

WE HAVE TO BUILD THE FUTURE OUT OF THE PAST

We must give love to those whom the gods put in our paths. I am agnostic about who or what you call the gods. I am fundamental about love, and that love is truth.

WHAT JACKIE WALLACE SAID, AND LESS IMPORTANT SUPER BOWL 52 TRASH TALK

On Super Bowl Eve, two stories seem prime: The first is about former 3X Super Bowl player and NFL star Jackie Wallace, a story of the difficulty of recovery and redemption, and Will Bunch's story of the heartwarming good of the Eagles.

THE POLITICAL GIFT ECONOMY

How do people hide corruption from themselves?

A DECADE OF TRASH

Basketball, whether pro or college, does not really start until the first of the year. College football, sand the Army?Navy game – Go Navy! – is done until bowl season really starts, baseball and F1 are off and, so, we are left with the NFL.

And a retrospective of Trash Talk over the last decade. So, I will, once again, make the ask. There are many modalities, but the overall effort needs you and your support:

For years, we've done this content ad free, relying on your donations and all of us doing free work to supply the things you read here. We have a love for what American democracy ought represent, and spill that love out in real time here. Hopefully that is valuable to you. But it takes real dollars, rubles, shekels and bit coin to keep this site alive. You have no idea what the physical costs are, and George Soros has never sent that check.

So, please, we almost never make an ask, but we are now, if you can, help us out: Support Emptywheel

Okay, that being said, let us take a look back at a decade of Trash Talk. May or may not be in any particular order:

ITALIAN GRAND PRIX 1961-2011: MONZA, DEATH OF VON TRIPS & A YANKEE CHAMPION

This one is my favorite in a bittersweet way. Phil Hill was a friend, and frankly, a bit of a mentor in my life. He enjoyed a large life as a world champion in Formula One and at Le Mans, and an even bigger one as a husband, father and restorer of magnificent antique cars.

ZENYATTA! AN LA WOMAN RUNS FOR THE ROSES & HISTORY

I was around, even if young, when Secretariat blowup the Triple Crown. There has never been a horse like that to this date. Never. But there was a filly who was pretty much the equivalent...Zenyatta. There have been great female horses, but none like Zenyatta. Our own Roving Reporter, Rosalind, went to cover Zenyatta's historic run at the Lady Secret's Stakes at Hollywood Park. It was magnificent.

WAVELAND AND THE NORTH SIDE, SWEET HOME CHICAGO

The lovable loser Cubbies won the World Series. And Obama joined Mick Jagger, BB King and Buddy Guy for Sweet Home Chicago. It really doesn't get any better than that.

SUPER BOWL 43 TRASH TALK: THE RED & THE BLACK

Okay, it is likely the only time the Arizona Cardinals will ever sniff the Super Bowl. And even with Kurt Warner and Larry Fitzgerald ripping it up, Pittsburgh won. Barely, but a win is a win, and a loss is a loss. Great BOC music though.

WITH A NECK LIKE A JOCKEY'S BOLLOCKS TRASH TALK

Sorry, I just love the title to this one. And you get to see me wearing a cheesehead!

ESPN IS GUTLESS, CHRIS MORTENSON HAS TINY DEFLATED BALLS AND OTHER DEFLATEGATE TRASH TALK

Like John McCain, I feel bad that Chris Mortenson is now in compromised health. But he has never atoned for the things he has done. In this case, he almost single handedly started "Deflategate" with a completely false report, and has never had the decency to admit his false reportage.

BACON, BOOBS & A BLOWJOB: ALL STAR TRASH TALK

I am sorry. I feel bad. But the title was just too good.

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE BO MERLOT EMPIRE

Charles Woodson is not walking through that door again. My favorite football memory ever is ASU

trouncing the Wolverweenies in the Rose Bowl. I was there, and was a glorious day what with the pounding of both Jim Harbaugh and Bo Schemberhler. Also, the great Mose Allison supplies some music.

