

October 12, 2014

Mark Steyn juxtaposes the nonchalant admittance to our country of an immigrant who would never leave, to harsh growling of the bureaucrats for the innocents abroad. *Thomas Eric Duncan has the distinction of being America's Patient Zero - the first but not the last person to develop Ebola symptoms in the United States.*

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Is he a resident of the United States? No, he landed at Washington's Dulles Airport on September 20th, in order to visit his sister and having quit his job in Monrovia a few weeks earlier.

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Matthew Continetti, after reviewing the actions of our government, says it might be time to panic.

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This is the template of recent events. A mental case jumps the White House fence. He makes it to the East Room before he's tackled by an off-duty Secret Service agent. Initial statements turn out to be misleading or false. We discover that lapses in security are much worse than previously understood, that in recent memory the White House was sprayed with bullets, and that an armed man with a criminal record rode in an elevator with the president. The official in charge of the Secret Service, promoted for reasons of affirmative action, resigns hours after the White House expresses its confidence in her abilities. The overriding impression is of disarray, confusion, bad management, failed communication, anomie, disillusion, corruption, and secrecy. But do not worry. Things are under control.

The elevator? It was in the Center for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, where the president told the American people that the Ebola outbreak in West Africa is not a threat to our country. President Obama said the chances of Ebola appearing in the United States are "extremely low." If a carrier somehow finds his way to the 50 states, "We have world-class facilities and

professionals ready to respond. And we have effective surveillance mechanisms in place.” Two weeks later, as Byron York points out, the president was proven utterly wrong.

In a WSJ OpEd, a climate scientist suggests much of the globalony worries have been overwrought.

At the recent United Nations Climate Summit, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warned that “Without significant cuts in emissions by all countries, and in key sectors, the window of opportunity to stay within less than 2 degrees [of warming] will soon close forever.” Actually, this window of opportunity may remain open for quite some time. A growing body of evidence suggests that the climate is less sensitive to increases in carbon-dioxide emissions than policy makers generally assume—and that the need for reductions in such emissions is less urgent.

According to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, preventing “dangerous human interference” with the climate is defined, rather arbitrarily, as limiting warming to no more than 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) above preindustrial temperatures. The Earth’s surface temperatures have already warmed about 0.8 degrees Celsius since 1850-1900. This leaves 1.2 degrees Celsius (about 2.2 degrees Fahrenheit) to go.

In its most optimistic projections, which assume a substantial decline in emissions, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) projects that the “dangerous” level might never be reached. In its most extreme, pessimistic projections, which assume heavy use of coal and rapid population growth, the threshold could be exceeded as early as 2040. But these projections reflect the effects of rising emissions on temperatures simulated by climate models, which are being challenged by recent observations. ...

We learn from Fiscal Times another area subjected to white house lies was the student loan default rate.

Eager to broadcast some good news approaching the midterm elections, the Obama administration recently announced a welcome dip in student loan defaults, from 14.7 percent for the 2010 cohort (loans taken out in that year) to 13.7 percent for 2011. Policymakers, alarmed about how our trillion-dollar student loan burden and soaring default rates are undermining our economic growth, cheered the report.

Unfortunately, it turns out the numbers are bogus.

In keeping with a White House that talks a good game on transparency but that is cloaked in secrecy, the Department of Education moved the goalposts at the last minute, changing how the default rates were calculated and thus sparing some colleges from tough penalties. It has so far refused to say which schools were given a reprieve, though it appears likely that black colleges were the major beneficiaries.

The academic world has been anxiously awaiting the Department of Education’s annual announcement on student loan defaults. As of this year, schools with three consecutive years of default rates above 30 percent (or one year above 40 percent) will risk losing federal financial aid. The review was expected to clobber the for-profit sector, but also to penalize some smaller schools characterized by higher-than-average student borrowing, such as numerous members of

Historically Black Colleges and Universities, or HBCU. Last year 14 colleges in that organization had default rates above 30 percent. ...

Wired tells us why the Nobel such a big deal and where it come from.

The Nobel Prize is a big deal. Want to know how I know? Because the Nobels are constantly invoked to signal the importance of other awards: The Turing Award is the “Nobel Prize of Computers,” the Pritzker Prize is the “Nobel Prize of Architecture,” ...

... It all began with a journalistic error. In 1888, a French newspaper mistakenly wrote that Alfred Nobel, inventor of dynamite, had died. It was actually his brother, Ludvig, who had passed. But, in addition to lackluster fact checking, the paper commemorated the event with defamatory prose: “Dr. Alfred Nobel, who became rich by finding ways to kill more people faster than ever before, died yesterday,” it wrote. Nobel, it is said, was crushed by the idea that he’d be remembered as a “merchant of death.” In order to regain control of his legacy, he willed his fortune to create an award that would recognize people who had made positive contributions to mankind. ...

