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Subject: Greg Brown's Weekend Reading and Other Things.... 08/24/2014
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DEAR FRIEND.....



Authorities in Ferguson, Mo deploy tear gas to disperse protesters where an unarmed black teen was shot and killed by a police officer.

On the day when Ferguson, Missouri look like Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt during the height of the Arab Spring three years ago as the streets filled with tear gas, rubber bullets, heavily-armed SWAT teams and mine-resistant vehicles on the fourth night of unrest since Michael Brown, an unarmed African American teenager, was shot to death by police on Aug. 9th another headline caught my eye – ***Does the Second Amendment Only Apply to White People?*** The article in **The Huffington Post** by Keith Boykin chronicles the killing of Ezell Ford by police last week in Los Angeles who had reportedly suffered from mental illness. The official police statement online never mentioned if Ford had a weapon when he was killed. Although several media organizations reported he was unarmed, Boykin said that he could find no evidence from LAPD or the family to corroborate that claim.

While trying to find out if the victim was unarmed Boykin said that he realized ***it didn't matter*** if he had a gun because in the eyes of America, he had something more dangerous than a gun: his black skin. Yes, Ezell Ford was suspicious, in part, because he was black. That's why unarmed black people continue to be killed. If you don't believe him look online and you'll find pictures of white people proudly carrying guns into churches, bars, and grocery stores thanks to the "open carry" laws passed in nearly every state recently. Black people don't have that right. As an example Boykin chronicled the story of a white teenager named Steve Lohner who was stopped by the police last month and refused to

show his ID after carrying a loaded shotgun on the streets of Aurora, Colorado (*the same city where a mass murderer killed 12 people and injured 70 others in a packed movie theater in July 2012*), the teen walked away with nothing but a citation. But when a 22-year-old black kid named John Crawford picked up a mere BB gun in a Walmart store in Dayton, Ohio last week, customers called the police, who then shot and killed him.

Here lies a racial disparity that's difficult for honest people to ignore. How can black people openly carry a real gun when we can't even pick up a BB gun in a store without arousing suspicion? The answer in America is that the Second Amendment doesn't really apply to black people. So don't tell me about The Constitution because in the eyes of many Whites the Second Amendment doesn't apply to us non-whites. Consider this. In the hours since the protests began in Ferguson, Missouri, gun sales spiked in the St. Louis area. It seems some whites are scared to death of violent black people, even though the only person who's been killed in the past week of turmoil in St. Louis was 18-year-old Michael Brown. Imagine what might happen if black people started buying up scores of weapons at gun stores and posting pictures of ourselves carrying them on the streets to protect ourselves? We don't have to wonder. When the Black Panthers did this in the 1960s, California's Republican Governor Ronald Reagan, the patron saint of white conservatives, signed a law called the Mulford Act which prohibited the carrying of firearms on your person, in a vehicle, or in any public place or street.

So does it really matter if Ezell Ford had a gun on him when he was killed? Perhaps it allows his defenders to maintain some sense of moral high ground, but it does not change the problem with race in our country. In America, a black kid with a bag of Skittles is far more "suspicious" than a white man carrying an assault rifle. That's why studies have shown that police are more likely to shoot unarmed black suspects than unarmed white ones. A white man with a gun is assumed to be a law-abiding patriot, while a black man with a gun is assumed to be a lawless thug. When a black man's exercise of his constitutional right stamps him with an instant presumption of guilt, he understands the Second Amendment isn't designed to protect him. But if white Americans want blacks to respect the law, then they must understand how pervasive racial disparities undermine confidence in our laws and our criminal justice system. If the public conversation about Michael Brown, Ezell Ford, Eric Garner, Renisha McBride, Trayvon Martin, and other victims does nothing else, I hope it strikes another nail in the coffin of the delusion of colorblindness in America. Until white people finally acknowledge the persistence and the depth of their own conscious and subconscious racial biases and assumptions, unarmed black people will continue to die from their mistakes.



As someone who hates the thought of **Black-On-Black Crime** my attention was drawn to the video under the headline of: **Watch A Poet-Activist Destroy The Fallacy Of 'Black-On-Black' Crime In Under 2 Minutes** – and boy do I see the issue a bit differently. Obviously any predatory crime is malicious, immoral and a failure of society. But the issue of Black-On-Black crime is that it indicts an entire race, when the reality is that the numbers of Black-on-Black crime statistically are not much different than White-on-White crime with the exception on how they are portrayed in the media. So last week on a night when thousands gathered at vigils throughout the nation to honor the memory of Michael Brown, Ezell Ford and victims of police brutality, one poet-activist addressed a racist fallacy at the root of how violence is sometimes reported by the media.

Speaking at Chicago's vigil in Daley Plaza Thursday evening, Malcolm London stated that in the Windy City *"it's not fair that in one part of this city, some folks will live until their hair is gray and in another part of this city, babies are literally dying."* *"Some folks use this rhetoric that 'black-on-black' crime is a thing. That's not even a real thing!"* London said in a video shot by **RedEye Chicago's** Megan Crepeau, before pointing out that the overwhelming majority of victims of violent crime share the same racial identity as their attackers -- regardless of their race. And that the term of **Black-On-Black** crime is used in the media suggesting that something is defective with Black People. And as Poet London also points out it allows people (White & Black) to not address the real issues of poverty and inequality in this country. The real issues of mass incarceration in this the U.S. The real issues of corporations profiting off of each and every one of us because they playing by different rules from anyone else, corrupting capitalism in ways that are yet to be understood.

Watch A Poet-Activist Destroy The Fallacy Of 'Black-On-Black' Crime In Under 2 Minutes

Web Link: <http://youtu.be/-Ao96Rbno2Y>

Black-on-Black crime is an abomination, as all predatory crime is repugnant. And the rhetoric and the way our media often uses it is as disgraceful because not only does it indict the felons, it also suggests complicity of the victims and the Black community as a whole, without addressing or even

identifying the underlying causes. Think about it, a child growing up in dysfunctional poverty with a feeling of no future, actually has a reason to lash out against society. And if his reach is only the immediate neighborhood, this is where his victim will be.... With this said, I urge you to watch the 2 minute video and hopefully it inspires you to look at crime in America a little differently.



Like me you may have first heard the name ISIS last year when they came to prominence in Syria as a group so violent it is said that they had been kicked out of the terrorist organization al Qaeda and was taking control of large areas of the country. The names ISIS, ISISL or the Islamic State, are the ultraviolent insurgents who crossed over the border two months ago from Syria into Iraq to establish a caliphate across the Arab world (Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Israel, and Kuwait), capturing the city of Mosul on their way to Iraq's six largest city, Erbil with a population of almost one million and currently terrorizing Iraq's third largest minority the Yazidis living in the small towns and villages on the way.

These Sunni militants who now threaten to take over Iraq seemed to spring from nowhere when they stormed Mosul in early June. But the group that recently renamed itself simply "the Islamic State" has existed under various names and in various shapes since the early 1990s. And its story is the story of how modern terrorism has evolved, from a political and religious ideal into a death cult.

The group began more than two decades ago as a fervid fantasy in the mind of a Jordanian named Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. A onetime street thug, he arrived in Afghanistan as a mujahideen wannabe in 1989, too late to fight the Soviet Union. He went back home to Jordan, and remained a fringe figure in the international violent "jihad" for much of the following decade. He returned to Afghanistan to set up a training camp for terrorists, and met Osama bin Laden in 1999, but chose not to join al-Qaeda.

The fall of the Taliban in 2001 forced Zarqawi to flee to Iraq. There his presence went largely unnoticed until the Bush administration used it as evidence that al-Qaeda was in cahoots with Saddam Hussein. In reality, though, Zarqawi was a free agent, looking to create his own terror organization. Shortly after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, he set up the forerunner to today's Islamic State: Jama'at al-Tawhid w'al-Jihad (the Party of Monotheism and Jihad), which was made up mostly of non-Iraqis. Although Zarqawi's rhetoric was similar to bin Laden's, his targets were quite different. From the start, Zarqawi directed his malevolence at fellow Muslims, especially Iraq's majority Shiite population. Bin Laden and al-Qaeda regarded the Shiites as heretics, but rarely targeted them for slaughter.

