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**Subject:** Greg Brown's Weekend Reading and Other Things.... 11/23/2014

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**Attachments:** 11\_Foods\_That\_Double\_As\_Cleaning\_Products\_\_Renee\_Jacques\_Huff\_Post\_Oct.\_26,\_2014.docx;  
The\_Affordable\_Care\_Act,\_Who\_Was\_Helped\_Most\_Kevin\_Ouealy\_&\_Margot\_Sanger\_NYT\_Oct.\_29,\_2014.docx;  
UN\_climate\_change\_report\_to\_warn\_of\_'severe,\_pervasive'\_effects\_of\_global\_warming\_Emily\_Gosden\_The\_Telegraph\_Nov.\_1,\_2014.docx;  
Map\_The\_countries\_that\_recognize\_Palestine\_as\_a\_state\_Ishaan\_Tharoor\_TWP\_November\_7,\_2014.docx;  
Sweden\_recognizes\_Palestinian\_state,\_hopes\_will\_revive\_peace\_process\_SIMON\_JOHNSON\_Reuter\_Oct.\_30,\_2014.docx;  
The\_Escalation\_of\_the\_War\_in\_Iraq\_Is\_Grounded\_in\_Fantasy\_William\_Hartung\_Huff\_Post\_Nov.\_10,\_2014.docx; Crosby,\_Stills,\_Nash\_&\_Young\_bio.docx;  
The\_\$9\_Billion\_Witness,\_Meet\_JPMorgan\_Chases\_Worst\_Nightmare\_Matt\_Tabbi\_Rolling\_Stone\_Nov.\_6,\_2014.docx;  
The\_Full\_Text\_Of\_Obama's\_Immigration\_Speech\_Nov.\_20,\_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

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**DEAR FRIEND.....**

**BRAVO MR. PRESIDENT**



**Web Link for the President's Immigration Speech:** <http://youtu.be/U7fJOTVFsJo> and the transcript of the speech is attached.

In a public address from the White House on Thursday night President Obama used a legal and moral argument Thursday to try to convince the American public that his decision to unilaterally protect millions of illegal immigrants from deportation is consistent with the law and necessary to begin repairing a dysfunctional immigration system. The President outlined a plan to provide administrative relief and work permits to as many as 3.7 million undocumented parents of U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents, as well as an additional 300,000 young immigrants who were brought to the country illegally as children.

In doing so, Obama challenged the opponents of his executive action to pass legislation permanently reforming the immigration system and to defend a current deportation policy that in his words “rips families apart.” He cited Scripture and his Republican predecessor to call for a more compassionate view of the immigrant experience in the United States, emphasizing the values of hard work, education and success for their children that he said are held by most of those who enter the country illegally.

President Obama portrayed his action as a “*common-sense, middle-ground approach*” that will allow otherwise law-abiding immigrants to “*come out of the shadows and get right with the law.*” He emphasized the need to act in Washington’s enduring political stalemate, which has not eased despite the recent midterm elections, which will soon bring Republican control to both chambers of Congress. He said a mass deportation of the nation’s more than 11 million undocumented immigrants “*would be both impossible and contrary to our character.*” Rather, the president said, the measures he is enacting would refocus federal border control agents on the highest-priority cases — such as felons, gang members and recent border-crossers — that he called, collectively, “*actual threats to our security.*”

Obama’s decision to act on his own came two years after he pledged, in the wake of his reelection, to pursue comprehensive immigration reform to provide a pathway to citizenship for many of the nation’s undocumented immigrants. But he was denied a potential legacy achievement after efforts to pass a comprehensive bill collapsed on Capitol Hill this past summer amid partisan fighting. Instead, the president sought in his 15-minute speech to build public support and head off staunch opposition from congressional Republicans, who have vowed to fight Obama’s use of executive actions to circumvent the legislative branch. Obama then held a rally with supporters at the same high school in Las Vegas on Friday where he made the pledge two years ago.

Even before Obama took to the airwaves, GOP leaders were deliberating over how to stop him, Republicans in both chambers debated filing a lawsuit over the president’s use of executive authority, pursuing their own legislation on immigration policy or removing funding for federal immigration agencies. “*By ignoring the will of the American people, President Obama has cemented his legacy of lawlessness and squandered what little credibility he had left,*” House Speaker John A. Boehner (R-Ohio) said after Obama’s address. “*Republicans are left with the serious responsibility of upholding our oath of office. We will not shrink from this duty, because our allegiance lies with the American people. We will listen to them, work with our members, and protect the Constitution.*”

But White House lawyers expressed confidence that Obama has the legal standing to enact the changes. They cited previous executive actions taken by Republican presidents, including Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, both of whom signed orders protecting smaller groups of illegal immigrants from deportation. White House officials released statistics showing that Bush’s order protected about the same percentage of illegal immigrants that Obama’s action is projected to protect

— though far fewer in raw number because there were only 3.5 million undocumented immigrants in the early 1990s.

Progressives and all those who have spent years trying to fix our broken immigration system should feel gratitude toward President Obama. The President's executive action will relieve some of the suffering caused by the failures of the status quo. Millions of families will no longer live under the daily threat of having their lives torn apart by senseless deportations, which is something all Christians, Jews, Muslims and agnostics -- whether Republican or Democrat -- should celebrate. As many of this immigrants have spent significant portions of their lives hiding in the shadows, can now move into the light. And as the **New York Times Editorial Board** wrote – ***This is a victory for problem-solving over posturing, common sense over cruelty, and lawful order over a chaotic status quo.***

It is amazing how political ideology prevents Conservatives and Republicans from seeing this as a new first step. Everyone agrees the only way to find sustainable, long-term solutions is through Congress passing bipartisan legislation. The Senate did exactly that more than 500 days ago, but their honest efforts have languished in the House of Representatives because of Republican intransigence. GOP leaders promised alternative policy ideas; reform garnered widespread, nationwide support -- including among a majority of Republicans; faith leaders were hopeful after countless positive conversations with members of Congress; the president even said that he was "*optimistic*" about reform after conversations with Speaker John Boehner; the country, and, more importantly immigrant families, patiently waited -- yet, the House failed to act.

With only continued delay and obstruction from the Congress and no promises for change, finally a political leader decided to act for the sake of immigrant families. For making a morally responsible choice -- using his discretionary legal authority to focus enforcement resources and prioritize deportations in ways that keep families together and our nation safe -- President Obama has been labeled an "*emperor*" and a "*dictator*" by the Republicans who now promise to obstruct his executive actions, sue the White House, block his administration's executive and judicial appointments, threaten another shutdown of the government, or even attempt to impeach him.

Asked about a potential GOP lawsuit, a senior administration official said: "*Anyone with a filing fee can sue; there's nothing we can do about that.*" But the official added that administration lawyers think Obama's actions "*are absolutely supported by the law.*" Addressing the chief criticism of Republicans — that illegal immigrants are being rewarded for violating the law to remain in the country — Obama emphasized that those who qualify for relief will have to pay taxes and that they will not achieve citizenship through the new program. He said many of the undocumented immigrants in the country "*are as American as Malia or Sasha,*" a reference to his daughters, and he quoted his predecessor, George W. Bush, to make the case that these immigrants "*are a part of American life.*"

*"Amnesty is the immigration system we have today — millions of people who live here without paying their taxes or playing by the rules, while politicians use the issue to scare people and whip up votes at election time,"* Obama said. *"That's the real amnesty — leaving this broken system the way it is."* *"The actions I'm taking are not only lawful, they're the kinds of actions taken by every single Republican president and every single Democratic president for the past half-century,"* Obama said. ***"And to those members of Congress who question my authority to make our immigration system work better, or question the wisdom of me***

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## John Oliver – European Far Right



Web Link: <http://youtu.be/NFEeS2OXpoI>

**If you want to know if racism is alive and well the reemergence of the Far Right in Europe here is the evidence and their threat is chillingly real.**

There is mounting panic among Europe's mainstream political parties at the rising popularity of extreme-right parties. And instead of meeting the extremism head on with reasoned argument, traditional parties are allowing the far right to hijack the political agenda. The mainstream parties are moving further right and changing their policies to win back votes. A number of factors have combined to create these high tensions in European politics.