Max Boot celebrates deserving Nobel Peace Prize recipients.

The Nobel Peace Prize was easy to lampoon even before Barack Obama won the award at the start of his presidency for doing essentially nothing beyond giving a few grandiose speeches. ...

... Some of the recipients have actually been warmongers, most notably North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Le Duc Tho and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat. ...

... But occasionally the Nobel committee gets it right—usually once a decade or so. This is one of those times, with the award going to Malala Yousafzai of Pakistan and Kailash Satyarthi of India. ...

Late night humor from **Andrew Malcolm**.

Fallon: Chelsea Clinton's new baby girl Charlotte has already said her first word: "Iowa."

Conan: The NFL has announced the possible sites for its 2015 draft have been reduced to two. It's either Rikers Island or San Quentin.

Fallon: Joe Biden was in Iowa recently. He spent two days there — one campaigning and another stuck in a corn maze.

Meyers: Vladimir Putin's 62d birthday was the other day. When he got his presents he said, "You didn't have to get me anything, I could have just taken it."



Steyn On Line

Ebola Yes, Bagpipes No

by Mark Steyn

Thomas Eric Duncan has the distinction of being America's Patient Zero - the first but not the last person to develop Ebola symptoms in the United States.

Is he a US citizen? No, he's Liberian.

Is he a resident of the United States? No, he landed at Washington's Dulles Airport on September 20th, in order to visit his sister and having quit his job in Monrovia a few weeks earlier.

So he's a single unemployed man with relatives in the US and no compelling reason to return to his native land. That alone is supposed to be cause for immigration scrutiny.

In addition, visitors from Liberia have [the fifth highest "visa overstay rate" in the United States](#). That's to say, they understand very clearly that all that matters is getting in. Once you're in, they'll never get you out.

And, of course, Liberia is one of the hottest spots of Ebola's West African "hot zone". It's been all over the front pages, except apparently in *The US Customs & Border Protection Staff Newsletter*, where it rated a solitary "News In Brief" item at the foot of page 37.

Just to give you an example of how hard-assed the boneheads of America's immigration bureaucracy can be when they want to:

The legendary Gord Sinclair, longtime news director of CJAD in Montreal, had a ski place near **the town of Jay** in northern Vermont, and he invited his engineer on the show to come down and visit him. "What's the purpose of your visit?" asked the agent at the small rural border post.

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They all had a good laugh about that back on the air on Monday, but it took forever to straighten out. A single man with contacts in the United States: He says he's coming for the weekend, but we all know any Montrealer would willingly trade a job at Quebec's Number One anglo radio station for casual yard work in Vermont, right?

And yet the unemployed guy from an Ebola hot zone gets in.

Every day CBP agents pull stuff like that weekend-in-Vermont thing, screwing over perfectly obviously law-abiding persons - tourists, businessmen, legal residents and, indeed, citizens.

But the Ebola guy gets in.

What is the priority of America's deranged border regime right now? As I wrote [two months ago](#):

This weekend [Campbell Webster] was returning to New Hampshire from a competition in Canada, which is how a newspaper story comes to open with a sentence never before written in the history of the English language:

'BAGPIPERS have expressed their fear over a new law which led to two US teenagers having their pipes seized by border control staff at the weekend.'

They can chisel that on the tombstone of the republic. On the northern border, bagpipers are "expressing their fear", while on the southern border gangbangers have no fear and stroll through the express check-in.

As do Ebola-bearing Liberians at Dulles. US border security devotes [more time and resources](#) to Campbell Webster of Concord bringing in a bagpipe than to Thomas Duncan of Monrovia bringing in Ebola.

Come to that, US border security devotes more time and resources to my kid bringing in a Kinder chocolate egg from Canada than to Thomas Duncan bringing in Ebola. Speaking of which, I recount the Great Kinder Egg Showdown in [my new book](#), which comes out this month. You can pre-order now from [Amazon](#), [Barnes & Noble](#), [Books-A-Million](#), [Indigo-Chapters](#) in Canada, and other retailers.

If you're wondering why the seizure of my kids' chocolate eggs is in the same book as war and terrorism and all the big-boy stuff, the answer is it's part of the same story. To function, institutions have to be able to prioritize - even big, bloated, money-no-object SWAT-teams-for-every-penpusher institutions like the US Government. You can't crack down on Kinder eggs, bagpipes and Ebola: At a certain point, you have to choose. My line with the Homeland Security guys is a simple one: every 20 minutes you spend on me, or my kids' chocolate eggs, or Cameron Webster's bagpipe is 20 minutes you're not spending on the guy with Ebola, or Tamerlan Tsarnaev. The price of bagpipe scrutiny is a big hole blown in the lives of American families attending the Boston Marathon, or a bunch of schoolkids in Dallas having to be quarantined for a vicious, ravaging disease with a high fatality rate.