SUPER BOWL SEX TRAFFICKING TRASH TALK

The hype and bullshit around an actual Super Bowl coming to your town is bonkers. I've been through three of them. But there is an underside to it all too.

THE SHAME OF FORMULA ONE IN BAHRAIN

This was a short post. I did not say nearly enough about the state of human rights in the Middle East. But I did try to make a point that F1 should not foster abusive nation states that refuse to respect such rights. One day, I will come back to this.

The things we have done is this weekend's music. If you ever get a chance to see The Killers, go. Do it. I have seen most of the big bands live at one time or another, and The Killers are very far up on the ladder. There is also a bit of link rot in some of the above posts. I fixed some of it, but not all.

As the Killers intone, you gotta hold on. Irrespective of where you are geographically or mentally in life. Thank you for participation, and thank you for support.

TEN YEARS AFTER: A DECADE AT EMPTYWHEEL


It is no secret by now that this blog is celebrating its ten year anniversary. You have seen the posts from Marcy, Jim, Ed and Rayne going throughout the history. This will be my

retrospective. But, first, I want to make the ask.

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Okay, with that out of the way, here are some of my key posts over the last decade. It may be ten, it may be more. Whatever it is, there will be soooo many that I wish I had the opportunity to revisit, but time is precious. From the top music:



The world's goin' crazy and
Nobody gives a damn anymore.
And they're breakin' off relationships
and
Leavin' on sailin' ships for far and
distant shores.
The old world's fadin'.
Now it seems so far away.
Well, I'm not goin' anywhere.
There's so much that we can share.
I'm your brother.

Before we start, I would like to take a moment to say thanks any and all who read and reside here. Agree, disagree, whatever...thank you. This blog has, from the start, been a community. That is because of all of you, and all who silently support us. Thanks, it is everything.

Alright, off we go in no apparent order of significance (actually probably tracks better chronologically, though can't guarantee that)...

DON'T CRY FOR THE TELCOS – BUSH & CHENEY ARE THE ONLY ONES THAT ARE DYING FOR IMMUNITY

A very early post, and one I still strongly stand by. The discourse on “immunity” for communications providers was completely dishonest. If you thought their butts were on the line instead of the government's, you were not paying attention to how things go with such interactions.

OBAMA KILLED THE JOHNSEN NOMINATION, NOT BEN NELSON NOR THE GOP

Dawn Johnsen is wonderful; she is the antithesis of what you see today in the DOJ. And I think it is very easy to say that some of the history of the Obama Administration, in retrospect, might be different in a positive way had Mr. Obama hewed to the initial principles, positions, and nominees like Dawn Johnsen that he ran on. Suffice it to say, the votes were there, it was Obama himself that blocked Dawn Johnsen.

ON THE PASSING OF DAVID MARGOLIS

This is a stand in for all of the David Margolis reportage here. There is a lot, from both me and Marcy. Margolis was a “career” man at the DOJ who, arguably, had bigger long term impact than most well known AG's. A complex, and conflicted man now in history. Look for the link to the Roach Motel Margolis created. I first wrote about that in 2010 as to the inherent conflict of interest between the DOJ Office of Professional Responsibility and David Margolis.

FORMER BUSH SPECIAL COUNSEL SCOTT BLOCH BULLIES JOURNALISTS AND THREATENS 1ST AMEND SPEECH BEFORE CRIMINAL SENTENCING

Scott Bloch was the poster boy both of the imperiousness of the Bush Administration and the fecklessness of Congress. He was a corrupt jackass in charge of, supposedly, supporting whistleblowers in government. He was not just the antithesis of that, but a precursor of the quality of appointees in the Trump Administration....The opposite of what government

appointees are supposed to do in office.

