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زبانهای اروپایی

by JEFFREY ST. CLAIR
23.09.2019

Roaming Charges: Pompeo and Circumstance



Storefront mannikin, Astoria, Oregon. Photo: Jeffrey St. Clair.

+ The Saudis want to “fight the Iranians to the last American.”

— Secretary of Defense Bob Gates, February 2010

+ Who needs John Bolton, when you’ve got Pompeo Maximus declaring the attack on the Abqaiq refineries in Saudi Arabia: “An act of war.”

+ By Pompeo’s logic, the death of every Yemeni kid from cholera was “sponsored” by the USA...

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+ As we await our real commander-in-chief MBS's decision on whether to go to war against Iran, it may be worth reminding people that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia owns the entire 45th floor of Trump World Tower...

+ Pompeo, Tuesday: "The president has made very clear he is prepared to meet with no preconditions."

Trump, Sunday: "The Fake News is saying that I am willing to meet with Iran, 'No Conditions.' That is an incorrect statement (as usual!)."

+ Mike Pompeo: "I promise you as Secretary of State, I will do my best to be your senior diplomat and stay true to my Christian values every single day." (How many drone strikes a day are consistent with Christian values?)

+ The rotten apple doesn't fall far from the poisonous tree: Liz Cheney calls for "proportional military response" against Iran for the drone strike on Saudi oil facilities.

+ Seeing Liz Cheney salivating for war on Iran is not surprising. But it does show the superior parenting skills of the Nixons, Fords, Carters and Reagans, none of whose offspring have entered politics.

+ Erich Boehm in Reason: "A world in which John Bolton says mean things about the president during lunch is far safer than a world in which John Bolton speaks to the president over lunch."

+ The NYTs Michael Crowley on the differences between Iraq and Iran: "Iraq, at least, was a country we were able to defeat and occupy fairly quickly." (And, according to the Times' social media editors, having penises thrust in your face at Yale parties might be considered harmless fun...)



+ It's official. By deploying troops and weapons to Saudi Arabia, Trump's doing more to protect Aramco's oil fields, than children in US schools...

But as The Clash say:

It's up to you, not to heed the call up

I don't want to die

It's up to you, not to hear the call up

I don't want to kill

+ The last time the US based troops in Saudi Arabia, it became the basis for Osama Bin Laden's 1996 fatwah, "Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places," where he vowed to remove them with "a rain of bullets."

+ With the human landfill of scandal known as Joe Biden, it seems implausible that Trump would need to bribe the Ukrainians to dig up dirt on Biden's son, Hunter. But Trump plays by the Roy Cohn Rules, so the implausible is always possible, if not probable.

+ Eric Columbus: "The Ukraine bribes really knock me out, they leave the West behind."

+ Q. Surely, this will be the scandal that breaks Trump's back?

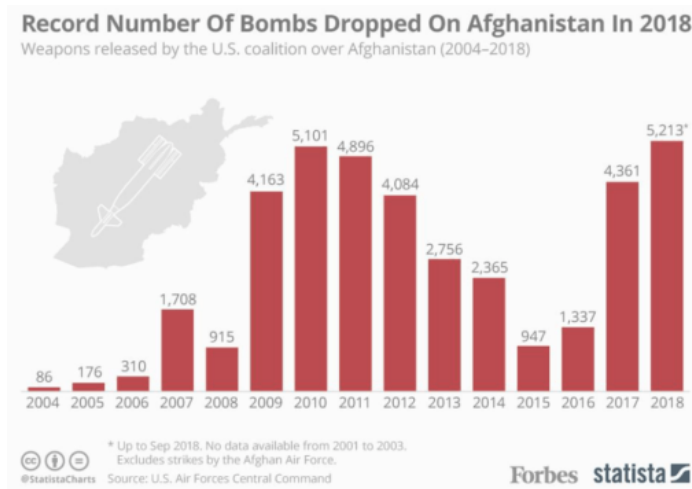
A. What if Trump has no back?

+ Rudy Giuliani is Trump's go-to guy for the limited, brain-modified hang out..

+ If Sanders, Warren and/or that Andrew Yang play the Ukraine scandal right they could knock off both Biden and Trump.

+ Another “smart weapon” massacre in Afghanistan this where a US drone strike killed 30 civilians working on a pine nut farm. And you wonder why they hate us? I’ll wager Trump got more crap for inviting (and then cancelling) the Taliban to Camp David for peace talks, than the Pentagon will ever get in the US press for this war crime.

