
From: Gregory Brown [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, May 21, 2017 1:07 PM
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Subject: Greg Brown's Weekend Reading and Other Things.. 05/21/2017

DEAR FRIEND.....

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Consider This

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Trying to come to terms with President Trump's proposal to increase the US military budget by an additional \$54 billion I ran across a 2015 article in ProPublica – We Blew \$17 Billion in Afghanistan. How Would You Have Spent It? —/b> And boy did it blow my mind. It is estimated that the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq will eventually cost American taxpayers \$4 to \$6 trillion, if not more. The truth is that everything we spent in these unnecessary wars is a waste but the \$17 billion that fell through the cracks is unconscionable, especially when the President wants to cut programs for the poor, children and elderly to give the military an additional \$54 billion.

The U.S. government has wasted billions of dollars in Afghanistan, but until ProPublica in 2015, no one has added it all up. ♦=A0 Project after project blundered ahead ignoring history, culture and warnings of failure. And Congress has barely blinked as the financial toll has mounted. Here's just what the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction found. ♦=A0 ProPublica listed all of the US programs in Afghanistan and their waste and across the page government programs where the money would have been better spent. See for yourself how that money could have been used at home as well as the actual ProPublica article in its entirety via the web link below.

Web Link: Behold, American taxpayer, what happened to nearly a half billion of your dollars in Afghanistan:

One example of the many: In 2008, the Pentagon bought 20 refurbished cargo planes for the Afghan Air Force, but as one top U.S. officer put it, “just about everything you can think of was wrong.” No spare parts, for example. The planes were also “a death trap,” according to the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction. So \$486 million was spent on worthless planes that no one could fly. We did recoup some of the investment. Sixteen of the planes were sold as scrap for the grand sum of \$32,000. That’s six cents a pound.

And what a bill it is. There’s a widely held idea of “just” as in “just a few million.” Like the military officer who wrote that the \$25 million blown on a fancy headquarters nobody used was “probably not bad in the grand scheme of things.” But those millions add up. To billions.

The problem, contrary to popular assumptions, is not unscrupulous contractors. Follow the long trail of waste and you’ll be standing at the doors of the military, the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development. It’s their bad decisions, bad purchases and bad programs that are consistently to blame.

ProPublica examined more than 200 audits, special projects and inspections done by SIGAR since 2009 and built a database to add up the total cost of failed reconstruction projects. Looking at the botched projects collectively — rather than as one-off headlines — reveals a grim picture of the overall reconstruction effort and a repeated cycle of mistakes.

* In just six years, the IG has tallied at least \$17 billion in questionable spending. This includes \$3.6 billion in outright waste, projects teetering on the brink of waste, or projects that can’t be sustained by the Afghans, as well as an additional \$13.5 billion that the average taxpayer might easily judge to be waste. Exhibit A for “you be the judge”: \$8.4 billion was spent on counter-narcotics programs that were so ineffective that Afghanistan has produced record levels of heroin — more than it did before the war started.

* Often the programs’ ambitions were out of whack with the reality of life in Afghanistan. After the invasion, the U.S. rushed forward with bold plans to create a democratic, fiscally secure, ethical government and society — out of whole cloth. It was the same country-building fiasco that had earlier tripped up the U.S. in Iraq when it dismissed the local culture and ignored corruption.

* “Pie in the sky” projects, as one USAID worker called them, were routinely launched without any thought to the financial and technological ability of the Afghans to maintain them. It turned out that the Afghans couldn’t afford most of them, so even the best programs could end up becoming waste.

* None of the programs were required to prove they had even limited success. Officials tracked dollars spent, not impact. For instance, no one evaluated whether Afghan security forces actually learned to read and write after going through a \$200 million literacy program.

* Those who signed off on the failed projects appeared to suffer no consequences. As head of SIGAR John Sopko puts it: Reconstruction efforts are “like a child sports game where everyone gets a trophy.”

If this accounting wasn’t bad enough, consider this: SIGAR has only examined a small percentage of the \$110 billion effort to rebuild and remodel Afghanistan. The waste totals are likely much higher. Still, it’s often hard to grasp what this kind of money means to the average American. Perhaps the most meaningful way to underscore what has been lost is to look at what the money could have paid for at home.

To set the scene, in 2010, as the U.S. was drastically increasing its investment in Afghanistan, a quarter of America’s homeowners — more than 11 million — were underwater on their mortgages, and the country hovered near a 10 percent unemployment rate. Congress was routinely gutting federal programs.

* The \$14.7 million spent on a storage facility the military never used? That could have paid for about 9,800 rape kits to be tested — enough to clear the backlog for the entire state of Tennessee.

* The \$456,000 police-training facility that was so poorly constructed it literally melted in the rain? That could have funded more than 180,000 dinners for low-income kids, enough for an entire summer.

* The \$335 million spent on a power plant that the Afghans don’t use? That could have paid for permanent housing for 3,000 homeless Americans and \$250,000 grants to 20 small-business owners to help them commercialize new technologies.

Take the money wasted on those worthless planes, plus that spent on an unused consulate, and fixing the buildings constructed with hazardous materials. That could have restored the \$714 million cut from the National Institute of Health’s budget, which funds scientific research into new treatments for disease. Despite such trade-offs, there’s been little collective outrage from either the public or Congress about the massive waste in Afghanistan.

The military, the State Department and USAID provided detailed public responses to the findings in each of SIGAR’s reports, sometimes disputing the conclusions and recommendations. The reports and their responses can be read here. This week a Defense Department spokesman told ProPublica that the Pentagon “disagrees with the assertion that \$17B in projects are ‘questionable.’” Often those responsible for the failed projects treat SIGAR’s findings like unnecessary niggling. Their rejoinder, in essence: “Hey, it’s a war zone, what do you expect?” There’s little time spent on pondering the bigger question: If it’s a war zone, why were we pouring billions into reconstruction?

Under the chapter ◆ 93 Fingers in Ears: Ignoring History, Advice and Culture Link ◀▶ — the ProPublica article points out that the U.S. is a slow learner. Again and again, the U.S. disregarded expert advice, the local culture or past mistakes in both Afghanistan and Iraq ◆ 80 ◆ sometimes, ignoring all three in a single failed project. First of all, large-scale projects are almost impossible to achieve success when there was still active fighting, as anything big drew the

attention of the insurgency. “Very frequently on those PowerPoints you would see this pipeline that already had been reconstructed had been blown up again. Or an electricity grid,” said former U.S. Ambassador William Taylor, who worked as director of the Iraq Reconstruction Management Office from 2004 to 2005. “That led us to several lessons in Iraq that have general applicability, which are: Smaller projects at the local level, by and large, are to be preferred.”

That didn’t stop the U.S. years later from trying to build a nationwide electricity system in Afghanistan that crossed through Taliban strongholds at the height of fighting. Or sinking billions into roads that spanned the country and were routinely blown up by insurgents. Officials also identified over-gifting as a problem in Iraq. Iraqis would give a “head nod” to whatever the U.S. offered, because they weren’t footing the bill, former U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker told Iraq’s inspector general. Once the projects were built, the Iraqis couldn’t pay to operate or maintain them. And yet in Afghanistan, the military, the State Department and USAID repeatedly defended unsustainable projects by saying that the Afghans had agreed to them.

Corruption also prominently undermined the security forces in Iraq and many efforts at governance. SIGAR, however, said the U.S. moved forward for years in Afghanistan with no strategy in place to deal with corruption, a failure investigators found baffling. “Something that quite’s pertinent to Afghanistan that we could have learned in Iraq is the problem of the local culture of corruption,” said Charles Tiefer, who investigated reconstruction on the Commission for Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan. Then there was the military, the State Department and USAID’s frequent failures to consider the local culture in either country, a costly misstep that caused many ill-considered projects to tank.

The chapter – Building in our Image: An Overly Ambitious Effort from the Start Link – speaks for itself. In 2011, a task force of financial gurus brainstorming business projects for the military had an idea: Alternate fuels! That’s what Afghanistan needs to jumpstart its economy and bring in foreign investors.

A few years earlier a geological survey had found that the northern part of the country was blessed with natural gas reserves. Commercializing that resource would be a boon for Afghanistan, the task force figured, particularly since the country relies on imported gasoline it can barely afford.

It seemed like a good idea on paper. But, as expert after expert has noted, Afghanistan is not the U.S. It’s not even Pakistan. Getting the gas out of the ground and moved around the country would be a feat. There is no distribution system in Afghanistan for that kind of compressed gas — and building one in a war-torn country that has trouble keeping the lights on with generators was an expensive, if not laughable, notion. But that didn’t seem to matter. The task force sunk \$43 million into a proof-of-concept gas station anyway.

