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**Subject:** Greg Brown's Weekend Reading and Other Things.... 04/06/2014

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**Attachments:** Tax-

Hating\_States\_Totally\_Fine\_With\_Taxing\_The\_Poor\_Ben\_Hallman\_Huff\_Post\_March\_21,\_2014.docx;

Pollution\_Killed\_7\_Million\_People\_Worldwide\_in\_2012\_ANDREW\_JACOBS\_and\_IAN\_JOHNSON\_NYT\_March\_25,\_2014.docx;

Why\_Americans\_like\_Obamacare\_(and\_why\_they\_don't)\_--

\_in\_two\_charts\_Sullivan\_Mar\_27,\_2014.docx; Heart\_Attacks\_and\_Water\_-\_April\_6,\_2014.docx;

U.S.\_stock\_markets\_are\_rigged,\_says\_author\_Michael\_Lewis\_John\_McCrank\_Reuters\_March\_31,\_2014.docx; Gene\_Feist\_obit\_NYT\_March\_22,\_2014.docx;

Supreme\_Court's\_McCutcheon\_Decision\_is\_a\_Blow\_Against\_Average\_Voters\_Brennan\_Center\_For\_Justice\_April\_2,\_2013.docx;

McCutcheon\_v.\_Federal\_Election\_Commission\_April\_2,\_2014.pdf;

Zucchero\_Fornaciari\_bio\_-\_March\_6,\_2014.docx

**Inline-Images:** image.png; image(1).png; image(2).png; image(3).png; image(4).png; image(5).png; image(6).png; image(7).png; image(8).png; image(9).png; image(10).png; image(11).png; image(12).png; image(13).png

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**DEAR FRIEND.....**

*The Unknown Known* Donald Rumsfeld gets  
the *Fog of War* treatment



A week ago Thursday, Chris Mathews spoke with Academy Award-winning documentary filmmaker Errol Morris to talk about his new film, *"The Unknown Known,"* based on 33 hours of interviews with former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and an unrepentant key architect of the Iraq War. The title refers to an infamous press briefing in 2002 when Rumsfeld faced questions from reporters about the lack of evidence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. *"The Unknown Known"* is Morris' 10th documentary feature. He won a **Best Documentary Oscar** for his film *"The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara."* His other films include *"Standard Operating Procedure,"* about alleged U.S. torture of terror suspects in Abu Ghraib prison, and *"The Thin Blue Line,"* about the wrongful conviction of Randall Adams for the murder of a Dallas policeman. The release of *"The Unknown Known"* comes in a month marking 11 years since the U.S. invaded Iraq, leaving an estimated half a million Iraqis dead, along with at least 4,400 American troops, tens of thousands civilians maimed, disabled and will continue to suffer from trauma, with one Harvard University study saying that the wars of choice in Afghanistan and Iraq will eventually cost American taxpayers as much as \$6 trillion.

We all know that the various officials of the Bush administration, George W. Bush himself, will never be held accountable for most, if not all, of the things that happened under their watch. They can now sit back and crow about one thing or another and indulge in one form of partisan politics after another. Maybe that's the most disturbing thing about this story. If they took us to war for no good reason, shouldn't they be in some way held accountable for that fact? Isn't that important to our democracy that we just don't simply sweep the past under the rug that we deal with it in some fashion? And what most shocked Morris in his 33 hours of conversation with Donald Rumsfeld — *"So many things. The fact that he unendingly says things which are not true, about—he unendingly says things that are false. Does he even realize it.... Lying...."* Rumsfeld's response is, *"stuff happens and people are allowed to make mistakes and things that you think you know you don't and they are the unknowns."*

We have to ask ourselves how we got into another disastrous war of choice after Viet Nam. But somehow we were talked into wars in both Afghanistan and Iraq, which Rumsfeld described in the documentary as a measured nuanced approach. We can only imagine what the opposite is.... *Dropping a nuke... maybe.....* As conservative neocons/hawks always demand that all options should be left on the table... There was and is an odd disconnection between the policies pursued by Rumsfeld, Cheney and Bush between what happened and their complicity and their complete certainty that they did nothing wrong.

In regard to no WMDs found in Iraq — Rumsfeld in a Pentagon Press Briefing on February 12, 2002 , *"reports that say that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me because as we know there are known, knowns. There are things that we know we know. And we also know that there are known unknowns, that is to say that we know things we do not know, but there are also unknowns, unknowns the ones we know we don't know. And if one looks throughout history of our country and other free countries, it is the latter category that tend to be the difficult ones. So people who have the omittance that they can say with high certainty that something has not happened or is not being tried have capabilities that are.... They can do things that I can't do."* With the press smiling along.... And this is a man who said last week in an appearance on **Fox News**, that a "trained ape could do a better job that President Obama is doing today in Afghanistan. Rumsfeld, *"our relationship with Afghanistan and Karzai was absolutely first rate in the Bush Administration. It has gone downhill like a toboggan ever since the Obama Administration came in...."* So I was truly interested watching Chris Mathew's interview with Errol Morris, which inspired Mathews to finish the show in a summary that he calls, ***The Last Word*** that I would like to share with you.

### ***The Last Word***

*Let me finish with this horrid war in Iraq. You keep hoping, don't we that the people who do big things that we think were wrong will one day admit it. They will have one of those moments like in an old Perry Mason show where they just can't take it any longer and burst out with the truth once and for all and all to hear. I guess lawyers will tell you that it doesn't happen like that. Because people who do things, do them with such perverse pride of authorship that they take them to the grave. They know what they did. They are happy with what they did but they don't want us to have the satisfaction of hearing them admit it or at least not the way we want to hear it and that absence of evidence is evidence.*

*I have yet to hear a crystal clear statement of why we went to war in Iraq. I know some of the arguments. The one about W wanting to outdo his father or to get revenge for Saddam Hussein's attempt to kill his father. I know the geopolitical argument that taking down the Iraqi would weaken the rejectionists' states against a peace deal in the Middle East. The old argument that the road to Jerusalem went through Baghdad. I know the oil argument. And I know Dick Cheney and his life time practice of not taking his foot off the neck of any opponent he could get the chance.*

*But Donald Rumsfeld, the Pentagon's chief who fought the war, please Don tell us what it was all about, please Don just spilled the beans. I watched this long documentary on Rumsfeld and who strikes me in the way he always has fey-whimsical, eccentric I suppose but nothing, nothing about the real reasons for that war. Nothing about nuclear weapons, the ones that Saddam never had. Nothing about the threat to the United States because there never was a threat. Nothing about why 186,000 people should die. What a moral disaster, the whole murky stupid W war that no one will tell us had to be, or even why.*

**Chris Matthews** - March 27, 2014

*Shouldn't these people be held accountable....?*

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## **Bill Maher To Democrats: Stand Your Ground, Stop Being Wimps And Embrace Jimmy Carter**



*"[President Jimmy] Carter is a perfect example of Republicans castigating Democrat success and Democrats not defending their own achievements. Republicans castigated Jimmy Carter's Administration as a "failed Presidency." Failed by whose standards? We may not had a great economy in the late 1970s but something else we didn't have.... a war. President Carter was branded a wimp, but the real wimps are the Democrats who never had his back for the achievement of never firing a shot while in office. And the courage of being the last President to ask Americans to sacrifice. And yet when President Obama talks fondly about the President of his*

youth he cites Reagan as an inspiration. But Obama is supposed to be an environmentalist. He should be inspired by the President who put solar panels on the roof of the White House. Not the President who came after him and tore them down because the sun was interfering with Nancy's astrology."

**Web Link:** <http://youtu.be/PMd9BsQS7tg>

As you will see in the above **YouTube** web-link and transcript, Bill Maher closed a week ago Friday's episode of "**Real Time**" by giving Democrats a rhetorical kick in the ass. With the midterms coming up later this year, Maher insisted that Dems need to let the American people know what they actually stand for and to start honoring their achievements — particularly with *Obamacare* — rather than cowering and apologizing. He also excoriated them for accepting the Republican narrative about former President Jimmy Carter: "*Carter was branded a wimp, but the real wimps are the Democrats who never had his back for the achievement of never firing a shot while in office and the courage of being the last president to ask Americans to sacrifice.*"

And whether you agree or not, what Bill Maher said is true. Not telling voters what they want to hear instead of what they need to hear is the kind of political suicide that takes real courage. And to have the wisdom to "not employ gunboat diplomacy" as a way to bully other countries, enabled President Carter to orchestrate a lasting peace between Israel and Egypt. To not bully a weaker country isn't being a wimp. Just like not escalating a new Cold War with Russia over Ukraine isn't wise. Jimmy Carter showed both courage and wisdom as President and since leaving the office, through his humanitarian efforts around the world, he has set the Platinum standard for any ex-President to follow. As such, it is about time that every American acknowledge that not only was Jimmy Carter a good President, he is a great example for every leader in or out of office around the world to follow.

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## What You Need to Know About Dark Money



There is an ugly thing happening today called **DARK MONEY**. If you look up "**Dark Money**" in **Merriam-Webster**, you won't find a definition, but as of this week, their online unabridged dictionary includes a word that tells a big part of its story — "**super PAC.**" It's defined in part as "*an independent PAC [political action committee] that can accept unlimited contributions from individuals and organizations (such as corporations and labor unions) and spend unlimited amounts in support of a candidate.*" It's a fitting reminder that four years after **Citizens United**, the Supreme Court decision that opened the floodgates of campaign cash, dark money may be here to stay.

Last week on **Bill Moyers and Company**, Kim Barker and Andy Kroll explains how dark money contributes to Washington's gridlock and why it keeps politicians from acting in the best interest of their constituent. *"I would argue that if you're wondering why your government is so broke and you can't really get anything passed through Congress, campaign finance has a lot to do with that."* Kroll adds this analogy on super PAC dark money from a conversation that he had with an unnamed senator. I had a conversation with a progressive senator who is not a fan of super PACs and at the time did not have his own sort of individual super PAC... And I said, 'What is this like when you're going to go up against an opponent who does have a super PAC and does have a motivated *one-percenter* in his corner?' And he said, 'It's like going into a boxing ring. ■ wearing boxing gloves. And the other guy has an Uzi.'

In this three-minute video, investigative reporters Kim Barker and Andy Kroll tell Bill how dark money contributes to Washington's gridlock and why it keeps politicians from acting in the best interest of their constituents.

**Watch:** <http://billmoyers.com/2014/03/21/what-you-need-to-know-about-dark-money/>

In the coming weeks, the Supreme Court is expected to issue another big decision on campaign finance, one that could further open the floodgates to unfettered and anonymous contributions, just as the Citizens United case did four years ago. Last week Bill speaks with investigative journalists Kim Barker and Andy Kroll about the role of dark money — and the wealthy donors behind it — in this year's midterm elections. Already, three times as much money has been raised for this year's elections as four years ago, when the Citizens United decision was announced. *"This is the era of the empowered 'one percenter'. They're taking action and they're becoming the new, headline players in this political system,"* Kroll tells Moyers. Kim Barker adds, *"People want influence. It's a question of whether we're going to allow it to happen, especially if we're going to allow it to happen and nobody even knows who the influencers are."*

**Web Site:** <http://billmoyers.com/episode/whos-buying-our-midterm-elections/>

Bill Moyers: It's barely spring and already the spending for this year's midterm elections is three times higher than it was on the very day the Supreme Court issued the Citizens United decision back in 2010. That one fired the starting gun that set off the mad dash for campaign cash. Look at this headline: *"Billionaires use super PACs to advance pet causes."* And this: *"Federal super PACs spend big on local elections."* Right. Unlimited and secret cash is no longer just for the White House or Congressional races — it's even being thrown at state and municipal races — right down to County Sheriff and school board. I could go on, but don't take my word for it. Listen instead to two of the best journalists covering the world of money and politics. Kim Barker reports for the independent, non-profit news organization **ProPublica**. She specializes in *"dark money"* from those so-called *"social welfare"* groups that keep the identity of their donors secret.

**KIM BARKER:** Dark money-- these are organizations that can take unlimited amounts of money from billionaires or corporations or unions or anybody. And then turned around and spend money on political ads without saying who their donors are. They don't have to tell who the money came from.