But, of course, giving additional attention to West African visitors would be [racist](#). Not like terrorizing Scotsmen over their bagpipes.

Meanwhile, the Department of Homeland Security [expands its curious priorities](#) from raiding Boston strip clubs for selling knock-off Red Sox T-shirts to raiding private homes to seize vintage cars that don't meet EPA standards. And yet more [emission creep](#):

Homeland Security Is Now Helping To Protect Communities From The Effects Of Climate Change

Big Government is, inevitably, stupid government. The bigger it gets the more it will focus on trivia, and the less it will even be able to discern the few things it should be doing. But something more pathological is going on here: "Homeland Security" is more interested in controlling law-abiding Americans than protecting them.

Free Beacon

The Case for Panic

Incompetent government + corrupt elite = disaster

by Matthew Continetti



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It is the same story as the fence-jumper: lax security, missed opportunities, hollow defenses. A Liberian national exposed to the terrible virus travels on a visa to visit his sister in Dallas. He has a three-hour layover in Dulles Airport. Upon his arrival in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area [he exposes, at a minimum, 100 people, including children](#), to Ebola. When he visits a hospital looking for help, he is

examined and sent away. Two days later he begins vomiting uncontrollably. [“His whole family was screaming.”](#) An ambulance arrived. He was returned to the hospital, where he remains.

Again, the authorities behave irresponsibly and inscrutably. Again, the faces on our televisions say there is no cause for alarm. “I think the notion that we will not have an outbreak of Ebola here, more than just an isolated person or two, is very reliable and very true,” [says MSNBC house doctor Zeke “If You Like Your Doctor You Can Pay More” Emanuel.](#) Emanuel is not bothered in the slightest—but then [he has just 18 years left anyway.](#)

I have a second opinion. Not only do I disagree with the constant stream of soothing and complacent rhetoric from Dr. Zeke’s friends in government and media. I also believe it is entirely rational to fear the possibility of a major Ebola outbreak, of a threat to the president and his family, of jihadists crossing the border, of a large-scale European or Asian war, of nuclear proliferation, of terrorists detonating a weapon of mass destruction. These dangers are real, and pressing, and though the probability of their occurrence is not high, it is amplified by the staggering incompetence and failure and misplaced priorities of the U.S. government. It is not Ebola I am afraid of. It is our government’s ability to deal with Ebola.

Over the last few years the divergence between what the government promises and what it delivers, between what it says is happening or will happen and what actually is happening and does happen, between what it determines to be important and what the public wishes to be important—this gap has become abysmal, unavoidable, inescapable. We hear of “lone-wolf” terrorism, of “workplace violence,” that if you like your plan you can keep your plan. We are told that Benghazi was a spontaneous demonstration, that al Qaeda is on the run, that the border is secure as it has ever been, that Assad must go, that I didn’t draw a red line, the world drew a red line, that the IRS targeting of Tea Party groups involved not a smidgen of corruption, that the Islamic State is not Islamic. We see the government spend billions on websites that do not function, and the VA consign patients to death by waiting list and then cover it up. We are assured that Putin won’t invade; that the Islamic State is the jayvee team of terrorism; that Bowe Bergdahl served with honor and distinction; that there is a ceasefire between Ukraine and Russia.

While the public remains pro-Israel, our government negotiates with Israel’s enemies. While the public wants to reduce immigration, the preeminent legislative objective of both parties is a bill that would increase it. While the public is uninterested in global warming, while costly regulations could not pass a filibuster-proof Democratic Senate, while the scientific consensus behind the green agenda is, at the very least, fraying, the president says that climate change is the greatest threat to the United States. While Americans tell pollsters their economic situation has not improved, and that things are headed in the wrong direction—while even Democratic economists acknowledge the despondent state of the middle class—the president travels to Chicago to celebrate his economic recovery.

These disjunctions and confusions, these missteps, scandals, and miscalculations, have hurt Obama’s approval numbers. They endanger the Democratic Senate majority, contribute to the widespread sense of disorder and decay, shatter trust in government and in public institutions. They have put into stark relief a political class dominated by liberal partisans, captured by ideas and interests removed from those of ordinary Americans. The stories of ineptitude or malfeasance that appear in the daily newspaper are more than examples of high ideals executed poorly. They are examples of the pursuit of ideas—of equality and diversity and progress and centralization and environmentalism and globalization—to absurd and self-destructive limits.