A PRIMER ON WHY SCHUELKE REPORT OF DOJ MISCONDUCT (IN TED STEVENS CASE) IS IMPORTANT

I don't know any other way to say it...the prosecution of Alaska Senator Ted Stevens was a disgrace. Sure you can say what you didn't like about Stevens' politics, but the due process free and prosecutorial depraved attack on him was abominable. Ted may have been a joke because of his "toobz" comment, but the man deserved better from the American justice system. And if it can happen to Stevens, guess how easily it occurs out in the states and streets every day.

JOHN MCCAIN THE NARCISSISTIC CARPETBAGGER

There were several posts I wrote on McCain during the 2008 election, most of them are linked in this one, but due to link rot from the demise of Firedoglake, here is another. I had mixed feelings about including this because of McCain's failing health. Love or hate him, and I have done both, he is a true American hero. But, as a native Arizonan, I will never forget the blunderbuss way he barged into Arizona and bullied some of our greatest statesmen.

AARON SWARTZ, PLEA LEVERAGING & THE BORDENKIRCHER PROBLEM

This was a tough post to write. I did it on a plane to San Jose where I knew I would be meeting with one of Aaron's attorneys who was appearing on a panel with Marcy. I knew he, a lot of other attorneys, including First Amendment and criminal specialists, and, most importantly, Aaron's family, would see it. I think I got it right, and so I have been told. Irrespective, the pernicious effect of the late 70's Supreme Court case of *Bordenkircher v. Hayes* still maintains, and is a blight on criminal justice application.

YES, RAY RICE'S DIVERSION ADJUDICATION WAS APPROPRIATE

Caught a lot of flak for this, but it was

unquestionably true from every one to the decades of actual practice of law I have. It was right then, and it is right now. Ray Rice has done, and been, everything that made him the perfect candidate for diversion that he clearly was, whether a well known athlete or not. Sometimes the aggressive press and aggrieved at a distance public needs to let professionals in the criminal justice system do what they know. Sometimes, the system is just bad. But this time it worked perfectly, as I predicted it would.

TRUMP'S BELATED JONES ACT WAIVER FOR PUERTO RICO IS A SHAM, HERE'S WHY

I wanted to include something contemporary. This post was drafted almost immediately upon Trump's dubious announcement. It turned out to be perfectly true. In every regard. And, yet, Puerto Rico is still dying and have never been supplied right given their true disaster. They are American citizens. We owed, and still owe, them so much better.

MOURNING THE LOSS OF A GIANT RECENTLY PASSED

It is far too rare that we get to muse about the more common things here, so I want to include a favorite. And one that seemed to strike home with a lot of you. Granpa Pricky. Our former 25 foot tall saguaro cactus that died with his boots on, and blocking the entire street. Dude went out with a bang! Seriously though, saguaros are truly magnificent. We still have three others, but none like Grandpa. Trust me, read the story of a mighty saguaro, you will like it.

WHY THE DOJ CAN'T PROSECUTE BANKSTERS: MAP OF CLEMENS INVESTIGATION

This was seriously insane. If you have not seen the chart on what was done by DOJ to go after Roger Clemens while they were ignoring the financial criminals ruining the world, you really need to see it.

PAT TILLMAN WAS A MAN, NOT JUST A SYMBOL

This still hurts. There is so much to say, but

it was said in the post. Please read that. He was a bit of a friend, and the world would be better if Pat were still here. He was so much more than the media cut out of him.

Okay, that is pretty much it. It has been strange going back over an entire decade of ups and downs in this wonderful world. Both cathartic, and troubling given the current status. What were once governmental vices are indeed now habits. Or worse. So I leave you, as we entered, with a song from, appropriately, Ten Years After, because that is where we are!

I'd love to change the world
But I don't know what to do
So I'll leave it up to you.

That is not just you, it is all of us. It is an antiquated song from a different time, but the feeling of a country lost I knew then is back now. Thank you, and thank you for your support.

THE TRUMP TRASH TALKING OF PUERTO RICO

This spot in our week here at Emptywheel is supposed to be a set aside for light hearted banter on sports, especially football and Formula One. That is what we have done since our beginning a decade ago. But I just cannot summon the enthusiasm for that right now.

