

# TUESDAY: ONE STRING

There aren't enough words to describe this genius who can do so much with a lone string. Brushy One String is the stage name of Andrew Chin, son of Jamaican musician Freddie McKay. McKay died in 1986 in his late 30s, leaving behind a body of work representative of the rocksteady (ex: Rock-a-Bye Woman) and reggae genres. While Brushy inherited his father's musical talent, he's parlayed into an interesting Rhythm-and-Blues-meets-Roots-Reggae crossover. Check out his website when you have a chance.

## Wheels

- Volkswagen and USDOJ talking about criminal investigation (Deutsche Welle) – Up in the air yet whether DOJ goes with deferred prosecution or asks for a guilty plea from the lawmaker for criminal activity related to the promotion and sale of its so-called “Clean Diesel” passenger vehicles during the last decade. Criminal fines are estimated at \$1.2 billion. VW claims to be cooperating, but the company's failure to disclose the additional cheat software in the 3.0L engines suggests some problems understanding what “good faith” means.
- Volkswagen's Australian manager believes diesel fix

“imminent” (CarsGuide) – And “Under Australian law, we don’t believe there’s anything on our car which is illegal.” Uh-huh. Hence the fix for 80,000 1.6L and 2.0L passenger diesels. It’s true that Australia is not as strict about NOX as the U.S., but VW’s passenger diesels didn’t meet EU or AUS limits on other pollutants.

- Ford expects to offer self-driving car without steering wheel within five years (Detroit News) – Well, then. Better hope regulations don’t require a steering wheel, huh? Ford has also invested \$75M in LiDAR-maker Velodyne; Chinese search engine company Baidu has likewise made a \$75M investment. LiDAR is expected to provide navigational assistance for these self-driving vehicles.

#### Way Up There

- China launches satellite researching unhackable quantum communications (euronews) – This is a joint mission with Austria; few details are available about the technology on board

apart from the use of quantum physics in communications.

- SpaceX rumored to spend serious bucks on carbon fiber technology (Ars Technica-UK) – Carbon fibers are durable, withstand temperature extremes, and are lightweight, making them an optimum choice for space travel. The amount of SpaceX's speculated commitment to carbon fiber manufacturer Toray is \$2-3 billion – sounds like enough for a Mars mission.
- Not just for blockbuster sci-fi movies anymore: NASA approves robotic arm for asteroid mission (Phys.org) – The robotic arm intended for use in sampling and repositioning an asteroid as part of the Asteroid Redirect Mission (ARM) has been approved for next phase in development. The robotic component has an additional planned use in NASA's Mars mission as well.

#### Words

- Univision's bid wins Gawker Media (Recode) – Of the two known bidders – Ziff-Davis and Univision – the latter's

\$135M bid won bankrupt Gawker Media and its brands. Gawker's lineup joins The Onion and The Root, purchased by Univision, and Fusion which Univision originally created jointly with Disney and now owns outright. Founder Nick Denton seems pleased with this outcome as his brands and workers continue without disruption; billionaire Pete Thiel gets partial revenge on Denton for outing him by forcing the bankruptcy and sale. Univision's editorial policy will be less personal in its coverage – probably a good thing. Let's check back in a year.

- 'Not a good fit' says Barnes & Noble as CEO shown the door (GalleyCat) – Whoa. You don't see such blunt statements about CEOs, especially one with less than a year under their belt. The company's stock has been up though retail sales continued to struggle in competition against Amazon. Feels like there's more to this story. In the mean time, Ron Boire is out the door and executive chairman Leonard Riggio will

delay his retirement until a new CEO is found. Hope the next one can salvage NOOK tablet platform because I can't stand Amazon's Kindle.

- Turkish court closes pro-Kurdish newspaper Ozgur Gundem (Business Standard) – Claiming the paper was a propaganda outlet for Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), labeled a terrorist organization by Turkey, EU, and the US. The court said the closure was not related to the government's post-coup purge of media believed to be sympathetic to Gülen movement. An appeal is possible.

#### **I-Spy: Cyber Edition**

You've probably heard about the alleged hacking of a NSA server and the subsequent attempt to auction contents from that server. Edward Snowden offered his perspective on the situation – I've Storify'd the tweet thread for your reading ease.

The disclosure and attempted auction were likely done by Russia for political reasons given the timing. Hacking and accessing the contents of the server should be expected – it's ordinary spying, same as the U.S. does. But the revelation is a new tack; Snowden suggests it's a warning to the U.S. about potential future disclosures. Read the thread for yourself.

I don't think this hacking and disclosure happened in a vacuum. There's a much bigger game to puzzle out – add the meeting between Russia

and Saudi Arabia to “achieve oil market stability” as well as Russia’s express interest in Saudi Arabia’s plans to build as many as 16 nuclear reactors. Factor in a change in relationship between Iran and Russia now that Russia has deployed long-range bombers from Iran for the first time against ISIS. Russia, Saudi Arabia and Iran have some of the largest proven oil reserves in the world, all three in the top 10 and in Saudi’s case, influence over OPEC. Is Russia preparing for asymmetric economic pressure?

**Late adder:** #BlueCutFire in San Bernadino County, CA is very bad, now 82,000 ordered to evacuate.

That’s it for now, still Tuesday in the next time zone. Let’s see if I can make it over the hump earlier tomorrow.

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## MONDAY: SKATE AWAY

Monday means it’s movie day, and I think this charming little documentary fills the bill. Valley Of A Thousand Hills from Jess Colquhoun looks at Zulu youth participating in a skate camp and the impact on their lives. They’re quite optimistic in spite of limited resources and opportunities. The film left the feeling they’re on the verge of a breakthrough – like these kids could really change global culture if they wanted to. They appear more self-aware and energized than most adults I run into of late.

