

From: Gregory Brown <[REDACTED]>
To: undisclosed-recipients;;
Bcc: jeevacation@gmail.com
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A_Saudi_Palace_Coup_David_Hearst_Huff_Post_01.23.2015.docx; Tony_Bennett_bio.docx;
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DEAR FRIEND.....

A Moral Disgrace



Living in the richest country in the world, it is a national moral disgrace that there are 14.7 million poor children and 6.5 million extremely poor children in the United States of America – the world's largest economy. It is also an unnecessary, costly and the greatest threat to our future national, economic and military security. The 14.7 million poor children in our nation exceeds the populations of 12 U.S. states combined: Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Maine, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming and is greater than the combined populations of the countries of Sweden and Costa Rica. Our nearly 6.5 million extremely poor children (living below the poverty line)

exceeds the combined populations of Delaware, Montana, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont and Wyoming and is greater than the populations of Denmark or Finland.

The younger children are the poorer they are during their years of greatest brain development. Over 40 percent of these children lived in extreme poverty, at less than half the poverty level. The youngest children were most likely to be poor, with more than 1 in 5 children under age 5 living in poverty during the years of rapid brain development. Every other American baby is non-White and 1 in 2 Black babies is poor, 150 years after slavery was legally abolished. Poor children are less likely to have access to affordable quality health coverage. Nearly 1 in 6 poor children lacks health insurance compared to about 1 in 12 non-poor children.⁹ Children in poor families are five times as likely to be in fair or poor health as children in non-poor families. They have more severe health problems than higher-income children, and fare worse than higher-income children with the same problems. For example, a poor child with asthma is more likely to be reported in poor health, spend more days in bed, and have more hospital episodes than a high-income child with asthma.

Traumatic experiences in childhood — often called adverse childhood experiences — also impact health throughout life. The more adverse experiences in childhood, the greater the likelihood of health problems in adulthood including heart disease, diabetes, substance abuse, and depression. America's poor children did not ask to be born; did not choose their parents, country, state, neighborhood, race, color, or faith. In fact if they had been born in 33 other Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries they would be less likely to be poor. Among these 35 countries, America ranks 34th in relative child poverty — ahead only of Romania whose economy is 99 percent smaller than ours.

The United Kingdom, whose economy, if it were an American state, would rank just above Mississippi according to the Washington Post, committed to and succeeded in cutting its child poverty rate by half in 10 years. It is about values and political will. Sadly, politics too often trumps good policy and moral decency and responsibility to the next generation and the nation's future. It is way past time for a critical mass of Americans to confront the hypocrisy of America's pretension to be a fair playing field while almost 15 million children languish in poverty.

Last week the **Children's Defense Fund** released a report entitled "**Ending Child Poverty Now**" that calls this country's rate of child poverty "*a moral disgrace*." This report calls for an end to child poverty in the richest nation on earth with a 60 percent reduction immediately. It shows solutions to ending child poverty in our nation already exist. For the first time this report shows how, by expanding investments in existing policies and programs that work, we can shrink overall child poverty 60 percent, Black child poverty 72 percent, and improve economic circumstances for 97 percent of poor children at a cost of \$77.2 billion a year. CDF says that these policies could be pursued immediately, improving the lives and futures of millions of children and eventually saving taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars annually.

CDF: *Ending Child Poverty Now* Report Web Link:
<http://www.childrensdefense.org/library/PovertyReport/EndingChildPovertyNow.html>

Child poverty is too expensive to continue. Every year we keep 14.7 million children in poverty costs our nation \$500 billion — six times more than the \$77 billion investment that the CDF proposes to reduce child poverty by 60 percent. MIT Nobel Laureate economist and 2014 Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient Dr. Robert Solow in his foreword to a 1994 CDF report *Wasting America's Future* presciently wrote: "For many years Americans have allowed child poverty levels to remain astonishingly high...far higher than one would think a rich and ethical society would tolerate. The justification, when one is offered at all, has often been that action is expensive: 'We have more will than wallet.' I suspect that in fact our wallets exceed our will, but in any event this concern for the drain on our resources completely misses the other side of the equation: Inaction has its costs too...As an economist I believe that good things are worth paying for; and that even if

curing children's poverty were expensive, it would be hard to think of a better use in the world for money. If society cares about children, it should be willing to spend money on them."

Not only does child poverty cost far more than eliminating it would, there are so many better choices that reflect more just values as well as economic savings. One would believe that food, shelter, quality early childhood investments to get every child ready for school and an equitable education for all children should take precedence over massive welfare for the rich and blatantly excessive spending for military weapons that do not work. We cannot and should not let our leaders spend \$400 billion, without offsets, to make permanent tax breaks to wealthy corporations and others and then say we cannot afford to ensure every child is housed and fed.

The Children's Defense Fund wanted to answer a basic question: "*How close could the nation get to ending poverty for today's children by simply investing more in approaches that work?*" To answer this question, CDF contracted with the Urban Institute, a leading nonpartisan research organization, to estimate the impact on child poverty of changes to nine existing federal programs and policies. The Urban Institute found the nation could reduce child poverty by a striking 60 percent by implementing several simple policy changes, demonstrating that the nation currently has the tools to significantly reduce child poverty. There can no longer be any excuse for our country not living up to its creed that all children should have the same opportunity to succeed.

Here are just a few ways that the Children Defence Fund suggesting funding the \$77 billion — 2 percent of our national budget — to make a huge down payment on ending preventable, costly and immoral child poverty in our wealthy nation:

- Closing tax loopholes that let U.S. corporations avoid \$90 billion in federal income taxes each year by shifting profits to subsidiaries in tax havens; or
- Eliminating tax breaks for the wealthy by taxing capital gains and dividends at the same rates as wages saving more than \$84 billion a year; or
- Closing 23 tax loopholes in former House Ways and Means Chairman Dave Camp's Tax Reform Act of 2014 which would free up an average of \$79.3 billion a year; or
- Decreasing 14 percent of the nation's FY2015 \$578 billion military budget. The U.S. has less than 5 percent of the world's population but 37 percent of the world's military expenditures; or
- Scrapping the F-35 fighter jet program which is several years behind schedule and 68 percent over budget and still not producing fully functional planes. For the nearly \$1.5 trillion projected costs of this program, the nation could reduce child poverty by 60 percent for 19 years.

The U.S. has made substantial progress in reducing poverty over the past 50 years despite worsening inequality and increased unemployment. Child poverty dropped over a third between 1967 and 2012 when income from tax credits and in-kind benefits like nutrition assistance are counted. This is all the more remarkable given that unemployment and income inequality more than doubled during this period.

The United Kingdom provides a modern example of how a concerted effort to reduce child poverty can succeed, even during economic recession. In 1999, Prime Minister Tony Blair's government committed to ending child poverty. Through a multi-pronged approach, the British government under Blair and his successor Gordon Brown managed to reduce child poverty by more than half over 10 years, and reductions persisted during the Great Recession. Many families with children benefited, but poorer children benefited most: Average incomes for families with children increased \$3,200, and incomes for families in the bottom fifth of the income range increased \$7,200.

We can do this too, if we just stop seeing helping these children as an us-versus-them struggle between makers and takers, if we stop getting so hung up on prudishness about sex and traditional views of what constitutes a family, if we stem our impulse to punish children for their mothers giving birth before marriage. By the way, Britain's out-of-wedlock birthrate is even higher than ours.

CDF: If we love America and love our children we must all stand against the excessive greed that tramples millions of our children entrusted to our care. America's Declaration of Independence says, "*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, and are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights.*" After more than two centuries, it is time to make those truths evident in the lives of all poor children and to close our intolerable national hypocrisy gap and show the world whether democratic capitalism is an oxymoron or can work. A nation that does not stand for its children does not stand for anything and will not stand tall in the 21st century world or before God.

The fact that there are almost 15 million children in America living in poverty is both obscene and a moral disgrace in a country that views itself as a Christian nation. Obviously we have the wealth but do we have the moral resolve?

Exonerations Of The Wrongfully Convicted Hit Record High In The U.S. In 2014



Wiley Bridgeman, 60, of Cleveland, left, is all smiles as his brother Ronnie, who is now known as Kwame Ajamu chokes up as they walk from the Cuyahoga County Justice Center after Bridgeman's release from a life sentence for a 1975 murder, Friday, Nov. 21, 2014 in Cleveland. The dismissal came after the key witness against Bridgeman, his brother and childhood friend Ricky Jackson recanted last year and said Cleveland police detectives coerced him into testifying that the three killed businessman.

