
From: Gregory Brown <[REDACTED]>
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DEAR FRIEND.....

The End of White Christian America is Approaching

In the on-line news magazine Alternet, Brooklyn writer and journalist Amanda Mancotte recently wrote – The end of white Christian America is nigh: Why the country's youth are abandoning religious conservatism— As White Christians are now a minority in 19 states and America's growing racial diversity only tells part of the story. New data from the American Values Atlas shows that while Caucasians continue to be the majority in all but 4 states in the country, white Christians are the minority in a whopping 19 states. And, nationwide, Americans who identify as Protestant are now in the minority for the first time ever, clocking in at a mere 47 percent of Americans and falling.

The most obvious reason for this change is growing racial diversity. Most Americans still identify as Christian, but “Christian” is a group that is less white and less Protestant than it has been at any time in history. The massive growth in Hispanic Catholics, in particular, has been a major factor in this shift in the ethnic and religious identity of this country. White Catholics used to outnumber Hispanic Catholics 3 to 1 in the 2000s, but now it's only by a 2 to 1 margin.

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But another major reason religious diversity is outpacing the growth of racial/ethnic diversity is largely due to the explosive growth in non-belief among Americans. One in five Americans now identifies as religiously unaffiliated. In 13 states, the “nones” are the largest religious group. Non-religious people now equal Catholics in number, and their proportion is likely to grow dramatically, as young people are by far the most non-religious group in the country. This isn't some kind of side effect of their youth, either. As Adam Lee has noted, the millennial generation is becoming less religious as they age.

These changes explain the modern political landscape as well as any economic indicator. While not all white Christians are conservative, these changing numbers definitely suggest that conservative Christians are rapidly losing their grip on power. And while some non-white Christians are conservative, their numbers are not making up for what the Christian right is losing. And whether conservative leaders are aware of the exact numbers or not, it's clear that they sense that change is in the air. Just by speaking to young people, turning on your TV, or reading the Internet, you can sense the way the country is lurching away from conservative Christian values and towards a more liberal, secular outlook. And conservative Christians aren't taking these changes well at all.

To look at the Christian right now is to see a people who know they are losing power and are desperately trying to reassert dominance before it's lost altogether. The most obvious example of this is the frenzy of anti-abortion activity in recent years. Anti-choice forces have controlled the Republican Party since the late '70s, but only in the past few years have they concentrated so singlemindedly on trying to destroy legal abortion in wide swaths of the country. In 2011 alone, states passed nearly three times as many abortion restrictions as they had in any previous year.

None of this is a reaction to any changes in people's sexual behavior or reproductive choices. It's not like there was a spike in abortions causing this panic. In fact, the abortion rate has been declining. And despite continuing media panic over adolescent sexuality the fact is that teenagers are waiting longer to have sex, on average, than in the past. Despite this, not only are you seeing a dramatic increase in attacks on legal abortion, the Christian right has expanded its attacks to contraception access, suggesting that something has worked them into a panic they believe can only be resolved by trying to reassert their religious and sexual values.

The fact that these changes in attitude are rising alongside the growth of irreligiosity is not a coincidence. More perhaps even than the 1960s, Americans are in a period of questioning rigid sexual and religious mores, and concluding, in increasing numbers, that they are not down with guilt-tripping people for victimless behavior and demanding conformity for its own sake. Some of them—now a whopping 22% of Americans!—are leaving religion entirely. Some are continuing in their faith but choosing to interpret their values differently than Christian conservatives would like.

And so we see Christian conservatives cracking down in a desperate bid to regain control. They claim that they're being oppressed by increasing tolerance for religious diversity. They have latched onto, with some success, the claim that "religious freedom" requires giving Christians the right to oppress others. The Republican Party is in complete thrall to the religious right, to the point where giving the Christian right one go-nowhere symbolic bill instead of another one created a major political crisis.

The irony is that this panic-based overreach is just making the situation worse for the Christian right. One of the biggest reasons the secularization trend has accelerated in recent years is that young people see the victim complex and the sex

policing of the Christian right and it's turnin= them off. And they're not just rejecting conservative Christianity but the entire idea of organized religion altogether. In=other words, the past few years have created a self-perpetuating cycle: Christian conservatives, in a panic over changing demographics, start cracking down. In reaction, more people =ive up on religion. That causes the Christian right to panic more and crack down more. In the end, Christian conservatives are going to haste= their own demise by trying to save themselves. And as Mancotte says, =i>"not that any of us should be crying for them."

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=span style="font-size:18pt;line-height:107%;font-family:Georgia,serif">T=e Myth of the Mutual Fund

How Many Mutual Funds Routinely Rout the Market? Zero

New York Times writer and podcast editor Jeff Sommer made a startlin= discovery based initially on a study last summer called "Does=Past Performance Matter? The Persistence Scorecard," conducted by S&P Dow Jones I=dices twice a year. The edition of the study that he focused on began in March 2009, the start of the bull market. The bull market in=stocks turned six last month, and despite some rocky stretches — it has generally been a v=ry pleasant time for money managers, who have often posted good numbers. <=p>

The study in=luded 2,862 broad, actively managed domestic stock mutual funds that were in operation for the 12 months through 2010.=C2◆ The S&P Dow Jones team winnowed the funds based on performance. It selected the 25 percent of funds with the best returns over those 12 months — and t=en asked how many of those funds actually remained in the top quarter in each of the four succeeding 12-month periods through March 2014. The answer =as remarkably low: two.

Just two funds — the Hodges Small Cap fund and t=e AMG SouthernSun Small Cap fund — managed to hold on to their berths in =he top quarter every year for five years running. And for the 2,862 funds as a who=e, that record is even a little worse than you would have expected from random chance alone. In other words, if all of the managers of the 2,862 funds hadn't bothered to try to pick stoc=s at all — if they had merely flipped coins — they would, as a group, probably=have produced better numbers. Instead of two funds at the end of five years.◆=A0 Basic probability theory tells us there should have been at least three.

The study seemed to support the considerable=body of evidence suggesting that most people sshouldn't even try to beat the market: Just pick low-cost index funds, assemble a balanced and appropriate portfolio fo= your specific needs, and give up on active fund management. The data in th= study didn't prove that the mutual fund managers lacked talent or that you couldn't beat the market. But, as =eith Loggie, the senior director of global research and design at S&P Dow Jones Indices, said in an interview last week, the evidence certainly ddidn't bolster the case for investing with active fund managers. "Looking at the numbers, you =an't tell whether there is skill involved in what they do or whether their performance= is just a matter of luck," Mr. Loggie said. "= believe that many of them do have skill. But even if they do have it, based on how they've done in the past you really can't =redict how they will perform in the future."

And although those two funds had manage to perf=rm splendidly during the last study – at the time of the article we were two weeks away from the completion of another 12 months since the end of that last study, and up to then it had been a mediocre for those two mutual funds, leaving Mr. Sommer to conclude that at the end ther= would be none. Here are the dismal statistics: The SouthernSun Small Cap fund has actually lost money for investors over the 12 months through Thursday. It was down 3.2 percent=, according to Morningstar, and for the nine months through December, it was in the bottom=quartile of funds in the S&P. Dow Jones study. The Hodges Small Cap fund h=s done better, gaining almost 6 percent through the middle of March. S.&P Dow J=nes Indices says that put it in the third quartile — or second-to-worst one — =hrough December. While it's mathematically possible, it is highly unlikely that either will climb to th= top quartile in the next few weeks, Mr. Loggie said.