It is precisely the intersection of Ebola and globalization that worries me. The only response to a virus this deadly is to quarantine it. Stop flights, suspend visas, and beef up customs and security.

It can be done. If the FAA can cancel flights to Israel, why can't it cancel flights to and from the West African countries whence the outbreak originated?

Simple: because doing so would violate the sacred principles by which our bourgeois liberal elite operate. To deny an individual entry to the United States over fears of contamination would offend our elite's sense of humanitarian cosmopolitanism. For them, "singling out" nations or cultures from which threats to the public health or safety of the United States originate is illegitimate. It "stigmatizes" those nations or cultures, it "shames" them, it makes them feel unequal. It's judgmental. It suggests that America prefers her already existing citizens to others.

Such pieties endanger us. They are the reason we were slow to contain the influx of Central American refugees, the reason [we do not follow-up on illegal immigrants who fail to show up for hearings](#), the reason we remain unable to strip jihadists of U.S. citizenship, the reason that a year after two Chechen refugees bombed the Boston Marathon, [America is preparing to expand resettlement of Syrian refugees](#). The imperatives of [the caste](#), the desire to make actual whatever is rattling around Tom Friedman's brain at a given moment, take precedence over reality.

The system can withstand only so many shocks. For the last two years it has suffered nothing but blows, traumas, national and international concussions. The response by our government has been denial and delusion. But that has further alienated the public, and it won't be long before things get really weird. Maybe it is time for the political class to panic, too.

[Know hope?](#) That's passé.

Know fear.

WSJ

[The Global Warming Statistical Meltdown](#)

Mounting evidence suggests that basic assumptions about climate change are mistaken: The numbers don't add up.

by Judith Curry

At the recent United Nations Climate Summit, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warned that "Without significant cuts in emissions by all countries, and in key sectors, the window of opportunity to stay within less than 2 degrees [of warming] will soon close forever." Actually, this window of opportunity may remain open for quite some time. A growing body of evidence suggests that the climate is less sensitive to increases in carbon-dioxide emissions than policy makers generally assume—and that the need for reductions in such emissions is less urgent.

According to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, preventing "dangerous human interference" with the climate is defined, rather arbitrarily, as limiting warming to no more than 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) above preindustrial temperatures. The Earth's surface temperatures have already warmed about 0.8 degrees Celsius since 1850-1900. This leaves 1.2 degrees Celsius (about 2.2 degrees Fahrenheit) to go.

In its most optimistic projections, which assume a substantial decline in emissions, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) projects that the "dangerous" level might never be reached. In its most extreme, pessimistic projections, which assume heavy use of coal

and rapid population growth, the threshold could be exceeded as early as 2040. But these projections reflect the effects of rising emissions on temperatures simulated by climate models, which are being challenged by recent observations.

Human-caused warming depends not only on increases in greenhouse gases but also on how “sensitive” the climate is to these increases. Climate sensitivity is defined as the global surface warming that occurs when the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere doubles. If climate sensitivity is high, then we can expect substantial warming in the coming century as emissions continue to increase. If climate sensitivity is low, then future warming will be substantially lower, and it may be several generations before we reach what the U.N. considers a dangerous level, even with high emissions.

The IPCC’s latest report (published in 2013) concluded that the actual change in 70 years if carbon-dioxide concentrations double, called the transient climate response, is likely in the range of 1 to 2.5 degrees Celsius. Most climate models have transient climate response values exceeding 1.8 degrees Celsius. But the IPCC report notes the substantial discrepancy between recent observation-based estimates of climate sensitivity and estimates from climate models.

Nicholas Lewis and I have just published a [study](#) in *Climate Dynamics* that shows the best estimate for transient climate response is 1.33 degrees Celsius with a likely range of 1.05-1.80 degrees Celsius. Using an observation-based energy-balance approach, our calculations used the same data for the effects on the Earth’s energy balance of changes in greenhouse gases, aerosols and other drivers of climate change given by the IPCC’s latest report.

We also estimated what the long-term warming from a doubling of carbon-dioxide concentrations would be, once the deep ocean had warmed up. Our estimates of sensitivity, both over a 70-year time-frame and long term, are far lower than the average values of sensitivity determined from global climate models that are used for warming projections. Also our ranges are narrower, with far lower upper limits than reported by the IPCC’s latest report. Even our upper limits lie below the average values of climate models.

Our paper is not an outlier. More than a dozen other observation-based studies have found climate sensitivity values lower than those determined using global climate models, including recent papers published in [Environmentrics](#) (2012), [Nature Geoscience](#) (2013) and [Earth Systems Dynamics](#) (2014). These new climate sensitivity estimates add to the growing evidence that climate models are running “too hot.” Moreover, the estimates in these empirical studies are being borne out by the much-discussed “pause” or “hiatus” in global warming—the period since 1998 during which global average surface temperatures have not significantly increased.

