

**From:** Gregory Brown <[REDACTED]>

**To:** undisclosed-recipients;

**Bcc:** jeevacation@gmail.com

**Subject:** Greg Brown's Weekend Reading and Other Things.... 9/30/12

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**Attachments:** Clinton's\_Remarks\_With\_Libyan\_President\_Mohamed\_Magariaf\_September\_34,\_2012.pdf;  
; President\_Magariaf\_speech\_to\_the\_CFR\_September\_28,\_2012.pdf;  
Providing\_a\_legal\_basis\_to\_attack\_Iran\_J\_Smith\_&\_J\_Bellington\_TWP\_September\_27,\_2012.pdf;  
Some\_experts\_say\_China's\_currency\_policy\_is\_not\_a\_danger\_to\_the\_economy\_Howard\_Schneider\_TWP\_09\_28\_12.pdf;  
Redistributing\_wealth\_upward\_Harold\_Meyerson\_09\_25\_12.pdf;  
Cap\_gains\_tax\_rates\_Steven\_Mufson\_09\_11\_12.pdf;  
A\_voting\_issue\_that\_isn't\_Eugene\_Robinson\_09\_25\_12.pdf;  
How\_Romney\_Has\_Failed\_as\_a\_CEO\_Sanjay\_Sanghee\_Huff\_Post\_09-28-12.pdf;  
Obama\_Fills\_in\_Blanks\_of\_Romney's\_Plans\_[REDACTED]\_Sees\_Falsehoods\_Michael\_Cooper\_NYT\_September\_27,\_2012.pdf;  
Romneys\_tax\_plan\_by\_the\_numbers\_Ruth\_Marcus\_09\_25\_12.pdf;  
Republicans\_deluded\_by\_'skewed'\_polls\_Eugene\_Robinson\_TWP\_September\_27,\_2012.pdf;  
Mr.\_Obama\_refreshing\_defense\_of\_free\_speech\_TWP\_Editorial\_09\_25\_12.pdf;  
The\_World\_We're\_Actually\_Living\_In\_Thomas\_Friedman\_NYT\_09\_29\_12.pdf

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## Dear Friends,

As many of my friends know, since the dawn of *The Arab Spring* last year I have been a strong supporter of the Transitional National Council in Libya (TNC), the National Front for the Salvation of Libya (NFSL), in particular its co-founder Dr. Mohammad Yousef Al-Magariaf and the people of Libya who were fighting for their self determination after 42 years of tyranny at the hands of Muammar Qaddafi. Last October the dictatorial Qaddafi regime was overthrown with the TNC establishing an interim government. On May 8, 2012, the NFSL held its sixth and final National Convention and officially ended its activities as a dissident group against the Qaddafi regime. The next day, the former NFSL commenced its activities as a political party now known as the National Front Party and held its first General National Assembly, in which Dr. Magariaf was voted as the president of the party. On July 7, 2012, he was voted into the two hundred member General National Congress in the first democratic elections in over four decades and on August 9, 2012, Dr. Magariaf was voted as the President of the General National Congress and the first democratically elected leader of Libya in more than forty years.

This past week I had the privileged of help arranging several events and meetings for President Magariaf during his visit to New York where he addressed the UN General Assembly and attended meetings at receptions held by President Obama, Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, and bilateral meetings with many distinguished world leaders, of whom I mention Madam Secretary Hillary Clinton, British Prime Minister David Cameron, former president Bill Clinton, Senator John McCain, Secretary General of NATO, President of the European Council, Executive Director of the World Bank, Council on Foreign Relations, Human Rights Watch and many others. Having met with more than fifty heads of states, in a private meeting yesterday, I found it refreshing to find my dear friend and brother President Magariaf still the same humble, thoughtful and wise man that I discovered when we first met a year and a half ago. Attached, please find President Magariaf's September 24th speech that he gave with **Secretary Hillary Clinton** and his September 28th speech that he gave at the **Council on Foreign Relations** to give you and insight of the man and his vision going forward..... Because he is **THE REAL DEAL**

and it is an honor to be his friend.

In an article by Jeffrey H. Smith and John B. Bellinger III in the **Washington Post** last week, *Providing a legal basis to attack Iran*, the writers point out that both President Obama and Mitt Romney have said they would consider a military strike against Iran. According to media reports, the necessary planning has been completed, and military options are “fully available.” The problem here under what basis does the United States, NATO or Israel have the right/authority to do a preempted attack against Iran for a perceived threat which Iran’s President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s pointed out last week that his country’s using a nuclear weapon against Israel, the United States or NATO would be suicide, because any single or ten nuclear strikes that they could muster would provoke a retaliation of hundreds, if not thousands of nuclear weapons upon Iran.