More and more it is becoming evident that the American justice system is seriously flawed and one example is that the number of U.S. criminals exonerated in 2014 climbed to a record high of 125, in part because of efforts by prosecutors willing to admit their offices made mistakes, according to a report released on Tuesday. The states with the most exonerations last year were Texas, New York and Illinois, according to the National Registry of Exonerations, a project of the University of Michigan Law School. This was the first time the Registry, which has tracked exonerations since 1989, found more than 100 in a single year. Evidence that frees a prisoner may include DNA linking another person to the crime and evidence of perjury. In one case, Ohio native Ricky Jackson spent 39 years in prison for murder - making him the longest-held U.S. prisoner to be exonerated. He was freed last November after the witness admitted he hadn't seen the crime.

Of the total known exonerations in 2014, more than half were obtained at the initiative or with the cooperation of law enforcement – the highest number in a single year, the report found. Most of these were the work of "*conviction integrity units*" set up by prosecutors to review questionable cases. In one case, a Chicago judge dismissed charges against Alstory Simon after 15 years in prison for a double murder. Another man, Anthony Porter, had been convicted of the same crime in 1983, and sentenced to death but was released

after Simon's confession. Upon reinvestigation, prosecutors found that Simon's confession had been coerced. And another David McCallum who was exonerated on Oct. 15, 2014 in New York. McCallum and Willie Stuckey, who died in prison, were 16 years old when they were convicted of murder. A judge exonerated both men for wrongful conviction.

Michigan law professor Samuel Gross, author of the report, said he is seeing a change in attitude among prosecutors about wrongful convictions. *"I think prosecutors are much more willing to see identifying errors as a positive part of their job, rather than as a misfortune they have to endure,"* Gross said. Lake County State's Attorney Michael Nerheim, whose office covers the northern suburbs of Chicago, started an independent panel made up of retired judges, defense and civil rights attorneys to review cases. He said prosecutors should be leading the charge against wrongful convictions. *"We're all on the same side - no prosecutor wants to wrongfully convict somebody,"* said Nerheim. *"We all want the truth."* Another reason for the large number of 2014 exonerations involves 33 drug cases in the Houston area. Prosecutors found that crime lab analysis came up negative for illegal drugs after defendants had already taken plea deals.

I know that justice is suppose to be colorblind but we have to ask ourselves why so many of the injustices are of people of color and the poor. When Robert Alan Durst, the son of New York real estate mogul Seymour Durst, being implicated in three murders somehow was acquitted three times. And yes there are the Michael Skakels, Menendez Brothers and Dana Ewells who inspite of their vast wealth and resources receive servere punishment but often the rich escape justice such as Claus von Bülow (*accused of the attempted murder of his wife Sunny in 1980*) and Joran van der Sloot (*prime suspect in the disappearance of American schoolgirl Natalee Holloway in Aruba in 2005*), never convicted of this crime, but in later life he was found guilty of killing and robbing Stefanie Tatiana Flores Ramirez in Peru, in 2010.



And then there is George Stinney Jr. Jr (*a black 14 year-old boy*) who was convicted of murder in 1944 and then executed. He was exonerated seventy years after he was wrongly convicted of murdering two white girls in Alcolu, South Carolina. His white lawyer called no witnesses and failed to cross-examine state witnesses. Judge Carmen T. Mullen of Circuit Court said that Prosecution failed to protect the Black teenager's Constitutional Rights and his court appointed lawyer did little or nothing to defend him. The judge also added that the confession was most likely *"Due to the power differential between his position as a 14 year-old black male apprehended and questioned by white, uniformed law enforcement in a small, segregated mill town in South Carolina."* The trail lasted only three hours and it took the jury of twelve white men only 10 minutes to find Sini who only weigh 95 pounds guilty of murder. He was sent to the electric chair not quite three months later. He is the youngest person to be legally executed in the US in the 20th Century.

The prospect of innocents languishing in prison or, worse, being put to death for crimes that they did not commit, should be intolerable to every American, regardless of race, politics, sex, origin, or creed. – **The Innocence Project**. Thank God for The Innocence Project and other groups like them, whose clients are poor, forgotten and have used up all legal avenues for relief when it comes to dealing with wrongful convictions. We need to raise the awareness and concern about the failings of our criminal justice because as The Innocent Project says, *“It is a facet of our society that eventually touches all of its citizens.”* And understand that no matter what we say to ourselves and others, justice is not colorblind or equal.

A Saudi Palace Coup



King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud

The House of Saud which is the ruling royal family of Saudi Arabia has thousands of members composed of the descendants of Muhammad bin Saud and his brothers, though the ruling faction of the family is primarily led by the descendants of Abdulaziz Ibn Saud. The family is estimated to be composed of 15,000 members, but the majority of the power and wealth is possessed by a group of only about 2,000.

The Saudi Royal family traces their ancestry back to the 1400s when Mani' ibn Rabiah Al-Muraydi settled in Diriyah in 1446–1447 with his clan. Since then the House of Saud has gone through three phases: the First Saudi State, the Second Saudi State, and the modern nation of Saudi Arabia. Modern Saudi Arabia was founded in 1932 when Abdulaziz bin Abdul Rahman Al Saud after conquering his opposition in the Saudi Peninsula and declared himself king of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Modern Saudi Arabia has had seven kings.

1. King *Abdulaziz* bin Abdul Rahman Al Saud (15 January 1876– 9 November 1953) ruled 1932[24]–1953
2. King *Saud* bin Abdulaziz (15 January 1902 – 24 January 1969) ruled 1953–1964
3. King *Faisal* bin Abdulaziz (April 1906 – 25 March 1975) ruled 1964–1975
4. King *Khalid* bin Abdulaziz (13 February 1913 – 13 June 1982) ruled 1975–1982
5. King *Fahd* bin Abdulaziz (16 March 1920 – 1 August 2005) ruled 1982–2005
6. King *Abdullah* bin Abdulaziz (1 August 1924 – 23 January 2015) ruled 2005–2015
7. King *Salman* bin Abdulaziz (born 31 December 1935) since 2015

Neither leadership and succession has not always gone well as King Saud bin Abdulaziz because of his lavish spending led to a power struggle with the new crown prince, Faisal was forced Saud to abdicate in favor of Faisal in 1964. Then during this period, some of Ibn Saud's younger sons, led by Talal ibn Abdul Aziz defected to Egypt, calling themselves the *“Free Princes”* and calling for liberalization and reform, but were later induced to return by Faisal. They were fully pardoned but were also barred from any future positions in government.

Faisal was assassinated in 1975 by a nephew, Faisal ibn Musaid. Another brother, Khalid, assumed the throne. The next prince in line had actually been Prince Muhammad, but he had relinquished his claim to the throne in favor of Khalid, his only full brother. Khalid died of a heart attack in 1982, and was succeeded by

Fahd, the eldest of the powerful "*Sudairi Seven*", so-called because they were all sons of Ibn Saud by his wife Hassa Al Sudairi. A stroke in 1995 left Fahd largely incapacitated, and the crown prince, Abdullah, gradually took over most of the king's responsibilities until Fahd's death in August 2005. Abdullah was proclaimed king on the day of Fahd's death and promptly appointed his younger brother Sultan bin Abdulaziz, the minister of defense and Fahd's "*Second Deputy Prime Minister*," as the new heir apparent. Sultan passed away in October 2011.

On 27 March 2009, Abdullah appointed Prince Nayef Interior Minister as his "*second deputy prime minister*" and Crown Prince on 27 October. Nayef died in Geneva, Switzerland on 15 June 2012. On 23 January 2015, Abdullah died after a prolonged illness, ending his nine-year rule as the King of Saudi Arabia, and Crown Prince Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud was declared the new King.

But here is where it becomes interesting because Salman moved swiftly to undo the work of his half-brother, decided not to change his crown prince Megren, who was picked by King Abdullah for him when he swiftly appointed another leading figure from the Sudairi clan, Mohammed Bin Nayef, the interior minister is to be his deputy crown prince – when it was no secret that Abdullah wanted his son Meteb for that position, but now he is out. More significantly, Salman, himself a Sudairi, attempted to secure the second generation by giving his 35- year old son Mohammed the powerful fiefdom of the defense ministry. The second post Mohammed got was arguably more important. He is now *General Secretary of the Royal Court*. And all these changes were announced before Abdullah was even buried. Which is why David Hearst called it a palace coup.

