

February 22, 2015

Noted environmentalist Bjørn Lomborg says in a USA Today OpEd that the benefits of electric cars are myths.

It is time to stop our green worship of the electric car. It costs us a fortune, cuts little CO2 and surprisingly kills almost twice the number of people compared with regular gasoline cars.

Electric cars' global-warming benefits are small. It is advertised as a zero-emissions car, but in reality it only shifts emissions to electricity production, with most coming from fossil fuels. As green venture capitalist Vinod Khosla likes to point out, "Electric cars are coal-powered cars."

The most popular electric car, a Nissan Leaf, over a 90,000-mile lifetime will emit 31 metric tons of CO2, based on emissions from its production, its electricity consumption at average U.S. fuel mix and its ultimate scrapping. A comparable diesel Mercedes CDI A160 over a similar lifetime will emit 3 tons more across its production, diesel consumption and ultimate scrapping.

The results are similar for the top-line Tesla car, emitting about 44 tons, about 5 tons less than a similar Audi A7 Quattro.

Yes, in both cases the electric car is better, but only by a tiny bit. Avoiding 3 tons of CO2 would cost less than \$27 on Europe's emissions trading market. The annual benefit is about the cost of a cup of coffee. Yet U.S. taxpayers spend up to \$7,500 in tax breaks for less than \$27 of climate benefits. That's a bad deal. ...

The New Scientist reports that internal combustion engines may soon use lasers instead of spark plugs.

... For a week last November an internal combustion engine hummed away in a lab near Chicago. Why the excitement? This particular engine sets fire to fuel with lasers instead of spark plugs, burning fuel more efficiently than normal. Laser-fired engines could lead to cleaner, greener cars.

In a normal combustion engine, a mix of fuel and air enters a chamber where it is ignited by a spark plug. Hot, expanding gases from the burning fuel then exert force on a moving part such as a piston – generating mechanical energy that can be used to turn the wheels of a car, for example. But because each combustion cycle happens very quickly, it is hard to get all of the fuel mixture to burn. The problem is that spark plugs can only ignite the fuel at one end of the chamber, says Chuni Ghosh, CEO of New Jersey-based Princeton Optronics, the firm that developed the new ignition system.

In Ghosh's engine, a laser ignites the fuel in the middle of the chamber instead, burning more of the fuel and improving combustion efficiency by 27 per cent. Laser ignition could boost the fuel efficiency of a car from 40 kilometres per litre up to around 50, for example. The more complete burn also emits fewer polluting by-products such as nitrogen dioxide. ...

Harvard Business Review speculates about Apple making cars. The iCar? Apple fanboys and Samsung's "Next Big Thing"ers would hoot with derisive laughter if *The Wall Street Journal* or *Financial Times* reported that GM or Ford planned to rewrite the rules of smartphone innovation. But when media coverage suggests Apple may redesign the automobile, even the most cynical car-lovers quiver with righteous curiosity. They should. ...

... Steve Jobs' successors are at least an order of magnitude more credible as disruptive innovators than the heirs of Ford and Sloan. The computer, software, telecoms, music, broadcast, publishing, photography, retail, and consumer electronics industries certainly believe so. Apple demonstrably understands design, UX, and global supply chain alignment in ways few organizations ever have. According to data from Yahoo finance, company's market cap exceeds that of Toyota, BMW, Volkswagen, Ford, GM, Honda, Fiat Chrysler, Tesla, and Daimler combined. Apple's cash hoard currently tops \$175 billion.

If Apple truly wants to fundamentally transform the driving experience and global automobile business, it surely has the ingenuity and resources to do so. ... Unlike commercial aviation, automobile economics brilliantly reward the brilliant. Apple is brilliant. Don't bet against them.

Who knows what an iCar might look, feel, or drive like? I don't. But the better and more challenging question is, how would the automotive industry's incumbents respond to genuinely disruptive competition? ...

Juan Williams of Fox with a WSJ OpEd on Clarence Thomas calling him "America's most influential thinker on race."

In his office hangs a copy of the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery in America. When his critics, and he has many, call him names, he likes to point to it and shout out, "I'm a free man!" This black history month is an opportunity to celebrate the most influential thinker on racial issues in America today—Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas.