This pause in warming is at odds with the 2007 IPCC report, which expected warming to increase at a rate of 0.2 degrees Celsius per decade in the early 21st century. The warming hiatus, combined with assessments that the climate-model sensitivities are too high, raises serious questions as to whether the climate-model projections of 21st-century temperatures are fit for making public-policy decisions.

The sensitivity of the climate to increasing concentrations of carbon dioxide is a central question in the debate on the appropriate policy response to increasing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Climate sensitivity and estimates of its uncertainty are key inputs into the economic models that drive cost-benefit analyses and estimates of the social cost of carbon.

Continuing to rely on climate-model warming projections based on high, model-derived values of climate sensitivity skews the cost-benefit analyses and estimates of the social cost of carbon. This

can bias policy decisions. The implications of the lower values of climate sensitivity in our paper, as well as similar other recent studies, is that human-caused warming near the end of the 21st century should be less than the 2-degrees-Celsius “danger” level for all but the IPCC’s most extreme emission scenario.

This slower rate of warming—relative to climate model projections—means there is less urgency to phase out greenhouse gas emissions now, and more time to find ways to decarbonize the economy affordably. It also allows us the flexibility to revise our policies as further information becomes available.

Ms. Curry, a professor and former chairwoman of the School of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences at the Georgia Institute of Technology, is the president of Climate Forecast Applications Network.

Fiscal Times

[Why the White House Fudged the Numbers on Student Loans](#)

The dip in student loan defaults is bogus

Loan default rates were recalculated to spare some schools

Caught in the trap were for-profit schools, even the good ones

by Liz Peek

Eager to broadcast some good news approaching the midterm elections, the Obama administration recently announced a welcome [dip in student loan defaults](#), from 14.7 percent for the 2010 cohort (loans taken out in that year) to 13.7 percent for 2011. Policymakers, alarmed about how our trillion-dollar student loan burden and soaring default rates are undermining our economic growth, cheered the report.

Unfortunately, it turns out the numbers are bogus.

In keeping with a White House that talks a good game on transparency but that is cloaked in secrecy, the Department of Education moved the goalposts at the last minute, changing how the default rates were calculated and thus sparing some colleges from tough penalties. It has so far refused to say which schools were given a reprieve, though it appears likely that [black colleges were the major beneficiaries](#).

The academic world has been anxiously awaiting the Department of Education’s annual announcement on student loan defaults. As of this year, schools with three consecutive years of default rates above 30 percent (or one year above 40 percent) will risk losing federal financial aid. The review was expected to clobber the for-profit sector, but also to [penalize some smaller schools](#) characterized by higher-than-average student borrowing, such as numerous members of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, or HBCU. Last year 14 colleges in that organization had default rates above 30 percent.

Faced with impending penalties, some institutions worked to lower rates. [Edward Waters College](#) in Jacksonville, Florida, for instance, had a default rate for its 2009 cohort approaching 32.5 percent, but has managed to lower it to 26 percent more recently.

Though many schools adopted practices aiming to reduce defaults, some were still expected to fall below the government standard. Education Secretary Arne Duncan, speaking recently at a

gathering of HBCU leaders, announced that because of changes to the way the numbers were calculated, [none of the black schools would lose federal aid.](#)

Proprietary (non-profit) schools, which have been under attack by the Obama White House for some time, were not so lucky. Twenty-one institutions, typically small for-profits offering beauty and cosmetology programs, were deemed to have default rates above the federal limit; those schools will likely lose their opportunity to offer students federal loans and grants – thus effectively [putting them out of business.](#)

For-profit schools enroll almost two million Americans, many of whom are older, are military vets, and minorities – in other words, exactly the population groups the White House should support. The Obama administration, for whom the word “profit” arguably triggers attack hormones, has long waged war on the sector.

Earlier this year the Department of Education issued yet another set of rules targeting proprietary schools mandating that the amount of student loan repayment must not exceed 8 percent of earnings – the so-called “gainful employment regulations.” By some estimates, that rule could cause some 40 percent of for-profit enrollees to lose federal financial aid.

Writing recently in *Forbes*, [Vicki Alger](#), research fellow at the Independent Institute in California, notes, “The net taxpayer cost of a private for-profit college student is \$183 compared to more than \$13,000 per public college student.” She concludes, “If private for-profit options aren’t available, many of these students would have to transfer to public colleges and cost taxpayers nationwide an additional \$1.7 billion annually.”