The financial crisis has made the working-class fear for their jobs. At the same time, migration within the EU has intensified since Poland and seven other East European countries won full rights within the EU in 2004. Since then, Bulgarians and Romanians have earned the same rights. The OECD has calculated that the number of people moving within the EU has "soared" to close to a million per year. Increasing resentment against immigrants has gone hand in hand with the growth of far-right parties. In the UK, the anti-EU, anti-immigrant UKIP party received 36% of the vote, and 24 of the UK's 73 seats, in May's European Parliament (EP) elections. A measure of UKIP's progress is that it won 1% of the vote in its first EP election 20 years ago. UKIP leader Nigel Farage has not been afraid to make incendiary statements, telling one interviewer that he would feel "uncomfortable" living next door to a Romanian family.

The major parties have been scrambling to claw back votes from UKIP. When British PM David Cameron recently announced that dole for unemployed EU migrants would be reduced from six months to three months, his justification sounded like quintessential Farage: Cameron claimed to be "addressing the magnetic pull of Britain's benefits system". He also announced a ban on overseas-only recruitment and "massive" restrictions on the number of jobs automatically advertised on an EU jobs portal. "This is about putting British residents first," he said.

There is a transparent link between the anti-immigrant policy moves of the mainstream parties and the rising popularity of the far right, according to Professor John Gaffney, author of Political Leadership in France: From Charles de Gaulle to Nicolas Sarkozy. "A great deal of the policy proposals of the ruling Tory party in the months before the 2015 general election will be connected to the success of UKIP at the EP elections. Cutting dole from six to three months was an attempt to go after the UKIP vote," he said.

But it is not just the usual suspects, United Kingdom, France and Germany that are in shock' at far-right parties' electoral breakthrough but socially liberal Sweden who prides itself on a long tradition of welcoming refugees has joined other countries in Europe with a sizable far-right party vote, one opposed to the Nordic nation's generous refugee policies. "Sweden is in shock today," said Haakan Bengtsson, director of the Swedish think-tank Arena, after the electoral breakthrough of the Sweden Democrats, who campaigned to radically reduce immigration.

Analysts believe the Sweden Democrats attracted votes from the working class, the elderly, unemployed and people from former industrial regions. The party's rise echoes the growth of far right and populist movements in Europe — as seen in EU election wins for their French, British and Danish counterparts in May — against a backdrop of discontent with the economy, unemployment and opposition to globalization and immigration.

Yes, immigrants are taking job but like the jobs that our new immigrant population from Mexico and Central America are doing here in the United States, are entry level jobs that Brits, French, Germans, Dutch, Swedes and even the Greeks won't do.... The same goes for the neighborhoods and apartments that these immigrants are live. And for the immigrants who have braved their way often thousands of miles from Africa and Eastern Europe often with little more than pocket change and the clothes on their back, they arrive with the determination that failure is not an option which can't be that bad for any economy.

These new Far Right converts shouldn't be angry at immigrants or the government policies that allow immigration. They should be angry and justifiably angry at their elected officials who often are little more than facilitators for Big Business, International Banks and Special Interest groups who obviously weren't vigilant enough enabling the malfeasance that caused greedy bankers knowingly to manipulate the financial system and politicians willing to jeopardize their country's economies by supporting massive numbers of government programs that produced distorted investment incentives — the ticking time bombs that caused the meltdown of the financial markets in 2009 and the ensuing Great Recession.

Ironic as it is because credit got us into this mess, the need for an influx of cash was the medicine that was needed as free market economies are built on credit. Yet in still many conservative European officials and the IMF refused this option and instead forced their citizens to live through years of painful government austerity which have fail miserably. As economists have found, efforts to rein in budget deficits employing austerity take a wrenching toll on living standards, especially in a recession. To suggest that all the misery of fiscally tight economic policies was worth the pain because of the tentative claims that the worst is now over and, ipso facto, austerity worked is an absolute charade. And since politicians won't accept the blame for choosing austerity instead of stimulus programs to produce jobs many of the European disenfranchise are blaming immigrants for their woes. Hence, the rise of the Far Right anti-immigrant, anti-Semitic and anti-government parties in Europe should be seen as a dangerous trend to everyone.

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## The world can't hide from pandemics

Epidemics and pandemics are like earthquakes. Tragic, inevitable and unpredictable. It starts as a random event. A virus jumps species from a bird, bat or other animal to "patient zero" — who passes it on to other human beings. More likely than not, over the course of this century we will face an influenza pandemic similar to the one in 1918 that killed an estimated 50 million people. President Obama's first chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel, said in the wake of the global economic meltdown that

*“you never want a serious crisis to go to waste.”* Crises are opportunities to learn. They point to measures that will prevent the collapse of institutions when they are under extreme pressure.

While the focus now is understandably on responding to Ebola, it is equally important that the crisis serve as a wake-up call with respect to inadequacies that threaten not just tragedy on an unprecedented scale but the basic security of the United States and other wealthy nations. As with climate change, no part of the world can insulate itself from the consequences of epidemic and pandemic. The Global Health 2035 report by the Commission on Investing in Health, which I co-chaired, points up three crucial lessons. First, collective action must be taken to build strong health systems in every corner of the globe. In West Africa, Ebola was a *“stress test”* on national health systems, and in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea the systems could not cope. There were too few trained health professionals, too little equipment and supplies, and too little capacity for public health surveillance and control.

Nigeria’s success in containing the virus after the first case was diagnosed there in July is instructive. Its success, hailed by the World Health Organization as a piece of “world-class epidemiological detective work,” is explained by its aggressive, coordinated surveillance and control response. It already had a polio surveillance system, with skilled outbreak specialists who could be quickly put to work tackling Ebola. While much of Nigeria’s health system, such as primary care services, remains very weak, on Ebola the surveillance and control system worked. Every country needs this kind of system. Prevention is cheaper than cure, and leads to better outcomes.

Building these systems takes time and money. Our research, conducted with an international team of economists and health experts and published last year in the medical journal the Lancet, suggests that the price of this *“systems strengthening”* would be about \$30 billion a year for the next two decades. The good news is that we have the funds to pay for this through a combination of aid and domestic spending. The cost is well under 1 percent of the additional gross domestic product that will be available to low- and lower-middle-income countries due to increased GDP growth over the next 20 years.

The second lesson is that the lack of investment in public health is a global emergency. The WHO’s slow response to Ebola was not surprising, given its recent staff cuts. For that, we all share the blame. Since 1994, the WHO’s regular budget has declined steadily in real terms. Even before the Ebola crisis, it struggled to fund basic functions. Its entire budget for influenza was just \$7.7 million in 2013 — less than a third of what New York City alone devotes to preparing for public health emergencies. It takes just one infected airline passenger to introduce an infection into a country. We need the WHO more than ever. It alone has the mandate and legitimacy to serve as a health protection agency for all countries, rich and poor. Starving it of funds is reckless.

The third lesson concerns scientific innovation. When it comes to discovering and developing medicines, vaccines and diagnostic tests, we have largely ignored the infectious diseases that disproportionately kill the world’s poor. Consequently, we still have no medicines or vaccine for Ebola. All we can do is provide basic life support, such as fluids and blood pressure treatment. For prevention, we have to rely on old-fashioned measures such as quarantine.

Margaret Chan, the WHO's director-general, has explained the reason for this neglect. Doctors were "empty-handed," she said, because "a profit-driven industry does not invest in products for markets that cannot pay." Ebola affects poor African nations, so drug companies see no profit in working on it. Nor is there an adequate incentive to invest in prevention. No society will allow companies to reap huge profits when disease is spreading rapidly.

Rich governments and donors need to step up. Investing several billion dollars a year, less than 0.01 percent of global GDP, could be decisive in preventing tragedy on the scale of world war. Some issues are even more important than recessions and elections. Ebola is a tragedy. Let us hope that it will also be a spur to taking the necessary steps to prevent the far greater one that is nearly inevitable on the current policy trajectory. The next Ebola is just around the corner.