This is an i=dication that one can never use past performance to predict future returns. Yes It is always possible that any one of these funds will beat the market over the l=ng term and some of them will. But the problem is that we don't know which of them will do that in advance= And that, in a nutshell, is the kernel of the argument for buying index funds. As much as mutual funds will tell you that their strategies employ science, it is a science that is less predictable than the weather forecast on your local television station's news program. So why are so many Americans not realizing that almost all Mutual Funds underp=rforms the market and continue to pay them millions and billions of =ollars in fees?

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A Tale of Two States

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It's hard to compare states so I found Ra=di Weingarten recent article in The Washington Post – It's a tal= of two states – as both sit side by side along sharing the shoreline with Lake Superior =heir economies both grew from foundations in manufacturing, farming and mining, and they each boast a strong history of organized labor. And in 2010, still reeling from the recession, they electe= new governors. Except that the governors took these two states -- Minnesota and

Wisconsin -- have gone down two very different paths. Today, Minnesota's unemployment rate is 3.6 percent -- far below the nationwide rate of 5.7 percent - while Wisconsin's job growth has been among the worst in the region and its income growth has been among the worst in the nation.

Since his election, Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton turned his state's budget deficit into a projected surplus of nearly \$2 billion.² While Republican front-runner for the 2016 Presidential election, Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker has swollen his state's budget deficit to a projected \$2 billion. Meanwhile, Dayton has boosted the minimum wage, invested in public education and supported workers' rights. (And Minnesota has the most union members of any state in the Midwest.) And Walker has slashed funding to public schools, and is dismantling the state's public university system. On March 9, he signed a bill that makes Wisconsin the 25th so-called right to work state, which, research shows, contrary to the hype, drives down wages and destroys good jobs. Why? All in an effort to eviscerate Wisconsin's labor unions.

Hasn't someone told Governor Walker that Trickle-Down Economics doesn't work and frankly and it ~~ever~~ has. Therefore if we want to restore a healthy middle class, we need a different approach. If we want a strong middle class, which both Governors say that they want, then you can't take out the unions that built it. If you want good jobs with higher wages, then workers need a voice. If we want to restore a healthy middle class, we need a different approach, a virtuous cycle that begins with a high-quality public education that gives students the skills they need to get good jobs with fair wages, helping each generation climb the ladder of opportunity. Another crucial step is to enable more workers to form and join unions.

As Hillary Clinton recently noted, "The American middle class was built, in part, by the right for people to organize and bargain." And at Weingarten pointed out in her article Secretary Clinton is right. When unions were at their peak, more workers -- upwards of 50 percent -- were in the middle class. Conversely, a decline in union membership - spurred on by trickle-down economics, ideological attacks and globalization -- is directly linked to the rise in income inequality. At a time when only the wealthiest 10 percent have reaped the benefits of any gains in productivity, workers once again need a voice on the job. Collective bargaining can lift all boats, even those boats that aren't carrying a union card.

Look at wages. In the heyday of the American labor movement, non-managerial workers' wages went up 75 percent. As unions have been on the decline, these workers have only seen a four percent bump. Still, even today, union workers earn 28 percent more than nonunion workers. When two-thirds of our economic activity is driven by consumer spending, it's critical that working families have more money in their pockets to spend. Broadly shared prosperity will remain elusive as long as workers' buying power is limited.

And then there is retirement security. Eighty-six percent of Americans believe our nation faces a retirement security crisis. Unions bar=ain a secure retirement on behalf of workers, often in the form of pensions. Pensions both ensure that workers can retire with financial dignity and are important investors in our economy. For every dollar paid in pension benefit=s, there's \$2.37 in economic output. Plus, long-term capital funds create =undreds of thousands of jobs in asset classes like infrastructure, venture capital =nd real estate.

Collective bargaining has a multiplier effect. So do laws meant to take collective bargaining away. Workers in so-called right-to-work states make about \$1,500 less per year. When wages are lower, workers leave the state, depressing job creatio=, and there's a sizable economic loss to the state. Marquette University economist Abdur Chowdhury estimates the impact of right-to-work on Wisconsin will be "a net loss of direct and indirect income of at least \$5.8 billion annually."

Governors and state policymakers have a clear choice. They can push ideological policies to break the backs of unions and further disempow=r workers, have their deficit grow, workers' wages sink and their state r=anked at the bottom for business and economic climate, as Walker's Wisconsin is.=Or they can -- like Minnesota, which is ranked in the top ten in the nation for its business and economic climate -- strengthen unions and workers' rights,=invest in public education and infrastructure, and create more good jobs. An= as Weingarten also pointed out, "It's a clear choice, and =f we care about working families accessing the American dream -- it's not a hard one.=E2◆◆

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America's Mass Incarceration Habit Needs a Serious Fix

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Michael K. Williams is the ACLU ambassador for ending mass incarceration. He is an act=r living in Williamsburg, Brooklyn

When Michael Williams was growing up in East Flatbush, one of the toughest neighborhoods in Brooklyn, one of his very best friends was something else. He, let's call him MZ, could have had Hollywood on a st=ing. He was actually William's inspiration for becoming an actor. MZ, however, suffered from bipolar disorder. Too poor to get the mental health care he needed, he ended up behind bars, and it wrecked h=m. He was no longer the friend and brother I knew. Between the disorder =nd what he experienced in prison, he's never been the same – a shell of his former sel=.

Stories like MZ's are all too common. Our society has been using jails and prisons as a dumping ground for the mentally ill and those addicted to drugs. These human beings don't belong in prison, they belong in treatment, yet we've pushed them into cages and denied them their humanity. Is it shocking that these same valuable citizens, like my friend MZ, emerge worse off than when they went in? Let's face it: America is addicted to mass incarceration, and it's making our society sick.

Our habit of locking away human beings is a particularly unseemly kind of addiction for a country that prides itself on freedom, especially when the United States incarcerates more of its citizens than China, Russia, or Iran. Right now America has about 5 percent of the world's population but is responsible for 25 percent of the world's incarcerated population. In other words, one out of four people in prison today are inside U.S. jails and penitentiaries. That is nearly 2.4 million human beings – an obscene number.

In America, it is black men, more than anyone else, who suffer from our dependence on mass incarceration. Currently, black men are six times more likely to be imprisoned in federal and state prisons and local jails than white men. This horrifying racial disparity comes in part from the war on drugs, which has been devastating communities of color for the past four decades. Although blacks and whites use illegal drugs at roughly the same rates, African-Americans make up nearly 40 percent of those put away for drug offenses in state or federal prison, even though we only make up 13 percent of the U.S. population.