### Wrath of Gods kind of weather

- Catastrophic flooding displaced more than 20,000 Baton Rouge area residents (NOLA.com) – Damn it, the news coverage on this

flooding was so thin this morning save for local papers. Flood victims include the governor and his family who had to be rescued from their home; actor Wendell Pierce lost everything in his Baton Rouge area home. Four parishes had already been declared a disaster including Tangipahoa, St. Helena, East Baton Rouge and Livingston.

- Aerial photos show massive damage to more than 10,000 homes (TheAdvocate.com) – Follow Maya Lau on Twitter for more photos; LSU campus is inundated and many homes are beneath water to their rooflines.
- Severe monsoon flooding displaced 50,500 around Manila, Philippines (Floodlist) – There have been a handful of deaths reported with more persons unaccounted for. Worst rainfall amount in 24-hour period 14-15 August was 6 inches over the Dagupan area. More rain is expected.
- Half a month's rain in short time period floods Moscow (euronews) – Flooding is worst Moscow has seen in 130

years. Reporting is extremely thin about this event which occurred over the last 24-48 hours.

- Massive flash flood killed 20 last weekend in Skopje, Macedonia (video, France24) – There's quite a bit of video from other outlets in YouTube about the flooding; ironic that Russian aid workers went to help Macedonia just before flooding began in Moscow.
- Nearly 3000 homes swamped in Thailand (Bangkok Post) – Flooding near Phayao was the worst in seven years; at least one person is missing.
- Sudanese states Kassala, Sennar, South Kordofan, West Kordofan and North Darfur flooded, killing 100 (Deccan Chronicle) – Heavy rains since June worsening two weeks ago led to a late night flash flood that swept away villages. More than 100,000 have been displaced. Clean drinking water is now a serious problem.

Might be time to brush off that copy of J. G. Ballard's *The Drowned World* and ponder a post-apocalyptic future under water. We've likely passed the 1.5C degree global warming threshold without any sense of urgency to act on climate change which fuels this wave of flooding.



## Sigh-ber

- Hotels across ten states breached (Reuters) – Hey, now you philanderers have an excuse for that bizarre charge to your room at the Starwood, Marriott, Hyatt, or InterContinental hotel for strawberries, whip cream, and a leather flogger during your last business trip. “It’s just a hacker, honey, that’s all, really...” HEI Hotels & Resorts, the operator of the affected hotels, found the malware in its systems handling payment card data. The malware had been present in the system for roughly 18 months while 20,000 transactions were exposed.
- Google ‘secretly’ developing a new OS (TechnoBuffalo) – A well-known Linux blogger wrote Google references “Pink + Purple == Fuschia (a new Operating System)” in its Git repository. The two colors are believed to refer to Magenta and LK kernels which Google is using to build a wholly new operating system. Magenta does not have a Wikipedia entry at the time of this post but

Googlesource has a brief explainer for Magenta and LK. The two kernels serve different purposes but combined they may be able to operate any device whether small Internet of Things single purpose devices or multi-purpose devices like personal computers. This may be the direction Google has chosen to go rather than fully merge its Chrome OS with Android. The new operating system could also resolve some annoying problems with antitrust regulators if Android is cut loose and managed by an open source consortium, perhaps one established by and aligned with the Open Handset Alliance.

- Banking malware attacks Android users browsing sites using Google AdSense (SecureList) – The thieves pay for a listing on AdSense, put their malicious ad in the system, and it downloads to an Android device whenever the user reads a website featuring the contaminated ad. Yuck. Use your antivirus app regularly on your Android devices as this nasty thing

may pick up your financial information.

**Longread: Manners matter?**

At Aeon.com, Professor Eleanor Dickey of University of Reading-UK discusses the 'magic word' and its use in early democratic society, and its decline with the rise of a hierarchical system in the fourth century BCE. Are we a more or less democratic society based on our current level of societal manners?

Catch you tomorrow if the creek doesn't rise!

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## **FRIDAY: THE IMMORAL MINORITY**

While philosopher Slavoj Žižek isn't everybody's cup of quirky tea, he's got a valid point in this video.

The right-wing has abandoned its claim to be the Moral Majority.

Don't mistake this as a validation of the Democratic Party here in the U.S.; they are only earning a majority in terms of politics, and in no small part by being the "Not GOP" party. With its leadership cozying up to war criminals, climate denialists and fossil fuel-based polluters, and general denigrators both of human rights and the public commons, they are not the Moral Majority by default.

But an unorganized left in this country rejects the right-wing's ethical decay implicitly underpinning the Republican Party. The left rejects those values which undermine democracy – misogyny, racism and marginalization of other minorities, the ongoing subversion of individuals' rights to promote the interests of corporations.

A true Moral Majority won't support a social contract undermining democracy by limiting life, liberty, and happiness' pursuit to a narrow few. It's well past time for the broader left to coalesce into an organized entity based upon the belief that all humans are created equal and deserving a more perfect union.