Then there was another very key problem: no customers. ♦=A0 The average Afghan would have to shell out more than an entire year's worth of salary to convert their cars to run on compressed natural gas. It costs about \$700 and most Afghans bring home \$69= annually. So unsurprisingly, the only people who used the station were the 120 Afghans the U.S. paid to convert their cars.

The scale of what that project wanted to achieve was inappropriate in almost every aspect, and ProPublica found, it wasn't unique in that regard. Afghanistan is at the bottom of almost every conceivable development ranking. Yet much of the reconstruction effort has seemed as if the U.S. and its allies were trying to create a new Afghanistan in their own image — both in the Western ideals superimposed on the Afghans and in the sheer ambition of the projects.

These 80 Countries Had a Lower GDP Than the \$17.1 Billion We Blew in Afghanistan<=pan>

The chapter: Over-Gifting: Afghans Can't Afford, Don't Need What They Got — is self-explanatory. ♦=A0In a 14-year flurry of giving, the U.S. built the Afghans an array of big-ticket projects, but whether they could afford to maintain, or even operate, this largess was rarely considered in any meaningful way. The World Bank ranks Afghanistan's ability to pay its bills as one of the world's [GB1] lowest. Right now, the country is significantly propped up by foreign aid whose future is uncertain. International donors have so far only committed at current levels through 2=17.

A former SIGAR official listed three key tests for sustainability: Do they have the money? The technical capacity? The political will? "Afghanistan generally fails all three." American "over-gifting" was a problem on virtually every project. Consider health care. In 2011, the inspector general for USAID issued a bleak assessment of the ability of the Afghans to sustain any of the agency's health programs. The Afghan government paid the tab for just 6 percent of the nation's health care expenditures.

<= class="MsoNormal">Yet USAID replaced a hospital in Gardez with a new, larger facility, saddling the Afghans with at least a 180 percent, and possibly as much as a 524 percent, increase in that annual bill. (Or it will when the hospital is finally completed. It's years behind schedule.) Not far from that hospital, USAID replaced another that had cost \$98,000 per year to run with one that costs \$587,000 annually — nearly six times as much.</=>

Sure, the Afghan Ministry of Public Health agreed to fund the new hospitals, but USAID didn't address a fundamental question: Could it actually afford to do so? Without donor money, the answer is unequivocally "no." And that's the answer for almost every single aspect of the Afghan government, according to a dozen of military and civilian Afghan experts.

One of the largest, most notorious, capital projects in Afghanistan is roads. So far the U.S. and other donors have spent more than \$4 billion total on multiple projects to build more than 5,700 miles of them. Yet the U.N. says 85 percent of the country's roads are undrivable. ♦ A0 The Afghans do little to care for them. USAID tried to mold the Ministry of Public Works into a competent bureaucracy, but so far it remains ineffective. There's about a "\$100 million maintenance gap and inadequate technical staff" at the ministry for "routine periodic, preventive, emergency and winter maintenance," USAID told SIGAR. Adding to their quick deterioration: the roads were built to U.S. weight standards, but Afghan trucks are notoriously overweight, Sopko said.

The chapter: </=pan>Doomed to Repeat: An Afghan Security Force That Can't Maintain Its Numbers, Buildings, Equipment. Even Its Front Lines. — suggests that if Afghans can't maintain their own military whatever we do will fail. One only has to look to Iraq, where the Pentagon spent more than \$20 billion to build an army and hailed it a resounding success. Until ISIS came and the Iraqi security forces crumbled. =span>

Meanwhile in Afghanistan, a far poorer and less sophisticated country, the military has replicated that training program, but tripled the investment, spending \$65 billion — nearly 60 percent of the entire reconstruction budget. The plan: Create a well-schooled, 352,000-strong national Army and police force, and a robust air force able to secure the country on its own — all in a matter of years.

But this formidable objective ignored the Afghans' pervasive corruption, fledgling leadership, and rudimentary capabilities. Not to mention Afghanistan's complete inability to pay the bills of such a large, modern military — which costs upwards of \$5 billion per year (If the Afghans spent every cent they collected in revenue on security and nothing else, they still couldn't cover the cost.) The Pentagon has also had a perplexing tendency to repeat mistakes made in Iraq.

The chapter: "A" Is For Effort: In Afghanistan No One Has To Prove Success — means that whatever we do will fail. For five years, USAID poured \$150 million into a project with warm, but fuzzy, aspirations: helping isolated, unstable Afghan communities grow and feel more connected to their government. It was a part of the military's broader campaign to win "hearts and minds." In all that time, though, USAID was never able to define what, exactly, the objectives of the "Local Governance and Community Development" program were, let alone if it had met them. C2 ♦ The agency also had a hard time keeping track of what contractors were actually doing, SIGAR reported.

That, however, didn't stop USAID from literally doubling down on the program in 2009, increasing its budget to \$373 million. SIGAR's conclusion: scattered, small successes but no wins on any overarching goals. Ashley Jackson, a longtime non-governmental organization worker, was blunter. USAID, she said, "would have been better off setting the money on fire."

The chapter: Consequence-Free Zone: No One Is Ever Blamed For Failure Link – obviously when there is no consequence of failure don't expect success. As an example that site an unfinished courthouse in North of Kabul, which is a shell of rebar and cracking concrete. So instead of being the centerpiece for Afghan national security trials, a prominent place to prosecute suspected insurgents, judges preside over a makeshift courtroom in a nearby building with fold-out tables.

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The Afghan contractor hired to build the courthouse had only been in business for about six months and there was very little documentation on why his company was chosen to do the work, Harmon said. The contractor hired a subcontractor that military commanders knew actively supported the Taliban. But since these commanders failed to share this information throughout the organization, the subcontractor had access to a U.S. military-controlled area for two days — a serious security lapse, according to a SIGAR report. With just basic foundation work done on the justice center, the contractor disappeared, taking almost \$400,000 of U.S. taxpayers' money with him. The military subsequently abandoned the project. The consequences for those mismanaging this misbegotten project? Nothing.

The final chapter: Success or Failure: We Spent \$8 billion and There's Now More Heroin Than Ever — sums up our success in Afghanistan. Today Afghanistan is the king of heroin. It sits on a narco throne as "the global leader in illicit opium cultivation and production," according to SIGAR. After a 13-year effort by the U.S. to end Afghanistan's drug trade, it is now the world leader in heroin production. Plans to promote alternative farming and eradicate poppy fields have only led to more poppies planted. Law enforcement training has been insufficient. About \$109 million was spent on substance abuse treatment programs and education.

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And that \$8.4 billion the U.S. spent to end its reign over the last 13 years appears to have only enhanced its standing. The Pentagon, USAID and the State Department had a grand plan to eradicate poppy fields, develop Afghan law enforcement and promote alternative farming livelihoods. Yet the drug trade still "poisons the Afghan financial sector and undermines the Afghan state's legitimacy by stoking corruption, sustaining criminal networks, and providing significant financial support to the Taliban and other insurgent groups," SIGAR found.

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The drug trade feeds corruption. Dealing with both are intrinsically tied to reconstruction success, which is why the failure to have an effective strategy. When a farmer grows poppy, he pays off the local officials, and the money goes up the chain and leads to corruption of entire institutions. Part of the program was to demonstrate to the Afghans that was why they shouldn't let the drug trade go on. Didn't we learn from the disastrous "War On Drugs" here in America and Nancy Reagan's laughable "Just Say No" drug campaign? Obviously not. And this is indicative to why our hold strategy under both Presidents Bush and Obama has failed. We are trying to force a square peg through a round hole and we

seem surprised that it is not working. But back to ProPublica's initial premise, think about what we could have accomplished with the billions of taxpayers' dollars wastes in Afghanistan. </=>

<=>So True</=>

Prejudices are what fools use for reason.

Francois Voltaire

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A new 'No Fly' List

The Treasury Department essentially has a 1,000-page financial no-fly list.

I am old enough to remember Richard Nixon's famous 'Enemies List' and later watched the Federal Government's 'No Fly List' which grew in response to the 9/11 attacks in 2001 from 16 people deemed "no transport" because they "presented a specific known or suspected threat to aviation" to more than 103,440 today. And because so many "False Positives" started to occur when a passenger who is not on the No Fly List has a name that matches or is similar to a name on the list – denying these passengers from boarding a flight unless they can convince the airline that they are not that person. In an effort to reduce the number of False Positives, DHS announced on April 28, 2008 that each airline would be permitted to create a system to verify and store a passenger's date of birth, to clear up watch list misidentifications.