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The 2,000th U.S. troop was killed In Insider Attack in Afghanistan War last week. We should ask why? Why are we still fighting this war? What are our objectives? And how does keeping this war going benefit America? The fact that this milestone happened during a firefight broke out between U.S. forces and their Afghan army allies in eastern Afghanistan Sunday, killing two Americans and three Afghan soldiers should truly allow us question why we are still in this war and how did we get in an eleven year war that has taken the lives of more than 2000 Americans soldier, with tens of thousands injured at a cost of more than a trillion dollars....

## Weekend Readings

Yes, Obama and Romney are right to say that the United States is prepared to use force to defend the nation against this threat, if that is necessary after other means have been exhausted. But both men should also explain a clear legal basis for a military strike. They should publicly commit to seeking specific congressional authorization to bolster the president’s constitutional authority to defend the United States. And they should explain how using force against Iran would be justified under international law and under what circumstances.

Since the fall of The Shah, Iranian governments have survived as a result of isolating their people from the rest of The West by blustering against Israel, talking trash against America and supporting insurgent forces in Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East. Yes, they have threaten to close the Strait of Hormuz but this would choke the Islamic Republic’s economy which also rely on shipping through the Strait. Like North Korea, America should see Iran’s blustering for what it is, blustering to keep its population in fear from the outside and not focused on the disastrous domestic policies of the leadership in their respective countries. As Tony Capaccio wrote in **Bloomberg** on Aug 5, 2012 that Iran probably would attempt to block the Strait of Hormuz at the mouth of the Persian Gulf only as a “last resort,” and would probably only use a nuclear weapon/WMD in retaliation of a preempted strike against them and then only as a last result.

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For the past several years both parties have blamed China for keeping its currency undervalued as the reason for extreme in-balance of trade between the two countries, when the truth is that in a free market system the buyer often chooses the lowest price. This argument/excuse is almost nil as the value of China’s currency closed Friday near a record high against the dollar, approaching what some analysts consider a fair market price and potentially easing concerns that the country’s currency policy is damaging the U.S. economy. Please see Howard Schneider’s article in **The Washington Post**, *Some experts say China’s currency policy is not a danger to the economy*.

U.S.-China relations have become an issue in the presidential campaign, with GOP challenger Mitt Romney promising to get tough with “cheaters like China.” President Obama has argued for a more diplomatic approach, but the U.S. government also filed new trade complaints against China at the World Trade Organization. On Friday, the administration barred a Chinese company on national security grounds from owning a wind energy

development near a U.S. weapons base in Oregon.

The value of the Chinese yuan has been a point of particularly sharp difference between the two candidates. By keeping its currency value low, a country can give an advantage to its exporters, a strategy China used to build its industrial base — to the detriment, some argue, of U.S. manufacturers.

But China has gradually been relaxing its currency controls and other financial rules — often at key moments, such as visits by foreign leaders and major international meetings. China's critics claim that it has been the steady threat of congressional action that has forced Beijing's hand. Other analysts say the Chinese government has recognized that liberalized currency rules help control inflation and will be important to China's long-term economic goals.

The Obama administration has argued that a combination of private lobbying and occasional public criticism are the best way to keep the process moving. Romney has advocated a blunter approach, including the designation of China as a "currency manipulator" under U.S. laws that would allow the possible imposition of import taxes to erase any advantage to Chinese companies from an undervalued yuan. Given the yuan's current trajectory, however, the urgency of the issue could ebb.

Two members of the Peterson Institute for International Economics — Director C. Fred Bergsten and senior fellow Joseph E. Gagnon — said that China in recent times "has not been the major perpetrator" of currency "aggression." Writing recently in the *Financial Times*, they cited efforts by South Korea, Switzerland and other U.S. allies to keep their money cheap, as well. A recent Peterson Institute paper estimated that the yuan was within 8 percent of its "equilibrium" level with the dollar — far below the undervaluation of 30 percent or more than some China critics have alleged.

My personal belief is that the currency differential is not the big gorilla in the room that our politicians are focusing are harping on. I believe that real gorilla will come from China moving from an export economy to a domestic consumption economy – no longer dependent on American consumers and as a result no longer needing to finance exports through buying American treasuries.