DID PRESIDENT TRUMP VIOLATE FEDERAL LAW WITH HIS ALABAMA RANT?

I wrote yesterday about the racial, social and football implications of Trump's rant in the history and home of George Wallace.

But a new, and by all appearances excellent, commenter on that post noted this:

"It occurs to me that his tweets are at least arguably in violation of 18 U.S. Code § 227. That section prohibits the POTUS (among others), from "attempting to influence or interfere" in a private company's labor matter, to urge a "political" firing. This is especially true where the basis for the POTUS's urging of the firing of such a private company employee (union covered, collective bargaining agreement governed) – is (as here) centered on protected political first amendment expression."

So, is that right? Well, it is a LOT closer call than most would dismissively think. Let's look at the language of the relevant statute, 18 USC §277:

18 U.S. Code § 227 – Wrongfully influencing a private entity's employment decisions by a Member of Congress or an officer or employee of the legislative or executive branch:

(a) Whoever, being a covered government person, with the intent to influence, solely on the basis of partisan political affiliation, an employment decision or employment practice of any private entity–

(1) takes or withholds, or offers or threatens to take or withhold, an official act, or
(2) influences, or offers or threatens to influence, the official act of another,
shall be fined under this title or imprisoned for not more than 15 years, or both, and may be disqualified from holding any office of honor, trust, or profit under the United States.

(b) In this section, the term “covered government person” means—

(1) a Senator or Representative in, or a Delegate or Resident Commissioner to, the Congress;
(2) an employee of either House of Congress; or
(3) the President, Vice President, an employee of the United States Postal Service or the Postal Regulatory Commission, or any other executive branch employee (as such term is defined under section 2105 of title 5, United States Code).

Read the statute. It is a lot closer call than you think. Will Trump’s own Department of Justice pursue this? No, no chance, nor probably should it be. Is it a viable question, and one that ought be discussed in the public and media, yes, absolutely.

As sports law “experts” would say, let’s break it down. There are elements to a crime. Trump is unequivocally a “covered person” within the ambit of the statute. Also unequivocal is the fact that his words in Alabama were meant to influence “an employment decision or employment practice of any private entity”, in this case, the National Football League.

The problem lies in section (a)(1) of the relevant statute, which requires:

takes or withholds, or offers or threatens to take or withhold, an

It is easy to see and admit that Trump would do just that in a heartbeat. But Trump did not do that per se in his Alabama speech.

No. That element cannot be met by Donald J. Trump's Alabama Song of hate. So, no, there is no exposure to 18 USC §227.

It is a great thought and question though.

And it is a perfect example of the precipice of racism, bigotry and ignorance on which the political discussion in the United States, and our Article II Executive Branch, courtesy of President Trump, nows perilously treads nearly every day.

The events and actions in and from the NFL today, tomorrow, and in the next few weeks pale in comparison. They are a symbol and a voice. But it is so much more and bigger than that.

WHEN THE PRESIDENT HATES A RACE AND TALKS RACIST TRASH

President Donald J. Trump is a racist bigot. Jemele Hill was right on that one, not that sane people had not already realized it long ago, and well before his election. Take his ignorant position on the Central Park Five case, just as a for instance. Then add on how he was sued decades ago for discriminating against blacks in housing. Throw in a thousand other tell tale points and you have a picture of a self entitled candy assed rich New York racist. That is just who he is. It has always been there for inquiring minds to see if they so desired.

Now the latest pure and unadulterated racism

from the now President of the United States. Last night in Alabama, Trump let loose a rambling self centered screed of a speech that would make George Wallace cringe. Here is a sample:

"Wouldn't you like to see one of these owners, when somebody disrespects our flag, to say, 'Get that son of a bitch off the field right now, out, he's fired. He's fired!'"

He then went on to state that any player so exercising free speech should be "fired" and unemployable at their career job. From Michael David Smith at PFT:

Trump said an NFL owner who releases a player would instantly gain broad support across America.