False Positive passengers will not be allowed to board a flight unless they can differentiate themselves from the actual person on the list, usually by presenting ID showing their middle name or date of birth. In some cases, False Positive passengers have been denied boarding or have missed flights because they could not easily prove that they were not the person on the No Fly List. But what if you don't know that your name is on the list? And if it is, how do you get your name off this list, if indeed it is a False Positive? And what do you do if you are on another list that you have never heard about?

I say all of this because I recently read a story in the Huffington Post by Ben Walsh — "Your Financial Life Could Be Ruined If Your Name Is On This Massive Government List" — about another government list that I had never heard of. Take the case of Muhammed Ali Khan tried to do one of the most boring, responsible things an American taxpayer can do: set up a government-guaranteed retirement savings account. He was rejected because the Treasury Department thought he might be a terrorist. But he isn't. He's a software consultant from Fullerton, California. But he shares a first name (with a different spelling), last name and middle initial with a financier of a Pakistani terror group.

That man, Mohammad Naushad Alam Khan, is on the Treasury Department's Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons List (SDN). The 1,026-page catalog lists people and organizations that U.S. citizens and residents are barred from doing business with because of their ties to terror cells, drug cartels or rogue states. The SDN is essentially a financial no-fly list that cuts people off from U.S. banks — and, as a result, the global financial system. The SDN has more than doubled in length in the last five years.

Khan later found out that his credit reports from Experian and TransUnion had also been flagged as a potential match. Luckily the trouble that caused him, was relatively minor — after he got over the shock of seeing a terrorism flag on his credit report, he spent a few hours navigating customer service lines with the Treasury Department and the two credit bureaus. He got his retirement account set up and his credit reports cleared after providing some personal information to show that he was not the man who had financially supported the 2008 Mumbai attacks.

Some other people wrongly believed to be on the SDN — either because they share a name with someone who is or because their name partially matches an alias used by someone on the list (and international criminals often have a lot of aliases) — are hurt far worse than Khan. As a result they can have their airline ticket purchases rejected or hotel reservations declined. Their bank account can be frozen. Loans to buy a home or a car can be declined. Wire transfers can be seized and held for up to a year while the freeze is litigated, which can destroy small businesses, block real estate transactions or delay inheritances.

Such delays impose "a tremendous burden," said Peter Djinis, a former anti-money laundering regulator at the Treasury Department. "It can become a business disadvantage to people whose name just happens to be similar to that of someone actually on the list," he said. "This is a real problem."

"Bank accounts can be frozen. Loans to buy a home or a car can be declined. Wire transfers can be seized and held for up to a year."

The Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control, or OFAC, maintains the SDN list. The catalog was created in 1940, but the department massively increased its efforts to block terrorist financing after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. OFAC is a relatively small office compared to other parts of the law enforcement and national security apparatus, although the Treasury Department claims that OFAC has enough staff and that its size is appropriate relative to U.S. sanctions programs. However, OFAC is especially small relative to its mission of blocking thousands of people from the U.S. financial system. This means day-to-day enforcement is largely left up to the private sector.

A Treasury Department spokesman said that OFAC manages individuals and entities on its list in coordination with relevant U.S. government agencies, and has processes in place to ensure that designations are applied appropriately, and to assist and provide due process to anyone who believes they should be removed. And due to a backlog a whole industry has popped up around this, producing what is known as interdiction software — programs that banks use to see if a customer's name matches one on the blocked list. This software produces a staggering volume of hits and leads to lots of false positives, like Khan's.

Banks tend to be conservative in their risk management, and cast as wide a net as possible to try to stop anything improper. This is because sanctions are enforced under the legal standard of strict liability, meaning any transaction with anybody on the list is illegal, regardless of intention. Fines are steep, too: either \$284,000 per violation, or twice the value of the transaction — whichever is higher. Companies that peddle interdiction software turn banks' worries into a selling point. Yet the software's results often don't live up to its promises, and financial institutions are struggling to deal with the mountains of data the software produces. The Treasury Department declined to comment on interdiction software.

Realize that that big banks, credit card companies and payment processors at most, only have between 200 and 500 employees to sift through hits and gather information to try to clear false positives from the OFAC list. When a potential client's name matches one on the list, the financial institution staffers then have to call OFAC to figure out if the person really is on the SDN or if they are dealing with a false positive. The SDN doesn't provide much in the way of specifics — a name, a few aliases, a nationality and sometimes a date of birth. Financial institutions complain that they would like more identifying information about the people on the SDN so they could vet their customers more quickly.

But the government is often hamstrung because it has limited personal information about the people on the list, often because the SDN targets are concealing as much about their lives as possible. The Treasury Department says that it compiles and releases as much identifying information about the people on the list as it can in order to reduce the number of false positives. The department declined to release data on the number of transactions or transfers halted due to false positives.

“It can become a business disadvantage to people whose name just happens to be similar to that of someone actually on the list.”

Peter Djinis, a former anti-money laundering regulator at the Treasury Department

False hits — people like Khan — are “a bigger problem, not a smaller problem,” explained Djinis, the former regulator. And clearing up false hits is a labor-intensive process. The safe, simple option for the financial institution is often to just stop doing business with a customer whose name gets flagged.

The complex nature of financial transactions makes this process even more difficult for customers with names that are likely to get wrongly flagged. For instance, a simple money transfer abroad might involve two retail banks and an intermediary bank to facilitate. The transfer can be held up if software run by any of the three banks flags any party involved.

Some financial institutions have tried to fix this by buying more software to help sort through the results — which is great for the software providers, and could help the people the system has wrongly flagged. “We are going to make so, so much money selling them stuff to fix this,” the software executive said. “The application of the SDN list has become ‘guilt by association,’” said Shereef Akeel, a civil rights lawyer in Michigan who has worked on the issue. The Treasury spokesman said the department wasn’t worried that enforcing the list raised any civil rights issue.

The vast number of false positives, Akeel said, “actually compromises our national security ... because everyone is busy looking at all these other names, they don’t have enough time to really catch the bad guys.” Instead, Akeel said, the burden falls on people like Khan, who have to try to prove that they are not someone else. Although Khan succeeded in setting up his retirement fund, but there’s no way for him to proactively tell every U.S. financial institution that he isn’t Mohammad Naushad Alam Khan.

In response to 9/11 we have allowed the government to extend the reach of Big Brother broad surveillance far beyond the levels permitted by the US Constitution and the Bill of Rights. And because so many of these programs overlap and interrelate among one another without a central server and intense backbone monitoring false positives will continue if not increase. So if you find yourself in a similar position of Muhammad Ali Khan there are ways to cure the problem that you can do yourself.

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The Great Show on Earth

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After 146 continuous years of entertaining and amazing generations of audiences across America the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus affectingly known as "The Greatest Show on Earth" will give its farewell show today, May 21st, in Uniondale, N.Y.

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The Ringling brothers (originally Rungeling) were seven American siblings of German and French descent who transformed their small touring company of performers into one of America's largest circuses in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The brothers were born between 1852 and 1869 with a sister Ida, (whose two sons John Ringling North and Henry Ringling North guide the circus into the modern age and under their management, the circus switched from tents to air conditioned venues in 1956) were born in McGregor, Iowa and raised in Baraboo, Wisconsin. The siblings were children of German and French immigrants, August Frederick and Marie Salome Rungeling, who simplified his name to Ringling once in America.

In 1884 five of the seven Ringling brothers: Albert, August, Otto, Alfred T., Charles, John, and Henry founded a small circus in Baraboo, Wisconsin, United States. This was about the same time that Barnum & Bailey were at the peak of their popularity. Similar to dozens of small circuses that toured the Midwest and the Northeast at the time, the brothers moved their circus from town to town in small animal-drawn caravans. Their circus rapidly grew and they were soon able to move their circus by train, which allowed them to have the largest traveling amusement enterprise of that time. Bailey's European tour gave the Ringling brothers an opportunity to move their show from the Midwest to the eastern seaboard. Faced with the new competition, Bailey took his show west of the Rocky Mountains for the first time in 1905. He died the next year, and the circus was sold to the Ringling Brothers.

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The Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus is a combination of the Barnum & Bailey's Greatest Show on Earth, a circus created by P. T. Barnum and James Anthony Bailey, was merged with the Ringling Bros. World's Greatest Shows and debuted in New York City. The Ringling brothers had purchased Barnum & Bailey Ltd. following Bailey's death in 1906, but ran the circuses separately until they were merged in 1919 debuted in New York City. The posters declared, "The Ringling Bros. World's Greatest Shows and the Barnum & Bailey Greatest Show on Earth are now combined into one record-breaking giant of all exhibitions." Charles E. Ringling died in 1926, but the circus flourished through the Roaring Twenties. In 1927 John Ringling moved the circus' headquarters to Sarasota, Florida. And in 1929, the American Circus Corporation signed a contract to perform in New York City. John Ringling purchased American Circus, owner of five circuses, for \$1.7 million.

