

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 Ivins'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!

TPP AND DEMOCRATIC SELF-DELUSION

After months of telling Bernie Sanders to drop out, the political chatterers are finally understanding one reason he did not do so: to maintain leverage over things like the party platform. After the platform was finalized yesterday, Bernie declared victory.

Pressed by supporters of U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders, Democratic Party platform writers meeting this weekend in Orlando, Florida, adopted a progressive agenda that underscores the need for bold action on climate change, addresses criminal justice reform and calls for doubling the federal minimum wage.

"We have made enormous strides," Sanders said. "Thanks to the millions of people across the country who got involved in the political process – many for the first time – we now have the most progressive platform in the history of the Democratic Party."

The Platform Committee also adopted an amendment focused on criminal justice reform which calls for an investigation by the Department of Justice to investigate all shootings involving police officers.

The platform that will be submitted at the Democratic National Convention later this month in Philadelphia also would support Congress putting a price on carbon and methane to discourage

continued use of fossil fuels that are causing severe climate change. The platform also says lawmakers must consider the impact on the climate in all federal decisions and invest heavily in wind and solar power rather than natural gas.

Delegates allied with Hillary Clinton's and Sanders' campaigns also passed amendments to fight for a \$15 federal minimum wage tied to inflation, urged passage of progressive immigration reform and called for legalization of marijuana.

There were three issues, however, where Sanders' delegates lost: opposition to Israeli settlements, a ban on fracking, and opposition to the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

The first two make sense: after all, those policy positions match Hillary's stated position (though the US is supposed to be opposed to illegal settlements), so rejecting Sanders' amendments equated to backing the nominee instead. That's the way it's supposed to work.

But Hillary, of course, claimed to oppose the TPP during the primary, even if that claim was always sketchy coming as it did as she worked so hard to negotiate the crappy deal as Secretary of State. So the mealy-mouthed language in the platform about protecting workers – akin to the same language in the Colombia Trade Deal that did squat to protect workers – is more notable.

As is the idiotic opinion expressed by this person, described by Robert Reich as an acquaintance from the Clinton White House.

ACQUAINTANCE: "Don't you think your blog post from last night was a bit harsh?"

ME: "Not at all. The Democratic Party is shooting itself in the foot by not officially opposing the Trans Pacific Partnership."

[They talk about how the Democrats are supporting this to back the President.]

ME: "But it's terrible policy. And it's awful politics. It gives Trump a battering ram. Obama won't be president in six months. Why risk it?"

ACQ: "They don't see much of a risk. Most Americans don't know or care about the TPP."

ME: "But they know big corporations are running economic policy. They think the whole system is corrupt. Believe me, Trump will use this against Hillary."

ACQ: "He can't. She's inoculated. She's come out against the TPP."

ME: "But it's her delegates who voted not to oppose it in the Democratic platform. Her fingerprints are all over this thing."

Trump may not have many articulated policy positions, but his stance against TPP has been consistent and (unsurprisingly loud). Reich is right: to the extent that platforms mean anything at all, this will be used by Trump to pitch Democrats as sell-outs to American workers.

And the notion that voters won't react against TPP is insulting. Sure, they may not know how specifically bad TPP is, but workers do know that NAFTA sucked. And Trump is certainly capable of equating the two.

Whoever this person is, by nature of being a Hillary advisor, he or she is supposed to be a technocratic elite. But this is idiotic, both from a policy and a political perspective.

FRIDAY MORNING: MI RITMO

Oye como va
Mi ritmo
Bueno pa gozar
Mulata

– excerpt, *Oye Como Va* by Tito Puente

This Latin jazz song was on the very first album I owned – Santana’s *Abraxas*. I have no idea what possessed my father to select this way back in 1971 because he’s not musically inclined. I prefer to think he was persuaded by the music store staff to buy it for me rather than think the cover art did it for him. To this day I don’t dare ask; I’d rather live with my illusion.

Perhaps he simply liked *Oye Como Va* by Tito Puente and decided I needed it. Maybe that’s what he wanted to listen to when I played the album over and over again, ad nauseam. The song is still easy to listen to even when played by a septuagenarian, isn’t it? Though Puente probably still felt the same way about this song in his last live performance as he did when he first recorded it in 1963.