Justice Thomas, who has been on the court nearly a quarter-century, remains a polarizing figure—loved by conservatives and loathed by liberals. But his "free"-thinking legal opinions are opening new roads for the American political debate on racial justice.

His opinions are rooted in the premise that the 14th Amendment—guaranteeing equal rights for all—cannot mean different things for different people. As he wrote in Fisher v. University of Texas (2013), he is opposed to "perpetual racial tinkering" by judges to fix racial imbalance and inequality at schools and the workplace. Yet he never contends racism has gone away. The fact that a 2001 article in *Time* magazine about him was headlined "Uncle Tom Justice" reminds us that racism stubbornly persists. ...

Comic **Kelly MacLean** survives Whole Foods.

... Unlike Vegas, Whole Foods' clientele are all about mindfulness and compassion... until they get to the parking lot. Then it's war. As I pull up this morning, I see a pregnant lady on the crosswalk holding a baby and groceries. This driver swerves around her and honks. As he speeds off I catch

his bumper sticker, which says 'NAMASTE'. Poor lady didn't even hear him approaching because he was driving a Prius. He crept up on her like a panther.

As the great, sliding glass doors part I am immediately smacked in the face by a wall of cool, moist air that smells of strawberries and orchids. I leave behind the concrete jungle and enter a cornucopia of organic bliss; the land of hemp milk and honey. Seriously, think about Heaven and then think about Whole Foods; they're basically the same.

The first thing I see is the great wall of kombucha -- 42 different kinds of rotten tea. Fun fact: the word kombucha is Japanese for 'I gizzed in your tea.' Anyone who's ever swallowed the glob of mucus at the end of the bottle knows exactly what I'm talking about. I believe this thing is called "The Mother," which makes it that much creepier. ...

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Baseball games will be quicker-paced in 2015.

The game will use a clock, batters will be forced to keep one foot in the batter's box and managers won't trot onto the field for every replay challenge.

The news comes in just the second month of the Rob Manfred administration. He replaced commissioner Bud Selig in January.

"These changes represent a step forward in our efforts to streamline the pace of play," Manfred said. "The most fundamental starting point for improving the pace of the average game involves getting into and out of breaks seamlessly. In addition, the batter's box rule will help speed up a basic action of the game."

Here are the specifics; ...

USA Today

Electric car benefits? Just myths

by Bjørn Lomborg

It is time to stop our green worship of the electric car. It costs us a fortune, cuts little CO2 and surprisingly kills almost twice the number of people compared with regular gasoline cars.

Electric cars' global-warming benefits are small. It is advertised as a zero-emissions car, but in reality it only shifts emissions to electricity production, with most coming from fossil fuels. As green venture capitalist Vinod Khosla likes to point out, "Electric cars are coal-powered cars."

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Subsidies vs. savings

Yes, in both cases the electric car is better, but only by a tiny bit. Avoiding 3 tons of CO2 would cost less than \$27 on Europe's emissions trading market. The annual benefit is about the cost of a cup of coffee. Yet U.S. taxpayers spend up to \$7,500 in tax breaks for less than \$27 of climate benefits. That's a bad deal.

The other main benefit from electric cars was supposed to be lower air pollution. Yes, it might be powered by coal, but unlike the regular car, coal emissions are far away from the city centers where more people live and where damage from air pollution hits hardest.

However, new research in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences found that while gasoline cars pollute closer to home, coal-fired power pollutes a lot more.

The researchers estimate that if the U.S. has 10% more gasoline cars in 2020, 870 more people will die each year in the U.S. from air pollution. Hybrids, because they are cleaner, will kill just 610 people. But 10% more electric vehicles powered on the average U.S. electricity mix will kill 1,617 more people every year, mostly from coal pollution. The electric car kills almost three times as many as a hybrid.

Of course, electric car proponents would venture that the perceived rapid ramp-up of renewables will make future electric cars much cleaner. This, however, is mostly wishful thinking. Today, the U.S. gets 14% of its electric power from renewables. In 25 years, Obama's Energy Information Administration estimates this will have gone up just 3 percentage points to 17%.

Similarly, fossil fuels generate 65% of U.S. electricity today, and will generate 64% in 2040, although natural gas will gain four percentage points and lead to slightly cleaner power.

Instead of focusing on electric cars, we should focus on making coal-fired power cleaner.