Lawrence Summers – November 9, 2014 – The Washington Post

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## The prison of the minimum wage: Only a quarter of low-paid workers will move up the income ladder



### *Women and part-timers make little progress in changing jobs market*

One of the biggest issues/problems in the United States is economic and social inequality. More than 45 million Americans live in poverty which is \$23,850 for a family of four, including 20% of all of the country's children. While at the same time, across the ocean in the United Kingdom only a quarter of low-paid workers will move up the income ladder, according to a major study published on November 10, 2014. The Resolution Foundation think tank uncovered the most graphic evidence to date of the scourge of in-work poverty, in which millions working part-time, in sales jobs and the hospitality

industry, cannot move up the income ladder. Fewer than one in five people working in restaurants, pubs, takeaways and catering left low pay for good in the past 10 years.

Many of those affected are women. The foundation said the “*strong negative link*” between working part-time and escaping low pay would be a big concern for the UK’s army of 6.8m part-timers, more than three quarters of whom are women. According to the study, major barriers to pay progression include being disabled, a single parent, an older worker and the number of years spent working part-time. Although many workers do move into higher-paid jobs, they often fall back. Among the three quarters of workers who were low-paid 10 years ago, a clear majority have moved between low and higher pay since. However, only 12 per cent of those who stayed in employment were stuck in low pay in every year of the period.

A previous study by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that the majority of the 13m people living in poverty in Britain are in families where one or more are in work, rather than so-called “*scroungers*” claiming out of work benefits. Today’s report reveals how hard it is for these “*strivers*” to move up the income ladder. It says that “*escapers*” from low pay saw their wages grow by on average 7.5 per cent a year in real terms over the past decade, bringing their pay up to around the level of typical workers. Those unable to escape low pay saw their wages grow half as fast (3.6 per cent a year). Alan Milburn: “The majority of Britain’s poorest paid workers never escape the low pay trap” Alan Milburn: “The majority of Britain’s poorest paid workers never escape the low pay trap”

The report, “**Escape Plan**”, written for the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, used official data to track low paid workers to find out how far up the ladder they climbed. It defined the low pay threshold as two thirds of median hourly earnings - £7.69 in 2013.

Alan Milburn, the former Labour cabinet minister who chairs the commission, said: “*The majority of Britain’s poorest paid workers never escape the low pay trap. Too many simply cycle in and out of low paying jobs instead of being able to move up the pay ladder. Any sort of work is better than no work but being in a job does not guarantee a route out of poverty.*” He added: “*This research provides compelling evidence for employers and government to do more on pay progression. It is a powerful argument for Britain to become a Living Wage country.*” **The Living Wage**, paid voluntarily by more than 1,000 employers, is worth £9.15 an hour in London and £7.85 outside the capital, higher than the £6.50 an hour national minimum wage. For you Americans that is \$14.55 and \$12.48 respectively and Conservatives here are fighting raising the U.S. Federal minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$10.10.

Vidhya Alakeson, the foundation’s deputy chief executive, said: “*Britain has a long-standing low pay problem, with over a fifth of the workforce in poorly paid jobs. But the limited opportunities for escaping low pay is just as big a concern as it has huge consequences for people’s life chances. More permanent escape routes are needed for the huge number of workers who move onto higher wages but fail to stay at that level.*” Ms. Alakeson said that even in low paid sectors, it was possible for staff, helped by employers, to progress their career and earn more. “*But we need more employers to take the issue seriously and have effective plans to promote pay progression,*” she said. Factors that help people escape low pay include having or obtaining a degree, having a positive outlook for the future and working for a large employer with 1,000 or more employees, the research found.

In a significant shift yesterday, Britain's bosses called for action to tackle the living standards crisis, by lifting the lowest paid out of national insurance and expanding free childcare. The CBI discussed what business could do to tackle low pay at its annual conference in London. Sir Michael Rake, the CBI president, said: *"Falling real wages – a price worth paying to preserve jobs during and after the recession – cannot go on for much longer. For those currently in low-paying jobs or trying for entry level roles, business has to do much more to help them climb the ladder and progress. We want to see the benefits of a growing economy translated into better opportunities for all people."*

## Low wages, depressing pay

### **Why do wages remain low?**

The market. As a society, we value Wayne Rooney much more than a care-home worker. There are few Rooneys and a huge paid demand for them; there are many of the latter and companies can get away with paying them little.

### **Is it getting worse?**

Most of the rise in prosperity across the West in recent decades has gone to the wealthy. Globalization has pushed wages down across the world, and, in Britain, displaced skilled jobs in manufacturing. The owners of capital and those who manage and control it on their behalf, have benefited.

### **What is the answer?**

Reverse globalization; subsidize skills training; redistribute wealth and income through taxation; raise minimum-wage rates; improve education to expand opportunities.

### **What about part-time workers?**

The latest report says that this is a limiting factor, but for some it may simply be that part-time occupation suits their family commitments. For some, in notorious "zero hours" contracts, this may also be the case, though there is much disquiet about their operation. Lack of funds and time limits chances of acquiring experience or skills.

Dr. John Sentamu, the Archbishop of York, told the CBI conference that Britain was in danger of becoming a country in which the *"haves"* and the *"have-nots"* lived in separate worlds. *"Income inequality is a stain on our consciences,"* he said. *"Let us make paying the Living Wage a litmus test for a fair recovery. Income inequality is the giant we must slay together."* As Andrew Grice wrote in the Independent two weeks ago – The prison of the minimum wage: Only a quarter of low-paid workers will move up the income ladder – and only one in four low earners has managed to permanently escape the prison of low pay in the past decade.

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# Remember When the Experts Told You Not to Freak Out About Ebola? You Should Have Listened.

Craig Spencer went home from the hospital on last week, as public health officials declared the city of New York officially Ebola-free. The media treated it as welcome, if relatively unremarkable, development, while politicians barely noticed. And in one sense, their response was appropriate. Surviving Ebola is no longer news. Virtually every patient who has undergone treatment at a U.S. hospital has recovered. The lone exception was Thomas Duncan, who died at Texas Presbyterian Hospital in Dallas. Most likely, that happened because staff there failed to recognize signs of Ebola — and sent him home—when he first arrived with symptoms. With modern medical care and round-the-clock attention, the majority and maybe the vast majority of Ebola patients seem likely to survive.

But Tuesday's news should have gotten a great deal more attention—and perhaps provoked a few apologies—given the controversy that erupted when Spencer first got sick. Spencer, a volunteer with Doctors Without Borders, had followed the standard protocol for physicians returning from West Africa. He'd monitored his own health daily and, as soon as he detected a fever, he went to the hospital. But then he decided to ride the subway and go bowling in Brooklyn, even though he felt "sluggish." The very next day he developed a fever, went to the hospital, and was diagnosed with the disease. Pundits and politicians, particularly although not exclusively on the right, were outraged — at Spencer, for potentially exposing other people to the disease, and at Administration officials for failing to enact policies that would have stopped Spencer from coming into contact with other people. Two figures in particular came under attack.

One was Thomas Frieden, director of the Centers for Disease Control. Echoing the views of other public experts, Frieden had said there was no reason for panic — that the CDC had implemented proper protocols and that nobody was going to get Ebola because they rode the same subway car or used the same bowling ball as Spencer. That prompted Darrell Issa, chairman of the House Government Oversight Committee, to question Frieden's credibility: "*We have the head of the Centers for Disease Control, who is supposed to be the expert, making statements that simply are not true.*" Rand Paul, the Kentucky senator and physician, said "*It's a big mistake to downplay this and act as if 'oh, this is not a big deal, we can control all this.' This could get beyond our control.*"

The other object of intense criticism, of course, was President Obama. The government's failure to contain Spencer became a supposed example of Obama's weak leadership skills and failed presidency. Jeb Bush, who like Paul is contemplating a run at the presidency, called the president's initial response to Ebola "*very incompetent*" and his inability to calm public fears an "*unmitigated disaster.*" Jodi Emswiler, who was at the time campaigning for Iowa's Senate seat, attacked the Administration's "*failed response.*" Later, Obama came under attack for not endorsing either a travel ban or, at least, a 21-day mandatory quarantine for returning visitors. Obama said it was unnecessary and potentially dangerous, because it'd discourage aid workers from going to Africa—where their presence was desperately needed, to fight the disease. Although Ebola still has the chance of becoming an out of control epidemic, if caught early and treated aggressively it hasn't and won't. Apparently Ebola only matters only when it's happening here in the U.S. and, politically, if it can be used to embarrass the president.