The personal irony I’m certain my father never considered: the last line is a reference to a mixed race “mulatto” woman. That’s me.

Vamos, amigos!

Wheels

- South Korea frustrated by Volkswagen’s response to Dieselgate (Yonhap) – Hard to tell how many VW passenger diesel cars with the emissions controls

defeat tech have been sold in South Korea to date. Last year's sales of 35,700 suggest VW needs to exert itself a little more than offer to recall a total 125,000 cars.

Technology Trends

- Breakthrough in memory technology could change computing dramatically (IBM via YouTube) – I'm still trying to wrap my head around this; could be the simplicity of the underlying science seems so obvious I can't understand why it wasn't discovered sooner. Using polycrystalline rather than amorphous material, more data can be stored and in a manner which is stable and not prone to loss when electricity is cut. This technology could replace DRAM at flash memory prices. Imagine how quickly systems could begin processing if they could avoid seeking programs and data.
- Google's annual I/O event chary on enterprise computing (ComputerWorld) – Wonder if Google executives' expressed intent to focus on the enterprise is a veiled

threat directed at Oracle? The I/O annual conference didn't have enough enterprise applications to satisfy the curious; is Google holding back? Or are there pending acquisitions to fill this stated intent, ones not yet ready for publication? I wouldn't be surprised to see Google launch something on par with Salesforce or Zoho very soon. Google Drive components already compete with or are integrated with some of those Zoho offers in its small business offering.

- Android's coming to Chromebooks – finally! (Google Blog) – I've put off buying another laptop until this happened, guess I'll look at the first three models on which developers will focus their development. The applications available for Android phones have been mind-boggling in number; it'd be nice to have the same diversity of selection for laptops. And then maybe desktops in the not-too-distant future? That would really make a dent in enterprise computing.

Cybersec

- Security camera not password protected? Police may be able to tap it (Engadget) – Love the subhead: “Don’t worry, it’s supposed to be for a good cause.” Just add the invisible snark tag. Purdue University researchers found surveillance cameras could be tapped to allow law enforcement to monitor a crime scene. I don’t know about you but this sounds like a backdoor, not a convenient vulnerability. If the police can use it soon, who might already be using it?
- Qualcomm mobile chip flaw leaves 60% of Android devices exposed (Threatpost) – Not good, especially since this boo-boo may affect both oldest and newest Android versions. But a malicious app is required to take advantage of this flaw, unlike the Stagefright exploit. Android has already issued a patch; the problem is getting it to all affected devices.
- LinkedIn’s 2012 breach yielded info on more than

100 million accounts (Motherboard) – Only 6.5 million accounts were initially breached – but that’s only the first batch published online. The actual haul from 2012 was at least 117 million accounts, now for sale for a mere five bitcoins or \$2200. Are you a LinkedIn user? Time to check Have I Been Pwned? to see if your account is among those in the breach.

Climate Crises

- Record high temp of 51C (124F) recorded in India (The Register) – Drought continues as well; article notes, “Back in India, relief from the heat is expected when the annual monsoon hits. The cooling rains generally arrive in mid-June.” Except that with a monster El Nino underway, the amount of rain and cooling will depart from average.
- Polymath Eleanor Saitta considers climate change and comes to some grim, mortal conclusions (Storify by @AnthonyBriggs) – If you’re a policymaker, you’d better worry about dealing

effectively with climate refugees and deaths in the millions. Maybe billions. Refugees from Syria will look like a minuscule blip. If you're not terrified, you should be.

Looks like it's going to be a lovely late spring weekend here – hope you're going to have a nice one, too. See you Monday!

WEDNESDAY MORNING: WANDERING

This music video is the result of an insomniac walkabout. I went looking for something mellow I hadn't heard before and tripped on this lovely little indie folk artistry. Not certain why I haven't heard Radical Face before given how popular this piece is. I like it enough to look for more by the same artist.

Let's go wandering...

Volkswagen: 3.0L fix in the offing, but too late for EU and the world?