David Hearst: The *general secretaryship* was the position held by the Cardinal Richelieu of Abdullah's royal court, Khalid al-Tuwaijri. It is a lucrative business handed down from father to son and started by Abdul Aziz al Tuwaijri. The Tuwaijris became the king's gatekeepers and no royal audience could be held without their permission, involvement, or knowledge. Tuwaijri was the key player in foreign intrigues -- to subvert the Egyptian revolution, to send in the troops to crush the uprising in Bahrain, to finance ISIL in Syria in the early stages of the civil war along his previous ally Prince Bandar bin Sultan.

The link between Tuwaijri and the Gulf region's fellow neo-con Mohammed bin Zayed, the crown prince of Abu Dhabi, was close. Tuwaijri is now out, and his long list of foreign clients, starting with the Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi may well feel a cooler wind blowing from Riyadh. Sisi failed to attend the funeral on Friday.



King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud

Salman's state of health is cause for concern, which is why the power he has given his son is more significant than other appointments announced. Aged 79, Salman is known to have Alzheimers, but the exact state of his dementia is a source of speculation. He is known to have held cogent conversations as recently as last October. But he can also forget what he said minutes ago, or faces he has known all his life, according to other witnesses. This is typical of the disease. It is said that the number of hospital visits in the last few months has increased, and that he did not walk around, as he did before.

So his ability to steer the ship of state, in a centralized country where no institutions, political parties or even national politics exist, is open to question. But one indication of a change of direction may lie in two attempts recently to establish links with Egyptian opposition figures. As Simon Henderson wrote recently in *The Atlantic*: National leaders do, on occasion, lose the plot when in office. But seldom do they gain top positions when their minds have already gone. The elevation of Crown Prince Salman to the Saudi throne, following the death of King Abdullah on Thursday, could prove a live experiment in whether such a scenario is viable.

Senior advisers to Salman approached an Egyptian liberal opposition politician and had a separate meeting with a lawyer. Neither of them are members of the Muslim Brotherhood but have working contacts with it. Talks were held in Saudi Arabia in the last two months about how reconciliation could be managed. No initiative was agreed, but the talks themselves were an indication of a more pragmatic, or less belligerent, approach by Salman and his advisers. It was understood that these meetings were preparatory to a possible initiative Salman may announce once he was in power.

The policy of the late King was to declare the Brotherhood terrorist organization on a par with the Islamic State and al Qaeda.

Even before the Sudairis made their move, a power struggle within the House of Saud was apparent. Early on Thursday evening, rumors on Twitter that the king was dead flooded the Internet, which is the primary source of political information in the kingdom. There were official denials, when a Saudi journalist on al Watan newspaper tweeted the information.

The palace's hand was forced when two emirs tweeted that the king was dead. MBC TV network cut broadcasting and put the Koran on screen, a sign of mourning, while national television kept on with normal programming. This was a sign that one clan in the royal family wanted the news out quickly and the other clan was stalling for more negotiations.

The need for a change of course is all too apparent. On the very night in which the royal drama was taking place, a political earthquake was underway in Saudi Arabia's backyard, Yemen. President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi, his prime minister and government resigned after days of virtual house arrest by Houthi militia. Hadi's resignation leaves two forces in control of the country both of them armed to the teeth: an Iranian backed militia which gets its training from Hezbollah, and al Qaeda, posing as the defender of Sunni Muslims.

It is a disaster for Saudi Arabia and what is left of the ability of the Gulf Cooperation Council to make any deal stick. Their foreign ministers met only the day before. Yemen's former strongman Ali Abdullah Saleh, who was levered out of power three years ago and who according to leaked telephone calls, advised the Houthis on how to grab power, is now calling for fresh elections, and there were already calls on Thursday night for the south to split away from the North. Yemen, in other words, has officially become the Middle East's fourth failed state.

The meteoric rise of the Houthis in Yemen was not the result of spontaneous combustion. It was planned and plotted months ago by Saleh and the United Arab Emirates. Saleh's son, the Yemeni ambassador to the UAE, was a key figure in this foreign intrigue, and as I reported before, he met an Iranian delegation in Rome. This was picked by US intelligence and communicated to Hadi. The year before, the then Saudi intelligence chief Prince Bandar flew a leading member of the Houthi delegation via London for a meeting. Incredible as it seemed, the Saudis were re-opening contact with an Iranian backed Zaydi or Shia sect with whom they had once fought bitter wars.

The Saudi/Emirati plan was to use the Houthis to engage and destroy their real target, which was Islah, the Islamist party and chief representative of the Sunni tribes in Yemen. As elsewhere in the Arab world, the entire focus of Abdullah foreign policy after 2011, was to stop the Arab spring in its tracks in Tunisia and Egypt and crush all forces capable of mounting an effective opposition in the Gulf States. Everything else, including the rise of Saudi's foremost regional rival Iran, became subservient to that paramount aim to crush democratic political Islam.

The Yemen plan backfired when Islah refused to take up arms to resist the Houthi advance. As a result, the Houthis took more control than they were expected to, and the result is that Yemen stands on the brink of civil war. Al Qaeda's claim to be the only fighters prepared to defend Sunni tribesmen, has just been given a major boost.

It is too early to tell whether King Salman is capable of, or even is aware of the need for changing course. All one can say with any confidence is that some of the key figures who stage-managed the Kingdom's disastrous foreign intrigues are now out. Meteb's influence is limited, while Tuwaijiri is out.

It is in no-one's interests for chaos to spread into the Kingdom itself. Maybe it is just coincidence that Abdullah died almost on the eve of the anniversary of the January 25 revolution in Egypt. But the timing of his death is a symbol. The royal family should learn that the mood of change that started on January 25 is unstoppable. The best defense against revolution is to lead genuine tangible political reform within the Kingdom. Allow it to modernize, to build national politics, political parties, real competitive elections, to let Saudis take a greater share of power, to free political prisoners.

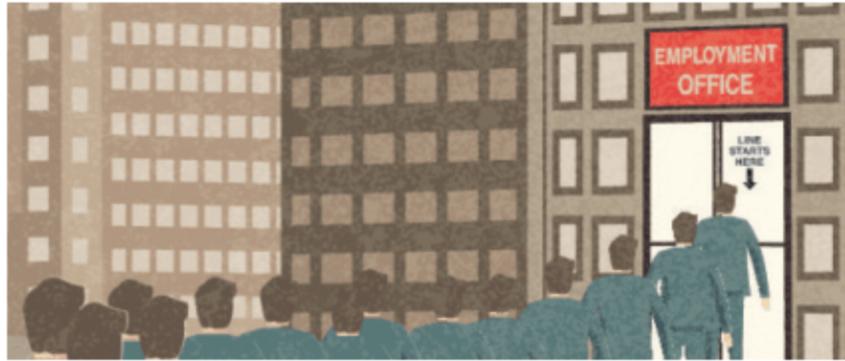
There are two theories about the slow train crash which the Middle East has become. One is that dictatorship, autocracy, and occupation are the bulwarks against the swirling chaos of civil war and population displacement. The other is that dictators are the cause of instability and extremism.

Abdullah was evidence in chief for the second theory. His reign left Saudi Arabia weaker internally and surrounded by enemies as never before. Can Salman make a difference? It's a big task, but there may be people around him who see the need for a fundamental change in course. It will be the only way a Saudi King will get the backing of his people. He may in the process turn himself into a figurehead, a constitutional monarch, but he will generate stability in the kingdom and the region.

In the longer term, Salman's decision to accept his half-brother and Deputy Crown Prince Muqrin as his own crown prince, or designated successor, doesn't resolve how royal succession will play out following Muqrin. With no more sons of the kingdom's founder, Ibn Saud, available, which line of grandsons will be tapped as a source of future kings? The news that grandson Prince Muhammad bin Nayef has become the new deputy crown prince does not fully answer this critical question. Are all the other grandsons going to simply accept being banished into obscurity? MbN, as he is known, is dour, not dynamic. His father wasn't a king. He is favored by U.S. counterterrorism officials, but that is not necessarily a plus in his country, where it is better to be regarded as pro-Saudi than pro-American.