Like most other businesses the circus suffered during the 1930s due to the Great Depression, but managed to stay in business. After John Nicholas Ringling's death, his nephew, John Ringling North, managed the indebted circus twice, the first from 1937 to 1943. Special dispensation was given to the circus by President Roosevelt to use the rails to operate in 1942, in spite of travel restrictions imposed as a result of World War II. Many of the most famous images from the circus that were published in magazine and posters were captured by American Photographer Maxwell Frederic Coplan, who traveled the world with the circus, capturing its beauty as well as its harsh realities. North's cousin Robert took over the presidency of the show in 1943. North resumed the presidency of the circus in 1947.

A fire occurred on July 6, 1944, in Hartford, Connecticut, during an afternoon performance that was attended by approximately 7,500 to 8,700 people. It was one of the worst fire disasters in the history of the United States. Although the Hartford Fire Department responded quickly, the fire was fanned by the fact that the canvas circus tent had been waterproofed through a mixture of highly flammable paraffin and gasoline. During the ensuing panic Emmett Kelly, the tramp clown, threw a bucket of water at the burning canvas tent, and a poignant photograph of his futile attempt was transmitted around the world as news spread of the disaster. At least 167 people were killed in the disaster, and hundreds more were injured. Some of the dead remain unidentified to this day, even with modern DNA techniques.

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In the following investigation, it was discovered that the tent had not been fireproofed. Ringling Bros. had applied to the Army, which had an absolute priority on the material, for enough fireproofing liquid to treat their Big Top. The Army had refused to release it to them. The circus had instead waterproofed the canvas using an older method of paraffin dissolved in gasoline and painted onto the canvas. The waterproofing worked, but as had been repeatedly shown it was horribly flammable. Circus management was found to be negligent and several Ringling executives served sentences in jail. Ringling Brothers' management set aside all profits for the next ten years to pay the claims filed against the show by the City of Hartford and the survivors of the fire.

The post-war prosperity enjoyed by the rest of the nation was not shared by the circus as crowds dwindled and costs increased. Public tastes, influenced by the movies and television, abandoned the circus, which gave its last performance under the big top in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on July 16, 1956. An article in Life magazine reported that "a magical era had passed forever". In 1956, when John Ringling North and Arthur Concello moved the circus from a tent show to an indoor operation, Irvin Feld was one of several promoters hired to work the advance for select dates, mostly in the Detroit and Philadelphia areas. Irvin Feld and his brother, Israel Feld, had already made a name for themselves marketing and promoting DC area rock and roll shows. In 1959, Ringling Bros. started wintering in Venice, Florida.

In late 1967, Irvin Feld, Israel Feld, and Judge Roy Mark Hofheinz of Texas, together with backing from Richard C. Blum, the founder of Blum Capital, bought the company outright from North and the Ringling family interests for \$8 million at a ceremony at Rome's Colosseum. Irvin Feld immediately began making other changes to improve the quality and profitability of the show. Irvin got rid of the freak show so as not to capitalize on others' deformations and to become more family oriented. He got rid of the more routine acts.

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In 1968, with the craft of clowning seemingly neglected and with many of the clowns in their 50s, he established the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Clown College. A circus in Europe was purchased for \$2 million just to have its star animal trainer, Gunther Gebel-Williams, for the core of his revamped circus. Soon, he split the show into two touring units, Red and Blue, which could tour the country independently. The separate tours could also offer differing slates of acts and themes, enabling circusgoers to view both tours where possible. The company was taken public in 1969. In 1970, Feld's only son Kenneth joined the company and became a co-producer. The circus was sold to the Mattel Company in 1971 for \$40 million, but the Feld family was retained as management.

After Walt Disney World opened near Orlando, Florida, in 1971, the circus attempted to cash in on the resulting tourism surge by opening Circus World theme park in nearby Haines City, which broke ground on April 6, 1973. The theme park was expected to become the circus's winter home as well as to have the Clown College located there. Mattel placed the circus corporation up for sale by December 1973 despite its profit contributions, as Mattel as a whole showed a \$29.9 million loss in 1972. The park's opening was then delayed until February 1974. Venture Out in America, Inc., a Gulf Oil recreational subsidiary, agreed to buy the combined shows in January 1974, and the opening was further pushed back to 1975. While the Circus Showcase for Circus World opened on February 21, 1974, Venture Out placed the purchase deal back into negotiations, and the opening of the whole complex was moved to an early 1976.

By May 1980, the company expanded to three circuses by adding the one-ring International Circus Festival of Monte Carlo that debuted in Japan and Australia. The Felds bought the circus back in 1982. Irvin Feld died in 1984 and the company has since been run by Kenneth. Circus World was never successful, as its standard carnival-type rides were no match for Disney's state-of-the-art attractions and was out of the way. The circus sold the park to Arizona developers James Monaghan and Brian Burstein in 1984.

When in 1990 the Venice rail tracks could not support the show's train cars, the combined circus moved its winter base to the Florida State Fairgrounds in Tampa. In 1993, the clown college was moved from the Venice Arena to Baraboo, Wisconsin. In 1995, the company founded the Center for Elephant Conservation (CEC). Clair George has testified in court that he worked as a consultant in the early 1990s for Kenneth Feld and the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus. He was involved in the surveillance of Jan Pottker (a journalist who was writing about the Feld family) and of various animal rights groups such as PETA.

After three years in Baraboo, the clown college operated at the Sarasota Opera House in Sarasota until 1998 before the program was suspended. On February 26, 1999, the circus company started previewing Barnum's Kaleidoscape, a one ring, intimate, upscale circus performed under the tent; designed to compete with similar upscale circuses such as Cirque du Soleil, Barnum's Kaleidoscape was not successful, and ceased performances after the end of 2000.

Nicole Feld became the first female producer of Ringling Circus in 2004. In 2009, Nicole and Alana Feld co-produced the circus. In 2001, a group led by the Humane Society of the United States, sued the circus over alleged mistreatment of elephants. The suit ended in 2014 with the circus winning \$25.2 million in settlements. On March 3, 2015, the Circus announced that all elephants would be retired in 2018 to the CEC. The retirement date was subsequently moved forward to May 2016.

On January 14, 2017, it was announced that the circus will be closed in May 2017, and would lay off more than 462 employees between March and May 2017. Declining attendance combined with high operating costs and loss of the elephants are among the reasons for closing. On May 7, 2017, its "Circus Extreme" tour will be shown for the last time in Providence, Rhode Island. The circus's last performance will be its "Out of This World" tour at Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum on May 21, 2017, and will be its first (and only) performance at Nassau Coliseum.

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I remember as a child during the 1950s and 60s going with my mother to the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus at the old Madison Square Garden. I also remember that when the circus came to town, we would go to see the Circus Parade with its elephants, other animals and clowns walking up 8th Avenue from the Penn Station yards, up to the old Madison Garden on 49th Street and 8th Avenue. I remember going early to see the 'side show' with its Bearded Lady, World's Strongest Man, midget clowns and all sorts of strange and wonderful animals. I remember being mesmerized by <=>The Flying Wallendas<=>, amused by the clowns, charmed by the jugglers and enchanted by the elephants. And like most children, a trip to the circus wasn't complete without popcorn, cotton candy and a circus light that you swung around on a string. As Bob Hope would have said and on this last day, Thanks for the memories very-very <=>best.

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Donald Trump's disastrously bad week in Washington

No Mr. President this isn't White Noise nor is it going Away

If you follow U.S. politics this past week was a doozy. Because for Donald Trump the week was the most damaging of his presidency. Except that I thought that last week was the worst week of the Trump Administration, starting with Sally Yates' damning testimony about Michael Flynn and ended with a series of wild tweets and an ever-changing story about exactly why he chose to fire FBI Director James Comey. But this week began with the continued shockwaves from Trump's decision to fire FBI Director James Comey.... still being felt. With critics of the President describing the decision as 'Nixonian' and then Trump hinting that there may be 'tapes' of their meetings which only heightened the Watergate comparisons.

Even by Trumpian standards, the wild swings, erratic messaging and general chaos was beyond the pale -- raising real concerns about whether Trump was losing control of the ship of state. Each day, a fresh scandal appeared to engulf Trump's administration at a speed not seen since he took office.

Monday: We learned that then-President Obama warned Trump not to hire former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn. We also learned that Trump gave the Russians highly classified information.