"Some owner's gonna do that. He's gonna say, 'That guy that disrespects our flag? He's fired. And that owner . . . they'll be the most popular person in this country. Because that's total disrespect of our heritage. That's total disrespect of everything we stand for,'" Trump said.

Trump added that he believes fans should walk out if players don't stand for the anthem. "If you see it, even if it's one player," Trump said, "Leave the stadium."

Trump also argued that if they do this to boycott the NFL and personal free speech, they would be supporting him and his position.

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l Bennett and Malcolm Jenkins, prominent NFL players who have had the audacity to be free thinking humans and exercise the protected free speech our Bill of Rights is led by and that generations of American patriots fought and died to preserve. Donald Trump shits on every ounce of that every time he goes on one of his little pointed and racist rants. And boy did he shit on it last night in Alabama. You'd almost think Trump is aligned with the neo-Nazi white supremacists with torches in Charlottesville that he praised as "fine people" instead of the full diversity of American citizens. Including, you know, black people.

Was Trump done? Of course not. He then cravenly went on to scold the NFL for being soft because of their (still lame and ineffective) concern about CTE degenerative brain disease:

"When the ratings are down massively, massively. The NFL ratings are down massively. Now the number one reason happens to be that they like watching what's happening...with yours truly. They like what's happening.

Because you know if they hit too hard...Fifteen yards! Throw him out of the game! they hd that last week. I watched for a couple of minutes. Two guys, just really, beautiful tackle. Boom, fifteen yards!

The referee gets on television, his wife is sitting at home, she's so proud of him. They're ruining the game! That's what they want to do. They want to hit. They want to hit! It is hurting the game!"

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workplace safety issues. Especially when the most recent studies found CTE degeneration in 99% of the brains from NFL players they have examined. And when the NFL was just slapped with a complaint on Aaron Hernandez that exhibited that even a relative young player displayed “a raisin-like brain of a 70-year-old even though he was 27”. Simply craven, bigoted and outrageous.

It is the the stuff of a narcissistic self entitled bigot plantation slave owner. Trump literally thinks he is not only the the better, but genetically superior to other humans, including the constituents he works for. Including people he thinks are owned as slaves by the NFL and other terrorized employees.

When Trump instructs NFL owners to fire people that disagree with his own petty world view, he thinks they are plantation owners such as he sees himself with the rest of humanity. Trump makes “the best deals” but cannot see, nor appreciate, the NFL collective bargaining agreement (CBA), nor does he respect that deal for squat if employees thereunder happen to annoy the fat ass boy king and god.

Apparently Trump thinks the illustrious group of NFL owner oligarchs are his bitches too. As Don Van Natta noted, “Bob Kraft, Jerry Jones, Stan Kroenke, Daniel Snyder, Shahid Khan, Woody Johnson & Bob McNair each gave \$1M to Trump”. That is nearly one quarter of the NFL owners. What are they rewarded with by their benefactor

Trump? A call for boycott of their business interests unless they enforce an unconscionable suppression of political free speech he disagrees with.

This may “only be sports”, but this is one of the more stunningly outrageous and un-American symbols of the cancer the Trump Presidency really is. And what a demented, sick and small man Trump really is.

Did Trump stop with that stunning pettiness and bigotry? No, of course not. He woke up and decided to be the charlatan of humanity he really is, and decided to lash out at another icon of sports. Steph Curry. And more:



Well that is brilliant Art of the Squeal Like a Pig Don.

So, lets see, who has Donald Trump lashed out at exclusively in the last 24 hours? Ryan Lizza hit it on the head:

Trump has now attacked Jemele Hill, Colin Kaepernick, & Stephen Curry. All have something in common but I can't quite put my finger on it.

Ryan was being sarcastic about the putting a finger on it. And, again, he was completely correct in his observation. I wonder what Trump would say about a golden white boy who turned down a White House invitation"? Oh, wait....