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# The Escalation of the War in Iraq Is Grounded in Fantasy



As William Hartung wrote a week ago in the **Huffington Post** – ***The Escalation of the War in Iraq Is Grounded in Fantasy*** – so why then is the Obama Administration now doubling the number of U.S. troops in Iraq, to 3,100; request an additional \$5.6 billion for the war; and putting U.S. trainers closer to the front lines. Adding to this, is the recently announced deal to sell Iraq \$600 million worth of tank ammunition. Obviously this is clear that the escalation of the president's "limited" war is well under way.

As Hartung pointed out – Of the many fallacies underlying the current U.S. military intervention in Iraq, the greatest may be the idea that the United States has a reliable partner in the government of Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi. In his Face the Nation interview, President Obama tied the latest escalation of the war to his trust in the new Iraqi government: *"Phase one was getting an Iraqi government that was inclusive and credible -- and we now have done that."*

The idea that the Abadi government is inclusive will come as news to people in Iraq. In one of his most consequential decisions since taking office, Abadi appointed Mohammed Salem al-Ghabban, a member of the Badr Organization, as interior minister. The Badr organization is run by Hadi al-Amiri. According to a U.S. embassy cable released by Wikileaks, Amiri ordered the torture and killing of over 2,000 Sunnis between 2004 and 2006 during a campaign of ethnic cleansing in Baghdad. One of the torture methods involved using a power drill to pierce the skull of the victims.

The appointment of a member of the Badr organization as interior minister gives Amiri substantial influence over the agency, if not de facto control. And given that the interior ministry is in charge of the federal police and intelligence agencies in Iraq, this does not bode well for the notion that the new Iraqi government will observe and protect the basic human rights of its Sunni citizens.

Government-sanctioned violence against Sunnis is not a thing of the past. In the aftermath of a series of successful counter-attacks against Islamic State (also known as ISIS) in Diyala province -- attacks in which Amiri was given control of all Iraqi forces -- Sunnis in the area suffered torture, executions, and the burning of entire villages at the hands of Shiite militias that had fought alongside Iraqi security forces.

And in Anbar province, residents of Abu Ghraib mounted a demonstration in mid-October protesting the actions of Shiite militias. Talal al-Zowbai, a member of parliament from Abu Ghraib, told the Washington Post that the actions of the militias are a recruiting tool for Islamic State: *"They arrest people, and nobody knows where they are taken. This makes so many people want to volunteer with Islamic State to fight the militias."*

Meanwhile, in some parts of northern Iraq the Shiite militias are viewed as being almost as great a danger as ISIS. Tirana Hassan of **Human Rights Watch**, writing for **Foreign Policy**, documented a campaign in which the Khorasani brigade -- a Shiite militia armed by the Iraqi government -- took control of an entire village south of Kirkuk and systematically burned down the homes of Sunni residents. Refugees from other towns in the area described similar actions. Hassan quotes a business owner from the village of Hufriyah, as follows: *"I took my family out to protect them from ISIS. I didn't realize that the people who came to fight ISIS were going to be the ones we would need protection from."*

The Obama administration should think twice about sending arms to the government in Baghdad at a time when many of the weapons are likely to be used by Shiite factions to repress Sunnis in Baghdad and beyond. Unless the Shiite militias are brought under control, President Obama's claim that there is an *"inclusive government"* in Baghdad will remain a fantasy.

More importantly where are our allies? Where are Saudi, Turkish, Jordanian, Omani and Egyptian troops. And why aren't these neighboring countries not paying the freight for this fight? Before we put any additional American troops in harm's way shouldn't we require these countries lead fight and fund their own protection? Another Democratic President was talked into placing US advisors on the ground in a foreign country and his name was John Kennedy and the country was Vietnam. Is this Barack Obama sliding down a similar *"they are only advisors"* slippery slope? Possibly and as a result..... ***this is my rant of the week....***

## WEEK'S READINGS

### The Affordable Care Act: Who Was Helped Most

*A new data set provides a clearer picture of which people gained health insurance under the Affordable Care Act.*

## Change in insured Americans, 2013-14



Healthcare in America was a disaster getting work before **The Affordable Care Act (ACA)** or **Obamacare** as both critics and supporters now call it. Decreasing the number of uninsured is a key goal of the Affordable Care Act, which provides Medicaid coverage to many low-income individuals in states that expand and Marketplace subsidies for individuals below 400% of the poverty line. Baseline estimates show that over 41 million individuals were uninsured in 2013, prior to the start of the major ACA coverage provisions, and early evidence suggests that the ACA has reduced this number.

We now know that about 10 million more people have insurance coverage this year as a result of the Affordable Care Act. But until now it has been difficult to say much about who was getting that coverage — where they live, their age, their income and other such details. Now a large set of data — from Enroll America, the group trying to sign up people for the program, and from the data firm Civis Analytics — is allowing a much clearer picture. The data shows that the law has done something rather unusual in the American economy this century: It has pushed back against inequality, essentially redistributing income — in the form of health insurance or insurance subsidies — too many of the groups that have fared poorly over the last few decades.

The biggest winners from the law include people between the ages of 18 and 34; blacks; Hispanics; and people who live in rural areas. The areas with the largest increases in the health insurance rate, for example, include rural Arkansas and Nevada; southern Texas; large swaths of New Mexico, Kentucky and West Virginia; and much of inland California and Oregon. Each of these trends is going in the opposite direction of larger economic patterns. Young people have fared substantially worse in the job market than older people in recent years. Blacks and Hispanics have fared worse than whites and Asians. Rural areas have fallen further behind larger metropolitan areas.

Women are the one modest exception. They have benefited more from Obamacare than men and they have received larger raises in recent years. But of course women still make considerably less money

than men, so an economic benefit for women still pushes against inequality in many ways. The Affordable Care Act was passed in 2010, but the law's biggest insurance expansion provisions went into effect in January, when millions more people qualified for state Medicaid programs, and new subsidized insurance plans sold in state marketplaces kicked in.

Despite many Republican voters' disdain for the Affordable Care Act, parts of the country that lean the most heavily Republican (according to 2012 presidential election results) showed significantly more insurance gains than places where voters lean strongly Democratic. That partly reflects underlying rates of insurance. In liberal places, like Massachusetts and Hawaii, previous state policies had made insurance coverage much more widespread, leaving less room for improvement. But the correlation also reflects trends in wealth and poverty. Many of the poorest and most rural states in the country tend to favor Republican politicians. Of course, the fact that Republican areas showed disproportionate insurance gains does not mean that only Republicans signed up; there are many Democrats living in even the most strongly Republican regions of the country.

While people who lived in rural areas were more likely to gain insurance than those living in big cities. Over all, the changes tended to be strongest among the groups that were the least likely to be insured. The single most predictive question in the Enroll model for 2014 was whether someone was insured in 2013. That also means that the newly insured are not substantially different from the remaining uninsured in broad demographic terms. There are still a lot of uninsured people remaining, many in the places that had high uninsured rates last year.

After a more than year and a half in place, the Affordable Care Act has largely succeeded in delivering on President Obama's main promises, an analysis by a team of reporters and data researchers shows. But it has also fallen short in some ways and given rise to a powerful conservative backlash.

1. Has the percentage of uninsured people been reduced? Yes, the number of uninsured has fallen significantly.
2. Has insurance under the law been affordable? For many, yes, but not for all.
3. Did the Affordable Care Act improve health outcomes? Data remains sparse except for one group, the young.
4. Will the online exchanges work better this year than last? Most experts expect they will, but they will be tested by new challenges.
5. Has the health care industry been helped or hurt by the law? The law mostly helped, by providing new paying patients and insurance customers.
6. How has the expansion of Medicaid fared? Twenty-three states have opposed expansion, though several of them are reconsidering.
7. Has the law contributed to a slowdown in health care spending? Perhaps, but we know that if ACA had not been enacted healthcare would cost more than it does today.

