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**Subject:** Greg Brown's Weekend Reading and Other Things.... 12/02/12

**Date:** Sun, 02 Dec 2012 17:38:49 +0000

**Attachments:** As\_drug\_industry's\_influence\_over\_research\_grows\_so\_does\_the\_potential\_for\_bias\_Peter\_Whoriskey\_TWP\_November\_24,\_3023.pdf;  
For\_Palestinians\_Gaza\_conflict\_deepens\_sense\_of\_futility\_with\_nonviolent\_approach\_toward\_Israel\_Karin\_Brulliard\_November\_24,\_2012.pdf;  
Fighting\_Fiscal\_Phantoms\_Paul\_Krugman\_NYT\_November\_25,\_2012.pdf;  
Lessons\_from\_Gaza\_Jackson\_Diehl\_TWP\_November\_25,\_2012.pdf;  
Costliest\_Jet\_Years\_in\_Making\_Sees\_the\_Enemy\_Budget\_Cuts\_Christopher\_Drew\_New\_York\_Times\_November\_28,\_2012.pdf;  
Is\_America\_becoming\_more\_socially\_liberal\_Aaron\_Blake\_TWP\_November\_30,\_2012.pdf;  
; To\_Save\_Congo\_Let\_It\_Fall\_Apart\_J.Peter\_Pham\_NYT\_November\_30,\_2012.pdf;  
Why\_it's\_cool\_to\_be\_liberal\_again\_Aaron\_Blake\_TWP\_November\_19,\_2012.pdf

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## Dear Friends....

We have to ask why are Congressional Republicans going after US Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice, for comments that she made on several Sunday morning news programs the weekend after the attack of the US Consulate in Benghazi, Libya that killed US Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans, as if she, President Obama and the White House bungled their protection, misled Congress and the American People and worse covered up "something" nefarious, when these same politicians have never expressed the equivalent contempt or interest in finding out how/why the country was misled into supporting a war in Iraq that killed hundreds of thousands of people (*including more than 4000 Americans*), created more than a million refugees, destabilized the entire Middle East, drove up the price of crude oil by 500% and cost the country almost one trillion dollars, based on carefully craft campaign orchestrated directly out of the Bush/Cheney Administration/White House, claiming that Saddam Hussein was just months away from developing Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) that could ("*would*") be used against America and Europe as a follow up to 9/11.

Senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham who are leading the assault against Ambassador Rice, first of all are bullies and petty little partisan politicians who as former Deputy White House Counsel to President Bill Clinton, Vince Foster wrote in a suicide note – despaired by the Washington's political environment, "***ruining people is considered sport***". Therefore in the words of Joseph N. Welch (Head Counsel for the US Army on August 30, 1954) to another bully and Senator, Joseph McCarthy, during another Congressional witch-hunt. "***Senators, may we not drop this? We know what the Ambassador said and where she received her talking point. Let us not assassinate her any further, Senators. You've done enough. Have you no sense of decency, sirs? At long last, have you left no sense of decency?***"

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As Aaron Blake wrote this week in **The Washington Post**, **Romney's final share of the vote? You guessed it: 47 percent.** Call it irony or call it coincidence: Mitt Romney's share of the popular vote in the 2012 presidential race is very likely to be 47 percent. Romney's campaign, of course, was doomed in large part by [comments made on a hidden camera](#) in which he suggested that 47 percent of the country was so reliant on government services that those people would never vote for him. The

words '47 percent' came to define what was already evident: that Romney struggled to connect with lower- and middle-income voters and with groups such as Latinos. And in the end, it looks like 47 percent also just happens to be the share of the vote that Romney will get. The Washington Post's [Greg Sargent noted a few days ago](#) that Romney was flirting with 47 percent, and now it appears to be happening.

According to [the latest numbers tallied by David Wasserman of the Cook Political Report](#), President Obama has expanded his share of the popular vote to 50.8 percent, while Romney has fallen to 47.49 percent. By virtue of rounding, Romney's share of the popular vote will be recorded here and elsewhere as 47 percent, so long as it doesn't rise above 47.5 percent again. That seems unlikely. Wasserman projects that Romney's vote share will actually head more toward 47 percent flat — 47.1 percent or 47.2 percent — because many of the outstanding ballots in the presidential race come from California and New York, which both voted for Obama by a large margin. And Obama's popular vote margin, in the end, is likely to be 51 percent to 47 percent.

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Although we still have a month to go in the year 2012 a number of notable people have died including actors **Larry Hagman**, **Andy Griffith**, **Michael Clarke Duncan**, **Ernest Borgnine** best-actor Oscar for playing against type in "Marty" in 1955 and to entertainers **Phyllis Diller**, **Robin Gibb** of the *Bee Gees*, *America's Oldest Teenager* **Dick Clark** who died at 82 and rapper **Adam Yauch** of the *Beastie Boys* to singers **Andy Williams**, *Queen of Disco* **Donna Summers** and **Whitney Houston** to former boxing champion **Hector "Macho" Camacho** to politicians **Warren B. Rudman**, former **Senator Arlen Specter** of Pennsylvania, and three-term Senator from South Dakota and Presidential candidate **George S. McGovern**, to writers **Han Suyin**, **Ray Bradbury** **Carlos Fuentes** to **The Rev. Sun Myung Moon**, a self-proclaimed messiah who founded *The Unification Church*, died at age 92 and astronaut and first man to walk on the moon, **Neil Armstrong**, as well as **Crown Prince Nayef bin Abdul-Aziz** of Saudia Arabia, veteran CBS newsmen **Mike Wallace**, *Soul Train* creator and host **Don Cornelius** and **Chaleo Yoovidhya**, who rose from poverty to become one of the world's richest men thanks to astute marketing of his Red Bull energy drink, died March 17 in his native Thailand. For more please see the attached website: [http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/obituaries/notable-deaths-of-2012/2012/01/12/gIQAiKoWUU\\_gallery.html?tid=ts\\_carousel#photo=5](http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/obituaries/notable-deaths-of-2012/2012/01/12/gIQAiKoWUU_gallery.html?tid=ts_carousel#photo=5) Whether or not you know or liked them, each one will be missed.