- New catalytic converter may be part of so-called fix for VW and Audi 3.0L vehicles (Bloomberg) – The financial hit affected dividend as reserve for fix/recall/litigation was raised from 6.7B to 16.2B euros. VW group will not have a full explanation

about Dieselgate's origins and costs to shareholders until the end of 2016.

- But Netherland's NO₂ level exceeds the 40 microgram threshold in 11 locations, violating EU air pollution standards (DutchNews) – Locations are those with high automobile traffic.
- UK government shoveled 105,000 pounds down legal fee rat hole fighting air pollution charges (Guardian-UK) – Look, we all know the air's dirty. Stop fighting the charges and fix the mess.
- UK's MPs already said air pollution was a 'public health emergency' (Guardian-UK) – It's killing 40-50,000 UK residents a year. One of the approaches discussed but not yet in motion is a scrapping plan for dirty diesel vehicles.
- Unfortunately global CO₂ level at 400 ppm tipping point, no thanks to VW's diesel vehicles (Sydney Melbourne Herald) – Granted, VW's passenger vehicles aren't the only source, but cheating for nearly a decade across millions of cars played a substantive role.

Mixed government messages about hacking, encryption, and cybersecurity enforcement
Compare: FBI hires a "grey hat" to crack the San Bernardino shooter's iPhone account, versus FCC and FTC desire for escalated security patching on wireless systems. So which is it? Hacking is good when it helps government, or no? Encryption is not good for government except when it is?
How do these stories make any sense?

- State of Florida prosecuting security researcher after he revealed FL state's election website was vulnerable (Tampa Bay Times) – Unencrypted site wide-open to SQL "injection attack" allowed research to hack into the site. Florida arrests him instead of saying thanks and fixing their mess.
- UK court rules hacker does not have to give up password (Guardian-UK) – Computer scientist and hacker activist Lauri Love fights extradition to U.S. after allegedly stealing 'massive quantities' of data from Fed Reserve and NASA computers; court ruled he does not have to give up password for his encrypted computers taken into custody last autumn.
- SWIFT denies technicians left Bangladeshi bank vulnerable to hacking (Reuters) – Tit-for-tat back

and forth between Bangladesh Bank and SWIFT as to which entity at fault for exposures to hacking. Funny how U.S. government is saying very little about this when the vulnerability could have been used by terrorists for financing.

Well, it's not quite noon Pacific time, still morning somewhere. Schedule was off due to insomnia last night; hoping for a better night's sleep tonight, and a better morning tomorrow. Catch you then!

FRIDAY MORNING [?!]: CHAMBER OF DELIGHTS

It's Friday. FINALLY. And it's jazz exploration day, too. Today we sample some chamber jazz, here with Meg Okura and the Pan Asian Chamber Ensemble.

It. Me. That is to say, of all genres, this one feels most like a part of myself. Here's another chamber jazz favorite – Quarter Chicken Dark from The Goat Rodeo Sessions. And another – Model Trane, the first cut in this linked video by Turtle Island Quartet.

You can see and hear for yourself what makes chamber jazz different from other genres: chamber instruments used in classical music to perform jazz.

Whew, I needed this stuff. Hope you like it, too, though I know it's not everybody's cup of tea.

My morning was overbooked, only have time today

for a few things that caught my eye.

Encryption and privacy issues

Go To Jail Indefinitely card for suspect who won't unlock hard drives (Naked Security) – Seems odd this wasn't the case the USDOJ used to force cracking of password-protected accounts on devices, given the circumstances surrounding a less-than-sympathetic defendant.

Amicus brief by ACLU and EFF for same case (pdf – Ars Technica)

Supreme Court ruling extends reach of FBI's computer search under Rule 41 (Bloomberg) – Would be nice if the Email Privacy Act, now waiting for Senate approval, addressed this and limited law enforcement's overreach.

Climate change and its secondary effects

India's ongoing drought now affects 330 million citizens, thousands have died from heat and dehydration (Oneindia) – 330 million is slightly more people than the entire U.S. population. Imagine what could happen if even one or two percent of these affected fled the country as climate refugees.

Tiger poaching in India dramatically increased over last year (Phys.org) – Have to ask if financial stress caused by drought encouraged illegal killing of tigers, now that more tigers have been poached this year to date compared to all of last year. Are gains in tiger population now threatened by primary and secondary effects of climate change?