As the few remaining sons of Ibn Saud grow older and more infirm, the weakness of Ibn Saud's succession mechanism has grown more glaring. Successive Saudi kings—Saud, Faisal, Khalid, Fahd, Abdullah, now Salman—have become progressively older at the point of gaining the throne, and their reigns have become more dominated by health issues than ideas about guiding the kingdom through turbulence, both foreign and domestic. Competition among Ibn Saud's sons has often been vicious. There is little reason to expect that rivalry among his grandsons will be any less intense, despite all the efforts to publicly convey a sense of calm in the House of Saud. As such, one can speculate that a coup has already taken place.

Why Stupid Politics Is the Cause of Our Economic Problems



Economist and Nobel Laureate Joseph E. Stiglitz recently wrote an op-ed in **The Huffington Post** under the heading – ***Why Stupid Politics Is the Cause of Our Economic Problems*** – which everyone should read, most importantly our politicians. The world economy remains stuck in the same rut that it has been in since emerging from the 2008 global financial crisis. Despite seemingly strong government action in Europe and the United States, both economies suffered deep and prolonged downturns. The gap between where they are and where they most likely would have been had the crisis not erupted is huge. In Europe, it increased over the course of the year. Developing countries fared better, but even there the news was grim. The most successful of these economies, having based their growth on exports, continued to expand in the wake of the financial crisis, even as their export markets struggled. But their performance, too, began to diminish significantly in 2014.

As Stiglitz points out – The near-global stagnation witnessed in 2014 was man-made. It is the result of politics and policies in several major economies -- politics and policies that choked off demand. In the absence of demand, investment and jobs will fail to materialize. It is that simple. Nowhere is this clearer than in the Eurozone, which has officially adopted a policy of austerity -- cuts in government spending that augment weaknesses in private spending. The Eurozone's structure is partly to blame for impeding adjustment to the shock generated by the crisis; in the absence of a banking union, it was no surprise that money fled the hardest hit countries, weakening their financial systems and constraining lending and investment.

In Japan, one of the three "arrows" of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's program for economic revival was launched in the wrong direction. The fall in GDP that followed the increase in the consumption tax in April provided further evidence in support of Keynesian economics -- as if there was not enough already. The U.S. introduced the smallest dose of austerity, and it has enjoyed the best economic performance. But even in the U.S., there are roughly 650,000 fewer public sector employees than there were before the crisis; normally, we would have expected some 2 million more. As a result, the U.S., too, is suffering, with wages basically stagnant.

Much of the growth deceleration in emerging and developing countries reflects China's slowdown. China is now the world's largest economy (in terms of purchasing power parity), and it has long been the main contributor to global growth. But China's remarkable success has bred its own problems, which should be addressed sooner rather than later. The Chinese economy's shift from quantity to quality is welcome -- almost necessary. And, though President Xi Jinping's fight against corruption may cause economic growth to slow further, as paralysis grips public contracting, there is no reason for Xi to let up. On the contrary, other forces undermining trust in his government -- widespread environmental problems, high and rising levels of inequality, and private-sector fraud -- need to be addressed with equal vigor. In short, the world should not

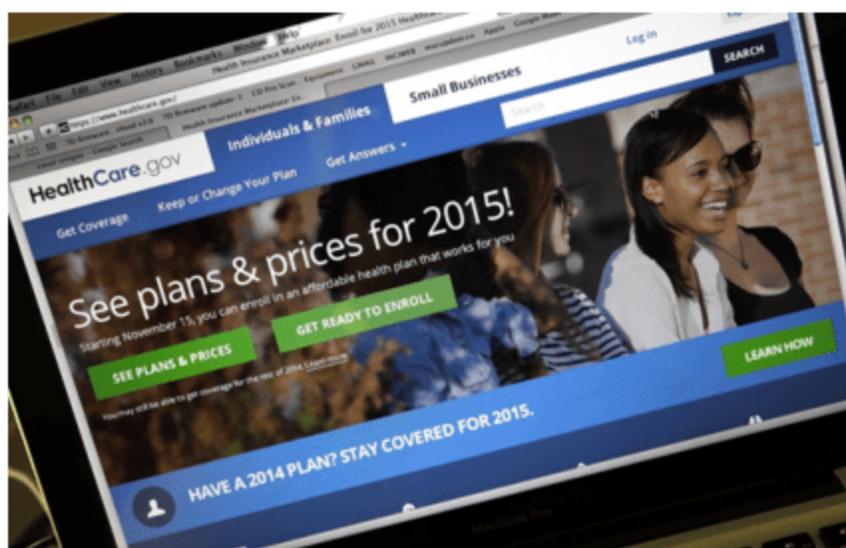
expect China to shore up global aggregate demand in 2015. If anything, there will be an even bigger hole to fill.

Meanwhile, in Russia, we can expect Western sanctions to slow growth, with adverse effects on an already weakened Europe. (This is not an argument against sanctions: The world had to respond to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and Western CEOs who argue otherwise, seeking to protect their investments, have demonstrated a disturbing lack of principle.) For the past six years, the West has believed that monetary policy can save the day. The crisis led to huge budget deficits and rising debt, and the need for de-leveraging, the thinking goes, means that fiscal policy must be shunted aside.

The problem is that low interest rates will not motivate firms to invest if there is no demand for their products. Nor will low rates inspire individuals to borrow to consume if they are anxious about their future (which they should be). What monetary policy can do is create asset-price bubbles. It might even prop up the price of government bonds in Europe, thereby forestalling a sovereign-debt crisis. But it is important to be clear: the likelihood that loose monetary policies will restore global prosperity is nil. This brings us back to politics and policies. Demand is what the world needs most. The private sector -- even with the generous support of monetary authorities -- will not supply it. But fiscal policy can. We have an ample choice of public investments that would yield high returns -- far higher than the real cost of capital -- and that would strengthen the balance sheets of the countries undertaking them.

Stiglitz – “The big problem facing the world in 2015 is not economic. We know how to escape our current malaise. The problem is our stupid politics. But we have to be honest, it was politicians and bankers who created the conditions that caused the 2008 recession.” And it was the austerity programs that placed the burden on citizens to pay for the excesses and greed of the international bankers that has choked off the much needed demand that Stiglitz and others recommend. Free Market economies are driven by demand and when the private sector is unable to generate sufficient demand it is the government's job to pick up the slack.

End Obamacare, and people could die. *That's okay says some...*



We make such trade-offs all the time.... But are they right?

There is hubris and then there is something beyond hubris and that something is ugly. One of the most recent examples of this ugliness the recent op-ed in The Washington Post by Michael R. Strain (a resident scholar at

the American Enterprise Institute) who in anticipation that conservatives may get their way with Obamacare should the Supreme Court dealing a death blow or a Republican president repealing it in 2017 – "That some people who got health insurance as a result of the Affordable Care Act may lose it – In which case, some of Obamacare's beneficiaries may die – and that this is okay."

During the health-care debates of 2009, Rep. Alan Grayson (D-Fla.) brought a poster on the House floor: "The Republican Health Care Plan: Die Quickly." In the summer of 2012, when Obamacare was threatened by a presidential election, writer Jonathan Alter argued that "*repeal equals death. People will die in the United States if Obamacare is repealed.*" Columnist Jonathan Chait wrote recently that those who may die are victims of ideology – "*collateral damage*" incurred in conservatives' pursuit "*of a larger goal.*" If these are the stakes, many liberals argue, then ending Obamacare is immoral.

Strain, "*Except, it's not.*"

Strain believes that In a world of scarce resources, a slightly higher mortality rate is an acceptable price to pay for certain goals – including more cash for other programs, such as those that help the poor; less government coercion and more individual liberty; more health-care choice for consumers, allowing them to find plans that better fit their needs; more money for taxpayers to spend themselves; and less federal health-care spending. This opinion is not immoral. Such choices are inevitable. They are made all the time.

In support of this thesis he uses the example of speed limits. By allowing people to drive their cars at speeds at which collisions result in death, our government has decided that the socially optimal number of traffic fatalities is not zero. Some poor souls die: There were more than 30,000 traffic fatalities on America's roads in 2013. If we didn't accept that risk, we'd lower the speed limit to a rate at which accidents simply don't kill, such as 10 mph. Instead, we've raised it periodically over the years, and you can now go as fast as 85 mph on a few highways.