### **But why are/were so many Americans uninsured?**

The high cost of insurance has been the main reason why people go without coverage. In 2013, 61% of uninsured adults said the main reason they were uninsured was because the cost was too high or because they had lost their job. Many people do not have access to coverage through a job, and gaps in eligibility for public coverage in the past have left many without an affordable option. Even after ACA coverage expansions, Medicaid eligibility for adults remains limited in states that did not expand their programs.

Who are the uninsured?

Most of the uninsured are in low-income working families. In 2013, nearly 8 in 10 were in a family with a worker, and nearly 6 in 10 have family income below 200% of poverty. Reflecting the more limited availability of public coverage, adults have been more likely to be uninsured than children. People of color are at higher risk of being uninsured than non-Hispanic Whites.

How does the lack of insurance affect access to health care?

People without insurance coverage have worse access to care than people who are insured. Almost a third of uninsured adults in 2013 (30%) went without needed medical care due to cost. Studies repeatedly demonstrate that the uninsured are less likely than those with insurance to receive preventive care and services for major health conditions and chronic diseases.

What are the financial implications of lack of coverage?

The uninsured often face unaffordable medical bills when they do seek care. In 2013, nearly 40% of uninsured adults said they had outstanding medical bills, and a fifth said they had medical bills that caused serious financial strain. These bills can quickly translate into medical debt since most of the uninsured have low or moderate incomes and have little, if any, savings.

What was happening to the uninsured leading up to the ACA?

The number of uninsured people steadily increased throughout most of the past decade due to decreasing employer sponsored insurance coverage and rising health care costs. The recent recession led to a steep increase in uninsured rates from 2008 to 2010 as a high jobless rate led millions to lose their employer sponsored coverage. Medicaid and CHIP prevented steeper drops in insurance coverage, as many Americans became newly eligible for these programs when their income declined during the recession. From 2011 to 2013, uninsured rates dropped as the economy improved and early provisions expanding coverage under the ACA went into effect.

How does the lack of insurance affect access to health care?

Receiving needed care is especially important for the uninsured since they are generally not as healthy as those with private coverage. The uninsured are at higher risk for preventable hospitalizations and for missed diagnoses of serious health conditions.

- After a chronic condition is diagnosed, they are less likely to receive follow-up care and as a result are more likely to have their health decline.

- Lack of follow-up attributed to being uninsured can delay the detection of certain cancers, which can result in adverse outcomes.
- It follows that the uninsured also have significantly higher mortality rates than those with insurance.

The uninsured report higher rates of postponing care and forgoing needed care or prescriptions due to cost compared to those enrolled in Medicaid and other public programs. A study of health insurance in Oregon found that the uninsured were less likely to receive care from a hospital or doctor than newly insured Medicaid enrollees. And a follow-up study found that newly insured Medicaid enrollees were much less likely to delay care because of costs than the uninsured.

Uninsured individuals report that cost poses a major barrier to purchasing coverage. In 2013, 61% of adults said that the main reason they are uninsured is either because the cost is too high or because they lost their job, compared to 1.7% who said they are uninsured because they do not need coverage. Under the ACA, financial assistance is available to help many uninsured people afford coverage. Not all workers have access to coverage through their job. Most uninsured workers are self-employed or work for small firms where health benefits are less likely to be offered. Low-wage workers who are offered coverage often cannot afford their share of the premiums, especially for family coverage.

Workers usually enroll in employer-sponsored health insurance if they are eligible. However, it has become increasingly difficult for many workers to afford coverage. In 2014, the average annual total cost of employer-sponsored family coverage was \$16,834, and the worker's share averaging \$4,823 per year. Between 2004 and 2014, total premiums have increased by 69%, and the worker's share has increased over 81%. Starting in 2015, under the ACA, employers with 50 or more workers will be penalized if they do not offer affordable coverage. As of 2014, the ACA provides Marketplace tax credits or Medicaid coverage for many employees without access to affordable employer-sponsored insurance.

Going without coverage can have serious health consequences for the uninsured because they receive less preventive care, and delayed care often results in more serious illness requiring advanced treatment. Being uninsured also can have serious financial consequences. The ACA holds promise for many people who will gain access to health insurance coverage and monitoring how coverage changes and who is left out of coverage expansions is also important. Most of all trying to overturn Obamacare because of partisan motives is beyond ugly as two of five adults who have recently been uninsured living in states that have not yet decided to expand Medicaid eligibility under the Affordable Care Act would likely have no new affordable health insurance options if their states don't eventually expand the program.

The U.S. Supreme Court, in upholding the law in 2012, ruled that the federal government cannot require states to expand Medicaid eligibility. Currently, 26 states have said they will not, or may not, expand their Medicaid programs in 2014. In these states, the lowest-income adults — those earning below the federal poverty level, or less than \$11,170 for an individual and \$23,050 for a family of four in 2012 — will not have access to either the Medicaid expansion or subsidized private insurance through the new state insurance marketplaces and are likely to remain uninsured.

### **Who remains uninsured in 2014**



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# Firestone and the Warlord

*The untold story of Firestone, Charles Taylor and the tragedy of Liberia*



Web site: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/firestone-and-the-warlord/>

As one of the first generation who grew up with ubiquitous television it was this omnipresent culture of television that taught me the language of the dominate culture but more importantly became my first insight for many things near and far. I wanted to dress like Cary Grant, walk with the swagger of John Wayne and dance like the dancers on 'Soul Train'. European imports like 'The Saint' led me to want to travel to Monte Carlo, Buenos Aries and Hong Kong. But little prepared me for the realities of Africa and some of the characters whom I met. One of the first Heads of State whom I met was the late William Richard Tolbert, Jr who became President of Liberia after the death of his predecessor William Tubman in 1971 and who arranged a visit to Liberia for my Mother's church group in Harlem. I somehow met with Master Sergeant Samuel Doe who came to power though a military coup in April 1980. And a decade later Doe was overthrown by American educated Charles Taylor who I met on several occasions and who personally gave me a Liberian Diplomatic Passport. What dishearten me the most was that under successive Presidents things got progressively worse. And although I realized the horrors of African civil wars and that the civil wars in Liberia paled in comparison to those in South Sudan, Rwanda and the DRC, the **FRONTLINE** documentary televised this week by **PBS** and **Pro Publica** – **Firestone and the Warlord** – was an eye-opener. With this said, I strongly recommend for anyone interested in Africa see the documentary which in on the **PBS' FRONTLINE** web site above.

In the late 1980s, 40% of the latex used in the United States was supplied by a single plantation — a massive operation run by Firestone in the African nation of Liberia. The plantation had survived the 1980 coup that saw the country's president slaughtered in his bed and cabinet members executed in public. But after an even bloodier uprising began in 1989, Firestone ultimately ended up in bed with one of history's most evil figures. Following the 1980 military coup led by Samuel Doe, American-educated Taylor was put in charge of the government bureau responsible for procurement. When he

was accused by Doe of embezzlement, Taylor fled to the U.S., where he was eventually jailed. Mysteriously, Taylor managed to escape custody in the U.S. and make his way back to Liberia (via Libya), where he quickly began building an army, mainly consisting of heavily armed, unskilled boys, often from neighboring nations like Sierra Leone.

Taylor's army quickly took over large swaths of Liberia, but was unable to take the capital of Monrovia, about 45 miles west of the Firestone plantation in the company town of Harbel. *"It really didn't affect us much,"* says the former Senior Accountant for the Firestone operation, *"until we knew that they were getting closer to Monrovia, and therefore, obviously, closer to us. I was hoping the rebels would go around the plantation, not come onto the plantation, and we would be able to continue to operate."* But the war arrived at the plantation on June 5, 1990, when a small group of Taylor's rebels burst into the plantation's golf club and demanded vehicles, bags of rice, handheld radios and petty cash. The rebels also began killing and torturing people in Harbel who belonged to the wrong tribe. Soon, more than 1,000 employees and family members showed up at the plantation manager's estate looking for some sort of help or protection. Only the foreign Firestone workers — mostly American — were given shelter.