They do have to say what it's being spent on. And where it's going. But they don't have to say who the donors are.

**BILL MOYERS:** Yeah, where does all this money go? I mean, it seems to me to be frank, it sometimes sounds like a racket, you know? Lots of money raised. It goes to the campaign managers. It goes to the strategist. It goes to the television stations. And you really wonder if so much of it isn't taken off along the way. Profit margins and all of that.

**ANDY KROLL:** It's absolutely a self-enrichment process for the consultants and the ad makers, you know? The "*mad men*" of American politics. And all the different players, the political professionals in this process. I mean, one aspect of all of this dark money sloshing around in our politics, as Kim and I have written about a lot is that, you know, these folks on the left and the right pass money around between different organizations, you know? *Americans for a Better Tomorrow* passes it to *Americans for Better Leadership* passes it to *Americans for a Better Leadership and a Better Tomorrow*. And all along the way, someone is taking a cut. A consultant has to be attached to these organizations as this dark money moves around. And people are getting rich off of that.

**KIM BARKER:** I would argue that if you're wondering why your government is so broke and you can't really get anything passed through Congress, campaign finance has a lot to do with that. I think it means that a candidate for office has to wake up in the morning and not just worry about what his or her opponent is doing. They have to worry about what his or her opponent's outside money group is doing and what their own outside money group is doing. So you have this sense that as soon as you get into office, you have to start raising money for the next election. It means you can't take a stand on an issue that might prove unpopular. It means that you have to go hand in hand with what your party thinks. It just sort of means that we're going to get more of the same, more of this gridlock, which benefits a lot of these same billionaires that are putting money into the system in the first place.

**ANDY KROLL:** Political science has shown us that members of Congress are already far more receptive to the interests and the ideas and the whims of the very wealthy in this country, sort of the middle class, and basically could not care less about what poor and working people think or want in terms of policymaking. Add super PACs into the mix, add dark money groups into the mix, when really it's just one donor in your district who can make or break you.

And the real **Big Ugly** is local and state level as unfettered money from empowered millionaires and billionaires is even stronger now, as the money goes a lot farther at the state level than it does in Congress. One example is the DeVos family in Michigan, cofounders of Amway, the multilevel marketing company. Big time Republicans, long-time members of the Koch network, the donor network. So in 2012, Michigan does the unthinkable and passes a right-to-work law. The cradle of organized labor is now a right-to-work state. Employing a multi-year effort, their funding was able to elect Republican candidates on every level essentially helping to engineer a complete Republican takeover in Michigan in 2010. The state House, the state Senate, and the Governor's Mansion all were occupied by Republicans.

Last week in **HARDBALL with Chris Matthews**: Let me finish tonight with this. When the communists in the world were in full cry they like to say that our democracy was a sham. That we will all being controlled by the Rockefellers, they and the biggest money boys were really the ones calling

the shots in our country and elections were just for appearance. Well just think how much the old guys in the Kremlin and their acolytes around the world would love to see the scene this weekend in Las Vegas. One after another the men seeking the Republican presidential nomination in 2016 are trooping into the gambling resort to borrow before and kiss the ring of a guy name Sheldon Adelson. A guy who has made a fortune in the casino business Vegas and overseas in Macau. Adelson has a few interests close to his heart. He is a rapid hawk in Middle East politics, hating be very idea of a two-state solution. He also hates online betting which threatens his brick and mortar gaming halls. And big surprise he hates unions, who she obviously sees as gobblers of the wealth that he believes should go undiluted from roulette, blackjack and craps tables right from the rakes of the croupiers into the bank of one, Sheldon Adelson.

Well so much for free enterprise. Nothing wrong with making money. But what about our democracy? Does it seem right to you, whatever your politics to see grown men, men with the ambition and moxy to think of being an American president, to bow for the personal approval of a man who were it not for his money, would be just another older guy with a couple of things that he cares about politically. I remember the New York congressman that got caught up in the *Abscam* scandal, caught on video taking cash from a pretend Arab sheik, who said on camera basically and essentially he knew how democracy worked, "**money talks**" he said knowingly "**and BS walks.**" Perhaps we should insist that the Republican wannabes out there sniffing around after Adelson should have to do there kissing with the surveillance cameras working. At least then we could see the stooping these guys are willing to do in order to conquer. **Chis Matthews**

It is not just Republicans like the Koch Brothers and Sheldon Adelson, I feel the same about progressives like Michael Bloomberg, because these billionaires should not be allowed to have this undue influence over our elected officials. If these *Masters of the Universe* are truly interested in helping society, let them use their money to directly fix the problems (build schools, factories, providing scholarships, funding low cost housing, etc.) and not buy politicians who will humiliatingly kiss your ring as if they were the character that Marlon Brando played in *The Godfather*. And the worse thing about Dark Money is that there is absolutely little or no transparency, enabling fundraisers of Dark Money to become a legal form or bribery, because few rich people make political contributions without expecting something – a *QUID PRO QUO*. **DARK MONEY** is a disease that is destroying our democracy and with or without the Supreme Court and whatever your politics..... this has to be changed.....

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 **Inline image 10**

How many folks do you know who say they don't want to drink anything before going to bed because they'll have to get up during the night.

Heart Attack and Water – I never knew all of this ! Interesting.....

Something else I didn't know ... I asked my Doctor why people need to urinate so much at night time. Answer from my Cardiac Doctor – Gravity holds water in the lower part of your body when you are upright (legs swell). When you lie down and the lower body (legs and etc) seeks level with the kidneys, it is then that the kidneys remove the water because it is easier. This then ties in with the last statement!

I knew you need your minimum water to help flush the toxins out of your body, but this was news to me. Correct time to drink water...

Very Important. From A Cardiac Specialist!

Drinking water at a certain time maximizes its effectiveness on the body

2 glasses of water after waking up – helps activate internal organs

1 glass of water 30 minutes before a meal – helps digestion

1 glass of water before taking a bath – helps lower blood pressure

1 glass of water before going to bed – avoids stroke or heart attack

I can also add to this... My Physician told me that water at bed time will also help prevent night time leg cramps. Your leg muscles are seeking hydration when they cramp and wake you up with a Charlie Horse.

Mayo Clinic Aspirin Dr. Virend Somers, is a Cardiologist from the Mayo Clinic, who is lead author of the report in the July 29, 2008 issue of the Journal of the American College of Cardiology.

Most heart attacks occur in the day, generally between 6 A.M. and noon. Having one during the night, when the heart should be most at rest, means that something unusual happened. Somers and his colleagues have been working for a decade to show that sleep apnea is to blame.

1. If you take an aspirin or a baby aspirin once a day, take it at night.

The reason: Aspirin has a 24-hour “half-life”; therefore, if most heart attacks happen in the wee hours of the morning, the Aspirin would be strongest in your system.

2. FYI, Aspirin lasts a really long time in your medicine chest, for years, (when it gets old, it smells like vinegar).

Please read on...

Something that we can do to help ourselves – nice to know. Bayer is making crystal aspirin to dissolve instantly on the tongue.

They work much faster than the tablets.

Why keep Aspirin by your bedside? It's about Heart Attacks.

There are other symptoms of a heart attack, besides the pain on the left arm. One must also be aware of an intense pain on the chin, as well as nausea and lots of sweating; however, these symptoms may also occur less frequently.

Note: There may be NO pain in the chest during a heart attack.

The majority of people (about 60%) who had a heart attack during their sleep did not wake up. However, if it occurs, the chest pain may wake you up from your deep sleep.

If that happens, immediately dissolve two aspirins in your mouth and swallow them with a bit of water.

Afterwards: – Call 911. – Phone a neighbor or a family member who lives very close by.- Say “heart attack!” – Say that you have taken 2 Aspirins.

Take a seat on a chair or sofa near the front door, and wait for their arrival and ...DO NOT LIE DOWN!

A Cardiologist has stated that if each person after receiving this e-mail, sends it to 10 people, probably one life could be saved!

I have already shared this information. What about you?

Do forward this message. It may save lives!

“Life is a one-time gift”

***Just in case you hadn't see this.....***

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## The Globalization of NATO

In January 1961, US President Dwight D Eisenhower used his farewell address to warn the nation of what he viewed as one of its greatest threats: the **military-industrial complex** composed of military contractors and lobbyists perpetuating war. Eisenhower warned that *"an immense military establishment and a large arms industry"* had emerged as a hidden force in US politics and that Americans *"must not fail to comprehend its grave implications"*. The speech may have been Eisenhower's most courageous and prophetic moment. Fifty years and some later, Americans find themselves in what seems like perpetual war. No sooner do we draw down on operations in Iraq than leaders demand interventions in Libya, Syria, Iran and most recently in the Ukraine. While perpetual war constitutes perpetual losses for families, and ever expanding budgets, it also represents perpetual profits for a new and larger complex of business and government interests.

The new military-industrial complex is fuelled by a conveniently ambiguous and unseen enemy: the terrorist. Former President George W Bush and his aides insisted on calling counter-terrorism efforts a **"war"**. This concerted effort by leaders like former Vice President Dick Cheney (*himself the former CEO of defense-contractor Halliburton*) was not some empty rhetorical exercise. Not only would a war maximize the inherent powers of the president, but it would maximize the budgets for military and homeland agencies. This new coalition of companies, agencies, and lobbyists dwarfs the system known by Eisenhower when he warned Americans to *"guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence... by the military-industrial complex"*. Ironically, it has had some of its best days under President Barack Obama who has radically expanded drone attacks and claimed that he alone determines what a war is for the purposes of consulting Congress. Now the new enemy of convenience is Vladimir Putin. The new reason is Russian troops on the Ukrainian border and the annexation of Crimea. Both give reason for hawks in the West to demand that NATO reciprocate with a military show of force, even though that this could lead to the resumption of a new Cold War.

Again, the world is enveloped in a blanket of perpetual conflict. Invasions, occupation, illicit sanctions, and regime change have become currencies and orders of the day. One organization – the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) – is repeatedly, and very controversially, involved in some form or another in many of these conflicts led by the US and its allies. NATO spawned from the Cold War. Its existence was justified by Washington and Western Bloc politicians as a guarantor against any Soviet and Eastern Bloc invasion of Western Europe, but all along the Alliance served to cement Washington's influence in Europe and continue what was actually America's post-World War II occupation of the European continent. In 1991 the *raison d'être* of the Soviet threat ended with the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War. Nevertheless NATO remained and continues to

alarmingly expand eastward, antagonizing Russia and its ex-Soviet allies. China and Iran are also increasingly monitoring NATO's moves as it comes into more frequent contact with them. And the **BIG UGLY** is that no one in the West, including progressive media is challenging their over-reach and potential policies that could create unintended consequences.

Certain critics say that Yugoslavia was a turning point for the Atlantic Alliance and its mandate. The organization moved from the guise of a defensive posture into an offensive pose under the pretexts of humanitarianism. Starting from Yugoslavia, NATO began its journey towards becoming a global military force. From its wars in the Balkans, it began to broaden its international area of operations outside of the Euro-Atlantic zone into the Caucasus, Central Asia, East Africa, the Middle East, North Africa, and the Indian Ocean. It has virtually turned the Mediterranean Sea into a NATO lake with the NATO Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, while it seeks to do the same to the Black Sea and gain a strategic foothold in the Caspian Sea region. The Gulf Security Initiative between NATO and the Gulf Cooperation Council seeks to also dominate the Persian Gulf and to hem in Iran. Israel has become a de facto member of the military organization. At the same time, NATO vessels sail the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. These warships are deployed off the coasts of Somalia, Djibouti, and Yemen as part of NATO's objectives to create a naval cordon of the seas controlling important strategic waterways and maritime transit routes.