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In Harold Meyerson's article in **The Washington Post** this week, *Redistributing wealth upward*, the title says it all..... As Meyerson says, *the "trickle-down" argument — that workers reap the rewards of productivity gains. Believing and asserting that requires either ignorance or willful denial of economic history. The only time in U.S. history when workers substantially benefited from productivity gains was the three decades that followed World War II, when median household income and productivity gains both increased by 102 percent. Not coincidentally, that was also the only period of genuine union power in U.S. history, and the time when the tax code was at its most progressive. During the past quarter-century, as progressivity was lessened and unions diminished, all productivity gains have gone to the wealthiest 10 percent, according to research published by the National Bureau of Economic Research. In 1955, at the height of union strength, the wealthiest 10 percent received 33 percent of the nation's personal income. In 2007, they received 50 percent, Economic Policy Institute data show.*

*If that's not redistribution, I don't know what is.*

*The problem is not just that everyone but the wealthy is claiming a smaller share of the nation's income; the absolute amount of income they're getting is declining as well. Median household income has dropped to the levels of the mid-1990s, according to Pew analysis of census data, while the income of the 400 wealthiest Americans rose by a tidy \$200 billion last year, according to data released this month by Forbes magazine. If that's not redistribution, I don't know what is.*

*So, which party can claim credit for this — the real redistribution this nation has experienced over the past 30 years? Many Democrats have been complicit in this calamity by their indifference to the consequences of deregulation and trade. But the trophy for promoting the policies that have redistributed wealth, family stability and longevity upward goes to the Republicans, whose standard-bearers are championing even more radical versions of these policies today. Reaganomics has not work evidence by the fall in standard of living for the*

Middle Class, so to double down on it now, which is the Republican agenda is ludicrous and would be a disaster for the country.

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To the accompany the preceding article by Harold Meyerson, I have included an earlier article also in **The Washington Post** by Steven Mufson and Jia Lynn Yang, *Capital gains tax rates benefiting wealthy feed growing gap between rich and poor*, whereby they suggest that the 15% tax rate for Capital Gains is not benefiting the country's economy and in fact is creating a growing gap between the rich and the poor. The writers say that Capital Gains equal Better Jobs is just not true and that the rates on capital gains — which include profits from the sale of stocks, bonds and real estate — should be a key point in negotiations over how to shrink the budget deficit.

Advocates for a low capital gains rate say it spurs more investment in the U.S. economy, benefiting all Americans. But some tax experts say the evidence for that theory is murky at best. What is clear is that the capital gains tax rate disproportionately benefits the ultra-wealthy.

Most Americans depend on wages and salaries for their income, which is subject to a graduated tax so the big earners pay higher percentages. The capital gains tax turns that idea on its head, capping the rate at 15 percent for long-term investments. As a result, anyone making more than \$34,500 a year in wages and salary is taxed at a higher rate than a billionaire is taxed on untold millions in capital gains.

While it's true that many middle-class Americans own stocks or bonds, they tend to stash them in tax-sheltered retirement accounts, where the capital gains rate does not apply. By contrast, the richest Americans reap huge benefits. Over the past 20 years, more than 80 percent of the capital gains income realized in the United States has gone to 5 percent of the people; about half of all the capital gains have gone to the wealthiest 0.1 percent. *"The way you get rich in this world is not by working hard,"* said Marty Sullivan, an economist and a contributing editor to Tax Analysts. *"It's by owning large amounts of assets and having those things appreciate in value."* Asked Mitt Romney who made \$21 million, paid only \$3.2 million (14%) in Federal taxes without working and would have paid less than 10% if he had not been running for President. But then one of the reasons that politicians are resistant to changing the Capital Gains Tax Rate, as the writers of the article points out *"remember that members of Congress themselves, particularly senators, are well off and they're more likely to be sympathetic to the argument for low capital gains."* This needs to be changed, especially since many who enjoy this Capital Gains disparity are professional investors and as such like professional gamblers, police, school teachers or firefighters they should pay at least as much taxes/rate as everyone else.