Those expats tell FRONTLINE that they simply couldn't protect anyone. And even the manager's mansion was no longer safe after the ninth day of Taylor's breach of the plantation. Rebels told the expats they had to leave the house or it would be destroyed with an RPG. And so, the next day the expat management fled by plane and the plantation stopped operating. But the war continued. The former head of the Coca-Cola bottling operation (also then run by Firestone) in Harbel says that around 17% of his more than 300 employees were killed by rebels along ethnic lines. In spite of these atrocities, Firestone's biggest concern was not for the workers at its abandoned plantation who were now subject to the whims of a madman and his army of young killers. Instead, Firestone (which had been purchased by Bridgestone in 1988) was more concerned about the lack of rubber and revenue coming out of Liberia.

"Firestone's intent was to make money," says the plantation's former controller. "Why did we go back? Because we felt sorry for the people that were there? Probably not. We wanted to get the investment earning money again." And even though sources both inside and outside the U.S. government were discussing reports of acts of genocide by Taylor's army, including atrocities in Sierra Leone, where Taylor was cashing in on the lucrative diamond business, the government never openly told Firestone that it would be a bad idea to deal with the rebels.

Making things even more complicated was the fact that the interim government set up in Monrovia was also not recognized as being legitimate. But they didn't have control of the plantation — Taylor did — and the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) peacekeepers were doing more looting and photo-taking than keeping of the peace. And so, in Oct. 1990, only months after being run off their own property by rebels, Firestone contacted Taylor to request a meeting, saying that the company *"continues to incur major losses as a result of hostilities."*

In early 1991, Taylor invited Firestone officials back to Liberia to assess the plantation. By then, all but the manager's mansion had been gutted and destroyed, chunks of land ruined, and the streets so strewn with dead bodies that the Coca-Cola manager says you couldn't drive down the road without running over human bones. At the time, Taylor admitted to officials that his forces would probably have no choice but to surrender if the U.S. military were to send in soldiers to quash the fighting, but with American soldiers already busy in the first Gulf War, Liberia's bloody conflict took a backseat. By

the end of 1991, the board of Firestone agreed to work with Taylor, who demanded that the company recognize his government as the rightful ruling power in Liberia, even though he still didn't control Monrovia. As part of the terms of its agreement with Taylor, Firestone not only agreed to recognize him as the president of Liberia and use a shipping port controlled by Taylor, but that it would also pay more than \$2.3 million in taxes to his government, which would also remain on the land alongside the plantation workers to provide "security."

A former advisor to Taylor tells FRONTLINE that getting the Firestone plantation reopened and allied with the rebels gave credibility to the insurrectionists. And with the help of the Firestone money and using the Firestone plantation as a base for his prolonged attack on Monrovia. That attack began in Oct. 1992, not even a year after Firestone returned to Liberia and invested millions in rebuilding the facility. The company claims that it had no idea that Taylor was using the plantation as a staging ground or storing weapons on the property, but employees at the plantation believe there is no way that Firestone management did not know what was going on.

The plantation was turned into a major military installation. *"Firestone provided the backdrop for this. Provided the rear base, the rear guard base. Provided the ammunition depot from which ambushes could be set and all of this could happen."* And it could have continued to go on like this, with Firestone harvesting sap and Taylor launching attacks on Monrovia, if ECOMOG had not decided on an aerial strike against the rebel camp in Harbel. This was too much for Firestone's expats to take, so they pulled up stakes again and fled the plantation. But not before sending an apology note — not to its workers — but to Taylor.

Firestone restarted the relationship in 1996, when it returned to Liberia, which would eventually elect Taylor to the office of president in 1997. While the tire company downplays its complicity in abetting Taylor's actions, claiming the millions it provided to the rebels were insignificant in the big picture of a rebellion that lasted nearly a decade, Taylor's own words paint a different picture of the company's role in his rise. More than a decade later, when tried for crimes against humanity at The Hague, Taylor explained the importance that Firestone in the early years of his insurrection. *"You had immediately a means that would provide the needed financial assistance that we needed for the revolution,"* explained Taylor about being allied with the plantation, which *"became at that particular time our most significant principal source of foreign exchange."*

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## Map: The countries that recognize Palestine as a state



On October 30, 2014, Sweden became the 135th member of the United Nations to officially recognize Palestine as an independent state. The act sparked a tetchy diplomatic incident with Israel. Sweden's Foreign Minister Margot Wallstrom said her government's decision was aimed at supporting the Palestinian Authority and its beleaguered President Mahmoud Abbas, particularly given the present tensions in Jerusalem. *"It is important to support those who believe in negotiations and not violence,"* she told Al Jazeera. *"This will give hope to young Palestinians and Israelis that there is an alternative to violence."* In the absence of progress in negotiations with Israel, Abbas has taken the Palestinians' case to the United Nations in recent years. The effort is mostly symbolic — a bid to deepen the political isolation of the right-wing government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. And one Israeli pundit says that Israelis needn't regard it as a hostile move; it reflects domestic politics as much as foreign policy.

On the ground, a separate, viable Palestinian state is far from a reality. Israel occupies the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and it partially blockades the Gaza Strip, the territories that would comprise it. The continued expansion of Israeli settlements into the West Bank makes tackling the question of Palestinian sovereignty all the more difficult. So, too, the apparent collapse of talks between the Israeli government and its Palestinian interlocutors.

Sweden's move reflects a wider European frustration with Netanyahu. This week, French socialist lawmakers said they were preparing a bill calling on the government to recognize Palestine. In mid-October, British lawmakers overwhelmingly passed a motion indicating *"that the Government should recognise the state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel, as a contribution to securing a negotiated two state solution."* The motion is nonbinding, but serves as one more sign of Europe's growing impatience with the Mideast status quo. The United States would want to see the two-state solution come into fruition before conferring official recognition upon Palestine. But that is, at present, a naive hope: A number of prominent ministers in Netanyahu's government reject outright the possibility of the two-state solution ever being realized.

Before Sweden's decision, tiny Iceland was the only Western European country to recognize Palestine. As you can see in the map, most of the other nations that have not officially recognized Palestine are in the E.U. or are U.S. partners who wouldn't want to ruffle Washington's feathers. These include South Pacific island nations like Kiribati and Nauru. Even then, it's quite likely that the U.S. will find itself on this map within a steadily shrinking patch of gray in the months and years to come.

Israel recalled its ambassador for consultations, saying the move was counterproductive and would hurt prospects for future negotiations. But Sweden's decision drew praise from Palestinians who called on other countries to match it – a hope which Wallstrom said was likely to be fulfilled in time. *"There is an ongoing debate in many other EU member states and hopefully also a move in this direction,"* she said. *"There are clearly signs that this might happen in other member states as well".*

Palestinians seek statehood in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and the blockaded Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as their capital. The land was captured by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war, although Israeli soldiers and settlers pulled out of Gaza in 2005. Years of efforts to forge a two-state solution have made little progress, with the last effort at negotiations collapsing in April. Palestinians now see little choice but to make a unilateral push for statehood. A total of 135 countries already recognize Palestine, including several east European countries that did so before they joined the EU. The move drew immediate criticism from Israel, with Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman calling it a *"wretched decision"* that would bolster extremist Palestinian elements. *"The Swedish government should understand that Middle East relations are more complex than a piece of self-assembled Ikea furniture, and the matter should be handled with responsibility and sensitivity,"* Lieberman said in a statement.

The Palestinian leadership called on other countries to follow Sweden, saying that establishing an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital would strengthen the chances for peace. *"This decision is a message to Israel and is an answer to its continued occupation of Palestinian land,"* said Nabeel Abu Rdeineh, spokesman for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. Earlier this month the Palestinians' chief peace negotiator said a resolution would be put to the United Nations Security Council calling for a November 2017 deadline for the establishment of two states based on the boundaries that existed before the 1967 war. With Britain's parliament having recognized Palestine in a non-binding vote earlier this month, and similar votes in the pipeline in Spain, France and Ireland, the Palestinians hope momentum in Europe is shifting.