Zarqawi's intentions were underlined with the bombing of the Imam Ali shrine in Najaf, the holiest place of Shiite worship in Iraq. With the survivors asking, *"Why us? Why, when there are so many Americans around, bomb us?"*

One reason: sheer convenience. The Shiites were easier targets because they didn't yet have the ability to fight back. But there was also a political calculation. After Saddam was toppled, Shiite politicians replaced the Sunnis who had long dominated power structures in Iraq. Zarqawi was counting on Sunni resentment against the Shiites to build alliances and find safe haven for his group. It worked: Zarqawi sent dozens of suicide bombers to blow themselves up in mosques, schools, cafes, and markets, usually in predominantly Shiite neighborhoods or towns.

By 2004, Zarqawi's campaign of suicide bombings across Iraq had made him a superstar of the international "jihadi" movement, and won the endorsement of bin Laden himself. Zarqawi now joined his group to bin Laden's, rebranding it al-Qaeda in Iraq, or AQI. (It is also sometimes called al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia, but don't confuse that with AQIM, which refers to the Algerian franchise, al-Qaeda in the Maghreb.)

Soon, however, Zarqawi's targeting of civilians created misgivings among the core al-Qaeda leadership. In 2005, bin Laden's right-hand man, Ayman al-Zawahiri, wrote a letter chiding the Jordanian for his tactics. Zarqawi paid it no heed. Last year Zawahiri likewise took ISIS's new leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, to task for his excessive ferocity—and was again ignored.

By the spring of 2006, Zarqawi was beginning to see himself as something more than an "emir" or insurgent commander: He aspired to spiritual leadership as well. (His successor as "emir," Baghdadi, would make the same transformation, appointing himself "caliph" after taking Mosul.) No longer content merely with alliances, he began to insist that his Iraqi Sunni hosts submit to his harsh interpretation of sharia law—veils for women, beheadings for criminals, the whole nine yards. Those who resisted, even prominent figures in the community, were executed.

But Zarqawi's ambitions were cut short in June, 2006, when the U.S. Air Force dropped a pair of 500-pound bombs on his hideout, 20 miles north of Baghdad. His death came just as the tide was turning against AQI. Many Sunni tribes, chafing at Zarqawi's sharia rules, had begun to fight back. The U.S. military, led by General David Petraeus, capitalized on this to finance and support an insurgency-within-an-insurgency, known as the "Awakening." Tribesmen willing to fight AQI, even if they had previously fought the Americans, were designated "Sons of Iraq," to underscore the fact that most of AQI's commanders were foreigners, like Zarqawi himself. These Iraqi Sunnis believed that joining

forces with the U.S. would give them immunity from prosecution from previous crimes, lucrative government contracts to rebuild devastated Sunni areas, and a share of political power in Baghdad.

Petraeus's "Awakening" campaign was accompanied by a surge of U.S. troops, and it worked ... up to a point. Demoralized by the loss of Zarqawi, AQI's foreign cadres melted away. Except that Petraeus's plan was designed mainly to reduce the violence and allow the U.S. to leave Iraq, not to repair the Shiite-Sunni rift that Zarqawi had opened up. American politicians and military commanders talked of creating a space for political dialogue between the two groups, but the effort to enable that dialogue was, at best, desultory. It was left to Iraq's elected government, led by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, to make a lasting peace.

As the U.S. discovered, Maliki and his Shiite-led governing coalition were more interested in recrimination than reconciliation. The Sons of Iraq were denied salaries they had been promised. Tribal leaders never got those government contracts. In Baghdad, Sunni politicians were ignored, often humiliated, sometimes prosecuted. The most senior of them, Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi, fled the country after being charged with terrorism; he was eventually sentenced to death in absentia. Meanwhile, Maliki filled the ranks of Iraqi police and military with Shiites, some of them partisans from militias that had previously killed Sunnis. Sunni resentment now bubbled up again, setting the stage for AQI's return.

By 2011, when the U.S. troop withdrawal was complete, AQI was being run by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and had morphed from a largely foreign to a largely Iraqi operation. Baghdadi himself, as his name suggests, is local. The absence of foreigners made it easier for the Sons of Iraq and their kin to ignore previous resentments against the group. There was also another rebranding: AQI was now better known as the Islamic State of Iraq, or ISI.

Baghdadi took Zarqawi's tactics and supercharged them. The Shiites were still his main targets, but now he sent suicide bombers to attack police and military offices, checkpoints, and recruiting stations. (Civilian targets remained fair game.) ISI's ranks were swelled by former Sons of Iraq, many of whom had previously been commanders and soldiers in Saddam's military. This gave Baghdadi's fighters the air of an army, rather than a rag-tag militant outfit.

With thousands of armed men now at his disposal, Baghdadi opened a second front against the Shiites—in Syria, where there was a largely secular uprising against President Bashar al-Assad. What mattered to Baghdadi and his propagandists was that Assad and many of his senior military commanders were Alawites, members of a Shiite sub-sect. Battle-hardened from Iraq, ISI was a much more potent fighting force than most of the secular groups, and fought Assad's forces to a standstill in many areas. Soon, Baghdadi renamed his group the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), reflecting his greater ambitions. His black flags, emblazoned with the Arabic words for "There is no god but god" and the reproduction of what many believe to be the Prophet Mohammed's seal, became ubiquitous.

Just as Zarqawi had in Iraq, Baghdadi overplayed his hand in Syria. He began to impose harsh strictures on Syrian towns and villages under ISIS control, especially in the province of Raqqa. In early 2014, Assad's forces had regrouped and begun to strike back; in May, they retook the city of Homs, which had been the symbolic heart of the uprising. It was a blow for the rebels.



The Islamic State

But Baghdadi was planning a much bigger, bolder strike—in his home country. The taking of Mosul the following month marked a new phase in ISIS's evolution: It was now able and willing to seize and control territory, not simply send suicide bombers to their death. Baghdadi used the occasion to promote himself to “caliph” and renamed the group “the Islamic State,” in a nod to its now even bigger ambition of ruling the entire region from the Mediterranean to the Gulf.

He also broadened his list of targets. Although ISIS had encountered minority religious and ethnic groups like Christians and Kurds in Syria, there seems to have been no central directive about what to do with them: Fighters were free to exercise their discretion. But in Mosul, the word came down from the “caliph”: Non-believers must either pay a special tax, leave, convert, or face death. The last two options were preferred. The city's ancient Christian community was the first to be targeted, and thousands fled. Then, as the Islamic State widened its operations, smaller groups found themselves in the firing line.

Today, ISIS and Baghdadi are dominating headlines around the world in ways Abu Musab al-Zarqawi could hardly have imagined. And people everywhere were asking: Where did these hellhounds come from?

And for you conservatives who would like to blame President Obama for the rise of ISIS you should realize that the single most important factor in ISIS' recent resurgence is the conflict between Iraqi Shias and Iraqi Sunnis. ISIS fighters themselves are Sunnis, and the tension between the two groups is a powerful recruiting tool for ISIS. And that the difference between the two largest Muslim groups originated with a controversy over who got to take power after the Prophet Muhammed's death. But Iraq's sectarian problems aren't about re-litigating 7th-century disputes; they're about modern political power and grievances.

A majority of Iraqis are Shias, but Sunnis ran the show when Saddam Hussein, himself Sunni, ruled Iraq. Saddam spread a false belief that Sunnis were the real majority in Iraq. Thus, Sunnis felt, and still feel, entitled to larger shares of political power than might perhaps be warranted by their size. After overthrowing Saddam, the American policy was to clean out all members of the Baath party, which

resulted in eliminating almost all of the people experienced in running the country, as well as everyone in the military. Filling this vacuum where Shias subservient to the US who became carpetbaggers in the worse way imaginable as hundreds of billions of dollars of US taxpayer's dollars was poured into Iraq train a new Shia led army and rebuild the country.