The face of the New England Patriots, Tom Brady, did not attend Wednesday's

White House ceremony with his teammates due to “personal family matters” – but the show went on without the star quarterback.

Brady’s decision not to visit the White House comes on the same day former teammate and convicted murderer Aaron Hernandez was found dead after an apparent suicide in his prison cell.

Yes, a pure as white can be Tom Brady gets no bad mouth at all from our racist bigot President, but be a black person in sports, whether athletes like Colin Kaepernick and Michael Bennett, or sports journalist like Jemele Hill, and he will try to deprive you and your family of the essential income your professional career provides.

This is where we are in America in the Age of Trumpism. If you are a white nationalist fat ass racist bigot, your President thinks you are “fine folk”. If you are an intelligent black, brown, gay or other, even trying to serve your country’s military, your President, Trump The Genetically Magnificent, will attack you and your family’s very source of income, and well being, mercilessly.

It is the shame of modern America.

I’m sorry, I’ve no stomach for the actual games this weekend at this point. We can all discuss that in comments, but not here. Not now. Not after this.

MCCAIN’S BRAIN VERSUS AMERICAN

LIVES AND HEALTHCARE

There is no joy here in the Mudville that is Arizona. John McCain may have been somebody that natives like me disfavored from the start because of his hubristic usurpation of a true legend and son of Arizona, John Rhodes, but no one here wanted this.

Not now. Not ever.

So the "press" such as they may be, can run all their blathering hagiographies. Go run with that. It's what you do, isn't it?

But, for now, thankfully, McCain is alive and well. I am thankful for that.

And, I hope, at this critical juncture in life, John McCain finds it within himself to realize that the healthcare that has kept him alive, and diagnosed his problems, should NOT be limited to Congresspeople and those that married into money. We all deserve the benefit of what McCain has realized.

John McCain has an opportunity to stand up now for those that have none of his storied display of heroism, nor the benefit of his position. His story, because Mr. McCain was born into military care and then segued into other money and entitlement that does not transfer to most of us. For the common citizens he has always talked about, yet curiously abandoned, when it counted in close measures on the Senate floor, where has John McCain been? Absent, that is where.

The man who lived under the press moniker "Maverick" can ride into the famous sunset of his adopted state by helping real people instead of going out with the McConnell Republicans determined to screw the populous. Who will John McCain be?

Who will John McCain be? The elusive and ethereal "Maverick" he has always painted himself as being? Or the reliable vote for craven Republican policies that devastate real

citizens? Arizona, indeed America itself, deserves the McCain always portrayed and lionized in his numerous campaigns. Not the guy who always defaulted to the GOP sick and craven core.

Will John McCain have the guts and glory he is famous for, and go out fighting for the common American and their human rights to healthcare and financial and educational stability? The exact things McCain has fatuously blabbered about and never really supported in Congress? Or will he do better?

Who are you truly John McCain? A dying country, in the age of Trump, wants to know.

You have a chance to now be the man you always painted yourself to be. For the sake of this country, please be that man.

STAMPED FROM THE BEGINNING BY IBRAM KENDI

I'm on the road, which is great for reading, but not so much for writing. I just finished Ibram X. Kendi's *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*. It won the National Book Award for 2016. The citation reads:

Stamped from the Beginning turns our ideas of the term "racism" upside-down. Ibram X. Kendi writes as a thoughtful cultural historian, aware that he is challenging deeply held, often progressive assumptions. Using a masterful voyage through the history of U.S. political rhetoric, beginning with Cotton Mather and ending with hip-hop, he argues that even the most fervent

anti-racists have been infected with that resilient virus. With his learning, he dares us to find a cure.

I always assumed that racist ideas arise from ignorance and hatred, or tribalism or some other source in individuals. Kendi says that first there was slavery, and then there were people who created justifications for slavery. When slavery was abolished the racist ideas persisted. There were plenty of people who benefited from using those racist ideas to exploit newly freed people for cheap labor. The ideas also proved useful in controlling the behavior of poor white people. There were plenty of people ready and willing to provide new versions of the old racist ideas, and many new ones.