While some proprietary schools have been feeding off the unfortunate, promising unlikely jobs and wages and taking advantage of generous federal lending, many offer opportunity to a segment of the population with limited options for advancement. Greater oversight may be necessary, but the problem lies with the system, in addition to a few bad apples.

Bottom line: Fudging the figures on newly established rules meant to curb wasteful lending by the federal government does not seem the most intelligent (or honest) way to rein in our towering student debt, which is a genuine problem. Studies have shown that young people burdened by loans are unable to buy homes and start families – their futures end up in hock to their education rather than guaranteed by extra hours in the classroom.

There are many better approaches, including:

- Most important, giving young people better and more productive high school educations, including vocational training. While we consider sending an ever-higher portion of youngsters to college a sign of progress, it is also admission that few emerge from high school with the tools necessary to compete for jobs. According to economist Richard Vedder of Ohio University, there are 1 million retail sales employees and 115,000 janitors today with college degrees. Simultaneously, employers report a shortage of skilled workers. Something is amiss.
- Limit the federal government’s role in college lending to military vets and targeted groups that would otherwise not be able to access financing. Borrowing for education should be rational; those seeking loans and those making them should be forced to analyze the value of the degree and the prospects for repayment. Just as the patient-payer disconnect has caused our health care spending to spiral out of control, so has overly generous government financing ramped up the cost of education, creating a trillion-dollar millstone around the country’s neck.

- Do whatever it takes to put more Americans to work. The unemployed cannot repay student loans. There are 92 *million* adult Americans not working today. Some are retired or receiving disability, some are stay-at-home moms, but far too many have simply given up looking for work. President Obama's jubilation over last week's announcement that the unemployment rate dipped to 5.9 percent from 6.0 percent failed to note that fully *315,000 more Americans* left the workplace. The decades-low workforce participation rate is a disaster for the nation, one that the president has conspicuously failed to address.

Wired

What's Up With That: How Did the Nobel Prize Become the Biggest Award on the Planet?

by Nick Stockton

The Nobel Prize is a big deal. Want to know how I know? Because the Nobels are constantly invoked to signal the importance of other awards: The Turing Award is the "Nobel Prize of Computers," the Pritzker Prize is the "Nobel Prize of Architecture," and geography's "Nobel" is named after the guy who named America after Amerigo Vespucci. In mathematics, the Abel Award and the Fields Medal compete over which is more worthy of a Nobel comparison. The Nobel Prize might as well be called the "Nobel Prize of Comparisons for Other Awards." But how did it get this status?

Like the winner of a decathlon, the Nobel Prize stands out for its superiority on a combination of factors, beginning with its unique origins, says Harriet Zuckerman, sociology professor emerita of Columbia University and author of [Scientific Elite](#), a history of the Nobel Prizes.

From the beginning, the Nobel Prize attracted public attention in a way that no other scientific award had.

It all began with a journalistic error. In 1888, a French newspaper mistakenly wrote that Alfred Nobel, inventor of dynamite, had died. It was actually his brother, Ludvig, who had passed. But, in addition to lackluster fact checking, the paper commemorated the event with defamatory prose: "Dr. Alfred Nobel, who became rich by finding ways to kill more people faster than ever before, died yesterday," it wrote. Nobel, it is said, was crushed by the idea that he'd be remembered as a "merchant of death." In order to regain control of his legacy, he willed his fortune to create an award that would recognize people who had made positive contributions to mankind.

Alfred Nobel was a celebrity, famous not only for his destructive invention, but also his reclusiveness. His will was made public a year after his death. The surprise announcement sparked a lot of interest from the outset, says Gustav Källstrand, senior curator at the Nobel Museum. "The fact that the inventor of dynamite had entrusted his money to create a peace prize, among other things, got a lot of people interested in the prize," he said.

The Nobel also attracted a lot of attention because of its huge cash prize. Scientists had been awarded medals, money, and even titles (How about a knighthood, Sir Isaac?) since at least the early Renaissance. But none of those awards came close to the Nobel's purse. In the early days, it was worth about 20 years of an academic salary, and was the prototypical "genius award" that allowed scholars to freely pursue their interests.

The prize money also gave the public a concrete way to comprehend what were (and still are) esoteric scientific discoveries, says Källstrand, who wrote a dissertation on how the Nobel became a bridge between science and society. The money showed the public that these prizes were important, he says, and that the people who won them must also be important and worth attention.

From its initial buzz through its gilded sheen, the prize eventually earned a reputation for selecting notable awardees. That prestige was earned due to the methodology established by the first Nobel panels of judges in 1901. Källstrand says that the members of the academy at that time were nervous to be the center of international attention. In 1897, after Nobel's will had been made public, the *New York Times* predicted that the prize would bring Sweden more trouble than glory, as the country would be resigned to the politics of picking favorites. In order to protect themselves from the ridicule of choosing the wrong people, the judges decided to solicit recommendations from the international scientific community.