The civil war after the American invasion had a brutally sectarian cast to it, and the pseudo-democracy that emerged afterwards empowered the Shia majority (with some heavy-handed help from Washington). Today, the two groups don't trust each other, and so far have competed in a zero-sum game for control over Iraqi political institutions. For instance, Shia used control over the police force to arbitrarily detain Sunni protesters demanding more representation in government last year.

So long as Shias control the government, and Sunnis don't feel like they're fairly represented, ISIS has an audience for its radical Sunni message. That's why ISIS is gaining in the heavily Sunni northwest. ISIS will be able to recruit Sunni fighters off of the Sunni-Shia tension even though Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki is no longer in office, unless his policies towards the Sunni minority changes considerably and immediately. Because Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki, a Shia Muslim, has built a Shia sectarian state which refused to take steps to accommodate Sunnis. Police have killed peaceful Sunni protesters and used anti-terrorism laws to mass-arrest Sunni civilians. Maliki has made political alliances with violent Shia militias, infuriating Sunnis. ISIS cannily exploited that brutality to recruit new fighters.

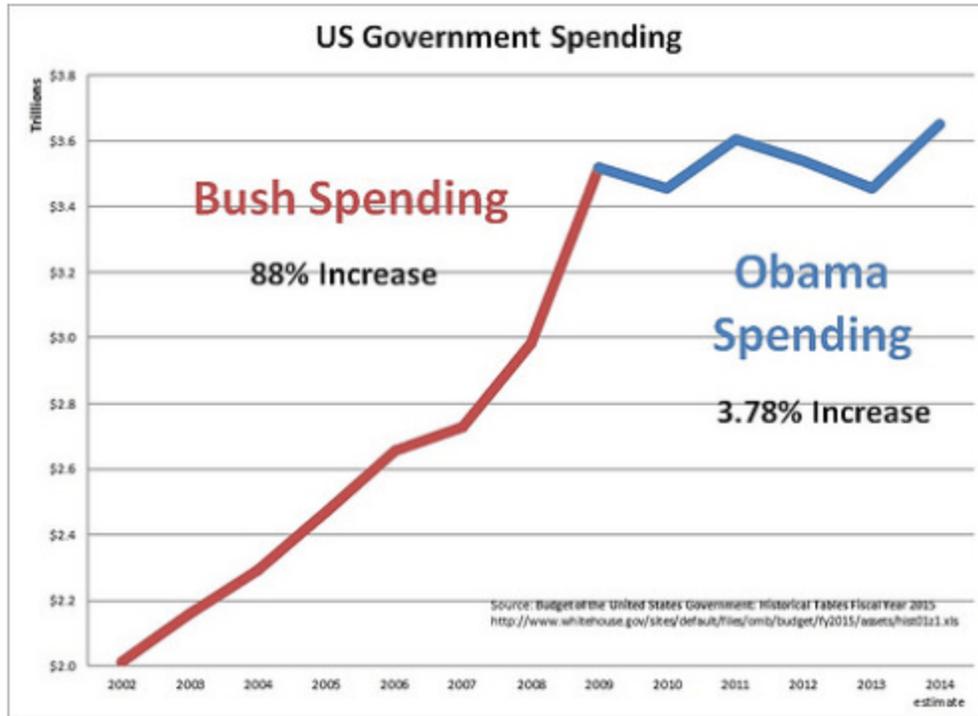
When ISIS reestablished itself, it put Sunni sectarianism at the heart of its identity and propaganda. The government persecution, according to the Washington Institute for Near East Studies' Michael Knights, *"played right into their hands."* Maliki *"made all the ISIS propaganda real, accurate."* That made it much, much easier for ISIS to replenish its fighting stock.

Again, although ISIS came to prominence in Syria, the group initially formed in Iraq in 2003 as a result of the Shia majority oppressing the Sunni minority. And this might have not happened if the US and its allies had not overthrown Saddam Hussein. ISIS may not have been able to gain a foothold in Syria if again if the US had not fermented the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad. These two assertions are more fact than speculation. Backing any type of armed conflict no matter how well intentioned often has unintended consequences. And the emergence of ISIS is one of those unintended consequences. There was no operating al Qaeda in Iraq when Saddam was in power. Removing him from power created the vacuum and allow the circumstances that cause the rise of ISIS. You have to wonder when our leaders who are clamoring for the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad and government in Iran have learned anything because believing that they can bring in moderates hasn't worked anywhere in the Arab World.

When I hear from political leaders like Rep. Peter King saying that ISIS is a major threat to the US, this is true lunacy. People in Brazil, Japan, China and Switzerland don't feel threaten by ISIS, so why is only super power in the world afraid? In fact unlike al Qaeda, ISIS prefers to concentrate its efforts in the Arab World. Therefore if Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait and the UAE aren't worried enough to support a military effort to stop ISIS why should the U.S. and Europe? And the biggest joke of all, is that the only two countries trying to stop ISIS today are the U.S. and Iran which are supposed to be enemies. But wars often make strange bedfellows. And this current conflict is no different. Hysteria at home and missteps in the theater of war aren't going to make us safer. Because we live in a time when any three lunatics can start a cell for any reason and bombing or putting boots on the ground are not going to stop this.

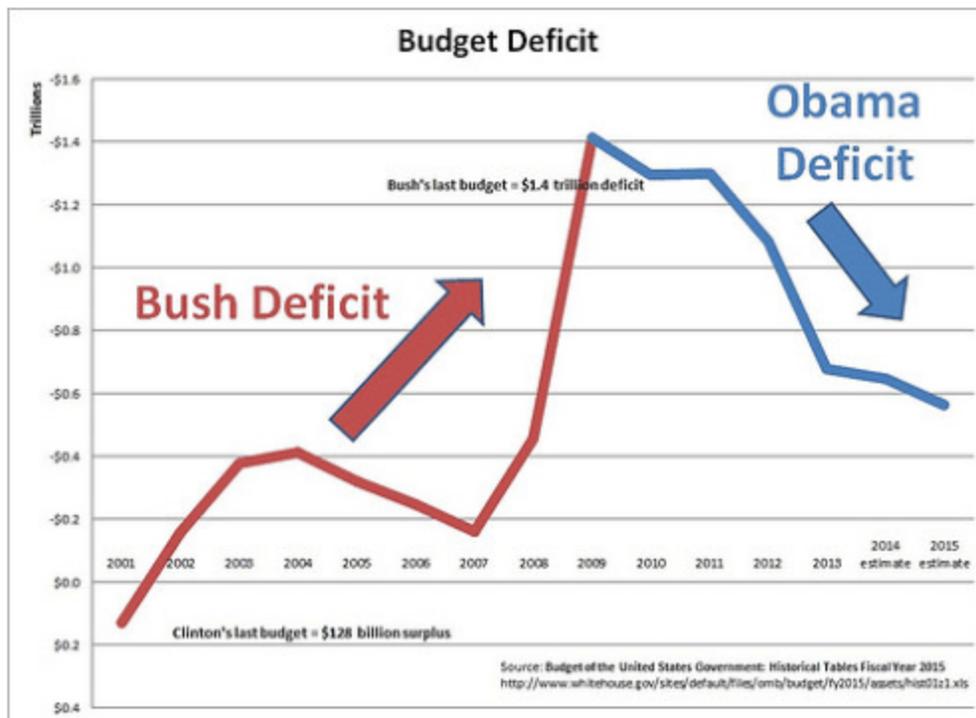
Early this month David Johnson wrote a piece in the **Huffington Post** updating his **2011 article – Three Charts to Email to Your Right-Wing Brother-In-Law (Updated)** – as evidence that the FOX-Limbaugh lie machine, which keeps spewing out disinformation about "Obama spending" and "*Obama deficits*" and how the "*stimulus*" just made things worse is totally BS. So instead of the cartoons that you have probably been receiving from your ultra-conservative right-wing friends, the article shows three "*reality-based*" charts showing what actually happened.

Spending



Government spending increased dramatically under President Bush. It has not increased much under President Obama. This is just a fact.