+ Trump said this week that when he first took office Gen. Mad Dog Mattis came to him and said, “Sir, we’re very low on ammunition.” Mattis advised Trump to delay military action (against a country Trump didn’t name) because of the ammunition shortage. This Trump tale is entirely plausible given the tonnage of bombs Obama dropped every day during his tenure in office. Of course, it didn’t take Trump and Mattis long to catch up and surpass Obama...



+ Trump: “Our nuclear was getting very tired when I got in. Now it’s in tippy-top shape. Tippy top.”

+ Funny, I don’t feel any safer...

+ According to a war game simulation from Princeton, if a nuclear war broke out between the US and the Russian Federation there would likely be more than 90 million casualties within the first five hours, 34 million deaths and 57.4 million injuries.

+ Bernie Sanders: “If you can’t afford to take care of your veterans, then don’t go to war.”

+ If you don’t want to create maimed veterans, widows of veterans, orphans of veterans or turn young people into war criminals, then don’t go to war.

+ In what may come as a relief to a nation held hostage, Trump named the State Department's chief hostage negotiator, Robert O'Brien, as his National Security Advisor, replacing John Bolton. Reportedly, Trump liked that Robert O'Brien was prolix in his praise for the president. Trump said: "Robert O'Brien said, 'Trump is the greatest hostage negotiator in history.' He happens to be right." He named O'Brien as his national security adviser a day later. *Quid pro fellatio*.

+ As Sam Husseini points out, Trump's new National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien went to university in apartheid South Africa in 1987, as Rotary Foundation Scholar, not to protest the racist regime but to learn Afrikaans.

In doing so, O'Brien violated the international academic boycott of South Africa. The ANC called for an academic boycott of SA in 1958. Nearly 500 British academics called for a boycott in 1965. The UN passed a Resolution imposing a Cultural & Academic boycott of SA in 1980. The boycott was not lifted until 1990.

According to Patrick Bond, who teaches at the University of Durban, in 1987 the University of the Orange Free State would have been "a place that was probably whites-only for all effective purposes."

From O'Brien's Linked-In page...

Education



University of California, Berkeley - School of Law

JD · Law

1988 – 1991



University of California, Los Angeles

BA · Political Science, cum laude

1984 – 1988

Activities and Societies: Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity



University of the Free State

Political Science and Government

1987 – 1987

Activities and Societies: Rotary Foundation Scholar

+ Here's some classic DC dialogue worthy of Joseph Heller's Good as Gold...

Corey Lewandowski: The Mueller report was very clear. There was no collusion. There was no obstruction.

Alisyn Camerota: That’s not what the Mueller report said, Corey.

Corey: It absolutely says that...

Alisyn: ... Did you read the Mueller report?

Corey: No, I never did.

+ During his congressional hearing, Lewandowski got trapped in a lie by the Democrats’ staff counsel, Barry Berke (the only effective questioning of the day). His unrepentant response: “I have no obligation to be honest with the media.”

Lewandowski was, naturally, a paid commentator on ... CNN.

+ The war that Trump really wants to fight is the war against the poor.

+ Sister Helen Prejean: “‘Capital punishment’ means those without capital get the punishment.”

+ The largest employer in each state...

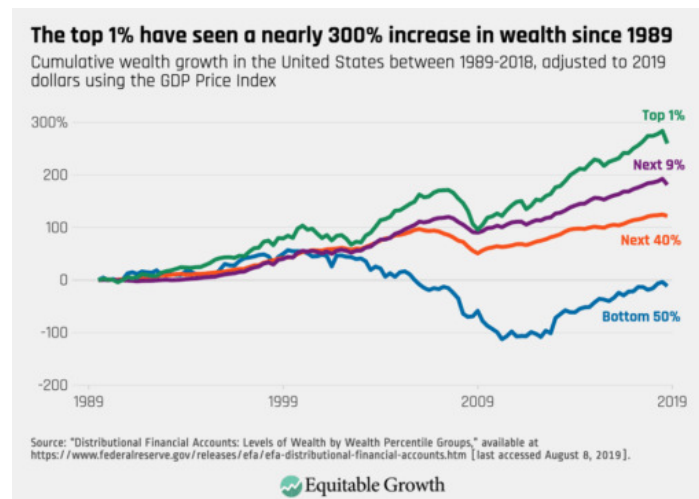


+ Trump says homeless people are living on “our best highways, our best streets, our best entrances to buildings,” where people pay “tremendous taxes” and desire “prestige.” The president claims that he’s spoken to tenants who are so frustrated by the homeless that “want to leave the country,” adding ominously “We’ll be doing something about it.”