We need to realize that these statistics represent human beings. These men are someone's child, someone's parent. Someone loves them and still wants the best for them. These men have dreams of being great, too. Ruining people's lives for small, nonviolent offenses tied to drug use, drug addiction, or mental illness is not the way to go. Health problems are health problems – not criminal justice problems. It's by the grace of God that I didn't get into more serious trouble. If I had, there's no way I'd be where I am today.

There are far too many people of color with bright futures that have been relegated to our prison systems. However, instead of being provided with opportunities to express themselves or their creativity safely or getting the right support, they make mistakes which cost them dearly. The costs of those mistakes are high and these men pay with their futures. Once people have done hard time, the world closes in on them. It's damn near impossible to get a job. Depending on where you live, you likely can't vote. The possibility of becoming a productive citizen is foreclosed on by a system that denies those who have served their time with another chance. Instead, they're forever seen as ex-cons.

And don't forget the huge cost of confinement – The U.S. spent \$80 billion in 2010 on locking up people on the local, state, and federal level, which could be better spent on education, health care, or simply getting at-risk people the counseling they need so they don't fall back into addiction and petty crime. We have spent the last 40 years stuffing our

prisons, mostly with black and brown men, and for what? This isn't who we are. America, we can do better. We have to, for all people. Because MZ deserved better, and there are hundreds of thousands more like him.

Unbelievable GOP Statements on Voter Suppression

Gov. Chris Christie during a campaign stop in Connecticut for Republican gubernatorial candidate Tom Foley.

You would think that making it easier for citizens to vote would be something for everyone in a democracy to celebrate. But the shocking remarks by these six government officials — some of whom will be on the November ballot — tell a different story.

Governor Chris Christie: Same-Day Voter Registration Is a “Trick” and GOP Needs to Win Gubernatorial Races So They Control “Voting Mechanisms”

In early March, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie spoke at a US Chamber of Commerce gathering in Washington, DC. In his comments, The Record reports that Christie “pushed further into the contentious debate over voting rights than ever before, saying Tuesday that Republicans need to win gubernatorial races this year so that they’re the ones controlling voting mechanisms’ going into the next presidential election.”

This isn't the first time Christie's come clean about GOP intentions at the ballot box. In August, while campaigning in Chicago for Bruce Rauner, the GOP candidate challenging Gov. Pat Quinn, Christie complained that Illinois would become the 11th state to permit same-day voter registration this November — a move supporters say will increase turnout and improve access. Christie didn't see it that way, calling it an underhanded Democrat's get-out-the-vote tactic. Christie said of Quinn: “I see the stuff that's going on. Same-day registration all of a sudden this year comes to Illinois. Shocking,” he added sarcastically. “I'm sure it was all based upon public policy, good public policy to get same-day registration here in Illinois just this year, when the governor is in the toilet and needs as much help as he can get.” He added that the voter registration program is designed to be a major “obstacle” for Republican gubernatorial candidates.

Fran Millar: Georgia Senator Complains About Polling Place Being Too Convenient for Black Voters

Georgia state Senator Fran Millar (R-Dunwoody) wrote an angry op-ed following the news that DeKalb County, part of which he represents, will permit early voting on the last Sunday in October. The voting will take place at the Gallery at South DeKalb mall. Here's what Millar wrote in The Atlanta-Journal Constitution: "[T]his location is dominated by African-American shoppers and it is near several large African-American mega churches such as New Birth Missionary Baptist... Is it possible church buses will be used to transport people directly to the mall since the poll will open when the mall opens? If this happens, so much for the accepted principle of separation of church and state." Millar, who is senior deputy whip for the Georgia Senate Republicans, promised to put an end to Sunday balloting in DeKalb County when state lawmakers assemble in the Capitol in January.

Doug Preis: An Ohio GOP Chair Says We Shouldn't Accommodate the "Urban — Read African-American — Voter-Turnout Machine"

In 2012, Republican officials in Ohio were limiting early voting hours in Democratic-majority counties, while expanding them on nights and weekends in Republican counties. In response to public outcry, Ohio Secretary of State Jon Husted mandated the same early voting hours in all 88 Ohio counties. He kept early voting hours from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays from October 2 to 19 and broadened hours from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. from October 22 to November 2. But he refused to expand voting hours beyond 7 p.m. during the week, on weekends or three days prior to the election — which is when voting is most convenient for many working-class Ohioans. Here's what the Franklin Party (Columbus) Ohio GOP chair, Doug Preis, and close adviser to Ohio Gov. John Kasich, said about limiting early voting. "I guess I really actually feel we shouldn't contort the voting process to accommodate the urban — read African-American — voter-turnout machine." (And yes, he actually said "read African-American," that wasn't inserted.)

Greg Abbott: Texas AG Says Partisan Districting Decisions Are Legal, Even if There Are "Incidental Effects" on Minority Voters

The 2010 Census results showed that 89 percent of the population growth in Texas came from minorities, but "when it came to fitting those new seats in the map, Republican lawmakers made sure three of them favored Republicans, who tend to be white" according to the Associated Press. The Justice Department claims that Texas lawmakers intentionally redrew the state's congressional districts in order to dilute the Hispanic vote. Attorney General Greg Abbott, who is running for governor of Texas, wrote the following in a letter to the Department of Justice defending the state's voting maps:

"DOJ's accusations of racial discrimination are baseless. In 2011, both houses of the Texas Legislature were controlled by large Republican majorities, and their redistricting decisions were designed to increase the Republican Party's electoral prospects at the expense of the Democrats. It is perfectly constitutional for a Republican-controlled legislature to make partisan districting decisions, even if there are incidental effects on minority voters who support Democratic candidates."

Ted Yoho: Only Property Owners Should Vote

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While running for a Florida congressional seat in 2012, Ted Yoho suggested that only property owners should have the right to vote, as you can watch in this video. Here's what he said: "I've had some radical ideas about voting and it's probably not a good time to tell them, but you used to have to be a property owner to vote." He also called early voting by absentee ballots "a travesty." And yes, Yoho won the election, and is now a member of Congress.

Don Yelton: North Carolina GOP Precinct Chair: Voter ID Law Will "Kick Democrats in the Butt" and Hurt "Lazy Blacks"

In an interview last year with The Daily Show, Don Yelton, a GOP precinct chair in Buncombe County, North Carolina, defended the state's new voter ID law, saying so many offensive things, he was asked to resign the day after it aired. Yelton admits at the start of the segment that the number of Buncombe County residents who commit voter fraud is one or two out of 60,000 a year. The interview correspondent, Aasif Mandvi, replies that those numbers show "there's enough voter fraud to sway zero elections," and then Yelton replies, "Mmm...that's not the point." He goes on to say that "if it hurts a bunch of lazy blacks that want the government to give them everything, so be it." and then adds, "The law is going to kick the Democrats in the butt." After the segment aired, the Buncombe County GOP Chair issued a statement on Yelton's comments, calling them "offensive, uniformed and unacceptable of any member within the Republican Party" and called for Yelton's resignation. He obliged.