Wallstrom said Sweden's move aimed at supporting moderate Palestinians and making their status more equal with that of Israel in peace negotiations, as well as giving hope to young people on both sides. The United States said earlier this month, when the Swedish move was in the works, that it believed international recognition of a Palestinian state would be premature. Statehood should come only through a negotiated outcome, it said. The European Union said after the Swedish announcement that the EU's objective was a two-state solution with an independent Palestinian state living side by side with Israel. *"In order to achieve this, what is important is direct negotiations resume as soon as possible."* European Commission spokesman Maya Kocijancic said. *"As for the European Union position on recognition, the EU has said in the past that it would recognize a Palestinian state when appropriate."*

Some EU states, which are closer to the Israeli position, were irritated by the Swedish step, diplomats in Brussels said. Nonetheless, the move showed growing international frustration at the lack of progress, with continued Israeli settlement building on occupied land a particular point of concern. The Gaza war of July and August also refocused attention on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The U.N. Under Secretary-General for political affairs, Jeffrey Feltman, said in New York several weeks ago that Israel's decision to accelerate planning for some 1,000 new settler homes in East Jerusalem raises serious doubts about the Israeli commitment to peace with the Palestinians. The U.N. General Assembly approved the de facto recognition of the state of Palestine in 2012, but the European Union and most EU countries have yet to give official recognition. And Netanyahu should realize that if the status quo continues more and more countries will join the ranks of those countries that now support

Palestine's statehood further pressuring Israel to come up with some sort of accommodation that gives the Palestinians their own country.

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## Matt Taibbi And JPMorgan Chase Whistleblower Explain \$9 Billion Cover-Up



**Web Link Video of Taibbi Interview:** <http://live.huffingtonpost.com/r/segment/matt-taibbi-rolling-stone-first-look-media/545bc4182b8c2ao8b50003b7>

If you have read **Matt Taibbi**, (the notoriously hard-hitting journalist known for his work with **Rolling Stone**), searing article – **JPMorgan Chase Whistleblower Explain \$9 Billion Cover-Up** – earlier this month revealing what he calls "*one of the biggest cases of white-collar crime in American history*," you should because it exposes the massive impropriety at the largest financial institutions in the U.S. and the failures of the Justice Department to properly investigate them. Alayne Fleischmann, the whistleblower and former high-ranking manager at JPMorgan Chase whom Taibbi describes as the bank's "*worst nightmare*," exposed the massive impropriety at the largest financial institutions in the U.S. and the failures of the Justice Department to properly investigate them.

Taibbi describes Fleischmann as a tall, thin, quick-witted securities lawyer in her late thirties, with long blond hair, pale-blue eyes and an infectious sense of humor that has survived some very tough times who had to struggle to find work despite some striking skills and qualifications, a common symptom of a not-so-common condition called being a whistle-blower. Fleischmann is the central witness in one of the biggest cases of white-collar crime in American history, possessing secrets that JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon late last year paid \$9 billion (not \$13 billion as regularly reported – more on that later) to keep the public from hearing.

Back in 2006, as a deal manager at the gigantic bank, Fleischmann first witnessed, then tried to stop, what she describes as "massive criminal securities fraud" in the bank's mortgage operations. Thanks to a confidentiality agreement, she's kept her mouth shut since then. "My closest family and friends don't know what I've been living with," she says. "*Even my brother will only find out for the first time*

*when he sees this interview.*" Six years after the crisis that cratered the global economy, it's not exactly news that the country's biggest banks stole on a grand scale. That's why the more important part of Fleischmann's story is in the pains Chase and the Justice Department took to silence her.

She was blocked at every turn: by asleep-on-the-job regulators like the Securities and Exchange Commission, by a court system that allowed Chase to use its billions to bury her evidence, and, finally, by officials like outgoing Attorney General Eric Holder, the chief architect of the crazily elaborate government policy of surrender, secrecy and cover-up. *"Every time I had a chance to talk, something always got in the way,"* Fleischmann says. This past year she watched as Holder's Justice Department struck a series of historic settlement deals with Chase, Citigroup and Bank of America.

The root bargain in these deals was cash for secrecy. The banks paid big fines, without trials or even judges – only secret negotiations that typically ended with the public shown nothing but vague, quasi-official papers called *"statements of facts,"* which were conveniently devoid of anything like actual facts. And now, with Holder about to leave office and his Justice Department reportedly wrapping up its final settlements, the state is effectively putting the finishing touches on what will amount to a sweeping, industrywide effort to bury the facts of a whole generation of Wall Street corruption. *"I could be sued into bankruptcy," she says. "I could lose my license to practice law. I could lose everything. But if we don't start speaking up, then this really is all we're going to get: the biggest financial cover-up in history."*

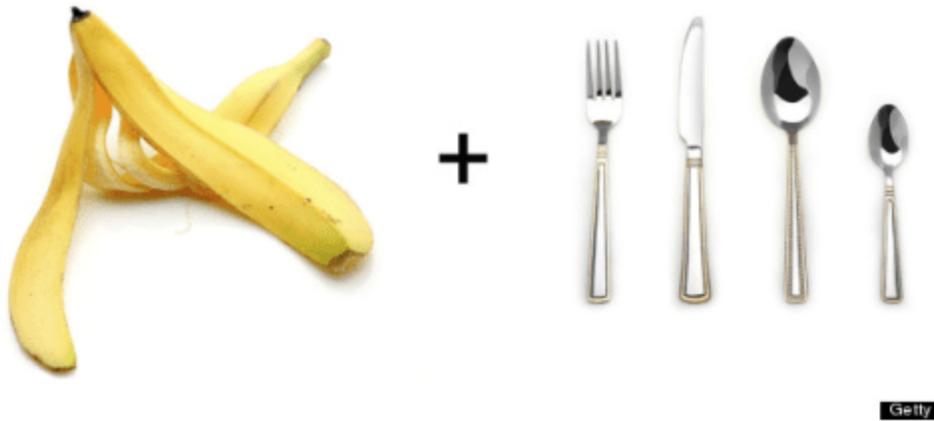
In today's America, someone like Fleischmann – an honest person caught for a little while in the wrong place at the wrong time – has to be willing to live through an epic ordeal just to get to the point of being able to open her mouth and tell a truth or two. And when she finally gets there, she still has to risk everything to take that last step. *"The assumption they make is that I won't blow up my life to do it,"* Fleischmann says. *"But they're wrong about that."* Good for her, and great for her that it's finally out. But the big-picture ending still stings. She hopes otherwise, but the likely final verdict is a Pyrrhic victory.

Because after all this activity, all these court actions, all these penalties (both real and abortive), even after a fair amount of noise in the press, the target companies remain more ascendant than ever. The people who stole all those billions are still in place. And the bank is more untouchable than ever – former Debevoise & Plimpton hotshots Mary Jo White and Andrew Ceresny, who represented Chase for some of this case, have since been named to the two top jobs at the SEC.

As for the bank itself, its stock price has gone up since the settlement and flirts weekly with five-year highs. They may lose the odd battle, but the markets clearly believe the banks won the war. Truth is one thing, and if the right people fight hard enough, you might get to hear it from time to time. But justice is different, and still far enough away. I strongly suggest everyone read Taibbi's article (attached) as it shows how a major Wall Street bank was able to distort, cajole and manipulate the description of its illegal activities and when this fails pay a fine, which is just the cost of their doing business without admitting any wrong doing or receiving and criminal penalties.

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## 11 Foods That Double As Cleaning Products



Ketchup is delicious, sure, but did you know that it's also effective at polishing copper? Yea, bet you find it a little less appetizing now. But ketchup isn't the only condiment or food that has dual purposes. In fact, many of the things you eat all the time have uses other than just keeping you satiated. Here are 11 foods that do double-duty as cleaning products. You should always remember these, if for no other reason than they will save you money.

### **1. Banana peels can polish silver**

Don't throw away that banana peel just yet. If your prized silverware collection is starting to get a bit tarnished, just rub the inside of a banana peel along the tarnished parts on your silver and it will help them look as good as new.