That year, and every year following, a 5-member committee for each prize solicited and reviewed thousands of nominations. "It is very clear that they do careful research, and that they get an enormous amount of information from those who make the nomination," said Zuckerman. After rigorous culling, the committee handed the selection over to either the Swedish Royal Society of Sciences (for chemistry and physics), or the Karolinska Institute (for medicine), who make the final determination for the year's winner.

The system gives the committee a strong sense of what the scientific community thinks. Another strength is that the committee members are allowed to be as honest as they need to be in their selection criteria. "The evaluations are secret for 50 years, so they also can write what they really think without anyone finding out," said Agneta Wallin Levinovitz, editor in chief of Nobelprize.org, the prize's official website.

Obviously, they don't always get it right. Even barring esoteric disciplinary quibbles, the committee has made mistakes that are pretty obvious in hindsight—like the time the medicine award went to the [guy who invented lobotomies](#), or when the physics panel thought [innovations in lighthouse design](#) warranted science's highest award.

But, for the most part, Nobel-winning discoveries have been tentpoles in the scientific circus. "The very, very good choices they made early on lent a luster to the awards, so they were able to transfer to people whose reputations might not be so stellar," said Zuckerman. This is also due to the fact that the selection committees typically leave a long time after a discovery is made before awarding it a prize. The only limit is that the award must go to living recipients. This gives the committees the luxury of observing how influential a discovery actually is, and whether it is able to survive past any initial hype.

Zuckerman and Källstrand point out that there are, of course, other minor contributing factors. These include the scientific prize's association with the Nobels for peace and literature. And the fact that the prizes are awarded by Sweden and Norway, countries that have, for the most part, been on the periphery of scientific discovery.

"If you look at the factors that have made the prize important, I think that tradition has now replaced money, and tradition is based on decisions that have held up throughout the century," said Källstrand. But that doesn't mean that there is any less pressure on the Nobel committee to select worthy winners. "In the past, you had committee members who gave Einstein and Heisenberg the prizes. Today, they have to hold up that responsibility to give away the prize to equally deserving people," said Källstrand

Contentions

Deserving Nobel Recipients

by Max Boot

The Nobel Peace Prize was easy to lampoon even before Barack Obama won the award at the start of his presidency for doing essentially nothing beyond giving a few grandiose speeches. It has tended to go to people like French Foreign Minister Aristide Briand and Secretary of State Frank Kellogg (co-authors of the Briand-Kellogg Pact outlawing war as an instrument of policy), author Norman Angell (who wrote *The Great Illusion*, claiming that war was obsolete right before the outbreak of World War I), the Quakers, and the Pugwash Conferences—those who dreamed of peace but who did not have much luck in implementing their dreams.

Some of the recipients have actually been warmongers, most notably North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Le Duc Tho and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat. South Korean President Kim Dae Jung won for his failed Sunshine Policy, which included bribing North Korea's Kim Jong-il into meeting with him. Few and far in between have been worthy recipients, such as Teddy Roosevelt, George Marshall, Martin Luther King Jr., Anwar Sadat, and Menachem Begin, and Mother Theresa. The U.S. armed forces, the greatest force for good in the world in the past century, have never won the prize.

But occasionally the Nobel committee gets it right—usually once a decade or so. This is one of those times, with the award going to Malala Yousafzai of Pakistan and Kailash Satyarthi of India. Yousafzai is the 17-year-old girl who had the temerity to campaign for girls' education in the Taliban-dominated area of Swat in Pakistan. To silence her, a Taliban gunman shot her in the head but she survived and is now reportedly living in Britain. Satyarthi is a longtime campaigner against child slavery in India and is credited with freeing some 50,000 children from quasi-slavery as indentured laborers.

There are lots of heroes like Yousafzai and Satyarthi around the world who are fighting for freedom. Another worthy recipient would have been Joshua Wong, the 17-year-old leader of pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong. The Nobel Committee should stick to recognizing and elevating their efforts instead of awarding prizes, as they have so often done, to Westerners who are big on grand gestures that cost them nothing.

IBD

Late Night Humor

by Andrew Malcolm

Fallon: A new survey finds more than half of Americans see Obama's time in office as a failure. The rest said, "You saw him in his office? When?"

Meyers: The longest MLB playoff game ever was last weekend -- 18 innings. The game was so long the Kiss-Cam couple got divorced.