Voter suppression is both appalling and un-American. But this is what Republicans really think and it's ugly.... It would be one thing if these were aberrations but they aren't. The Republican Party leadership not only doesn't see this type of language and accompanied actions as a problem, because of their partisan disdain of Democrats, minorities and especially our first Black President, they truly believe that anything that they do, no matter how vile and despicable is okay to do even if this includes subverting the democratic process and this is my rant of the week....<=b>

WEEK's READINGS

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The Incredibly Shrinking American Middle Class

Although the economy has pretty much recovered with company profits soaring, financial markets at all-time highs, unemployment at a low of 5.5% and inflation at historic lows it is apparent that the Middle Class has been left out of this largess. Even though most have done what would have been called doing the right thing all-of their lives — raising children and taking care of their families do-to good paying jobs, for millions of Americans all gone now, including for many families the house. And although many have found jobs, they are working at jobs making a third of what they used =o. And unlike Wall Street there was no bail out for the middle class.

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A typical American household made about \$51,017 in=2012, according to new figures out from the Census Bureau. That number may =ound familiar to anyone who remembers George H. W. Bush's first year as president or Michael Jackson in his prime. That's because household income in 2012 is similar to what i= was in 1989 (but back then it was actually higher: you had an extra \$600 or so to spend compared to today). =hat sobering statistic gives an indication of where the American middle class appears to be headed. Take a look below =t a snapshot of where the middle class is now, the problems they face and what =ur Facebook audience has to say about squeaking out a living these days.

A note on the term "middle class": There is no single, universal definition so we turned to economic analyst Robert Reich ♦=93 who spoke to us this week – for some direction. Reich suggested defining middle class as those with income levels 50 percent above and below the median income.♦=A0 Median is a term that means the "middle of the middle.♦=D Median earnings are a key indicator of how the middle class is doing.

A Snapshot

the income range to be considered middle class:\$25,500 – \$76,500

The median middle class household income in 2012: \$51,017 and in 1989: \$51,681

Year inflation-adjusted median household income peaked at \$56,080: 1999

Income needed in a two parent, two child home in St. Louis for an adequate living standard: \$64,67= and in New York City: \$94,676

The Problem

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Share of self-described middle-class adults who say it's more difficult now than a decade ago for middle-class people to maintain their standard of living: 85

Percentage of Americans that consider themselves to be "lower class" (the highest percentage ever): 8.4

Percentage increase in salary growth for the median worker from 1979 to 2012: 5

Percentage drop in average real income per family since 2007: 8.3

The median net worth of a family in 2010: \$77,300 and in 2007: \$126,400

Percentage of Americans that are unemployed/underemployed rate: 14

Number of states in which poverty rates rose between 2007 and 2010: 46

Approximate poverty rate from 2009 to 2012: 15

The last time it remained at or above 15 percent for three years running: 1965

The Work

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Average number of hours U.S. workers put in annually: 1,790 what the Norwegians work: 1,420 and the French: 1,479

Percent increase in productivity from 1979 to 2012: 75

What the=median middle-class income (\$51,017) would be if wages grew at the same rate: \$77,=31

Number of guaranteed days of paid vacation given to U.S. workers: 0

Number of vacation days U.S. workers are entitled to, but don't take, in a typical year: 17= million

Number of paid maternity days in Germany: 98 (100% pay)

<=pan style="font-size:12pt;line-height:107%;font-family:Georgia,serif">Nu=ber of paid maternity days in France: 112 (100% pay)

<=pan style="font-size:12pt;line-height:107%;font-family:Georgia,serif">Nu=ber of paid maternity days in U.S.: 0

Number of industrialized countries that do not mandate paid maternity leave: 1=/p>

(yes, the U.S. is the only one that does not require paid leave.)

The Costs

Average out-of-pocket health care expenses per household in 2012: \$3,600 and in 2011: \$3,280 and =n 2005: \$2,035

Average amount needed to send a child to an in-state college for the 2012-13 academic year: ♦=A0\$22,261 and for a private college: \$43,289

Percentage of Americans near retirement with less than \$30,000 in their retirement accounts: 75

Percentage increase in housing prices since 1990: 56

Share of Americans that do not have enough money saved to pay their bills for six months: 3/4

The Inequality

What Ha=pen To The American Dream

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“Seriously thin=ing of moving overseas. Economically, many countries are struggling, but they seem to still have better quality of lif=. Not everything is perfect, there is still crime, there are still rich stupi= idiots, but there is less of the government being the evil empire as much a= here in the U.S. and more support for smaller less, global corporations.

Environmental concerns are evident in legislation and policies. Healthcare =s a right which supersedes any right to carry a gun in public. Someone once wrote, 'Americans have rights to protection; Europeans have rights to be protected from.'"

=span style="font-size:9pt;line-height:107%;font-family:Georgia,serif">>=E2◆◆ Saundra Hopkins

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Although economist may disagree, I view the economy as a zero sum game and if this is true we have to ask why since 1970 to the Top=1%'s income grew by 181% while the bottom 99%'s income only grew by 2.6% and worker' productiv=ty grew by almost 90%. It is obvious who is getting the short end. And unless Wall Street, stockholders and management decide=that it is important to share the wealth with workers the Middle Class squeeze is only going to get worse.

NCAA

The Hypocrisy in College Sports

In a second installmen= of my weekly readings, as you know the NCAA which offers scholarships to =ts student athletes refuses to pay them like typical employees but what you ma= not know, the true cost of that arrangement is staggering. Often stud=nt athletes injured while playing can sometimes become so debilitated from their injuries that even after recovery they can be classified as disabled, enabled to play sports or concentrate in the classroom and after leaving school can't hold a job.=C2◆ These injured student athletes learn something ugly. Once you are done with college, college is typically done w=th you and not only are they stuck with the injuries they sustain, they are also stuck with the medical bills. Career ending injuries almost always means medical bills with no end in sight. Eve= with medical insurance thanks to Obamacare the co-pays and deductibles can =ost these injured ex-student athletes tens of thousands of dollars a year.

The NCAA s=ys that it is always looking out for its student athletes which is why they consider them student athletes to begin with... =o protect them by keeping them as amateurs and not as paid employees who coul= be exploited by an overly aggressive sports program. But it turns out that not being an employee is the very thing that puts student athletes

at risk because it deprives them of the benefit that virtually every worker in all 50 United States is guaranteed by law, Worker's Compensation Insurance which pays for all medical care if they get hurt on the job. Worker's compensation pays 100%, just like the coaches and the guys selling peanuts in the grandstands. So why not the student athletes who have the most dangerous jobs or are the most likely to get injured?

Many student athletes end up paying the universities that they played for as a result of the injuries sustained while playing for their same university. This truly seems a little odd but no accident because the term student athlete was created by the NCAA in the 1950s in an effort to not have to pay Worker's Compensation after a football player in Colorado was actually killed during a game, and when his family pressed the school for the same survivor benefits that they gave their employees, the NCAA said that he wasn't an employee at all. And invented a new term, student athlete. A term that helped give them the control of an employer without the obligations. This move saved the NCAA an untold fortune because new research shows that former NCAA athletes often suffer physical ailments for the rest of their lives.