It is tragic that thousands of people die each year in car crashes. At the same time, there are huge (if dispersed) benefits to a 70 mph speed limit over a 10 mph limit: a transportation sector that can deliver goods quickly across the country; increased productivity, because millions of commuters can spend more time at work than in transit; and more time at home with our children.

Strain then cites the Second Amendment. That although thousands of people die in homicides in the United States every year which could be reduced this substantially, but we have (at least implicitly) decided that the costs – financial and otherwise – of more intrusive monitoring, additional policing, stricter sentencing and other, harsher measures are not worth the benefit. And that he wouldn't make that trade-off.

How do we defend collateral damage when it comes to the lives of real people? As someone whose quality of life was saved with the help of Obamacare I take this personal because I am sure that one of the reasons that Strain, Chait and other conservatives are so cavalier when it comes to healthcare is because they have access to affordable health insurance. Let them have a seven year-old daughter with a deadly condition that insurance companies won't cover, I am sure that their support of acceptable collateral damage will change.

We live in a country where everyone has to take off their shoes because one person unsuccessfully tried to ignite a bomb on an airplane fourteen years ago and we penalize people for not using their seat belts. These same conservatives are willing to go to war with Iran over their right to pursue the development of a nuclear program, which would cost the lives of tens if not thousands of people. And if you don't think so look at Afghanistan and Iraq. Yet these same conservatives are willing to accept collateral damage in the numbers of

potential deaths should Obamacare be repealed. But let's be honest why they feel this way. It's because these deaths won't be in their families. And if this isn't immoral than nothing is... ***and this is my rant of the week...***

WEEK'S READINGS

Malcolm X

The John Coltrane of America's Social Conscience



Next Saturday will be the 50th anniversary of the death of **Malcolm X**, also known as **El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz** (Arabic: الحاج مالك الشباز), was an African-American Muslim minister and a human rights activist who indicted white America in the harshest terms for its crimes against black Americans and although detractors accused him of preaching racism and violence, he has been called one of the greatest and most influential African Americans in history. And although Malcolm X started with the teachings of Honorable Elijah Muhammad; that black people are the original people of the world, white people are "devils", blacks are superior to whites, and that the demise of the white race is imminent – he said that after listening to leaders like Nasser, Ben Bella, and Nkrumah awakened him to the dangers of all racism, "*I realized racism isn't just a black and white problem.*" And from then on, he viewed issues with a global prospective, beyond race and prejudice.

Born **Malcolm Little** on May 29, 1925 and died February 21, 1965 in an assassination at the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem. His father was killed when he was six and his mother was placed in a mental hospital when he was thirteen, after which he lived in a series of foster homes. In 1946, at age 20, he went to prison for larceny and breaking and entering. While in prison he became a member of the Nation of Islam, (Black Muslim) and after his parole in 1952 quickly rose to become one of its most influential leaders. For a dozen years he was the public face of the controversial group; in keeping with the Nation's teachings he espoused black supremacy, advocated the separation of black and white Americans and scoffed at the civil rights movement's emphasis on integration.

By March 1964, Malcolm X had grown disillusioned with the Nation of Islam and its leader Elijah Muhammad. He ultimately repudiated the Nation and its teachings and embraced Sunni Islam. After a period of travel in Africa and the Middle East, including completing the Hajj, he returned to the United States to found Muslim Mosque, Inc. and the Organization of Afro-American Unity. While continuing to emphasize Pan-Africanism, black self-determination, and black self-defense, he disavowed racism. In February 1965, shortly after repudiating the Nation of Islam, he was assassinated by three of its members. ***The Autobiography of Malcolm X***, published shortly after his death, is considered one of the most influential nonfiction books of the 20th century.

After leaving the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X announced his willingness to work with leaders of the civil rights movement, though he advocated some changes to their policies. He felt that calling the movement a struggle for civil rights would keep the issue within the United States, while changing the focus to human rights would make it an international concern. The movement could then bring its complaints before the United Nations, where Malcolm X said the emerging nations of the world would add their support. Malcolm X stressed the global perspective he gained from his international travels. He emphasized the "*direct connection*" between the domestic struggles of African Americans for equal rights with the independence struggles of Third World nations. He said that African Americans were wrong when they thought of themselves as a minority because globally, black people and people of color are the majority.

In addition for being described as one of the greatest and most influential African Americans in history, he is credited with raising the self-esteem of black Americans and reconnecting them with their African heritage. He is largely responsible for the spread of Islam in the black community in the United States. Many African Americans, especially those who lived in cities in the Northern and Western United States, felt that Malcolm X articulated their complaints concerning inequality better than the mainstream civil rights movement did. One biographer says that by giving expression to their frustration, Malcolm X "*made clear the price that white America would have to pay if it did not accede to black America's legitimate demands.*" More importantly to me, Malcolm X taught my generation to be proud of our black skin, kinky hair and rich heritage. I can't explain how profound that was and how much that meant to both blacks and whites alike. One of my greatest regrets was that I was supposed to go the Audubon Ballroom to see Malcolm X on February 21, 1965 with Captain Joseph but chose to do something else, believing that I could see Malcolm X another time.... so may understand how I will feel next Saturday....

Why wealthy Americans' delusions about the poor are so dangerous



As we know American politics are dominated by those with money. As a result, America's tax debate is dominated by voices that insist the rich are unduly persecuted by high taxes and that low-income folks are living the high life. Indeed, a new survey by the Pew Research Center recently found that the most financially secure Americans believe "*poor people today have it easy.*" Of course the rich are certainly entitled to their own opinions — but, as the old saying goes, nobody is entitled to their own facts. With that in mind, here's a set of tax facts that's worth considering: Middle- and low-income Americans are facing far higher state and local tax rates than the wealthy. In all, a comprehensive analysis by the nonpartisan Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy finds that the poorest 20 percent of households pay on average more than twice the effective state and local tax rate (*10.9 percent*) as the richest 1 percent of taxpayers (*5.4 percent*).

ITEP researchers say the incongruity derives from state and local governments' reliance on sales, excise and property taxes rather than on more progressively structured income taxes that increase rates on higher earnings. They argue that the tax disconnect is helping create the largest wealth gap between the rich and middle class in American history. "*In recent years, multiple studies have revealed the growing chasm between the wealthy and everyone else,*" Matt Gardner, executive director of ITEP, said. "*Upside-down state tax systems didn't cause the growing income divide, but they certainly exacerbate the problem. State policymakers shouldn't wring their hands or ignore the problem. They should thoroughly explore and enact tax reform policies that will make their tax systems fairer.*"

The 10 states with the largest gap between tax rates on the rich and poor are a politically and geographically diverse group — from traditional Republican bastions such as Texas and Arizona to Democratic strongholds such as Illinois and Washington. The latter state, reports ITEP, is the most regressive of all. Four years after billionaire moguls such as Amazon's Jeff Bezos and Microsoft's Steve Ballmer funded a campaign to defeat an income tax ballot measure, Washington now makes low-income families pay seven times the effective tax rate that the rich pay. That's right, those in the poorest 20 percent of Washington households pay on average 16.8 percent of their income in state and local taxes, while Washington's 1-percenters pay just 2.4 percent of their income. Like many of the other regressive tax states, Washington imposes no personal income tax all. "The problem with our state tax systems is that we are asking far more of those who can afford the least," concludes ITEP's state director Wiehe.

By contrast, the states identified as having the smallest gap in effective tax rates are California, Delaware, Minnesota, Oregon and Vermont — all Democratic strongholds and all relying more heavily on progressively structured income taxes. Montana is the only Republican-leaning state ITEP researchers identify among the states with the least regressive tax rates. Of course, if you aren't poor, you may be reading this and thinking that these trends have no real-world impact on your life. But think again: In September, Standard & Poor's released a study showing that increasing economic inequality hurts economic growth and subsequently reduces public revenue. As important, the report found that the correlation between high inequality and low economic growth was highest in states that relied most heavily on regressive levies such as sales taxes.