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One of the issues that is dear to my heart is voter suppression and as such I have included an op-ed piece by Eugene Robinson in **The Washing Post** this week, *A voting issue that isn't*. Robinson: *"Let's be clear: Voter ID laws are not a solution to the "problem" of voter fraud. There is no problem, or at least no problem that would be solved by voter ID. Proponents should be able to point to troubling instances of voter-impersonation fraud, which is the only kind that would be prevented by the new laws. But they can't. For all intents and purposes, this kind of fraud simply does not happen.*

*What did happen in 2008 was that African Americans, Hispanics and poor people — traditional Democratic Party constituencies — voted in unusually large numbers. And what happened in 2010 was that Republicans took control of more statehouses and set out to reshape the electorate and make it GOP-friendly. Not coincidentally, this voter ID campaign has been particularly intense in swing states such as Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania. Invariably, advocates cloak the restrictive new measures in pious-sounding rhetoric about "the integrity of the voting process." This sounds uncontroversial — who's against integrity? — until you weigh the laws' unconscionable costs against their undetectable benefits.*

*We cannot let anyone discourage us from casting our ballots," the first lady said Saturday. "We cannot let anyone make us feel unwelcome in the voting booth. It is up to us to make sure that in every election, every voice*

*is heard and every vote is counted.” As such, I strongly urge everyone to fight against any form of voter suppression as it is un-democratic and un-American, as well as a denial of citizens rights!*

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Last week **The Washington Post** did an editorial, Mr. Obama’s refreshing defense of free speech praising the President. I believe in free speech and I treasure the fact that I live in a country that is the citadel of free speech. But at the same time I am sensitive to the cultural differences between countries, religions and races. So one person’s vision of free speech is often different from another’s, example Germany where it is illegal to post anything anti-Semitic, although Germany is universally considered a country that supports free speech to the same degree that we do here in America .

As President Magariaf of Libya said when he addressed the **Council on Foreign Relations** this past Friday in New York – *“We believe that there can be no durable peace in the world unless human and political rights are respected everywhere, and until there is justice and opportunity for all. Since some of these rights will invariably be viewed differently in different countries, moderation and mutual respect is crucial to maintaining a civil society. I have an example involving the American concept of freedom of speech, which I submit must live respectfully among other central ideals both in America and abroad. In my country, and for Muslims everywhere, mocking the Prophet Mohammed is a crime, and it is punished harshly. Even in America, as I understand it, the right to freedom of speech does not extend to the right to scream “fire” in a crowded theater. Recently a movie that was made in America mocked and denigrated the Prophet Mohammed in a shameless way, and I would suggest, this is not so different from screaming fire in a crowded theater. It is crazy, inflammatory, and certain to cause mayhem or a brawl, and this has happened around the Muslim world in reaction to this film. So, as President of a Muslim nation, I would ask Americans to please not artificially elevate freedom of speech above all other principles and values and to instead exercise moderation and respect in the treatment of the Prophet Mohammed. Doing this will go far to enable the mutual respect and trust between Americans and Muslims on which we all rely, and ultimately upon which the future of the planet may rely. “*

What most Americans and even **The Washington Post** don’t appreciate is that people who live in Muslim countries don’t understand that the American government does not control what people say, write or place on the Internet. This is especially true with Muslims living in totalitarian societies whereby governments control the media and believing the most powerful country in the world can’t or doesn’t is does not make sense, especially since they know that America polices the Internet for child pornography and Internet gambling is prosecuted. At the same time people in these same countries used Twitter, Facebook and other portals on the Internet under the mantra of Free Speech during The Arab Spring. As such enlighten leaders like President Magariaf has asked both sides to be mutually respectful.

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From my brother Jan.....

*Dear Gregory:*

*Please add to your weekly reading list:*

***"Republican is Not a Four-letter Word: Why African Americans Must Stop Their Monolithic Support for the Democratic Party; and Why That's Important to Every Americans' Future."*** by JR Adams.

**Available at Amazon**

**PoliticsThis Week**

As Sanjay Sanghoo pointed out in his piece this week in **The Huffington Post**, *How Romney Fail as a CEO?*, is that Romney's business experience as the CEO of Bain Capital does not necessarily give him the skills and/or experience required by the President of the United States, Commander and Chief and Leader of the Free World. Especially since Romney has not demonstrated the qualities of a good CEO lately. Despite all the press about his hands-on management style for the campaign, his missteps on several mission-critical fronts show that he is actually a poor leader, or at least not ready for primetime.

He has been unable to keep his party on message, questioning his management skills in a political environment where you can't fire people or entice them with bonuses. The one thing that every smart CEO knows is that his employment depends upon the shareholders and whatever else he does, his biggest responsibility is to look after their interests. As a political candidate, Romney's shareholder base is the entire American public, and so logic dictates that he should be sensitive to the needs of people from all walks of life. But Romney has made it clear on many occasions that the only constituencies he cares about are wealthy individuals and major corporations, while low to middle-income Americans are really not his concern. That is blatantly unprofessional and brings into question the Republican challenger's suitability for running even a Chick Fil-A, forget the United States of America.