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This week *Moyers & Company* presents "*United States of ALEC*," a report on the most influential corporate-funded political force most of America has *never* heard of — **ALEC, the American Legislative Exchange Council**. A national consortium of state politicians and powerful corporations, ALEC presents itself as a "nonpartisan public-private partnership". But behind that mantra lies a vast network of corporate lobbying and political action aimed to increase corporate profits at public expense without public knowledge.

Using interviews, documents, and field reporting, the episode explores ALEC's self-serving machine at work, acting in a way one Wisconsin politician describes as "a corporate dating service for lonely legislators and corporate special interests."

In state houses around the country, hundreds of pieces of boilerplate ALEC legislation are proposed or enacted that would, among other things, dilute collective bargaining rights, make it harder for some Americans to vote, and limit corporate liability for harm caused to consumers — each accomplished without the public ever knowing who's behind it.

"All of us here are very familiar with ALEC and the influence that ALEC has with many of the [legislative] members," says Arizona State Senator Steve Farley. "Corporations have the right to present their arguments, but they don't have the right to do it secretly."

**BILL MOYERS:** *“Welcome, to a story that’s been unfolding for more than 30 years but has gone largely untold. That’s the way the central characters wanted it. They were smart and understood something very important: that they might more easily get what they wanted from state capitals than from Washington, DC. So they started putting their money in places like Raleigh, North Carolina; Nashville, Tennessee; Phoenix, Arizona; and Madison, Wisconsin. That’s because what happens in our state legislatures directly affects our taxes, schools, roads, the quality of our air and water -- even our right to vote.*

*Politicians and lobbyists at the core of this clever enterprise figured out how to pull it off in an organized, camouflaged way -- covering their tracks while they put one over on an unsuspecting public. This is the story of how and why it worked. Our report was many months in the making. It’s collaboration between Tom Casciato and Kathleen Hughes, the filmmakers at Okapi Productions; and the Schumann Media Center that I head. Schumann supports independent journalism and public watchdog groups like the Center for Media and Democracy, whose investigators have been tracking the footprints of ALEC, an organization hiding in plain sight, yet one of the most influential and powerful in American politics.”*

<http://billmoyers.com/segment/united-states-of-alec/>

## Weekend Readings

The ugly secret in the pharmaceutical industry in the US is the extent of the financial connections between the drug-maker and the research and review as outlined in [Peter Whoriskey’s](#) article this week in **The Washington Post** titled, **As drug industry’s influence over research grows, so does the potential for bias**. It chronicles a [17-page article](#) in the **New England Journal of Medicine**. The 2006 report described a trial that compared three diabetes drugs and concluded that Avandia, the company’s new drug, performed best. “We now have clear evidence from a large international study that the initial use of [Avandia] is more effective than standard therapies,” a senior vice president of GlaxoSmithKline, Lawson Macartney, said in a news release. The trial had been funded by GlaxoSmithKline, and each of the 11 authors had received money from the company. Four were employees and held company stock. The other seven were academic experts who had received grants or consultant fees from the firm.

Whether these ties altered the report on Avandia may be impossible for readers to know. But while sorting through the data from more than 4,000 patients, the investigators missed hints of a danger that, when fully realized four years later, would lead to Avandia’s virtual disappearance from the United States: The drug raised the risk of heart attacks. *“If you looked closely at the data that was out there, you could see warning signs,”* said Steven E. Nissen, a Cleveland Clinic cardiologist who issued one of the earliest warnings about the drug. *“But they were overlooked.”* A **Food and Drug Administration** scientist later estimated that the drug had been associated with 83,000 heart attacks and deaths.

Arguably the most prestigious medical journal in the world, the **New England Journal of Medicine** regularly features articles over which pharmaceutical companies and their employees can exert significant influence. Over a year-long period ending in August, **NEJM** published 73 articles on original studies of new drugs, encompassing drugs approved by the FDA since 2000 and experimental drugs, according to a review by **The Washington Post**. Of those articles, 60 were funded by a pharmaceutical company, 50 were co-written by drug company employees and 37 had a lead author, typically an academic, who had previously accepted outside compensation from the sponsoring drug company in the form of consultant pay, grants or speaker fees. The New England Journal of Medicine is not alone in featuring research sponsored in large part by drug companies — it has become a common practice that reflects the growing role of industry money in research. Years ago, the government funded a larger share of such experiments. But since about the mid-1980s, research funding by pharmaceutical firms has exceeded what the **National Institutes of Health** spends. Last year, the industry spent \$39 billion on research in the United States while **NIH** spent \$31 billion. The billions that the drug companies invest in such experiments help fund the world’s quest for cures. But their aim is not just public health. That money is also part of a high-risk quest for profits, and over the past decade corporate interference has repeatedly muddled the nation’s drug science, sometimes with potentially lethal consequences.