#### Zapped by Zika

- “ZIKA VIRUS | Days since White House funding request: 186 | Funding response from Congress: \$0 | Zika cases in US and territories: 8,580” (Tweet, Dan Diamond/Politico)
- Peter robbed to pay Paul: DHHS pulls money from other projects to fund Zika vaccine research (Reuters) – Lacking new dedicated funding from Congress, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services squeezed out \$81 million and spread it into Zika vaccine research, with \$34 million of that to the National Institutes of Health and \$47 million to the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA). The white House had asked for \$1.9 billion last fall for Zika, but that amount was pared down by 42%; Republicans then objected to any of the remaining portion going to

Planned Parenthood, putting Democrats in a bind. Access to birth control is critically important to preventing Zika's spread; access to abortion could prevent the birth of severely deformed infants who will live short, utterly miserable, and expensive lives.

- Arthrogryposis – congenital joint defects – associated with Zika during pregnancy (The BMJ) – Dislocated and or misshaped knees, ankles, elbows, hips appeared in children born with other neurological defects found in Zika-infected fetuses. Further research is necessary to prove both the virus is causal and learn the mechanism by which the virus inflicts this damage in utero. The patients had been tested for other known causes of arthrogryposis – toxoplasmosis, cytomegalovirus, rubella, syphilis, and HIV. All were negative.
- First infant death due to Zika reported in Texas (KHOU) – The infant's mother traveled to El Salvador during pregnancy where it is

believed she contracted the virus.

- Zika virus case confirmed in Monroe County, Michigan (Detroit Free Press) – But the method of infection is not clear (what?!). County health and state officials are working toward mosquito surveillance.

#### Wheels and steals

- Millions of vehicles made from 1995 on vulnerable to keyless-remote hacking (USENIX) – Researchers at University of Birmingham and Kasper & Oswald GmbH presented a paper at the USENIX 2016 conference, showing more than 20 years' worth of VW Group vehicles are hackable using inexpensive Arduino-based RF transceiver technology. Alfa Romeo, Chevrolet, Peugeot, Lancia, Opel, Renault, Ford and other makes relying on the Hitag2 access security method are similarly at risk. Researchers also looked at after-market keyless entry remotes for these and other vehicles; the cars for which these worked were also vulnerable. All vehicles tested appear

to be those made for the European market, but the research noted the radio frequency differences – 315 MHz band in North America and the 433 MHz or 868 MHz band in Europe – used in remotes. The paper's research team notified VW in November 2015 of their results; NXP Semiconductor, a manufacturer of Hitag2 remote technology, was also notified. NXP had already informed customers of the vulnerability in 2012 and has already improved device security.

- Volkswagen suppressed news about keyless remote insecurity since 2013 (Bloomberg) – The same researchers from University of Birmingham and Kasper & Oswald GmbH had originally approached NXP Semiconductor and VW with their work in 2012 and 2013, respectively. VW sued and blocked release of their work; the paper was released this past week at USENIX only “after lengthy negotiations” and the removal of a single sentence which car thieves could use to easily crack the keyless remotes. A number of

suspicious automobile thefts over the years may have relied on hacking remotes; will insurance companies look into these thefts and demand recovery from VW?

- DOE grants Ford \$6M for fuel cell research (Detroit Free Press) – Existing fuel cell technology has been too expensive for successful commercialization; the grant will be used to develop cheaper technology competitive with battery and internal combustion engines.

#### **Longread: Geopolitics**

FiveBooks.com interviewed former state department official and senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, Jennifer M. Harris, about geopolitics. She discusses the topic and offers five book recommendations about the same. Harris is the co-author of recently released *War by Other Means: Geoeconomics and Statecraft*. Given her work as U.S. National Intelligence Council staff followed by work on economics under then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, this interview might offer a preview to future statecraft.

#### **Friday Jazz**

It's still Friday somewhere according to my clock. Try French performer Zaz, stage name for Isabelle Geffroy. If you like this ditty, preview more of her work on her channel on SoundCloud.

It's been a hectic week here; next week doesn't look any better, but I'll aim to be here on Monday. Have a relaxing weekend!



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## TUESDAY: EN GARDE

Looks like it's going to be a thing this week, covering women in sports. This is a marvelous example of covering a female competitor, this short film profiling U.S. Women's Individual Foil fencer Nzingha Prescod – it's about her and her approach to her sport, period. Does she sound like somebody who doesn't care about the results of competition, like she'd rather have narrative surrounding it?

Her next match is tomorrow at 8:10 a.m.; I wish I could catch it live online.

Another example of crappy coverage comes from BBC – can't imagine why the UK became so white nationalist, can you? Let's not note the countries or the individual competitors, let's point out their attire and hint at religious and political positions at the same time. What garbage.

If you're not already familiar with 'male gaze', it's time for a primer on this concept first theorized 41 years ago by Laura Mulvey. I don't know if I can even call it purely feminist theory any longer though it arose because of feminism's emergence. The way content is constructed can be political, and the way we view it can also be political; if content can be constructed for the male gaze, it can also be constructed to perform for political ideology. What we see in the BBC's photo is both a political and sexist statement – the bikini-clad woman preferred over the fully-clothed woman whose attire has been mislabeled (it's not a burka), the lack of identity in either case. These women are figures to be looked at for visual enjoyment and not in a manner which satisfies women but a male gaze with a particular ideological slant.

The problem with NBC's constructed Olympic

coverage is that the corporation believes it has created a 'female gaze' product – but women don't feel immersed in the sports they are watching, continually disrupted by the inauthenticity of the content they are viewing. It feels forced, like we are supposed to care about the content presented apart from the actual sports on the screen based on a third (and likely straight male) party's expectations of the female audience, but the mediation and curation process interfere with our autonomy in viewing. We feel a jarring disconnect from a state of attentive viewing into a state of critical viewing – we're left unsatisfied.

I don't think men are feeling any better about the content they are seeing because it fails to serve their gaze in a manner which they have always expected from the male-led sports and entertainment industries.