Even Republicans question his principals with his flip-flops on universal healthcare, contraception, and gay marriage to gun control from his time as Governor of Massachusetts to his current Presidential run indicates a lack of resolve and purpose. Or as the writer says, *"quite simply, he seems to go whichever way he thinks the wind is blowing, and is willing to compromise his principles in order to pander to the far-right wing of the GOP."* Even his pick of Paul Ryan for Vice President shows that he cannot decide which way he wants America to go; on one hand, he advocates lower taxes and deep cuts in government spending but on the other is hesitant to embrace Ryan's complete road map for fear that it is too extreme.

The fact that he truly doesn't understand Good Public Relations, having offended the British People and by putting his foot in his mouth again and again, he has eroded the credibility of his platform and the GOP itself. "For starters, his repetitive vow to repeal Obamacare if elected, combined with his hammering of the "welfare" state, has firmly positioned the Republicans as being insensitive to the needs of working class Americans. As if that was not enough, his infamous "47%" remark conveys the image of a man who is willing to alienate half the nation, not to mention that his reasoning itself is flawed: while some people may not pay income tax, they still pay payroll and sales taxes and some simply enjoy loopholes which means that they are likely middle class or rich and not the welfare-loving freeloaders that Romney automatically assumes them to be. And finally, his gratuitous criticism of Obama after the killing of the American ambassador to Libya only made him appear as an opportunistic jerk rather than Presidential. For someone vying to be America's front-man to the world, Romney's public relations skills are shockingly."

But the biggest deficit in Romney is that he has No Clear Plan of Action. Romney's plan for fixing America's economy is vague and unconvincing. Other than advocating the cutting of taxes and government spending, he has not put forward any concrete ideas about how to actually spur economic growth. By relying on dubious trickle-down economic theories that have been discredited by many economists, and by adopting the attitude that once the government gets out of the way, the private sector will solve all our problems, Romney has chosen to deflect the question rather than addressing it. And if this doesn't disqualify Romney for your vote, nothing will.....

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As Michael Cooper pointed out in his article this week in **The Washington Post**, *Obama Fills in Blanks of Romney's Plans, and [REDACTED] Sees Falsehoods*, that Romney's vague policies and solutions allow others to fill in the blanks to his disadvantage, including Republicans. EXAMPLE: The Obama campaign has run advertisements charging that Mitt Romney's Medicare plan "could raise seniors' costs up to \$6,400 a year" and that his tax proposal "would give millionaires another tax break and raises taxes on middle-class families by up to \$2,000 a year." To be honest the charge that future Medicare beneficiaries could face \$6,400 in higher costs

comes from an analysis of an old proposal by Mr. Romney's running mate, Representative Paul D. Ryan, that has since been revised, a point that President Obama himself acknowledged in a speech last week.

Mr. Ryan's original plan called for giving future beneficiaries fixed amounts of money to buy private insurance — and it limited the growth of those payments to the rate of inflation. Since health care costs rise faster than inflation, such a plan would leave beneficiaries to face higher costs. Mr. Ryan then revised his plan, and Mr. Romney has further altered it. The Romney campaign's policy director, Lanhee Chen, wrote last month that while older people with higher incomes may be asked to pay more, "all seniors will be guaranteed sufficient support because the support is actually set based on what plans will cost." But the campaign has yet to detailed how the plan would work.

The Obama campaign's television ad charging that Mr. Romney would raise taxes on the middle class was found to be accurate by several fact-checking organizations, even though it runs directly counter to Mr. Romney's pledge that he will not do so. The ad is based on an analysis of Mr. Romney's vague proposals by the Tax Policy Center, a nonpartisan group, which found that it was impossible for his plan to achieve all of its stated goals. Mr. Romney wants to cut income tax rates by 20 percent while continuing to collect the same amount of revenue by eliminating tax breaks — all without raising taxes on the middle class. And the center projected that the tax cuts alone would reduce revenues by \$456 billion in 2015. But the center's director, Donald Marron, later wrote that he did not read the analysis as "*evidence that Governor Romney wants to increase taxes on the middle class in order to cut taxes for the rich*" but rather as "*showing that his plan can't accomplish all his stated objectives.*"