Over a decade, controversies over blockbuster drugs such as Vioxx, Avandia and Celebrex erupted amid charges that the companies had shaped their research to obscure the dangerous side effects. When the company is footing the bill, the

opportunities for bias are manifold: Company executives seeking to promote their drugs can design research that makes their products look better. They can select like-minded academics to perform the work. And they can run the statistics in ways that make their own drugs look better than they are. If troubling signs about a drug arise, they can steer clear of further exploration. In the wake of controversies arising around Vioxx, Avandia and Celebrex, many in the medical world have sought ways to ensure that drug research is free of commercial bias. One of the leading proposals would be to compel drug companies to release all of the data from trials of drugs that are on the market. ***Obviously, this would be a good idea....***

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The latest military conflict in Gaza may have deepened a sense here that the authority's nonviolent, diplomacy-based approach to winning a Palestinian state is increasingly futile, as Hamas's latest battle against Israel sparked feverish Palestinian pride that spread beyond the Gaza Strip to the Palestinian Authority-led West Bank.

While President Mahmoud Abbas played the role of bystander throughout the crisis, Hamas raising its profile, claimed that they defeated their enemy with weapons not words, which resonated to many young Palestinians. *"Resistance has succeeded in forcing the Israelis to hide"* in bomb shelters, supermarket employee Hassam al-Badouwi, 28, said at a pro-Hamas rally in Ramallah before the cease-fire. *"I advise Abu Mazen to take a vacation."*

As Hamas's leader-in-exile, Khaled Meshal, negotiated the cease-fire under the mediation of Cairo's Islamist-led government, Abbas envoys traveled to Gaza, but he did not. Abbas has not been to the strip since 2006, when Hamas won Palestinian parliamentary elections. Hamas, which Israel and the United States deem a terrorist group, seized control of Gaza one year later. Some Palestinian and Israeli commentators have said that Israel emboldened Hamas — perhaps intentionally — at the expense of the Palestinian Authority, which the United States funds and views as the true representative of the Palestinian people.

Israel has come to recognize that Hamas is the de facto power in Gaza, casting doubt on Abbas's claim as leader of all Palestinians. *"We don't want to harm Abu Mazen,"* a senior official said, using Abbas's nickname. But *"the idea that Abu Mazen will reinstate himself into Gaza. . . . We don't see it."* How this is going to play out in the long run, no one knows, but one thing for sure is that the latest conflict as further isolated moderate Palestinian leaders from both the people whom they lead, other countries in the region and the Israeli leadership. See the article by Karin Brulliard and Ernesto Londoño in **The Washington Post**, ***For Palestinians, Gaza conflict deepens sense of futility with nonviolent approach toward Israel.***

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As economist Paul Krugman wrote this week in the **New York Times** in his article, ***Fighting Fiscal Phantoms***, our policy makers should not be pressured into making an unwise deal because of the *"fiscal cliff"* — better described as the austerity bomb — the tax hikes and spending cuts scheduled to kick in at the end of this year. With many conservatives campaigning for cuts to Social Security and Medicare, while maintaining the Bush Tax Cuts, and somehow finding money through unidentified tax loopholes as *"core principle,"* they are using the fear of the *"fiscal cliff"* as the hammer/push through legislation that favors the rich and large corporations.... *Status quo....*

We are being told by these groups that should the country go over the "fiscal cliff" investors will lose faith in America's ability to come to grips with its budget failures. And when they do, there will be a run on Treasury bonds, interest rates will spike, and the U.S. economy will plunge back into recession. But as Krugman says — although this sounds plausible, giving that this is the situation in Greece, the US is not Greece, as it controls its currency and therefore has the ability to print (money), its way out of a short-term squeeze.... *"literally can't run out of money. After all, it can print the stuff. So there's almost no risk that America will default on its debt — I'd say no risk at all if it weren't for the possibility that Republicans would once again try to hold the nation hostage over the debt ceiling."*

And for those who say that this would lead to massive inflation, Krugman again: *"Now, it's true that investors might start to expect higher inflation some years down the road. They might also push down the value of the dollar. Both of these things, however, would actually help rather than hurt the U.S. economy right now: expected inflation*

would discourage corporations and families from sitting on cash, while a weaker dollar would make our exports more competitive.”

Krugman concludes that Washington should stop worrying about this phantom menace — and to stop listening to the people who have been peddling this scare story in an attempt to get their way. My belief is that if the President can't get the deal that he wants, he should allow the Bush Tax Cuts to expire and use sequestration (automatic cuts in military budget and social programs) to negotiate a more equable and long-term legislative compromise.

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We have to ask, what lessons that were learned from the recent conflict in Gaza. Then, how can they be used to settle the issues that cause the conflict so that a long term peace can be created. This week, in **The Washington Post**, Jackson Diehl wrote, **Lessons From Gaza**, outlining the re-alignment created by the conflict and how it might play-out in the future. First, the new Islamic front is far weaker than the post-truce celebrations in Gaza suggest. Though it survived the assassination of its military chief and managed to bombard Israel with 1,500 rockets and mortar rounds, Hamas showed that it lacks the means to do more than frighten or inconvenience Israelis. While the success of the U.S. funded [Iron Dome anti-missile system](#) suggests that missiles will be a decreasingly credible threat to Israel. But the other reality is that “smashing” or “uprooting” Hamas is no longer an option. As the recent conflict has now consolidated the support of the Muslim Brotherhood-led government of Egypt, with Turkey and Qatar on behalf of Hamas.