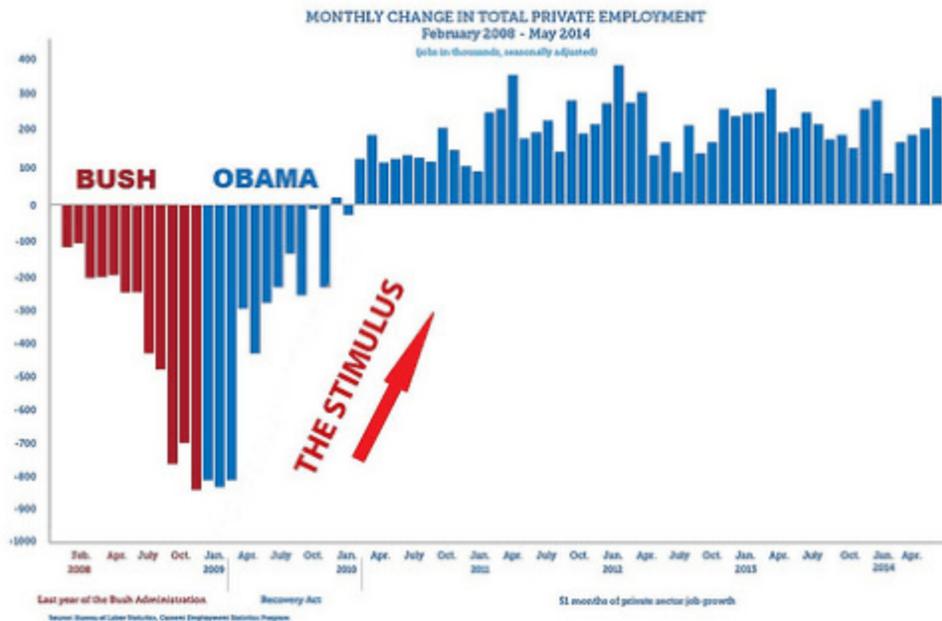
Deficits



Note that this chart starts with Clinton's last budget year for comparison.

The numbers in these two charts come from Budget of the United States Government: Historical Tables Fiscal Year 2015. They are just the amounts that the government spent and borrowed, period. Anyone can go look them up. People who claim that Obama "tripled the deficit" or increased it or anything of the sort are either misled or are trying to mislead. President Obama inherited a budget deficit of \$1.4 trillion from President Bush's last budget year and annual budget deficits have gone down dramatically since.

The Stimulus and Jobs



In this chart, the RED lines on the left side -- the ones that keep doing DOWN -- show what happened to jobs under the policies of Bush and the Republicans. We were losing lots and lots of jobs every month, and it was getting worse and worse. The BLUE lines -- the ones that just go UP -- show what happened to jobs when the stimulus was in effect. We stopped losing jobs and started gaining jobs, and it was getting better and better.

The leveling off on the right side of the chart shows what happened as the stimulus started to wind down: job creation leveled off at too low a level.

It looks a lot like the stimulus reversed what was going on before the stimulus. We have gone from losing around 850,000 jobs a month to gaining over 200,000 jobs a month.

Conclusion: The stimulus worked but that was not enough

More False Things

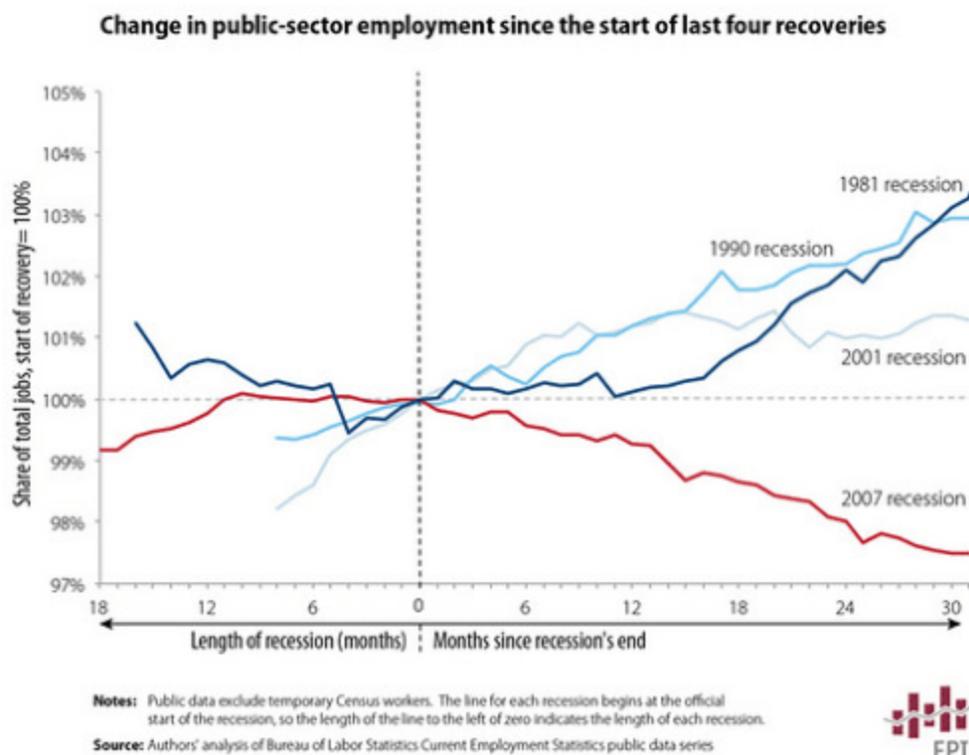
These are just three of the false things that everyone "knows" because places like Fox News repeat them over and over and over. Some others are (click through): Obama bailed out the banks, businesses will hire if they get tax cuts, health care reform cost \$1 trillion, Social Security is a Ponzi Scheme or is "going broke", tax cuts grow the economy, government spending "takes money out of the economy."

Actually This Reduced Spending And Lower Deficit Have Hurt The Economy

Government spending is literally, by definition, the things that government does to make our lives better. People have been tricked into thinking that government spending is somehow bad. The billionaires and giant corporations spread this nonsense around because they are greedy and just want their taxes lower. The top income tax rate used to be more than 90 percent and the top corporate tax rate used to be more than 50 percent. That was back when we built this country's great infrastructure, had good schools and defended the world against the Soviet Union. We also had higher economic growth and a growing middle class.

Government spending does not "take money out of the economy." In fact, it puts money into the economy, creates jobs and lays the foundation for future prosperity. The decline in government spending shown in the charts above is the reason that the economy remains sluggish and jobs are still hard to get. Just look at that chart showing what the stimulus spending did for the job situation. But since the stimulus ended, Republicans have obstructed every effort to continue to use our government to help our economy.

For example, this chart from The Atlantic, "The Incredible Shrinking U.S. Government," shows how government spending to create government jobs helped us get out of the 1981, 1990 and 2001 recessions. But since the 2007 "Great Recession," we instead have laid off hundreds of thousands of government employees, obviously making unemployment even worse.

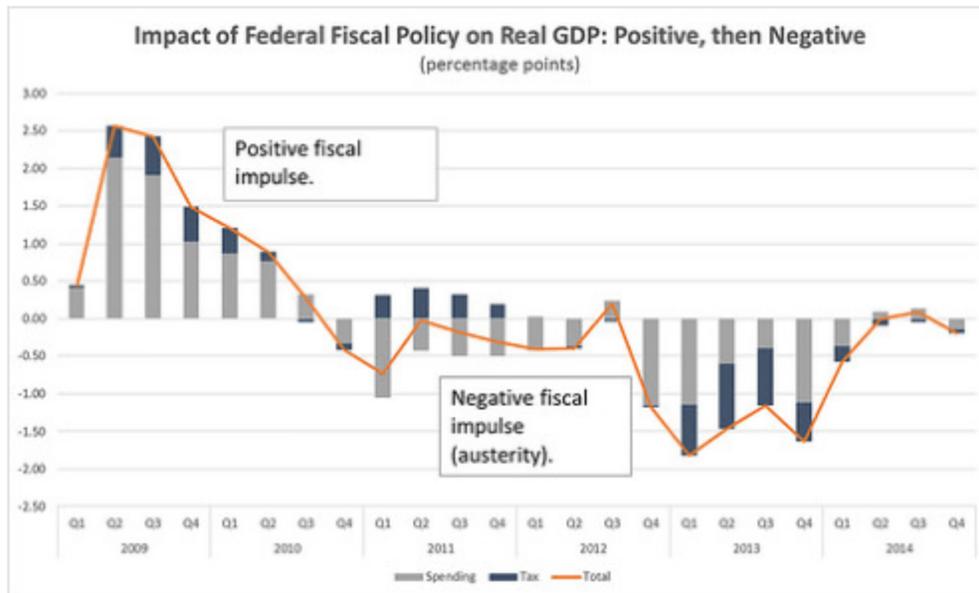


This chart shows only the loss of government jobs. Never mind the job losses in the stores where all of these people were shopping. The Atlantic article says this, "EPI argues that "these extra government jobs would have helped preserve about 500,000 private sector jobs."