What proponents say

Proponents could also argue that the more mileage an electric car logs, the more its carbon footprint is reduced because the battery production is a significant part of their total emissions.

Yet, it hardly matters. The added mileage saves little in the way of emissions, and the electric car's extended use might mean it would have to replace its batteries, entirely blowing the climate benefit.

Moreover, because the Nissan gives you only 84 miles on a charge, most people buy it as a second car for shorter trips. If such a second car goes only 50,000 miles, it will actually end up emitting more CO2.

In the public conversation, electric cars are seen as the new uber-green. But they're nothing of the sort. If we had 25 million extra electric cars rather than gasoline cars on the road in 2020, they

would over their lifetime avoid 75 million tons of CO₂ at a market value of more than half a billion dollars.

However, at present-day subsidies, they would cost a phenomenal \$188 billion while creating more pollution than gasoline cars, costing about \$35 billion in lives cut short by poor air quality. For every dollar of cost, the electric car does less than half a cent of good.

For the next decades, hybrids are the way to go, while we innovate cheaper green energy that hopefully over some decades will make the electric car worthwhile.

Bjørn Lomborg, author of The Skeptical Environmentalist and Cool It, is president of the Copenhagen Consensus Center.

New Scientist

[Lasers set to zap engines into running more efficiently](#)

by Hal Hodson

PEW pew! For a week last November an internal combustion engine hummed away in a lab near Chicago. Why the excitement? This particular engine sets fire to fuel with lasers instead of spark plugs, burning fuel more efficiently than normal. Laser-fired engines could lead to cleaner, greener cars.

In a normal combustion engine, a mix of fuel and air enters a chamber where it is ignited by a spark plug. Hot, expanding gases from the burning fuel then exert force on a moving part such as a piston – generating mechanical energy that can be used to turn the wheels of a car, for example. But because each combustion cycle happens very quickly, it is hard to get all of the fuel mixture to burn. The problem is that spark plugs can only ignite the fuel at one end of the chamber, says Chuni Ghosh, CEO of New Jersey-based Princeton Optronics, the firm that developed the new ignition system.



In Ghosh's engine, a laser ignites the fuel in the middle of the chamber instead, burning more of the fuel and improving combustion efficiency by 27 per cent. Laser ignition could boost the fuel efficiency of a car from 40 kilometres per litre up to around 50, for example. The more complete burn also emits fewer polluting by-products such as nitrogen dioxide.

Lasers are also better at keeping up with the thousands of cycles a minute at which a car engine runs. They can be tuned more precisely than spark plugs so that they fire at the optimal instant for ignition. They can even be fired multiple times during the same cycle into different parts of the cylinder to maximise fuel burn.

The engine was presented for the first time at the [ARPA-e energy innovation summit](#) last week in Washington DC. The idea itself is not new, but Princeton Optronics is the first to show that it works in a real engine, with the heat and extreme forces that thousands of revolutions per minute produce. Toyota toyed with a similar system in 2011, but never tested it in these conditions.

Cars are not the only vehicles that stand to gain. Back-up generators and ships' engines could benefit too. "There is a lot of pressure on the shipping companies to reduce the pollution from their ships," says Ghosh. "One shipping company we are talking to is interested in retrofitting their existing engines with laser ignition."

Harvard Business Review

[What Happens If Apple Starts Making Cars](#)

by Michael Schrage

Apple fanboys and Samsung's "Next Big Thing"ers would hoot with derisive laughter if *The Wall Street Journal* or *Financial Times* reported that GM or Ford planned to rewrite the rules of smartphone innovation. But when [media coverage suggests Apple may redesign the automobile](#), even the most cynical car-lovers quiver with righteous curiosity. They should.

Could Sir Jonny Ive be the next [Battista Pininfarina](#), [Harley Earl](#), or [Akihiro Nagaya](#)? Don't bet against him. Steve Jobs' successors are at least an order of magnitude more credible as disruptive innovators than the heirs of Ford and Sloan. The computer, software, telecoms, music, broadcast, publishing, photography, retail, and consumer electronics industries certainly believe so. Apple demonstrably understands design, UX, and global supply chain alignment in ways few organizations ever have. According to data from Yahoo finance, company's market cap exceeds that of Toyota, BMW, Volkswagen, Ford, GM, Honda, Fiat Chrysler, Tesla, and Daimler combined. Apple's cash hoard currently [tops \\$175 billion](#).