As such, the real change is that the moderate Palestinians in the West Bank have been marginalized, leaving Netanyahu and his hard-line supporters in Israel, to deal with an equally hawkish Hamas. Remember it took the hard-line anti-Communist Nixon/Kissinger to negotiate the initial SALT agreement Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev/Soviet Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Dobrynin, which began the de-escalation of the arms (nuclear) race between both superpowers. And it took equally anti-Communist Ronald Reagan to open the door between the US and China. Using these two examples; comprehensive peace settlement may be possible — since the new regional alignment may allow Israel and Hamas to work out a modus vivendi that benefits both sides. In exchange for more open borders and an opportunity to develop economically with backing from its new Arab allies, Hamas could agree to a more thorough and reliable truce that leaves southern Israel in peace. This may be a long way from real peace — but it's better than both sides than going to war every couple of years. *But then I have always been an optimist.*

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Almost all of the talk this week in Washington was about the “fiscal cliff” and whether or not Ambassador Rice misled the press and others when she suggested that the terrorist attack in Benghazi that killed Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans was caused by angry against a film that ridiculed Islam. While one of the biggest cover ups in Washington is the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter — whose cost has risen from — \$233 billion when in 2001 the Pentagon contracted to buy 1,591 F-35 planes by 2017 — in an attempt to cut cost — and today that number of aircraft has been reduced to 365, while the cost is now \$395.7 billion and rising. That would be nearly four times as much as any other weapons system and two-thirds of the \$589 billion the United States has spent of the war in Afghanistan. The military is also desperately trying to figure out how to reduce the long-term costs of operating the planes, now projected at \$1.1 trillion through 2030. “*The plane is unaffordable,*” said Winslow T. Wheeler, an analyst at the Project on Government Oversight, a nonprofit group in Washington.

The F-35 program is currently the most expensive weapons system in military history. But while Pentagon officials now say that the program is making progress, it begins its 12th year in development years behind schedule, troubled with technological flaws and facing concerns about its relatively short flight range as possible threats grow from Asia. Behind the scenes, the Pentagon and F-35's main contractor, Lockheed Martin, are engaged in a conflict of their own over the costs. The relationship “*is the worst I've ever seen, and I've been in some bad ones,*” Maj. Gen. Christopher Bogdan of the Air Force, a top program official, said in September. “*I guarantee you: we will not succeed on this if we do not get past that.*” The roots of the problems go back to the mid-1990s, when military officials pitched the F-35 as simple and affordable, like a Chevrolet of the skies, with the three versions sharing 70 to 80 percent of their parts. And that the planes would also be versatile, capable of fighting other planes but focused mainly on attacking ground targets.

The F-35 was conceived as the Pentagon's silver bullet in the sky — a state-of-the-art aircraft that could be adapted to three branches of the military, with advances that would easily overcome the defenses of most foes. The radar-evading jets would not only dodge sophisticated anti-aircraft missiles, but they would also give pilots a better picture of enemy threats while enabling allies, who want the planes that can fly at the speed of Mach 1.6 and land like a helicopter to fight more closely with American forces. But the ambitious aircraft instead illustrates how the Pentagon can let huge and complex programs veer out of control and then have a hard time reining them in. The program nearly doubled in cost as Lockheed and the military's own bureaucracy failed to deliver on the most basic promise of a three-in-one jet that would save taxpayers money and be served up speedily.

So far Lockheed has delivered 41 planes for testing and initial training, and Pentagon leaders are slowing purchases of the F-35 to fix the latest technical problems and reduce the immediate costs. A helmet for pilots that projects targeting data onto its visor is too jittery to count on. The tail-hook on the Navy jet has had trouble catching the arresting cable, meaning that version cannot yet land on carriers. And writing and testing the millions of lines of software needed by the jets is so daunting that General Bogdan said, *"It scares the heck out of me."* With all the delays — full production is not expected until 2019 — the military has spent billions to extend the lives of older fighters and buy more of them to fill the gap. At the same time, the cost to build each F-35 has risen to an average of \$137 million from \$69 million in 2001. With a Pentagon policy of *"buy before you fly"* against the usual reverse because Lockheed and its suppliers on the F-35, designed its production to employ 35,000 workers in nearly every Congressional district, locking in political support, even after the program got into trouble there was a willingness to *"roll the dice."*

On top of that, the F-35 could be too sophisticated for minor conflicts, and its relatively short flight range could be a problem as the Pentagon changes its view of possible threats. Mark Gunzinger, a retired Air Force colonel who is now an analyst at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, said the Pentagon would need to shift money to longer-range planes as China and other countries expanded the reach of missiles capable of destroying American ships and bases. Todd Harrison, an analyst at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, a research group in Washington, said Pentagon officials had little choice but to push ahead, especially after already spending \$65 billion on the fighter. *"It is simultaneously too big to fail and too big to succeed,"* he said. *"The bottom line here is that they've crammed too much into the program. They were asking one fighter to do three different jobs, and they basically ended up with three different fighters."* The Navy is developing a stealthy unmanned fighter that could fly from carriers and go two or three times as far as the F-35. The Air Force is studying concepts for the bomber, which could fly much farther and carry more firepower than the F-35.