And never mind the millions of jobs lost or not created because of "austerity" cutbacks in government spending on things like maintaining (never mind modernizing) our infrastructure! And beyond that, what if we had spent some money (public investment) to retrofit every building and home in the country to be energy efficient, or built high-speed rail around the country? How many millions more

would have been hired to do those things -- and how much would we be saving on energy and other costs from now on?

This chart from Roger Hickey's post, *Continued Jobs Growth. But Highway Bill Shows Austerity Still Hurts.*, shows how "conservative budget cutting has undermined growth from mid-2010 through 2014":



"As you can see, the impact of austerity on the economy is projected to be reduced over the next two quarters, but the next budget is not expected to be expansionary - and Republicans are still writing budgets under the mistaken conservative theory that spending cuts somehow stimulate growth."

Family Budget?

They say that government is like a family budget -- when the money isn't coming in you have to cut back. That's just nonsense if you think about it. First of all, if we make the big corporations and billionaires pay their fair share of taxes again, the money would be coming in. And anyway, families do invest in a mortgage, student loans and car loans so they can have a place to live, a good education to get a better job, and a car to get to and from work.

So don't fall for the nonsense the big corporations and billionaires are spreading through their right-wing outlets. When you look a little deeper, that stuff just falls apart. A country needs to invest to create jobs and have a better future.

Why This Matters

These things really matter. We all want to fix the terrible problems the country has. But it is so important to know just what the problems are before you decide how to fix them. Otherwise the things you do to try to solve those problems might just make them worse -- just as laying off government workers in a recession makes unemployment worse.

David Johnson: If we get tricked into thinking that Obama has made things worse and that we should go back to what we were doing before Obama -- tax cuts for the rich, giving giant corporations and Wall Street everything they want, when those are the things that caused the problems in the first place -- then we will be in real trouble.

TRIGGER HAPPY POLICE



Cell phone camera Web Link: <http://youtu.be/j-P54MZVxMU>

Huff Post official Police response Web Link: <http://news.stlpublicradio.org/post/st-louis-police-release-video-calls-city-shooting>

With everything going on this week in Ferguson you would think that the police in St. Louis would be under some sort of restraint but obvious this is not the case because on Tuesday two Police officers who responded to a shoplifting call found the suspect still walking around in front of the convenience store of the incident. It was obvious to everyone in the immediate vicinity, as a number of passerbys warned him to cool his jets as he was acting erratic, that he was a bit unhinged. The suspect, Kajieme Powell, a 25-year-old black man approached the officers when they arrived, yelling at them to shoot him already. When he ignored commands to drop the knife, the two officers fired a total of 12 shots. Chief Sam Dotson said the knife was like a steak knife.

But the issue that I have is what followed after the shooting. When the official response by the Police Commissioner Sam Dotson, *"both of the officers opened fire on Powell when he came within a three or four feet of them holding a knife in an overhand grip,"* suggesting that the officers fired in fear of their lives while a neighbor who took a video with his cell phone showing the entire incident, prior to the police arrival, the shooting and the arrival of other officers to cording off the scene – showed an entirely different story. Yes, the victim stole two drinks and then went back into the store and walk off with a donut. But throughout the few minutes, he was not a threat to the store clerk and shoppers coming in and out of the store. So why did two trained police officers who were more than five to ten feet away at the time they opened fire feel the need to execute this obviously deranged individual? According to the magazine Mother Jones, at least 5 unarmed black men were killed by police in the past month alone.

Assessing the Damage and Destruction in Gaza



The damage to Gaza's infrastructure from the current conflict is more severe than the destruction caused by either of the last two Gaza wars, according to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (Unrwa) and other organizations with staff on the ground, like Oxfam and Human Rights Watch. The fighting has displaced about a fourth of Gaza's population. Nearly 60,000 people have lost their homes, and the number of people taking shelter in Unrwa schools is nearly five times as many as in 2009. The cost to Gaza's already fragile economy will be significant: the 2009 conflict caused losses estimated at \$4 billion — almost three times the size of Gaza's annual gross domestic product.



Beit Hanoun: About 630 buildings including a hospital and Mosque have been damaged or destroyed. Israel has accused Hamas of using Mosques and hospitals to hide weapons and rockets.

Shejaiya: The Shejaiya neighborhood of Gaza City, a Hamas stronghold, has been leveled. About 600 structures were destroyed and another 280 others were damaged in the first two and a half weeks of the conflict.

Power Plant: Gaza's only power plant remains shut down after being shelled on July 29. The plum from the fire ignited by the shelling was visible across the entire region.

Khan Younis: Israel targeted residences in Khan Younis it says belonged to members of Hamas. One strike leveled a four-story house, killing more than two dozen people. Another strike, in a crowded neighborhood, set off huge secondary explosions.

Rafah: Israel soldiers bombarded the Rafah area after three soldiers were killed by Palestinian militants who emerged from a tunnel near the beginning of the humanitarian cease fire.

Egypt has been trying to broker a cease-fire since the first week of the conflict. Those efforts intensified in recent days but apparently failed to make real progress. Hamas, and a broader Palestinian delegation including the moderate, secular Fatah Party of the Palestinian Authority's president, Mahmoud Abbas, had demanded the reopening of all border crossings, the removal of Israeli restrictions on trade, the building of a Gaza seaport and the revival of a defunct airport in the coastal territory.

Israel had called for a demilitarization of Gaza under international supervision.

People briefed on the talks have said that negotiators agreed last week to set these broader goals aside for a month and to focus an initial agreement on the reconstruction of Gaza, where thousands of homes, businesses and other properties have been destroyed. But that initial agreement never came. Avigdor Lieberman, Israel's foreign minister, seized on the collapse of the Cairo talks to reiterate his call for a more aggressive assault to topple Hamas from Gaza.

"I hope that now it is clear to everyone that the policy of 'quiet will be answered with quiet' means that Hamas is the initiator, and that it is the one that decides when, where and how much it fires on the residents of Israel, whereas we make do with only a response that, even if it is powerful, is still just a response," Mr. Lieberman wrote on his Facebook page. "When we're talking seriously about the security of the residents of Israel, we need to understand that there isn't any option other than a resolute Israeli initiative that spells one thing – bringing about Hamas's surrender."

But Fawzi Barhoum, a Hamas spokesman, blamed Israel for the breakdown, saying that country's negotiators withdrew from the talks before rockets were fired Tuesday "and did not answer to Hamas's notes and offers." Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel "had been given the choice between war and lull — he selected war," Mr. Barhoum said in an interview at Al Shifa Hospital in Gaza City. "Netanyahu's government must get prepared for a battle that will be difficult and hard on the Israelis. Netanyahu and his government have only one choice: stopping the aggression, lifting the blockade, allowing the rebuilding of Gaza and accepting the demands of the resistance."