If Apple truly wants to fundamentally transform the driving experience and global automobile business, it surely has the ingenuity and resources to do so. Super-investor [Warren Buffett's admonition](#) that "When a management with a reputation for brilliance tackles a business with a reputation for bad economics, it is the reputation of the business that remains intact" doesn't apply. Unlike commercial aviation, automobile economics brilliantly reward the brilliant. Apple is brilliant. Don't bet against them.

Who knows what an iCar might look, feel, or drive like? I don't. But the better and more challenging question is, how would the automotive industry's incumbents respond to genuinely disruptive competition? How might the industry splinter, shatter, or consolidate when truly well-endowed innovators commit to upending expectations around the DX — the Driving Experience? The money, frankly, is secondary; the real issue is creativity and capability.

Consider what happened with the iPhone. Incumbents Nokia and RIM—the handset status quo—collapsed into irrelevance. They simply couldn't compete. By contrast, entrepreneurial non-

incumbents like Google counterattacked with Android. Samsung and Xiaomi—a company that didn't even have a smartphone five years ago—quickly became dominant players.

No, an automobile is not just an iPhone with wheels. But is GM a Blackberry and Ford a Nokia when Apple competes with a DX, a business model, and an iCar “genius bar” support network that makes their offerings look last century?

The failure of [Shai Agassi's Better Place](#) and the [ongoing production challenges confronting Elon Musk's Tesla](#) underscore how hard being an entrepreneurial 21st Century automobile start-up can be. Musk, whose company is reluctant to hire people from the industry, [has bitinglly observed](#) that his established automotive competitors are innovation laggards. “I had thought the big car companies would be coming out with electric cars sooner,” [he observed](#) in late 2014. Their failure to do so was “mind blowing.”

But Apple would deny any and every incumbent their “too small to matter” excuse for inertia. Indeed, precisely because Apple knows how to profitably scale its design, UX and supply chain expertise, automobile manufacturers would be compelled to react and respond. Traditional retailers smirked and cried “niche!” when Ron Johnson began rolling out Apple Stores in 2001. Yet those stores have successfully redefined retail norms and customer expectations well beyond Apple products and services. Apple dramatically influenced even its indirect competitors.

So put aside its brand equity. Apple's command of UX and technical infrastructure create multiple opportunities to transform the economics and expectations of every value-added aspect of the automobile experience. Building a car is the least of it. Apple needn't build a car any more than it must build an iPhone or an iPad (thanks, Foxconn). All Apple has to do to force fundamental industry restructuring is do what the incumbents have not—redesign the end-to-end purchase and DX, not just the cars themselves.

That's a bold vision for an entrepreneur, but a revitalizing challenge for a post-Jobs Apple. A partnership with Uber, for example, could be as DX transformative as special arrangements with the traffic management authorities in Beijing, London, Los Angeles, and New Delhi. How might Apple leapfrog or reframe Google's autonomous vehicle approach to DX? Even a modest Apple incursion into the automotive industry would likely prompt an entrepreneurial explosion of innovation—and innovative—partnerships. To what extent might an automotive counterpart of “apps” and the “app store” generate new automotive expectations and value?

Indeed, it's easy to see how a Google has as much or more incentive than Apple to “own” tomorrow's DX as the future of personal mobility and sustainability evolves. After all, [Google's Waze](#) is already evolving into an indispensable global DX standard. More difficult to anticipate is how a Toyota or Ford or Volkswagen will respond. These companies haven't had to respond to a truly disruptive innovator in over forty years.

Toyota, without question, is the real incumbent to watch. If Apple drives into the automobile marketplace, Toyota has the most to lose. Between the Lexus and the Prius, Toyota's the one dominant market leader that consistently respects design and business fundamentals even as it innovates.

Even if it never built a single car, Apple would likely prove the most serious and worthy competitor Toyota ever confronted. Toyota knows that Apple could design, build and deliver a DX that Toyota's best customers would like. Maybe it wouldn't be a “car”....but it would be something that redefined how people thought and felt about what it means to buy, own, and drive a car.