As such these critics maintain that the Atlantic Alliance's ultimate aim is to fix and fasten the American Empire. NATO has clearly played an important role in complementing the US strategy for dominating Eurasia. This includes the encirclement of Russia, China, Iran, and their allies with a military ring subservient to Washington. The global missile shield project, the militarization of Japan, the insurgencies in Libya and Syria, the threats against Iran, and the formation of a NATO-like military alliance in the Asia-Pacific region are components of this colossal geopolitical project. NATO's globalization, however, is bringing together a new series of Eurasian counter-alliances with global linkages that stretch as far as Latin America. The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) have been formed by Russia, China, and their allies as shields against the US and NATO and as a means to challenge them. As the globalization of NATO unfolds the risks of nuclear war become more and more serious with the Atlantic Alliance headed towards a collision course with Russia, China, and Iran that could ignite World War III. And no better example is the Western powers wooing of Ukraine money and the possibility of joining the EU and NATO that led to the overthrow of the "*corrupt*" but "*democratically elected*" government of former President Viktor Yanukovich.

We need to understand how dominant economic interests are supported by the "*internationalization*" of NATO and how and why this military entity has extended its areas of jurisdiction from the European-North Atlantic region into new frontiers and what does this truly mean. Unlike the most rabid critics who argue that NATO's growing over-reach and agenda has grown from keeping the Soviet Union as bay and protecting the sovereignty of Western Countries under the alliance to encircle Russia, China, Iran and any other countries not in support of the U.S. and Western leaders objectives, I do not propose dismantling NATO. Because I believe, (*maybe naively*), that this globally military agenda can be reversed when people around the world, in the true spirit of internationalism and national sovereignty, join hands in bringing transparency to NATO and its corporate sponsors with the goal of neutering the militarism of the international Military-Industrial Complex that increasingly employs gunboat diplomacy to advance its sponsors' economic agenda. Perpetual war represents perpetual profits for the ever expanding business and government interests and NATO has become an integral part of this dangerous and destructive cycle. When are people going to come to their senses and realize that war is failure and that perpetual has to be stopped.....?

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As a young African American growing up in the white suburbs of New York City in the 50s and 60s, which had its own societal segregation, early on I realized that if I wanted to get beyond the shackles of being a second class citizen I had to find my voice and the nearest and best place to go was Manhattan, the city where dreams were possible, even for a young black kid from Mount Vernon New York. And early on I realized, I had to surround myself with the movers and shakers among my peer group and older mentors willing to share their time and wisdom. This week I discovered that one of my mentors died several weeks ago, and although I really only knew him through my childhood friend and first business partner, Michael Johnson, this icon of the New York theater world for five decades, **GENE FEIST**, ignited my creative juices that set me on the course of developing a group of skills that are part of the foundation that I use today.

**Gene Feist** (January 16, 1923 – March 17, 2014, New York City) was an American playwright, theatre director and co-founder of the **Roundabout Theater Company**. He authored fifteen plays or adaptations, of which two were published by Samuel French Inc. Born in Brooklyn along with his twin brother Harold, Feist grew up in the Coney Island district where his father owned and operated the bar "*Bucket of Blood*". His love of reading made him somewhat of an outcast in his community during his youth. In high school he pursued studies in print making, and after graduating he joined the United States Army Air Forces where he was trained as an airplane mechanic. During World War II he was stationed in the South Pacific where his talents were ultimately put to use as a writer for press releases and other journalistic aims as well as work as a librarian. After the war he attended Carnegie Mellon University where he became a close friend of the artist and fellow student Andy Warhol.

But I am not sure if there would have ever been a Roundabout if not for his wife Kathe Feist, who along with Gene founded the Roundabout Theatre Company, first located in the basement of a supermarket building owned by the housing development in Manhattan where the Feists lived. Kathe a stage actress was professionally known as Elizabeth Owens and appeared in more than 30 plays over the next 25. She died from breast cancer, aged 77, on March 7, 2005. Gene remained as the Roundabout's Founding Director and he died in March at the age of 91.

Gene and Kathe conceived of the Roundabout as a home to classics by Shaw, Pirandello, Ibsen and the like. (The first production was Strindberg's *The Father*.) "*Everybody in New York was doing new plays; nobody was doing the classics,*" he said, years later. "*Any new play must have some literary merit or historical reference to be put on by us.*" To encourage attendance, an inexpensive season subscription of \$5 for three plays was offered. In its first season, the company had 400 subscribers. Early productions attracted both established actors and rising stars such as Kim Hunter, Vincent Price, Irene Worth, Tammy Grimes, Malcolm McDowell and Philip Bosco.

Along the way the Roundabout had its ups and downs, including filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in 1978, and losing its lease on its 23rd Street home, which was later converted into a movie theatre. Eventually, the company found a new home in an old, much larger building off Union Square, which was formerly a headquarters for Tammany Hall. Gene stepped down as artistic director in 1988. In 1991 the Roundabout made an unprecedented leap for a New York nonprofit for the time, moving to Criterion Center, a former movie theatre, and thus becoming only the second nonprofit (after Lincoln Center Theater) to have a berth on Broadway.

**Today**, the Roundabout, a multistage Goliath that is one of the nation's most important nonprofit companies, commands five stages around and about Times Square: the American Airlines Theatre, Stephen Sondheim Theatre and Studio 54 on Broadway; and the Laura Pels Theatre and the Underground Black Box on West 46th Street Off-Broadway. It's considerably more real estate than Gene began with when, in 1965, he and Kathe set up shop in a 150-seat theatre carved out of a converted supermarket basement on West 26th Street in Chelsea.

I last saw Gene several years ago in London when he visited Michael Johnson for two weeks, and at the age of 88/89 he could still up the room with his humor, presence and his jest for life. We last spoke a year later when I asked him to read my dear friend and international song writer, Jack Robinson's play "Walking the Dogs." Obviously his health had declined but I did not know it at the time, so he was unable to really help us. Still, Gene tried to inspire us to continue on and obviously it was this optimism that birthed The Roundabout and inflected everyone who was lucky enough to be part of his

orbit. ***Gene you will be dearly missed and I thank you for inspiring me to grow beyond my station.***

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In **The Washington Post** this week, E.J. Dionne wrote an op-ed – ***The GOP must admit it was wrong on Obamacare*** – asking is there any accountability in American politics for being completely wrong? Is there any cost to those who say things that turn out not to be true and then, when their fabrications or false predictions are exposed, calmly move on to concocting new claims as if they had never made the old ones? The fact that the **Affordable Care Act (ACA)** hit its original goal this week of signing up more than 7 million people through its insurance exchanges ought to be a moment of truth – literally as well as figuratively. It ought to give everyone, particularly members of the news media, pause over how reckless the opponents of change have been in making instant judgments and outlandish charges.

When the health-care Web site went haywire last fall, conservatives were absolutely certain this technological failure meant that the entire reform effort was doomed. If you doubt this, try a Google search keyed to that period relating the word “*doomed*” to the health-care law. It should be said that the general public was much wiser. A CNN poll in November that Post blogger Greg Sargent highlighted at the time found a majority (54 percent to 45 percent) saying that the problems facing the law “*will eventually be solved.*” Political moderates took this view by 55 percent to 43 percent, independents by 50 percent to 48 percent. Only Republicans – by a whopping 72 percent to 27 percent – and conservatives (by 66 percent to 33 percent) thought the law could never be fixed.

Their representatives in Washington, moderate conservatives as well as the tea party’s loyalists, followed the base’s lead. In mid-November, for example, Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio) told Fox News flatly that the law is “*destined to fail,*” “*fundamentally flawed*” and “*not ready for prime time.*” House Speaker John Boehner predicted dire outcomes before the Web site fiasco. He repeatedly insisted, as he did in July, that “*even the Obama administration knows the ‘train wreck’ will only get worse.*” This attitude affected more neutral observers. Forbes magazine posted a piece on Nov. 22 under the headline: “***What to do if and when Obamacare collapses.***” The op-ed modestly acknowledged that “*it’s too soon to write an epitaph for Obamacare,*” but then barged forward, since “*its crises are piling up so fast that one has to begin looking ahead.*” At this point, the etiquette of commentary typically requires a “*to be sure*” paragraph, as in: To be sure, the law could still face other problems, blah, blah, blah. But such paragraphs are timid and often insincere hedges. After all, every successful program, even well-established ones such as Medicare, Social Security and food stamps, confronts ongoing challenges.

So let’s say it out loud: The ACA is doing exactly what its supporters said it would do. It is getting health insurance to millions who didn’t have it before. (**The Los Angeles Times** pegged the number at 9.5 million at the beginning of the week.) And it’s working especially well in places such as Kentucky, where state officials threw themselves fully and competently behind the cause of signing up the uninsured. Those who want to repeal the law will have to admit that they are willing to deprive

these people, or some large percentage of them, of insurance. Too many conservatives would prefer not to say upfront what they really believe: They don't want the federal government to spend the significant sums of money needed to get everyone covered. Admitting this can sound cruel, so they insist that their objections are to the ACA's alleged unworkability, or to "*a Washington takeover of the health system*" (which makes you wonder what they think of Medicare, a far more centralized program). Or they peddle isolated horror stories that the fact-checkers usually discover are untrue or misleading.

Thus the moment of truth, about the facts and about our purposes. From now on, will there be more healthy skepticism about conservative claims against the ACA? Given how many times the law's enemies have said the sky was falling when it wasn't, will there be tougher interrogation of their next round of apocalyptic predictions? Will their so-called alternatives be analyzed closely to see how many now-insured people would actually lose coverage under the "*replacement*" plans? Perhaps more importantly, will we finally be honest about the real argument here: Do we or do we not want to put in the effort and money it takes to guarantee all Americans health insurance? If we do — and we should — let's get on with doing it the best way we can.

I include this op-ed by Dionne because Conservative Republicans never own up to their own mistakes. Today, Cheney and Rumsfeld will say if they had to do it all over again, even knowing what they know today, they would still attack Iraq. But what about the **Weapons of Mass Destruction**? Where is the **Yellow Cake**? And what about Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz assertions in 2003 that the Iraqi war could be done on the cheap and that it would largely pay for itself. Today the US government says that the Iraq war cost more than \$800 billion and when long term benefits are paid out connected with the death and injury of US troops in both Afghanistan and Iraq, the number is expected to rise to about \$4 and possibly \$6 trillion. These are some of the same people who castigated Susan Rice for confusing one sentence on a single Sunday morning news show concerning '*who was behind the attack in Benghazi that killed the US Ambassador to Libya and three other Americans.*' What about the hundreds of thousands of Iraqis who died as a result of an unnecessary War Of Choice, creating millions of people to flee their homes and the country, destabilizing the entire region and giving al Qaeda and Iran a foothold which they hadn't had in the country?

So why are these naysayers not called on the carpet to apologize? — and instead of replacing the **Affordable Healthcare Act**, with a promise of cherry-picking the parts that are undeniably wanted by most Americans without addressing a way of paying for them — why don't they just fold their cards and work with Democrats and the President to improve it? I still have Republican friends who truly believe that Barrack Obama is the worse President ever but won't acknowledge that the country is better in almost every measure than it was five years ago. They sort of gloss over the fact that five years ago the US was in two wars without end, an economy that had gone from a \$230 billion surplus to a \$1.1 billion deficit, financial markets in free-fall and half of what they are today, a job loss of 800,000 jobs a month and growing compared to 46 straight months of job-growth as of last month including 192,000 new jobs in March 2014, banking system on the verge of complete breakdown and a housing market that had collapsed and has since recovered. These critics continue to lie, distort through innuendos and disinformation, covering up without penalty. This has to be stopped! So, thank you E.J. Dionne for calling these naysayers/hypocrites out on Obamacare.... And this is my **rant of the week**.... And I hope that it is yours too.....

# WEEK's READINGS

## Tax-Hating States Totally Fine With Taxing The Poor

 Inline image 7

As everyone knows, Southern politicians despise taxes more than just about anything -- except perhaps cornbread with sugar, or iced tea without. This established rule of the universe makes a new report by the Tax Foundation especially curious, at least at first look. The group, which typically takes an anti-tax stance, combined each state's sales tax rate with the average local sales tax rate, as of Jan. 1. The group found that the five states with the highest average combined state-local tax rates are mostly Southern-fried: Tennessee (9.45 percent), Arkansas (9.19 percent), Louisiana (8.89 percent), Washington (8.88 percent), and Oklahoma (8.72 percent). The combined sales tax rate is also high in New York (8.47 percent) and California (8.40). Four states, Oregon, Montana, New Hampshire and Delaware, collect no sales taxes at all. Not mentioned in the report are some of the factors that play into high sales tax rates. In the South, especially, property taxes are very low, and voters have historically rejected attempts to raise them. The region also has a history of handing out huge tax breaks to large manufactures in order to persuade them to move there.