An Indiana University study last year found that half of them will have chronic injuries by their early 50s, a rate twice that of non-athletes. When you suffer a spine, back or neck injury you are not just going to be out for the rest of the season. You are potentially going to be debilitated for the rest of your life. You are going to be restricted in your career opportunities. It can result in catastrophic illnesses that you will carry for the rest of your life. Some injured student athletes are so debilitated (especially in football but also includes soccer, diving, swimming, water polo, hockey, track & field, etc.) that they are prohibited from working by their doctors or even driving. They are often in such bad shape that the Federal Government labels them as 'legally disabled' and a ward of the state with their medical bills and living expenses paid by taxpayers.

More disturbing is that because schools don't cover injuries a number of critics believe that they are not doing the things normal employees would do to prevent injuries, which means that athletes are not just on the hook for their medical bills but are more likely to get injured to begin with. The whole point of Workman's Comp was to recognize that we want employers who are benefiting from the activities of their employees to bare the costs of their injuries and to try to take steps to reduce the risk of injuries. The biggest problem here is that they don't have very much incentive to reduce those injuries.

These student athletes go to college hoping to enhance their earning potential and instead for far too many it has been just the opposite. Many of these injured athletes are unable to sit or work on their feet for sustained periods making it impossible for them to do office work, work as drivers or become police officers or firemen. When actual employees get hurt on the job and lose earning potential Workmen Comp makes up most of the difference so they don't lose money. But since student athletes are not considered employees, they are on their own. And to add insult to injury the schools seem to not care. Few injured student athletes ever hear from their coaches or schools after leaving. Something is wrong.

And for those who argue that changing the rules could bankrupt some sports programs.... I say malarkey. With billions of dollars in college sports, why not set aside some money dedicated to the athletes and this can be a piece of the TV revenues and maybe you don't have to pay the coach \$6 million and pay him \$5 million. It is not implausible that a system can be created that funnels at least some of the money that goes to pay everybody else, making some very rich in the system except the players to at least a minimum to provide healthcare. Guaranteed medical coverage should be the number one priority in college sports.

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The other dirty secret in college sports is mental abuse because being a student athlete can be a hazard to one's mental health. From day one student athletes are told that if they don't thrive in their meets or games they can kiss their dreams goodbye. Most college coaches make it absolutely clear to their athletes that if they don't perform they will be fired, losing their scholarship and sent home. And if they die they will be replaced in a nanosecond. This type of 'tough coaching' which is common in college sports often borders on abuse and at a much higher rate than in health services, manufacturing, financial institutions, education and the military according to the Ohio State Tepper Scale of Industry Differences in Abuse. Dr. Bennett J. Tepper blames the NCAA system. One that makes it very hard for athletes to transfer schools and punishes coaches who don't deliver wins. They have created a system where you have bosses who are under tremendous strain. The pressure to win is really high. Their job insecurity is really high. That combined with students who have very little power, who can't get away, can't escape and completely vulnerable and even when the NCAA knows of the abuse they more often take little action... leads to a pattern of continued abuse.

Rebuild Gaza, and avert the next war

A Palestinian schoolgirl walks through the rubble of destroyed buildings in the northern Gaza Strip on March 11.

Nearly seven months after the end of the last war in Gaza, none of the underlying causes of the conflict have been addressed. In the meantime, the people of Gaza are experiencing unprecedented levels of deprivation, and the prospect for renewed armed conflict is very real.

In June 2014, the Hamas-backed government in Gaza was dissolved, and a reunified Palestinian Authority cabinet was created under the leadership of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. The international community reached a consensus, with tacit support from Israel, to empower this government to lead reconstruction in Gaza and, together with the United Nations, to track the delivery and use of building materials to address fears that cement and other supplies could be diverted to build tunnels into Israel.

The \$5.4 billion pledged for rebuilding was predicated on the Palestinian Authority asserting itself in Gaza. However, relations between Hamas and its political rivals, Abbas's Fatah party, remain fraught. The authority has proven unwilling or unable to govern in Gaza. As a result, the promised reconstruction money has not been delivered.

The shortage of funds is the most immediate problem, but it is not the only one: Israel has restricted access to Gaza, with three of four commercial crossing points closed. There is not enough money to buy building materials or support needy families. The Shelter Cluster, which coordinates housing construction between the United Nations and nongovernmental organizations, estimates that Gaza needs at least 16,000 new units to replace homes destroyed or rendered uninhabitable during the war. In January, 16 truckloads of construction material were permitted into Gaza per day, compared with a need for 735 loads daily for three years to build the necessary homes. These numbers do not account for the additional 5,000 homes that still need to be rebuilt from previous wars or another 80,000 homes necessary to accommodate population growth.

The international community, including the Obama administration, should be given credit for recognizing the need to unify the Palestinian political system in order to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and stabilize the security situation. However, this consensus must now be backed by sustained pressure to implement reconciliation agreements between Fatah and Hamas and to end Israel's closure of Gaza. It is incumbent on the world to engage at the highest levels with the Palestinians, Egypt and Israel to push this process forward.

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If there is no reconciliation, the international community must be willing to promote new arrangements for rebuilding Gaza and ending its isolation. Donors will have to coordinate directly with local and international NGOs, as well as the de facto Hamas authorities, while continuing to urge that the current Palestinian government of national consensus deploy in Gaza.

In addition, Western governments should push Israel to drop its insistence on tracking every bag of cement. The evidence suggests that such fine-grained monitoring may be impossible, but tunneling can be prevented with a supervised peace agreement. Further, by insisting on such oversight, Israel may be compromising its security in the short term, given the misery and volatility in Gaza. Instead, Israel should align the import-export regime for Gaza with that of the West Bank, and Gaza crossing points should be reopened. More generally, Israel should integrate the economy of Gaza with that of the West Bank to allow for more normal development.

Ultimately, only a peace agreement that grants freedom to self-governed Palestinians can bring the security that both the Israeli and Palestinian people deserve. As long as Palestinians remain divided, it will be difficult for any leader to sell to the Palestinian people a peace agreement with Israel. Absent such an agreement, lifting the closure and jump-starting Gaza's reconstruction can do much to avert the next war.

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How Ukraine became Ukr=ine

=p class="MsoNormal" style="margin-bottom:0.0001pt;background-image:initial;background-repeat:initial">One of my father's favorite sayings is that "history is always rewritten by the winners" and so are the boundaries of countries. Nowhere is this truer than in Europe and especially with the Ukraine where for the past year, Ukraine has been plunged into chaos. Mass protests against pro-Moscow President Viktor Yanukovych led to his ouster in February 2014. That sparked a spiraling crisis: a fledgling interim government in Kiev looked on as Russia first seized and then annexed the territory of Crimea, a strategic Black Sea peninsula. A pro-Russian separatist insurgency in eastern Ukraine, believed to have direct backing from Moscow, has led to the deaths of thousands since.

To some, Ukraine has become the geopolitical faultline between the liberal democratic West and authoritarian, neo-imperial Russia under President Vladimir Putin. Foreign policy luminaries in Washington openly discuss the current state of affairs as a new Cold War. Beneath the political divisions of the present lies a country's deep, complex past. The land that's now Ukraine has long been dear to Russian nationalists. But it has also been home to a host of other peoples and empires. Its shifting borders and overlapping histories all have echoes in the current heated moment.