+ Re: Trump and the homeless crisis: how many homes did Mnuchin foreclose on, how many families did Kushner evict from his tenements?

+ About the sanctity of that employer provided health insurance, which Biden keeps claiming is superior to Medicare-for-All....”GM is cutting off striking workers’ health care coverage effective today. The UAW will now pick up the bill for their members’ continued healthcare through COBRA ”

+ According to the Federal Reserve’s latest Distributional Financial Accounts reveal the massive concentration of wealth in the US with 10% of the population holding 70% of all of the nation’s wealth. The bottom 50% of wealth owners have seen no growth in net wealth since 1989, while the top 1% saw their wealth grow by almost 300% since 1989. And they wonder why “socialism” is becoming more popular with America’s youth...



+ In the latest case study of Bankruptcy Capitalism, Purdue Pharmaceuticals is trying to shell out \$34 million in bonuses to “certain employees.” as it flees wrongful death lawsuits and seeks the protection of a Chapter 11 filing in bankruptcy court.

+ Then there’s GM, which received \$104 million in tax rebates in 2018. They paid their CEO \$22 million, cut 15,000 jobs and made \$8 billion in profits, which they paid no federal income taxes on.

+ Congress has relinquished its principle power and obligation under the Constitution: to determine how the US government spends money. Now it’s only really interested how lobbyists and PACs spends money ... on them.

+ David Graeber: “The paradox of modern work: 1. Most people’s sense of dignity and self-worth is caught up in working for living; 2. Most people hate their jobs.”

+ How DiFi explains the homelessness crisis in California: “A lot of homeless people keep moving here.”

+ Kim Gordon, former NYer, former bassist for Sonic Youth, former wife of Thurston Moore, current resident of SoCal: “California is a place of death, a place people are drawn to because they don’t realize deep down they’re actually afraid of what they want.”

+ So HUD Secretary Ben Carson, a former brain surgeon, is very concerned that people can’t tell the difference between women and men any more and seems really freaked at the possibility of “big, hairy men” using the women’s bathroom. But aren’t those the same people who keep breaking down in tears at Trump rallies?

+ It seems like the Border Patrol is having a moral crisis, with more and more agents complaining that people “hate” them. It may seem like an obvious point, but apparently it can’t be repeated often enough: If you want to be liked, don’t join the SS...

+ Last year, Ivanka Trump used to her personal email to send hundreds of messages about government business.

+ Ivanka: “I got my moral compass from my father.”

+ Joe Biden, just another member in good standing of the Democratic National Klavern...

+ Biden is, of course, the living proof of his assertion that racism hasn’t been “relegated to history“...

+ The total collapse of Madame Prosecutor (she now trails Andrew Yang in her home state of California) is almost enough to restore one’s faith in the humanity of Democrats...almost.

+ Meanwhile, Bill DeBlasio is now polling at 0% in the New York Presidential primary...

2020 New York Democratic Primary:

Biden 22%

Warren 17%

Sanders 15%

Harris 4%

Buttigieg 3%

Klobuchar 1%

Gabbard 1%

Yang 1%

Booker 0%
O'Rourke 0%
Castro 0%
de Blasio 0%

@SienaResearch 9/8-12

+ Biden is the Lock 'Em Up candidate, who urged Reagan to incarcerate more and more people (mostly young black men)...

+ Eric Draitser: "That feeling that Bernie people are expressing is not fear of losing. It's not anxiety over a good campaign. It's not questioning their own commitment. It's the collective recognition that the ruling class has made its choice. And her name is Warren."

+ Is it any surprise that the party of the ruling class would select its favorite (or second favorite) as its candidate? The only real surprise is that Bernie dragged his troops through the charade one more time expecting a different result.

+ But where do they go? Bernie could have spent the last four years building an independent party or taking over the wreckage of the Greens. Instead, he spent it recruiting young progressives into the same party that had just drawn-and-quartered him.

+ If there's no alternative than the Democrats, then Sanders should admit it, drop all of the "socialist" pretense and stop whining about leaks and how he's been screwed over by arbitrary rules enforced by the party elites. This is it. You're stuck with it. The best was long ago. Sorry, kids, you're fucked. Best of luck, Gramps.