Conan: An Italian man called police after spotting a burglar breaking into his home. But it was actually his wife's lover attempting a surprise visit. Then, because it's Italy, everybody had a good laugh.

Meyers: New York Comic-con is this weekend. It's the world's largest gathering of people who weren't invited to any other gatherings.

Fallon: Rumors floating around of a sequel to the movie "Independence Day." How scary could it be though? An alien invasion would only be like the fifth worst thing we're facing.

Meyers: Leon Panetta says Obama has "lost his way" as president. In fact, he's gotten so bad that this morning Obama was seen asking a White House intruder for directions.

Conan: The NFL has announced the possible sites for its 2015 draft have been reduced to two. It's either Rikers Island or San Quentin.

Fallon: Vladimir Putin turned 62 last week. It must be tough buying him a gift - I mean, what do you get for the man who has EVERYWHERE?

Meyers: Vladimir Putin's 62d birthday was the other day. When he got his presents he said, "You didn't have to get me anything, I could have just taken it."

Meyers: Arizona archaeologists have discovered a 1,300-year-old village. They also found dwellings, stone tools and hundreds of ballots cast for Sen. John McCain.

Conan: Now it's out that the Secret Service let an armed ex-convict ride on the same elevator as President Obama. No word yet which NFL player it was.

Conan: After the White House break-in, they put a lock on the front door. Also, the Secret Service is adding a barking dog recording. And they'll leave the TV on.

Conan: The Secret Service Director says agents can use "lethal force" on White House intruders. This may reduce trick-or-treaters there this year.

Conan: The new Secret Service director used to work for Comcast cable. So now White House intruders can only sneak in between the hours of 10:00 and 2:00.

Conan: The new iPhone 6 Plus bends under 90 pounds of pressure. And get this, when it's under 300 pounds of pressure, Siri says, "Try a salad, fat-ass!"

Conan: Viagra ads are now targeting women. But the women aren't too happy with Viagra's new slogan, "Maybe It's *You*."

Conan: California has become the first state to totally ban plastic bags. Gov. Jerry Brown says, "Plastic has no place in California unless it's in our residents' faces or breasts."

Conan: George Clooney says marriage "feels pretty damn great." Then every married guy replied, "Dude, it's been four days. Give it time."

Fallon: Chelsea Clinton's new baby girl Charlotte has already said her first word: "Iowa."

Fallon: The Kenyan runner Dennis Kimetto set a new world marathon record of 2:2:57. He also set a record for being the first guy from Kenya named Dennis.

Fallon: An elementary school kid asked Obama if he was in the Civil War. The president said, "No, I was born in 1961." Then the kid asked, "Where?" Obama said: "Next question."

Fallon: Joe Biden was in Iowa recently. He spent two days there — one campaigning and another stuck in a corn maze.

Meyers: Scientists at North Carolina State University say they've discovered a way to move and manipulate liquid metal with electricity. And Arnold Schwarzenegger has already been sent back in time to stop it.

Meyers: Doctors have discovered a 24-year-old Chinese woman who's lived her whole life without a major part of her brain. They're calling her "the lost Kardashian."

Conan: A Baltimore Ravens player has retired to donate a kidney to his brother. Since receiving the new kidney, the brother has committed six felonies.

Conan: Scientists have discovered the largest dinosaur ever. It weighed 65 tons and was a vegetarian. They say the creature left behind massive footprints and a reusable Whole Foods bag.

Meyer: A company has released plans for a portable wind turbine that can charge laptops or cell phones. So now instead of lugging around that cumbersome charger you can just carry a windmill.

Conan: White Castle confirms it's opening a restaurant in Las Vegas. It's perfect for people in Vegas looking for one more bad choice to make while drunk.

Meyers: Several lingerie companies have started organizing bra-fitting events in offices, called "bra parties." Meanwhile, in offices in China and India, people are working.

Conan: Detroit high school students sent a YouTube video invitation to the Pope asking him to visit their school. They want to see if the Pope can visit Detroit and still believe there's a God.

Conan: Paula Deen is releasing a video defending herself in her racism scandal. But you have to pay \$9.99 to watch. Or \$14.99 if you're Black.

Conan: Another celebrity photo leak: Nude photos of Kim Kardashian were posted to the Internet. Kim said she would be very embarrassed, if only she knew how.

Fallon: Hulk Hogan and David Hasselhoff will star in a new movie together. The film is expected to be released in June...of 1985.

Fallon: The No. 1 movie last weekend was "Gone Girl." It made \$38 million. It's about a wife whose husband tried to make her sit through an 18-inning, six-hour baseball game.

dear WINE,

we had a deal.

you were to make
me funnier, sexier,
smarter and a
better dancer.

i saw the video.

we need to talk.