Though severe El Nino deepened by climate change causes record drought now, an equally deep La Nina could be ahead (Phys.org) – Which could mean dramatic rains and flooding in areas where plant growth has died off, leaving little protection from water runoff. Are any governments planning ahead even as they deal with drought?

Hope your weekend is pleasant – see you Monday morning!

THURSDAY MORNING: IT'S STILL MORNING SOMEWHERE

Fried. I am totally brain-fried after spending the night reading about flavivirus, rubivirus, arbovirus. So a morning post was not in the cards right away today in my time zone.

Things are fried elsewhere, too, as you can see from the global map above. These locations are suffering from drought:

Colombia – Drought has affected hydroelectric generation.

India – south – Heatwave coupled with drought cost lives

Malawi – Food crisis declared as crop yields fall off due to drought

Mongolia – Severe winter sandwiched between droughts devastates livestock

Morocco – Wheat crop output fell by 50% due to drought

Mozambique – Floods in the north and drought in the south damaged crops; a “red alert” now issued over food security.

Oceania (S Australia/Papua New Guinea) – Human trafficking reported, with girls sold in exchange for rice in Papua New Guinea due to drought-caused crop failures.

Venezuela – Country experiencing electricity shortages due to drought

Vietnam – Livestock are dying due to drought

Zimbabwe – Country is participating in a co-operative food aid program due to severe drought.

This is only a partial list of drought-affected countries; Mideast and Mediterranean countries, Thailand, more of the African continent, and the southwest U.S. also suffer from drought.

Some drought is due to cyclical trends like the current El Nino event, but much of the drought is deeper than the average cycle, and some of it is simply climate change. Many places are already facing agricultural crises, and others have been facing them for years now.

While the map above doesn't reflect it, forecasts predict dryer-than-average conditions across the crop-growing region of the middle U.S. as well as a return to dryer conditions in California.

We are overdue for discussions about global food security as climate change worsens. We can start now.

Back to regular morning roundup programming tomorrow – see you then!

TUESDAY MORNING: CHANGING THE TENOR

Once in a while, I indulge in the musical equivalent of eating chocolate instead of a wholesome meal. I'll listen to my favorite tenors on a continuous loop for an afternoon. I have a weakspot for Luciano Pavarotti and Franco Correlli, though the latter isn't one of the Three Tenors.

Speaking of which, this video features a really bizarre event: the Three Tenors performing at Los Angeles' Dodgers Stadium in 1994. Poppy and Barbara Bush are there in the audience, too. What a supremely odd venue! And yet these guys did a bang up job in such a huge, open space. Pavarotti's Nessun Dorma at ~1:05 is my favorite

cut, but it's all fun.

Now let's change the tenor...

Former Microsoft CEO Bill Gates sides with FBI against Apple

Gates isn't the best salesman for this job, promoting compelled software. Given Gates' role as technology adviser to Microsoft's current CEO Satya Nadella, how persistently invasive Windows 10 is, and Microsoft software's leaky history, Gates comes off as a *soldato* for USDOJ. Do read the article; it's as if Gates was so intent on touting USDOJ's line that he didn't bother to read any details about USDOJ's demands on Apple.

UPDATE – 10:25 AM EST – Poor Bill, so misunderstood, now backpedaling on his position about Apple's compliance. This, from a Fortune 100 technology adviser...~*shaking my head*~

Gates talks out of the other side of his face on climate change

Unsurprisingly, Bill Gates also looks less than credible when he pleads with students for an 'energy miracle' to tackle climate change. This is shameless: first, guilt-tripping minors in high school, second for the blatant hypocrisy. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation continues to hold investments in ExxonMobil, BP, and Shell because of their yields. Not exactly a commitment to alternative energy there. How's that investment strategy working for you now, Gates?

Fossil fuel-based industries: wall-to-wall bad news

Speaking of crappy investments in dirty hydrocarbons, conditions are just plain ugly.

- JPMorgan expects loans to go bad if oil prices stay low, requiring greater reserves.
- Decreased demand for coal hurting mining companies. (WSJ paywall)
- International Energy Agency

forecasts continued pain across oil industry with retrenchment expected due to low oil prices.