+ This is why Ralph Nader has always been the superior political leader. Ralph was never under the illusion that the Democratic Party could be "revolutionized" from within, especially when the "revolutionary" ends up supporting the ruling class' candidate in the end, as Bernie did

+ I learned everything I needed to know about the Democratic Party after the Jackson campaign in 1984. I guess some people have to relearn the same basic truths every four years. This willful suspension of disbelief is what keeps the party alive...to the extent it is alive.

+ Hillary, however, seems to have learned nothing.

+ Let's reset this, Hillary. You ran a terrible campaign. You had no plans. Your party rigged your nomination. You ran against the most unpopular candidate in history and still lost. Now get lost.

+ Still, by almost every standard Joe Biden is a worse candidate than Hillary Clinton: he's older, dumber and has a more tarnished record. His saving grace, as far as I can tell, is that Biden is so boring, so lacking in inspiration, that he can't even inspire people to hate him as they did HRC.

+ Apparently the Working Families Party thought so highly of the Democrats' "Super Delegate" system, they decided to use it in their own endorsement vote, which gave 50% of the vote to party leaders and 50% to the members and then, after endorsing Elizabeth Warren, refused to release a tally of the actual numbers. (In 2016, 87.5% of the WFP members voted for Bernie Sanders.)

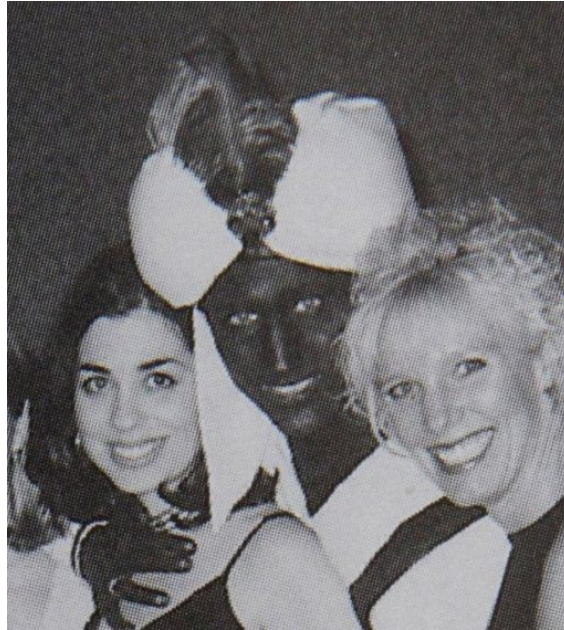
+ According to a new report by Sludge, West Virginia Senator Joe Manchin owns between \$1 million and \$5 million worth of non-public stock in his family coal business, Enersystems. Despite pressure from environmentalists, Senate minority leader, Chuck Schumer, made Manchin the ranking member of the committee, and Manchin did not divest his coal holdings.

+ But Manchin is far from alone in profiting off of fossil fuel holdings. Rep. Joe Kennedy just announced his intention to run against Sen. Ed Markey in next year's Democratic primary in Massachusetts. Markey, a long time environmental advocate, is one of the principal sponsors of the Green New Deal, a measure which will pose a significant threat to the stock portfolio of Kennedy, who owns nearly \$1.75 million in fossil stocks, including investments in oil and gas companies.

+ In a Trumpian maneuver, billionaire candidate Tom Steyer, who has pledged to divest from fossil fuels, says that confidentiality agreements bar him from disclosing between \$370 million and \$742 million in assets.

+ Liberal heartthrob Justin Trudeau dressed up in blackface on at least three different occasions. MSDNC's Andrea Mitchell, a fan of the Prime Minister of Tar Sands,

delicately described Trudeau as “applying skin darkening makeup.” But are they sure he didn’t just coat himself in crude oil?



+ If Trudeau manages to lose re-election to the ultra right-winger and homophobe Andrew Scheer, he could probably salvage his political career by running for governor of Virginia or Alabama.

+ Could Justin Trudeau be “Corn Pop“?

+ Hey, Trump, it looks like we’ve finally found your witch hunt, looking no further than your own Department of Education which is targeting universities like Duke and UNC for alleged “anti-Israel” bias.

+ If Netanyahu falls, who then will the Democrats blame for the crimes of the Israeli state?