I bet BMW, Volkswagen, and Ford know that, too. The question is, what are they going to do about it? Will the incumbents wait and see? Or will they take the wheel?

If Apple hits the accelerator on its DX option, the next ten years of automobile innovation will be more interesting than any ten years of the automotive past.

WSJ

America's Most Influential Thinker on Race

Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas's insights are reshaping law and policy for the better.

by Juan Williams



In his office hangs a copy of the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery in America. When his critics, and he has many, call him names, he likes to point to it and shout out, “I’m a free man!” This black history month is an opportunity to celebrate the most influential thinker on racial issues in America today—Supreme Court Justice [Clarence Thomas](#).

Justice Thomas, who has been on the court nearly a quarter-century, remains a polarizing figure—loved by conservatives and loathed by liberals. But his “free”-thinking legal opinions are opening new roads for the American political debate on racial justice.

His opinions are rooted in the premise that the 14th Amendment—guaranteeing equal rights for all—cannot mean different things for different people. As he wrote in [Fisher v. University of Texas](#) (2013), he is opposed to “perpetual racial tinkering” by judges to fix racial imbalance and inequality at schools and the workplace. Yet he never contends racism has gone away. The fact that a 2001 article in Time magazine about him was headlined “Uncle Tom Justice” reminds us that racism stubbornly persists.

His only current rival in the race debate is President Obama. At moments of racial controversy the nation’s first black president has used his national pulpit to give voice to black fear that racial stereotyping led to tragedy. But that is as far as he is willing to go. His attorney general, [Eric Holder](#), has gone further by calling Americans “cowards” when it comes to discussing race. And some critics have chastised him even for that.

Justice Thomas, meanwhile, is reshaping the law and government policy on race by virtue of the power of his opinions from the bench. Thurgood Marshall, the first African-American on the Supreme Court, stood up as a voice insisting on rights for black people. Justice Thomas, the second black man on the court, takes a different tack. He stands up for individual rights as a sure blanket of legal protection for everyone, including minorities.

In his [dissent](#) in *Grutter v. Bollinger*, a case that preserved the affirmative-action policies of the University of Michigan Law School, he quoted an 1865 speech by Frederick Douglass : “‘What I ask for the Negro is not benevolence, not pity, not sympathy, but simply justice.’ . . . Like Douglass, I believe blacks can achieve in every avenue of American life without the meddling of university administrators.”

The principal point Justice Thomas has made in a variety of cases is that black people deserve to be treated as independent, competent, self-sufficient citizens. He rejects the idea that 21st-century government and the courts should continue to view blacks as victims of a history of slavery and racism.

Instead, in an era with a rising number of blacks, Hispanics, Asians and immigrants, he cheers personal responsibility as the basis of equal rights. In his concurring [opinion](#) in *Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Peña* (1995), he made the case against government set-asides for minority businesses by arguing that “racial paternalism and its unintended consequences can be as poisonous and pernicious as any other form of discrimination.” The Constitution, he said, bans discrimination by “those who wish to oppress a race or by those who have a sincere desire to help.”

In the same vein he contends that people who insist on racial diversity as a worthy principle are hiding assumptions of black inferiority. “After all, if separation itself is a harm, and if integration therefore is the only way that blacks can receive a proper education, then there must be something inferior about blacks,” he wrote in his concurring [opinion](#) in *Missouri v. Jenkins* (1995). “Under this theory, segregation injures blacks because blacks, when left on their own, cannot achieve. To my way of thinking that conclusion is the result of a jurisprudence based upon a theory of black inferiority.”

Justice Thomas holds that quality education should be the focus of educators for children of all races and argues there is no proof that integration necessarily improves education. Black leaders, from Martin Luther King Jr. to Thurgood Marshall, he has noted, were educated at black schools.

He also makes the case that diversity in school admissions has never been proven to raise black achievement to the level of people admitted with no special consideration. “Racial imbalance is not

segregation,” he [wrote](#) in a 2007 case ending Seattle and Louisville plans to reverse racial segregation in schools, “and the mere incantation of terms like re-segregation and remediation cannot make up the difference.” Federal judges, he said, are “not social engineers” charged with creating plans to achieve racial equality.