It's so damned easy to fix, too.

The one entity finding a silver lining in NBC's coverage of the Olympics? Netflix, which blames flat subscriber growth on the games' broadcast. Hard to argue with this based on anecdotal evidence; everybody who ordinarily binges on Netflix programming and shares the experience in social media during cooler months is now complaining about NBC's programming.

### Wheels

- Not one but THREE illegal emissions control software programs in VW's 3.0L vehicles (Reuters) – U.S. isn't saying how they found them but the existence of multiple programs hints at the reason for the lack of a "fix" for 3.0L passenger diesels under the terms of the proposed settlement.

Volkswagen has admitted to emissions controls defeat in its 2.0L and 3.0L passenger diesel vehicles it marketed as “clean diesel” here in the U.S., but it has not been forthcoming about the emissions cheat methodology. If I had to guess, I’d say every one of the 3.0L vehicles will be bought back – because even after all this time, VW having known the cheats were discovered in 2014, the company still does not have a true fix for the 3.0L engine.

- GM now testing self-driving Bolt in AZ (The Detroit News) – This is the second city in which GM has tested the Bolt; first tests were in San Francisco, which seems to me more challenging than Scottsdale.
- Court case against GM starts this week (Bloomberg) – Judge will have their hands full trying to keep the case focused on whether ignition switch at fault or not given the driver’s youth and alleged reckless driving.

#### Wings

- Delta’s massive outage yesterday still causing

scheduling problems (Bloomberg) – System failure still attributed to power outage though interestingly Georgia Power said it was a Delta problem. No mention anywhere of other possible causes for the outage – so far.

- Southwest's July outage revealed enterprise problems (Bloomberg) – The crash of a single router caused massive problems which Southwest is still digging out of weeks later. Why is this airline lacking adequate failover? Why is this airline so focused on stock price now to detriment of infrastructure, in spite of fuel costs having fallen so much since June 2014?
- Teen security research awarded one million flyer miles by United Airlines (ZDNet) – Olivier Beg reported 20 undisclosed bugs to the airline. The largest single reward he received was 250K miles, meaning the worst single bug he found was medium in severity. Certainly cheaper to offer Beg the equivalent of 20 roundtrips to the U.S. than pay for the costs related to

a major bug-related outage.

#### Words

- “Stop calling ransomware ‘attack’” demands infosec researcher (InfoSec Handlers Diary Blog) – He calls ransomware an infection because it’s not targeted or focused. Except when it is. Right.
- ‘Cyber war’ and ‘cyber weapon’ misused and confuse the public (Threatpost) – Two contributors discuss the meaning of these terms and correct application. This is a much more serious problem than ransomware attack versus infection. Warfare shouldn’t be mistaken for spying, yes?
- Child porn case decision worth a read (Ars Technica) – The article doesn’t mention it but the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals’ decision weighed the issue of trespass with regard to opening emails obtained without a warrant. In short, if the feds want to read emails? They’d better get a warrant.

#### One for the road

Looks like the FBI hasn’t found an app for that yet – remote surveillance on smartphones, that

is. Isn't that interesting?

Off to cook dinner before the nightly Olympic debacle begins. Wonder what fresh hell the taped delayed coverage will bring?

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## **JUST ANOTHER MISOGYNIST MONDAY**

I'm not watching the Olympics on NBC. I see more than enough of the events in my social media feed that I don't need to turn on the television. This post is based on the observations and media content shared online, an indicator of just how much content there is about the Olympics, both corporate and personal.

And I am SO glad I haven't bothered to watch based on the persistent anger in my timeline. NBC's coverage has been a bunch of sexist and racist nonsense, framing female athletes not by their performance but by the men or white family members in their lives.

Like noting a particular athlete became a mother since her last competition – gee, how many of the male athletes became fathers? The narrative NBC built around each woman competitor sounds more like an observation of their performing femininity. "She's turned in the best time and look, she can still clean house and wear a dress!" Obnoxious.

Or in the case of Simone Biles, a woman of color, about whom NBC's Al Trautwig feels compelled to note she's adopted. He cannot simply talk about Biles' gymnastic performance or the family who came for her as her parents.

Other U.S. media covering the Olympics don't do any better, like this ridiculous bullshit from The Chicago Tribune and USAToday. First this internationally-recognized athlete is not named

but identified as the spouse of non-Olympic male athlete – then half-assed corrections revealing her name still ensure she’s pegged as a man’s wife. Are you kidding me with this?

The Washington Post criticized NBC’s coverage this weekend, but the columnist made her own sexist dig in doing so by calling it “paperback romance novel approach.” Can you say “internalized oppression”? This merely reinforces the marginalizing pink ghetto-ization of genre literature which for women offers subversive escape.

The rationalization for NBC’s craptastic framing as offered to WaPo:

Women don’t watch the Olympics for the live results; they watch it for the narrative. Or that’s the reasoning of NBC, anyway. As the network’s chief marketing officer John Miller explained:

“The people who watch the Olympics are not particularly sports fans,” he told Philly.com recently. “More women watch the games than men, and for the women, they’re less interested in the result and more interested in the journey. It’s sort of like the ultimate reality show and miniseries wrapped into one.” Women don’t watch the Olympics for the live results; they watch it for the narrative. Or that’s the reasoning of NBC, anyway. As the network’s chief marketing officer John Miller explained:

“The people who watch the Olympics are not particularly sports fans,” he told Philly.com recently. “More women watch the games than men, and for the women, they’re less interested in the result and more interested in the journey. It’s sort of like the ultimate reality show and miniseries wrapped into one.”