The F-35 was conceived in the mid 1990s for threats and missions that have changed dramatically twenty-five years later. The idea of F-35s in some sort of dog-fights are as ridiculous as spending \$400 billion to develop a short range jet fighter to challenge Iran and North Korean fighter, Syria and Cuba. America continues to believe that overkill will be the winning military component in every conflict. If that were true, the war in Afghanistan would have been over a decade ago. This type of military spending is beyond wasteful, especially when more than 30% of Americans are living below the poverty line, and we are choosing to cut healthcare, education, infrastructure, technology development and programs that are the safety net for the poor to reduce the deficit. For more information please see Christopher Drew's article in the **New York Times**, *Costliest Jet, Years in Making, Sees the Enemy: Budget Cuts*. *The F-35 program is the ultimate*

*boondoggle that politicians in both parties chose to ignore that is now too big to fail and too big to succeed..... and no longer needed.....*

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For the past several decades Republican Conservatives, **FOX Television** pundits and others have been claiming that "*America is a center-right country*" and being a card-carrying liberal Democrat they almost had me believing this hype too. After decades of hearing pundits make the claim, Democrats inside the Beltway seem to have internalized the fiction that they are a minority in a conservative country. There is no other way to explain their lack of faith in their own policies and their inability to fight for strong progressive legislation, even after voters gave them an unambiguous mandate to govern. Yes, Republicans hold a majority of the seats in the House of Representatives, but Democratic candidates in the House received a million more votes than Republicans. also, Democratic Presidential candidates received more votes than Republicans in five of the past six elections. And Democrats currently hold a solid 55-45 majority in the Senate.

As Aaron Blake pointed out in an article this week in **The Washington Post**, *Is America becoming more socially liberal?* – Social issues worked in President Obama's favor on Election Day — the same day that multiple states voted for the first time to legalize both gay marriage and recreational marijuana. And that confluence has some suggesting the country is shifting to the left on social issues.

**Look at the following:**

**Jobs:** Poll after poll shows that the American people overwhelmingly rank jobs and unemployment as more important priorities than the budget deficit. For example, nearly 60% of likely voters said the economy and jobs are the most important issue in their vote for president, compared to only 8% for the deficit. (The good news is that putting Americans back to work is the best way to fix the deficit.)

**Taxes:** Two-thirds of Americans support raising taxes on incomes over \$250,000 -- that is, the richest 2%. National exit polling from this election also shows 60% think taxes should be increased.

**Defense Spending:** Over 75% of Americans believe we should cut Pentagon spending, including three-fourths of people in Republican districts.

**Social Security:** Over 80% of Americans oppose cutting Social Security benefits, even to help reduce the budget deficit.

**Medicare:** Over 75% of Americans oppose cutting Medicare benefits, even to help reduce the budget deficit.

**Medicaid:** 60% of Americans oppose the Congressional Republicans' plan to restructure and cut Medicaid.

**Education:** 75% of Americans oppose cutting federal funding for education and over 60% oppose cutting funding for college student loans.

**Stimulus:** 55% of people who've heard about the stimulus think it was the right thing to do for the country.

**Poverty:** Nearly 90% of Americans think helping the working poor should be a top or important priority for our government.

**Clean Energy:** 80% of voters agree that the U.S. should use more renewable energy sources in the future, and over 60% of Americans say they would be willing to pay more for energy if it meant utility companies have to produce more of it from renewable sources, like solar.

**Climate Change:** Nearly 60% say they are worried about climate change and think it's a growing threat to people in the U.S. Almost two-thirds say the U.S. should act to reduce greenhouse gas emissions now.

**Campaign Finance:** Nearly 90% of Americans say there is too much corporate money in politics, and over 80% support limits on the amount of money given to groups that are trying to influence our elections.

**Marriage:** The majority of Americans agree that all committed couples should be able to marry the one they love. And yesterday voters who faced ballot measures in Maine, Maryland, Washington, and Minnesota affirmed marriage equality.

Support of the above issues look liberal to me..... And a number of historians say that America may have never been a center-right country. Of course, there are pendulum swings in the political spectrum and the country is more conservative at times and more progressive at other times. But overall, we built the United Nations, we started the idea of human rights, we expanded voting rights and civil rights for everybody, we spread the idea of individual rights throughout the world, and we even rebuilt our enemies after World War II. It is no exaggeration to say that America is one of the most progressive countries in the history of the world. On November 6, 2012 voters spoke, giving President Obama 64,143,352 votes and 50.8% over Romney 59,961,784 and 47.5% of the votes and 332 to 206 in Electoral Votes majority. The Democrats won additional seats in the Senate as well and now have 55 to 45 majority. The center-right myth has been dispelled, with voters increasingly embracing more and more liberal policies. Hopefully, the President and his Democratic majority in the Senate use their mandate to push the liberal will and issues that a majority of Americans support.

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The **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, commonly referred to as **DR Congo**, **Congo-Kinshasa** or the **DRC**, is a country located in central Africa. It is the second largest country in Africa by area and the eleventh largest in the world. With a population of over 71 million, the DRC is the nineteenth most populous nation in the world, the fourth most populous nation in Africa, as well as the most populous officially Francophone country. It borders the Central African Republic and South Sudan to the north; Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi in the east; Zamba and Angola to the south; the Republic of the Congo, the Angolan exclave of Cabinda, and the Atlantic Ocean to the west; and is separated from Tanzania by Lake Tanganyika in the east. The country has access to the ocean through a 40-kilometre (25 mi) stretch of Atlantic coastline at Muanda and the roughly 9 km wide mouth of the Congo River which opens into the Gulf of Guinea. It has the second-highest total Christian population in Africa.