Alabama, for example, handed out a sweet package of \$253 million in tax breaks and other incentives in order to woo a Mercedes-Benz plant to the state in 1993. A decade later, the plant reaped an additional \$11.5 million in tax breaks for an expansion that didn't create any new jobs. Washington, number four on the list, passed a package of \$9 billion in tax breaks in November in order to keep Boeing to locate production of its newest jet in Seattle. So with few other options available to pay for things like roads and schools, states have been forced to boost sales taxes, a form of revenue generation generally considered regressive -- meaning it hurts poor people the most. That's because the cost of food, clothing and other purchased goods tend to make up a higher percentage of a low income consumer's budget than for people with higher incomes. The poor are also less likely to own property, and thus less likely to benefit from lower tax rates for homes and land. Sales taxes affect the poor disproportionately more than wealthier people as their total income is in a continuous churn, whereas the wealthy can shield income in 401k programs and the rich can frame earned income as dividends, whereby CEOs pay lower tax rates than their secretaries and administrative assistants.

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*A tourist boat navigates through the haze of the Guangdong Providence of China this month. The Country's rapid urbanization was cited as contributing to pollution.*

It almost appears that every month there is a new epidemic and although none compare to the magnitude of the Plague of Justinian, which historians say killed 40% of the people living in Europe between 541 and 542 and then the Black Plague which historians say killed between 30% to 70% of the people living in Europe between the years of 1346 to 1350, as well as a number of other plagues around

the world and other diseases including smallpox, yellow fever, measles, influenza, typhus, cholera, polio, bubonic plague, dengue fever, meningitis, ebola, HIV/AIDS, untold others diseases and of course the epidemic of wars, the new player on the block seems to be pollution.

Last week the World Health Organization released a report that says pollution around the world is killing 7 million people. More than one-third of those deaths, the organization said, occurred in fast-developing nations of Asia, where rates of cardiovascular and pulmonary disease have been soaring. Around the world, one out of every eight deaths was tied to dirty air, the agency determined — twice as many as previously estimated. Its report identified air pollution as the world's single biggest environmental health risk. "The big news is that we have a better understanding of how large a role air pollution plays in strokes and coronary heart attacks," said Dr. Carlos Dora, coordinator of public health and the environment at the organization. "Given the astronomical costs, countries need to find a way to prevent these non-communicable diseases."

The report found that those who are most vulnerable live in a wide arc of Asia stretching from Japan and China in the northeast to India in the south. Exposure to smoke from cooking fires means that poor women are especially at risk, the agency said. Indoor air pollutants loomed as the largest threat, involved in 4.3 million deaths in 2012, while toxic air outdoors figured in 3.7 million deaths, the agency said. Many deaths were attributed to both. Breakneck urbanization in the developing nations of Asia, especially China, is a major force contributing to the air pollution problem.

The World Health Organization report, released in Geneva, coincided on Tuesday with the publication of a World Bank study in Beijing concerning China's drive to urbanize. The study, issued with the Development Research Center of China's State Council, argued that many of the country's cities had been allowed to sprawl wastefully and called for better-planned, denser cities instead. The bank estimated that China will spend \$5.3 trillion on urban infrastructure over the next 15 years, as it plans to move 100 million farmers to cities and to better integrate another 100 million who already live in urban areas but lack full access to schools and hospitals.

The study said the Chinese government could save \$1.4 trillion of that cost — or about 15 percent of the country's total economic output last year — by planning its cities more rationally. One way would be to halt the current practice of expropriating farmers' land and selling it to private developers, a method that helps raise money but leads to wasteful sprawl. The bank said that building more densely in city centers would be more efficient; for example, Guangzhou, with 8.5 million residents, could accommodate 4.2 million more in the same space if it were as densely developed as Seoul, South Korea. Based on current trends, the study said, Chinese cities in the next decade will gobble up land equal in area to the Netherlands, leading to longer commutes, higher energy consumption and continued high levels of air pollution. Sprawl will cost China \$300 billion a year in premature deaths, birth defects and other health-related problems, the study said.

The study also emphasized the unfairness of the current system, with farmers receiving only 20 percent of their land's value. That has led to chronic unrest and, the bank said, has increased the disparities in income between rich and poor. Some of the bank's recommendations were found in a plan released this month, which included proposals to better integrate existing residents. China has said it wants one billion of its people, about 60 percent of the population, to be living in cities by 2020 — up from 54 percent now. But the bank said urbanization is moving much faster than that, and so are the problems it creates. Sri Mulyani Indrawati, managing director of the World Bank, said in an interview that to follow the bank's recommendations, China would need major changes in how cities finance new infrastructure. Currently, local governments cannot levy taxes, so they rely on land

expropriation instead. The Chinese leadership has good intentions to overhaul the system, but no specific plan yet, Ms. Indrawati said: “I don’t think that, at the moment in this case, there is clarity of when you are going to achieve what.”

The reports by the World Bank and World Health Organization each said the burning of noxious fuels — coal, wood and animal waste — was among the greatest threats to human health. In India, the health agency estimated, 700 million people rely on biomass fuels like agricultural waste for indoor cooking. Kirk R. Smith of the University of California, Berkeley, measured pollutants from smoky indoor ovens, and said they were comparable to burning 400 cigarettes an hour. “Unfortunately, we have not made a lot of progress in the past decades, and household air pollution is still the largest single health risk factor for Indian women and girls,” the health agency quoted Dr. Smith as saying.

In China, the bigger culprit is coal, which supplies two-thirds of the country’s energy. A study published last year in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences estimated that people in northern China, where the air pollution is worst, lived an average of five fewer years than those in the south. Alarmed by the worsening smog and the rising discontent among urban residents, Chinese leaders have taken note, promising to reduce reliance on coal and introduce cleaner-burning motor fuels and more energy-efficient construction methods. Prime Minister Li Keqiang declared a “war against pollution” in his annual report to the nation this month.

Though the winter heating season has ended, Beijing was still suffused with a familiar acrid haze on Tuesday. The United States Embassy’s air monitor rated the air as “very unhealthy,” a level at which outdoor activity should be avoided. Dr. Dora of the health agency said he hoped the stark mortality figures released on Tuesday would prompt people and governments alike to confront the scourge of filthy air with greater urgency. “What’s needed is collective action,” he said. “The air you are polluting is the same air you breathe.”

In a warming world with record concentrations of atmospheric carbon dioxide, a new analysis from environmental think tank World Resources Institute found that the global number of coal-fired power plants could increase significantly. There are currently more than 2100 coal plants in 58 countries, with China and India accounting for more 76% of these plants. And although the United States (with 5% of the world’s population), has only 36 coal-fired power plants it emits almost 20% of the world’s greenhouse gases. With every other epidemic there has been a worldwide consensus to work together to eradicate the problem. But somehow with more than 7 million people dying yearly, commercial interests has stymied this effort. As I pointed out last week that rising sea levels is leading to an unimagined world catastrophe, so is air pollution and if we don’t do something seriously about them both life as we know it will be screwed.

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## Why Americans like Obamacare (*and why they don’t*) — in two charts

BY SEAN SULLIVAN: March 27, 2014 – The Washington Post

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Few -- if any -- laws have divided the public like the Affordable Care Act. Ever since President Obama signed the federal health-care law four years ago this week, Republicans have pilloried it while Democrats have defended it. But why do the law's supporters like it? And why do opponents hate it? Thanks to a poll released this week by the Kaiser Family Foundation, we can answer these questions. The public remains more negative (46 percent hold an unfavorable view) than positive (38 percent hold a favorable view) toward the law, overall. That's the way it's been for much of the last four years. Kaiser asked respondents open-ended questions about why they favor the law and why they don't. By far the most popular reason for supporting the law: Expanded access to medical care and coverage. Cost comes in second. The third most popular reason is that it's good for the country. Here's a chart, courtesy of Kaiser, that breaks it all down:

**FIGURE 5: In Their Own Words: Reasons For Favorable Views**

AMONG THE 38% WHO HAVE A FAVORABLE VIEW: Could you tell me in your own words what is the main reason you have a favorable opinion of the health reform law?

Category	Percent Mentioning	Quotes
Expanding access to care and insurance	61%	<i>"Because it allows people without insurance the ability to get insurance."</i> <i>"Because a lot of people who otherwise would not have insurance will now have it."</i> <i>"Because I am able to keep my health insurance with my parents until age 26."</i>
Will make health care more affordable/control costs/lower costs	10	<i>"Because it makes health insurance affordable for people without insurance."</i> <i>"Because I think the health care system was too costly and the affordable health care act will cut costs."</i>
Country/people will be better off generally	7	<i>"It makes health care better for Americans."</i> <i>"It is beneficial to the general public."</i>

Opposition is driven by cost, distaste for the individual mandate, and a sense that the measure is an example of government overreach:

**FIGURE 6: In Their Own Words: Reasons For Unfavorable Views**

AMONG THE 46% WHO HAVE AN UNFAVORABLE VIEW: Could you tell me in your own words what is the main reason you have an unfavorable opinion of the health reform law?

Category	Percent Mentioning	Quotes
Cost concerns	23%	<i>"It's too expensive for regular people."</i> <i>"It's costing too much money. It's supposed to help people with low incomes and it's not."</i> <i>"Because it's a financial hardship on the U.S."</i>
Opposed to individual mandate/ Unconstitutional	17	<i>"Don't think it's right to penalize people who don't have health care."</i> <i>"It's unconstitutional, requiring people to have health insurance."</i>
Government-related issues	10	<i>"I don't like the government making personal decisions for me."</i> <i>"I believe the government should stay out of health care"</i> <i>"There is too much government in our personal choices."</i>

The fact that cost is an oft-cited reason why Americans like the law as well as a primary justification for why they dislike it speaks volumes for just how far apart the public is on the health-care debate. What one side sees as an attribute, the other side views as a problem. Republicans and Democrats are already hitting on these themes in an effort to drive turnout in the November midterms. Republicans have been referencing Obamacare much more in the midterm campaign, given its unpopularity and troubled rollout. Expect to hear a lot more about government overreach and cost burdens from GOP candidates and groups. Democrats have mostly adopted a keep-it-but-fix-it posture predicated on emphasizing the parts of Obamacare that are popular, like what it does to expand coverage, while underscoring efforts to fix the parts that are less popular.

With more than 6 million people signed up under Obamacare, even its strongest critics admit that it is here to stay. What the graphs don't show is how many people would support a single payer healthcare program that is not politicalized. But it will be difficult to mobilize wide support when special interest (insurance industry) groups can easily manipulate the mob to vote against their own self-interest by pitting them against each other. All countries that have a Single Pay / National Health Care Distribution System provide the same level of health care for EVERYONE regardless of age or income via ONE Health Care Distribution System. The system is funded and administered in the same way as our Medicaid system. Bottom line: the only way a Single Pay / National Health Care Distribution System can work effectively and efficiently in this country is if all health care distribution systems in place now are rolled into one and that one system is all inclusive.

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Like many other Americans who chose to watch **60 Minutes** last Sunday instead of **March Madness** (the NCAA basketball tournament), the leading segment by Steve Kroft investigating the business of high-frequency trading of mainly stocks but could also include other financial instruments that said that the U.S. stock market is rigged in favor of high-speed electronic trading firms, which use their advantages to extract billions from investors, according to Michael Lewis, author of a new book on the topic, "**Flash Boys: A Wall Street Revolt.**"

Discount trader **Charles Schwab & Co.** issued a statement Thursday, calling high-frequency trading **“a cancer.”** *“High-frequency traders are gaming the system, reaping billions in the process and undermining investor confidence in the fairness of the markets,” Schwab’s statement said. “It’s a growing cancer and needs to be addressed.”* High-frequency trading is exactly that: Trading thousands of shares in a microsecond to reap tiny — but cumulatively lucrative — gains. *“High-frequency trading isn’t providing more efficient, liquid markets; it is a technological arms race designed to pick the pockets of legitimate market participants,”* Schwab said in its statement. *“That flies in the face of our markets’ founding principles.”*

**For more clarity: High-frequency trading (HFT)** is a practice carried out by many banks and proprietary trading firms using sophisticated computer programs to send gobs of orders into the market, executing a small portion of them when opportunities arise to capitalize on price imbalances, or to make markets. HFT makes up more than half of all U.S. trading volume.