“Less interested in the result” – yeah, that’s

why so many women in my timeline were holding their breath as they waited for gymnasts' scores, or flailing on keyboards as swimmers sped toward the end of the pool. They do care, deeply and intensely, about the results of each sport.

But they don't care for propping up men – oh, look, this swimmer *co-parents* with his med student wife, and wow, this guy was responsible for this woman's swimming medal – at the expense of women.

We are not things. We are not your wallpaper or props. We are not accessories to men's or white people's lives. We don't need your white and/or male validation to affirm our existence. We are competitors who work fucking hard to meet others as committed to sports as we are. We are viewers who appreciate the competitors' respect and commitment to sport and want to see the field strive hard and the best win.

The fact that we have been born with a vagina or different skin color should be irrelevant to corporate content.

*I'll do a daily roundup later today. Get your sports talk out here in thread. ~R*

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## FRIDAY: LITTLE FLY

Friday jazz comes to us from vocalist and bassist Esperanza Spalding, one of my personal favorites. She's the first jazz musician to ever win the Grammy Award for Best New Artist, awarded only a handful of months after this featured performance from 2010.

My favorite tune of the three she performs here is Apple Blossom – it never fails to make me sniffle. Spalding plays more than just the double bass; sample her more progressive work on electric bass here. Want something a bit more



traditional? Try her upbeat bluesy rendition of On the Sunny Side of the Street. Or maybe a little pop rock slice with her tribute to Stevie Wonder, Overjoyed.

### **Wheels and steals**

#### ***Volkswagen:***

- Whiny op-ed complains about poor, poor Volkswagen (WSJ)
  - Aw, poor fraudulent enterprise lied and ripped off the American public for a decade while other automakers in the U.S. complied with emissions laws. Murdoch-NewsCorp outlet Wall Street Journal wants us to take pity on the bastards who did not care one whit they were literally poisoning U.S. citizens while lying to customers and dealers, let alone poisoning and lying to tens of millions of customers abroad. Look, they broke U.S. laws for nearly ten years. They made interest and capital gains on the money they gained from their illegal efforts. They can make the customers they defrauded whole and they can do something to fix the damage they wreaked on our environment. And they should be punished for breaking laws on top of reparations.

Anything less is a neoliberal blowjob to a company which cannot compete fairly inside the U.S.

- VW passenger diesel owners need additional protections (Reuters) – The current settlement offered by VW in federal court does not provide a secondary level of protection to consumers says the consumer advocacy journal, needed if the proposed fix to the emissions cheating diesel vehicles does not work. These vehicle owners should be able to opt for buy-back. The amount offered also undervalues retail prices on alternative replacement vehicles, Consumer Reports said in its submission during the public comment period which ended today.

Consumer Reports said it generally supported the settlement, but urged “regulators to wield robust oversight of Volkswagen to ensure that the company implements its recall, investment, and mitigation programs appropriately” and it called on “federal and state officials to assess tough civil penalties and any appropriate criminal penalties against the company in order to hold it fully accountable.”

- South Korea halts sales of 80 VW vehicle models (NBCNews) – This is what the U.S. could have done to VW given the scale of fraud, emissions cheating, and the lack of actual “clean diesel” passenger technology available to remedy both 2.0L and 3.0L engine vehicles. The 80 models now banned for non-compliance with emissions and noise pollution laws as well as document forgery include VW, Audi and Bentley vehicles. VW has also been slapped with \$16.06 million fine, which is extremely light considering VW broke not only emissions laws while fraudulently misrepresenting the vehicles’ attributes.
- West Virginia’s suit against VW amended (Hastings Tribune) – WVa Attorney General expanded the suit to include VW parent group as well as Audi and Porsche brands. Bosch, the manufacturer of VW’s electronic control units which were programmed to defeat emissions controls, is included in the lawsuit.
- Fewer Americans buying VW vehicles (Business Insider)

– No surprise, given the emissions controls cheating scandal, the pricey labels, iffy reliability, and a product lineup that doesn't match the U.S.' market demand. It may be a long time before VW digs itself out of its hole here.

**NOT Volkswagen:**

- Two Houston thieves hack Jeep and Dodge cars (Phys.org) – Hacking pirated computer software used by auto technicians and dealers, two men tweaked Fiat Chrysler model vehicles' security codes so their key worked. The thieves were picked up driving a stolen Jeep Grand Cherokee after police focused on an area where a high number of vehicle thefts occurred.
- White hat hackers proved Chrysler's anti-hack update breachable (The Register) – Last year Charlie Miller and Chris Valasek showed Fiat Chrysler's wireless feature could be hacked remotely to take control of a car. At Black Hat 2016 this week the same duo showed how they could defeat Fiat Chrysler's

firmware update which the automaker pushed to patch the vulnerability. But in terms of ease and speed, the two thieves in Houston might actually have a faster approach to taking control of a vehicle.

- 28-year-old cracks up his brother's car while playing Pokémon GO (The Guardian) – Dude. Really? You're lucky to be alive or that you didn't kill someone else. This is the kind of generational stupid old-man-yelling-at-clouds Clint Eastwood should take a poke at instead of doubling down on his closeted racism.
- Self-driving feature in Tesla X may have saved its driver (CNBC) – Driver suffered a pulmonary embolism while on the road; the vehicle took him to the hospital. Article says the driver "was able to steer the car the last few meters" suggesting he was conscious and in control if limited in capacity. No further details were included to describe how the vehicle switched from its original route to the hospital.