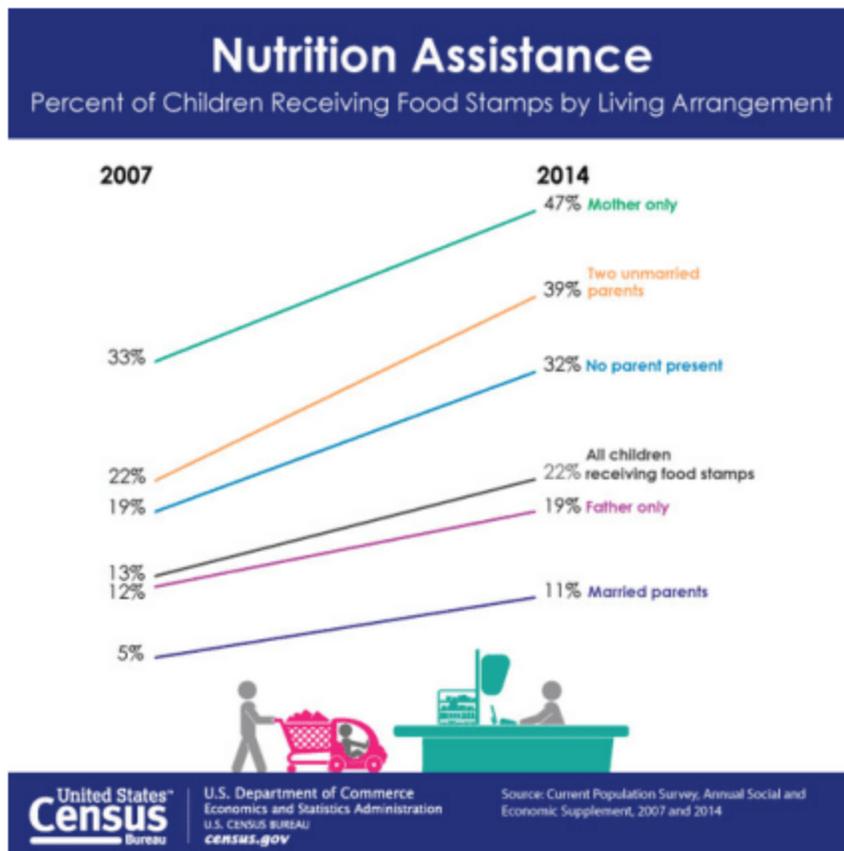
In other words, regressive state and local tax policies don't just harm the poor — they end up harming entire economies. So if altruism doesn't prompt you to care about unfair tax rates and economic inequality, then it seems self-interest should.

DAVID SIROTA – Salon Magazine – January 23, 2015

One In 5 American Kids Are On Food Stamps



Here's more evidence that the economic recovery isn't benefitting the people who need it most: One in 5 American kids got food stamps in 2014, up from 1 in 8 before the recession. About 16 million kids relied on the U.S. government's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in 2014, according to Census Bureau data released Wednesday, up from 15.6 million a year earlier. In 2007, before the start of the Great Recession, that figure was only 9 million. The Census also found that the percentage of kids on food stamps rose across all types of living arrangements. Nearly half of kids on food stamps live with only their mother. The number of kids living in poverty, for example, has risen since the recession. According to a recent study by the Southern Education Foundation, 51 percent of U.S. public school students live in poverty, up from 42 percent in 2006. The numbers highlight how unfair the recovery has been so far. Most of its benefits have gone to the wealthy, while middle- and low-income Americans have continued to suffer.



For The Ladies – All The Exercise GIFs You'll Ever Need



Web Link: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/01/08/huffpost-exercise-gifs-sarah-klein_n_6343368.html?utm_hp_ref=mostpopular

Finding your new favorite workout shouldn't be stressful. But considering the wealth of fitness information at your fingertips, nailing down the perfect routine can prove just as difficult as actually getting to the gym. That's one of the many reasons we like to highlight safe, efficient and (hopefully) fun moves that just about anyone can learn to do just about anywhere. On the above web link, you'll find the moves you want, when you want them -- whether it's a leg day or just a plank day. Simply click each GIF in our cheat sheet below for more info.

Exercises Include: Ab Exercises – Foam Rolling – Leg Exercises – Squats – Butt Exercises – 100 Up – Pushups With A Pumpkin! – Planks

For The Men – The Only 5 Exercises You'll Ever Need



Web Link: [REDACTED]

It sounds like a bad infomercial: Get ripped in less time! We're conditioned to believe that jaw-dropping, body-transforming results are achieved only by putting in the hours. But if you've been adhering to the muscle-isolating back-and-bi, chest-and-tri gospel, the truth is, you're doing it wrong.

"Your brain doesn't think in single 'muscles,' it thinks in terms of movement patterns," says Pat Davidson, Ph.D., director of training methodology at Peak Performance, a private fitness studio in New York City. "Human evolution led to five basic movements, which encompass nearly all of our everyday motions." Meaning your workout needs just five exercises, one from each of these categories: push (pressing away from you), pull (tugging toward you), hip-hinge (bending from the middle), squat (flexing at the knee), and plank (stabilizing your core).

It's the approach Davidson takes when drawing up the regimens of Peak's celebrity clients, including Gerard Butler, 50 Cent, and Jimmy Fallon. The time-crunched love it because it's an efficient and effective workout -- more taxing on the muscles, leading to increased strength and a faster metabolism. Plus, you're not lost when your trainer isn't around. "If you know the basics, it's incredibly simple to build your own workout," Davidson says.

Still, there can be too much of a good thing. "It's stressful to the entire body," says Jason Hartman, trainer to many U.S. Olympic bobsled and skeleton athletes and the U.S. Army Special Forces. "That means that if you overdo them, you'll just beat yourself up. Do this style of workout no more than three or four times a week." Mix and match the moves and feel okay about taking the less-time-consuming way out.

How It Works

Pick one move from each of these categories. Then do two sets of 12 reps. Change up the moves but repeat the plan three or four times a week. For cardio extra credit, see the add-ons below.

PUSH

The Ultimate: Bench Press

Lie face-up on a bench, holding a heavy barbell at your sternum, hands shoulder-width apart, elbows bent into sides. Extend arms, pushing bar directly above chest. Pause, then lower barbell to start.

The Alternates: Push-up, dumbbell shoulder press, single-arm kettlebell press, push press

PULL

The Ultimate: Pull-up

Hang from a bar with palms facing away from you, arms straight, knees bent so feet don't touch floor. Bend elbows, pulling chest toward bar. Slowly lower yourself to start.

The Alternates: Dumbbell row, TRX row, chin-up, cable row, lat pull-down

HIP-HINGE

The Ultimate: Deadlift

Set a heavy barbell on the floor in front of you. Push hips back as you bend forward, grabbing the bar with hands more than shoulder-width apart, palms facing body. Keep back straight as you stand up, lifting the bar and thrusting hips forward. Slowly lower bar to start.

The Alternates: Kettlebell swing, Romanian deadlift, trap-bar deadlift

SQUAT

The Ultimate: Split Squat

Stand on your right leg, left foot resting on a bench or box behind you, and hold a heavy dumbbell in each hand. Bend right knee, lowering body until left knee hovers just above the ground. Straighten right leg, returning to start. Complete all the reps on one side before switching legs.

The Alternates: Barbell squat, lunge, goblet squat, reverse lunge

PLANK

The Ultimate: Farmer's Walk

Stand up straight holding a heavy dumbbell in each hand, palms facing body. Maintain your posture as you walk 20 meters. Turn, repeat, returning to start.

The Alternates: Plank, bird dog, side plank, suitcase carry

Fat-Burning Finishers

To check off cardio, too (and send your metabolism into even higher gear), add one of these five-minute bursts to your five-move session, suggests Davidson. *"Make it the worst five minutes of your life,"* he says. The results: less fat, more definition.

Do More Reps

Load a barbell with a weight that's about 70 percent of what you can lift one time, then choose one of the five movements and perform as many reps as you can -- without breaking form.

Go Farther

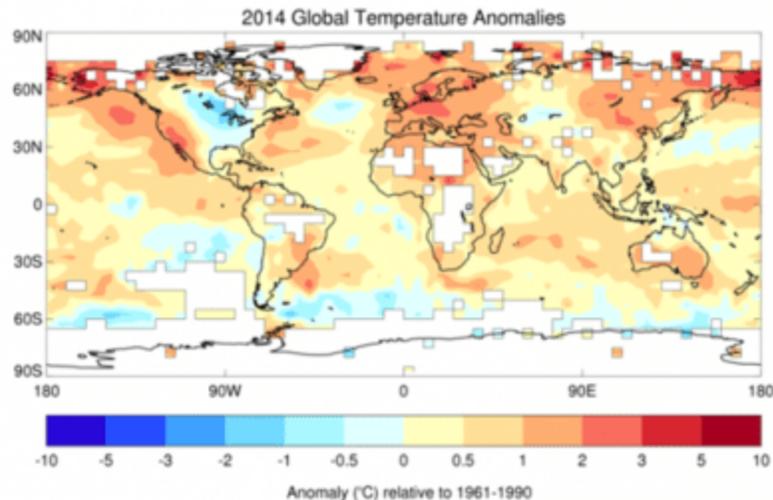
On a rowing machine, row as many meters as possible in five minutes. With each workout, attempt to increase that distance by one percent.