The trading methods and technology that make HFT possible are all legal, and the stock exchanges HFT firms trade on are highly regulated. But Lewis said these firms are using their speed advantage to profit at the expense of other market participants to the tune of tens of billions of dollars. *“They are able to identify your desire to buy shares in Microsoft and buy them in front of you and sell them back to you at a higher price,”* says Lewis.

This speed advantage that the faster traders have is milliseconds, some of it is fractions of a penny per trade, but the sheer speed and volume of their trading activity allows those that are successful to make significant profits. Proponents of HFT argue that the presence of such firms makes it easier for all market participants to find buyers and sellers for their trades, and that the speed at which HFT firms can detect and take advantage of pricing imbalances between different markets and assets leads to smaller bid-ask spreads. But Brad Katsuyama, former head trader in New York for the Royal Bank of Canada and a major figure in Lewis's book, said he was finding that when he would send a large stock order to the market, it would only be partially filled, and then he would have to pay a higher price for the rest of the order.

With the help of new hire Ronan Ryan, Katsuyama realized that his orders traveled along fiber optic lines and hit the closest exchange first, where high frequency traders would get a glimpse, and then use their speed advantage to beat him to the other 12 U.S. public exchanges and 45 private trading venues. HFT algorithms could then buy the shares Katsuyama wanted, and then sell them to him at a slightly higher price. Katsuyama and Ryan created a system in which RBC would send its orders first to the exchange that was the furthest away, and last to the exchange that was closest, with the goal of arriving at all places nearly simultaneously, cutting out HFT. *“Essentially, our fill rates went to 100 percent. We couldn’t believe it when we actually figured it out,”* Katsuyama told **“60 Minutes.”**

Katsuyama said he decided to start a new trading platform, called IEX, for the Investors' Exchange, employing similar tactics to those he used at RBC. *"It almost felt like a sense of obligation to say we found a problem that is affecting millions and millions of people - people are blindly losing money they didn't even know they were entitled to. It's a hole in the bottom of the bucket,"* he said. IEX has attracted the investment of David Einhorn, the billionaire owner of hedge fund Greenlight Capital, and an endorsement from Goldman Sachs. The investors in IEX are fund companies and individuals, not banks. *"We are selling trust, we are selling transparency, and to think that trust is actually a differentiator in a service business, is actually a crazy thought, right?"* said Katsuyama. Earlier this month, New York State's Attorney General Eric Schneiderman said he believes U.S. stock exchanges and other platforms provide HFT firms with unfair advantages.

Exchanges allow trading firms to place computer servers inside the exchange's data centers so that the firms can see the data as soon as possible. The practice, called co-location, is regulated and available to anyone who wants to pay for it. Schneiderman has begun meeting with the U.S. exchanges, which include Intercontinental Exchange Group's New York Stock Exchange, Nasdaq OMX Group's main bourse, and four platforms run by BATS Global Markets, on possible reforms, a source close to the situation told **Reuters**. A ban on HFT is unlikely, as U.S. regulators would be loath to put policies in place that could lead to a less liquid market, Robert Greifeld, chief executive officer of Nasdaq, said on Thursday. As a result, Lewis claims that the stock market is "rigged" and because it is in pennies, these tens of billions of pennies have gone unnoticed.

You can watch the full **"60 Minutes"** piece below:

**Web Link:** <http://www.cbsnews.com/videos/is-the-us-stock-market-rigged>

Just to provide clarity, Michael Lewis is not talking about the stock market that you see on television every day. That ceased to be the center of U.S. financial activity years ago, and exists today mostly as a photo op. This is the stock market that Lewis is talking about; the one where most of the trades take place now, inside hundreds of thousands of these black boxes located at more than 60 public and private exchanges, where billions of dollars in stock change hands every day with little or no public documentation. The trades are being made by thousands of robot computers, programmed to buy and sell every stock on the market at speeds 100 times faster than you can blink an eye. A system so complex, it's all but invisible.

Still confused? **Business Insider** helps: The basic mechanism that he describes is this: You place an order for a stock, say Microsoft. That order goes to something called the *"BATS exchange"* at which point high-frequency traders pick up on your order, and then race to the exchange with an order for

Microsoft faster than you can get there. They buy the Microsoft and bring it back to you at an inflated price. Technically, Lewis says, all of this is legal. But, he says, ordinary investors are getting **“screwed.”**

CNBC’s Bob Pisani, however, says the interview didn’t bring up one of the biggest issues: The odd thing about the interview is that they did not bring up the hottest topic around high-speed trading: that high-speed traders have access to a *“proprietary feed”* that allows them to have a trading advantage over those who rely on the *“public feed.”* There is indeed a *“proprietary feed”* which has been provided to anyone willing to pay for it, with the blessing of the SEC, for many years. The core argument is that those who access this proprietary feed can calculate the most current bids and offers (known as the National Best Bid and Offer, or NBBO) quicker than those who get the public feed (known as the Securities Information Processor, or SIP).

That can indeed provide a trading advantage. Still, he says the difference in stock price for private vs. public traders amounts to cents: What’s the bottom line? If you are a long-term buyer, under some circumstances – particularly during times of high volatility – high-speed traders are indeed trying to scalp a penny on your trade. Would I like to see fewer of these price dislocations? I sure would. But is this some outrageous act of highway robbery? For what it’s worth, the econ site **Zero Hedge** has been ringing the alarm bell for some time on this. If you didn’t see 60 Minutes last week, I urge you to view the above web link and then decide yourself.

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## **Big Lies Launch Wars. “All Wars are based on Deception”**

In **“The Art of War,”** Sun Tzu said *“All wars are based on deception.”* What worked in ancient times more than ever applies now, given instant ways of communicating globally and super-weapons Washington and its allies threaten to use like hand grenades.

In **“Doctor Faustus”**, Christopher Marlowe mentioned *“the face that launched a thousand ships.”* He referred to Helen of Troy (formerly of Sparta). To win her back, Greeks launched 1,000 warships. According to Greek mythology, the Trojan War followed. Homer’s **Odyssey** and **Iliad** recounted it. So did Roman poets Virgil and Ovid. Homer said it lasted 10 years. Mythological goddess quarrels started it. Real, mythological, or fabricated reasons work equally well. Then it was Athena and Hera v. Aphrodite. Today it’s *“war on terror”* and domestically *“the war on drugs”* fear tactics. Near its end, Greeks entered Troy in a Trojan Horse. America’s perhaps was 9/11. Both were duplicitous acts used to ravage targeted enemies.

The expression, *“beware of Greeks bearing gifts”* originated from back then. According to Homer and other Greek literature, they burned the city, captured Trojan women, rescued Helen, and returned her to Menelaus, her husband. Fear, misinformation, and deceit work best enlisting popular support, whether in ancient China, Greece or modern times. Television today supplies it. From its earliest

days, it lied, distracted, entertained, and provided a platform for corporate America to control thought, manipulate public opinion, and sell people junk they don't need.

In a June 1950 commencement speech, Boston University President Daniel Marsh said, *"If the (television) craze continues....we are destined to have a nation of morons."* In May 1961, Kennedy's FCC chairman Newton Minow called commercial television a "vast wasteland." He suggested watching it for a day *"without a book, without a magazine, without a newspaper,"* with no distractions. *"Keep your eyes glued to that set until the station signs off"* as it once did before 24 broadcasting. *"I can assure you that what you will observe is a vast wasteland, (a) procession of game shows, (nonsensical) formula comedies....blood and thunder, mayhem, violence, sadism, murder, western bad men, western good men, private eyes, gangsters, more violence, and cartoons."* *"And endless commercials – many screaming, cajoling, and offending....And if you think I exaggerate....try it."*

Try it now. It's the same on hundreds of channels round the clock and 24/7 new cycle ad nauseam. Communication theorist/media critic George Gerbner once said television has nothing to tell and everything to sell. In his book, ***"Amusing Ourselves to Death,"*** Neil Postman said *"Americans are the most entertained and least informed people in the world,"* knowing little or nothing about what matters most. Famed comedian Ernie Kovacs once said television is called a medium because it's neither rare or well done. Because most people rely on it for news and information, a nation of "morons" lets America get away with murder.

**America's Permanent War Agenda:** In his book titled, ***"Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace,"*** Gore Vidal said: *"our rulers for more than half a century have made sure that we are never to be told the truth about anything that our government has done to other people, not to mention our own."* In his book titled, ***"Dreaming War,"*** he compared GW Bush's imperial ambitions to WW II and subsequent Truman Doctrine pledge: *"To support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures."* At issue was keeping Greece and Turkey from going communist. Applied globally, it initiated America's National Security State strategy. Ever since, it lurched from one war to another to benefit war profiteers and advance America's imperium, no matter the body count to achieve both.

In his 1953 collection of historical revisionist essays titled, ***"Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace: A Critical Examination of the Foreign Policy of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and It's Aftermath,"*** Harry Elmer Barnes wrote: *"If trends continue as they have during the last fifteen years, we shall soon reach (the) point of no return, and can only anticipate interminable wars, disguised as noble gestures for peace."* *"Such an era could only culminate in a third world war which might well, as Arnold J. Toynbee has suggested, leave only the pygmies in remote jungles, or even the apes and ants, to carry on 'the cultural traditions' of mankind."*

Deception, misinformation, popular fiction, and Big Lies launch wars – all of them. Television today incites them. Earlier times, however had other ways to enlist public support or at least avoid opposition enough to stop them. Historian Gabriel Kolko explained nothing good about *"the good war,"* WW II, or any others. None achieve peace, security and stability. One conflict begets others. Endless destructive cycles follow. Countless millions die. Vast destruction ravages countries. Human misery, not liberation, results. Since the 19th century, imperial wars shaped American life. Waging them is prioritized. Technological expertise produces killing machines. Industrial America suffered. Human needs go unmet, today more than ever in modern times. State capitalism partners with business waging war. Uneducated, disadvantaged, impoverished, disconnected, restless, angry

millions get left on their own sink or swim. Others go to war to get killed, injured, maimed, or emotionally scared for life with nothing in return benefitting them.

In his January 1961 farewell address, Dwight Eisenhower warned about: the **“military-industrial complex,”** citing the *“grave implications”* of a *“coalition of the military and industrialists who profit by manufacturing arms and selling them to the government.”* He said *“we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence....by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.”* He added that: *“Every gun that is made, every war ship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, from those who are cold and not clothed....”*

Today, dominant *“iron triangle”* authority runs America’s war machine. With sitting presidents, it consists of Congress, the Pentagon, and defense industry profiteers, including producers of sophisticated technology for digital age warfare Eisenhower couldn’t have imagined. In combination, they addicted the nation to war, not for threats. It’s for power and profits. Why else would war be America’s business!

In his book titled, **“JFK and the Unspeakable: Why He Died and Why It Matters,”** James Douglas discussed many reasons. Key was his opposition to force. After the Joint Chiefs demanded troops for Laos, he told Geneva Conference representative Averell Harriman: *“Did you understand? I want a negotiated settlement in Laos. I don’t want to put troops in.”* He opposed nuclear weapons use in Berlin and Southeast Asia. During the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, he refused to bomb or invade. Afterwards he said, *“I never had the slightest intention of doing so.”* In June 1963 (a few months before his assassination), he called for abolishing nuclear weapons, ending the Cold War, and advancing *“general and complete disarmament.”* In October 1963, he signed National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) 263 to withdraw 1,000 US forces from Vietnam by year end and all of them by 1965. He wanted *“to splinter the CIA in a thousand pieces and scatter it to the winds.”*

After WW I, Kellogg-Briand in 1928 renounced aggressive war, prohibiting its use as *“an instrument of national policy,”* except in self-defense. Sixty-three nations were signatories, including America, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Soviet Russia, and Japan. The US Senate approved the treaty 85 – 1. Like Nuremberg, it’s binding international law. Washington’s war machine hardly slowed. WW II followed as well as perpetual others thereafter. Even then, the business of America was war. It’s more than ever that today. Its *“scourge”* wants power, profits and unchallenged dominance. Today, America wages it globally against humanity. International law is defied. So is morality and common sense. International peace, security, stability, equity, justice, and freedom are non-starters. Only war spoils matter, including benefits derived from them in all forms. *“War on Terror+”* authority accelerated permanent wars. As a result, Presidents now wage them at their discretion, with the support of special interests and mainstream media looking for any headline to replace the Kardashians latest mishap which story has gone stale.