- And in spite of the non-cyclical change in energy, University of Texas Investment Management Co. doubles down on stupid by buying more fossil fuel exposures. Must be taking lessons from Bill Gates on 'energy miracles.'

Office of Personnel Management's CIO steps down
Donna K. Seymour stepped down from her role, the second OPM management team member to leave after the massive hack of U.S. government personnel records. She was scheduled to appear before Congress this week; that hearing has now been canceled by House Oversight and Government Reform Committee chair Jason Chaffetz. Huh. That's convenient. Wonder if she would have said something that reflected badly on a previous GOP administration? This bit from the linked article is just...well...

FBI Director James Comey called the hacks an "enormous breach," saying his own data were stolen. U.S. authorities blamed China, which strongly denied the accusation before it said in December that it had arrested several "criminal" Chinese hackers connected to the breach.

Wow, I wonder what China could do if they had access to every U.S. government employees' iPhone? Anybody asked Comey what kind of phone he carries?

That's a wrap. I'm off to listen to something sung in a sweet tenor voice.

FRIDAY MORNING: THANK A GODDESS

Yeah, you can thank Frīge for her dæg – Friday is her day. Frigg, Frea, or Freyja, has been lumped into sky-and-weather-goddesses category though I don't recall running across a folktale about her actually doing weather-y stuff.

Hope you were prepared for snow if you live in eastern U.S.; Frigg won't be as much help to you as a decent snow shovel. Same with keeping the kids busy on a snow day. Maybe you could coax them into writing a story about Frigg calling up a snow storm, replete with drawings?

Speaking of weather...and climate..

These news stories suggest snowpocalyptic events here in the U.S. aren't the only unusual conditions affecting the way we do business today.

- South African's wine production will be affected by recent wildfires. Wonder if Australia's will be, too? Oh definitely, by too much rain as well as drought and bushfires.
- Milder than usual weather hurt retail spending in UK. Lucky for our former British overlords we've exported our Black Friday to give them a temporary boost in sales.
- The worst drought in two decades spurs Zimbabwe to seed clouds. Ugh. Not good. If they're seeding there,

what happens to rainfall in Mozambique, Malawi, and Madagascar?

Note: My spell check app offers “snowpocalypse” and “snowpocalypses” after I wrote “snowpocalyptic” – even spell check insists mega-sized snowstorms are now a regular occurrence.

Dutch tech firm Philips’ sale of Lumileds division halted

No specific details were shared, but the Senate Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) blocked the sale of Philips’ California-based lighting component manufacturing subsidiary. Note the article refers to “Asian buyers,” and mentions further down the story that Chinese firms were involved in the buyers’ consortium.

Seems odd this sale was blocked by CFIUS, but not that of chipmaker OmniVision Technologies last May, or Freescale Semiconductor in March (though perhaps the previous owners of Freescale may have been a factor).

Military vendor for AV and building systems sold devices with backdoor

Not only a hidden backdoor, but packet sniffing capabilities found in the AMX brand NX-1200 model building controls device.

But backdoors are a good thing, right? No?

That’s a wrap on this week. Hope those of you along the east coast expecting heavy snow are prepared with ample alcoholic beverages for what appears to be a long weekend. Make an offering to Frigg and see if it helps. Offer another to the person who shoveled your snow.

OBAMA'S TERRORISM CANCER SPEECH, CARTER'S MALAISE SPEECH

The right wingers who insist on calling any attack by a Muslim "terrorism" – who insist on tying the San Bernardino attack to ISIS, even in the absence of evidence – do it to prioritize the fight against Islamic terrorists over all the other ills facing America: over other gun violence, over climate change, over the persistent economic struggles of most Americans. Theirs is a profoundly unpatriotic effort to put war over every other policy priority, even far more pressing ones. That stance has led to a disinvestment in America, with real consequences for everyone not getting rich off of arms sales.

Last week, President Obama capitulated to these forces, giving a speech designed to give the attack in San Bernardino precedence over all the other mass killings of late, to give its 14 dead victims more importance over all the other dead victims. Most strikingly, Obama called attacks that aren't, legally, terrorism, something his critics have long been demanding.