Tuesday: Trump fired FBI Director James Comey, which Comey found out about on TV and that Trump asked Comey to shut down the FBI investigation into Michael Flynn.

Wednesday: He met in the Oval Office with Russian diplomats, including an accused Russian spy, where the President bragged about firing the FBI Director.

Thursday: He admitted he fired Comey specifically because of the Russian investigation.

Friday: He threatened Comey with 'secret tapes' of their conversation.

Further clouding the issue, on Monday night the White House trotted out national security adviser H.R. McMaster on Monday night to issue a statement saying that the Post's story that the President had shared highly classified information with the Russian Foreign Minister and their Ambassador, as Cas reported, is false." Deputy national security adviser Dina Powell also denied the story. "This story is false," she said. "The president only discussed the common threats both countries faced." In Trump's tweets, he isn't denying anything, as McMaster and Powell were; instead he's pointing out that he was within his legal rights to share such information with Russia, throwing both under the bus.

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The constant state of bedlam is beginning to sink this White House, even as the President continually launches people overboard in an attempt to keep his ship afloat. Even if he survives The Russian Connection and The Comey Memos and all the rest, you have to wonder if anyone will survive working for him. Oh, and what happens when there's a scandal he didn't create himself?

For any president, one of these headlines would be very bad news. For President Trump, they all came in a span of 12 hours:

• "Justice Department to appoint special counsel to oversee probe of Russian meddling in 2016 election"

• "House majority leader told colleagues last year: 'I think Putin pays' Trump"

• "Flynn stopped military plan Turkey opposed — after being paid as its agent"

• "Trump Team Knew Flynn Was Under Investigation Before He Came to White House"

• "Israeli Source Seen as Key to Countering Islamic State Threat"

• "Trump campaign had at least 18 undisclosed contacts with Russians — sources"

It was a dizzying Wednesday night for political reporters and followers alike, with a bevy of new information being thrown at them on multiple fronts. And it continued into early Thursday morning with that last headline, from Reuters. Trump's opponents have often accused the media of allowing Trump to distract them with the insignificant, shiny objects that Trump dangles in front of them. At this point, the bigger problem may be that there are too many very real stories to keep up with. So here's a quick summary of why each of these stories is significant, and what it means going forward.

1) The special prosecutor

This is the day the White House — and apparently congressional Republicans — hoped would never come. The White House said just three days ago that there was "frankly no need" for a special investigator to look into Russian meddling, and very few in the GOP signed off on one, even after the drama of Trump firing FBI Director James B. Comey last week.

The reasons they didn't want one are: a) The investigation had previously been handled only by Republicans, who control both chambers of Congress, and by the FBI, which is at least within the chain of command in the Trump administration. A special prosecutor lends much more seriousness to the proceedings and carries the kind of independence from political influence that simply didn't exist before.

And as I argue, it's a pretty direct rebuke from Trump's own Justice Department of his heavy-handed approach to this whole thing, something opponents have argued amounts to obstruction of justice.

2) Kevin McCarthy's 'Putin pays' Trump line

Even if you acknowledge this was a joke, which House GOP leadership say it was, it shows that Republicans were joking about Trump colluding with Russia even before WikiLeaks. That's a story line even Democrats didn't really pick up until much later. It's not difficult to see Democrats using this to argue that Republicans buried whatever curiosity they had about ties between Trump and Russia as they were working to elect him president.

3) Flynn directly influenced White House policy in a pro-Turkey direction after Turkey paid him

Michael T. Flynn, who was forced to resign as Trump's national security adviser, is the opposite of the gift that keeps on giving. He's the infestation that no exterminator can get rid of. We've gradually learned more and more about his work for the Turkish government, which he failed to disclose and could face legal trouble for. Now McClatchy points out that he not only did not disclose the \$500,000 he was paid, but he also pushed the White House in a pro-Turkey direction very early on. Here's more:

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The decision came 10 days before Donald Trump had been sworn in as president, in a conversation with President Barack Obama's national security adviser, Susan Rice, who had explained the Pentagon's plan to retake the Islamic State's de facto capital of Raqqa with Syrian Kurdish forces whom the Pentagon considered the U.S.'s most effective military partners. Obama's national security team had decided to ask for Trump's sign-off, since the plan would all but certainly be executed after Trump had become president.=/span>

=) White House counsel knew Flynn was under investigation even before he was hired</=pan>

This arrangement may not have been known to the public, but the New York Times reports that not only was the Trump team aware, but that it knew he was under investigation for it.

Here's the crux:</=pan>

Michael T. Flynn told President Trump's transition team weeks before the inauguration that he was under federal investigation for secretly working as a paid lobbyist for Turkey during the campaign, according to two people familiar with the case. ...

Mr. Flynn's disclosure, on Jan. 4, was first made to the transition team's chief lawyer, Donald F. McGahn II, who is now the White House counsel. That conversation, and another one two days later between Mr. Flynn's lawyer and transition lawyers, shows that the Trump team knew about the investigation of Mr. Flynn far earlier than has been previously reported.

This makes the above and everything that came before it just remarkable. How could Trump hire Flynn for a national security job knowing this? How could the White House let him weigh in on policy affecting Turkey? How could the White House have waited so long to terminate Flynn when his problems grew on that second big issue, his contacts with Russia? And very troubling for Vice President Pence, who led Trump's transition, how in the world do you explain this?

5) The source whose highly classified information Trump shared with Russia is a valuable Israeli one

From the Wall Street Journal:

The classified information that President Donald Trump shared with Russian officials last week came from an Israeli source described by multiple U.S. officials as the most valuable source of information on external plotting by the Islamic State.

"The most valuable source of information on external plotting by the Islamic State." Some officials think Trump compromised this source with what he shared with Russia. Whether he did that or not, it's becoming clear that it was a hugely significant source of intelligence from a top ally.

6) 18 undisclosed contacts between the Trump campaign and Russia

Anonymous officials tell Reuters that there were at least 18 previously undisclosed phone calls and emails between the Trump campaign and Russia during the final seven months of the 2016 campaign. Several of these involved Flynn and Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak. The Trump team has previously denied any contact with the Russians during the campaign on multiple occasions. Here's a sampling:

"There was no communication between the campaign and any foreign entity during the campaign." — Trump spokeswoman Hope Hicks in November

"The campaign had no contact with Russian officials." — Hicks, also in November

"This is a nonstory because, to the best of our knowledge, no contacts took place, so it's hard to make a comment on something that never happened." — White House deputy press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders in February

And here's the money quote in the Reuters story from Richard Armitage, a former top State Department official in the George W. Bush administration: "It's rare to have that many phone calls to foreign officials, especially to a country we consider an adversary or a hostile power." Add this to the long paper trail of contradicted White House statements on Russia. So Paul Ryan you are wrong this is not just "white noise". I am not saying that the President has done anything illegal but he has admitted to trying to obstruct justice and passed top secret information to a Russian spymaster in the Oval Office where the only media allowed were Russian.

Someone recently said, "George Washington never told a lie. Richard Nixon never told the truth. And Donald Trump doesn't know the difference." In an op-ed this week in the New York Times, conservative columnist David Brooks' article – When the World is Led by a Child – "Our institutions depend on people who have enough engraved character traits to fulfill their assigned duties. But there is perpetually less to Trump than it appears. When we analyze the President's utterances we tend to assume that there is some substantive process behind the words, that it is part of some strategic intent. But Trump's statements don't necessarily come from anywhere, lead anywhere or have a permanent reality beyond his wish to be liked at any given instant. We've got this perverse situation in which the vast analytic powers of the entire world are being spent trying to understand a guy whose thoughts are often just six fireflies beeping randomly in a jar."

Trump has built his presidency on his unpredictability and unorthodoxy. But his policy of just saying and doing whatever comes to mind isn't, of course, a policy at all. Which became frighteningly apparent -- again -- this week. If Barack Obama or Hillary Clinton had done these same things Ryan, Pence and Trump himself would be calling for impeachment and it is this hypocrisy that upsets me today, as the most dangerous thing that is happening is that

Republican are continually placing party over country. With Paul Ryan describing last week's White House shenanigans as "White Noise" while Trump and his inner-circle parade around Saudi Arabia hoping that all will go away..... Both are delusional and this is dangerous because no one is acknowledging that something is rotten in Denmark..... and this is my rant of the week....

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If there was ever an iconic brand it is Riva. The company was established in 1842 on the shore of Lake Iseo, Italy, by Pietro Riva, the great-grandfather of Carlo Riva who was born on February 24, 1922, during the heyday of motor boating, at the time when the first real speedboats were being built. Carlo Riva became a legendary boat and yacht designer and builder, designing boats and setting the style for others to follow.