I am not a tree hugging liberal, but I am alarmed by the fact that every time there is an international incident or crisis the first instinct of many of our leaders is to play the gunboat diplomacy card. To counter Iran’s perceived nuclear ambitions, America uses the vague threat of *“no options are off the table”* which is code for *“WE WILL BOMB YOU if you don’t do what we want.”* The *“Red Line”* is the same code. If proposing installing missiles in Poland is not an overt threat to Russia, remember the Cuban missile crisis. When any country including the United States initiates a war of aggression.... It is not only an international crimes, it is the supreme international crimes differing only from the other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole. We can’t defend

collateral damage and in the same breath ignore crimes against humanity. Moreover, the idea of peace through war, is as ridiculous as me shooting myself in the foot because my feet hurt. This may not be an accurate analogy, but I am sure you get the meaning. The US has to get off this permanent war footing. And the first step is to acknowledge the folly of both US led Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Because if we don't, the same types of deceptions will be used again to get us into another unnecessary war of choice. And until we view war as failure, little will change.

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### Inline image 3

As a African American growing up in Westchester County New York, who has spent his entire lifetime trying to decipher the dominate culture around me, I have an insatiable curiosity especially when it comes to why things are what they are and then having traveled over the last four decades, also in international politics. As such I am a voracious reader so I can see multiple points of view, and not just those close to my personal thinking. So when I was reading an article this week in **Al Jazeera's** online service, I came across an interesting article – ***Syria: A new paradigm shift?*** – by **Ammar Waqqaf** who is a Syrian political activist living in the UK and a consultant to its government – that only Syrians can overcome the crisis by crossing bridges and refusing to adhere to Ottoman-era sectarian and feudal divides.

Waqqaf: The reason why the Syrian crisis has gone on for this long is that the underlying questions that can unite Syrians are yet to be asked. It's as simple as that. Forget about democracy. Although it is perceived as a key element of this conflict, it was never really the main issue for the majority of Syrians who rebelled. For some, it was a vague term that benignly disguised majoritarian wishes and, for others, it was merely a language through which they could appeal to Western public opinion and facilitate the task of winning support from Western governments. Despite talking democracy day and night, look at the tyrannical practices in rebel-controlled areas, for example, or at the inability of the Syrian opposition's political class to lead their followers. The lack of deeply rooted democratic beliefs or the irrelevance of it, is there for everyone to see.

Waggaf again: Forget about the "*foreign conspiracy*" theory as well. Regional and international interests have always existed and clashed, and will continue to do so. You could even forget about the much-hyped sectarian split, or even the far more important class struggle that is clearly evident in the rift between rural and urban areas. All of these factors have contributed to the bloodshed, but they do not actually account for the prolonging of the crisis. Only by scratching the surface a bit deeper will one notice that the great divide is in fact that of an identity clash or, to be more precise, a clash of mentalities. Not only is this why the crisis has taken so long, but this is why it could take even longer.

Waggaf summarizes the article: Adherents to the traditional interpretations of the Syrian crisis tend to split society straight down the middle, one that calls for crossing bridges and rejecting irrational behavior, could appeal to the vast majority, and constitute a much-needed novel rallying point. Unfortunately, this view is hardly universal among Syrians at the moment. Many of them, especially those who lost loved ones, view the struggle from an existential point of view. It would be quite a challenge to bring them along, and encourage them to accept such a paradigm shift. One key obstacle in this regard is the part played by the so-called progressive Syrians, who have dug their heels so deep into the "anti-dictatorship" paradigm that there seems to be no apparent way forward. Another roadblock is the absence of a coherent group of Syrians, who could be trusted by a large enough number of their countrymen, both in character and in capacity, and who could then lead the way.

If Syrians do not open themselves up to a new way of looking at the problem, this crisis will be repeated, generation after generation, no matter how it is tackled, whether by force, by international or

regional checks and balances, or whatever. It is up to the Syrians, and no one else, to really solve this crisis and find a way through towards a more fertile future for them and their children. Destiny has chosen them to lead the way for other societies in the Middle East in the regional struggle towards rationality, and they need to prove, first to themselves, that they are up for the challenge.

As someone who is not an expert in Middle East affairs, the one thing that I do believe is that democracy can't be given. Democratic societies are only democratic because their people have fought for the right to participate from bottom up and not be govern from top down. And in splintered societies, democracies may not be possible. India has the second largest population on the planet and although one can say that its democracy is dysfunctional at best, it was hard fought by the Indians themselves. Whereas, if China instituted a truly transparent democracy today, I am absolutely sure that it would split apart, with several states being controlled by warlords with tribal support. But getting back to the point; the only people who can solve the Syrian crisis are the Syrians themselves, and its neighbor Iraq has proven that a flawed democracy imposed by outside powers can be worse than the tyrant who was overthrown.

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## Climate Signals, Growing Louder

The New York Times Editorial Board — MARCH 31, 2014

Perhaps now the deniers will cease their attacks on the science of climate change, and the American public will, at last, fully accept that global warming is a danger now and an even graver threat to future generations.

Monday, [March 31, 2014], the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change**, a **United Nations** group that since 1990 has been issuing increasingly grim warnings about the consequences of a warming planet, released its most powerful and sobering assessment so far. Even now, it said, ice caps are melting, droughts and floods are getting worse, coral reefs are dying. And without swift and decisive action to limit greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels and other sources, the world will almost surely face centuries of climbing temperatures, rising seas, species loss and dwindling agricultural yields. The damage will be particularly acute in coastal communities and in low-lying poor countries — like Bangladesh — that are least able to protect themselves.

The report's conclusions mirrored those of a much shorter but no less disturbing report issued two weeks ago by the **American Association for the Advancement of Science**, the world's largest scientific society. Like the panel, the association declared that the world is already feeling the effects of global warming, that the ultimate consequences could be catastrophic, and that the window for effective action is swiftly closing.

The intergovernmental panel's report (a companion report later this month will discuss what governments should do) could carry considerable weight with delegates to next year's climate change summit meeting in Paris, at which the members of the **United Nations** will again try, after years of futility, to fashion a new global climate treaty. And together, the two reports could build public support for President Obama's efforts to use his executive authority to limit greenhouse gases, most recently

with a plan issued on Friday to reduce methane emissions from landfills, agricultural operations and oil and gas production and distribution.

The methane strategy is one of several weapons in Mr. Obama's broader **Climate Action Plan**, announced last year that seeks to reduce emissions by circumventing an obstructionist Congress by aggressively using his executive authority under the **Clean Air Act** and other statutes. The most important of these are two rules from the **Environmental Protection Agency** — one already proposed, another in the works — that would regulate emissions from new and existing coal-fired power plants, the largest source of industrial carbon pollution. He has also promised to increase energy efficiency in appliances and buildings, and double renewable energy capacity on public lands by 2020.

The methane abatement plan is a welcome addition to that arsenal. Methane, a product of animal wastes and of decomposing material in landfills, and the main component in natural gas, contributes only about 9 percent of America's greenhouse gas emissions. And natural gas, as a fuel, is much cleaner than coal. But methane is a powerful atmospheric pollutant, 20 times more potent than carbon dioxide, and thus a major driver of global warming.

The burden for fulfilling the president's promise will fall on the E.P.A., which is charged with developing regulations to plug methane leaks in pipelines and in oil and gas production systems. Given everything we now know, public and congressional acceptance of these initiatives should be close to automatic. But, of course, it is not. Senator Mitch McConnell, the leader of the Senate Republicans, seeks to block the coal regulations. Industry groups are complaining in advance about methane regulations.

Some of this may be attributable to public misunderstanding. A poll last year found that one-third of Americans believed that scientists disagreed on whether global warming was happening. These studies suggest virtually no disagreement. The hope among advocates is that the latest show of scientific solidarity will clear up any confusion about the causes and consequences of climate change and the need for action.

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 Supreme-Court-580.jpg

If the explosion of unfettered **Dark Money** wasn't not enough of a problem in our democracy the Supreme Court just made it legal. The Supreme Court on Wednesday struck down the aggregate campaign contribution limits, thereby opening the door to even more money in the political system. The 5-4 ruling in **McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission** was penned by Chief Justice John Roberts and joined by justices Anthony Kennedy, Samuel Alito and Antonin Scalia along party lines. The decision relies heavily on the assertion in the 2010 Citizens United ruling that influence and access are not a corruption concern. Justice Clarence Thomas wrote a separate opinion that agreed to strike the aggregate limits, but also called for an end to the entire campaign finance reform system. Before Wednesday's decision the limits were meant to prevent corruption but according to Chief Justice Roberts, this is not the case, who said the *limits "intrude without justification citizen's ability to exercise the most fundamental First Amendment activities."* After news broke out the **Brennan Center For Justice** responded with this *statement "Today's Supreme Court decision rejects decades of precedent and strikes a sharp blow against the interests of the average voters. Once again the Court has struck down a law that curbs the corruption influence of large campaign contributions in*

*our politics. Sadly, the court has also achieved a new milestone by striking down a federal contribution limits for the first time."*

The victory for the Alabama businessman and major Republican Party donor Shaun McCutcheon, who was joined by the Republican National Committee in his challenge, means that a single donor will soon be able to contribute millions of hard dollars -- in limited contributions -- to political parties, candidates and political action committees. "With the ruling, we continue to chip away at the long entrenched status quo from the grassroots -- a status quo that has kept challengers, better ideas, and new entrants to the political arena mostly locked out," McCutcheon said in a statement. "Ensuring that citizens are able to contribute to multiple candidates or causes who share their views only provides further support to a system in which 'We the People' hold the ultimate reins of power."

Campaign finance reform proponents were not so pleased. *"With its decision today in McCutcheon, the Supreme Court majority continued on its march to destroy the nation's campaign finance laws, which were enacted to prevent corruption and protect the integrity of our democracy,"* **Democracy 21** President Fred Wertheimer said in a statement. Public Citizen President, Robert Weissman said in a statement, *"This is truly a decision establishing plutocrat rights. The Supreme Court today holds that the purported right of a few hundred superrich individuals to spend outrageously large sums on campaign contributions outweighs the national interest in political equality and a government free of corruption."*

Indeed, a single donor can now give more than \$5 million in individually limited contributions to every House candidate, every Senate candidate, every state party committee, every national party committee and every leadership PAC connected to one political party. For the 2013-2014 election cycle, Federal Election Commission rules state that a donor can give no more than \$123,200 to all political committees, with two sub-limits of \$48,600 to candidates and \$74,600 to political parties and political action committees. Those limits are no more. Today this immeasurably helps the Republican Party, which relies far more on large campaign donors who give the maximum campaign contributions. In the past year, Republican congressional political party committees have struggled to raise funds, as compared to their Democratic counterparts and the RNC. The court's decision now frees donors to make contributions of \$32,400 to all three party committees every year. But like everything else, this advantage will change biting the same Republicans in their behind.

People shouldn't be surprised, but outrage is appropriate, because when John Roberts went in front of the Senate for confirmation he said that he had respect for precedent and obviously that was a flat out lie. He very clearly has strong opinions on the way that money should be able to play and roll in politics n for somebody who has those types of opinions there is a way to try to implement them, you run for Congress you run for Senate you run for President and you try to pass laws. Instead he went to the Supreme Court and rewrote a century of campaign finance laws. And this is just one step of a complete dismantling of our campaign finance system. Right now there are so many internal contradictions with it that it can't stand and Roberts is going to make sure that he knocks out each leg one at a time.