The truth is that neither President or Mitt Romney will be able to cut taxes and maintain popular social programs like Medicare and Medicaid that Americans overwhelmingly love and support, and Romney's tweaking here and there are only resulting in more blanks allowing the Obama campaign to take advantage of the many unknown details of Mr. Romney's policy proposals by filling in the blanks in the least flattering light, often relying on the findings of research organizations. Although I disagree with Michael Cooper, because I truly believe that many of Romney's economic plans won't work and if the details came to light they would be overwhelmingly be rejected by the American public, which is why Romney and Ryan are trying to patch each leak without presenting a cohesive plans that they feel confident to stand behind and will be supported by American voters

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Ruth Marcus' article in **The Washington Post** this week, *Romney's tax plan, by the numbers* she asserts that, "*there are three fallacies and two dangers at the heart of Mitt Romney's tax policy.*" The first is the argument that cutting personal income tax rates would lead to economic growth robust enough to help pay for a big chunk of the cuts. The second, related, fallacy is the contention that raising rates on top earners would hurt growth. The third is that raising capital-gains rates would be even more harmful. To be clear: Holding everything else equal (ignoring, for example, the economic drag of bigger deficits), lower tax rates are better than higher ones. A simpler tax code would be far preferable to the current byzantine mess. Lowering rates and broadening the base is a dandy idea — when done in a way that also raises badly needed new revenue. But done the way Romney proposes, with the goal of merely avoiding greater debt. Even if that hinges on the faith-based assertion that this revenue neutrality can be achieved through the ensuing miracle of faster economic growth.

First, would lower rates, as Romney claims, produce economic growth? "Past changes in tax rates have had no large clear effect on economic growth," the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service (CRS) concluded in a December review. Consider: The economy grew at 3.9 percent from 1950 to 1970, when the average top marginal income tax rate was 84.8 percent. From 1987 to 2010, when the average rate was less than half that (36.4 percent), economic growth was far less robust, 2.9 percent. This comparison might be misleading because multiple factors affect the economy, so the CRS looked at a shorter, more recent time span. From 1987 through 1992, the top average marginal income tax rate was 33.3 percent. Economic growth averaged 2.3 percent. From 1993 through 2002, after taxes increased under President Clinton, the average top marginal rate was 39.5 percent. Economic growth averaged 3.7 percent. Finally, from 2003 through 2007, after the Bush tax cuts, the average top marginal rate was 35 percent. Economic growth averaged 2.8 percent. If you were going to make a causality argument from these figures, it would be that lower taxes correlate with lower growth. Such a leap isn't justified — but where is the proof supporting Republicans' insistence that lower rates fuel growth?

Second, and this is at the heart of the current debate over letting the Bush tax cuts expire, would raising rates on upper-income taxpayers threaten growth? A new CRS report suggests not — but it underscores the risk of the other danger, increasing income inequality. Lower top rates do not correlate with increased savings, investment or productivity, the CRS found. Top tax rates, it concludes, “appear to have little or no relation to the size of the economic pie.” But lower top rates do help the rich serve themselves a heftier slice of that pie. Reducing top rates, the CRS noted, appears “associated with the increasing concentration of income at the top.” Which leads to the final question: whether lower capital-gains rates, whose benefits flow overwhelmingly to the wealthiest, are justified.

Romney told CBS News’ “60 Minutes” that his own 14 percent effective income tax rate in 2011 was fair because lower taxes on investment are, repeat after me, “the right way to encourage economic growth.” Leonard Burman of Syracuse University’s Maxwell School looked at capital-gains rates over six decades and found no correlation with economic growth. Look at his graph and you’ll see: The two lines — capital-gains rates and growth — bear no relation to each other. “There is no apparent relationship,” Burman told the Senate Finance Committee last week. “Cutting capital gains taxes will not turbocharge the economy, and raising them would not usher in a depression.”

Ms. Marcus: At a moment that demands seriousness about the debt, the country is trapped in a tax debate premised on unproven assertions and flawed history. It risks producing fiscal chaos and social instability. ■■■■■ think a numbers guy would at least look at the numbers before taking this dangerous tax leap.

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First it was the Liberal Media and now Conservatives are saying that it is a conspiracy to skew polls showing President Obama with a growing lead over Mitt Romney are deliberately being skewed by the Liberal Mainstream Media hoping that Republicans will be disheartened and stay home on Election Day. But as Eugene Robinson wrote this week in **The Washington Post**, *Republicans deluded by ‘skewed’ polls*, they should look at their behavior, policies and programs that have scared the elderly, told black and Hispanic voters that they were not included, promised to repeal programs that help students led by a Presidential candidate who 47% demeaning comment that the half of the country that pays no Federal income tax. have no incentive to restrain spending and are moochers living on the government. The truth is of the 47 percent of Americans who pay no federal income tax, two-thirds pay federal payroll tax. Most of them aren’t making a lot of money; a couple with two children has to earn less than \$26,400 to pay no income tax. Altogether, only a tenth of Americans pay no federal tax, and most who pay neither income nor payroll tax are retirees.