=span style="font-size:12pt;font-family:Georgia,serif;color:rgb(27,27,27)">Recently Ishaan Tharoor wrote an interesting article in The Washington Post – Maps: How Ukraine became Ukraine that follows is a sketch of how Ukraine became Ukraine over 1,300 years of history. Ukraine's modern borders are outlined in green throughout.

8th century to 13th century

The "Rus" -- the people whose name got tacked on to Russia -- were originally Scandinavian traders and settlers who made their way from the Baltic Sea through the marshes and forests of Eastern Europe down toward the fertile riverlands of what's now Ukraine. Other Viking adventurers journeyed to Constantinople, the great capital of the Byzantine Empire, to find their fortune -- sometimes as hired muscle.

The first major center of the "Rus" was at Kiev, established in the 9th century. In 988, Vladimir, a prince of the Kievan Rus, was baptized by a Byzantine priest in the old Greek colony of Khersonesos on the Crimean coast. His conversion

marked the advent of Orthodox Christianity among the Rus and remains=a moment of great nationalist symbolism for Russians. Putin invoked this older Vladimir in a speech last December when justifying his annexation of Crimea=

Successive Mongol invasions beginning in the 13th century subdued Kiev's influence= and led eventually to the rise of other Russian centers to the north, including Moscow. The Turkic descendants of the Mongol Golden Horde formed their own Khanate along the northern rim of the Black Sea.

1650 to 1812

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Fast forward a few centuries, and you see how the land that's now Ukraine is on the margins of competing empires. It was a region of permanent contest and shifting borders. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth -- which, at its peak, encompassed a huge swath of Europe -- had dominated much of the land, but Ukraine would also see the incursions of Hungarians, Ottomans, Swedes, bands of Cossacks and the armies of successive Russian czars.

In the 17th century, Russia and Poland split much of the territory of what's now Ukraine along the Dnipro river. Russia's advance continued a century later, during the rule of Catherine the Great, who imagined her domains along the Black Sea constituted "Novorossiya," or "new Russia" -- a term revived by the pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine. Back then, the Russian court harbored dreams of collapsing the Ottoman Empire and extending Moscow's reach to Istanbul (formerly Constantinople) and even Jerusalem.

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"Believe me, you will acquire immortal fame such as no other sovereign of Russia ever had," said Grigoriy Potemkin, a prominent adviser to Catherine the Great, when offering the empress counsel in 1780 on plans to wrest Crimea away from Ottoman suzerainty. "This glory will open the way to still further and greater glory."

Meanwhile, the partitions of Poland in the late 18th century led to the city of Lviv -- once a major regional hub and a center of Jewish culture in Eastern Europe -- falling under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It was there in the mid-19th century where Ukrainian nationalism began to take hold, rooted in the traditions and dialects of the region's peasants and the aspirations of intellectuals who had fled the stifling rule of Russia further to the east.

1914 to 1918

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World War I and the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 triggered more traumas and upheaval in the areas that now constitute Ukraine. The new Bolshevik government was desperate to end hostilities with Germany and its allies and signed a treaty in the town of Brest-Litovsk in 1918 ceding some of Russia's domains to the Central powers and recognizing the independence of others, including Ukraine.

The terms of the treaty were nullified by Germany's defeat later in the year, but the genie of Ukrainian nationalism was out of the bottle. Independence movements of various stripes sprung up in cities like Lviv, Kiev and Kharkiv, but were eventually all swept away amid the wider struggle for power in Russia.

1919 to 1922

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At the end of World War I, a revived Poland reclaimed Lviv and a chunk of what's now western Ukraine. The country was one of the key battlegrounds of the Russian Civil War, pitting Bolshevik forces against an array of armies, led by loyalists to the old czarist regime as well as other political opportunists. After a lot of bloodshed -- and other battles with Poland -- the Bolsheviks emerged triumphant, and officially declared the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic in 1922.

The years that followed would be even more traumatic: in the late 1920s and early 1930s, Ukraine suffered heavily under the rule of Soviet despot Josef Stalin. A vast segment of Ukraine's rural population was displaced and dispossessed by Stalin's aggressive collectivization policies. A man-made famine in 1932-3 led to the deaths of some three million people.

To make up the numbers, Russian speakers from elsewhere immigrated to Ukraine's hollowed out towns and cities, leaving a demographic footprint that defines Ukraine's divisive politics to this day.

1945 to 1954

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After the end of World War II, the Soviet Union claimed Lviv and its surrounding lands in Ukraine's west. The Crimean peninsula, whose population was majority Russian (after the mass deportation of Crimea's Tatars), was formally ceded from Russia to the Ukrainian socialist republic in 1954 by Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev.

After the fall of the U.S.S.R.

=span style="font-size:12pt;font-family:Georgia,serif;color:rgb(27,27,27)">>With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine emerged as one of many new independent post-Soviet states in 1991. Its politics were riven by regional divides between the country's west and the Russian-leaning east. Russia chose to maintain a naval base in Sevastopol, the main port city in Crimea's southern tip.

Present day

And so here we are. Russian troops, many based in Sevastopol, fanned out across=the peninsula last March to aid what was ultimately Russia's annexation of =he territory. A pro-Russian insurgency in the east by the cities of Donetsk and Luhansk, Ukraine's industrial hea=land, is ongoing, despite numerous attempts at ceasefires.

K=ev is seeking greater Western military assistance in what many consider to be = fight against Moscow. There are fears Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko may institute martial law in a bid to subdue the separatists, threatening the country's already fledgling dem=ocracy. Ukraine is at a proverbial crossroads, as it has been for centuries.=/p>

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5 Vitamins Packed With Age-Fighting Power

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"I'm sort of a whole food p=erson myself," Farris, 61, said. "I always tell people, the best way to get any phytonutrient= vitamin or antioxidant, is in the foods it's been grown in." While=taking supplements is a hot trend, Farris says there's no guarantee vitamins w=ll have the same effect in supplement form as they do in their natural form. =quot;If you start beefing up your diet with heavy loads of fruits, veggie and antioxidants, you certainly could thwart =ome of the damages of aging," Farris said. "Just because you're o=er 50 doesn't mean you can't make a difference now. Clean up your diet an= put in the good food no matter what age."

Here are five vitamins and their natural food=sources that you might want to add to your diet to battle aging:

1. Vitamin C

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Oranges

Found in abundance in citrus fruits, vitamin C is essential for collagen production, skin repair and also for keeping your bones and teeth strong. Vitamin C not only protects against sun damage, it also can repair existing damage which results in lines and wrinkles. "Vitamin C can change the way your skin ages," Farris says.

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2. Vitamin A

Sweet Potatoes

Load up on foods like sweet potatoes, kale, mangoes and carrots to get the antioxidant benefits of vitamin A. Retinol, one of the only FDA-approved wrinkle treatments, is a form of this vitamin, which works inside cells, hitting receptors which helps them function as if they were younger. It also slows the breakdown of collagen, Farris says, which is important in giving skin its youthful appearance and elasticity. While it's important to get your vitamin A in your diet to keep a strong immune system and keep our skin and eyes healthy, it can also be applied topically for anti-aging benefits.