### **2. Cucumber peels can remove marks on walls and tables**

According to Saudia Davis, the founder and CEO of Greenhouse Eco-Cleaning, cucumbers are extremely versatile cleaning products. The peels can remove marks on countertops and walls; and if you want a non-foggy bathroom mirror when you get out of the shower, just rub cucumber peel on it before you start the water.

### **3. Use ketchup to brighten up your copper pots and pans**

All you've got to do is dab some of ketchup on a cloth on whatever copper item you have that needs some polishing, and let it sit for five to thirty minutes. The acids in the condiment will remove the tarnish.

### **4. A raw onion will clean your dirty grill grates**

The folks over at The Kitchn report that if you run half of a raw onion against your grill grates with the cut side down, it will work to remove all the grease and leftover grit on the grill. Your best option is to

heat up your grill first to help burn off any attached food or grime, then add the onion to the end of a large fork and go at it.

## **5. Use walnuts to remove scratches on wood furniture**

Here's how it works: You peel the walnut from its shell and rub the nut part along the scratch. Then, run your finger over the scratch to help penetrate the oils. Let it sit for five minutes. Finally, use a soft cloth to buffer the area, and voila! Hopefully you now have a scratch-free piece of wood.

## **6. Your regular table salt will help remove a red wine stain**

Next time someone accidentally spills their glass of red on your brand new white couch, immediately grab the table salt in the kitchen. Ingrid Johnson, Professor and Assistant Chairperson of Textile Development and Marketing at Fashion Institute Of Technology (FIT), recently told The Huffington Post that table salt is "the first and easiest thing to do" since it will absorb the wine.

## **7. A slice of white bread will help pick up little pieces of broken glass**

The answer to picking up all those annoying little shards of glass is devastatingly simple: Grab a piece of Wonder Bread, dampen it, and dab it on all the little pieces.

## **8. Rice will clean your coffee grinder**

This little trick, provided by Food52, works for spice grinders, as well. Take some uncooked rice and put it in your grinder. Grind it up until it becomes dust. When you remove that dust, it will also remove any coffee bean or spice fragments left in your grinder. Then you can just clean off the rest of it with a damp cloth.

## **9. Olive oil will remove sap**

Perhaps one of your kids brushed up against some sap while playing outside and then sat on the couch, and now... well... there's sap on your couch. Grab the olive oil. Real Simple says when you dab a tablespoon of it on a cloth and rub it on the affected area, it should loosen up that sap in no time.

## **10. Cornmeal will remove grease stains on fabric**

A pantry staple can remove that dreaded pizza stain. Just cover the stain entirely with cornmeal and let it sit for 15-20 minutes. Once you vacuum the cornmeal away, the stain should be absorbed. Then all you have to do is clean the fabric as you normally would.

## **11. Use Coca-Cola to clean your toilet bowl**

The acids in Coca-Cola will help remove any toilet bowl stains, apparently. So, grab a can and pour the whole thing into your toilet. Let the soda sit in there and do its magic for an hour. Then scrub the bowl and flush. Your toilet should be sparkling clean after.

By Renee Jacques – October 26, 2014 – Huffington Post

## THIS WEEK'S QUOTE

*“Beware that, when fighting monsters, you yourself do not become a monster.”*

**Friedrich Nietzsche**

## BEST VIDEO OF THE WEEK

### Exquisite Dining...

**Web Link:** [http://www.youtube.com/embed/ub1Dc3NHZ3s?autoplay=1&cc\\_load\\_policy=1](http://www.youtube.com/embed/ub1Dc3NHZ3s?autoplay=1&cc_load_policy=1)

*Funny..... Funny..... Funny.....*

## GREAT MAGIC TRICKS

**World's FUNNIEST Street Magician (The end is amazing!)**



Web Link: <http://youtu.be/se2P7hjPanE>

*And although James Hessler may not be the most impressive magician in the world, he is definitely one of the funniest....*

*Enjoy.... Enjoy.... Enjoy....*

## THIS WEEK'S MUSIC



**Crosby, Stills & Nash** (CSN) is a folk rock super group made up of David Crosby, Stephen Stills and Graham Nash. They became **Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young** (CSNY) when joined by occasional fourth member Neil Young. They are noted for their intricate vocal harmonies, often tumultuous interpersonal relationships, political activism, and lasting influence on American music and culture. All four members of CSNY have been inducted into the **Rock and Roll Hall of Fame** twice, though Young's inductions were for work not involving the group.

Prior to the formation of CSN, each member of the band had belonged to another prominent group. David Crosby had performed rhythm guitar, vocals and songwriting with folk-rock group the Byrds; Stephen Stills had been a guitarist, vocalist and songwriter in the band Buffalo Springfield, which also featured Neil Young; and Graham Nash had been a guitarist, vocalist and songwriter with the Hollies, one of the British Invasion acts. CSNY was originally commissioned to create the soundtrack for the

counter-culture cult film, Easy Rider, but Stills' offering, "*Find the Cost of Freedom*" (on the flip side of "Ohio"), was also rejected.

The collective abilities allowed CSNY to straddle all the flavors of popular music eminent at the time, from country rock to confessional balladry, from acoustic guitars and voice to electric guitar, and three-part harmony. With The Beatles break-up made public by April 1970, and with Bob Dylan in reclusive low-key activity since mid-1966, CSNY found itself as the adopted standard bearers for the *Woodstock Nation*, serving an importance in society as counterculture figureheads equaled at the time in rock and roll only by The Rolling Stones, The Who, or the ascending Led Zeppelin.

An entire sub-industry of singer-songwriters in California either had their careers boosted or came to prominence in the wake of CSNY. In part, many musicians lived in or near Laurel Canyon, in California. They included Laura Nyro, Joni Mitchell, Jackson Browne, and The Eagles. Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young are in the Pantheon of Rock & Roll and the musical voice of a generation. So with no further ado..... *I invite you to enjoy the music of Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young....*

Crosby, Stills & Nash – ***Southern Cross*** -- <http://youtu.be/iuLBhxZUkmU>

Crosby, Stills, & Nash – ***Suite Judy Blue Eyes*** -- <http://youtu.be/kVUwrfwKrl>

Crosby, Stills & Nash – ***Helplessly Hoping*** -- <http://youtu.be/WGtFRsCXRcc>

Crosby, Stills & Nash – ***Blackbird*** -- <http://youtu.be/wORwlCy3JDI>

Crosby, Stills & Nash – ***Wooden Ships*** -- [http://youtu.be/\\_2e2kC-geMI](http://youtu.be/_2e2kC-geMI)

Crosby, Stills & Nash – ***Long Time Gone*** -- <http://youtu.be/CVW9sOsXAjU>

Crosby, Stills & Nash – ***In My Life*** -- <http://youtu.be/7a7CdCYv13w>

Crosby, Stills & Nash – ***Almost Cut My Hair*** -- <http://youtu.be/9XWmwvT8bCw>

Crosby, Stills & Nash – ***Woodstock*** -- <http://youtu.be/D3MUH8tFZTA>

Crosby, Stills Nash & Young – ***Teach Your Children*** -- [http://youtu.be/EkaKwXddT\\_I](http://youtu.be/EkaKwXddT_I)

Crosby, Stills Nash & Young – ***Our House*** -- [http://youtu.be/NZtJWJe\\_K\\_w](http://youtu.be/NZtJWJe_K_w)

Crosby Nash – ***Guinnevere*** -- <http://youtu.be/jsmC1zrpwfQ>

Crosby Nash – ***Simple Man - Marrakesh Express*** -- <http://youtu.be/TfycUkxblnk>

Stephen Stills – ***For What Its Worth*** -- <http://youtu.be/2Y16iDqQiVg>

Neil Young – ***Old Man*** -- [http://youtu.be/An2a1\\_Do\\_fc](http://youtu.be/An2a1_Do_fc)

Neil Young and Bob Dylan – ***Helpless + Knockin' on Heaven's Door*** -- <http://youtu.be/2sDGTZRdQdw>

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

**Sincerely,**

**Greg Brown**

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