As he wrote in his concurring opinion in [Fisher](#), even if schools have the best intentions and justify lower standards for blacks seeking college admission in the name of reparations for past injury, “racial discrimination is never benign. . . . There can be no doubt that the University’s discrimination injures white and Asian applicants who are denied admission because of their race.”

This line of thinking has helped to rein in ambitious diversity and desegregation plans in K-12 schools as well as at universities. It has also made Justice Thomas the target of liberal derision. Mississippi Rep. Bennie Thompson once said he simply “doesn’t like black people” or “being black.” Nevada Sen. [Harry Reid](#) once dismissed him as one of “five white men” on the high court. Paradoxically, these bitter attacks are still more evidence that Clarence Thomas is now leading the national debate on race.

Huffington Post **[Surviving Whole Foods](#)** by Kelly MacLean

Whole Foods is like Vegas. You go there to feel good but you leave broke, disoriented, and with the newfound knowledge that you have a vaginal disease.

Unlike Vegas, Whole Foods' clientele are all about mindfulness and compassion... until they get to the parking lot. Then it's war. As I pull up this morning, I see a pregnant lady on the crosswalk holding a baby and groceries. This driver swerves around her and honks. As he speeds off I catch his bumper sticker, which says 'NAMASTE'. Poor lady didn't even hear him approaching because he was driving a Prius. He crept up on her like a panther.

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The first thing I see is the great wall of kombucha -- 42 different kinds of rotten tea. Fun fact: the word kombucha is Japanese for 'I gizzed in your tea.' Anyone who's ever swallowed the glob of mucus at the end of the bottle knows exactly what I'm talking about. I believe this thing is called "The Mother," which makes it that much creepier.

Next I see the gluten-free section filled with crackers and bread made from various wheat-substitutes such as cardboard and sawdust. I skip this aisle because I'm not rich enough to have dietary restrictions. Ever notice that you don't meet poor people with special diet needs? A gluten intolerant house cleaner? A cab driver with Candida? Candida is what I call a rich, white person problem. You know you've really made it in this world when you get Candida. My personal theory is that Candida is something you get from too much hot yoga. All I'm saying is if I were a yeast, I would want to live in your yoga pants.

Next I approach the beauty aisle. There is a scary looking machine there that you put your face inside of and it tells you exactly how ugly you are. They calculate your wrinkles, sun spots, the size of your pores, etc. and compare it to other women your age. I think of myself attractive but as it turns out, I am 78 percent ugly, meaning less pretty than 78 percent of women in the world. On the popular 1-10 hotness scale used by males the world over, that makes me a 3 (if you round up, which I hope you will.) A glance at the extremely close-up picture they took of my face, in which I somehow have a glorious, blond porn mustache, tells me that 3 is about right. Especially because the left side of my face is apparently 20 percent more aged than the right. Fantastic. After contemplating ending it all here and now, I decide instead to buy their product. One bottle of delicious smelling, silky feeling creme that is maybe going to raise me from a 3 to a 4 for only \$108 which is a pretty good deal when you think about it.

I grab a handful of peanut butter pretzels on my way out of this stupid aisle. I don't feel bad about pilfering these bites because of the umpteen times that I've overpaid at the salad bar and been tricked into buying \$108 beauty creams. The pretzels are very fattening but I'm already in the seventieth percentile of ugly so who cares.

Next I come to the vitamin aisle which is a danger zone for any broke hypochondriac. Warning: Whole Foods keeps their best people in this section. Although you think she's a homeless person at first, that vitamin clerk is an ex-pharmaceuticals sales rep. Today she talks me into buying estrogen for my mystery mustache and Women's Acidophilus because apparently I DO have Candida after all.

I move on to the next aisle and ask the nearest Whole Foods clerk for help. He's wearing a visor inside and as if that weren't douchey enough, it has one word on it in all caps. Yup, NAMASTE. I ask him where I can find whole wheat bread. He chuckles at me "Oh, we keep the poison in aisle 7." Based solely on the attitudes of people sporting namaste paraphernalia today, I'd think it was Sanskrit for "go fuck yourself."

I pass the table where the guy invites me to join a group cleanse he's leading. For \$179.99 I can not-eat not-alone... not-gonna-happen. They're doing the cleanse where you consume nothing but lemon juice, cayenne pepper and fiber pills for 10 days, what's that one called again? Oh, yeah...anorexia. I went on a cleanse once; it was a mixed blessing. On the one hand, I detoxified, I purified, I lost weight. On the other hand, I fell asleep on the highway, fantasized about eating a pigeon, and crapped my pants. I think I'll stick with the whole eating thing.