Because opening ceremonies begin tonight at the Rio Olympics, I'll leave you here. Catch you Monday – have a safe and restful weekend!

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## THURSDAY: MOVE

Need something easy on the nerves today, something mellow, and yet something that won't let a listener off too lightly. Guess for today that's John Legend's Tiny Desk Concert.

I promised reindeer tales today, haven't forgotten.

### From Anthrax to Zombies

- First outbreak in 75 years forces evacuation of reindeer herders (The Siberian Times) – The last outbreak in the Siberian tundra was in 1941; news of this outbreak broke across mainstream media this past week, with some outlets referring to it as a “zombie” infection since it came back from dormancy, likely rising from a long-dead human or animal corpse.
- Infected reindeer corpses to be collected and destroyed (The Barent Observer) – A lot of odd details about anthrax and its history pop up as the outbreak evolves. Like the mortality rate for

skin anthrax (24%) and the alleged leak of anthrax from a Soviet bio-warfare lab in 1979. Reindeer deaths were blamed initially on unusually warm weather (~30C); the same unusually warm weather may have encouraged the release of long-dormant anthrax from the tundra.

- Siberian outbreak may have started five weeks earlier (The Siberian Times) – Russia's Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Surveillance senior official is angry about the slow response to the first diagnosis; the affected region does not have strong veterinary service, and it took a herder four days' walk across the tundra to inform authorities about an infection due to a lack of communications technology. The situation must be serious as the Health Minister Veronika Skvortsova has now been vaccinated against anthrax. Reports as of yesterday indicate 90 people have been hospitalized, 23 of which have been diagnosed with anthrax, and one child died.

The form most appear infected with is intestinal; its mortality rate is a little over 50%. Infection is blamed on anthrax-contaminated meat; shipment of meat from the area is now banned. Russian bio-warfare troops have established a clean camp for the evacuated herder families until the reindeer corpses have been disposed of and inoculations distributed across the area's population.

- Important: keep in mind this Siberian outbreak may be unusual for its location, but not across the globe. In the last quarter there have been small anthrax outbreaks in Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Bangladesh, and Bulgaria. Just search under Google News for "anthrax" stories over the last year.
- Coincidentally, anthrax drug maker filed and received FDA's 'orphan status' (GlobeNewsWire) – There have been so few orders for anthrax prophylaxis vaccine BioThrax that specialty biopharmaceutical company Emergent BioSolutions requested 'orphan status' from the FDA, granted to



special therapies for rare conditions affecting less than 200,000 persons in the U.S. The status was awarded mid-June.

- Investor sues anthrax drug maker for misleading expectations (Washington Business Journal) – Suit filed against the company and executives claims Emergent BioSolutions mislead investors into thinking the company would sell as many doses of BioThrax to the U.S. government during the next five years as the preceding five years. On the face of it, investor appears to expect Emergent BioSolutions to predict both actual vaccine demand in advance along with government funding (hello, GOP-led Congress?) and other new competitors in the same marketplace. Seems a bit much to me, like the investor feels entitled to profits without risk. Maybe they'll get lucky and climate change will increase likelihood of anthrax infections – cha-ching.
- Another coincidence: Last Friday marked 8 years since

anthrax researcher Bruce Ivin's death (Tulsa World) – And this coming Saturday marks six years since the FBI released its report on the anthrax attacks it blamed on Ivins.

#### Cybernia

- Facebook let police shut down feed from negotiations resulting in another civilian-death-by-cop (The Mary Sue) –Yeah, we wouldn't want to let the public see the police use deadly force against an African American mother and her five-year-old child instead of talking and waiting them out of the situation as they do so many white men in armed confrontations. And now police blame Instagram for her death. Since when does using Instagram come with an automatic death warrant?
- Can GPS location signals be spoofed? Yep. (IEEE) – It's possible the U.S. Navy patrol boats caught in Iran's waters may have relied on spoofed GPS; we don't know yet as the "misnavigating" incident is still under investigation. This article does a nice job

explaining GPS spoofing, but it leaves us with a mystery. GPS signals are generated in civilian and military formats, the first is unencrypted and the second encrypted. If the “misnavigated” patrol boats captured by Iran in January were sent spoofed GPS location data, does this mean U.S. military encryption was broken? The piece also ask about reliability of GPS given spoofing when it comes to self-driving, self-navigating cars. Oh hell no.

- Security firm F-Secure releases paper on trojan targeting entities involved in South China Sea dispute (F-Secure) – The Remote Access Trojan (RAT) has been called NanHaiShu, which means South China Sea Rat. The RAT, containing a VBA macro that executes an embedded JScript file, was spread via email messages using industry-specific terms. The targets were deliberately selected for spearfishing as the senders knew the users did not lock down Microsoft Office’s default security setting to

prevent macro execution. The malware had been in the wild for about two years, but its activity synced with events related to the South China Sea dispute.

Tomorrow's Friday, which means jazz. Guess I'd better start poking around in my files for something good. Catch you later!

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## WEDNESDAY: NOT THE SHAPE

*I know that the spades are the swords of  
a soldier  
I know that the clubs are weapons of war  
I know that diamonds mean money for this  
art  
But that's not the shape of my heart*

– excerpt, Shape of My Heart by Sting  
and Dominic Miller, 1993

After reading deeply about so many people suffering, I'm falling back on the equivalent of musical comfort food. A double helping as this Sting song is one of my favorites, performed here by some of my favorite musicians.