The DRC has been in war since 1998, devastated the country and is sometimes referred to as the "African world war" because it involved nine African nations and some twenty armed groups. Despite the signing of peace accords in 2003, fighting continues in the east of the country. In eastern Congo, the prevalence of rape and other sexual violence is described as the worst in the world. The war is the world's deadliest conflict since World War II, killing 5.4 million people since 1998. The vast majority died from conditions of malaria, diarrhea, pneumonia and malnutrition.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo was formerly, in chronological order, the Congo Free State, Belgian Congo, Congo-[Léopoldville](#), Congo-Kinshasa, and Zaire (*Zaire* in French). These former names are sometimes referred to as unofficial names, with the exception of Mobutu's discredited Zaire, along with various abbreviations such as *DR Congo* and *DRC*. Though it is located in the Central African UN Sub-region, the nation is also economically and regionally affiliated with Southern Africa as a member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Prior to European exploration, exploitation, the area consisted of local kingdoms. European exploration and administration began in the 1870s with Sir Henry Morton Stanley, under the sponsorship of King Lepold II of Belgium. Leopold formally acquired rights to the Congo territory at the Conference of Berlin in 1885 and made the land his private property and named it the Congo Free State. Leopold's regime began various infrastructure projects, such as construction of the railway that ran from the coast to the capital of Leopoldville (now Kinshasa). In 1908, the Belgian parliament, despite initial reluctance, bowed to international pressure (especially that from Great Britain) and took over the Free State from the king. From then on, as a Belgian colony, it was called the Belgian Congo and was under the rule of the elected Belgian government. From a colonial point of view, the governing of the Congo improved significantly and considerable economic and social progress was achieved – with the white colonial rulers having a condescending, patronizing attitude toward the indigenous peoples, which led to bitter resentment from both sides.

In May 1960, a growing nationalist movement, the Movement National Congolais or MNC Party, led by Patrice Lumumba, won the parliamentary elections. On 17 January 1961, local African forces and Belgian paratroops – supported by the United States and Belgium – kidnapped and executed Patrice Lumumba. Amidst widespread confusion and chaos, a temporary government was led by technicians (Collège des Commissaires) with Evariste Kimba. The Katanga secession was ended in January 1963 with the assistance of UN forces. Several short-lived governments, of Joseph Ileo, Cyrille Adoula, and Moïse Tshombe, took over in quick succession. In 1965 Joseph Mobutu, who was the chief of staff on the new Congo army mounted a coup and changing the country's name to the "Democratic Republic of the Congo." In 1971 it was changed again to "Republic of Zaïre." In May 1997, Mobutu fled the country and longtime opposition figures, led by Laurent-Désiré Kabila marched into Kinshasa, naming himself president and reverting the name of the country to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Almost immediately, President Laurent-Désiré Kabila asked foreign military forces to return back to their countries because he was concerned that the Rwandan military officers who were running his army were plotting a coup d'état against him in order to give the presidency to a Tutsi who would report directly to the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame. Consequently, Rwandan troops in DRC retreated to Goma and launched a new Tutsi led rebel military movement called the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD) to fight against their former ally, President Kabila, while Uganda instigated the creation of another rebel movement called the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC), led by the Congolese warlord Jean-Pierre Bemba. The two rebel movements, along with Rwandan and Ugandan troops, started the Second Congo War by attacking the DRC army in 1998. Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia became involved militarily on the side of the government to defend a fellow SADC member.

Kabila was assassinated in 2001 and was succeeded by his son Joseph Kabila, who upon taking office called for multilateral peace talks to end the war. UN peacekeepers, MONUC, now known as MONUSCO, arrived in April 2001. Talks between Kabila and the rebel leaders led to the signing of a peace accord in which Kabila would share power with former rebels. By June 2003 all foreign armies except those of Rwanda had pulled out of Congo. DR Congo had a transitional government until the election was over. A constitution was approved by voters, and on 30 July 2006 DRC held its first multi-party elections. Joseph Kabila took 45% of the votes and his opponent, Jean-Pierre Bemba took 20%. The disputed results of this election turned into an all-out battle between the supporters of the two parties in the streets of the capital, Kinshasa. MONUC took control of the city. A new election was held on 29 October 2006, which Kabila won with 70% of the vote and on 6 December 2006 the transitional government came to an end as Joseph Kabila was sworn in as President.

What's needed, first, is comprehensive demilitarization, with the government and its neighbors ceasing relations with the militias that prey upon the population and compete for influence and control of resources throughout the east.

Second, make vast, overdue investment in infrastructure, particularly roads, the dismal lack of which incubates disorder.

Third, transform the exploitation of the Congo's vast mineral, agricultural and human resources into something more businesslike: regulated, transparent, equitably taxed. Neighbors like Rwanda and Uganda -- natural trading partners -- must be a part of this.

Fourth, reform, train, pay well enough -- and actually pay! -- military, police and civil service, so that their livelihoods don't depend on embezzlement and extortion.

Finally, Congo's communities must be involved in a rethink of governance, so that a weak and capricious state meddles, manipulates and muscles less and governs more. In such a huge country, there must be space and support for communities to sort out local affairs, instead of alternating between being left to rot and getting

whacked. A new system must include meaningful protections of human and political rights, especially for women.

Doing any one of these is like fixing carbon emissions. If it were easy, it would have been done. And doing one but not the others might help some but solve little. Governing factions all know that in the end a reformed Congo will bring prosperity to everyone. They just want to dominate the process. They need to be pushed relentlessly to do the right thing.

One of the most recent solutions was outlined in this week's **New York Times** article, *To Save Congo, Let It Fall Apart* by Peter Pham. Except that allowing warlords to split up a country instead of pressuring the outside forces to stop supporting the warring factions, plays into the hands of profiteers who fermented the hostiles in the first place.

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This week in **The Washington Post**, Glenn Kessler, examines the role of Social Security plays in the deficit, *Updating a ruling: Social Security and its role in the nation's debt*. This debate has intensified recently with the current arguments over the "Fiscal Cliff" With supporter including progressive Senator Dick Durbin acknowledging that Social Security's long-term financing is an important issue that cannot be deferred, advocating the creation of a commission to ensure 75 years of solvency to the program.