The company's founder, Pietro Riva – who after moving to Sarnico Laglio, near Como – became the master of his own destiny moving from repairing damaged boats for the local fisherman to building his own boats. These boats quickly stood out for their unmatched style and personality. Riva rapidly gained great respect and recognition; the boatyard flourished also thanks to the farsightedness of Ernesto Riva, who had succeeded his father Pietro and introduced internal combustion engines on Riva boats. With this the era of large cargo and passenger boats operating on the lake thus began.

After World War II, Serafino Riva gave Riva products their final imprinting and turned the boatyard's precious crafts into a real brand, allowing it to take a step into history: production steered from transportation to power boating, which at the time was still dawning. Between the 1940s and the 1950s Riva, through its racing yachts, collected a large number of records and victories in national and international competitions.

In the 1950s, Serafino's son, Carlo opened a new futuristic shipyard — currently protected by the Italian Superintendence for Artistic and Architectural Heritage — and the company began building the type of boats its name still conjures to this day: classy, sophisticated, well-crafted pleasure boats, starting with the Ariston, then the Tritone (the first two-engine yacht), the Sebino (the company's first series), and shortly thereafter, the Florida, made famous by Brigitte Bardot, Liz Taylor, Sean Connery, and others. Aristocrats and business tycoons alike clamored for the beautiful wooden boats.

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Carlo created Riva's golden era. Even today, these jewels preserve intact all the charm of that time, made of paparazzi, movie stars wearing foulards and glamorous sunshades, celebrity love stories, luxury and timeless elegance. The 1950s were the years of Carlo Riva, who had been driven by boundless passion for boats and the family business since he was a child. And much like Ferraris, Riva had by then become the synonym of elegance, status and perfection. Selected materials of the highest quality, a painstaking care for the tiniest details, unparalleled, long-standing expertise and craftsmanship. Riva's creations became the object of desire for the aristocracy, award winning athletes, successful businessmen and movie stars.

In the decade of the Italian industrial revolution, dominated by the myth of speed and racing cars, l'Ingegnere, as Carlo Riva is called, sensed the importance of this phenomenon and created a series of wooden yachts characterized by unique, unmistakable design features. One of them was the Ariston, of which Carlo Riva says it was "designed with love, born pure and strong like a pedigree horse. Unforgettable! It was my Lord of the Sea". In 1956 Riva started cooperating with designer and architect Giorgio Barilani, whose graphic and design activities for the boating industry were then devoted exclusively to Riva, where Barilani was the design manager between 1970 and 1996.

In November 1962 another myth was born: it was named Aquarama. Since its presentation, at the third Milan International Boat Show, the Aquarama became the symbol of Riva par excellence, almost "a brand within the brand". The name of the yacht drew inspiration from the Cinemascope system, the American experimental wide screens. The slogan the yacht was launched with contained several key-words: "Sun, sea, joie de vivre!" The prototype was the mythical Lipicar no. 1, the evolution of the Tritone. 8.02 meters in length, 2.62 meters wide, capable of sleeping up to eight people, two berths at the bow, two 185 hp Chris-Craft petrol engines, a speed of 73 km/h. The price: 10 million=800 thousands liras.

The year 1969 was another milestone in the history of the legendary brand: it was then that fiberglass production started. The first two Riva models in composite material were born: the day cruiser Bahia Mar 20' and the cabin cruiser Sport Fisherman 25'. The new material was first accurately studied by purchasing the hull from the Bertram boatyard. The hull was subsequently redesigned and both models were then finished with wood details, in line with Riva's tradition. Between the 1970s and the 1990s, more yachts were created, including the St. Tropez - which was produced until 1992 - and the Supramerica, the first large cabin cruiser, which was available on the market for more than 20 years. In spite of the success met by fiberglass, Riva's production of wooden runabouts continued until 1996, when the last Aquarama Special (hull number 784) was built.

In September 1969, Carlo Riva, frustrated by a tough union climate, sells the shipyard to the US company Whittaker, maintaining the role of Chairman and General Manager, from which he resigned in 1971. These roles are taken on by Gino Gervasoni, his partner since 1950. Old and new models evolve, Riva's tradition continues. In 1989, one year after the English Group Vickers, of which the brand Rolls Royce was part too, had bought 100% of the shares of Riva, Gino Gervasoni, who had married Carlo Riva's sister, left the shipyard after 41 years of activity. This is how the presence of the Riva family at the shipyard came to an end. In 1991 Riva presented the 58' Bahamas at Genoa International Boat Show 1993 it was the first yacht designed by Mauro Micheli.

Most recently, Carlo Riva attended the launch of the RivaMare last spring. He died on April 11, 2017 at the age of 95. His enthusiasm and creativity will be missed even by those who have only seen a Riva in a James Bond movie and especially for those of us who have enjoyed the class, sophistication, power and fun of zipping around the water on one of the hippest boats to ever grace the seas. There are bigger boats and jazzier boats but few compare to a Riva. Bravo Carlo.... www.riva-yacht.com (<http://www.riva-yacht.com>)

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Tribal Secrets of raising children

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Web Link: <https://www.facebook.com/gordon.cyrus/posts/10154119274127134>
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Eight powerful parenting lessons from tribes around the world. Have you ever wonder how tribes raised their children? British photo journalist Jimmy Nelson documented 35 indigenous tribes around the world across 28 years of work. Here are some lessons about parenting he learned in his journey:

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<=pan style="font-size:12pt;line-height:107%;font-family:georgia,serif">1.=span style="font-variant-numeric:normal;font-weight:normal;font-stretch:=ormal;font-size:7pt;line-height:normal;font-family:"times new roman"&q=ot;"> The healthiest baby food is breast milk. Babies are bre=st feed until they're 4 of 5 years old because mothers know from a long tradition of maternal wisdom tha= it is the healthiest food for a baby's immune system.

=span style="font-size:12pt;line-height:107%;font-family:georgia,serif">2= Babies shouldn't know loneliness. From dusk to dawn, babies are attached to another human being. If parents =re working other family members will carry them. At night they sleep with their parents or siblings.

=span style="font-size:12pt;line-height:107%;font-family:georgia,serif">3= Babies don't cry if their contact needs are met. Babies are either being held or in close contact with someone. Tribes know that babies need the warmth and comfort of touch in order to thrive in all aspec=s of their development.

4.<=pan style="font-variant-numeric:normal;font-weight:normal;font-stretch:n=rma;font-size:7pt;line-height:normal;font-family:"times new roman"&qu=t;"> Babies are nursed on demand. Amongst tribal communities, y=u rarely hear a baby cry. Babies sleep, normally naked, amongst their love ones.</=pan>

<=pan style="font-size:12pt;line-height:107%;font-family:georgia,serif">5.=span style="font-variant-numeric:normal;font-weight:normal;font-stretch:=ormal;font-size:7pt;line-height:normal;font-family:"times new roman"&q=ot;"> No pushchairs needed. Carrying babies on their body gi=es parents more freedom to move around and the baby as well becomes more independent, =nd gets to see the world from the prospective of a grown up. <=b>

=span style="font-size:12pt;line-height:107%;font-family:georgia,serif">6= Co-sleeping is a natural thing. Families, sometimes even s=rangers, sleep together, especially if it is cold. They put their hands and feet in each other's groins and armpits in orde= to keep warm.

=span style="font-size:12pt;line-height:107%;font-family:georgia,serif">7= Parenting is shared with the community. In indigenous tr=bes, parenting duties are shared by the entire community. There is a collective responsibility amongst the tribe to raise a child. </=pan>

8.<=pan style="font-variant-numeric:normal;font-weight:normal;font-stretch:n=rma;font-size:7pt;line-height:normal;font-family:"times new roman"&qu=t;"> No-punishment parenting. They believe that the role of family is the "planting of good seed." Acknowledging positive behavior is more powerful punishing "bad" behavior.

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We=can learn much from our tribal brothers and sisters. Most importantly, that it takes a vil=age to raise a child and contact and praise is more powerful than forced self-reli=nce and discipline. =nd of course – Mother's milk is superior to any Gerber product that you can feed your child.=span style="font-family:georgia,serif;font-size:12pt"> Finally in our ultra-m=terialist society, it is good to realize that it is not nearly as important how much you give a c=ild, as how much time you spend with them.=C2

Five myths about World War I

No the U.S. wasn't completely neutral before 1917, and not all men rushed to sign up to serve in the military.