I grab a couple of loaves of poison, and head to checkout. The fact that I'm at Whole Foods on a Sunday finally sinks in when I join the end of the line...halfway down the dog food aisle. I suddenly realize that I'm dying to get out of this store. Maybe it's the lonely feeling of being a carnivore in a sea of vegans, or the newfound knowledge that some people's dogs eat better than I do, but mostly I think it's the fact that Yanni has been playing literally this entire time. Like sensory deprivation, listening to Yanni seems harmless at first, enjoyable even. But two hours in, you'll chew your own ear off to make it stop.

A thousand minutes later, I get to the cashier. She is 95 percent beautiful. "Have you brought your reusable bags?" Fuck. No, they are at home with their 2 dozen once-used friends. She rings up my meat, alcohol, gluten and a wrapper from the chocolate bar I ate in line, with thinly veiled alarm. She scans my ladies acidophilus, gives me a pitying frown and whispers, "Ya know, if you wanna get rid of your Candida, you should stop feeding it." She rings me up for \$313. I resist the urge to unwrap and swallow whole another \$6 truffle in protest. Barely. Instead, I reach for my wallet, flash her a quiet smile and say, "Namaste."

San Francisco Chronicle

Baseball games to be quicker-paced this year

by John Shea



Baseball games will be quicker-paced in 2015.

The game will use a clock, batters will be forced to keep one foot in the batter's box and managers won't trot onto the field for every replay challenge.

The news comes in just the second month of the Rob Manfred administration. He replaced commissioner Bud Selig in January.

"These changes represent a step forward in our efforts to streamline the pace of play," Manfred said. "The most fundamental starting point for improving the pace of the average game involves getting into and out of breaks seamlessly. In addition, the batter's box rule will help speed up a basic action of the game."

Here are the specifics;

A timer on or near the outfield scoreboard (and a smaller one behind the plate, near the press box) will count down the seconds between innings. After the third out, the timer will show 2 minutes, 25 seconds for locally televised games and 2:45 for nationally televised games.

The breakdown:

PA announcer introduces batter, walkup music begins: 40 seconds.

Pitcher's final warm-up pitch: 30 seconds (if he doesn't get the traditional eight warmup pitches, too bad – extra time is allotted if the pitcher or batter finished the previous half inning on base or at the plate).

Batter's walk-up music ends: 25 seconds.

Batter enters box or is encouraged to do so: 20 seconds.

Pitcher begins motion (once the batter is in the box and turns toward the pitcher): 20 seconds.

As for batters, one foot must remain in the box between pitches except for swings, foul balls, foul tips, brushback pitches, throwdowns to a base, wild pitches and passed balls.

Penalties for not obeying pace-of-game rules? Warnings. And fines. No fines until May, however. Penalties won't include the umpire adding a strike to the count if the batter is too slow or a ball to the count if the pitcher is too slow.

The manager has to be quicker on replay requests, too, and this is good news. Common sense, actually. No longer can the manager mosey out to the umpire, make a 180-degree turn and wait for the thumb's up or thumb's down from his bench coach, who's hearing from the team's replay coordinator.

Now, managers must signal from the top step of the dugout that he's considering a replay challenge. Managers can leave the dugout for a challenge only on an inning-ending call.

Other replay updates:

A runner leaving base early or touching a base on a tag play now is reviewable.

Also, a manager can retain his challenge even after a call is overturned.

The announcement came jointly from MLB and the players' union, whose director, Tony Clark, said, "The players believe that enforcing the rules that currently exist regarding between-inning breaks and plate appearances is the best way to address the issue of pace of play. We're confident that today's announcements will have a positive impact on the pace of the game without jeopardizing the integrity of the competition."

The umpires apparently are aboard. Umpire rep Brian Lam said, "These strides to hone the pace of game over time will improve the natural rhythm of baseball, and we applaud and support the Players Association and the Commissioner's Office as we all move toward this goal."

Last season's games averaged 3 hours, 2 minutes. Back in 1981, games averaged 2:33.