### **The Facts**

Social Security is a pay-as-you-go system, which means that payments collected today are immediately used to pay benefits. Until recently, more payments were collected than were needed for benefits. So Social Security loaned the money to the U.S. government, which used it for other things, which in effect masked the overall size of the federal budget deficit. In exchange, Social Security received interest-bearing Treasury securities, which now total more than \$2.7 trillion.

The bonds held by Social Security are backed by the full faith and credit of the U.S. government. The bonds are a real asset to Social Security, but — here's where it gets complicated — they also represent an obligation by the rest of the government. Like any entity that issues debt, such as a corporation, the government will have to make good on its obligations, generally by taking the money out of revenue, reducing expenses or issuing new debt.

So what is happening today? The [Congressional Budget Office](#) tracks the flow of money in and out of the Social Security fund, and below is a summary of the data for fiscal 2013. To keep things simple, we will include transfers made for the payroll tax holiday as part of "other income."

### **Social Security Income (in billions of dollars)**

**Revenues 675**

**Interest 110**

**Other income 70**

**Total income 854**

**Outgo**

**Total outgo 819**

**This looks like surplus, worth about \$36 billion after rounding.**

**The problem is that if you** notice that fully \$110 billion of the income was interest on Treasury securities. But that interest is simply paid with new Treasury bonds. So when that money is subtracted, the actual cash flow

(what the CBO document calls “primary surplus/deficit”) is negative — and getting worse.

In 2012, the cash flow deficit was \$58 billion. In 2013, it will be negative \$75 billion — and then negative \$82 billion in 2014. By 2016, the trust fund for disability insurance will be exhausted, so in theory, full disability benefits could not be paid. This is partly a matter of theology. Democrats look at those trust funds and see actual assets, as the belief is that over time, they will be honored.

In their view, the general fund — which is now making payments to Social Security to cover the cash flow shortfall — has benefitted greatly over the past 30 years from annual Social Security trust fund surpluses that were invested in Treasury securities. In other words, Social Security has helped finance deficit spending in the rest of government – rather than contributing to those deficits. So any cash flow problem should be viewed as a deficit in the general fund rather than in Social Security.

For years Social Security monies have been used to fund the deficit. As demographics have changed it will no longer run a surplus. During this period it will have to fund the shortfall from the budget. But then what are investment grade bonds for...? More so, this shortfall can be easily fixed. First stop government looting Social Security. Secondly raise the top-end cap and raise age eligibility. As such to suggest that Social Security is the same as other social programs and military spending is disingenuous.

## Quote of The Week

*"Knowledge speaks, but wisdom listens"*

— Jimi Hendrix

## This Week's Musical Selection

*This week, I am feeling Jimi Hendrix, whom I met in NYC one morning, when we both found shelter under an awning in a downpour of rain. This chance meeting led to me being invited into his world, which expanded mine. In addition to being one of the coolest dressing guys in the counter-culture at that time, I found him shy and humble with the soul of a poet. To this day he is in the Pantheon of celebrities whom I got to know, along side with Muhammad Ali and Nelson Mandela.... My fondest memory of Hendrix was believing that neither of us had a good meal in a while, my mother insisted on cooking us dinner and then made him wash the dishes, with me doing the drying and both being told to take out the garbage when we left.... Please enjoy....*

**Jimi Hendrix** – **James Marshall Hendrix** (born **Johnny Allen Hendrix**; November 27, 1942 – September 18, 1970) was an American musician, singer and songwriter. Despite a limited mainstream exposure of four years, he is widely considered to have been the greatest electric guitarist in the history of popular music, and one of the most important musicians of the 20th century.

Influenced musically by American rock & roll and electric blues, following initial success in Europe with his band [the Jimi Hendrix Experience](#), he achieved fame in the US after his 1967 performance at the Monterey Pop Festival. Later, he headlined the Woodstock Festival in 1969, and the Isle of Wight Festival in 1970, before dying from drug-related asphyxia at the age of 27.

Instrumental in developing the previously undesirable technique of guitar amplifier feedback, Hendrix favored overdriven amplifiers with high volume, gain and treble. He helped to popularize the use of the wah-wah pedal in mainstream rock, which he often used to deliver tonal exaggerations in his solos. He also pioneered experimentation with stereophonic phasing effects in rock music recordings.

The recipient of several prestigious rock music awards during his lifetime and posthumously, **The Jimi Hendrix Experience** was inducted into the US Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1992, and the UK Music Hall of Fame in 2005. English Heritage erected a [blue plaque](#) to identify his former residence on Brook Street, London, in September 1997. *Rolling Stone* ranked his three non-posthumous studio albums, *Are You Experienced* (1967),

*Axis: Bold As Love* (1967) and *Electric Ladyland* (1968) among the top 100 Greatest Albums of All Time. They ranked Hendrix number one on their list of the 100 greatest guitarists of all-time, and number six on their list of the 100 greatest artists of all time.

Jimi Hendrix was of a mixed genealogy that included African American, Irish, and Cherokee ancestors. Jimi had four other younger siblings, Leon born in 1948, Joseph, in 1949, Kathy in 1950, and Pamela, 1951, all of whom Al and Lucille surrendered into foster care and adoption. One of his early influences was his paternal grandmother, Nora Hendrix, a former vaudeville dancer. They shared a love for theatrical clothing and adornment, music, and performance with Jimi. She also imbued him with the stories, rituals and music that had been part of her own Afro-Cherokee heritage and her former life on the stage. Along with his attendance at black Pentecostal church services, writers have suggested these experiences may later have informed Hendrix's thinking about the connections between emotions, spirituality and music.