### Suffer the little children

- U.N. Commission of Inquiry reports Yazidis erased by ISIS (OHCHR) – The UN's independent international Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic

published "They Came to Destroy: ISIS Crimes Against the Yazidis" on June 16 but media outlets are only now reporting on the inquiry's findings. ISIS has violated the 1948 Genocide Convention, by

"ISIS has sought to erase the Yazidis through killings; sexual slavery, enslavement, torture and inhuman and degrading treatment and forcible transfer causing serious bodily and mental harm; the infliction of conditions of life that bring about a slow death; the imposition of measures to prevent Yazidi children from being born, including forced conversion of adults, the separation of Yazidi men and women, and mental trauma; and the transfer of Yazidi children from their own families and placing them with ISIS fighters, thereby cutting them off from beliefs and practices of their own religious community"

Seven weeks later mainstream media finally gets around to covering this report. I wonder how many more Yazidis have died or been degraded and tortured in that time. And I wonder if we'll ever do anything constructive to halt the elimination of this people by a non-state (or state) actor. Before ISIS began its assault on the Yazidi, there were an estimated 800K to 1.5 million of them.

▪ Australia continues to

ignore plight of refugees on Nauru (HRW) – Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International investigated the conditions of refugees held on Pacific Island of Nauru, to which Australia shunts asylum seekers and refugees from other countries. In spite of earlier investigations over the last 15 months and subsequent demands for improvements by the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a Senate Select Committee, and an independent investigator, Australia continues to do nothing about the appalling and abusive conditions on Nauru. The gross neglect is now policy by default.

- Czech president wants to reject all refugees (Deutsche Welle) – Milos Zeman has always talked anti-Nazi, but on the matter of EU's policy on refugees he sounds like he's done a 180 degree turn. His spokesman claims this position is based on terrorism:

"Our country simply cannot afford to risk terrorist attacks like what occurred in France and Germany. By accepting migrants, we would create fertile ground for barbaric attacks..."

In opposition to Zeman, Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka has agreed to take 80 Syrian refugees. That's far more than the U.S. has accepted on a proportional basis; we killed more Syrian civilians this month than that number.

### **Reading the Classics**

From *Sententiae Antiquae*, Corrupt Leaders Make Corrupt Countries: An Ancient Course on Leadership. Nothing new under the sun; sure looks like we've debated this topic for millennia.

I like this bit by the Greek writer Onasander particularly:

...οὐδὲ χωρὶς στρατηγῶν οὐδὲ μία πόλις  
ἐκπέμψει στρατόπεδον, οὐδὲ δίχα τοῦ  
δύνασθαι λέγειν αἰρήσεται στρατηγόν.

...No land nor city will field an army  
without generals nor even choose a  
general who cannot speak effectively.

How do you say, "Wishful thinking" in ancient Greek?

Reindeer games here tomorrow, in spite of the season. See you then.

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# TUESDAY: ALLEZ VOUS F

*J'adore* Stromae. I'm not in the hip hop demographic, but Stromae – whose real name is Paul Van Haver – pulls me in. This multi-talented artist born to a Rwandan father and a Belgian mother pulls together multiple genres of music laced with compelling *au courant* lyrics presented with stunning visual effects – how could I not love him?

This particular song, Papatouai, has a strong psychic undertow. This song asks where Papa is; the lyrics and video suggest an emotionally or physically distant father. Van Haver's own father was killed in the Rwandan genocide when he was not yet ten years old. Is this song about his own father, or about inaccessible fathers in general? The use of older African jazz rhythms emphasizes retrospection suggesting a look backward rather than forward for the missing father figure(s). More than a third of a billion views for this video say something important about its themes.

Much of Stromae's work is strongly political, but it conveys the difficulty of youth who are multi-racial/multi-ethnic unsatisfied with the binaries and economic injustices forced on them by oldsters. A favorite among kids I know is AVF (*Allez Vous Faire*):

*"Allez vous faire!"  
Toujours les mêmes discours, toujours  
les mêmes airs,  
Hollande, Belgique, France austère.  
Gauches, ou libéraux, avant-centres ou  
centristes,  
Ça m'est égal, tous aussi démagos que  
des artistes.*

Go fuck yourselves!  
Always the same words, always the same  
airs.  
Holland, Belgium, France, austere.  
Right or Left? Moderate or Extremist?  
They're all the same to me – the



demagogues and the artists.

*Remarquable et pertinent, non?* I'm also crazy about *Tous Les Mêmes*, a trans- and cis-feminist song with a marvelous old school Latin beat simmering with frustration. But there's not much I don't like by Stromae; I can't name a song I wouldn't listen to again and again.

If you're ready for more Stromae, try his concert recorded in Montreal this past winter. So good.

#### Expedition to the Cyber Pass

- UK wireless firm 02 customer data breached and sold (BBC) – 02 customers who were gamers at XSplit had their 02 account data stolen. The approach used, credential stuffing, relies on users who employ the same password at multiple sites. Wonder how Verizon's recent hiring of 02's CEO Ronan Dunne will play out during the integration of Yahoo into Verizon's corporate fold, given Verizon's data breach? Will Dunne insist on mandatory 2FA policy and insure Verizon and Yahoo accounts can't use the same passwords?
- Speaking of Yahoo: 200 million credentials for sale (Motherboard) – Yahoo's Tumblr had already been involved in a massive

breach, now there's Yahoo accounts available on the dark web. Given the Verizon breach already mentioned, it's just a matter of time before these accounts are cross-matched for criminal use.

