclusions about climate change.

Will continues:

Now, there is, as Charles says, the policy question is how much wealth do we want to spend directly or in lost production in order to have no discernible measurable effect on the climate? People say, well, what about this report? There is a sociology of science. Scientists are not saints in white laboratory smocks. They have got interests like everybody else. If you want a tenure-track position in academia, don't question the reigning orthodoxy on climate change. If you want money from the biggest source of direct research in this country, the federal government, don't question its orthodoxy. If you want to get along with your peers, conform to peer pressure. This is what's happening.

Will is arguing that climate scientists have been massively corrupted by federal funding and peer pressure. ("They have got interests like everybody else.") He does not consider the countervailing power of opposing financial interests that might lure scientists to question of the scientific consensus, such as the lucrative funding made available in the right-wing think-tank world. He likewise discounts the possibility that scientists would find the lure of being proven eventually correct to be a powerful reputational incentive, let alone that they would actually care enough about being right to disregard social and financial pressure. If Will has any specific sense of how these social pressures survived the rigors of the scientific method and peer review, he does not explicate them. Will is then asked about the 97 percent of climate scientists who share the consensus analysis, and replies:

Who measured it? Where did that figure come from? They pluck these things from the ether. I do not.

It comes from a peer-reviewed study which found that 97.1 percent of scientific papers taking a position on anthropogenic climate change "*endorsed the consensus position that humans are causing global warming.*"

To watch Will and Krauthammer grasp for rationales to cast doubt on an established scientific field merely because its findings pose a challenge to their ideological priors is a depressing, and even harrowing, study in the poisonous effects of dogma upon a once-healthy brain. They have amassed an impressive array of sound bites and factoids, and can render them with convincing gravitas, and yet their underlying reasoning is absolutely bonkers. The analogy Krauthammer suggests of the rain man — an authority figure possessed of commanding prestige despite lacking even rudimentary analytic powers — turns out to be apt; only he is describing himself. How can one explain Krauthammer and Will defend *the stupid*? There is nothing worse than smart people who allow partisan prejudice cloud their judgment.

THIS WEEK'S QUOTES

Islamicphobic is a word created by fascist and used by cowards to manipulate morons.

Christopher Hitchens

BEST VIDEO OF THE WEEK

Bill Maher Argues For Privacy, Free Speech In Wake Of Donald Sterling Scandal



Web Link: [\[REDACTED\]](#)

While most late night comedy shows have focused on Donald Sterling's overt racism in recent weeks, Bill Maher dug into a different aspect of the story on Friday's **"Real Time: Privacy."** *"Last week when President Obama was asked about the Sterling episode, he said, 'When ignorant folks want to advertise their ignorance, just let them talk.' But Sterling didn't advertise,"* Maher explained, *"He was bugged. And while he may not be worth defending, the 4th Amendment is."* It's a difficult point to make, given the collective outrage that sprung up once Sterling's comments were broadcast. Maher's studio audience broke into fewer rounds of applause during the segment than is usual for one of his **New Rules.** But as the host laid out his argument that we need to maintain the ability to speak our minds in private, he seemed to win them over.

In response to a Washington Post op-ed by Kathleen Parker which suggested you, *"Say what you will, but you'd best check for recording devices... [or] check your thoughts,"* Maher chafed, *"I'd rather be a Mormon."* He went on to sum up Parker's sentiment: *"So let me get this straight, we should concede that there's no such thing anymore as a private conversation, so therefore remember to 'lawyer' everything you say before you say it, and hey, speaking your mind was overrated anyway, so you won't miss it. Well, I'll miss it, I'll miss it a lot."* Watch the segment above (the Sterling New Rule begins at 2:14) and let me know what you think.

THIS WEEK'S MUSIC

Queen Latifah



This week I would like to share the music of Queen Latifah. Dana Elaine Owens (born March 18, 1970), better known by her stage name **Queen Latifah**, is an American singer, songwriter, rapper, actress, model, television producer, record producer, comedienne, and talk show hostess. She has long been considered one of hip-hop's pioneer feminists. Her work in music, film, and television has earned her a **Golden Globe** award, two **Screen Actors Guild Awards**, two **Image Awards**, a Grammy Award, six additional **Grammy** nominations, an **Emmy Award** nomination and an **Academy Award** nomination. On September 16, 2013, Latifah premiered her own syndicated daytime television show titled **The Queen Latifah Show**. On January 26, 2014, Latifah officiated the weddings of 33 same-sex and opposite-sex couples during a performance of "Same Love" by Macklemore at the **56th Annual Grammy Awards**. With this I invite you to enjoy the music of **Ms. Queen Latifah**.

Queen Latifah – [REDACTED] -- [REDACTED]

Queen Latifah – *Just Another Day* -- [REDACTED]

Queen Latifah ft. Monie Love – *Ladies First* -- [REDACTED]

Queen Latifah – *I Know Where I've Been* -- [REDACTED]

Queen Latifah – *California Dreamin* -- [REDACTED]

Queen Latifah – *Goin' Out Of My Head* -- [REDACTED]

Queen Latifah – *Hello Stranger* -- [REDACTED]

Queen Latifah – *Mercy, Mercy, Mercy* -- [REDACTED]

Alicia Keys, Queen Latifah & Kathleen Battle – *Superwoman* -- [REDACTED]

QUEEN LATIFAH, YO YO, MC LYTE, SALT IN PEPA, TLC & ATRA – *FREEDOM* -- [REDACTED]

Queen Latifah – *Dance For Me* -- [REDACTED]

Queen Latifah at the White House – *I Can't Stand The Rain* -- [REDACTED]

I hope that you have enjoyed this week's offerings and wish you and yours a great week.... Also – HAPPY MOTHER's DAY.....

Sincerely,

Greg Brown

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Gregory Brown
Chairman & CEO
GlobalCast Partners, LLC

US: [REDACTED]