After being caught riding in stolen cars, Hendrix was given a choice between spending two years in prison or joining the Army. Hendrix chose the latter and enlisted on May 31, 1961. After completing basic training at Fort Ord near Monterey in California, the Army assigned him to the 101st Airborne Division and stationed him in Fort Campbell Kentucky. Because Hendrix often play his guitar, a fellow serviceman Billy Cox who was also a musician met and together they formed a band called the Casuals. After having served only one year, he was granted an honorable discharge on the basis of unsuitability on June 29, 1962, although Jimi like to tell reporters that he was discharged after breaking his ankle during his 26<sup>th</sup> parachute jump.

In September 1963, after Cox's Army discharge, he and Hendrix moved to nearby Clarksville, Tennessee and formed a new band called the "King Kasuals". Feeling he had artistically outgrown the Black circuit in the South and frustrated at following the rules of bandleaders, Hendrix moved to New York City in January 1964 where he won first prize in the Apollo Theater amateur contest. From there Hendrix was offered the guitarist position with the Isley Brothers' back-up band.. Hendrix' first studio recording occurred in March 1964, when the Isley Brothers, with Hendrix as a member of the band, recorded the two-part single "*Testify*". Hendrix went on to tour with Little Richard, Ike & Tina Turner, Curtis Knight, Joey Dee and the Starlites and King Curtis.

In 1966, Hendrix was introduced to Chas Chandler who at that time was the bassist in the rock group, The Animals. Chas believing that Hendrix's "Hey Jude" would be a hit, brought him to London where he introduced him to ex-Animals manager and helped him to form the Jimi Hendrix Experience, with guitarist Noel Redding and Mitch Mitchell. Chandler also convinced Hendrix to change the spelling of his first name from "Jimmy" to the more exotic "Jimi". Released in the UK in May 1967, and in the US in August, the first Jimi Hendrix Experience album, "*Are You Experienced*," reached number 2 in the UK and number 5 in the US. The LP contained none of the previously released (outside the United States and Canada) singles or their B sides ("*Hey Joe*"/"*Stone Free*", "*Purple Haze*"/"*51st Anniversary*" and "*The Wind Cries Mary*"/"*Highway Chile*").

Although very popular in Europe, the Jimi Hendrix Experience did not find success in the United States until they performed at the 1967 Monterey International Pop Festival, where Jimi rocked the house, made love to his guitar and then lit it on fire. Following the Monterey Pop Festival, the Experience played a series of concerts at Bill Graham's Fillmore replacing the original headliners Jefferson Airplane at the top of the bill. Meanwhile, in Western Europe, where Hendrix was appreciated for his authentic blues as well as his hit singles and recognized for his avant-garde musical ideas, his wild-man image and musical gimmickry (such as playing the guitar with his teeth and behind his back) had faded; but they later plagued him in the US following Monterey, causing him to become frustrated with the US media and audience, as he felt that they only concentrated on his stage tricks and best known (hit) songs.

The Jimi Hendrix Experience's second 1967 album, "*Axis: Bold as Love*" was his first recording made for stereo release and used panning and other stereo effects. Hendrix's third recording, the double album "*Electric Ladyland*" (1968), was a departure from previous efforts and reached #1 on the charts in November in the US, and #6 in the UK charts. The Experience broke up in the summer of 1969. The most memorable moment at the Woodstock Festival was Hendrix's rendition of the U.S. national anthem, "*The Star-Spangled Banner*" which

occurred about 3/4 into the set (after which he morphed into "Purple Haze"). During 1969 and 1970 Hendrix performed with group of musicians that he referred to Band of Gypsys. In September 1970 Hendrix returned to Europe to do several dates and split from his management, whom he had began to detest in 1968. After a night of partying on September 18, 1970, Hendrix died in London, which led to a number of conspiracy theories.

**Jimi Hendrix Experience - Hey Joe ( 1967 ) Live** – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HmP8EoQ2XwU&feature=related>

**Jimi Hendrix Live – Red House** – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2FMQPb1f-Ng&feature=related>

**Jimi Hendrix Live – The Wind cries Mary** – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M7alzFMVqE&feature=related>

**Jimi Hendrix Live – "Like A Rolling Stone" (from Winterland)** – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ktjpxrIFox8&list=AL94UKMTqg-9BS-GQFJJC4rwB8PeWMXx8M&index=16>

**Jimi Hendrix – If 6 was 9** – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7dESdS7m7Rc&list=AL94UKMTqg-9BS-GQFJJC4rwB8PeWMXx8M&index=36>

**Jimi Hendrix Live – Bold As Love** – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Om8dFQMY8IE&list=AL94UKMTqg-9BS-GQFJJC4rwB8PeWMXx8M&index=58>

**Jimi Hendrix – Castles made of Sand** – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QgUZfb5AX8E> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jW5zPy73gWk>

**"Jimi Hendrix Killed Eric Clapton"** – [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6t4qXH\\_YaBs&feature=related](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6t4qXH_YaBs&feature=related)

**Jimi Hendrix – Electric Lady Land** – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QgUZfb5AX8E>

**Jimi Hendrix – Hear My Train Cominn (acoustic)** – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fU2vmTdiE9Y&feature=related>

Wishing you a great week....

Sincerely,  
Greg Brown

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Gregory Brown  
Chairman & CEO  
GlobalCast Partners, LLC