But how much more destruction has to happen and how many more innocent people have to die before both side get off of their high-horses and chose peace instead of winning? ***And this is my rant of the week.....***

WEEK'S READINGS

Tips For Being An Unarmed Black Teen



With riots raging in Ferguson, MO following the shooting death by police of an unarmed African-American youth, the nation has turned its eyes toward social injustice and the continuing crisis of race relations. Here are tips from *The Onion* for being an unarmed black teen in America:

- Shy away from dangerous, heavily policed areas.
- Avoid swaggering or any other confident behavior that suggests you are not completely subjugated.
- Be sure not to pick up any object that could be perceived by a police officer as a firearm, such as a cell phone, a food item, or nothing.
- Explain in clear and logical terms that you do not enjoy being shot, and would prefer that it not happen.
- Don't let society stereotype you as a petty criminal. Remember that you can be seen as so much more, from an armed robbery suspect, to a rape suspect, to a murder suspect.
- Try to see it from a police officer's point of view: You may be unarmed, but you're also black.
- Avoid wearing clothing associated with the gang lifestyle, such as shirts and pants.
- Revel in the fact that by simply existing, you exert a threatening presence over the nation's police force.
- Be as polite and straightforward as possible when police officers are kicking the shit out of you.

The above would be funny if like any other great humor the root of its brilliance is its underlying truth. Living in a household with a seventeen year old black male whom I worry about every time he is out of the house..... he has been warned of the *dos and don'ts* that I am sure that his white classmates haven't. But then this is the world that we live in and as bad as it may seem today it is light years better and safer for Black and Latino males than it was when I was growing up in the 1950s and 1960s. Still the idea that we live in a post-racial society in America is a myth, Therefore, every young person of color should be aware that the rules are different for them.....



As someone who feels that with age my memory is fading too, the article on [REDACTED] by Renee Fisher – ***The Real Key To Improving Brain Function*** – definitely captured my interest especially since the author said that the information is targeted to Baby Boomers like myself. What blew me away is that against what I have always been told -- Nicholas Spitzer, professor or neuroscience at the University of California and editor-in-chief of brainfacts.org, has a message for all of you out there who are listening to classical music and doing crossword puzzles as a way of improving your brain functioning: Stop it right now. Well, I have been a lover of classical music and I stopped doing crosswords decades ago so stopping was not a problem especially now that I know (from the article) that doing puzzles and listening to classical music might improve one's concentration momentarily, but they don't actually make one any smarter. That is, they don't improve one's long-term brain function, allowing one to use impressive words like pelisse and bicorne. Crossword puzzles, especially, will force one to learn a lot of seriously random words that normal people will never use, like words with no vowels or synonyms for toenail.

Fisher says that Spitzer stomps all over our beliefs about improving brain function: *"Many people think classical music is going to enhance brain function (the Mozart effect) or playing particular games sharpens one's cognitive function. These theories have been looked at in detail and they don't stand up,"* he said. It seems that instead Spitzer believes that exercise is a key thing for brain function and another key is exposure to sunlight. Spitzer believes that our brains change their behavior (*like "a railway switching yard"*) based on environmental factors to help us conserve energy during winter. We give our brain a further signal that it's time to use as little energy as possible. This feedback loop, he says, is what causes Seasonal Affective Disorder, a type of depression that affects otherwise healthy people during the dark winter months and gives Now Husband an excuse to flee to his manufactured mobile home (previously known as "mobile home" and even more previously known as "trailer") in Florida.

The bottom line is that in order to keep your brain at tip-top shape, you should stay active. That gives your body cues to devote lots of resources to cognitive function. And if you are a woman and don't like to be outside and you have an aversion to the sun, you are in luck as there is something else you can do. A recent study found that female orgasms trigger an increase in blood flow to all regions of the brain, improving overall cognitive performance. Fisher ends the article with: This news will either have a lot of older women surprising their partners for requests of constant sex, or will have them rushing to stores to buy swimsuits for the first time since the Carter administration. Others will convince their partners to frolic on the beach and then shed their newly-purchased swimsuits in favor of beach sex. This will not only increase their brain function, it will most likely produce hordes of screaming and fleeing beachgoers.

But since we all know that too much sun is bad for you and sex on the beach is not as romantic as one would think, there is another thing that we can do. Eat healthy food options for optimum brain power. Here are several.

Make Your Meals A Rainbow: Try to eat foods of a variety of natural colors to gain antioxidants. See example graphic at the top of this section.

Avoid Certain Fruits: For brain health, scientist recommend food with a low glycemic index -- which measures how quickly food increases blood sugar -- and a lot of fiber, which benefits your intestinal tract. Certain fruit like pineapple and watermelon have high glycemic indexes and should be avoided, advises Dr. Amen. Instead, incorporate fruits like blueberries, apples, oranges, cherries, kiwi, strawberries and raspberries. When it comes to fiber, consider adding coconut to your diet.

You Need Fat: Don't eliminate all of the fat in your diet. Instead, focus on incorporating good fats. In fact, if your cholesterol drops too low, you may be at greater risk for depression, according to Amen and several studies on low cholesterol. So what exactly are "*good fats*"? Scientist advise people to eat foods rich in omega-3s to promote brain health, including almonds, walnuts, brazil nuts, fish, lamb, avocados and green leafy vegetables. Another added benefit of eating good fats? Vitamins are actually absorbed better when you eat them with a little bit of fat.

Choose Your Meat Wisely: While you generally want to avoid bad fats, if you choose to eat steak, "you want to go with grass-fed, hormone-free, free-range meats" rather than grain-fed meats, said Dr. Amen. "When you feed the animals the high-glycemic foods, they actually produce less of the good fat and more of the bad fat. So they're not as good for you." In other words, what your food eats affects your health too.

Herbs And Spices Don't Just Add Flavor: Next time you're whipping up some grub, turn to your spice rack for an extra brain boost. Spices and herbs may do more for your health than you realize. Cinnamon balances blood sugar; garlic, oregano and rosemary increase blood flow to the brain; curry acts as an anti-inflammatory; and saffron can have anti-depressant effects.

Pour Out That Juice: Next time you're craving a cold glass of juice with your breakfast, think again. Juice is sugar that is unwrapped from its fiber source, and whenever you unwrap sugar from its

fiber source, it can turn toxic in your body.

What You Eat For Breakfast Matters: You may be dreaming about that delicious breakfast muffin all night, but you should probably steer clear of the breakfast pastries. "here's way too much bad fat and sugar. Instead try a protein-heavy breakfast like a few boiled eggs, nuts and an apple. While scientist suggest eating lean protein at each meal, breakfast is especially important in the morning because it helps one focus.

Find Supportive Friends: The last thing you need when you're trying to eat healthy are friends who try to coerce you to be unhealthy. You have to deal with the food pushers in your life because they'll steal your health and remember that the health of the people you spend time with will often determine your longevity. Most important, make sure your friends understand and support your decision to eat healthier, and try to find other people who who are on the same healthy path as you.

Theater Shooting Suspect Was Brilliant Science Student

July 21, 2012 10:27 AM



Police: Michael Brown Struggled With Officer Before Shooting

Brian Kelly (Twitter: @borkelly)

August 18, 2014 11:31 AM



Journalist Nick Wing wrote the article in the **Huffington Post** last week – ***When The Media Treats White Suspects And Killers Better Than Black Victims*** – that almost all Blacks and Latinos already knew and most white Americans don't realize. Last week, Twitter user *LordSWVP* tweeted out a photo driving home another point: Media treatment of black victims is often harsher than it is of whites suspected of crimes, including murder.

This is by no means standard media protocol, but it happens frequently, deliberately or not. News reports often headline claims from police or other officials that appear unsympathetic or dismissive of black victims. Other times, the headlines seem to suggest that black victims are to blame for their own deaths, engaging in what critics sometimes allege is a form of character assassination. When contrasted with media portrayal of white suspects and accused murderers, the differences are more striking. News outlets often choose to run headlines that exhibit an air of disbelief at an alleged white killer's supposed actions. Sometimes, they appear to go out of their way to boost the suspect's character, carrying quotes from relatives or acquaintances that often paint even alleged murderers in a positive light.

Here are a few examples and for more please download the attached article:

WHITE SUSPECT

Ala. suspect but brilliant but social misfit

That's how the Lubbock Avalanche-Journal chose to present the story of Amy Bishop, a former college professor who eventually pleaded guilty to killing three colleagues and wounding three others at a faculty meeting in 2010.