+ Colt is suspending production of the AR-15 for the civilian market. But they’d save more lives if they ended production for the cop, military and paramilitary markets...

+ According to the libertarian Cato Institute, 16 countries enjoy a higher level of overall freedom than the United States, and most of them ban or severely restrict ownership of assault weapons.

+ Brothers in Arms, MSDNC's Chris Hayes and David Frum...



+ Speaking of revolting couplings, it's been reported that Stephen Miller is dating Katie Waldman, a former DHS spokeswoman under Kirstjen Nielsen, who Mike Pence just hired as his communications director. Of course, even Goebbels had his Magda, who was, by most accounts, even more vicious than he was...

+ Supreme Court justice Brett Kavanaugh agreed to talk to New York Times reporters Kate Kelly and Robin Pogrebin for their book, The Education of Brett Kavanaugh: an Investigation, on one condition: that they wrote that they *didn't* talk with him. The authors refused and walked away from the interview.

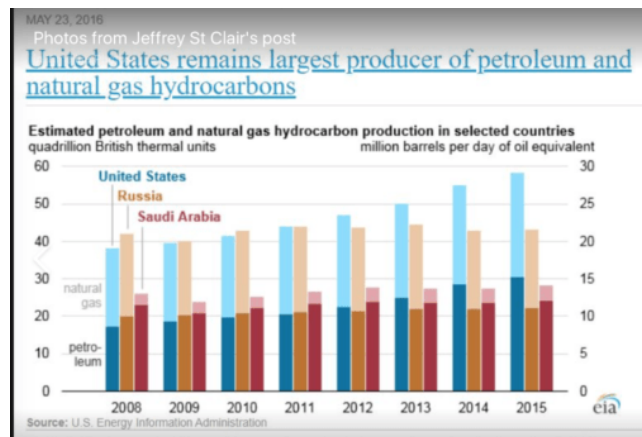
+ While we're on the subject of Kavanaugh: One in 16 women's first sexual experience (avg. age 15.5) in the US is being raped/forced to have sex; the average age for female's first voluntary sexual experience is 17.5.

+ Kavanaugh's survived for a reason. A major new study concludes that even if Democrats win the White House and Congress, the conservative justices on the Supreme Court are very likely to strike down most climate legislation.

+ The Chenchu people of India can recognize five different types of bees that produce five different types of honey: "We leave the larvae so it will recycle again; by looking at the way a bee flies we can know where the honey is."

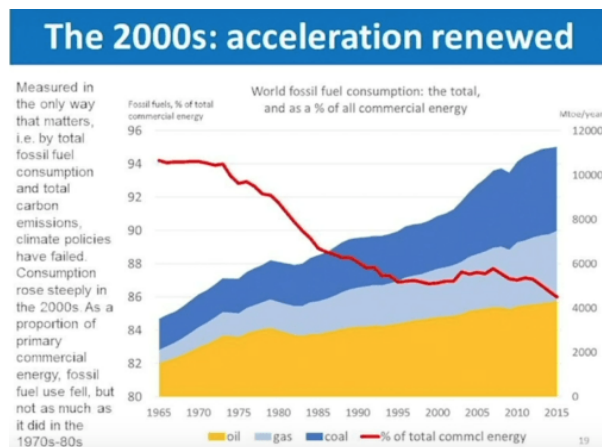
+ It's only a real strike if they forbid you to do it.

+ Trump’s repeated boast that he made the US the world’s top energy producer is false. It happened in 2012 under Obama, the Fracker-in-Chief.



+ Obama, the man who approved Deepwater Horizon, was palling around with climate heroine Greta Thuneberg this week before her testimony before the House of Representatives. Obama proclaimed the teenager “one of our planet’s greatest advocates,” saying she was “unafraid to push for real action.” Too bad Obama wasn’t, when he was in a position to do something about it.

+ Global fossil fuel consumption soared throughout the 2000s, spiking to ominous new heights during the Obama years.