Right now you can give unlimitedly. So a rich person supporting can now give \$3.5 million to national candidates but some point soon will be eliminated. Today you can give an unlimited amount to state committees, who are limited to spending have limited spending on federal elections, but one day this wall will come down as well. But where we are headed people, corporations and special interest groups will be able as much as they want and anonymously. This will flood our democracy with out of control spending. The rich will have easier path to continue to buy elections. Today's McCutcheon decision

helps billionaires who only had massive political influence, will now have limitless. What the decision did was brush aside the reason why campaign finance limits were enacted in the first place. Fundamentally we are democracy and the Constitution rest on us being a democracy and it rests on citizens putting their faith into the government and the idea of one person one vote and that this is a fair system.

And around the turn of the last century people lost faith in that. So the Supreme Court and Congress said that after a certain amount of spending on elections create an appearance corruption then that undermines the entire basis of under which the country is founded. Therefore it is appropriate to limit free speech. Free speech can only be protected by a government. And if you don't have a democratic government it can't protect it. And that is buying in the whole idea that money equals speech, which is obviously silly because money is money and speech is speech. But today the Roberts' Court has no patience for the idea that all of this money in politics has a corrupting effect or erodes the public's trust. And this is obviously untrue. People do you think that money corrupts politics. As such it will take a while for the majority to realize that their votes/rights have been compromise and we will see if this will lead to a popular revolt demanding the reinstating of limiting money in politics.

Even a ten-year-old will tell you that too much of anything is bad, and allowing unlimited money that is often **Dark Money** without transparency is sure to undermine the tenets of our democracy. The latest Supreme Court decision is a shortsighted decision, made for political gain without the regard of the harm that might result. With a dysfunctional Congress and a bias Judiciary and a loss in confidence in the Executive Branch one can see the handwriting on the walls of future discontent, as more and more people lose faith in their democracy, which has been bought and paid for by a small group of rich people, intent of further lining their own pockets and pursuing their own agenda which may be contrary to the good of the public. Forget our differences on Obamacare, Ukraine, climate change and immigration reform, the Supreme Court's decision on Wednesday has to be understood for what it is, the unbridling of resources by a few to take control of our democracy and thus the country. As I pointed out in my piece on **Dark Money in Politics**, as unrestrained funding in politics will (and is) a legal form of bribery, because few rich people make political contributions without expecting something in return. And as they would say when I was growing up, *"you can take that to the bank."*

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## A Most Revealing Week for Republicans

 **Inline image 14**

DAILY BEAST by Michael Tomasky: April 4, 2014

The McCutcheon decision, Paul Ryan's budget, and Obamacare deniers all say what the GOP can't: We protect the well-off from redistribution of their wealth to those who don't deserve it.

If you haven't done so yet, I urge you to take three minutes here with me to reflect on this unusually revealing week. Three big developments—the Obamacare enrollment deadline, the Paul Ryan budget, and the Supreme Court's McCutcheon decision—return us to first principles, so to speak; remind us of what our two parties (and the philosophical positions behind them) are really and truly about. And they remind me, at least, of why the Republican Party, on a very basic level, can't ever be truthful with the American people about what matters to it most at the end of the day.

So what is it that matters most to the Republican Party? A lot of things do, and for different Republicans, the answer will be different: abhorrence of abortion, disgust at social relativism, hatred of big government. These things matter. But they don't, in my view, matter most. What matters most, especially to elected Republicans in Washington (that is, more so than the rank-and-file), is this: Protect the well-off from redistribution of their wealth to those who don't deserve it.

On what basis do I make this claim? Well, I've been watching Republicans on Capitol Hill pretty closely for many years now. There are, Lord knows, a number of topics on which they are not exactly what you'd call amenable to compromise. The climate-change denialism, the constant attempts to chop away at reproductive rights (which are constitutional rights), et cetera.

But I think it's fair and accurate to say that, especially in the Obama era, two issues have obsessed the party more than all the others: opposition to tax increases, especially on the wealthy; and a zeal for cutting the budget, which really means cutting domestic spending programs.

In other words—protect the rich, and injure the poor. These are the points on which they've fought tooth and nail. After all, think about this: They could have had a major concession from Obama on entitlements (chained CPI) if they'd been willing to allow an income-tax increase on dollars earned above \$250,000. But even that couldn't reel them in. It's true they did allow an increase on dollars earned above \$450,000 (for families) in the fiscal-cliff deal, but their backs were really against the wall on that one: They relented to that small increase only because the country was hours away from a major tax increase (the expiration of the Bush tax cuts), and it was clear to everyone that the Republicans were going to shoulder most of the blame.

As for cutting the federal budget, downsizing government—and we all know doing that hurts poor and working-class families most directly—well, wasn't that the chief impetus behind the creation of the Tea Party? Remember Rick Santelli's creation-myth rant, about the anger at the people who took mortgages they couldn't afford. (Classic liberal-conservative divide, rooted almost entirely in psychological outlook: Liberals tended to blame the banks that hornswoggled people, while conservatives tended to blame the people who let themselves be hornswoggled.)

That's the game. Redistribution, as in loathing of. That's the glue of the Washington Republican Party. And it's wrong to think of it as just an "economic" issue. It is, to them, a moral one. Don't believe me? Take it from Arthur Brooks, head of the American Enterprise Institute, who wrote a famous Wall Street Journal column back in April 2009 headlined "The Real Culture War Is Over Capitalism." Reread that. Money, a cultural issue. Defenders of free enterprise, he wrote, "have to declare that it is a moral issue to confiscate more income from the minority simply because the government can." He also charged these same defenders with the task of defining true "fairness" as "protecting merit and freedom." I shouldn't have to decode those two words for you, I shouldn't think.

Roberts's opinion says: "It is not an acceptable governmental objective to 'level the playing field.'" You can't ask for it to be put more plainly than that.

But here's the thing: Brooks's candor was and is rare. It wasn't a risk of any kind for him to express those views to the readers of the Journal's Op-Ed page, who would strongly agree. But most Americans don't agree. Most Americans support redistribution to one degree or another. They support progressive taxation, they support many or even most categories of government spending, and so on. We—liberal Democrats, centrist Democrats, and moderate Republicans, to the extent that they exist—argue about how much spending, but not about the very notion of spending. Real conservatives stand outside this conversation: They believe that virtually no redistributive spending is justified. But they know that's a highly unpopular position, so most of the time, they can't say that. They have to say other things.

Now let's circle back to this week. What Republicans really think about Obamacare, as E.J. Dionne put it in *The Washington Post* yesterday, is that "they don't want the federal government to spend the significant sums of money needed to get everyone covered." But they know that sounds cruel, so they can't say that. So instead of inveighing against redistribution directly, they've spent months talking about its unworkability. Well, that's been proven wrong (so far), and so now they'll just say, as they have been this week, that they don't believe the numbers. Then they'll fish out more alleged horror stories that don't check out. But they won't say what they actually think.

In the same way, Paul Ryan puts out a budget document that makes dramatic cuts on programs for poor and working people, which makes four domestic promises in the summary—"Expand Opportunity," "Strengthen the Safety Net," "Secure Seniors' Retirement," and "Restore Fairness"—but in its numbers does the opposite. Ryan's budgets have always been first and foremost about attacking redistribution aggressively. But he can't say that. So he just says the opposite.

And what does the McCutcheon decision have to do with all this? Very simple. Redistribution happens because redistributionist politicians have the nasty habit of getting elected. They get elected, in part, because of campaign-finance laws that limit wealthy conservatives' ability to influence outcomes. In this sense the campaign-finance reform laws of the 1970s are themselves redistributionist—they were explicitly designed to level the playing field, which is a hoary cliché but expresses a proper goal, i.e., not letting the wealthy own Congress lock, stock, and barrel.

McCutcheon tells us, to an extent that even *Citizens United* hadn't quite, that Chief Justice John Roberts detests this electoral redistributionism, and as Jeffrey Toobin wrote this week, has as his goal "the deregulation of American political campaigns." Roberts's opinion says: "It is not an acceptable governmental objective to 'level the playing field.'" You can't ask for it to be put more plainly than that. (Roberts doesn't face voters and has a job for life and can speak with more candor than senators.)

Savagely fighting the delivery of health care to financially struggling people; slashing the federal programs that help these people get by; rigging elections so that rich conservatives (who outnumber rich liberals substantially) have more control over who wins them. These may seem disparate battles,

especially the third one, but the motivation in each case is the same: Protect the well-off from redistribution of their wealth to those who don't deserve it.

You'll rarely hear an elected Republican admit this. But it's usually the motivation. And we saw it this week in starker relief than we usually do. But don't despair too much: They may yet prevail on campaign spending, but Ryan is going to lose, and Obamacare is going to win. So maybe, even though they won't talk about it openly, people are onto them anyway.

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## GOOD NEWS

The U.S. economy added 192,000 jobs in March, according to government data released Friday morning, a concrete sign that the recovery remains on track despite a slowdown over the winter. The Labor Department reported that the unemployment rate held steady at 6.7 percent as about half a million people joined the labor force, and the broad-based expansion touched industries ranging from health care to construction. The strong showing is roughly on par with the pace of hiring during the second half of last year, before job creation plunged during an unusually brutal winter. Economists are still debating how much of the weakness was a temporary side effect of the weather. But Friday's data suggested the labor market has thawed with the spring. "It's an overall positive report," said Alan MacEachin, corporate economist at **Navy Federal Credit Union**. *"The job market continues to be healthy, not robust."*

MacEachin and many other economists had hoped for an even stronger snapback in March of 200,000 new jobs -- or more. But he said that hiring last month may still have been affected by several late snow storms. MacEachin said he expects businesses to spend the next few months making up lost activity over the winter before hiring returns to its average pace of about 180,000 new jobs. The report also included another piece of good news: The average workweek edged up by 0.2 hours to 34.5 hours in March. The increase helped offset declines over the past three months that some economists feared signaled fundamental weakness in the labor market. However, average hourly earnings slipped 1 cent to \$24.30 in March after spiking 9 cents in February. *"The main takeaway from this report is that the labor market is continuing to bounce out of the weather-induced slump of earlier this year, and while the pace of rebound remains slower than we expected, we take encouragement from the strong showing in almost every other aspect of this report,"* said Millan L. Mulraine, deputy head of U.S. research and strategy at **TD Securities**.

The Obama administration used the jobs report to highlight the plight of the long-term unemployed, who account for more than one-third of people out of work. The Senate is expected to vote Monday on a measure that would restore unemployment benefits to those workers. Federal payments to those who have been unemployed six months or more expired in December, and Democrats have been seeking a way to reinstate them.

In a deal brokered by Sens. Jack Reed (D-R.I.) and Dean Heller (R-Nev.), the bill would allow retroactive payments to affected workers. It is expected to pass the Senate but faces a rockier road in the House. *"The challenges confronting the long-term unemployed are the challenges that keep me up the most at night,"* Labor Secretary Thomas Perez said in an interview Friday. *"We're certainly not going to quit on them."*

March's job gains spanned several key sectors. The professional and business services sector created 57,000 jobs, adding to its rapid expansion. The health care industry and the construction sector each added 19,000 jobs. Though the federal government workforce shrank by 9,000 positions, local jurisdictions added 8,000 jobs, not including those in education. The government also increased its estimates of job growth in January to 144,000 and in February to 197,000. The revised numbers represent 37,000 more jobs than previously reported for that time period.