3. =C2◆ Vitamin D

Sunlight

When it comes to anti-aging, don't neglect your bone health. Bone loss can be one of the more powerful effects of aging to consider, especially for women, Farris says. Vitamin D works with calcium to keep your bones strong and dense. "One of the things that makes your face look saggy is loss of bone. We focused for years on collagen, and now we understand that you lose fat, collagen and bones in aging," she said. "The better your bone health, the better your bone structure is and the more youthful you will appear."

Foods like fatty fish, some dairy products and egg yolks are good sources also. According to the NIH, most Americans get the majority of their vitamin D from fortified foods, like most milk and some orange juices.

While vitamin D synthesis also occurs from our daily sun exposure, sunscreen with SPF 8 and higher can block that effect. The American Academy of Dermatology recommends getting vitamin D from your diet, as unprotected sun exposure can damage your skin and cause premature aging.

4.=C2◆ Vitamin K

Kale

Load up on leafy greens to get=your vitamin K, especially if you complain about bruising. Farris says one of the most common complaints =he gets from her post-50 patients is of bruising, commonly on the arms. Vitami= K helps keep collagen in your skin intact and keeps your skin thick, reducing=the appearance of bruises, veins and, as some suggest, even dark circles.

5. ♦=A0 Vitamin E

Sunflower Oil

Vitamin E is great, especially when combined with=vitamin C, in keeping your cells healthy. Vitamin E helps fight damaging free radicals=on a cellular level, which protects your cells from vulnerability. Farris says it's one of the most potent antioxidants out there. It can help provide=sun protection to the skin and may have anti-inflammatory benefits. It is fat-soluble and can be found in many oils, such as sunflower oil and soybea= oil, as well as in nuts and seeds.

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THIS WEEK's QUOTE
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As m=st of you know language is important.

Case in Point

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THIS WEEK's VIDEO

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Why People From India Don't Rob Banks

This is seriously hilarious... Indian guy robbing a bank

It is short, clean, and funny! Click video below....

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Web Link: <https://yo=tu.be/B6APh7ov4rM> <<https://youtu.be/B6APh7ov4rM>>

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SOMETHING SPECIAL

BEFORE TELEVISION, THERE WA= ... THE RADIO

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Here's an huge co=lection of all the old time radio shows.

Find your favorite, click on it and listen to all t=e episodes.

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Comedy

Al Jolson Show <http://www.dumb.co=oldtimeradio/radio/1/Comedy/Al_Jolson_Show.html>

Alan Young Show <http://www.dumb.com/oldtimeradio/radio/2/Comedy/Alan_Young_Show.html> =u>

Aldrich Family<=a> <http://www.dumb.com/oldtimeradio/radio/3/Comedy/Aldrich_Family.htm>=

Alka =eltzer Time <http://www.dumb.com/oldtimeradio/radio/4/Comedy/Alka_Se=tzer_Time.html>

A=os & Andy <http://www.dumb.com/oldtimeradio/ra=io/5/Comedy/Amos_Any.html>

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Baby Snooks <http://www.dumb.com/oldtimeradi=radio/7/Comedy/Baby_Snooks.html>

Bergen & McCarthy <http://www.dumb.com/oldtimera=io/radio/8/Comedy/Bergen_McCarthy.html>

Bickersons, The <http://w=w.dumb.com/oldtimeradio/radio/9/Comedy/Bickersons_The.html>

Bing Crosby <=>

Bob & Ray

Breakfast In Hollywood

Bright Star <http://www.dumb.com/oldtimeradio/radio/13/Comedy/Bright_Star.html>
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Comedy Performance <http://www.dumb.com/oldtimeradio/radio/16/Comedy/Command_Performance.html>
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My Friend Irma <http://www.dumb.com/oldtimeradio/radio/48/Comedy/My_Friend_Irma.html>
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I Was A Communist For The FBI
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<u>This Is Your F.B.I <http://www.dumb.com/oldtimeradio/=adio/84/Detective/This_Is_Your_F_B_I.html>
You=s Truly Johnny Dollar

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David Harding Counter Spy
<http://www.dumb.com/oldtimeradio/radio/171/Mystery/Dav=d_Harding_Counter_Spy.html>
Diary of Fate
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Ha=l Of Fantasy <http://www.dumb.com/oldtimeradio/radio/179/Mystery/Hal=_Of_Fantasy.html>
</=>Haunting Hour, The <http://www.dumb.com/oldtimeradio/r=dio/180/Mystery/Haunting_Hour_The.html>
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I Love A Myster=br/>
Incredible, But True <http://www.dumb.com/oldtimeradio/radio/183/Mys=ery/Incredible_But_True.html>
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Lights Out</=> <http://www.dumb.com/oldtimeradio/radio/185/Mystery/Lights_Out=html>
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Quiet Please <http://www=dumb.com/oldtimeradio/radio/191/Mystery/Quiet_Please.html>
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Air Ad=ntures Of Jimmy Allen
<http://www.dumb.com/oldtimeradio/radio/89/Drama/Air_Adventures_Of_Jimmy_Allen.ht=l>
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<http://www.dumb.com/o=dtimeradio/radio/94/Drama/Big_John_Sparky.html>

Bill Sterns Sports Re=l <http://w=w.dumb.com/oldtimeradio/radio/96/Drama/Bill_Sterns_Sports_Reel.html>
Birdseye Open House <http://www.dumb.com/oldtimeradio/radio/97/Dra=a/Birdseye_Open_House.html>
Blackstone, The Ma=ic Detective
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<http://www.dum=.com/oldtimeradio/radio/106/Drama/Chesterfield_Chicago_Theater_Of.html>

=/span>Cinnamon Bear <http://www.dumb.com/oldti=eradio/radio/107/Drama/Cinnamon_Bear.html>
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Bro=wers
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Dangerously Yours <http://www.dumb.com/oldtimeradio/radio/112/Drama/Dangerously_Yours.html>
Frank Merriwell
Future Tense <http://www.dumb.com/oldtimerad=o/radio/120/Drama/Future_Tense.html> Goon Show, The
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Adventu=e
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Mr. President <http://www.dumb.com/oldtimeradio/radio/143/Drama/Mr_Presiden=.html>
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Smilin Ed'=s Buster Brown Gang
<http://www.dum=.com/oldtimeradio/radio/146/Drama/Smilin_Ed_s_Buster_Brown_Gang.html>
</pan>Soap Operas <http://www.dumb.com/oldtime=adio/radio/147/Drama/Soap_Operas.html> =u>

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THIS WEEK's MUSIC

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The Ohio Players

This week I would like to share with you the music of=the masters of 1970s R&B funk The Ohio Players. With their slinky, horn-powered grooves, impeccable musicianship, and eye-poppin= album covers, the Ohio Players were among the top funk bands of the mid- 70s. Emerging from the musical hotbed of Dayton in 1959, the group was originally dubbed the Ohio Untouchables, and initially comprised singer/guitarist Robert Ward, bassist Marshall "Rock" Jones, saxophonist/guitarist Clarence "Satch" Satchell, drummer Cornelius Johnson, and trumpeter/trombonist Ralph "Pee Wee" Middlebrooks. In late 1961, a relative of Ward's founded the Detroit-based Lupine Records, and the group trave=ed north to the Motor City to back the Falcons on their hit "I Found a Love"; the Ohio Untouchables soon made their headlining debut with "Love Is Amazing," but when Ward subsequently exited for a solo c=reer, the group essentially disbanded.