- Oracle's not-so-good-very-bad-too-many 276 vulnerabilities patched (Threatpost) – Whew. Two. Hundred. Seventy. Six. That's a lot of risk. Good they're all patched, but wow, how did Oracle end up with so many to begin with? Some of them are in products once owned by Sun Microsystems, including Java. Maybe Oracle ought to rethink Java's licensing and work with the software community to develop a better approach to patching Java?
- F-35 ready, says USAF – kind of (Bloomberg) – Massively expensive combat jet now up for 'limited combat use', except...

The initial aircraft won't have all the electronic combat, data fusion, weapons capacity or automated maintenance and diagnostics capabilities until the most advanced version of its complex software is fielded

by 2018.

Uh, what the hell did we spend a gazillion-plus bucks on if we don't have aircraft with competitive working electronics?

Light load today, busy here between getting youngest ready for college and primary day in Michigan. YES, YOU, MICHIGANDER, GO VOTE IN THE PRIMARY! Polls close at 8:00 p.m. EDT, you still have time – check your party for write-in candidates. You can check your registration, precinct, ballot at this MI-SOS link.

The rest of you: check your own state's primary date and registration deadlines. Scoot!

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## MONDAY: GREY BULL

Hope you have some free time today to enjoy this short film. Grey Bull by Khoby runs 15 minutes long, but worth it. Its pace is slow, but the emotions this short musters are full and richly explored. I look forward to more from filmmaker Khoby.

### Energy escapades

NV ENERGY: Last Friday I posted a link to a story about Nevada's governor replacing a member of the Public Utilities Commission as a result of costly barriers to residential solar energy integration. Commenter jo6pac pointed out that Berkshire Hathaway-owned NV Energy (NVE) has been part of the challenge to increasing the use of individual residential solar-generated electricity in NV. I thought there was another electricity provider in Nevada besides NVE given the number of businesses switching from NVE. It's a challenge, though, if NVE has near-monopolistic position in the state's electricity market, especially since NVE has the second

highest residential rates for electricity in the mountain west region.

But that's only part of NV's problem. Like much of the U.S., NV must phase out of fossil fuels like coal and gas – NVE's standard energy mix relies on 75% or more fossil fuels. As a nation we're not talking enough about exiting fossil fuels, and how to prevent economic damage while winding down an entire industry in the case of coal. The public does not owe corporations guaranteed profits, but there is a compelling reason for the state to minimize damage to the public's interests by ensuring coal does not crash.

Putting aside that rather large topic, Friday's story is really the inversion – it's not the lone PUC commissioner who might have been batting for NVE, but the largest industry in the state damaged by electricity monopoly and using its power to persuade regulatory change.

This January 2016 article explains a lot: casinos want to exit NV Energy for another provider, but they are being assessed enormous exit fees over which they are suing. More than \$100 million in fees between three casinos is a lot of pressure to remain with the status quo.

We're entering a phase where electricity attains commodification – any supplier will do, and the user should be able to freely switch – but the traditional infrastructure based on coal and other fossil fuel sources with steep and long-term sunk costs can't compete with commodified alternative energy suppliers. It's a challenge not unlike the transition from brick-and-mortar retail to e-tail, or newsprint to online news. The legacy system must give way, but it's going to hurt when there is little forethought put into the transition. Nevada's PUC is in for a very rough ride.

SOLARCITY: Tesla announced it's buying out all of the solar power systems company for a price

\$200 million below its initial offer last month. While SolarCity's headquarters are in San Mateo, California, after the merger it will have battery production facilities in the Gigafactory under construction near Reno, Nevada. Last year the SolarCity sued Salt River Project (SRP) claiming SRP's increased rates for residential solar energy users violated antitrust laws since the consumers could not leave SRP's portion of the grid.

Which sounds a lot like the situation in the rest of Nevada where NVE charges higher rates for residential users who install solar panels as jo6pac pointed out (more in NYT via bloopie2). Is there another antitrust suit in the offing? Or will billionaires Elon Musk of Tesla and Warren Buffett of Berkshire Hathaway have a meeting of the minds?

#### **Frightening flooding**

- **MARYLAND:** Patapsco River near Elkridge at Patapsco Valley State Park rose 20 feet in a matter of minutes on Saturday evening. (Bill McKibben-Twitter) – Absolutely mindboggling how fast this flash flood happened; it's surprising there were only two deaths so far.
- **INDIA:** At least 32 deaths reported in eastern India due to flooding (Times of India) – Worst of the flooding occurred in Assam, Meghalaya, Bihar and West Bengal. Another 27 people were killed by lightning in

Odisha. Read the comments at that article; surprising how much the remarks parallel what we see in the U.S. wrt government responsibility and pleas to deities for help.

- CHINA: Heavy flooding slowed manufacturing demand and production in July (Asia Times) – Flooding exacerbated already softer demand from abroad and may lead to layoffs.

#### Troubled Turkey

- Nigeria cooperates with Turkey, shutting down 17 schools (AllAfrica) – The Nigerian Turkish International Colleges are allegedly tied to the Gülenist movement. Somalia has now also agreed to shut down schools believed to be pro-Gülenist.
- Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have now both turned down Turkey's request to shut Turkish schools (The Diplomat) – Uzbekistan and Tajikistan had already closed Gülen-linked schools well before the attempted coup.
- More journalists detained (European Federation of

Journalists) – As of today, the total number of journalists arrested is now 58.

- Academic take on Gülen's responsibility for the coup (Dani Rodrik's blog) – Long read by Ford Foundation Professor of International Political Economy at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. Interesting how weaselly everyone is with carefully worded rebuttals. See also followup post as to whether U.S. backed Fethullah Gülen.

That's it for Monday, only one more month before Congress returns to DC. See you tomorrow!