One hundred years ago, on April 6, 1917, Congress voted to declare war on imperial Germany. The First World War was the pivot of the 20th century: It took the lives of 17 million people and resulted in the collapse of three major empires (the German, the Ottoman and the Austro-Hungarian). In the aftermath, totalitarian regimes both right and left came to power, leading to a second, far bloodier global conflict. Alas, for most Americans, the "Great War" holds little interest, particularly compared with the Civil War, World War II and Vietnam — all conflicts remembered as titanic moral struggles that transformed the nation. This neglect has given rise to some serious misconceptions about the war in which more than 116,000 Americans died.

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MYTH NO. 1

The United States was neutral, in fact as well as name, until 1917.

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America was an "exemplar of peace," according to the title of the first chapter of Margaret E. Wagner's forthcoming history of the United States during the war, sponsored by the Library of Congress. The keepers of Woodrow Wilson's post-presidential home in Washington echo that conventional wisdom: His "primary goal at the outset of the European war . . . was to maintain American neutrality and to help broker peace between the warring parties." In August 1914,

Wilson called upon Americans to be "neutrals in fact as well as name," and in 1916, he ran for reelection on the slogan "Wilson hoped, at some point, to mediate an end to the carnage"

But his private sympathies were never in doubt. A German victory, the president told his closest adviser when the war began, "would change the course of our civilization and make the United States a military nation." So the federal government did little to prevent U.S. businesses from selling goods and lending money to Britain and France. Bethlehem Steel made arms for the Allies, and the investment house of J.P. Morgan and Co. served as the British government's exclusive purchasing agent in the United States. By war's end, the total cost to king and country came to \$3 billion; J.P. Morgan collected a tidy 1 percent commission on every sale. Meanwhile, the Royal Navy was blockading the North Sea, making it all but impossible for American firms to do business with Germany — a disparity Wilson complained about briefly and only in the mildest terms.

MYTH NO. 2

Americans who actively opposed going to war were isolationists.

There is no myth more powerful than the notion that most Americans resisted intervention because they wanted to remain aloof from the problems besetting the rest of the world. In 1952, journalist Walter Lippmann recalled that "the isolationists were the party of neutrality and of pacifism." More recently, Wilson biographer A. Scott Berg reflected that the president was "speaking to an isolationist nation" when he asked Congress to declare war in April 1917.

But both writers ignore the internationalist creed and connections held by the key leaders of the antiwar coalition. Jane Addams presided over a pacifist women's conference in Europe. Morris Hillquit, a leading socialist, tried to travel to Stockholm to meet with comrades from other nations to formulate a peace plan. In 1915, Sen. Robert La Follette urged the Senate to pass a resolution in support of a conference of neutral nations, and in 1917, in a speech preceding his vote against a declaration of war, he offered praise for Germany's social and industrial reforms. Industrialist Henry Ford chartered an ocean liner to transport himself and dozens of other activists across the Atlantic, where they lobbied neutral governments to embrace a peace plan they would press on the warring powers.

These Americans, like many prominent critics of the war elsewhere in the world, wanted a new global order based on cooperative relationships among nations and gradual disarmament. Militarism, they argued, isolated peoples behind walls of mutual fear and loathing. Of course, not all Americans who tried to stop the rush to war shared this global outlook. But they did fear the growth of a huge standing army that might be used in future conflicts abroad.

MYTH NO. 3

Opposition essentially dissolved once the United States declared war.

Accounts of wartime politics at home usually focus on the stringent Espionage and Sedition acts of 1917 and 1918. Conservative author Wendy McElroy writes that these laws “were used to destroy what was left of the left wing in America.” Berg reports that the nation “entered a period of repression as egregious as any in American history.”

Yet, despite the legal challenges, many peace advocates refused to remain silent and even thrived for a time. Some organized the People’s Council of America for Democracy and Peace to demand free speech and oppose the draft. In late May 1917, the council attracted a crowd of more than 15,000 to Madison Square Garden, despite efforts by New York police to intimidate those who attended. Other antiwar stalwarts established the National Civil Liberties Bureau (renamed the ACLU in 1920) to defend Americans prosecuted for exercising their First Amendment rights. And in the fall of 1917, Hillquit ran for mayor of New York on an antiwar platform; in a four-man race, he won almost a quarter of the vote. In several other big cities — Buffalo; Chicago; Dayton, Ohio; and Rochester, N.Y. — socialist candidates also exceeded totals beyond what the party had achieved in prewar contests.

MYTH NO. 4

African Americans eagerly backed the war, hoping to win equal rights by doing so.

"Many black American leaders, such as W. E. B. DuBois, supported the war effort and sought a place at the front for black soldiers" according to a popular online textbook. "Black leaders viewed military service as an opportunity to demonstrate to white society the willingness and ability of black men to assume all duties and responsibilities of citizens." The historian David Kennedy quotes a black assistant to the secretary of war as a stand-in for the majority of African Americans: "This is not the time to discuss race problems," asserted Emmett Scott. "Our first duty is to fight. Then we can adjust the problems that remain in the life of the colored man."

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But other black leaders, such as A. Philip Randolph and Ida Wells-Barnett, refused to encourage African Americans to join a segregated army to fight for a democracy abroad that they did not enjoy at home. And quite a few ordinary black people agreed. In July 1917, marchers took to the streets in several cities to protest the killing by a white mob of as many as 100 black residents of East St. Louis, Ill. Some of the demonstrators in New York carried posters demanding that Wilson "Bring Democracy to America Before You Carry It to Europe."

In the summer of 1917, a group of black infantrymen stationed in Houston who had been attacked by local police protested in a particularly grisly fashion. They marched out of their camp and killed 15 white residents, including several white soldiers. After some of the culprits were executed, Wells-Barnett ordered a batch of buttons describing them as martyrs. Most black draftees grudgingly joined the rigorously segregated army, but few saw combat; they were, instead, assigned to menial labor done in uniform.

MYTH NO.

Nearly all young men obeyed the new conscription law.

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There had been no draft since the Civil War, and most historians are impressed that, as G.J. Meyer puts it in a new book, "more than nine and a half million men registered" on the day in June 1917 when it was initiated; "it all went as smoothly as anyone could have hoped." The Library of Congress history echoes that view: "Predictions of widespread disorder," Wagner writes, "proved unfounded" as those men "signed up with Uncle Sam, cheered on by their fellow citizens." It is easy to assume that young Americans rushed to obey the demand of James Montgomery Flagg's iconic Uncle Sam poster: "I want you."

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But in fact, resistance to conscription was quite strong. By the end of the war, the ranks of non-cooperators were stunningly large. ♦=A0 Roughly 3 million eligible men never registered, in violation of the law — compared with the 24 million who did. And some 338,000 who did register either failed to obey an induction notice or deserted after they joined the ranks. The Justice Department was able to arrest only a small percentage of these lawbreakers. A large number of Mexican Americans and others slipped across the southern border, where prosecutors could not touch them. Altogether, a higher percentage of American men successfully resisted conscription during World War I than during the Vietnam War half a century later.<=span>

By Michael Kazin — The Washington Post — April 6, 2017

=/p>

=p class="MsoNormal" align="center" style="text-align:center">Sleep=or Naps

As someone who has poor sleeping habits and often tries to wake up for missed sleep with naps this article caught my interest, so I too wondered.

Can Naps Make Up for Sleep Deficits?

Q

There's been lots of coverage lately about meeting exercise recommendations by completing small chunks of exercise throughout the day rather than one, continuous session. Does the same hold true for meeting sleep recommendations?

A

No. Unfortunately, sleep does not work that way. Substituting periodic naps for one consolidated night of sleep creates severe sleep deprivation, said Dr. Daniel Buysse, a sleep expert and professor of psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh.

He and his colleagues once did an experiment in which volunteers agreed to alternate 30 minutes of sleep with 60 minutes of wakefulness for two and a half days straight. They ended up sleep deprived, he said, because sound sleep is not equally likely at all times of day. People have a better chance of falling quickly into deep, restful sleep at night than midday, even if they feel as though they could fall asleep at any time. "Our biological clocks do not allow us to sleep as well during the day as at night," he said. "All sleep is not necessarily equal."

That's why night workers get less sleep on average than people who work other shifts – and suffer health consequences as a result, he said. But it's always a good idea to make up for lost sleep, regardless of the time of day, said Dr. Ruth Benca, a professor of psychiatry and director of the Center for Sleep Medicine and Sleep Research at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. People used to think that it was better to pull an all-nighter than to break it up with a short nap, but that isn't true, she said.