At that point, the nucleus of Middlebrooks, Jones, an= newly added guitarist Leroy "Sugarfoot" Bonner returned to Dayton; ther= they recruited saxophonist Andrew Noland and drummer Gary Webster, the latt= a somewhat elusive figure whose true involvement in the group's convolute= history has never been definitively answered -- some sources credit him as = founding Untouchable, others even as the band's early leader. In =ny case, by 1967, with the subsequent addition of singers Bobby Lee Fears and Dutch Robinson, the newly rechristened Ohio Players were signed as the house band for the New York-based Compass Records, backing singer Helena Ferguson on her lone hit, "Where Is =he Party," before issuing their solo debut, "Trespassin'," which hit the R&B charts in early 1968.

Observations in Time Although the Players' trademark bottom-heavy, horn-driven sound was already blossoming, their follow-up, "It'= a Cryin' Shame," flopped, and as Compass teetered on the brink of bankruptcy they exited the label. (Their early Compass side= were later packaged as First Impressions.) The Players then landed on Capitol, where 1969's "Here Today, Gone Tomorrow" was a minor hit; an LP, Observations in Time, soon followed, with covers of "Summertime" an= "Over the Rainbow" offering a strong hint of the stylistic detours to follow. In 1970 the group dis=anded, however; Fears and Robinson both mounted solo careers, while the remaining members again decamped to Dayton, eventually re-forming with keyboardist, vocalist, and songwriter Walter "Junie" Morrison, trumpeter Bruce Napier, and trombonist Marvin Pierce.

Pain influenced by the groundbreaking funk of =ly & the Family Stone -- and with the nasal, cartoon-voiced Bonner assuming vocal duties --the new Ohio Players lineup made their debut with the single "Pain,&quo=; issued on the small

local label Rubber Town Sounds; it was soon picked up for distribution by the Detroit-based Westbound label= reaching the R&B Top 40 in late 1971. An LP, also titled Pa=n, appeared that same year, and was followed in 1972 by Pleasure, which launched the absur=ist smash "Funky Worm." Ecstasy appea=ed in 1973, and after 1974's Climax, the Players signed to Mercury; the label c=ange also heralded yet more lineup changes, with keyboardist Billy Beck replacing Morrison (who later signed on with Parliament) and drummer Jimmy "Diamond" Williams taking over for Webster.

At Mercury, the Ohio Players enjoyed their greatest s=ccess; not only did their sound coalesce, but they became notorious for their sexu=llly provocative LP covers, a tradition begun during their Westbound tenure.◆=A0 Their 1974 Mercury debut, Skin Tight, was their first unequivocal classic, launching the hit title track as well as &quo=;Jive Turkey." Its follow-up, Fire, remains t=e Players' masterpiece, topping the pop charts on the strength of its bone-rattling title cut, itself a number one hit; "I Want to Be Fre=," one of the band's few attempts at social commentary, was also highly successful. 1975's Honey=/*i* -- which featured perhaps the Players' most controversial and erotic cover to date -- was another mon=ter, generating the chart-topping masterpiece "Love Rollercoaster" in addition to the hits "Sweet Sticky Thing=quot; and "Fopp."

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The insistent "Who'd She Coo?" from 1976's Contradiction, was the Pla=ers' last number one R&B hit; "O-H-I-O," from 1977's Angel, was their last major hit on any chart, and as the &#=9;70s drew to a close, the band's fortunes continued to decline. 1979's =ass-Ay-Lay-Dee was their final Mercury effort, and upon signing to Arista, the Players returned with Everybo=y Up, followed by a pair of dismal releases on BoardwalkTenderness and 1982's Ouch! After 198=s Graduation, four years passed prior to the release of their next effort, Back. No new mater=al was forthcoming, although various lineups continued performing live well into t=e following decades. Despite the deaths of core members Satchell (December 1995), Middlebrooks (November 1997), Ward (December 2008), Johnson (February 2009), and Bonner (January 2013), the ba=d continued to sporadically record and extensively tour.

In the 1970s if you didn't own one of the above albums you =efinitely weren'tMasters of Funk◆=80◆.. The Ohio Players..... And for those of you who want to reminisce please=play a special attention to the Bump It, Roller Coaster, O-H-I-O and Fire medley from the 1995 Sinbad Funk Festival because it is a good as it gets.....

The Ohio Players – Fire --<=i> <https://youtu.be/Y47G-Wa4qfs>

The Ohio Players – I Want T= Be Free -- <https://youtu.be/9CJMoXIlm4o> <<https://youtu.be/9CJMoXI=m4o>>

The Ohio Players --> Skin Tight -- <https://youtu.be/d-z2Kyi0Nk> <<https://youtu.be/d-z2Kyi0Nk=target=>> and live <https://youtu.be/27UX12PW6ZE> <<https://youtu.be/27UX12PW6ZE>>

The Ohio Players – Heaven m=st be like this -- <https://youtu.be/AAxsek1ovkA> <<https://youtu.be/AAxsek1ovkA>>

The Ohio Players – Sweet St=cky Thing -- <https://youtu.be/Ta-F4NAVURs> <<https://youtu.be/Ta-F4N=VURs>>

The Ohio Players – Let'= Do It -- <https://youtu.be/x0ELdjG8O28>

The Ohio Players – Angel◆=A0 -- <https://youtu.be/2Jmc7PCP7jw>

The Ohio Players – Pressure=C2◆ -- <https://youtu.be/kO11ONn5QFo> <<https://youtu.be/kO11ONn5Q=o>>

The Ohio Players – Honey◆=A0 -- <https://youtu.be/Uo10yzdxbh4>

The Ohio Players – Jive Tur=ey -- <https://youtu.be/dNZ5zVW76uo> and live <https://youtu.be/sOFHhs2d8VM> <<https://youtu.be/sOFHhs2d8VM>>

The Ohio Players – Who D Sh= Coo -- <https://youtu.be/MVwaa2BKk6k>

The Ohio Players – Pain◆=A0 -- <https://youtu.be/jTstTWSGnEs>

The Ohio Players – O-H-I-O=C2◆ -- <https://youtu.be/W0lur61iGQA>

The Ohio Players – Bump It = Roller Coaster . O-H-I-O . Fire live medley -- <https://youtu.be/jS8WZICJeZs>

The Ohio Players – It's=All Over -- <https://youtu.be/ToifIVYcBIQ>

The Ohio Players – The Funk= Worm -- https://youtu.be/nI5gS8NR_Ic

The Ohio Players – Ecstasy:=Do or Die -- <https://youtu.be/8hgVe6NxsDs> <<https://youtu.be/8hgVe6NxsDs>>

The Ohio Players – RIP SUGG=FOOT -- <https://youtu.be/HQSVBld2qH0>

Fax: +1-310-861-0927 <tel:%2B1=310-861-0927> =