Sprint up a Hill

Set a treadmill to a slight incline, about 3 percent. Run as fast as you can for 30 seconds, aiming for 10 miles per hour. Jog for 30 seconds at 5 mph. Repeat for 5 minutes.

Hottest year on record: The real reason why 2014 was so remarkable

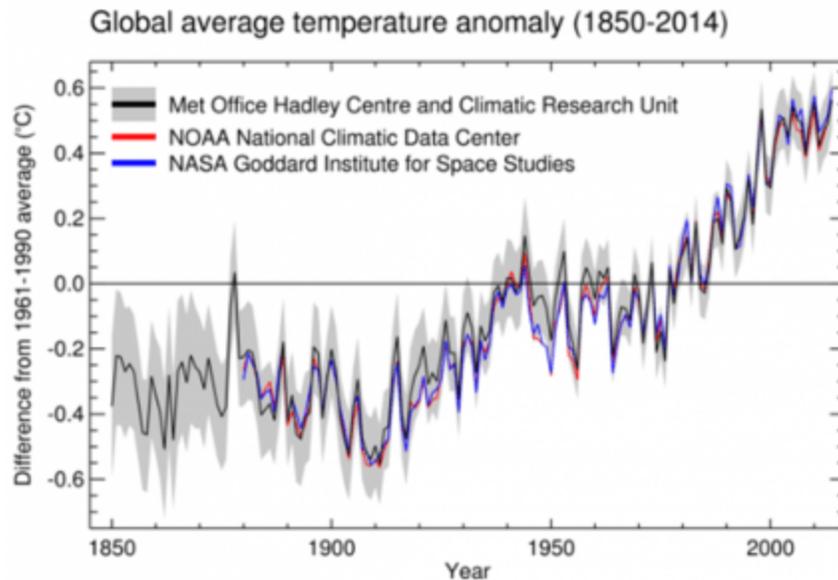
14 of the 15 hottest recorded years have occurred in the 21st century, the WMO announced



Adding to the chorus of voices from NASA, NOAA and the Japan Meteorological Agency, the U.N. World Meteorological Organization announced Monday that 2014 was the hottest year on record. According to the agency, which incorporates multiple sources of data into its analysis, surface temperatures for the past year were 0.57 degrees Celsius (1.03 degrees Fahrenheit) above the 1961-1990 average. Sea surface temperatures set a record as well — which is particularly important, the WMO notes, because about 93 percent of heat trapped in the atmosphere by greenhouse gases ends up in the oceans.

While 2014 was definitely hot, it didn't exactly smash records — the WMO cautions that it is beat out the previous record holders, 2005 and 2010, by only a few hundredths of a degree, putting it below the margin of uncertainty. The UK Met Office and Climatic Research Unit (CRU) decided that the uncertainty was too great to declare 2014 the hottest ever, opting instead to describe it as "one of the warmest years in a record going back to 1850."

Any doubt about the veracity of global warming statistics is candy for climate deniers. The New York Times' Andy Revkin took a deep dive into the inevitable controversies a couple of weeks ago (with links to plenty of others' dissections), and ends up here: sure, there's a lot of uncertainty, he argues, but to focus on whether 2014 was a hottest year or the hottest year just ends up obscuring the larger point. Regardless of what you want to call it, 2014 certainly fits in with that long term trend. Here, via the WMO, is what it looks like:



And with that in mind, the most pertinent statistic from the new analysis might be this: 14 of the 15 hottest years on record have occurred since 2000. “The overall warming trend is more important than the ranking of an individual year,” WMO Secretary-General Michel Jarraud said in a statement. “We expect global warming to continue, given that rising levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and the increasing heat content of the oceans are committing us to a warmer future.”

THIS WEEK'S QUOTE

“America’s poor children did not ask to be born; did not choose their parents, country, state, neighborhood, race, color, or faith. In fact if they had been born in 33 other Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries they would be less likely to be poor. Among these 35 countries, America ranks 34th in relative child poverty — ahead only of Romania, whose economy is 99 percent smaller than ours.”

Children’s Defense Fund – January 28, 2015

GREAT PHOTOS

In The Heat Of The Moment



kawika-singson-standing-on-lava-shoes-tr

-
An Airplane's View Of A Distant Storm



distant-storm-cloud-seen-from-airplane-w

Open Water Roll Cloud



roll-cloud-off-coast-of-brazil.jpg?w

Creative Mirror Positioning



woman-holding-mirror-on-grass-reflection

Light Show at the Grand Canyon



grand-canyon-lightning-storm-rolf-maeder

"UFO" Spotted In Seattle



seattle-fog-space-needle-looks-like-ufo.

Waterspouts Over The Adriatic



waterspouts-over-the-adriatic-sea.jpg?w

A Full Circle Rainbow



full-circle-rainbow-reflection.jpg?w

The Studley Tool Chest



ho-studley-tool-chest.jpg?w

Praising The Sun



5893395540_af1965d474_o.jpg

San Francisco is Steep



san-francisco-hills-perspective-straight

The Sky Whale



sky-whale-pigeon-point.jpg?w

When Art Meets Nature



street-art-by-nuxuno-xan-fort-de-france-

Shelf Cloud Over Timisoara



shelf-cloud-over-timisoara-romania-ervin

Fly-by Eclipse



airplaine-crosses-partial-solar-eclipse.

Underwater Perfection



7313944638_ce1d4d3055_c.jpg

Beautiful Barn Conversion



barn-conversion-seagull-house-devon-engl

Just Room Enough for One Island



just-room-enough-island-thousand-islands

Abandoned Parisian Railway



3211027090_2e9cde9787_b.jpg

Forest on Shipwreck



7523233750_1217cc9aaf_c.jpg

Their First Flight



baby-common-goldeneye-ducks-leaving-nest

Time-Lapse Moonrise Over LA



moonrise-timelapse-over-la.jpg?w

World's Coolest Duck . . . Ever!