It is this type of attack that we saw at Fort Hood in 2009; in Chattanooga earlier this year; and now in San Bernardino.

And he lectured Muslims to reject any interpretation of Islam that is "incompatible" with "religious tolerance."

That does not mean denying the fact that an extremist ideology has spread within some Muslim communities. This is a real problem that Muslims must confront, without excuse. Muslim leaders here and around the globe have to continue working with us to decisively and

unequivocally reject the hateful ideology that groups like ISIL and al Qaeda promote; to speak out against not just acts of violence, but also those interpretations of Islam that are incompatible with the values of religious tolerance, mutual respect, and human dignity.

Not only does this give too little credit for the condemnation Muslims have long voiced against terrorist attacks, but it holds Muslims to a standard Obama doesn't demand from Christians spewing intolerance.

It was a horrible speech. But this line struck me.

I know that after so much war, many Americans are asking whether we are confronted by a cancer that has no immediate cure.

In context, it was about terrorism.

I know we see our kids in the faces of the young people killed in Paris. And I know that after so much war, many Americans are asking whether we are confronted by a cancer that has no immediate cure.

Well, here's what I want you to know: The threat from terrorism is real, but we will overcome it

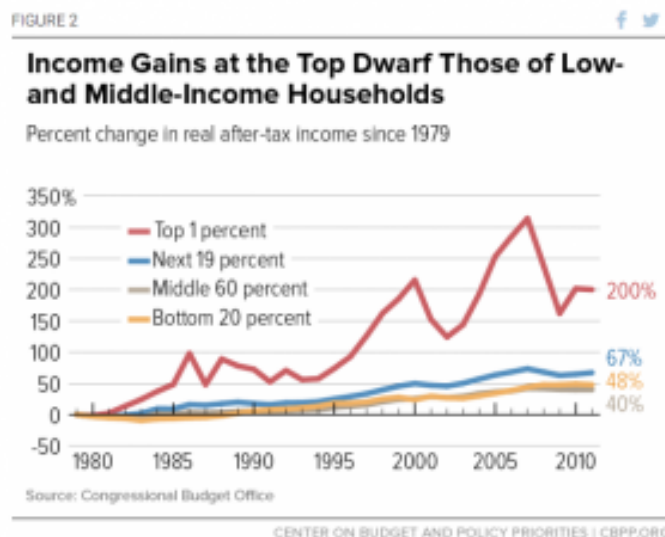
But, particularly coming as it did after invoking dead children, it shouldn't have been. Aside from those whose own kids narrowly missed being in Paris, why should we see our kids in the faces of the young people killed in Paris, rather than in the faces of the young people killed in the Umpqua Community College attack or the over 60 people under the age of 25 shot in Chicago between the Paris attack and Obama's speech? If we were to think of a cancer with no

immediate cure, why wouldn't we be thinking of the 20 6-year olds killed in Newtown?

We have a cancer, but it's not terrorism. And it's not just exhibited in all our shootings. It is equally exhibited in our growing addiction rates, in the increasing mortality in some groups. Obama gave the speech, surely, to quiet the calls from those who demand he address terrorism more aggressively than he address the underlying cancer.

Obama's horrible, flatly delivered speech made me think – even as I was watching of it – of that far more famous malaise speech, delivered by Jimmy Carter, 36 years ago.

Carter's malaise speech, after all, was offered at the moment so much of the current malaise, the cancer, started. Inflation-adjusted wages for the middle class had already peaked, 6 years earlier. That was the moment when the rich and the super-rich started running off with greater and greater portion of the benefits of America's productivity.



And the overthrow of our client dictator in Iran months earlier would set off our decades-long dance with Islamic extremists. Indeed, just 12 days before Carter delivered what would be dubbed the malaise speech, he authorized covert support for what would become the *mujahadeen* in

Afghanistan. Our entanglement with the Saudis – and with it our refusal to ditch our oil addiction – has disastrously governed much of our foreign policy since, even while the petrodollar delayed the recognition that our economy isn't working anymore, not for average Americans.

Carter correctly diagnosed his moment. After making an effort to hear from Americans from all walks of life, he recognized that people believed – correctly, we now know – that the future might bring decline, not progress.