The robust hiring in March breathes new life into predictions that 2014 will mark a turning point in the nation's long-simmering economic recovery. Many of the headwinds that had held back growth in previous years have faded: Lawmakers in Washington have reached a deal to fund the government through next year, dispelling the cloud of fiscal uncertainty that had loomed over consumers and businesses since 2011. The financial crisis in Europe has been contained, and the Federal Reserve has begun the anxiously anticipated process of scaling back its support for the economy with relatively little pain. All those factors combined were supposed to set the stage for the recovery to take off. Most of all, the U.S. has recovered more than the 8.2 million private sector jobs lost as a result of the 2008 recession and with economist forecasting that that the economy could expand at a rate of 3 percent this year for the first time in nearly a decade. The solid job growth in March -- if it holds up in future months -- we really will have something to celebrate. ***And this is why I am celebrating this Good News.***

## THIS WEEK'S QUOTES

*War may sometimes be a necessary evil. But no matter how necessary, it is always an evil, never a good. We will not learn how to live together in peace by killing each other's children.*

Jimmy Carter

*We cannot be both the world's leading champion of peace and the world's leading supplier of the weapons of war.*

Jimmy Carter

*A fundamentalist can't bring himself or herself to negotiate with people who disagree with them because the negotiating process itself is an indication of implied equality.*

Jimmy Carter

*Unless both sides win, no agreement can be permanent.*

Jimmy Carter

## BEST VIDEO OF THE WEEK

*Feeling "the happy" from Tripoli*

Web site: 

## SOMETHING SPECIAL

The Comedy of Trevor Noah



Trevor Noah: *That's Racist - Surfing AIDS* -- <http://youtu.be/-NuKhW3sJsA>

Trevor Noah: *That's Racist - Tacos* -- <http://youtu.be/QDk5ajNDgZc>

Trevor Noah: *Super Funny How To Be Black come to America* -- <http://youtu.be/QDXWUBIU88>

Trevor Noah: *Crazy Normal - Attention All Passengers* -- <http://youtu.be/Xiqwkw4oujo>

Trevor Noah: *It's My Culture - Service with a Smile* -- <http://youtu.be/37Y7CLGGMUo>

Trevor Noah: *Crazy Normal - Death at a Funeral* -- <http://youtu.be/AXsZ5bydFTo>

Trevor Noah: *Crazy Normal - President Jacob Zuma's Speech* -- <http://youtu.be/Q12H1dpOwdE>

Trevor Noah: *Nelson Mandela Birthday Party* -- <http://youtu.be/1HMZjSqJwmE>

Trevor Noah: *David Letterman Show* 17 May 2013 -- <http://youtu.be/ozU1DSfei3g>

Trevor Noah: *Daywalker 2.0 - Oprah's School in South Africa* -- <http://youtu.be/YcyuIKzpYJQ>

Trevor Noah: *It's My Culture - Springbok Bafana* -- <http://youtu.be/LAlrmCfY2Zw>

Trevor Noah: *Live at the Apollo* – London -- [http://youtu.be/2LQw\\_J-sbeU](http://youtu.be/2LQw_J-sbeU)

**Trevor Noah** (born 20 February 1984) is a South African comedian. He has also been a radio DJ, actor and TV host. Trevor Noah was born to a (White European) Swiss father and (Black African) South African mother. His mixed-race heritage, his experiences growing up in an apartheid Soweto township, and his observations about race and ethnicity are leading themes in his comedy.

Noah had a small role on the South African soap opera, *Isidingo* in 2002, when he was 18. He then began hosting his own radio show Noah's Ark on Gauteng's leading youth radio station, **YFM**. Noah then went on to host an educational program *Run The Adventure* from 2004-2006 on **SABC2**. In 2007 he hosted *The Real Goboza*, a gossip show on **SABC1**, and *Siyadlala* a SABC's sports show. In 2008 Noah co-hosted alongside Pabi Moloji on *The Amazing Date* (*dating game-show*) and was a *Strictly Come Dancing Season 4*. In 2009 he hosted the *3rd Annual South Africa Film and Television Awards* (SAFTA Awards) and co-hosted alongside Eugene Khoza on *The Axe Sweet Life* (reality competition series) at the 15th annual **South African Music Awards**. In 2010 Noah hosted the 16th annual **South African Music Awards** and also hosted *Tonight with Trevor Noah on MNet* (in the second season it moved to **DStv's Mzansi Magic Channel**).

Noah dropped his radio show and acting to focus on comedy, and has performed with South African comedians such as Riaad Moosa, Darren Simpson, Marc Lottering, Barry Hilton and Nik Rabinowitz, international comedians such as Paul Rodriguez, Carl Barron and Paul Zerdin, and as the opening act for Gabriel Iglesias in November 2007 and Canadian comedian Russell Peters on his South African tour.

Noah has performed all around South Africa in *The Blacks Only Comedy Show*, *Heavyweight Comedy Jam*, the *Vodacom Campus Comedy Tour*, the *Cape Town International Comedy Festival*, the *Jozi Comedy Festival*, and *Bafunny Bafunny* (2010). His stand-up comedy specials include *The Daywalker* (2009), and *Crazy Normal* (2011), both of which have been released on DVD.

On 6 January 2012 Noah became the first South African stand-up comedian to appear on **The Tonight Show** and appeared on 17 May 2013 on **Late Show with David Letterman**. Noah was the subject of the 2012 documentary *You Laugh But It's True*. The same year he starred in the one-man comedy show *That's Racist*. In 2013 Noah starred in **BBC Radio 4** show *Trevor Noah: The Racist*. In 2013 he performed the comedy special *Trevor Noah: African American*. On 11 October 2013 he was a guest on **BBC Two's** comedy panel show *QI*. On 29 November 2013 he was a panelist on **Channel 4** game show *8 out of 10 Cats*.

## THIS WEEK'S MUSIC



**ZUCCHERO**, Adelmo Zuccherò (born 25 September 1955), more commonly known by his stage name Zucchero Zucchero or simply Zucchero, (sugar), is an Italian rock singer and Order of Merit of the Italian Republic. His music is largely inspired by gospel, soul and rock music, and alternates between ballads and more rhythmic boogie-like pieces. Zucchero is the Italian word for sugar. In his career, spanning four decades, Zucchero has sold over 50 million records around the world and has achieved numerous awards, including two World Music Awards, six IFPI Europe Platinum Awards and a Grammy Award nomination. Adelmo Zucchero was born in Reggio Emilia, Italy (in the frazione of Roncocesi) although he spent most of his childhood in the seaside town of Forte dei Marmi (*Province of Lucca, Tuscany*). Zucchero currently lives in Pontremoli.

His musical career began in 1970, with several small bands such as I Ducali, Le Nuove Luci, Sugar & Daniel, Sugar & Candies and finally with a band named Taxi, with whom he won the Castrocaro Music Festival in 1981. He made his first appearance in the famous Sanremo festival next year with the songs "Una notte che vola via" and in 1983 with "Nuvola" at Festival dei Fiori. His first album, *Un po' di Zucchero*, was released the same year with moderate success. In 1984, Zucchero temporarily moved to California, where he collaborated for the first time with Italian producer Corrado Rustici. The result of these sessions, with a backing band that included bassist Randy Jackson, was the 1985 album *Zucchero & The Randy Jackson Band*, of which the single "Donne" became a huge hit in Italy. After the relative success of *Zucchero & The Randy Jackson Band*, Zucchero and Rustici again gathered in California to work on a follow-up. *Rispetto*, which included several hit singles including the titletrack and "Come il sole all'improvviso", combining the Italo-pop sound of Zucchero's earlier albums with a more American soul sound.

Although *Zucchero & The Randy Jackson Band* and *Rispetto* had been commercially successful, it was the 1988 album *Blue's* that went on to become the highest selling album in Italian history, and made Zucchero a household name in Italy, and the rest of Europe. The album, again produced by Rustici and featuring musical performances by Clarence Clemons, The Memphis Horns and David Sancious, included the Italian hit singles "Con Le Mani" (*with lyrics by Gino Paoli*), the controversial "Solo una sana...", and the original version of "Senza una Donna" which later became an international hit in a duet version with Paul Young. During the following *Blue's* Tour Zucchero shared the stage with Joe Cocker (for a cover of "With a Little Help From My Friends"), Ray Charles and Dee Dee Bridgewater.

In 1989 Zucchero and his band recorded the album *Oro incenso e birra* in Memphis. The album, which is greatly influenced by American soul music, included guest appearances by Eric Clapton, and blues singer Rufus Thomas, while Zucchero's band by that time included former E-Street Band member David Sancious. *Oro, incenso e birra* still stands as one of Zucchero's most successful albums, outselling even *Blue's* and includes the Italian hit singles "Diamante", "Overdose (d'Amore)", "Il Mare" and "Wonderful World". After the million selling success of *Blue's* and *Oro incenso e birra* in Italy, and his collaborations with Joe Cocker, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Eric Clapton and Miles Davis, Zucchero from 1990 on attempted to conquer the rest of Europe. The album *Blue's* was released the following year in the United Kingdom, and in 1990 Zucchero Sings his Hits in English, an album that featured songs from the *Blue's* and *Oro incenso e birra* albums, some of which translated to English and released worldwide.

Zucchero's best known hit "Senza una donna" ("Without a Woman"), in a duet with Paul Young, is from this album. The first pressing of the album didn't feature the duet: the song was performed by Zucchero only. The duet was a great success worldwide, reaching the top 10 in European charts. Other European hit singles from this album include English versions of "Diamante" (of which the original Italian lyrics were written by Francesco De Gregori, and "Wonderful World" (with Eric Clapton). *Diamante* was later released as a duet with Randy Crawford, a variant not available on any album until the special edition of *Zu & Co.*

Since then Zucchero has record two dozen plus albums/cds that have been hugely successful in his native Italy as well as elsewhere around the world. He has continued to collaborate with some of the world's most famous artists, such as Sting, Luciano Pavarotti, a young Andrea Bocelli, Peter Maffay, Elton John, Brian May and Eric Clapton. Many of these duets would later be included in the compilation *Zu & Co.* (2004). 1991 also saw the release of Zucchero's first live album *Live at the Kremlin*, recorded in Moscow and featuring guest appearances by Randy Crawford (on John Lennon's "Imagine") and Toni Childs. In 2013 Zucchero toured Cuba where he held a mega-concert recorded and was broadcast throughout the country. - The live double live CD and DVD, "UNA ROSA BLANCA", was released in Italian and international versions. If you get a chance please see it.

Zucchero continues to tour to sold-out audiences around the world and most recently performed in Las Angeles with Don Was and Randy Jackson as special guest at Club Nokia in Hollywood. And on April 23, 2014 he will be performing at the legendary Madison Square Garden in New York City and will be joined by the renowned Nile Rogers. So, if you love music, want to see a great show and are in the New York area, I highly recommend that you try to see ZUCCHERO. With this I invite you to enjoy the music of one of my favorite musicians in the world, **Zucchero**.

Zucchero – **Mama** -- <http://youtu.be/DUxkHgvyr30>

Zucchero – **Diamante** -- [http://youtu.be/ZSL\\_PpRZI\\_0](http://youtu.be/ZSL_PpRZI_0)

Zucchero – **Così Celeste** -- <http://youtu.be/GUcyWDbt3Y0>

Zucchero – **Guantanamera** -- [http://youtu.be/b3oxFc\\_CnVw](http://youtu.be/b3oxFc_CnVw) and <http://youtu.be/4JsJJd70xSM>

Zucchero – **Everybody's Got To Learn Sometime** -- <http://youtu.be/BQjDvTjtty8>

Zucchero – **Con le Mani** -- <http://youtu.be/ktn-MRNtBCw>

Zucchero – *Dune Mosse* -- <http://youtu.be/CG-U7rdITcE>

Zucchero & B.B. King – *Hey Man* -- <http://youtu.be/CMZwr5oLOao>

Zucchero & Eric Clapton – *Wonderful World* -- <http://youtu.be/rtN9A2yyYv8>

Zucchero & Pavarotti – *Miserere* -- <http://youtu.be/cP1NgW6GS-Q>

Zucchero – *Baila Morena* -- <http://youtu.be/jP7rWubGNOI>

Zucchero – *Diavolo in Me* -- <http://youtu.be/Ovml5tWO1Hw>

Zucchero – *Vedo Nero* -- <http://youtu.be/Z43t5mXB4Mo>

Zucchero – *Overdose d'Amore* -- <http://youtu.be/7pAsywaOwzc>

Zucchero – *Baila Morena* -- <http://youtu.be/jP7rWubGNOI>

Zucchero – *Il Mare* -- <http://youtu.be/oddeMZS9Hs4>

Zucchero & Paul Young – *Senza una donna (Without a Woman)* --  
<http://youtu.be/m8922LLqCKo>

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

Sincerely,

**Greg Brown**

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Gregory Brown  
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