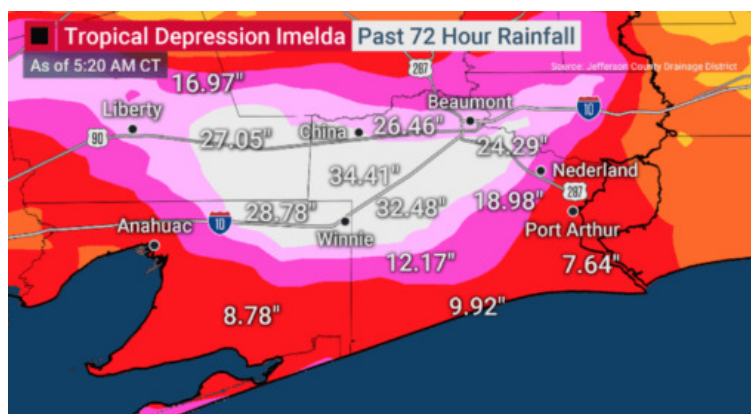
+ Here’s a map of all of the oil and gas leases on public lands that have sold for less than \$2 an acre.

+ The Earth’s Northern Hemisphere just experienced its hottest summer on record. The five hottest summers have all occurred in the last five years...

- + Global carbon emissions have grown 18-fold since 1900.
- + Silent spring, summer, fall and winter: “The number of birds in the United States and Canada has declined by 3 billion, or 29 percent, over the past half-century.”
- + It’s been said that the Pacific Northwest is defined by where the salmon go. How will we know where we live 20 YEARS from now when the chinook are gone?
- + A few weeks ago, the Portland Police shut down the Hawthorne Bridge to allow the neo-Nazi Proud Boys to goose-step through town unmolested. No such courtesy was extended to the kids marching in the Climate Strike today. As many as 20,000 of them passed over the bridge anyway...Go kids!



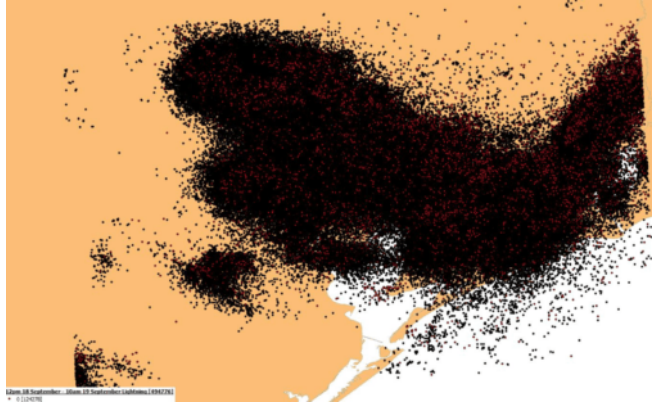
- + 34 inches of rain along the Gulf Coast of Texas in last 72 hours. Meanwhile, Trump is gleefully gutting California’s clean air and fuel efficiency standards...



- + Trump in New Mexico: “Cars have so much junk on them to save a tiny faction of gasoline. Energy-efficient cars are made out of papier mache and weigh about three

pounds. That's bad for crashes, because heavier is better. When somebody hits me, I want to be in as close to an army tank as possible." (Over to you, Ralph Nader.)

+ Nearly 500,000 lightning strikes hit the Houston area during TS Imelda...



+ Dr. Jeff Masters, meteorologist: "This near-record global warmth in 2019 is all the more remarkable since it is occurring during the minimum of the weakest solar cycle in 100+ years, and during a year when a strong El Niño has not been present"

+ The entire geophysical nature of Greenland's ice sheets are changing in ways that geologists have never seen before. First comes the melt off, then comes the hardening of the ice, which accelerates the flooding, which increases the melt off...

+ Alex Wild (curator of Entomology at the University of Texas, Austin): "Imagine being an art aficionado watching corrupt governments pay fascist gangs to burn museums to the ground. Day after day, city after city, accelerating until all that remains is smoldering rubble. That is what it feels like to be a biologist in the Trump era."

+ Good news from ACLU: "A federal court just blocked South Dakota's laws suppressing protests of the Keystone XL pipeline. Let this be a lesson to other states – if you try to criminalize protest, we will sue."

+ Marianne Williamson: "Climate change is the product of an amoral economic system." Let Marianne debate!

+ I wonder if the eavesdropping Alexa could have saved Elvis, who, according to the coroner's report, died on the toilet, "straining at stool"...

+ For those of you who, like me, grew up reading and arguing with Greil Marcus' writings on music, books and film, his Real Life Rock Top 10 column has found a new home at the LA Review of Books. This month's installment features a mini-review of the new book on Manson and the CIA by my friend Steve Perry (and occasional CounterPunch contributor) and a fabulous review of Brian Ferry's recent concert in Oakland.