Some of those people have names. Aristotle, for example, justified enslaving Caucasians from the north because the cold temperatures made them slow, stupid and ugly, and enslaving Africans because the hot temperature made them burnt and slow-witted, unlike the perfect Greeks; therefore slavery was justified. Then there was Gomes Eanes de Zuzara, who wrote the first book about African slavery in 1452, explaining that the Africans were barbarians who needed to be saved into the right religion and civilized, and slavery was therefore a good thing. Others are nameless, the preachers, newspaper writers, authors, speakers, politicians and others who used their authority to spread poisonous ideas. The book is an intellectual and cultural history of anti-intellectual ideas and culture. Kendi describes a number of racist ideas and follows their twists and turns and the usually unavailing efforts to defeat them across the centuries in the US. In one chilling aside, he shows how these ideas formed the basis of anti-Semitic laws and theory in Nazi Germany. This is the subject of a new book, *Hitler's American Model*, reviewed here by Jeff Guo.

If racist ideas could be stomped out by facts and reason, the results of the study of the

human genome should have done the trick. Craig Venter, who led the project, said that his work showed that it is not possible to tell the "race" of a person by looking at the genome. The genes of humans are 99.9% the same. That didn't stop the racists though: they announced that the different .1% was obviously the source of race and the superiority of white people, and they hired people to prove it. The idea of genetic differences cannot be eradicated.

The book forced me to think about how racist ideas are buried deep in my mind; about how African-Americans have been affected by and infected with racist ideas about themselves; about the relation between racism and other forms of prejudice; about the way these prejudices are used to create anger and hostility in our society; and much more. This wide range of ideas gives a good picture of the depth of Kendi's work.

The idea that racist policy comes before the justification for racist policy is one thread that runs throughout the book. As Kendi shows, slavery came first, then the justifications for slavery. Race-based policies were in place, then came the justifications for race-based policies. This is the way many ideas we see in the world today came into existence. In economics, for example, trickle-down economics, an idea with roots in the 1890s, came back into common usage in the 1980s just in time to justify Reagan's enormous tax cuts for the rich. It didn't matter that it was laughably silly; it did its job of providing cover for people who benefited from the policy. Paul Krugman calls economic ideas like trickle-down zombie ideas, dead but on the move, eating brains. After reading Kendi's book, I now think of racist ideas as zombie ideas, wholly false and known to be false, utterly unsupported by evidence and still eating brains.

I feel like I've spent my life unlearning ideas I somehow picked up along the way. Some of those ideas were deeply wrong, some stupid, and some irrelevant. Maybe there are billions and

billions of galaxies, but what difference does that make in my life as compared with the idea that there are billions of stars as I first learned? There are other ideas that are wrong, and I acted on them and maybe hurt other people, and I wish I never had those wrong ideas or done those things.

Either way, carrying around wrong ideas is intrinsically bad. But how do I know which ideas are wrong, especially in areas in which I have no training or expertise? Let's make that concrete with one of Kendi's examples. Suppose in the mid-1860s I read Charles Darwin's *On The Origin of Species*, and then read Herbert Spencer, who taught that human society evolves in the same way as fauna and flora. This led him and others to formulate what we now call Social Darwinism, another zombie idea used to justify racism. It led people to believe that white people were on top because they were the fittest, and Africans were at the bottom of society because they lost the battle; some even argued that the African population would die out completely in short order.

I ask myself if I would have had the strength of mind to reject Spencer and the racist implications of his misbegotten theory. Maybe I would have, but I don't know. And that's a problem. Today there are people who are paid to invent new justifications for racism, and their tactics are more and more sophisticated. It's up to all of us to recognize them as the vicious lies they are, and try to stamp them out as they emerge. I just hope Kendi doesn't have to add new chapters to his book to cover a new set of racist lies.