=span style="font-size:12pt;line-height:1.2;font-family:georgia,serif;">>

On the other hand, it may be helpful, she said, to take an afternoon nap to compensate for a short night of sleep, bringing a six- and- a- half hour night up to seven, for instance. "If you have to stay awake for a prolonged period, you can mitigate that a little bit by taking some naps, but you can't live your life like that," Dr. Benca said. "Any sleep is better than no sleep, and more sleep is better than less sleep."

by Karen Weintraub – New York Times – March 15, 2016

THIS WEEK's QUOTE

4 Things That You Can't Get Back

The Stone after it's thrown.

The Word after it's said.

The Occasion after it's missed.

The Time after it's gone.

</=pan>

THIS IS INTERESTING

=span style="font-size:12.5pt;font-family:georgia,serif">Although this vi=eo is promotional, being someone who at times has trouble going to sleep I though= that this may being interesting for some of you.... With this, =lease enjoy and let me know if it works....

THINK ABOUT THIS

<=mg src="cid:ii_15b0954fe9f1cb8a" alt="Inline image 1" width="384" he=ght="382">

</=pan>

BEST =IDEO OF THE WEEK

<=pan style="font-size:12pt;font-family:"times new roman",serif"=

Dancing in Silhouette

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Amazing and Wonderful....

Enjoy....

THIS WEEK'S MUSIC

Phil Collins

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The week you are invited to enjoy the music of one of the most successful pop and adult contemporary singers of the '80s, 90s and beyond the balding and diminutive, former (super-group) Genesis drummer-turned-vocalist the incomparable Phil Collins who was almost 30 years old when his first solo single, "In the Air Tonight," became a number two hit in his native U.K. as well as a Top 20 hit in the U.S. Between 1984 and 1990, Collins had a string of 13 straight U.S. Top Ten hits. Long before any of that happened, however, Collins was a child actor/singer who appeared as the Artful Dodger in the London production of Oliver! in 1964. He also has a cameo in A Hard Day's Night, among other films. He got his first break in music in his late teens, when he was chosen to be a replacement drummer in the British art rock band Genesis in 1970. Collins maintained a separate jazz career with the band Brand X as well.

When Collins joined the Genesis the group was fronted by singer Peter Gabriel. They had achieved a moderate level of success in the U.K. and the U.S. with elaborate concept albums, before Gabriel abruptly left in 1975. Genesis auditioned 400 singers without success, then decided to let Collins have a go. The result was a gradual simplifying of Genesis' sound and an increasing focus on Collins' expressive, throaty voice. And Then There Were Three... went gold in 1978, and Duke was even more successful. Collins made his debut solo album, Face Value, in 1981, which turned out to be a bigger hit than any Genesis album. It concentrated on Collins' voice, often in stark, haunting contexts such as the piano-and-drum dirge "In the Air Tonight," which sounded like something from John Lennon's debut solo album, John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band.

During the '80s, Collins was enormously successful in balancing his continuing solo work with his membership in Genesis. In 1992, Genesis released *We Can't Dance* and began an extensive tour. Upon its completion, Collins released *Both Sides* in 1993, and the record became his first album not to produce a major hit single or go multi-platinum. In 1995, he announced that he was leaving Genesis permanently. The following year, he released *Dance into the Light*. Although the album didn't chart highly, its subsequent supporting tour was a success. The *Hits* collection followed in 1998, and a year later Collins made his first big-band record, *Hot Night in Paris*. The song cycle *Testify* arrived in 2002, and his next studio-recorded solo release was 2010's *Going Back*, which saw him revisiting the Motown hits that so influenced him and featured three of the surviving Funk Brothers -- guitarists Eddie Willis and Ray Monette, and bassist Bob Babbitt.

After some time out of the spotlight, much of it spent recovering from physical ailments, Collins returned in 2014 to play a couple of songs at his sons' school and to write songs with Adele. Soon after, he began work on reissuing his solo albums, sorting through the archives for demos and live recordings to flesh them out. In early 2016, Warner Music began releasing the discs in pairs, with new portraits of Collins on the covers in place of the original images. Collins returned to the stage in March of 2016, performing at the Little Dreams Foundation Benefit Gala in Miami. He published his autobiography, *Not Dead Yet: The Memoir*, in October of that year, and the double-disc compilation *The Singles* appeared during the same month.

When his work with Genesis, his work with other artists, as well as his solo career is totaled, Collins had more US Top 40 singles than any other artist during the 1980s. His most successful singles from the period include "In the Air Tonight", "Against All Odds (Take a Look at Me Now)", "One More Night", "Sussudio" and "Another Day in Paradise". Collins' discography includes eight studio albums that have sold 33.5 million certified units in the US and an estimated 150 million worldwide, making him one of the world's best-selling artists. He is one of only two recording artists, along with Paul McCartney, who have sold over 100 million records worldwide both as solo artists and separately as principal members of a band.

Collins has won seven Grammy Awards, six Brit Awards, two Golden Globe Awards, an Academy Award, and a Disney Legend Award. In 1999, he received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2003, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as a member of Genesis in 2010, the Modern Drummer Hall of Fame in 2012, and the Classic Drummer Hall of Fame in 2013. Despite his commercial success and his status as a respected and influential drummer, music critics are divided in their opinion of his work and he has publicly received both criticism and praise from other prominent music artists. Although known to be difficult to work with, Phil Collins has been a major influence in Rock/Pop Music around the world and with this you are again invited to enjoy the music of one of the most multi-talented musicians and sometimes actor.... Mr. Phil Collins....

Phil Collins – In The Air Tonight -- <https://youtu.be/no4qgpbJQ7E> <<https://youtu.be/no4qgpbJQ7E>>

Phil Collins – Drums & =ake Me Home -- <https://y=utu.be/egJR3K6UIJY> <<https://youtu.be/egJR3K6UIJY>>

Phil Collins – Both Sides O= The Story -- <https://y=utu.be/UASOqR9xkFA> <<https://youtu.be/UASOqR9xkFA>>

Phil Collins – Another Day =n Paradise -- <https://y=utu.be/FXvBbnZcnHU> <<https://youtu.be/FXvBbnZcnHU>>

Phil Collins – Can't St=p Loving You -- <https://y=utu.be/K8inZ2sg6d0> <<https://youtu.be/K8inZ2sg6d0>>

Phil Collins – Against All =dds -- https://y=utu.be/-OiV_5kEt6A <https://youtu.be/-OiV_5kEt6A>

Phil Collins – Easy Lover=C2◆ -- <https://youtu.be/K3oWdNTzQDc>

Phil Collins – Do You Remem=er -- <https://y=utu.be/Owdv9l1D82M> <<https://youtu.be/Owdv9l1D82M>>

Phil Collins – Doesn't =nybody Stay Together Anymore -- <https://youtu.be/mN1jiHjKewY>=span>

Phil Collins – Colours◆=A0 -- https://youtu.be/MpGLINmbL_4

Phil Collins – I Don't =are Anymore -- <https://youtu.be/xLpfbcXTeo8> <<https://youtu.be/xLpfbcXTeo8>>

Phil Collins – You'll B= In My Heart -- <https://youtu.be/05MykSuOxP0>

Phil Collins◆=A0 – Something Happened On The Way =o Heaven Live -- https://youtu.be/_0soY3Dk6=l

Genesis – Mama --=/b> <https://youtu.be/xbO6aK=yNIA>

Genesis – Dance on a Volcan= -- <https://y=utu.be/oVeBR-hOTlo> <<https://youtu.be/oVeBR-hOTlo>>

Genesis – Domino I & II= In The Glow Of The Night -- <https://youtu.be/Ula3r12oCo8> <<https://youtu=be/Ula3r12oCo8>>

Genesis – Turn It On Again=C2◆ -- https://y=utu.be/kfCRv_4NuWk <https://youtu.be/kfCRv_4NuWk>

Genesis – Home By The Sea =C2◆-- https://y=utu.be/3AtL_Ko2KNQ <https://youtu.be/3AtL_Ko2KNQ>

Genesis – I Can't Dance -- <https://y=utu.be/qOyF4hR5GoE> <<https://youtu.be/qOyF4hR5GoE>>

Genesis – Entangled -- <https://youtu.be/eMNO3gjOVHM>

Genesis – I Know What I Lik= -- =C2◆htt=s://youtu.be/eK9a2jLEAfs <<https://youtu.be/eK9a2jLEAfs>>

BONUS

Eric Clapton &am=; Phil Collins – Layla ◆=A0(Live Aid 1985) -- <https://y=utu.be/ZQlqTFKM7Ws>
<<https://youtu.be/ZQlqTFKM7Ws>>

I hope that you enjoyed this week's offering and wish you and =ours a great week....

Sincerely,

Greg Brown

--◆=A0

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