+ Graham Nash on the writing and recording of his solo LP Songs for Beginners: "I met Rita (Coolidge) during the recording of 'Love the One You're With,' Stephen's great song. Rita and I made a date to go to a swap meet, and Stephen called her and said I was sick and couldn't go and that she should go with him. And so she spent a couple of weeks with Stephen. But Rita and I were very attracted to each other. Being somewhat of an Englishman and a gentleman, I couldn't even kiss Rita without letting Stephen know we wanted to be together. And so I picked up Rita one morning and drove to Stephen's house in Laurel Canyon. I said that Rita and I wanted to spend time together and I wanted to let him know before anything sexually happened between Rita and I. He didn't take it well. As a matter of fact, he tried to spit on me and missed."

+ As Jesse Walker noted, this may be the headline of the year..."Navy Confirms UFO Videos Posted by Blink 182 Rocker Are Real."

+ "When you grow up at the bottom of the ladder, you're the first to be sent to fight a war that the people in power are waging," John Fogarty said. "A song like 'Fortunate Son' ends up having a universal application because at any point in our history you could cry out, 'I ain't no fortunate one.' It's the people at the bottom who always do the fighting and dying."

+ + Trump Koan of the Week, reflecting on how Obama compares to DeMille: "I mean, if you were — if he was Cecil B. DeMille, he would have gotten — I mean, Cecil B. DeMille should be, if he ever came back from the dead, one of the greats of all time."

+ Nothing sums up the current state of Hollywood quite like awarding a "star" on the "walk of fame" to a brand of jeans.



As Eric Draitser noted, a star for a pair jeans is, at least, an aesthetic step up from Cecil B. DeMille and, by Trumpian extension, Barack Obama.

+ We're beginning to see more and more Trump cinema coming out of Hollywood. The latest offering is from Sylvester Stallone. In his re-re-boot of the unlamented Rambo franchise, "Last Blood," Stallone kills dozens of people in a variety vile ways...all of them Mexicans.

+ Who knew that Jacques Tourneur's Cat People was a documentary?

+ I'm missing James Gandolfini on what would have been his 58th birthday... "Let me tell ya something. Nowadays, everybody's gotta go to shrinks, and counselors, and go on Sally Jessy Raphael and talk about their problems. What happened to Gary Cooper? The strong, silent type. That was an American. He wasn't in touch with his feelings. He just did what he had to do. See, what they didn't know was once they got Gary Cooper in touch with his feelings that they wouldn't be able to shut him up! And then it's dysfunction this, and dysfunction that, and dysfunction vaffancul!"

+ RIP John Cohen, musicologist, civil rights and anti-war activist, philosopher and banjo player for the New Lost City Ramblers...

+ A critic who should know better asserted that Quadrophenia was the greatest rock album. Wrong.

The Who Sell Out is the greatest album by The Who.

There's a Riot Goin' On by Sly and the Family Stone is the greatest rock album.

A Love Supreme by John Coltrane is the greatest album.

+ 20: the number of Americans who earn their living primarily from writing about classical music.

+ According to Siri, Bob Dylan died 11 years ago, on April 24, 2008, at the age of 66.

Oh, Siri, am I not a brother to you?

We grew up together

From the cradle to the grave

We died and were reborn

And then mysteriously (screen) saved

+ Sun Ra: “You must realise that you have the right to love beauty. You must prepare to live life to the fullest extent.”

Why you got to own everything that you see?

Booked Up

What I'm reading this week...

Natural Rivals: John Muir, Gifford Pinchot and the Birth of Public Lands

John Clayton

(Pegasus)

Audience of One: Donald Trump, Television and the Fracturing of America

James Poniewozik

(Liveright)

The Testaments

Margaret Atwood

(Nan Talese)

Sound Grammar

What I'm listening to this week...

Beneath the Eyrrie

The Pixies

(Infectious Music)

Retrofuture

Tiger Army

(Rise)

Sinematic

Robbie Robertson

(UMe)

Images in the Stream

What I'm streaming this week...

Game, Set, Match

Dir. Ken Grieve and Patrick Lau
(1988)

The Beautiful Troublemaker

(La Belle Noiseuse)

Dir. Jacques Rivette
(1991)

Things Were Better When They Were Much Worse

Joseph Heller: "Gold never doubted that racial discrimination was atrocious, unjust, and despicably cruel and degrading. But he knew in his heart that he much preferred it the old way, when he was safer. Things were much better for him when they had been much worse." (Good as Gold)