As Eugene Robinson say: *“Voters blame the GOP more than they blame Obama and the Democrats for the gridlock and brinkmanship that have characterized much of the president’s time in office. The Republican Party has taken stands on issues such as abortion and immigration that big segments of the electorate find extreme and unacceptable. Moderate Republicans, as a political species, are all but extinct. If a polling sample shows Democrats outnumbering Republicans by, say, 32 percent to 24 percent (with most of the rest calling themselves independents), GOP partisans shouldn’t worry about a conspiracy. They should worry that this is a snapshot of how Americans feel about the two major parties. It’s not the polls, it’s the policies. Now that’s a reason for Republicans to be depressed.”*

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As Thomas Friedman wrote this week in the **New York Times**, *The World We’re Actually Living In – FOR the first time in a long, long time, a Democrat is running for president and has the clear advantage on national security policy. There is a reason President Obama is leading on national security, and it was apparent in his ■■■■■ speech last week, which showed a president who understands that we really do live in a more complex world today. Rather than really thinking afresh about the world, Romney has chosen instead to go with the same old ■■■■■ bacon and eggs — that the Democrats are toothless wimps who won’t stand up to our foes or for our values, that the Republicans are tough and that it is 1989 all over again.*

*The funny thing is that the one area where Romney could have really challenged Obama on foreign policy was*

on the president's bad decision to double-down on Afghanistan. But Romney can't, because the Republican Party wanted to triple down. So we're having no debate about how to extricate ourselves from our biggest foreign policy mess and a cartoon debate — "■ tough; he's not" — about everything else. In that sense, foreign policy is a lot like domestic policy. The morning after the election, we will face a huge "cliff": how to deal with Afghanistan, Iran and Syria, without guidance from the candidates or a mandate from voters. Voters will have to go with their gut about which guy has the best gut feel for navigating this world. Obama has demonstrated that he has something there. Romney has not. We live in an increasingly complex world which businessman Romney doesn't come close to understanding.

## Saying of the Week

**Much like the Arab Spring** *Does a caterpillar know that it is going to be a butterfly....?*

## 2012 Darwin Awards

### **Nominee No. 1: [ San Jose Mercury News]:**

An unidentified man, using a shotgun like a club to break a former girlfriend's windshield, accidentally shot himself to death when the gun discharged, blowing a hole in his gut.

### **Nominee No. 2: [ Kalamazoo Gazette]:**

James Burns, 34, (a mechanic) of Alamo , MI , was killed in March as he was trying to repair what police describe as a "farm-type truck." Burns got a friend to drive the truck on a highway while Burns hung underneath so that he could ascertain the source of a troubling noise. Burns' clothes caught on something, however, and the other man found Burns "wrapped in the drive shaft."

### **Nominee No. 3: [ Hickory Daily Record]:**

Ken Charles Barger, 47, accidentally shot himself to death in December in Newton , NC . Awakening to the sound of a ringing telephone beside his bed, he reached for the phone but grabbed instead a Smith & Wesson 38 Special, which discharged when he drew it to his ear.

### **Nominee No. 4: [UPI, Toronto ]:**

Police said a lawyer demonstrating the safety of windows in a downtown Toronto skyscraper crashed through a pane with his shoulder and plunged 24 floors to his death. A police spokesman said Garry Hoy, 39, fell into the courtyard of the Toronto Dominion Bank Tower early Friday evening as he was explaining the strength of the buildings windows to visiting law students. Hoy previously has conducted demonstrations of window strength according to police reports. Peter Lawson, managing partner of the firm Holden Day Wilson, told the Toronto Sun newspaper that Hoy was "one of the best and brightest" members of the 200-man association. A person has to wonder what the dimmer members of this law firm are like.

### **Nominee No. 5: [The News of the Weird]:**

Michael Anderson Godwin had spent several years awaiting South Carolina's electric chair on a murder conviction before having his sentence reduced to life in prison. While sitting on a metal toilet in his cell attempting to fix his small TV set, he bit into a wire and was electrocuted.