The erosion of our confidence in the future is threatening to destroy the social and the political fabric of America.

The confidence that we have always had as a people is not simply some romantic dream or a proverb in a dusty book that we read just on the Fourth of July.

It is the idea which founded our nation and has guided our development as a people. Confidence in the future has supported everything else – public institutions and private enterprise, our own families, and the very Constitution of the United States. Confidence has defined our course and has served as a link between generations. We've always believed in something called progress. We've always had a faith that the days of our children would be better than our own.

Our people are losing that faith, not only in government itself but in the ability as citizens to serve as the ultimate rulers and shapers of our democracy. As a people we know our past and we are proud of it. Our progress has been part of the living history of America, even the world. We always believed that we were part of a great movement of humanity itself called

democracy, involved in the search for freedom, and that belief has always strengthened us in our purpose. But just as we are losing our confidence in the future, we are also beginning to close the door on our past.

In a nation that was proud of hard work, strong families, close-knit communities, and our faith in God, too many of us now tend to worship self-indulgence and consumption. Human identity is no longer defined by what one does, but by what one owns. But we've discovered that owning things and consuming things does not satisfy our longing for meaning. We've learned that piling up material goods cannot fill the emptiness of lives which have no confidence or purpose.

The symptoms of this crisis of the American spirit are all around us. For the first time in the history of our country a majority of our people believe that the next five years will be worse than the past five years.

He saw the gap growing between Washington's policy wonks and the people they purportedly served.

Looking for a way out of this crisis, our people have turned to the Federal government and found it isolated from the mainstream of our nation's life. Washington, D.C., has become an island. The gap between our citizens and our government has never been so wide. The people are looking for honest answers, not easy answers; clear leadership, not false claims and evasiveness and politics as usual.

What you see too often in Washington and elsewhere around the country is a system of government that seems incapable of action. You see a Congress twisted and

pulled in every direction by hundreds of well-financed and powerful special interests. You see every extreme position defended to the last vote, almost to the last breath by one unyielding group or another. You often see a balanced and a fair approach that demands sacrifice, a little sacrifice from everyone, abandoned like an orphan without support and without friends.

36 years ago, Carter saw that the nation was at a turning point, a moment where it could choose to continue down the path it was (and remains on) or come together again.

We are at a turning point in our history. There are two paths to choose. One is a path I've warned about tonight, the path that leads to fragmentation and self-interest. Down that road lies a mistaken idea of freedom, the right to grasp for ourselves some advantage over others. That path would be one of constant conflict between narrow interests ending in chaos and immobility. It is a certain route to failure.

All the traditions of our past, all the lessons of our heritage, all the promises of our future point to another path, the path of common purpose and the restoration of American values. That path leads to true freedom for our nation and ourselves. We can take the first steps down that path as we begin to solve our energy problem.

There are parts of Carter's speech that grate, now. Given his singular focus on energy independence, he pushed hard for coal and shale oil exploitation. Carter's endorsement of saying something nice about America dismisses the possibility some introspection about America's mistakes was in order.

Moreover, some areas of strength, the areas where Carter believed America would endure, have not.

I do not mean our political and civil liberties. They will endure. And I do not refer to the outward strength of America, a nation that is at peace tonight everywhere in the world, with unmatched economic power and military might.

We still have unmatched military might and the largest economy, but that hasn't brought us peace or respect for civil liberties. Instead, the monster Carter and his advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski first unleashed led us to double down on our own malaise, one which led, after many years, to Obama's cancer speech.

And while the initial response to the speech was quite positive, Carter squandered the value of the speech.

Obama was, in my opinion, wrong to capitulate to those who want to focus singularly on terrorism rather than on America's problems more generally. Because both here and abroad, our failure to address the malaise Carter identified decades ago remains the more critical problem.

TEN BILLION: A KICK IN THE ASS WE'VE NEEDED

[Note: You can join Professor Stephen Emmott for a @reddit AMA TODAY Friday 04-DEC-2015 at 4:00 pm (UK) / 11:00 am EST.]

If we learned a cataclysmic, extinction-level event was hurtling toward our planet, how would

we respond? How should we respond if we know we can minimize the threat?