BLACK VICTIM

Montgomery's latest homicide victim had history of narcotics abuse, tangles with the law

And that's the headline ████████ ran about the shooting death of a 25-year-old black man in Alabama earlier this year.

WHITE SUSPECT

Son in Staten Island Murders was brilliant, athletic – but his demons were the death of parents

This is how the Staten Island Advance covered the case of Eric Bellucci, a mentally ill New York man who allegedly killed his parents.

BLACK VICTIM

Trayvon Martin was suspended three times from school

Meanwhile, NBC News ran this headline during ongoing coverage of the Trayvon Martin killing.

WHITE SUSPECT

Oregon school shooting suspect fascinated with guns but was a devoted Mormon, his friends say

This Fox News headline quoted friends shocked that 15-year-old Jared Michael Padgett had entered his high school heavily armed and killed a classmate, injured a teacher and took his own life.

BLACK VICTIM

Police: Slain Lakeland Teen Had Been Shot Before, Death Possibly Drug-Related

But in Florida, this headline in the Ledger focused on a police account that made the death of a black 19-year-old seem somehow expected, or at least unsurprising.

WHITE SUSPECT

Straight-A student plots to bomb high school

In the wake of the mass shooting in Santa Barbara, California, earlier this year, the Whittier Daily News offered a headline showing one man's disbelief that Elliot Rodger could have committed such a crime.

BLACK VICTIM

Ohio man was carrying variable pump air rifle – not a toy – when cops killed him: attorney general

Earlier this month, the New York Daily News ran this headline, carrying comments by the Ohio attorney general that appeared to defend police after killing a black man at a Walmart.

WHITE SUSPECT

Ohio shooting suspect, T.J. Lane, described as 'fine person'

This was the headline given to an Associated Press story at [REDACTED] about an Ohio teen who later pleaded guilty to a school shooting in which three students were killed and two were wounded.

BLACK VICTIM

Deputy killed Marine out of fear from children's safety, officials say

But when an unarmed father of two was killed by a police officer while entering a vehicle that contained his own children, the Los Angeles Times served up this claim from officials.

And the latest example of ***Blaming the Black Victim*** was last Friday, when after almost a week, the Police Chief Thomas Jackson of Ferguson, Missouri identified Darren Wilson as the officer who fatally shot unarmed black teen Michael Brown that Saturday. But the outrage is that as justification for the killing of the unarmed teenager, Jackson also announced Friday that the department would release video of a "*strong-armed robbery*" that took place in the area. He outlined events that began at 11 [REDACTED] the day of the shooting and implied Wilson confronted Brown, 18, in connection with the robbery. Wilson encountered Brown at 12:01 [REDACTED], Jackson said. By the time a second officer arrived at 12:04 [REDACTED], Brown was dead with six bullets in his body. The report Jackson distributed identifies Brown as the primary suspect in the robbery. It also contains still images from the surveillance camera in the convenience store where the robbery took place. But in a later press conference Police Chief Jackson had to dial back this connection, saying that the "*contact between the victim Brown and the police was not related to the robbery of the cigars in the convenience store.*" Even if Brown stole the cigars, (which was shoplifting not strong-armed robbery) does that justify Patrolman Darren Wilson to act as judge, jury and executor? What we do also know is that if there wasn't a national spotlight on this offensive behavior this outrage would have gone unnoticed. And as Michael Brown's family and lawyers asserted..... ***What the Police did was Character Assassination*** which often happens when the victim is Black, Latino or Asian.

As I was researching my piece on ISIS/The Islamic State this week, I ran across an op-ed in the Boston Globe by Daniel Benjamin titled – Hawks exaggerate Islamic State threat to the United States – which I so agreed with. As such I am including it in its entirety.



TO JUDGE by the doom-laden prophecies cascading in from Washington, the United States faces a towering and imminent threat in the form of the militant group calling itself the Islamic State, or ISIS. *“They are coming here,”* Republican Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina intoned on Fox News Sunday. *“I think of an American city in flames because of the terrorists’ ability to operate in Syria and Iraq.”*

Senator Graham’s friend Senator John McCain is no less alarmist. Calling for immediate air strikes in Iraq and Syria, he declared, *“They are getting stronger all the time . . . And their goal . . . is destruction of the United States of America.”*

Stoking the panic has been a very excitable press. On CNN last week, I was asked if Islamic State fighters represented an *“existential threat”* to the United States.

Set aside that absurdity; no terrorist group threatens our existence. (America has faced one existential threat in modern times — the Soviet nuclear arsenal — and that is it.) But is the Islamic State a huge and menacing terrorist threat? Certainly not to the United States today.

The danger to Iraq and its neighbors is real. The Islamic State has shown itself to be a formidable insurgency. Its focus is on ripping apart Iraq and Syria, sowing sectarian conflict, and creating in its midst a new jihadist state or caliphate. (That very word seems to incite fearmongers: *“Every day that goes by, ISIS builds up its caliphate, and it becomes a direct threat to the United States,”* said New York Representative Peter King, conjuring an image of a new Golden Horde with nuclear-tipped scimitars.) If the insurgency grows, and the threat to Jordan or Lebanon increases, we may have to act.

But, for now, it’s important to understand that even if marauding operatives in Land Cruisers may be humiliating Iraq’s hollowed-out military, that doesn’t mean they have genuine terrorist skills.

Consider the details: The Islamic State has never carried out a significant attack outside of its neighborhood. In 2005, when its operatives were still part of Al Qaeda in Iraq, operatives carried out hotel bombings in Jordan and tried and failed to attack an American warship in the Red Sea. More recently, four people were killed in an apparent lone-wolf attack at the Jewish museum in Brussels by a young man trained in Syria. In other words, we've seen no demonstrated ability to carry out the kind of complex international strike that kills dozens or hundreds, let alone engulfs a US city in flames.

That is not to say Islamic State militants couldn't develop those capabilities. As I wrote on this page in June, a vast ungoverned area has opened up in Syria and Iraq, opening up more space for terrorism to thrive. Additionally, the Islamic State's cause has attracted foreign fighters from Europe and, in small numbers, America. Those are the people to worry about, since they have useful passports and the ability to operate in the West.

What's more, the group appears to be attracting attention from other jihadist organizations. Possibly the greatest risk today continues to be from Yemen, home to the same bomb makers who armed a young Nigerian, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, with a hard-to-detect explosive sewn into his underwear and put him on a 2009 flight bound for Detroit. If these technicians join forces with the Islamic State, the threat level will go up markedly.

These risks, however, don't argue for abandoning the administration's current targeted strategy in Iraq and instead launching a wide-ranging air campaign. To begin with, bombing insurgent formations isn't going to reduce terrorism. The cells to worry over aren't headed toward Erbil or Baghdad.

More importantly, to deal with a terrorist group like the Islamic State requires local partners, and those partners will have to be Iraqis. That's why it is vital that a new government is formed in Baghdad with a renewed effort at inclusiveness among Shia, Sunnis, and Kurds. As the White House recognizes, if that effort fails, and the sectarianism persists, Iraq will disintegrate. And if the United States takes ownership of fighting the Islamic State, Iraq's common security problem, ██████ be little incentive for cooperation. Ultimately, a more fearsome civil war will occur, and the danger to the West will expand exponentially. Terrorists thrive in conflict zones.

Yes, we probably have a confrontation with the Islamic State — a group with a desire to kill Americans in its DNA — in our future. It's a good bet that within a year or two, there will be extensive American intelligence operations throughout Iraq, and US drones flying its skies. As we head toward that eventuality, however, we should remember the critical advances (despite Edward Snowden) in US intelligence gathering since 9/11. We can't stop every solo operative who gets his hands on a rifle or even gunpowder and ball bearings — but that reality doesn't threaten our existence. And hysteria and missteps in the field aren't going to make us safer.

By Daniel Benjamin: AUGUST 17, 2014

A Lesson Israel and Hamas Should Remember

Israel, with its mighty military prowess, could not force Hamas to submission; it still remains capable of wreaking havoc on the Israeli population. Conversely, Hamas cannot exact one meaningful concession from Israel by force or by evoking international outcry for the terrible human tragedies and material losses it has sustained. It is a bitter lesson both sides will do well to remember. Should they now begin to contemplate taking bold steps and change direction, which appears to be inconceivable at this juncture? I believe that in the long run they will have no other choice. Yet, however incongruous this may seem, it is better to be a fool who tries than a wise man who never dares.