### **Nominee No. 6: [The Indianapolis Star]:**

A Dunkirk , IN man, using a cigarette lighter to check the barrel of a muzzleloader, was killed Monday night when the weapon discharged in his face, sheriff's investigators said. Gregory David Pryor, 19, died in his parents' rural Dunkirk home at about 11:30 PM. Investigators said Pryor was cleaning a 54 caliber muzzle-loader that had not been firing properly. He was using the lighter to look into the barrel when the gunpowder ignited.

### **Nominee No. 7: [Reuters, Mississauga , Ontario ]:**

A man cleaning a bird feeder on the balcony of his condominium apartment in this Toronto suburb slipped and fell 23 stories to his death. "Stefan Macko, 55, was standing on a wheelchair when the accident occurred," said Inspector Darcy Honer of the Peel Regional Police. "It appears that the chair moved, and he went over the balcony," Honer said.

Finally, THE WINNER!!!: [ Arkansas Democrat Gazette]:

Two local men were injured when their pickup truck left the road and struck a tree near Cotton Patch on State Highway 38 early Monday. Woodruff County deputy Dovey Snyder reported the accident shortly after midnight Monday. Thurston Poole, 33, of Des Arc, and Billy Ray Wallis, 38, of Little Rock, were returning to Des Arc after a frog-catching trip. On an overcast Sunday night, Poole 's pickup truck headlights malfunctioned. The two men concluded that the headlight fuse on the older-model truck had burned out. As a replacement fuse was not available, Wallis noticed that the .22 caliber bullets from his pistol fit perfectly into the fuse box next to the steering-wheel column. Upon inserting the bullet the headlights again began to operate properly, and the two men proceeded on eastbound toward the White River Bridge .

After traveling approximately 20 miles, and just before crossing the river, the bullet apparently overheated, discharged and struck Poole in the testicles. The vehicle swerved sharply right, exited the pavement, and struck a tree. Poole suffered only minor cuts and abrasions from the accident but will require extensive surgery to repair the damage to his testicles, which will never operate as intended.

Wallis sustained a broken clavicle and was treated and released. "Thank God we weren't on that bridge when Thurston shot his balls off, or we might be dead," stated Wallis

"I've been a trooper for 10 years in this part of the world, but this is a first for me. I can't believe that those two would admit how this accident happened," said Snyder.

Upon being notified of the wreck, Lavinia Poole ( Poole 's wife) asked how many frogs the boys had caught and did anyone get them from the truck?

Though Poole and Wallis did not die as a result of their misadventure as normally required by Darwin Award Official Rules, it can be argued that Poole did in fact effectively remove himself from the gene pool.

## This Week's Musical Offerings

*Having grown up listening to Bill Evans and having the honor and pleasure to play with him on several occasions I would love to share a little Bill Evans with you this weekend.... Please enjoy....*

*The Dave Brubeck Quartet - Take Five - [REDACTED] and*

<http://youtu.be/nzpnWuk3RjU>

*The Dave Brubeck Quartet (Live 1066) - Take Five [REDACTED]  
[v=faJE92phKzI&playnext=1&list=PLC340276DD3D8C878&feature=results\\_video](http://youtu.be/v=faJE92phKzI&playnext=1&list=PLC340276DD3D8C878&feature=results_video) and*

*The Dave Brubeck Quartet - Blue Rondo A La Turk - [REDACTED] and*

<http://youtu.be/kc34Uj8wlmE>

*The Dave Brubeck Quartet - Like Someone in Love - [REDACTED] and*

[v=QFoapxPvZy4&feature=BFa&list=PL97FBAAADB684D30B](http://youtu.be/v=QFoapxPvZy4&feature=BFa&list=PL97FBAAADB684D30B) and [v=QFoapxPvZy4&feature=share&list=PL97FBAAADB684D30B](http://youtu.be/v=QFoapxPvZy4&feature=share&list=PL97FBAAADB684D30B)

*Dave Brubeck - Koto Song - 1966 - [REDACTED] and*

<http://youtu.be/0Ohyd0EDVKA>

*Bill Evans with Jeremy Steig - Spartacus Love Theme - [REDACTED] and*

<http://youtu.be/zF54tio1PtQ>

*Bill Evans - Peace Piece - [REDACTED] and*

<http://youtu.be/Nv2GgV34qIg>

I hope that you enjoyed this week's offerings....

Sincerely,  
Greg Brown

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Gregory Brown  
Chairman & CEO  
GlobalCast Partners, LLC

US: [+1-415-994-7851](tel:+14159947851)

EFTA01181706

Tel: +1-800-406-5892  
Fax: [+1-310-861-0927](tel:+1-310-861-0927)  
Skype: gbrown1970