This is in essence the question asked of us by *Ten Billion*, a film based on Professor Stephen Emmott's eponymous book. The film premieres this Saturday at 22:00 UTC on SkyTV.

I was fortunate to screen *Ten Billion* recently. Crafted by director Peter Webber, it deftly evokes *Koyaanisqatsi* (1982), its name based on the Hopi word for "life out of balance." *Ten Billion* similarly shows us a world even more off kilter, its resources relentlessly consumed by humans. Where *Koyaanisqatsi's* Philip Glass score was reflective and elegiac, *Ten Billion's* Alex Heffes' score underlines the mounting urgency of crises.

These crises are many, pegged directly to population growth and its corresponding rate of consumption. The film's use of a timeline depicting past and future projections of population are effective, like watching the tipping point of a virus infecting its host.

Effective, too, are comparisons between recent and archival photos depicting the changes wrought by humans. Evidence of glaciation loss is horrific, as one example.

Photos of earth from the International Space Station remind us that we are all in this together. There is no escape, no way around this; this is home, and we must work together to save it.

My sole critique is about the diversity of "climate migrants" – so-called in the film, but we know now that many who flee political instability are really "climate refugees." *Ten Billion* depicts the plight of peoples affected most by climate change. Most live closer to the equator, and are therefore darker skinned. They have been too easily ignored by light-skinned northern cultures. We see that now with the response to Syrian refugees, whose home country began to fall apart due to severe drought long before overt military action began against

Bashar al-Assad's regime and ISIS.

We also see the same blindness in western response to world-record typhoons Bopha, Haiyan, Hagupit, Koppu hitting the Philippines year after year; cyclone Pam nearly wiping away Vanuatu this past March; and the combination of severe drought and catastrophic flooding affecting Chennai, India even now. There is little if any news coverage here in the U.S., and a nominal amount in the U.K. and EU, as if Asians and Pacific Islanders don't even exist though they number in the billions. We ignore our role in exporting not only manufacturing jobs but associated air pollution to India and China.

Ten Billion would have been more effective holding a mirror up to the pale faces of northern climes, forcing them to see they, too, are affected. Whites fled both New Orleans and the Gulf Coast ahead of hurricanes like Katrina. They fled the coast of New Jersey and New York after Hurricane Sandy – some who stayed and returned to the affected area are still dealing with post-storm damage years later. There will be more internal climate refugees again whenever the next Category 4 or 5 hurricane hits U.S.

And there will be refugees from drought, when the need for water in states like California finally exceeds the ability of other states to sell and ship enough to meet the shortfall. We are not prepared to deal with this generation's version of the Okies fleeing a new Dust Bowl.

Until the west – especially the U.S. based on its consumption habits and political reach – realizes its own pale skin is invested in these crises, it may continue to look the other way while making idle greenwashed gestures like COP21 in Paris this week.

I am on the fence about Emmott's understatement about his own background in this film. If he had been more explicit about his role as a scientist, would the public take his plea in *Ten Billion* more seriously?

It's important to note this film may be part of a growing trend – scientists bypassing the suffocation of politicized corporate media, in order to reach the public.

We've seen this recently with the op-ed by NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory/Caltech senior water scientist Professor Jay Famiglietti, warning California only had one year of water left in its reservoirs. Famiglietti didn't wait for a report issued from either NASA or academia to filter its way into the stultifying news reporting process. He cut out the middle men and wrote an op-ed for the Los Angeles Times to convey urgency and effect immediate action.

Some will criticize this film as expository and hortatory, failing to provide solutions to the crises we've created. This is not that film. This is not meant to guide us toward help, when so many other scientists have already told us for decades what is wrong and what action we must take to minimize the threat to our planet and ourselves.

This film is meant to be a much-needed kick in the ass, to propel us to action appropriate to a cataclysmic, extinction-level event.

Because as Emmott says, in concise terms familiar to civilians and scientists alike, we're fucked if do not take immediate, appropriate action.

You can join Professor Emmott for a @reddit AMA TODAY Friday 04-DEC-2015 at 4:00 pm (UK) / 11:00 am EST. Emmott also has an op-ed today in The Guardian.