Alon Ben-Meir -- Huffington Post -- August 22, 2014

THIS WEEK'S QUOTE

Stoking the panic has been a very excitable press. On CNN last week, I was asked if Islamic State fighters represented an “existential threat” to the United States.

Set aside that absurdity; no terrorist group threatens our existence. (America has faced one existential threat in modern times — the Soviet nuclear arsenal — and that is it.) But is the Islamic State a huge and menacing terrorist threat? Certainly not to the United States today.

By Daniel Benjamin: AUGUST 17, 2014

SECOND QUOTE

Former New York police commissioner, Ray Kelly, told a state senator that he targeted black and Latino youth “because he wanted to instill fear in them that every time that they left their homes they could be targeted by police”.

UGLY.... UGLY.... UGLY.... sad but TRUE

BEST VIDEO OF THE WEEK

As many of you know I am a big fan of satirist Bill Maher and this week I would like to share with you some of the best from New Rules on his HBO show Real Times. Please click on the links below and enjoy....



Bill Maher – *Heaven is Real*

Web Link: <http://youtu.be/G1FjRK12IsU>

Bill Maher – New Rules – *America's Next War*

Web Link: <http://youtu.be/xllZ21L9RUo>

Bill Maher Destroys *Ronald Reagan* on New Rules

Web Link: <http://youtu.be/kzZM3kUnxzA>

Bill Maher – New Rule – *False Profit*

Web Link: <http://youtu.be/tlLioItMHI4>

Bill Maher – New Rule – *Crazy Left*

Web Link: http://youtu.be/nkqs_5khioo

Bill Maher – New Rules – ***Socialism***

Web Link: <http://youtu.be/O6e4mOitoRc>

Bill Maher on ***how the GOP imagines Barack Obama***

<http://youtu.be/Hl16HSDfhFk>

Bill Maher – New Rules – ***Big Business is the New Big Government***

<http://youtu.be/fyQCXF8wVao>

THIS WEEK'S MUSIC



In my generation if there was one couple that epitomized urban R&B music it was **Nickolas Ashford** and **Valerie Simpson** or to their millions of fans around the world **Ashford & Simpson**. This songwriting pair wrote some of Motown's biggest hits, like "*Ain't No Mountain High Enough*" and "*Ain't Nothing Like the Real Thing*," before they remade their careers as a recording and touring duo, until Nick Ashford died on August 22, 2011 in New York City due to throat cancer at the age of 70.

One of Motown's leading songwriting and producing teams, Ashford & Simpson specialized in romantic duets of the most dramatic kind, professing the power of true love and the comforts of sweet talk. In "*Ain't No Mountain High Enough*," from 1967, their first of several hits for Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell, lovers in close harmony proclaim their determination that "*no wind, no rain, no winter's cold, can stop me, baby*," while also making cuter promises like "*If you're ever in trouble, I'll be there on the double*." Gaye and Terrell also sang the duo's songs "*Your Precious Love*," "*Ain't Nothing Like the Real Thing*" and "*You're All I Need to Get By*." After leaving the Supremes in

1970, Diana Ross sang their *"Reach Out and Touch Somebody's Hand,"* and later that year her version of *"Ain't No Mountain High Enough"* became her first No. 1 single as a solo artist.

They had magic and anyone who was privileged to have attended one of their concerts or when they would do an impromptu set at their lounge The Sugar Bar and earlier at The Nickel Bar on Manhattan's Upper Westside will attest.

Nick Ashford was born on May 4, 1941, in Fairfield, S.C., and raised in Willow Run, Mich., where his father, Calvin, was a construction worker. He got his musical start at Willow Run Baptist Church, singing and writing songs for the gospel choir. He briefly attended Eastern Michigan University, in Ypsilanti, before heading to New York, where he tried but failed to find success as a dancer.

In 1964, while homeless, Mr. Ashford went to White Rock Baptist Church in Harlem, where he met Ms. Simpson, a 17-year-old recent high school graduate who was studying music. They began writing songs together, selling the first bunch for \$64. In 1966, after Ray Charles sang "Let's Go Get Stoned," a song Ashford & Simpson wrote with Josephine Armstead, the duo signed on with Motown as writers and producers.

They wrote for virtually every major act on the label, including Gladys Knight and the Pips (*"Didn't You Know [REDACTED] Have to Cry Sometime"*) and Smokey Robinson and the Miracles (*"Who's Gonna Take the Blame"*). While writing for Motown, Ashford & Simpson nursed a desire to perform, which Berry Gordy Jr., the founder of the label, discouraged. They left the label in 1973 and married in 1974.

Ashford & Simpson's initial collaborations sold poorly, but by the late '70s they had become fixtures on the upper rungs of the rhythm-and-blues charts with songs like *"Don't Cost You Nothing," "It Seems to Hang On"* and *"Found a Cure."* Their biggest success was *"Solid,"* from 1984, which went to No. 12 on the pop chart in the United States and in Britain climbed as high as No. 3. They sang of monogamous devotion, and on their album covers the couple were usually pictured pulling each other close in various states of undress. But with his shock of slicked black hair, shirts open to the sternum and playful smile, Mr. Ashford also cut a perfect figure as a seducer for the swinging '70s. They continued to write for other singers. *"[REDACTED] Every Woman"* was a hit for Chaka Khan in 1978, and later for Whitney Houston on the soundtrack to the 1992 film *"The Bodyguard."*

One of my all-time favorite concerts was one of their concerts at New York's Carnegie Hall, which ended in love-fest, as Ashford and Simpson urge everyone in the audience to hug the people in front, back and on both sides while they sang a powerful and soulful 25 minute rendition of *"Reach out and Touch Somebody."* I was high for the next two weeks. So with this thought in mind, I invite everyone this week to enjoy the genius and soulfulness of Nick Ashford and Valerie Simpson because it doesn't get much better and if we all reached out and touch someone the world would be a better place.

Ashford & Simpson – **Solid** -- <http://youtu.be/y6DMMjUYvsU>

Ashford & Simpson – **Gimme Something Real** -- <http://youtu.be/YAc8-nirNWY>

Ashford & Simpson – *I'm Every Woman* -- <http://youtu.be/cPoiUYnLDmQ>

Ashford & Simpson - *Found A Cure* -- <http://youtu.be/rSJWthxBH6I>

Ashford & Simpson – *Is It Still Good To Ya* -- <http://youtu.be/upFziNa48Jc>

Teddy Pendergrass, Ashford & Simpson – *Reach Out And Touch Somebody's Hand* -- <http://youtu.be/CYpJYU2cpCk>

Ashford & Simpson – *It Seems to Hang On* -- <http://youtu.be/qFMInNpcAy8> and <http://youtu.be/Y7mkIIAN1Sk>

ASHFORD & SIMPSON – *Send It* -- <http://youtu.be/DtBZDdVtFW4>

Ashford & Simpson – *Don't Cost You Nothin* -- <http://youtu.be/nwNNMCZKe48>

Michael McDonald Live, Nicolas Ashford & Valerie **Simpson** – *Ain't No Mountain High Enough* -- <http://youtu.be/O6CDIFREHgE>

Nick Ashford singing Happy Birthday to Valerie Simpson Live at the Sugarbar -- <http://youtu.be/haiuQb4FVt4>

Valentines Day Special 7 Ashford and Simpson 2009 -- <http://youtu.be/-tPPZkiOI7s>

Ashford & Simpson – *The Boss* -- <http://youtu.be/0QICgEEvg8M>

Ashford & Simpson at J&R – *Solid as Barack* -- <http://youtu.be/rHYVpHAGkqg>

I hope that you have enjoyed this weekend's offerings and wish you and yours a wonderful week.

Sincerely,

Greg Brown

--
Gregory Brown
Chairman & CEO
GlobalCast Partners, LLC