surding-duck.jpg?w

Down The Spiral Staircase



vatican_museums_spiral_staircase_giusepp

Whiskey On The Rocks . . . Ahhhh



5025266073_843e031e08_b.jpg

Moon Jelly



7901889380_30fcf2ff06_c.jpg

Forces Of Nature



forces-of-nature.jpg?w

Coal Train At Sunset



5955596892_b8cc5bba81_b.jpg

The Eye Of The Moon



the-moon-through-north-window-arches-nat

Dubai: Cloud City



cloud-city-foggy-dubai-aerial-from-above

Easter Island Sunrise



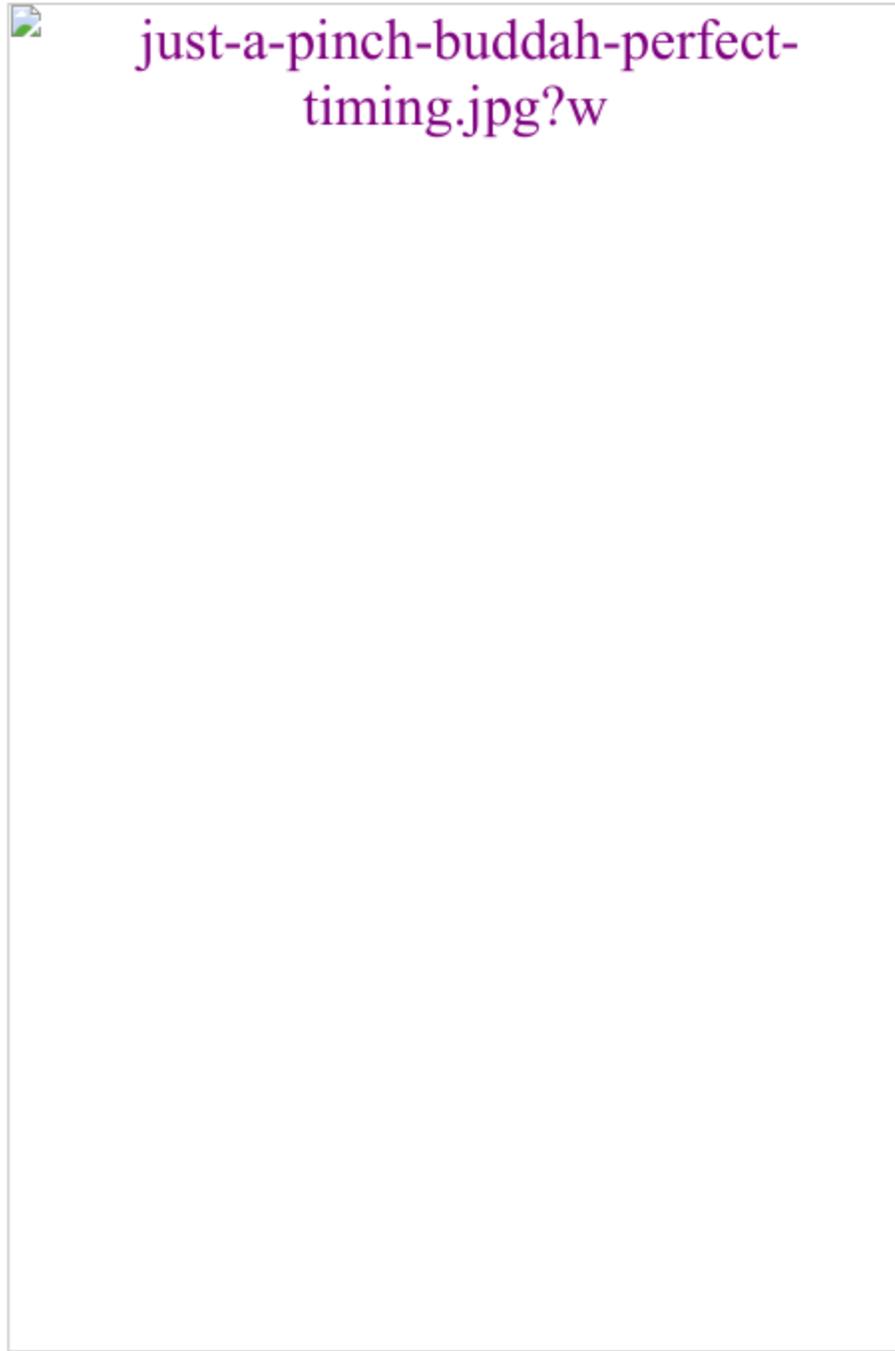
sunrise-easter-island-aerial-kite-photog

Olympic Moonrise



full-moon-olympic-rings-london-bridge-20

Tail-Pinching Buddha



BEST VIDEO OF THE WEEK

Mehdi Hasan – Islam Is A Peaceful Religion Debate In Oxford University



Web Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HjRI2AsF3h0>

A truly stunning rebuttal to the ignorance propagated by far too many in the US, France and elsewhere about Islam. Watch this. Seriously. Watch. This. It will really help you the next time you find yourself in a discussion with someone who makes egregious, ignorant-filled allegations about something they likely know very little about. Again, I urge everyone to take 12 minutes and watch this video.....

THIS WEEK'S MUSIC

Tony Bennett



There are musicians and then there are Musician's Musicians. Tony Bennett is a Musician's Musician who sets the standard for everyone else. Born on August 3, 1926, in Astoria, Queens, New York Anthony Dominick "Tony" Benedetto, known as Tony Bennett, is an American singer of traditional pop standards, show tunes, and jazz. Bennett is also an accomplished painter, having created works—under the name Anthony Benedetto—that are on

permanent public display in several institutions. Bennett began singing at an early age. He fought in the final stages of World War II as an infantryman with the U.S. Army in the European Theater. Afterwards, he developed his singing technique, signed with Columbia Records, and had his first number-one popular song with "*Because of You*" in 1951. Several top hits such as "*Rags to Riches*" followed in the early 1950s. Bennett then further refined his approach to encompass jazz singing. He reached an artistic peak in the late 1950s with albums such as *The Beat of My Heart* and *Basie Swings, Bennett Sings*. In 1962, Bennett recorded his signature song, "*I Left My Heart in San Francisco*". His career and his personal life then suffered an extended downturn during the height of the rock music era.

Bennett staged a comeback in the late 1980s and 1990s, putting out gold record albums again and expanding his audience to the MTV Generation while keeping his musical style intact. He remains a popular and critically praised recording artist and concert performer in the 2010s. Bennett has won 17 Grammy Awards (including a Lifetime Achievement Award, presented in 2001) and two Emmy Awards, and has been named an NEA Jazz Master and a Kennedy Center Honoree. He has sold over 50 million records worldwide. Bennett's work for the American Civil Rights movement, including his participation in the 1965 Selma to Montgomery marches, later earned him induction into the International Civil Rights Walk of Fame in Atlanta.

Since his comeback, Bennett has financially prospered; his assets are said to be worth \$110 million. At the age of 88 Bennett says that he has no intention of retiring, saying in reference to masters such as Pablo Picasso, Jack Benny, and Fred Astaire: "*right up to the day they died, they were performing. If you are creative, you get busier as you get older.*" Bennett continued to record and tour steadily, with shows scheduled across the United States and Europe through the middle of summer.. In concert Bennett often makes a point of singing one song (usually "*Fly Me to the Moon*") without any microphone or amplification, demonstrating his skills at vocal projection. One show, Tony Bennett's *Wonderful World: Live From San Francisco*, was made into a PBS special. Bennett also created the idea behind, and starred in the first episode of, the A&E Network's popular Live by Request series, for which he won an Emmy Award. In addition to numerous television guest performances, Bennett has had cameo appearances as himself in films such as *The Scout*, *Analyze This*, and *Bruce Almighty*.

As someone who is on the first row in the Pantheon of American music I invite you to enjoy the music mastering of Mr. Tony Bennett....

Tony Bennett – *I left My Heart in San Francisco* -- <http://youtu.be/tTBsZErC0o>

Tony Bennett – *Fly Me to the Moon* -- <http://youtu.be/VLjXbkSm8B4>

Tony Bennett – *The Good Life* -- <http://youtu.be/JpehxxcbW4k>

Tony Bennett & Juanes – *The Shadow of Your Smile* -- <http://youtu.be/G1axDFgX3eY>

Tony Bennett & Barbra Streisand – *Smile* -- <http://youtu.be/UhHfGwUR6X8>

Tony Bennett & Paul McCartney – *The Very Thought of You* -- <http://youtu.be/TjfJzM8nHcl>

Tony Bennett & Lady Gaga – *Perform Cheek To Cheek* -- <http://youtu.be/bPOWG4mGdAc>

Tony Bennett & Amy Winehouse – *Body and Soul* -- http://youtu.be/_OEMkCeP6ok

Tony Bennett & Andrea Bocelli – *Stranger In Paradise* -- <http://youtu.be/WFrUsa5SUv0>

Tony Bennett & Chayanne – *The Best Is Yet to Come* -- 

Tony Bennett & John Mayer – *One for My Baby (And One More for the Road)* -- <http://youtu.be/Tfpbe7w6nRI>

Tony Bennett & Stevie Wonder – *For Once in My Life* -- <http://youtu.be/5A0CA9uX-s0>

Tony Bennett & Christina Aguilera – *Steppin Out With My Baby* -- http://youtu.be/C_nLq5npQTs

Tony Bennett & k.d. lang – *Because of You* -- <http://youtu.be/o9sesopGFqA>

Tony Bennett & Michael Bublé – *Just in Time* -- <http://youtu.be/vMAajEh3lt0>

Tony Bennett & Sting – *The Boulevard of Broken Dreams* -- http://youtu.be/l_YF2mtpXQg

Tony Bennett & Bono – *I Wanna Be Around* -- <http://youtu.be/aAD3MthbO-w>

Tony Bennett & Billy Joel – *New York State of Mind* -- <http://youtu.be/bgbxthWrGeM>

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

Sincerely,

Greg Brown

--

Gregory Brown
Chairman & CEO
GlobalCast Partners, LLC

US:
Tel:
Fax:
Sky: