

**INFORMATION REGARDING CALLS PRESENTED AND/OR SUPPORTED BY
2013 RAINBOW ROUND TABLE**

I TO ACCESS THE THREE WEEKLY CALLS via the Internet

A BBS RADIO Go To www.bbsradio.com ; click on Talk Radio Station #2; click on "64K Listen"

Thursday: 9 pm – 12:00 pm EST **Stargate Round Table** **Host: Marietta Robert**

Friday: 9 pm – 2 am EST **Friday Night Hard News** **Hosts: T & R**

Saturday: 4:30 pm – 2 am EST **History of our Galactic World & NESARA** **Hosts: T & R**

Friday, Saturday: From **10 – 11 pm EST**, for one hour, the call moves to the Conference Call Line [PIN below] and then returns to BBS Radio.

- Use the following phone numbers to ask questions or make comments during the radio show.

530 – 413 – 9537 [line 1]

530 – 763 – 1594 [line 2 & 3]

530 – 746 – 0341 [line 4]

- **BBS Toll Free # in Canada, US** 1 – 888-429-5471 This number picks up whichever line is available.

B Conference Call:	1-213 -342-3000	Thursday PIN #	87 87 87#
		Friday PIN #	23 23 23#
		Saturday PIN #	13 72 9#

C Skype: **BBSradio2**

D Archives for the 3 Programs listed above:

- To access the **FREE BBS archives** for any of these programs:
 - Go to *BBSRadio.com/ Station 2*;
 - in the Left Hand Column, under MAIN MENU, scroll down to *Current Program Archives*;
 - when the new page comes up, scroll down to "Hard News on Friday" and, under that name, click on *More Archives*
 - when the new page comes up, you will see "Listen" or "Download MP3"
 - You can download the program to your own computer or listen directly.
- The **website also has an archive section:**
<http://2013rainbowroundtable.ning.com/> look under the "Archives" tab for written notes.

II TO ACCESS OTHER CALLS SUPPORTED BY 2013 Rainbow Roundtable

A Sunday, Mondays: 9 – 10:30 EST **Cheryl Croci's Activation Calls**
By telephone only: 1 – 213 - 342- 3000; PIN 9467441#

B Tuesdays, 2nd & 4th of each month: **Ashtar on the Road**
9:30 – 11:00 pm EST Host is Fran; Susan Leland channels Ashtar & Mother Sekhmet
www.Ashtarontheroad.com
▪ Phone Number: 1 – 559 – 726 – 1300; PIN 163731#
▪ Call is free [except for long distance charges]
▪ Can also listen to the call via Skype

C Wednesdays: 7:00 – 9:00 EST **The Friends of The Aboriginal Moabite Nation Call**
By telephone only: 1– 712-432-0900 PIN 666238#
Replay # [good for 1 week] 1-712- 432-0990 PIN 666238#

Opening Meditation: Rainbird

Housekeeping: Rainbird

- BBS:**
- A listener-supported radio program; we can access program archives on BBS
 - We are being asked to do our part and start the year with a clean slate: **we need \$520** to complete our commitment for last week and this week.

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

- Go to BBS Radio.com/station2; find the listing for History of Nesara Call & the Paypal button
- NO COST TO ACCESS THE ARCHIVES for any of the T & R PROGRAMS
- Re: archives of the other programs on BBS: the money we pay to listen to other people's archives is put towards our BBS bill!

MR: • Please remember to support MariettaRobert's Thursday Stargate Roundtable as well!!!!

- You can also mail a cheque or money order to
BBS Network, Inc. (Attention:Don)
5167 Toyon Lane
Paradise, CA 95969
Please note on your cheque or MO that it is for
Tara and Rama, and MariettaRobert.

T & R: • WE CAN GIFT T & R BY GIFTING BBS.

- On the website: 2013RainbowRoundTable.ning.com
there is a donate button on the home page and on the Blog page
- Please notify them if you're sending something: koran999@comcast.net
- Rama's mailing address for cheques, Money orders:
Ram D Berkowitz
1704 B Llano St, # 249
Santa Fe, NM 87505
- phone contact is via MariettaRobert: 317-773-0061
or by e-mail: stargatemarietta@gmail.com
- Remember you can also have a session with Mother, as well!

Every little bit matters! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

HARD NEWS:

T: everyone sounds better with the new mike! Yayy!!

- An appeal to everyone for help with the BBS bill.

R: a call from KOS – not able to get on **Camp Loveway** with David Icke: the nanites and their frequencies are not at the same level with his technology at the moment

- Why was Trayvon Martin killed for just walking down the street with iced tea and skittles?

David Icke brought this up: has to do with the war on people of colour

- Sen. Gillibrand of NY has called the Tea party and the NRA are domestic terrorist organizations who want to take this man [Obama] and his family out
- Has to do with the 520 missing years of history and the Moabite nation
- David talked of the archons and the hybridization which has been going on since the time the Annunaki invaded this planet. Still going on
 - Warren Buffet, Bill Gates, Rupert Murdoch – have 6 – 12 strands of DNA; the love strand has been engineered out of their consciousness, and they are trying to bring it back in – it is about love and gratitude; yet when you are surrounded by the other archons & other CEOs, not so easy
 - Carly, former CEO of Hewlett Packard, running for office in CA – her money is tainted, like that of Gates, Buffet etc – the Man with the Plan said if you want to walk with me, give away all your money.
- David Icke has done just that: he has found an organization tied in with the lady in Africa who planted trees –

- he is giving money to her foundation, and to the girl in Afghanistan who got shot in the face.
- He also brought up the Alexandrian Library and the man who could shape shift into a woman.
 - This was Tara who died in the fire at the library - but she did not die, she beamed up to the ships!
 - She became a hobo, went to Rome and continued the pursuit of what the Vatican was doing – working
- There were half a million scrolls that were stolen from that library – about Pangea, Atlantis, Lemuria – not all the scrolls were saved but to this day, since the church of the unholy seat of Peter stole them, they are stashed under the catacombs in Rome.
- Mr Francis is an international war criminal and he too is a pedophile; this has to do with the truly elected –
 - he is a fake, not the real pope. This has to do with the stories of hybridized archons

T: last night Bill Maher was trying to say Gates and Buffet tried to give away half their money – but they didn't

- He talked about the infinity stones, the Kabbah stone that sits in Mecca – this is one of them. When the story is complete, that Kabbah stone will be fully transformed; it is already turning back into a clear crystal cube which provides eternal energy.

Icke on Lagarde – she is a male 50' lizard equal to a 4 star general; she will have to face the ICC and other bodies for her crimes

- He also said: “No one talks about this but his friend Lord Rama:
 - the one good thing Bill Gates did was to upload millions and millions of nanites into the satellites that circle our planet; they are in a sleep mode for the moment.
 - When Admiral Sananda and Ashtar give the signal, they will wake up and will be tuned to the control panels on the ships and we will hear Ashtar and Sananda; it will be a different story – and we are in that mix right now.

KOS: Russia and Ukraine are on the brink: they are playing nuclear brinkmanship game:

- Ashtar has already neutralized **the nukes – THEY WILL NOT WORK.**
- **This is being done to create fear:** where your attention goes, your energy goes
- so if you focus on fear and head for the shelters and the bunkers, you will bring it on.

T: on Alex Witt: it is that we are not going near Ukraine: the consequences are that Obama and US will boycott Sochi later in the year

- It was on RT: Putin requested the upper house of their government to have Russian troops into the eastern portion of Ukraine proper to protect the Russian people from really, truthfully the riot police –
 - what T & R understand is that the riot police were ordered up by Yanakovich himself, and they are responsible for murdering 100s of western Ukrainian people.
 - They also had help from the neo nazis funded by McCain and Murray & funding from Abe of Japan.
- Some of the riot police laid down their weapons – McCain was a Nazi collaborator; Yanakovich and 2 others from his cabinet are not innocent – the people want these 3 in front of the ICC, though the country is not signed on to the ICC.

R: KOS also brought up that the whole fiasco has to do with the IMF, the World Bank, and Christine Lagarde, mr archon. The issues go deep and have to do with change and the reformation act –

He also said "With all due respect, Mr TNT and the others – quit lying to the people day after day!"

T: it is good to do spiritual work, yet we also have to do the work in the physical; we offer our services to others in the community, and that is bringing the truth to the people. The more awareness of NESARA and the Reformation act there is, the easier it will be to bring NESARA all the way in.

- Some people who are disabled are literally organizing at the ground level!
- KOS has talked to disabled war vets who have returned from the proxy wars and the impunity in which we have become enemies of the state, and in the sick and twisted psychotic dream of the 13 families who want to gather up all the gold on the planet and make a deal with the nibiruians –
 - The planet is not for sale no matter what is going on with the overall agenda.
 - They cannot get past the circle of infinite fear they have created; they think we will do to them what they have done to us and even more
 - This is not about the revenge of the Sith: those coming with Mother are only coming in love.

- The hidden history of this is in the scrolls under the catacombs which tell the truth about the melanin and the gold dust - we are on a magical mystery tour: Rama, like Obama, got high and did not pay attention while he was in the 60s and 70s because he was too busy being angry for sending people off to die in a war that Congress never declared: the Gulf of Tonkin – same as 9/11.
- We have our gifts and abilities back as it is being hammered into his head:
- Asks about the Dawn Zimmer, the mayor of Hoboken and why is this still going on and Chris Christie and Hurricane Sandy, global engineering and weather modification - they are bordering on sidereal technology and the planet is saying enough.

Icke: there will be a turnaround here and it will be a righting of the wrongs which have happened –

- what happened on the GWB, the acquisition of the land at GroundZero, the Port Authority, the hiding of the wreckage from 9/11 so no one can examine the particles which came from the pulverized concrete – all will be revealed.

Music: Kadoish, kadoish, Kadoish

Reading: The Gnosis and the Law – Chapter 2, The Creation of the World, Section Seven Might Elohim, page 12

- Helios and Vesta are the parents of Sananda Kumara

Chapter 3, The Projection of the Spirit Sparks into Conscious Individualized “I AM” Presences, p 14

- Great Central Sun – another name for Alcyone and his beloved Mother Sekhmet

Audio: Remarks by the President on "My Brother's Keeper" Initiative [SEE BELOW]

Audio: Thom Hartmann – guest is Dr Douglas Edgerton [SEE BELOW]

2014, Feb 25 Abolitionist or Terrorist? By DOUGLAS R. EGERTON

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/26/opinion/abolitionist-or-terrorist.html?_r=0

Thom: Why are white americans so unaware of the violence involved with slavery in early America?

DE: Difficult for a society to look at its history – easier to look at the progress

His book: “The Wars of Reconstruction: The Brief, Violent History of America’s Most Progressive Era.”

Audio:

About discovery of insulin: the increase in Diabetes in NY coincided with the introduction of sugar, the increase in candy and sugar drinks.

In discussing the topic of sugar, diabetes and cancer, Thom has pulled his information from the following article: 2011, Sept 13 NYT is sugar toxic? [SEE BELOW]

Audio: Thom reads comments from **Craig Thompson, President of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York:** “I have eliminated refined sugar from my diet because I believe ultimately it's something I can do to decrease my risk of cancer.”

Other discussions about health effects of sugar-as-toxin

Audio: Democracy Now [SEE BELOW]

2014, Feb 27 George Takei on Arizona’s Anti-Gay Bill, Life in a Japanese Internment Camp & Star Trek’s Mr. Sulu

http://www.democracynow.org/2014/2/27/george_takei_on_arizonas_anti_gay

Audio: Democracy Now

2014, Feb 27 Big Oil and Bad Air:~Report Exposes Link Between Fracking and Toxic Air Emissions in Texas

http://www.democracynow.org/2014/2/27/big_oil_and_bad_air_report

Audio: Breaking the Set 2014, Feb 27

Exporting religious fundamentalism, covert intelligence trolls, & remembering Bill Hicks

http://img.rt.com/files/episode/22/e7/f0/00/bts_480p.mp4?event=download

Abby Martin speaks with RT's Anastasia Churkina about extreme fundamentalist Christianity in the military and how it's affecting other soldiers and populations in countries where US soldiers serve. We look at Glenn Greenwald's report regarding the intelligence community's use of subversive and manipulative online tactics to destroy the reputations of businesses and individuals. Jed Morey, author of 'the Great American Disconnect', highlights the seven biggest threats facing American democracy. Finally, a tribute to the late comedian and political satirist Bill Hicks, discussing his impact on politics and pop culture with comedian Lee Camp.

Audio: Thom Hartmann - various items

- The Obamas see to getting food for kids at school
- A police chief in Maryland lies in a hearing and says over 50 people O'D'd on marijuana in Colorado and was called out on the lie
- Plays a clip of Rush Limbaugh on Jan Brewer being bullied

R: this guy was on Abby Martin and he has a message!

- Cale Sampson – The Truth is (Official Music Video) You Tube
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8LI273gNi90#t=110>

T: reads the words of the chorus

Audio: Luminaries | | Official Website: Music, News, Videos, Blog, & More | LuminariesMusic.com
<http://luminariesmusic.com/>

R: This one is for the people of Russia and the Ukraine!

Astrology: Richard

- Once a year, the new moon in Pisces!
[February 25, 2014 Pele Report, Astrology Forecast](#)
[February 25, 2014 9:41 pm · Kaypacha](#)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=CVhZLmC4opY

[click here for the New Moon astrology chart](#)

***If I don't stop and reflect on what's happened,
But get lost in creating and controlling the action,
I won't learn the lessons or see the wisdom,
That leads to my healing and soul evolution.***

[click here for the English transcription of the Pele Report](#)

[click here for the Spanish translation of the Pele Report](#)

[Pele Report mp3 only](#)

New Moon in Pisces coming this Friday! As mentioned in the report, this can be very healing if we can let go, go in, and go up, or..... it can be very frustrating and challenging if we stay attached and

“invested” in our goals and ambitions.... may you experience the former rather than the latter!.....
Injoy..... Check out this week’s musician at <http://www.cdbaby.com/Artist/Michelle...>

Reading: 2014, March 1 **Happy NEW MOON in Pisces March 1, 2014!** [SEE BELOW]

Reading: Richard from **Alice Bailey’s Esoteric Astrology, Ch 5.**

Conf. Call

Ri: What he read is what DK saw playing out for our times; Alice Bailey was only the secretary
T: the work that Alice did remains the foundation; what we have learned since is just added on.
Annie Basant and Alice Bailey were the same soul

News: we listen to what is happening in Ukraine, Russia

Ri: Annie Basant born in UK, died in 1933 at age 85. Alice Bailey born
• Alice Bailey and Annie Basant shared some time on the planet together
• They knew each other and shared the same soul – they recognized each other.

T: had a friend who was a child in Dachau

Patterning: • Learn how to coordinate body, mind and spirit just by working with aligning the spinal cord
• Also knows how to work with sound and break up congestion in the aura

Caller: sent a YouTube – to be played later!

Caller: talking about the rain in California; a tree fell on her roommate’s car! Just 2 cars damaged, people OK.
T: an avalanche in Colorado that buried 3 people and they are still alive; the house was buried with them in it!

T: the Piscean energy asks us to be fluid.

Reading: I Ching For The Week of February 24, 2014 [SEE BELOW]

BBS:

Audio: Bill Hicks <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=egpRiNpVQws>

- He was murdered by the gov’t Feb 26, 1994 – gave him a heart attack like they did Hugo Chavez

Reading: the last bit of the I Ching, started on the Conf Call.

Audio: “You get more beautiful” – written to celebrate the courage of a woman who was attacked and left to die by the assailant

- The song “You are so beautiful” comes from the Peace Alliance, a Unity Church that puts on the Positive Spin. She reads the mission statement: www.thepeacealliance.org
- Brings up the conversation of a caller with Thom Hartmann
- There is also The Meta Centre for Non-violence, Box 98. Petaluma CA 949593 www.mettacenter.org
707-774-6094

Audio: ♥ A message from the Heart of God Tabor ♥ God of the Mountains /Earth/Gaia

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTfWiWdKveo>

Audio: Democracy Now

[SEE BELOW]

2014, Feb 26 Chokwe Lumumba~ Remembering "America's Most Revolutionary Mayor"

Audio: Inner World, Outer World Part 2: The Spiral

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G7nOxvgN0dc>

It is with heartfelt gratitude to Daniel Schmidt and his team that we at the Inner World Institute would like to share this 2nd video of a 4 part series with you. This series provides a superb rendering and profound insights into our Inner World that will alter your perception of reality and open the door to Self Awareness like never before.

Our path to the Inner World is different for everyone. What we find when we cross the bridge from the Outer World and enter into the Inner World is the same. Infinite intelligence, connection to Source and validation of how we ARE connected as One.

Our mission at the Inner World Institute is to open doors to the Inner World for any and all to walk through according to their own intention. www.innerworldinstitute.com

AUDIO: Max Keiser Episode 569

March 01, 2014 13:30

http://img.rt.com/files/episode/22/f5/70/00/kr0103_480p.mp4?event=download

In this episode of the Keiser Report, Max Keiser and Stacy Herbert discuss the Jon Corzine of bitcoin trying to concern troll his way into a bailout and failing. And while 6 percent of all bitcoins allegedly went missing via Mt. Gox, every year 3 percent of China's GDP goes missing into property and bank accounts in the US, Canada and Australia. They also look at a recent study that friends of ex-Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner were rewarded by the stock market as much as friends of Suharto were in Indonesia. In the second half, Max interviews Charles Hoskinson, a cryptographer and one of the people behind a new crypto start up called Ethereum. They also discuss cryptography, bitcoin and maxcoin.

Reading: When Rocks Cry Out, Ch 32 Ancient Hyroglyphs name cities in the Yucatan Peninsula

Closing: Rainbird 11* Pisces – she reads the angel message for that day: The Angels of Light

- Close with the poetry of Rumi: can be found at www.Mythicimagination.org

INFORMATION RELATED TO THE NOTES

For Immediate Release

February 27, 2014

Remarks by the President on "My Brother's Keeper" Initiative

East Room

3:43 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. Well, good afternoon, everybody.

AUDIENCE: Good afternoon.

THE PRESIDENT: Welcome to the White House. And thank you, Christian, for that outstanding introduction. And thank you for cheering for the White Sox, which is the right thing to do. (Laughter.) Like your parents and your teachers, I could not be prouder of you. I could not be prouder of the other young men who are here today. But just so we're clear -- you're only excused for one day of school. (Laughter.) And I'm assuming you've got your assignments with you so that you can catch up -- perhaps even on the flight back. (Laughter.)

As Christian mentioned, I first met Christian about a year ago. I visited the Hyde Park Academy in Chicago, which is only about a mile from my house. And Christian was part of this program called "Becoming a Man." It's a program that Mayor Rahm Emanuel introduced to me. And it helps young men who show a lot of potential but may have gotten in some trouble to stay on the right path.

They get help with schoolwork, but they also learn life skills like how to be a responsible citizen, and how to deal with life's challenges, and how to manage frustrations in a constructive way, and how to set goals for themselves. And it works. One study found that, among young men who participate in the BAM program, arrests for violent crimes dropped 44 percent, and they were more likely to graduate from high school. (Applause.)

So as Christian mentioned, during my visit, they're in a circle and I sat down in the circle, and we went around, led by their counselor, and guys talked about their lives, talked about their stories. They talked about what they were struggling with, and how they were trying to do the right thing, and how sometimes they didn't always do the right thing. And when it was my turn, I explained to them that when I was their age I was a lot like them. I didn't have a dad in the house. And I was angry about it, even though I didn't necessarily realize it at the time. I made bad choices. I got high without always thinking about the harm that it could do. I didn't always take school as seriously as I should have. I made excuses. Sometimes I sold myself short.

And I remember when I was saying this -- Christian, you may remember this -- after I was finished, the guy sitting next to me said, "Are you talking about you?" (Laughter.) I said, yes.

And the point was I could see myself in these young men. And the only difference is that I grew up in an environment that was a little bit more forgiving, so when I made a mistake the consequences were not as severe. I had people who encouraged me -- not just my mom and grandparents, but wonderful teachers and community leaders -- and they'd push me to work hard and study hard and make the most of myself. And if I didn't listen they said it again. And if I didn't listen they said it a third time. And they would give me second chances, and third chances. They never gave up on me, and so I didn't give up on myself.

I told these young men my story then, and I repeat it now because I firmly believe that every child deserves the same chances that I had. And that's why we're here today -- to do what we can, in this year of action, to give more young Americans the support they need to make good choices, and to be resilient, and to overcome obstacles, and achieve their dreams.

This is an issue of national importance -- it's as important as any issue that I work on. It's an issue that goes to the very heart of why I ran for President -- because if America stands for anything, it stands for the idea of opportunity for everybody; the notion that no matter who you are, or where you came from, or the circumstances

into which you are born, if you work hard, if you take responsibility, then you can make it in this country. (Applause.) That's the core idea.

And that's the idea behind everything that I'll do this year, and for the rest of my presidency. Because at a time when the economy is growing, we've got to make sure that every American shares in that growth, not just a few. And that means guaranteeing every child in America has access to a world-class education. It means creating more jobs and empowering more workers with the skills they need to do those jobs. It means making sure that hard work pays off with wages you can live on and savings you can retire on and health care that you can count on. It means building more ladders of opportunity into the middle class for anybody who's willing to work hard to climb them.

Those are national issues. They have an impact on everybody. And the problem of stagnant wages and economic insecurity and stalled mobility are issues that affect all demographic groups all across the country. My administration's policies -- from early childhood education to job training, to minimum wages -- are designed to give a hand up to everybody, every child, every American willing to work hard and take responsibility for their own success. That's the larger agenda.

But the plain fact is there are some Americans who, in the aggregate, are consistently doing worse in our society -- groups that have had the odds stacked against them in unique ways that require unique solutions; groups who've seen fewer opportunities that have spanned generations. And by almost every measure, the group that is facing some of the most severe challenges in the 21st century in this country are boys and young men of color.

Now, to say this is not to deny the enormous strides we've made in closing the opportunity gaps that marred our history for so long. My presence is a testimony to that progress. Across this country, in government, in business, in our military, in communities in every state we see extraordinary examples of African American and Latino men who are standing tall and leading, and building businesses, and making our country stronger. Some of those role models who have defied the odds are with us here today -- the Magic Johnsons or the Colin Powells who are doing extraordinary things -- the Anthony Foxxes.

Anthony, yesterday he and I were talking about how both of us never knew our dads, and shared that sense of both how hard that had been but also how that had driven us to succeed in many ways. So there are examples of extraordinary achievement. We all know that. We don't need to stereotype and pretend that there's only dysfunction out there. But 50 years after Dr. King talked about his dream for America's children, the stubborn fact is that the life chances of the average black or brown child in this country lags behind by almost every measure, and is worse for boys and young men.

If you're African American, there's about a one in two chance you grow up without a father in your house -- one in two. If you're Latino, you have about a one in four chance. We know that boys who grow up without a father are more likely to be poor, more likely to underperform in school.

As a black student, you are far less likely than a white student to be able to read proficiently by the time you are in 4th grade. By the time you reach high school, you're far more likely to have been suspended or expelled. There's a higher chance you end up in the criminal justice system, and a far higher chance that you are the victim of a violent crime. Fewer young black and Latino men participate in the labor force compared to young white men. And all of this translates into higher unemployment rates and poverty rates as adults.

And the worst part is we've become numb to these statistics. We're not surprised by them. We take them as the norm. We just assume this is an inevitable part of American life, instead of the outrage that it is. (Applause.) That's how we think about it. It's like a cultural backdrop for us -- in movies and television. We just assume, of course, it's going to be like that. But these statistics should break our hearts. And they should compel us to act.

Michelle and I are blessed with two beautiful daughters. We don't have a son. But I know if I had a son, on the

day he was born I would have felt everything I felt with Malia and Sasha -- the awe, the gratitude, the overwhelming sense of responsibility to do everything in my power to protect that amazing new life from this big world out there. And just as our daughters are growing up into wonderful, beautiful young women, I'd want my son to feel a sense of boundless possibility. And I'd want him to have independence and confidence. And I'd want him to have empathy and compassion. I'd want him to have a sense of diligence and commitment, and a respect for others and himself -- the tools that he'd need to succeed.

I don't have a son, but as parents, that's what we should want not just for our children, but for all children. (Applause.) And I believe the continuing struggles of so many boys and young men -- the fact that too many of them are falling by the wayside, dropping out, unemployed, involved in negative behavior, going to jail, being profiled -- this is a moral issue for our country. It's also an economic issue for our country.

After all, these boys are a growing segment of our population. They are our future workforce. When, generation after generation, they lag behind, our economy suffers. Our family structure suffers. Our civic life suffers. Cycles of hopelessness breed violence and mistrust. And our country is a little less than what we know it can be. So we need to change the statistics -- not just for the sake of the young men and boys, but for the sake of America's future.

That's why, in the aftermath of the Trayvon Martin verdict, with all the emotions and controversy that it sparked, I spoke about the need to bolster and reinforce our young men, and give them the sense that their country cares about them and values them and is willing to invest in them. (Applause.) And I'm grateful that Trayvon's parents, Sybrina and Tracy, are here with us today, along with Jordan Davis's parents, Lucy and Ron.

In my State of the Union address last month, I said I'd pick up the phone and reach out to Americans willing to help more young men of color facing especially tough odds to stay on track and reach their full potential, so America can reach its full potential. And that's what today is all about.

After months of conversation with a wide range of people, we've pulled together private philanthropies and businesses, mayors, state and local leaders, faith leaders, nonprofits, all who are committed to creating more pathways to success. And we're committed to building on what works. And we call it "My Brother's Keeper."

Now, just to be clear -- "My Brother's Keeper" is not some big, new government program. In my State of the Union address, I outlined the work that needs to be done for broad-based economic growth and opportunity for all Americans. We have manufacturing hubs, infrastructure spending -- I've been traveling around the country for the last several weeks talking about what we need to do to grow the economy and expand opportunity for everybody. And in the absence of some of those macroeconomic policies that create more good jobs and restore middle-class security, it's going to be harder for everyone to make progress. And for the last four years, we've been working through initiatives like Promise Zones to help break down the structural barriers -- from lack of transportation to substandard schools -- that afflict some of this country's most impoverished counties, and we'll continue to promote these efforts in urban and rural counties alike.

Those are all government initiatives, government programs that we think are good for all Americans and we're going to keep on pushing for them. But what we're talking about here today with "My Brother's Keeper" is a more focused effort on boys and young men of color who are having a particularly tough time. And in this effort, government cannot play the only -- or even the primary -- role. We can help give every child access to quality preschool and help them start learning from an early age, but we can't replace the power of a parent who's reading to that child. We can reform our criminal justice system to ensure that it's not infected with bias, but nothing keeps a young man out of trouble like a father who takes an active role in his son's life. (Applause.)

In other words, broadening the horizons for our young men and giving them the tools they need to succeed will require a sustained effort from all of us. Parents will have to parent -- and turn off the television, and help with

homework. (Applause.) Teachers will need to do their part to make sure our kids don't fall behind and that we're setting high expectations for those children and not giving up on them. Business leaders will need to create more mentorships and apprenticeships to show more young people what careers are out there. Tech leaders will need to open young eyes to fields like computer science and engineering. Faith leaders will need to help our young men develop the values and ethical framework that is the foundation for a good and productive life.

So we all have a job to do. And we can do it together -- black and white, urban and rural, Democrat and Republican. So often, the issues facing boys and young men of color get caught up in long-running ideological arguments about race and class, and crime and poverty, the role of government, partisan politics. We've all heard those arguments before. But the urgency of the situation requires us to move past some of those old arguments and focus on getting something done and focusing on what works. It doesn't mean the arguments are unimportant; it just means that they can't paralyze us. And there's enough goodwill and enough overlap and agreement that we should be able to go ahead and get some things done, without resolved everything about our history or our future.

Twenty years ago, Congresswoman Frederica Wilson started a program in the Miami public school system -- feel free to stand up. (Applause.) To help young boys at risk of dropping out of school. Today, it serves thousands of students in dozens of schools.

As Mayor of New York, Mayor Bloomberg -- Michael Bloomberg, who's here today, started a "Young Men's Initiative" for African-American and Latino boys, because he understood that in order for America to compete we need to make it easier for all our young people to do better in the classroom and find a job once they graduate.

A bipartisan group of mayors called "Cities United" has made this issue a priority in communities across the country. Senator Mike Lee -- a leader of the tea party -- has been working with Senator Dick Durbin -- a Democrat from my home state of Illinois -- to reduce disparities in our criminal justice system that have hit the African American and Latino communities especially hard.

So I want to thank everybody who's been doing incredible work -- many of the people who are here today, including members of Congress, who have been focused on this and are moving the needle in their communities and around the country.

They understand that giving every young person who's willing to work hard a shot at opportunity should not be a partisan issue. Yes, we need to train our workers, invest in our schools, make college more affordable -- and government has a role to play. And, yes, we need to encourage fathers to stick around, and remove the barriers to marriage, and talk openly about things like responsibility and faith and community. In the words of Dr. King, it is not either-or; it is both-and.

And if I can persuade Sharpton and O'Reilly to be in the same meeting -- (laughter and applause) -- then it means that there are people of good faith who want to get some stuff done, even if we don't agree on everything. And that's our focus.

While there may not be much of an appetite in Congress for sweeping new programs or major new initiatives right now, we all know we can't wait. And so the good news is folks in the private sector who know how important boosting the achievement of young men of color is to this country -- they are ready to step up.

Today, I'm pleased to announce that some of the most forward-looking foundations in America are looking to invest at least \$200 million over the next five years -- on top of the \$150 million that they've already invested -- to test which strategies are working for our kids and expand them in cities across the country. (Applause.)

Many of these folks have been on the front lines in this fight for a long time. What's more, they're joined by business leaders, corporate leaders, entrepreneurs who are stepping forward to support this effort as well. And

my administration is going to do its part. So today after my remarks are done, I'm going to pen this presidential memorandum directing the federal government not to spend more money, but to do things smarter, to determine what we can do right now to improve the odds for boys and young men of color, and make sure our agencies are working more effectively with each other, with those businesses, with those philanthropies, and with local communities to implement proven solutions.

And part of what makes this initiative so promising is that we actually know what works -- and we know when it works. Now, what do I mean by that? Over the years, we've identified key moments in the life of a boy or a young man of color that will, more often than not, determine whether he succeeds, or falls through the cracks. We know the data. We know the statistics. And if we can focus on those key moments, those life-changing points in their lives, you can have a big impact; you can boost the odds for more of our kids.

First of all, we know that during the first three years of life, a child born into a low-income family hears 30 million fewer words than a child born into a well-off family. And everybody knows babies are sponges, they just soak that up. A 30-million-word deficit is hard to make up. And if a black or Latino kid isn't ready for kindergarten, he's half as likely to finish middle school with strong academic and social skills. So by giving more of our kids access to high-quality early education -- and by helping parents get the tools they need to help their children succeed -- we can give more kids a better shot at the career they're capable of, and the life that will make us all better off. So that's point number one right at the beginning.

Point number two, if a child can't read well by the time he's in 3rd grade, he's four times less likely to graduate from high school by age 19 than one who can. And if he happens to be poor, he's six times less likely to graduate. So by boosting reading levels, we can help more of our kids make the grade, keep on advancing, reach that day that so many parents dream of -- until it comes close and then you start tearing up -- and that's when they're walking across the stage, holding that high school diploma.

Number three, we know that Latino kids are almost twice as likely as white kids to be suspended from school. Black kids are nearly four times as likely. And if a student has been suspended even once by the time they're in 9th grade they are twice as likely to drop out.

That's why my administration has been working with schools on alternatives to the so-called "zero tolerance" guidelines -- not because teachers or administrators or fellow students should have to put up with bad behavior, but because there are ways to modify bad behavior that lead to good behavior -- as opposed to bad behavior out of school. We can make classrooms good places for learning for everybody without jeopardizing a child's future. (Applause.) And by building on that work, we can keep more of our young men where they belong -- in the classroom, learning, growing, gaining the skills they need to succeed.

Number four, we know that students of color are far more likely than their white classmates to find themselves in trouble with the law. If a student gets arrested, he's almost twice as likely to drop out of school. By making sure our criminal justice system doesn't just function as a pipeline from underfunded schools to overcrowded jails, we can help young men of color stay out of prison, stay out of jail. And that means then, they're more likely to be employable, and to invest in their own families, and to pass on a legacy of love and hope.

And finally, we know young black men are twice as likely as young white men to be "disconnected" -- not in school, not working. We've got to reconnect them. We've got to give more of these young men access to mentors. We've got to continue to encourage responsible fatherhood. We've got to provide more pathways to apply to college or find a job. We can keep them from falling through the cracks, and help them lay a foundation for a career and a family and a better life.

In the discussion before we came in, General Powell talked about the fact that there are going to be some kids who just don't have a family at home that is functional, no matter how hard we try. But just an adult, any adult

who's paying attention can make a difference. Any adult who cares can make a difference.

Magic was talking about being in a school in Chicago, and rather than going to the school he brought the school to the company, All-State, that was doing the work. And suddenly, just that one conversation meant these young men saw something different. A world opened up for them. It doesn't take that much. But it takes more than we're doing now.

And that's what "My Brother's Keeper" is all about -- helping more of our young people stay on track; providing the support they need to think more broadly about their future; building on what works, when it works, in those critical life-changing moments. And when I say, by the way, building on what works, it means looking at the actual evidence of what works. There are a lot of programs out there that sound good, are well-intentioned, well-inspired, but they're not actually having an impact. We don't have enough money or time or resources to invest in things that don't work, so we've got to be pretty hard-headed about saying if something is not working, let's stop doing it. Let's do things that work. And we shouldn't care whether it was a Democratic program or a Republican program, or a faith-based program or -- if it works, we should support it. If it doesn't, we shouldn't.

And all the time recognizing that "my neighbor's child is my child" -- that each of us has an obligation to give every child the same chance this country gave so many of us.

So, in closing, let me just say this. None of this is going to be easy. This is not a one-year proposition. It's not a two-year proposition. It's going to take time. We're dealing with complicated issues that run deep in our history, run deep in our society, and are entrenched in our minds. And addressing these issues will have to be a two-way bargain. Because no matter how much the community chips in, it's ultimately going to be up to these young men and all the young men who are out there to step up and seize responsibility for their own lives. (Applause.)

And that's why I want to close by speaking directly to the young men who are here today and all the boys and young men who are watching at home. Part of my message, part of our message in this initiative is "no excuses." Government and private sector and philanthropy and all the faith communities -- we all have a responsibility to help provide you the tools you need; we've got to help you knock down some of the barriers that you experience. That's what we're here for. But you've got responsibilities, too.

And I know you can meet the challenge -- many of you already are -- if you make the effort. It may be hard, but you will have to reject the cynicism that says the circumstances of your birth or society's lingering injustices necessarily define you and your future. It will take courage, but you will have to tune out the naysayers who say the deck is stacked against you, you might as well just give up -- or settle into the stereotype.

It's not going to happen overnight, but you're going to have to set goals and you're going to have to work for those goals. Nothing will be given to you. The world is tough out there, there's a lot of competition for jobs and college positions, and everybody has to work hard. But I know you guys can succeed. We've got young men up here who are starting to make those good choices because somebody stepped in and gave them a sense of how they might go about it.

And I know it can work because of men like Maurice Owens, who's here today. I want to tell Moe's story just real quick.

When Moe was four years old, he moved with his mom Chauvet from South Carolina to the Bronx. His mom didn't have a lot of money, and they lived in a tough neighborhood. Crime was high. A lot of young men ended up in jail or worse. But she knew the importance of education, so she got Moe into the best elementary school that she could find. And every morning, she put him on a bus; every night, she welcomed him when he came home.

She took the initiative, she eventually found a sponsorship program that allowed Moe to attend a good high school. And while many of his friends got into trouble, some of it pretty serious, Moe just kept on getting on the

bus, and kept on working hard and reaching for something better. And he had some adults in his life that were willing to give him advice and help him along the way. And he ended up going to college. And he ended up serving his country in the Air Force. And today, Moe works in the White House, just two doors down from the Oval Office, as the Special Assistant to my Chief of Staff. (Applause.) And Moe never misses a chance to tell kids who grew up just like he did that if he can make it, they can, too.

Moe and his mom are here today, so I want to thank them both for this incredible example. Stand up, Moe, and show off your mom there. (Applause.) Good job, Moe.

So Moe didn't make excuses. His mom had high expectations. America needs more citizens like Moe. We need more young men like Christian. We will beat the odds. We need to give every child, no matter what they look like, where they live, the chance to reach their full potential. Because if we do -- if we help these wonderful young men become better husbands and fathers, and well-educated, hardworking, good citizens -- then not only will they contribute to the growth and prosperity of this country, but they will pass on those lessons on to their children, on to their grandchildren, will start a different cycle. And this country will be richer and stronger for it for generations to come.

So let's get going. Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America. (Applause.)

END 4:17 P.M. EST

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/02/27/remarks-president-my-brothers-keeper-initiative>



FAYETTEVILLE, N.Y. — ON Feb. 14, a group of activists in Charleston, S.C., unveiled a life-size statue of Denmark Vesey, a black abolitionist who was executed in 1822 for leading a failed slave rebellion in the city.

For many people, Vesey was a freedom fighter and a proto-civil rights leader. But the statue, the work of nearly two decades, brought out furious counterattacks; one recent critic [called him](#) a “terrorist,” and a historian denounced him as “a man determined to create mayhem.”

Radio hosts, academics and newspaper bloggers condemned the project as “Charleston’s parallel to the 1990s O. J. Simpson verdict,” and suggested other African-Americans they believed more appropriate subjects of memorialization, like the rock pioneer Chubby Checker or the astronaut Ronald E. McNair.

There’s no doubt that Vesey was a violent man, who planned to attack and kill Charleston whites. But those who condemn him as a terrorist merely demonstrate how little we, as a culture, understand about slavery, and what it forced the men and women it ensnared to do.

Vesey was as complicated a figure as the world that produced him. He was born around 1767, probably on the island of St. Thomas. As a child he was purchased as a cabin boy by Joseph Vesey, a Charleston-based slaver, who settled in the city just after the Revolution.

In 1799, the huge, bright, domestic slave won \$1,500 in a city lottery and used \$600 of that money to purchase his freedom. But his wife’s master evidently refused to sell her to him, and Charleston whites continued to own her and many of his children.

By early 1822, Vesey had begun to develop a plan for city slaves to rise up. On July 14, they would slay their masters as they slept, fight their way toward the docks and hoist sail for the black republic of Haiti,

where slaves had successfully overthrown the French colonists two decades earlier.

Vesey had not lived through the horrors of slavery in the Caribbean and South Carolina by turning the other cheek. With a tough-minded brutality that shocks modern critics of the statue, he worried little about the civilians who might fall as the rebelling slaves worked their way to the docks. While discussing the men who owned his wife and family with his fellow plotters, Vesey picked up a large snake in his path and crushed it with one hand. “That’s the way we would do them,” he said calmly.

When the plot was foiled and Vesey and his co-conspirators captured, white Charleston erupted in anger. During his trial in June 1822, the justices charged him with “a diabolical plot” designed to instigate “blood, outrage, rapine, and conflagration.” Outside the castle-like structure, black women sang and prayed as city authorities sentenced Vesey and 34 of his followers to hang.

The complexity of Vesey’s story is hard to grasp, and wrestling with slavery and violence is hardly unique to South Carolina; white Southerners may rightly wonder when Manhattan will erect a statue to the slave Caesar Varick, who was burned alive in 1741 for plotting a revolt similar to Vesey’s.

More than a decade ago, while I was giving a talk on Vesey in Charleston, a member of the audience challenged my view that what Vesey wished to accomplish — the freedom for his friends and family — could be a good thing, on the grounds that he went about it the wrong way. “Why not work within the system for liberation,” the man asked, or even “stage a protest march?”

Although well intentioned, such questions reveal how far American society still has to travel before we reach a sophisticated understanding of the past. There was no “system” for Vesey to work within; his state had flatly banned private manumissions, or the freeing of slaves, in 1820. The only path to freedom was to sharpen a sword. Americans today can admire the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his 1963 nonviolent March on Washington, but his world was not Vesey’s, and we must understand that.

It is ironic that such historical myopia should be found in Charleston, which today bills itself as one of the nation’s most historic cities. Each afternoon horse-drawn carriages transport tourists about its narrow streets. But as the fight over the Vesey statue suggests, tour guides tell at best an incomplete story.

They often ignore, for example, the fact that of the roughly 400,000 Africans sold into what is now the United States, approximately 40 percent landed on Sullivan’s Island, a hellish Ellis Island of sorts just outside of Charleston Harbor. Today nothing commemorates that ugly fact but a simple bench, established by the author Toni Morrison using private funds.

Critics of the Vesey statue may not care for his methods (even though their city bristles with monuments and statues of men who picked up a gun to fight for slavery in 1861). But they need to acknowledge that his views were shaped by the whip. Upon being told that he was going to hang, Vesey allegedly whispered that “the work of insurrection would go on.” When it comes to facing up to unhappy truths about our history, he was more right than he knew.

[Douglas R. Egerton](#), a professor of history at Le Moyne College, is the author of “He Shall Go Out Free: The Lives of Denmark Vesey” and, most recently, “The Wars of Reconstruction: The Brief, Violent History of America’s Most Progressive Era.”

A version of this op-ed appears in print on February 26, 2014, on page A25 of the New York edition with the headline: Abolitionist or Terrorist?.

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/26/opinion/abolitionist-or-terrorist.html?_r=0

2011, April 13 Is Sugar Toxic?



Kenji Aoki for The New York Times

By **GARY TAUBES**

Published: **April 13, 2011**

On May 26, 2009, Robert Lustig gave a lecture called “Sugar: The Bitter Truth,” which was [posted on YouTube](#) the following July. Since then, it has been viewed well over 800,000 times, gaining new viewers at a rate of about 50,000 per month, fairly remarkable numbers for a 90-minute discussion of the nuances of fructose biochemistry and human physiology.

[Q. and A With Gary Taubes](#)

The author answered reader questions on the Well blog.

Multimedia

What the average American consumes in added sugars:



[Graphic](#)

[High-Fructose Corn Syrup Consumption](#)



[Graphic](#)

Lustig is a specialist on pediatric hormone disorders and the leading expert in childhood obesity at the University of California, San Francisco, School of Medicine, which is one of the best medical schools in the country. He published his first paper on childhood obesity a dozen years ago, and he has been treating patients and doing research on the disorder ever since.

The viral success of his lecture, though, has little to do with Lustig's impressive credentials and far more with the persuasive case he makes that sugar is a "toxin" or a "poison," terms he uses together 13 times through the course of the lecture, in addition to the five references to sugar as merely "evil." And by "sugar," Lustig means not only the white granulated stuff that we put in coffee and sprinkle on cereal — technically known as sucrose — but also high-fructose corn syrup, which has already become without Lustig's help what he calls "the most demonized additive known to man."

It doesn't hurt Lustig's cause that he is a compelling public speaker. His critics argue that what makes him compelling is his practice of taking suggestive evidence and insisting that it's incontrovertible. Lustig certainly doesn't dabble in shades of gray. Sugar is not just an empty calorie, he says; its effect on us is much more insidious. "It's not about the calories," he says. "It has nothing to do with the calories. It's a poison by itself."

If Lustig is right, then our excessive consumption of sugar is the primary reason that the numbers of obese and diabetic Americans have skyrocketed in the past 30 years. But his argument implies more than that. If Lustig is right, it would mean that sugar is also the likely dietary cause of several other chronic ailments widely considered to be diseases of Western lifestyles — heart disease, hypertension and many common cancers among them.

The number of viewers Lustig has attracted suggests that people are paying attention to his argument. When I set out to interview public health authorities and researchers for this article, they would often initiate the interview with some variation of the comment "surely you've spoken to Robert Lustig," not because Lustig has done any of the key research on sugar himself, which he hasn't, but because he's willing to insist publicly and unambiguously, when most researchers are not, that sugar is a toxic substance that people abuse. In Lustig's view, sugar should be thought of, like cigarettes and alcohol, as something that's killing us.

This brings us to the salient question: Can sugar possibly be as bad as Lustig says it is?

It's one thing to suggest, as most nutritionists will, that a healthful diet includes more fruits and vegetables, and maybe less fat, red meat and salt, or less of everything. It's entirely different to claim that one particularly cherished aspect of our diet might not just be an unhealthful indulgence but actually be toxic, that when you bake your children a birthday cake or give them lemonade on a hot summer day, you may be doing them more harm than good, despite all the love that goes with it. Suggesting that sugar might kill us is what zealots do. But Lustig, who has genuine expertise, has accumulated and synthesized a mass of evidence, which he finds compelling enough to convict sugar. His critics consider that evidence insufficient, but there's no way to know who might be right, or what must be done to find out, without discussing it.

If I didn't buy this argument myself, I wouldn't be writing about it here. And I also have a disclaimer to acknowledge. I've spent much of the last decade doing journalistic research on diet and chronic disease — some of the more contrarian findings, [on dietary fat](#), appeared in this magazine — and I have come to conclusions similar to Lustig's.

The history of the debate over the health effects of sugar has gone on far longer than you might imagine. It

is littered with erroneous statements and conclusions because even the supposed authorities had no true understanding of what they were talking about. They didn't know, quite literally, what they meant by the word "sugar" and therefore what the implications were.

So let's start by clarifying a few issues, beginning with Lustig's use of the word "sugar" to mean both sucrose — beet and cane sugar, whether white or brown — *and* high-fructose corn syrup. This is a critical point, particularly because high-fructose corn syrup has indeed become "the flashpoint for everybody's distrust of processed foods," says Marion Nestle, a New York University nutritionist and the author of "Food Politics."

This development is recent and borders on humorous. In the early 1980s, high-fructose corn syrup replaced sugar in sodas and other products in part because refined sugar then had the reputation as a generally noxious nutrient. ("Villain in Disguise?" asked a headline in this paper in 1977, before answering in the affirmative.) High-fructose corn syrup was portrayed by the food industry as a healthful alternative, and that's how the public perceived it. It was also cheaper than sugar, which didn't hurt its commercial prospects. Now the tide is rolling the other way, and refined sugar is making a commercial comeback as the supposedly healthful alternative to this noxious corn-syrup stuff. "Industry after industry is replacing their product with sucrose and advertising it as such — 'No High-Fructose Corn Syrup,'" Nestle notes.

But marketing aside, the two sweeteners are effectively identical in their biological effects. "High-fructose corn syrup, sugar — no difference," is how Lustig put it in a lecture that I attended in San Francisco last December. "The point is they're each bad — equally bad, equally poisonous."

Refined sugar (that is, sucrose) is made up of a molecule of the carbohydrate glucose, bonded to a molecule of the carbohydrate fructose — a 50-50 mixture of the two. The fructose, which is almost twice as sweet as glucose, is what distinguishes sugar from other carbohydrate-rich foods like bread or potatoes that break down upon digestion to glucose alone. The more fructose in a substance, the sweeter it will be. High-fructose corn syrup, as it is most commonly consumed, is 55 percent fructose, and the remaining 45 percent is nearly all glucose. It was first marketed in the late 1970s and was created to be indistinguishable from refined sugar when used in soft drinks. Because each of these sugars ends up as glucose and fructose in our guts, our bodies react the same way to both, and the physiological effects are identical. In a 2010 review of the relevant science, Luc Tappy, a researcher at the University of Lausanne in Switzerland who is considered by biochemists who study fructose to be the world's foremost authority on the subject, said there was "not the single hint" that H.F.C.S. was more deleterious than other sources of sugar.

The question, then, isn't whether high-fructose corn syrup is worse than sugar; it's what do they do to us, and how do they do it? The conventional wisdom has long been that the worst that can be said about sugars of any kind is that they cause tooth decay and represent "empty calories" that we eat in excess because they taste so good.

By this logic, sugar-sweetened beverages (or H.F.C.S.-sweetened beverages, as the Sugar Association prefers they are called) are bad for us not because there's anything particularly toxic about the sugar they contain but just because people consume too many of them.

Those organizations that now advise us to cut down on our sugar consumption — the Department of Agriculture, for instance, in its recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans, or the American Heart Association in guidelines released in September 2009 (of which Lustig was a co-author) — do so for this reason. Refined sugar and H.F.C.S. don't come with any protein, vitamins, minerals, antioxidants or fiber, and so

they either displace other more nutritious elements of our diet or are eaten over and above what we need to sustain our weight, and this is why we get fatter.

Whether the empty-calories argument is true, it's certainly convenient. It allows everyone to assign blame for obesity and, by extension, diabetes — two conditions so intimately linked that some authorities have taken to calling them “diabesity” — to overeating of all foods, or underexercising, because a calorie is a calorie. “This isn't about demonizing any industry,” as Michelle Obama said about her Let's Move program to combat the epidemic of childhood obesity. Instead it's about getting us — or our children — to move more and eat less, reduce our portion sizes, cut back on snacks.

Lustig's argument, however, is not about the consumption of empty calories — and biochemists have made the same case previously, though not so publicly. It is that sugar has unique characteristics, specifically in the way the human body metabolizes the fructose in it, that may make it singularly harmful, at least if consumed in sufficient quantities.

The phrase Lustig uses when he describes this concept is “isocaloric but not isometabolic.” This means we can eat 100 calories of glucose (from a potato or bread or other starch) or 100 calories of sugar (half glucose and half fructose), and they will be metabolized differently and have a different effect on the body. The calories are the same, but the metabolic consequences are quite different.

The fructose component of sugar and H.F.C.S. is metabolized primarily by the liver, while the glucose from sugar and starches is metabolized by every cell in the body. Consuming sugar (fructose and glucose) means more work for the liver than if you consumed the same number of calories of starch (glucose). And if you take that sugar in liquid form — soda or fruit juices — the fructose and glucose will hit the liver more quickly than if you consume them, say, in an apple (or several apples, to get what researchers would call the equivalent dose of sugar). The speed with which the liver has to do its work will also affect how it metabolizes the fructose and glucose.

In animals, or at least in laboratory rats and mice, it's clear that if the fructose hits the liver in sufficient quantity and with sufficient speed, the liver will convert much of it to fat. This apparently induces a condition known as insulin resistance, which is now considered the fundamental problem in obesity, and the underlying defect in heart disease and in the type of diabetes, type 2, that is common to obese and overweight individuals. It might also be the underlying defect in many cancers.

If what happens in laboratory rodents also happens in humans, and if we are eating enough sugar to make it happen, then we are in trouble.

The last time an agency of the federal government looked into the question of sugar and health in any detail was in 2005, in a report by the Institute of Medicine, a branch of the National Academies. The authors of the report acknowledged that plenty of evidence suggested that sugar could increase the risk of heart disease and diabetes — even raising LDL cholesterol, known as the “bad cholesterol” — but did not consider the research to be definitive. There was enough ambiguity, they concluded, that they couldn't even set an upper limit on how much sugar constitutes too much. Referring back to the 2005 report, an Institute of Medicine report released last fall reiterated, “There is a lack of scientific agreement about the amount of sugars that can be consumed in a healthy diet.” This was the same conclusion that the Food and Drug Administration came to when it last assessed the sugar question, back in 1986. The [F.D.A. report](#) was perceived as an exoneration of sugar, and that perception influenced the treatment of sugar in the landmark reports on diet and health that came after.

The Sugar Association and the Corn Refiners Association have also [portrayed the 1986 F.D.A.](#) report as clearing sugar of nutritional crimes, but what it concluded was actually something else entirely. To be precise, the F.D.A. reviewers said that other than its contribution to calories, “no conclusive evidence on sugars demonstrates a hazard to the general public when sugars are consumed at the levels that are now current.” This is another way of saying that the evidence by no means refuted the kinds of claims that Lustig is making now and other researchers were making then, just that it wasn’t definitive or unambiguous.

What we have to keep in mind, says Walter Glinsmann, the F.D.A. administrator who was the primary author on the 1986 report and who now is an adviser to the Corn Refiners Association, is that sugar and high-fructose corn syrup might be toxic, as Lustig argues, but so might any substance if it’s consumed in ways or in quantities that are unnatural for humans. The question is always at what dose does a substance go from being harmless to harmful? How much do we have to consume before this happens?

When Glinsmann and his F.D.A. co-authors decided no conclusive evidence demonstrated harm at the levels of sugar then being consumed, they estimated those levels at 40 pounds per person per year beyond what we might get naturally in fruits and vegetables — 40 pounds per person per year of “added sugars” as nutritionists now call them. This is 200 calories per day of sugar, which is less than the amount in a can and a half of Coca-Cola or two cups of apple juice. If that’s indeed all we consume, most nutritionists today would be delighted, including Lustig.

But 40 pounds per year happened to be 35 pounds less than what Department of Agriculture analysts said we were consuming at the time — 75 pounds per person per year — and the U.S.D.A. estimates are typically considered to be the most reliable. By the early 2000s, according to the U.S.D.A., we had increased our consumption to more than 90 pounds per person per year.

That this increase happened to coincide with the current epidemics of obesity and diabetes is one reason that it’s tempting to blame sugars — sucrose and high-fructose corn syrup — for the problem. In 1980, roughly one in seven Americans was obese, and almost six million were diabetic, and the obesity rates, at least, hadn’t changed significantly in the 20 years previously. By the early 2000s, when sugar consumption peaked, one in every three Americans was obese, and 14 million were diabetic.

This correlation between sugar consumption and diabetes is what defense attorneys call circumstantial evidence. It’s more compelling than it otherwise might be, though, because the last time sugar consumption jumped markedly in this country, it was also associated with a diabetes epidemic.

In the early 20th century, many of the leading authorities on diabetes in North America and Europe (including Frederick Banting, who shared the 1923 Nobel Prize for the discovery of insulin) suspected that sugar causes diabetes based on the observation that the disease was rare in populations that didn’t consume refined sugar and widespread in those that did. In 1924, Haven Emerson, director of the institute of public health at Columbia University, reported that diabetes deaths in New York City had increased as much as 15-fold since the Civil War years, and that deaths increased as much as fourfold in some U.S. cities between 1900 and 1920 alone. This coincided, he noted, with an equally significant increase in sugar consumption — almost doubling from 1890 to the early 1920s — with the birth and subsequent growth of the candy and soft-drink industries.

Emerson’s argument was countered by Elliott Joslin, a leading authority on diabetes, and Joslin won out. But his argument was fundamentally flawed. Simply put, it went like this: The Japanese eat lots of rice, and Japanese diabetics are few and far between; rice is mostly carbohydrate, which suggests that sugar, also a

carbohydrate, does not cause diabetes. But sugar and rice are not identical merely because they're both carbohydrates. Joslin could not know at the time that the fructose content of sugar affects how we metabolize it.

Joslin was also unaware that the Japanese ate little sugar. In the early 1960s, the Japanese were eating as little sugar as Americans were a century earlier, maybe less, which means that the Japanese experience could have been used to support the idea that sugar causes diabetes. Still, with Joslin arguing in edition after edition of his seminal textbook that sugar played no role in diabetes, it eventually took on the aura of undisputed truth.

Until Lustig came along, the last time an academic forcefully put forward the sugar-as-toxin thesis was in the 1970s, when John Yudkin, a leading authority on nutrition in the United Kingdom, published a polemic on sugar called "Sweet and Dangerous." Through the 1960s Yudkin did a series of experiments feeding sugar and starch to rodents, chickens, rabbits, pigs and college students. He found that the sugar invariably raised blood levels of triglycerides (a technical term for fat), which was then, as now, considered a risk factor for heart disease. Sugar also raised insulin levels in Yudkin's experiments, which linked sugar directly to type 2 diabetes. Few in the medical community took Yudkin's ideas seriously, largely because he was also arguing that dietary fat and saturated fat were harmless. This set Yudkin's sugar hypothesis directly against the growing acceptance of the idea, prominent to this day, that dietary fat was the cause of heart disease, a notion championed by the University of Minnesota nutritionist Ancel Keys.

A common assumption at the time was that if one hypothesis was right, then the other was most likely wrong. Either fat caused heart disease by raising cholesterol, or sugar did by raising triglycerides. "The theory that diets high in sugar are an important cause of atherosclerosis and heart disease does not have wide support among experts in the field, who say that fats and cholesterol are the more likely culprits," as Jane E. Brody wrote in *The Times* in 1977.

At the time, many of the key observations cited to argue that dietary fat caused heart disease actually support the sugar theory as well. During the Korean War, pathologists doing autopsies on American soldiers killed in battle noticed that many had significant plaques in their arteries, even those who were still teenagers, while the Koreans killed in battle did not. The atherosclerotic plaques in the Americans were attributed to the fact that they ate high-fat diets and the Koreans ate low-fat. But the Americans were also eating high-sugar diets, while the Koreans, like the Japanese, were not.

In 1970, Keys published the results of a landmark study in nutrition known as the Seven Countries Study. Its results were perceived by the medical community and the wider public as compelling evidence that saturated-fat consumption is the best dietary predictor of heart disease. But sugar consumption in the seven countries studied was almost equally predictive. So it was possible that Yudkin was right, and Keys was wrong, or that they could both be right. The evidence has always been able to go either way.

European clinicians tended to side with Yudkin; Americans with Keys. The situation wasn't helped, as one of Yudkin's colleagues later told me, by the fact that "there was quite a bit of loathing" between the two nutritionists themselves. In 1971, Keys published an article attacking Yudkin and describing his evidence against sugar as "flimsy indeed." He treated Yudkin as a figure of scorn, and Yudkin never managed to shake the portrayal.

By the end of the 1970s, any scientist who studied the potentially deleterious effects of sugar in the diet, according to Sheldon Reiser, who did just that at the U.S.D.A.'s Carbohydrate Nutrition Laboratory in

Beltsville, Md., and talked about it publicly, was endangering his reputation. “Yudkin was so discredited,” Reiser said to me. “He was ridiculed in a way. And anybody else who said something bad about sucrose, they’d say, ‘He’s just like Yudkin.’ ”

What has changed since then, other than Americans getting fatter and more diabetic? It wasn’t so much that researchers learned anything particularly new about the effects of sugar or high-fructose corn syrup in the human body. Rather the context of the science changed: physicians and medical authorities came to accept the idea that a condition known as [metabolic syndrome](#) is a major, if not *the* major, risk factor for heart disease and diabetes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [now estimate](#) that some 75 million Americans have metabolic syndrome. For those who have heart attacks, metabolic syndrome will very likely be the reason.

The first symptom doctors are told to look for in diagnosing metabolic syndrome is an expanding waistline. This means that if you’re overweight, there’s a good chance you have metabolic syndrome, and this is why you’re more likely to have a heart attack or become diabetic (or both) than someone who’s not. Although lean individuals, too, can have metabolic syndrome, and they are at greater risk of heart disease and diabetes than lean individuals without it.

Having metabolic syndrome is another way of saying that the cells in your body are actively ignoring the action of the hormone insulin — a condition known technically as being insulin-resistant. Because insulin resistance and metabolic syndrome still get remarkably little attention in the press (certainly compared with cholesterol), let me explain the basics.

You secrete insulin in response to the foods you eat — particularly the carbohydrates — to keep blood sugar in control after a meal. When your cells are resistant to insulin, your body (your pancreas, to be precise) responds to rising blood sugar by pumping out more and more insulin. Eventually the pancreas can no longer keep up with the demand or it gives in to what diabetologists call “pancreatic exhaustion.” Now your blood sugar will rise out of control, and you’ve got diabetes.

Not everyone with insulin resistance becomes diabetic; some continue to secrete enough insulin to overcome their cells’ resistance to the hormone. But having chronically elevated insulin levels has harmful effects of its own — heart disease, for one. A result is higher triglyceride levels and blood pressure, lower levels of HDL cholesterol (the “good cholesterol”), further worsening the insulin resistance — this is metabolic syndrome.

When physicians assess your risk of heart disease these days, they will take into consideration your LDL cholesterol (the bad kind), but also these symptoms of metabolic syndrome. The idea, according to Scott Grundy, a University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center nutritionist and the chairman of the panel that produced the last edition of the National Cholesterol Education Program guidelines, is that heart attacks 50 years ago might have been caused by high cholesterol — particularly high LDL cholesterol — but since then we’ve all gotten fatter and more diabetic, and now it’s metabolic syndrome that’s the more conspicuous problem.

This raises two obvious questions. The first is what sets off metabolic syndrome to begin with, which is another way of asking, What causes the initial insulin resistance? There are several hypotheses, but researchers who study the mechanisms of insulin resistance now think that a likely cause is the accumulation of fat in the liver. When studies have been done trying to answer this question in humans, says Varman Samuel, who studies insulin resistance at Yale School of Medicine, the correlation between

liver fat and insulin resistance in patients, lean or obese, is “remarkably strong.” What it looks like, Samuel says, is that “when you deposit fat in the liver, that’s when you become insulin-resistant.”

That raises the other obvious question: What causes the liver to accumulate fat in humans? A common assumption is that simply getting fatter leads to a fatty liver, but this does not explain fatty liver in lean people. Some of it could be attributed to genetic predisposition. But harking back to Lustig, there’s also the very real possibility that it is caused by sugar.

As it happens, metabolic syndrome and insulin resistance are the reasons that many of the researchers today studying fructose became interested in the subject to begin with. If you want to cause insulin resistance in laboratory rats, says Gerald Reaven, the Stanford University diabetologist who did much of the pioneering work on the subject, feeding them diets that are mostly fructose is an easy way to do it. It’s a “very obvious, very dramatic” effect, Reaven says.

By the early 2000s, researchers studying fructose metabolism had established certain findings unambiguously and had well-established biochemical explanations for what was happening. Feed animals enough pure fructose or enough sugar, and their livers convert the fructose into fat — the saturated fatty acid, palmitate, to be precise, that supposedly gives us heart disease when we eat it, by raising LDL cholesterol. The fat accumulates in the liver, and insulin resistance and metabolic syndrome follow.

Michael Pagliassotti, a Colorado State University biochemist who did many of the relevant animal studies in the late 1990s, says these changes can happen in as little as a week if the animals are fed sugar or fructose in huge amounts — 60 or 70 percent of the calories in their diets. They can take several months if the animals are fed something closer to what humans (in America) actually consume — around 20 percent of the calories in their diet. Stop feeding them the sugar, in either case, and the fatty liver promptly goes away, and with it the insulin resistance.

Similar effects can be shown in humans, although the researchers doing this work typically did the studies with only fructose — as Luc Tappy did in Switzerland or Peter Havel and Kimber Stanhope did at the University of California, Davis — and pure fructose is not the same thing as sugar or high-fructose corn syrup. When Tappy fed his human subjects the equivalent of the fructose in 8 to 10 cans of Coke or Pepsi a day — a “pretty high dose,” he says — their livers would start to become insulin-resistant, and their triglycerides would go up in just a few days. With lower doses, Tappy says, just as in the animal research, the same effects would appear, but it would take longer, a month or more.

Despite the steady accumulation of research, the evidence can still be criticized as falling far short of conclusive. The studies in rodents aren’t necessarily applicable to humans. And the kinds of studies that Tappy, Havel and Stanhope did — having real people drink beverages sweetened with fructose and comparing the effect with what happens when the same people or others drink beverages sweetened with glucose — aren’t applicable to real human experience, because we never naturally consume pure fructose. We always take it with glucose, in the nearly 50-50 combinations of sugar or high-fructose corn syrup. And then the amount of fructose or sucrose being fed in these studies, to the rodents or the human subjects, has typically been enormous.

This is why the research reviews on the subject invariably conclude that more research is necessary to establish at what dose sugar and high-fructose corn syrup start becoming what Lustig calls toxic. “There is clearly a need for intervention studies,” as Tappy recently phrased it in the technical jargon of the field, “in which the fructose intake of high-fructose consumers is reduced to better delineate the possible pathogenic

role of fructose. At present, short-term-intervention studies, however, suggest that a high-fructose intake consisting of soft drinks, sweetened juices or bakery products can increase the risk of metabolic and cardiovascular diseases.”

In simpler language, how much of this stuff do we have to eat or drink, and for how long, before it does to us what it does to laboratory rats? And is that amount more than we're already consuming?

Unfortunately, we're unlikely to learn anything conclusive in the near future. As Lustig points out, sugar and high-fructose corn syrup are certainly not “acute toxins” of the kind the F.D.A. typically regulates and the effects of which can be studied over the course of days or months. The question is whether they're “chronic toxins,” which means “not toxic after one meal, but after 1,000 meals.” This means that what Tappy calls “intervention studies” have to go on for significantly longer than 1,000 meals to be meaningful.

At the moment, the National Institutes of Health are supporting surprisingly few clinical trials related to sugar and high-fructose corn syrup in the U.S. All are small, and none will last more than a few months. Lustig and his colleagues at U.C.S.F. — including Jean-Marc Schwarz, whom Tappy describes as one of the three best fructose biochemists in the world — are doing one of these studies. It will look at what happens when obese teenagers consume no sugar other than what they might get in fruits and vegetables. Another study will do the same with pregnant women to see if their babies are born healthier and leaner.

Only one study in this country, by Havel and Stanhope at the University of California, Davis, is directly addressing the question of how much sugar is required to trigger the symptoms of insulin resistance and metabolic syndrome. Havel and Stanhope are having healthy people drink three sugar- or H.F.C.S.-sweetened beverages a day and then seeing what happens. The catch is that their study subjects go through this three-beverage-a-day routine for only two weeks. That doesn't seem like a very long time — only 42 meals, not 1,000 — but Havel and Stanhope have been studying fructose since the mid-1990s, and they seem confident that two weeks is sufficient to see if these sugars cause at least some of the symptoms of metabolic syndrome.

So the answer to the question of whether sugar is as bad as Lustig claims is that it certainly could be. It very well may be true that sugar and high-fructose corn syrup, because of the unique way in which we metabolize fructose and at the levels we now consume it, cause fat to accumulate in our livers followed by insulin resistance and metabolic syndrome, and so trigger the process that leads to heart disease, diabetes and obesity. They could indeed be toxic, but they take years to do their damage. It doesn't happen overnight. Until long-term studies are done, we won't know for sure.

One more question still needs to be asked, and this is what my wife, who has had to live with my journalistic obsession on this subject, calls the Grinch-trying-to-steal-Christmas problem. What are the chances that sugar is actually worse than Lustig says it is?

One of the diseases that increases in incidence with obesity, diabetes and metabolic syndrome is cancer. This is why I said earlier that insulin resistance may be a fundamental underlying defect in many cancers, as it is in type 2 diabetes and heart disease. The connection between obesity, diabetes and cancer was first reported in 2004 in large population studies by researchers from the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer. It is not controversial. What it means is that you are more likely to get cancer if you're obese or diabetic than if you're not, and you're more likely to get cancer if you have metabolic syndrome than if you don't.

This goes along with two other observations that have led to the well-accepted idea that some large

percentage of cancers are caused by our Western diets and lifestyles. This means they could actually be prevented if we could pinpoint exactly what the problem is and prevent or avoid *that*.

One observation is that death rates from cancer, like those from diabetes, increased significantly in the second half of the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th. As with diabetes, this observation was accompanied by a vigorous debate about whether those increases could be explained solely by the aging of the population and the use of new diagnostic techniques or whether it was really the incidence of cancer itself that was increasing. “By the 1930s,” as a 1997 report by the World Cancer Research Fund International and the American Institute for Cancer Research explained, “it was apparent that age-adjusted death rates from cancer were rising in the U.S.A.,” which meant that the likelihood of any particular 60-year-old, for instance, dying from cancer was increasing, even if there were indeed more 60-years-olds with each passing year.

The second observation was that malignant cancer, like diabetes, was a relatively rare disease in populations that didn’t eat Western diets, and in some of these populations it appeared to be virtually nonexistent. In the 1950s, malignant cancer among the Inuit, for instance, was still deemed sufficiently rare that physicians working in northern Canada would publish case reports in medical journals when they did diagnose a case.

In 1984, Canadian physicians published an analysis of 30 years of cancer incidence among Inuit in the western and central Arctic. While there had been a “striking increase in the incidence of cancers of modern societies” including lung and cervical cancer, they reported, there were still “conspicuous deficits” in breast-cancer rates. They could not find a single case in an Inuit patient before 1966; they could find only two cases between 1967 and 1980. Since then, as their diet became more like ours, breast cancer incidence has steadily increased among the Inuit, although it’s still significantly lower than it is in other North American ethnic groups. Diabetes rates in the Inuit have also gone from vanishingly low in the mid-20th century to high today.

Now most researchers will agree that the link between Western diet or lifestyle and cancer manifests itself through this association with obesity, diabetes and metabolic syndrome — i.e., insulin resistance. This was the conclusion, for instance, of a 2007 report published by the World Cancer Research Fund and the American Institute for Cancer Research — “Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity and the Prevention of Cancer.”

So how does it work? Cancer researchers now consider that the problem with insulin resistance is that it leads us to secrete more insulin, and insulin (as well as a related hormone known as insulin-like growth factor) actually promotes tumor growth.

As it was explained to me by Craig Thompson, who has done much of this research and is now president of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York, the cells of many human cancers come to depend on insulin to provide the fuel (blood sugar) and materials they need to grow and multiply. Insulin and insulin-like growth factor (and related growth factors) also provide the signal, in effect, to do it. The more insulin, the better they do. Some cancers develop mutations that serve the purpose of increasing the influence of insulin on the cell; others take advantage of the elevated insulin levels that are common to metabolic syndrome, obesity and type 2 diabetes. Some do both. Thompson believes that many pre-cancerous cells would never acquire the mutations that turn them into malignant tumors if they weren’t being driven by insulin to take up more and more blood sugar and metabolize it.

What these researchers call elevated insulin (or insulin-like growth factor) signaling appears to be a

necessary step in many human cancers, particularly cancers like breast and colon cancer. Lewis Cantley, director of the Cancer Center at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center at Harvard Medical School, says that up to 80 percent of all human cancers are driven by either mutations or environmental factors that work to enhance or mimic the effect of insulin on the incipient tumor cells. Cantley is now the leader of one of five scientific “dream teams,” financed by a national coalition called Stand Up to Cancer, to study, in the case of Cantley’s team, precisely this link between a specific insulin-signaling gene (known technically as PI3K) and tumor development in breast and other cancers common to women.

Most of the researchers studying this insulin/cancer link seem concerned primarily with finding a drug that might work to suppress insulin signaling in incipient cancer cells and so, they hope, inhibit or prevent their growth entirely. Many of the experts writing about the insulin/cancer link from a public health perspective — as in the 2007 report from the World Cancer Research Fund and the American Institute for Cancer Research — work from the assumption that chronically elevated insulin levels and insulin resistance are both caused by being fat or by getting fatter. They recommend, as the 2007 report did, that we should all work to be lean and more physically active, and that in turn will help us prevent cancer.

But some researchers will make the case, as Cantley and Thompson do, that if something other than just being fatter is causing insulin resistance to begin with, that’s quite likely the dietary cause of many cancers. If it’s sugar that causes insulin resistance, they say, then the conclusion is hard to avoid that sugar causes cancer — some cancers, at least — radical as this may seem and despite the fact that this suggestion has rarely if ever been voiced before publicly. For just this reason, neither of these men will eat sugar or high-fructose corn syrup, if they can avoid it.

“I have eliminated refined sugar from my diet and eat as little as I possibly can,” Thompson told me, “because I believe ultimately it’s something I can do to decrease my risk of cancer.” Cantley put it this way: “Sugar scares me.”

Sugar scares me too, obviously. I’d like to eat it in moderation. I’d certainly like my two sons to be able to eat it in moderation, to not overconsume it, but I don’t actually know what that means, and I’ve been reporting on this subject and studying it for more than a decade. If sugar just makes us fatter, that’s one thing. We start gaining weight, we eat less of it. But we are also talking about things we can’t see — fatty liver, insulin resistance and all that follows. Officially I’m not supposed to worry because the evidence isn’t conclusive, but I do.

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<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/17/magazine/mag-17Sugar-t.html?pagewanted=all>

2014, Feb 26

George Takei on Arizona's Anti-Gay Bill, Life in a Japanese Internment Camp & Star Trek's Mr. Sulu

Guests [George Takei](#), legendary *Star Trek* actor and gay-rights activist. His new musical is *Allegiance: A New American Musical*.

In a major victory for civil rights advocates, Arizona's Republican Gov. Jan Brewer has vetoed a bill that would have allowed businesses to deny service to LGBT people in the name of religion. The bill was passed by both houses of the Arizona Legislature earlier this month and sparked outcry not only from human rights activists, but also from major corporations, and eventually even from some of the Republican lawmakers who voted for it. Delta, PetSmart, American Airlines Group, Marriott and Apple were among the many companies that urged Brewer to block the bill. The Arizona bill is similar to measures that have failed in other states. In another victory for LGBT rights advocates, on the same day as the Arizona veto, a federal judge in Texas declared that state's same-sex marriage ban unconstitutional. We are joined by one of the country's most well-known champions of gay rights: the legendary actor, author and activist, George Takei, best known for playing Hikaru Sulu on *Star Trek*. He recently wrote a scathing essay headlined "Razing Arizona," promising to boycott Arizona if Brewer had allowed the controversial anti-gay bill to pass into law. Takei also talks about his role as World War II veteran Sam Kimura in "*Allegiance: A New American Musical*." The musical tells the story of a Japanese-American family who is relocated from their farm after the attack on Pearl Harbor and placed in an internment camp in Wyoming. This parallels part of Takei's own family history. At the age of five, his family was shipped to a Japanese-American internment camp in Rohwer, Arkansas.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: In a major victory for civil rights advocates, Arizona's Republican Governor Jan Brewer vetoed a bill Wednesday that would have allowed businesses to deny services to LGBT people.

GOV. JAN BREWER: Senate Bill 1062 does not address a specific or present concern related to religious liberty in Arizona. I have not heard of one example in Arizona where a business owner's religious liberty has been violated. The bill is broadly worded and could result in unintended and negative consequences. After weighing all of the arguments, I have vetoed Senate Bill 1062 moments ago.

AMY GOODMAN: The bill was passed by both houses of the Arizona Legislature earlier this month and sparked outcry not only from human rights activists but also from major corporations. Delta, PetSmart, American Airlines Group, Marriott and Apple were among the many companies that urged Governor Brewer to block the bill. Some companies threatened to pull out of Arizona altogether.

Governor Brewer also faced pressure from within her own party to reject the bill. Three Republican state senators sent Brewer a letter urging her to veto the bill—just days after they voted for it along with the rest of the state Senate's Republican caucus. The senators wrote that public outcry over the law was causing Arizona "immeasurable harm." The Arizona bill is similar to ones that recently failed in Idaho and Kansas, and to one under consideration in Utah.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: Meanwhile, in another victory for marriage equality advocates, a federal judge in Texas declared a same-sex marriage ban unconstitutional on Wednesday. The case was filed last fall on behalf of two same-sex couples. One couple, Victor Holmes and Mark Phariss, have been together for 17 years. The other couple—shortly after the ruling, they addressed the reporters.

VICTOR HOLMES: The biggest thing I think I would want to say is, "Whoo! We did it! Whoo!" It may be the first step, but it's an awesome first step.

MARK PHARISS: Ultimately, we look forward to the day when, after 17 years, almost 17 years, we can finally—we can finally be married.

AMY GOODMAN: Well, for all this and more, we're joined now by one of the country's most well-known champions of gay rights, the legendary actor and activist George Takei, best known for playing Hikaru Sulu on *Star Trek*. In a scathing [essay](#) headlined "Razing Arizona," he had promised to boycott Arizona if the anti-gay bill became law.

George Takei, welcome to *Democracy Now!*

GEORGE TAKEI: Good morning. Good to be here.

AMY GOODMAN: So what was your reaction late yesterday when you heard Jan Brewer, the governor of Arizona, vetoing the bill?

GEORGE TAKEI: It was not surprise. We expected her to veto the bill. What was surprising was that both houses of the Arizona Legislature passed such a bill. That House is dominated by right-wing religious extremists, and it is not really representative of the people of Arizona. We own property in Show Low, Arizona, up in the White Mountains. My husband Brad was born there. So, we have a vested interest, and we know many, many people. We have family there. We have many friends there. And these people are not represented by these right-wing extremists in the Legislature. The veto was not a surprise. We expected that. As you cited, all the major corporations, all the—

AMY GOODMAN: Sports teams. NFL was going to pull out.

GEORGE TAKEI: NFL, absolutely. So, we didn't think that the governor would damage the—first of all, the reputation, and, secondly, the economy of Arizona any more than the—what the Legislature had done.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: Especially with the next NFL Super Bowl scheduled to be in Arizona next.

GEORGE TAKEI: Exactly.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: But what about this extraordinary situation of legislators who voted for the bill then requesting that Jan Brewer veto it? I want to Al Melvin, a Republican state senator from Arizona, who supported the bill allowing businesses to refuse to serve gay people on religious grounds. Here's Melvin speaking on CNN earlier this week.

STATE SEN. AL MELVIN: The bottom line for us and those who voted for it—and it was a majority in both chambers—is it's as basic as religious freedom. You could say that it might be preemptive, after we saw what has taken place in some other states, but we think it's nothing more and nothing less than protecting religious freedom in our state, and we take that very seriously.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: Now, Melvin was not one of those who asked her to change her mind, but after her decision, he said, "I am sorry to hear that Governor Brewer has vetoed this bill. I'm sure it was a difficult choice for her, but it is a sad day when protecting liberty is considered controversial." But what about those who did—

GEORGE TAKEI: State Senator Steve Pierce was the one—one of the three who changed their mind. But, you know, these people do not listen, and they do not think. The Democratic minority in both houses of the Legislature clearly stated that this was using religious freedom as a veil to cover, very simply, personal prejudice, and nothing more than that. And yet, Steve Pierce says, "I heard nothing about prejudice, and that's why I voted for. But now I understand, and so I'm voting against it—or I'm urging the governor to veto it." So, you know, these legislators have no business being in public service, making public policy. They need to be removed. And we are going to be very active in the campaign to remove these people, who have no right to be in public office.

AMY GOODMAN: I want to turn to Rush Limbaugh from Tuesday talking about the Arizona bill.

RUSH LIMBAUGH: The governor of Arizona is being bullied. She's being bullied by the homosexual lobby in Arizona and elsewhere, she's being bullied by the nationwide drive-by media, she's being bullied by certain elements of corporate America, in order to advance the gay agenda. I guess, in that circumstance, bullying is admirable. In fact, this kind of bullying is honorable.

AMY GOODMAN: That's Rush Limbaugh. George Takei?

GEORGE TAKEI: We have to consider the source. What the legislation was doing was to refuse service to gays and lesbians or anyone that disagrees with the businesspeople's religion. So a Muslim taxi driver could refuse to take a Jewish person or a single woman traveling by herself. Rush Limbaugh has no credibility at all. The legislation was trying to write in prejudice and, to use his words, bullying and coercion into civil law, and that is not allowed.

AMY GOODMAN: I mean, times have changed a great deal. When you have this massive corporate lobby putting pressure, this isn't your traditional, you know, gay and lesbian activists and their supporters. You had corporate America saying no to prejudice.

GEORGE TAKEI: Yeah, because they recognize the economic realities here. The LGBT buying power, as well as our allies, as well as—you know, I maintain the mass—the majority of Americans are good, decent people, and they will not tolerate this kind of abuse of the legal process. And so, the corporations recognized that, as well—Marriott, American Airlines, Delta Airlines. Apple was going to build a manufacturing plant in Mesa, Arizona. And—

AMY GOODMAN: Mitt Romney tweeted out: Veto the bill.

GEORGE TAKEI: All the political leadership from the Republican side—the two U.S. senators from Arizona, John McCain and Jeff Flake, as well as the Arizona state secretary of state and the Arizona tax—or treasurer. So, you know, it was overwhelming. These are rational, decent, fair-minded people.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: And I wanted to ask you also about the events in Texas nearby. On Wednesday, a federal judge declared a same-sex marriage ban in Texas unconstitutional. Cleopatra De Leon and Nicole Dimetman were part of the lawsuit. They were legally married five years ago in Massachusetts but wanted Texas to recognize their union. Shortly after the ruling, Dimetman addressed reporters.

NICOLE DIMETMAN: We're committed to—I think we're all committed—we're really committed to our families, and so obviously we're very committed to this cause. And we're going to continue it until we have no avenues left for appeal.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: Your reaction to the Texas decision?

GEORGE TAKEI: It's consistent with all that's been happening. There are 17 states now that have marriage equality, plus the national capital, Washington, D.C. Now there are states like Utah, a very conservative state, another conservative state, Oklahoma, Virginia, where the same kind of federal ruling has come down. Utah is appealing that to the appellate court. Oklahoma has indicated that they will go with the Utah appeal. And so, you know, this is all—but Texas's being ruled unconstitutional is all consistent with the way things are going. And inevitably, when we're enjoying this kind of legislative or judicial victories, the backlash is about—will come. And that's what Arizona is. And the same kind of bill that Arizona tried to write into law is being considered by other states like South Dakota and other states. But I think the overwhelming public reaction and the decent, fair-minded people's reaction will put a stop to all the other efforts, because it is patently unconstitutional.

AMY GOODMAN: Well, George Takei, we can't just have you on being a pundit on these issues. When we come

back from break, we want to talk to you, the helmsman of the Starship Enterprise, about your life, about your activism. I don't know if you are the most active person on Facebook, with your six million followers, but it is astounding, your activity there on all sorts of issues. This is *Democracy Now!* George Takei is our guest. Stay with us.

[break]

AMY GOODMAN: "Let It Go" from *Frozen*. This is *Democracy Now!*, democracynow.org, *The War and Peace Report*. I'm Amy Goodman, with Juan González.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: Well, we continue our conversation with the actor and gay rights activist George Takei. He's best known for playing the role of Lieutenant Hikaru Sulu on the original *Star Trek* TV series.

AMY GOODMAN: This is a clip from season one, episode five. In this episode on stardate 1672.1, the Starship Enterprise is exploring the planet Alpha 177. A transporter malfunction leaves some of the crew stuck, including Takei's character, after they can't beam back up to the ship. In this scene, Lieutenant Sulu radios in to Captain Kirk.

LT. HIKARU SULU: [played by Geoge Takei] Can you give us a status report, Captain? Temperature's still dropping, now 41 degrees below zero.

CAPT. JAMES T. KIRK: [played by William Shatner] We've located the trouble. It shouldn't be much longer.

LT. HIKARU SULU: Do you think you might be able to find a long rope somewhere and lower us down a pot of hot coffee?

CAPT. JAMES T. KIRK: I'll see what we can do.

LT. HIKARU SULU: Rice wine will do, if you're short on coffee.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: That's our guest, George Takei, playing Lieutenant Sulu in the original *Star Trek* TV series. Well, you can still see Takei performing the role of World War II veteran Sam Kimura in *Allegiance: A New American Musical*. The play tells the story of a Japanese-American family who is relocated from their farm after the attack on Pearl Harbor and placed in an internment camp in Wyoming. This parallels part of Takei's own family history. At the age of eight, he and his parents and siblings were shipped to a Japanese-American internment camp in Rohwer, Arkansas.

AMY GOODMAN: In January, a new documentary premiered at the Sundance Film Festival called *To Be Takei*, which follows George Takei and his husband Brad as they work on *Allegiance*, as well as his everyday life as a famous actor and activist. This is a clip from the film.

GEORGE TAKEI: Oh, my goodness, they're lining up outside. Thank you all. Thank you.

DAN PARENT: I had met George a couple years ago, and I told him about the Kevin Keller character, and he was really supportive of it. Since he's the first, you know, openly gay Archie character, it just seemed sort of like a natural sort of like storyline that Kevin would be inspired by George.

GEORGE TAKEI: Hello. How are you?

TREKKIE 1: Hi, good.

TREKKIE 2: [translated] Can you please read my letter?

GEORGE TAKEI: [translated] OK, I will read it.

TREKKIE 2: [translated] Thank you so much!

GEORGE TAKEI: [translated] You're welcome! [in English] That's very impressive.

TREKKIE 2: Thank you!

TREKKIE 3: Can you put "Oh, my!" on there?

GEORGE TAKEI: "Oh, my"?

BRAD TAKEI: Life is reality TV for the rest of your life. You're a young man. And what's going to happen is, you just pretend like the cameras aren't there. That's how I do it.

GEORGE TAKEI: You determine your destiny. I don't believe in negativity. If I did believe in that, that usually comes true. I, in my own life, have been the beneficiary of an optimistic view of life. My life today is much better than when I was a child.

There you are.

TREKKIE 4: Thank you very much.

GEORGE TAKEI: My pleasure.

TREKKIE 4: Appreciate it.

GEORGE TAKEI: Good to see you. Good night.

TREKKIE 4: Nice to meet you.

AMY GOODMAN: That's a clip from the new documentary, *To Be Takei*, about our guest, actor and activist George Takei. So, you were born in?

GEORGE TAKEI: Los Angeles.

AMY GOODMAN: And yet, at the age of eight, you were interned?

GEORGE TAKEI: No, at the age of five.

AMY GOODMAN: At the age of five.

GEORGE TAKEI: We came out when I was eight.

AMY GOODMAN: So, talk about that. What happened?

GEORGE TAKEI: Yes, well, you know, it wasn't just my birth in the U.S. My mother was born in Sacramento, California. My father was a San Franciscan. They were Northern Californians. And they met in Los Angeles, so I was born in Southern California. But there's no north-south divide in our family. We're Americans. We were and are—my parents have passed now, but we were citizens of this country. We had nothing to do with the war. We simply happened to look like the people that bombed Pearl Harbor. But without charges, without trial, without due

process—the fundamental pillar of our justice system—we were summarily rounded up, all Japanese Americans on the West Coast, where we were primarily resident, and sent off to 10 barb wire internment camps—prison camps, really, with sentry towers, machine guns pointed at us—in some of the most desolate places in this country: the wastelands of Wyoming, Idaho, Utah, Colorado, the blistering hot desert of Arizona, of all places, in black tarpaper barracks. And our family was sent two-thirds of the way across the country, the farthest east, in the swamps of Arkansas.

And it's from this experience that, when I was a teenager, my father told me that our democracy is very fragile, but it is a true people's democracy, both as strong and as great as the people can be, but it is also as fallible as people are. And that's why good people have to be actively engaged in the process, sometimes holding democracy's feet to the fire, in order to make it a better, truer democracy.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: If I'm not mistaken, the governor of California back then during the internment process was Earl Warren, who later became a justice of the Supreme Court, perhaps one of the most liberal justices, but he supported those efforts back then.

GEORGE TAKEI: Well, this illustrates the hysteria that ran throughout the country. Actually, Earl Warren was the attorney general of the state of California at that time.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: Oh, attorney general, right.

GEORGE TAKEI: He took an oath on the Constitution. He knew the Constitution. But knowing the Constitution and knowing what he was going to do was going to be against the Constitution, his ambition took over. He wanted to be governor. And he ran on the "get rid of the Japs" platform—and won. And as you stated, he later went on to become the "liberal" chief justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. So, even with the Supreme Court, there is that human fallibility. We—the good people have to be engaged in the process. And that's what's so shameful about the Arizona Legislature, that people like that, people who don't think, people who don't listen and people who do damage to the state get elected and dominate in legislatures.

AMY GOODMAN: Just last week, February 19th, that's the anniversary. It's called the Day of Internment—

GEORGE TAKEI: No, Day of Remembrance.

AMY GOODMAN: Day of Remembrance. February 19th, 1942, the Executive Order 9066 signed requiring internment of all U.S. residents of Japanese ancestry.

GEORGE TAKEI: By a liberal Democrat president, Franklin D. Roosevelt.

AMY GOODMAN: What did you understand at the time as a five-year-old?

GEORGE TAKEI: I was a five-year-old. My parents told—my father told us that we were going on a long vacation to a place called Arkansas. It was an adventure. I thought everyone took vacations by leaving home in a railroad car with sentries, armed soldiers at both ends of the car, sitting on wooden benches. And whenever we approached a town, we were forced to draw the curtains, the shade. We were not supposed to be seen by the people out there. We thought that was the way things happened. We saw people crying, you know, and we thought, "Well, why are they crying? Daddy said we're going on a vacation." So we were innocent children.

When we arrived at Rohwer, in the swamps of Arkansas, there were these barb wire fences and sentry towers. But children are amazingly adaptable. And so, the barb wire fence became no more intimidating than a chain link fence around a school playground. And the sentry towers were just part of the landscape. We adjusted to lining up three times a day to eat lousy food in a noisy mess hall. And at school, we began every school day with the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag. I could see the barb wire fence and the sentry towers right outside my schoolhouse window as I recited the words "with liberty and justice for all," an innocent child unaware of the

irony.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: And once your family was released from the internment, what—the process of putting your lives back together, what had happened to your possessions, to your home? And talk about that process, as well.

GEORGE TAKEI: We lost everything. We were given a one-way ticket to wherever in the United States we wanted to go to, plus \$20. And many people were very embittered about their West Coast experience, and they chose to go to the Midwest, places like Chicago or Milwaukee, or further east to New Jersey, New York, Boston. My parents decided to go back to Los Angeles. We were most familiar there. But we found that it was very difficult. Housing was impossible. They would deny us housing. Jobs were very, very difficult. My father's first job was as a dishwasher in a Chinatown restaurant. Only other Asians would hire us. And our first home was on skid row, with the stench of urine everywhere and those scary, smelly, ugly people lined up leaning on brick walls. They would stagger around and barf right in front of us. My baby sister, who was now five years old, said, "Mama, let's go back home," meaning behind those barb wire fences. We had adjusted to that. And coming home was a horrific, traumatic experience for us kids.

AMY GOODMAN: We're talking to George Takei. If you recognize that voice, yes, it is George, it is Sulu, Lieutenant Sulu, helmsman of the Starship Enterprise. So how did you go from that experience to becoming one of the most famous actors in the United States? When I asked you before how long you did *Star Trek* and you said just three years, I mean, it seems to me it went on for decades.

GEORGE TAKEI: It's the reruns.

AMY GOODMAN: Yes.

GEORGE TAKEI: And once we were canceled, the syndicators put us on every night, five days a week, so people thought that we had a thousand episodes. But it's the same episodes from three seasons being rerun over and over again.

AMY GOODMAN: So how did you go from that interned child to the actor that you are today?

GEORGE TAKEI: Well, I loved acting. I love performance. One of my school—grammar school teachers cast me as an Indian chief in a Thanksgiving pageant. And that was thrilling. But my father said, "Well, you know, being interested in the arts, culture, theater, is fine, but you don't make a living at it." And he was in real estate by that time. And he, I think, fancied having an architect son and having Takei & Son Real Estate Development. I would design the buildings, and he would develop them. So, like a good son, I began my college career as an architecture student up at Berkeley.

But after two years, the fire in the belly kept getting hotter and hotter, and so I came back down to Los Angeles and girded my loins for a knockdown, drag-out debate with my father. And I said, "Daddy, I want to go—I want to be honest with myself. I want to test my wings. I want to study acting at the Actors Studios in New York." And my father said, "Yes, I know about them. They're a fine, distinguished, respected acting school. But they won't give you a diploma when you finish your schooling there. And your mother and I want you to have that legitimacy. So, you're a bullheaded kid. You're going to do it anyway. Let me remind you: It is—New York is a crowded place, a competitive place and an expensive place, and you have to be prepared to do it all on your own. However, right here in town, at UCLA, they have a fine theater arts department. And if you study there and you finish, they will give you a diploma, that you're legitimately educated. Your mother and I want you to have that. And so, if you choose UCLA, we'll subsidize you. So you choose: New York on your own or UCLA with subsidy." I made a self-discovery: I'm a practical kid.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: And then the jump to the *Star Trek* role? And did you ever imagine that *Star Trek* would

become this cult—have this cult following, really, for so many years afterwards?

GEORGE TAKEI: Well, it turned out, you know, Daddy knew best, because I was seen in a student production at UCLA and—seen by a casting director from Warner Brothers who was in the audience. And he plucked me out of that, put me in my first feature film, Edna Ferber's epic novel about Alaska, *Ice Palace*. And so, breaking into the movies was a piece of cake, actually, by going by my father's advice. And that same casting director—Hoyt Bowers was his name—put in a word for me later on when Gene Roddenberry was casting for *Star Trek*. And I wound up with that iconic, legendary now, sci-fi TV series.

AMY GOODMAN: So, talk about *Star Trek*. It broke ground in so many ways. I mean, we all grew up on it. It was a most diverse cast, to say the least—women, people of color. How—who was the—who put this together? I mean, what was this the brainchild of?

GEORGE TAKEI: Gene Roddenberry was the visionary. He was the creator and producer, and wrote some of the episodes. And when I first went in for the interview, he shared his philosophy and his concept. And the key thing was, he said, "The story will take place—the majority of the story will take place on this vast starship. It's a spacecraft, but we're calling it a starship. And this starship is going to be populated by about a thousand crack professional scientists, engineers, people that are necessary to make this ship move. And this starship is a metaphor for Starship Earth. And the strength of the starship is in its diversity, coming together, people from different parts of this planet, people from different cultures, races, languages, faiths and ideas, working together in concert and working out, you know, the differences and finding the common ground. And that's what's going to move this ship forward." And so, you saw that visually. But you also saw the non-visual diversity. At a time of the Cold War, we had a Russian, trusted member of the crew, Chekov, the navigator. So, you know, it was that kind of diversity that Gene Roddenberry envisioned. I mean, the Cold War was at its coldest point, but he said, "This, too, we can overcome." He was an extraordinary man. And I think that's—that was the key thing that contributes to its continuing popularity.

AMY GOODMAN: And what was your relationship like with the other actors who became so iconic, every one of them, from Spock to Kirk to—

GEORGE TAKEI: I received many gifts from *Star Trek*, and one of the best is that my work colleagues have become my lifetime friends. When Brad and I got married in the Democracy Forum of the Japanese American National Museum, our best man was Walter Koenig, who played Chekov. And the—

AMY GOODMAN: What year was that, that you got married?

GEORGE TAKEI: 2008, right before Proposition 8 came down, the ballot measure that banned marriage equality until the Supreme Court ruled on it.

AMY GOODMAN: Were you openly gay through all this time, through—

GEORGE TAKEI: I was not openly gay. I wanted to work as an actor, and it would have been dangerous—in fact, impossible—to be hired as an actor if I were out. It wasn't until 2005 that—well, it happened again because of a political thing that happened. Both houses of the California Legislature passed the marriage equality bill. It was precedent-setting, because Massachusetts had marriage equality, but that came through the judicial route. In California, we got it through the legislative route. That bill went to the governor's desk for his signature. The governor at that time happened to be Arnold Schwarzenegger. When he ran for office, he campaigned by saying, "I'm from Hollywood. I've worked with gays and lesbians. Some of my best friends are..."—all the clichés. So I was confident that he was going to sign it. When he played to his right-wing Republican base and vetoed it, my blood was boiling. And I saw all these young people on the evening news pouring out onto Santa Monica Boulevard protesting Schwarzenegger's veto, and I felt I needed to participate, get my voice heard in that. And for that voice to be heard, it had to be authentic. And I came out to the press. I had been out, you know, quietly—

friends, family, some relatives. But in 2005, Arnold Schwarzenegger's veto prompted me to speak to the press. And that's what's called coming out openly.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: I'm curious about this other life that you have developed in the digital age, this enormous following that you have on Facebook. Could you talk about—were you surprised by that—

GEORGE TAKEI: Yes.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: —by how many people want to know what you have to say?

GEORGE TAKEI: I was astounded by, first of all, the rapidity of its growth and how large, how massive it can be. I have people responding from Brussels or—Belgium, or Perth, Australia, or from Buenos Aires. It's global. I mean, this is Gene Roddenberry's vision, this Starship Earth, coming together.

AMY GOODMAN: It's intergalactic.

GEORGE TAKEI: Yes. Why I began social media has another ulterior motive. We—I came across an extraordinarily gifted composer-lyricist in a Broadway theater, of all places. And we talked about the subject of the internment of Japanese Americans during the Second World War. And I told him that I had always planned to write a play on that subject. And he thought it would be a great subject for a musical. And, you know, I'm a musical theater fan, but I never thought of a musical. It was a brilliant idea, because I had been on speaking tours to corporations, universities, governmental agencies, but, you know, it's intellectual, and to really get people to empathize, you have to hit them emotionally. And music has the extraordinary power to do that.

AMY GOODMAN: Let's go to a clip of *Allegiance: A New American Musical*.

CHORUS: [singing] Even when all hope seems gone, *gaman*.

SAM KIMURA: [played by George Takei] Remember song I teach you, how mountain can be moved stone by stone, eh?

AMY GOODMAN: A clip from *Allegiance: A New American Musical*. It's coming to Broadway?

GEORGE TAKEI: It's coming to Broadway. And that's what gave rise to my activity with social media. Here is a subject that is still too little known, and even less understood, and it's a rather shameful part of American history. And here we've invested so much of ourselves—our talents, our energy, our enthusiasm, our passion and our resources. And are we going to be able to find an audience for it? And so, I thought, well, social media is the way to do it. But my base was essentially sci-fi geeks and nerds.

AMY GOODMAN: Lieutenant Sulu, where did you get the name? Where did they get the name Lieutenant Sulu?

GEORGE TAKEI: Oh, there's a whole story to that, too. Again, Gene Roddenberry's amazing thought, a profound thinking on each of this. As I said, the starship—the crew of the Enterprise was to represent the diversity of this planet. And Uhura represented Africa. Captain Kirk represented North America. Scotty, the engineer, represented Europe. And there was this character that's to represent Asia. But Asia in the mid-20th century was a nation that—or area of the world that had a turbulent history of warfare, colonization, revolution. And to find a name for this Asian character that was not nationally specific—you know, Takei or Tanaka or Yamada is Japanese. Wong, Hong is Chinese. Kim, Park is Korean. And there's a turbulent history there. And he didn't want to take sides. So his challenge was, how do I find a name for this character that's pan-Asian, represents all of Asia? And he was looking at a map of Asia that he had pinned on his wall, and he was staring at it. And he saw off the coast of the Philippines the Sulu Sea. And he thought, "Ah, the waters of a sea touch all shores." And that's how the name Sulu came about. But because he cast a Japanese-American actor, he came up with a Japanese first name. And that was taken from a great piece of Japanese literature, *The Tale of Genji*, a

young prince who was great at military strategy, and a poet, but also brought people together and brought about peace.

AMY GOODMAN: Hikaru Sulu. Well, Hikaru Sulu, otherwise known as George Takei, I want to thank you so much for being with us, the legendary actor, activist. This is *Democracy Now!*

GEORGE TAKEI: Thank you. I've enjoyed visiting with you.

AMY GOODMAN: It's been great. We'll be back in a minute.

http://www.democracynow.org/2014/2/27/george_takei_on_arizonas_anti_gay

2014, Feb 27
Emissions in Texas

Big Oil and Bad Air:~Report Exposes Link Between Fracking and Toxic Air

Guests [Lisa Song](#), a journalist with InsideClimate News, one of the lead reporters on "Fracking the Eagle Ford Shale: Big Oil & Bad Air on the Texas Prairie," an eight-month investigation by InsideClimate News, the Center for Public Integrity and The Weather Channel. She was also part of the team that won the Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting for their series, "The Dilbit Disaster: The Biggest Oil Spill You've Never Heard Of."

[David Hasemyer](#), A journalist with InsideClimate News, one of the lead reporters on "Fracking the Eagle Ford Shale: Big Oil & Bad Air on the Texas Prairie," an eight-month investigation by InsideClimate News, the Center for Public Integrity and The Weather Channel. He was also part of the team that won the Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting for their series, "The Dilbit Disaster: The Biggest Oil Spill You've Never Heard Of."

Links

[Read: "Fracking the Eagle Ford Shale" Report](#)

[Watch: "Fracking the Eagle Ford Shale"](#)

[Read: "Gas Drilling Boom Accelerates With Little Study of Public Health Effects" \(Inside Climate News\)](#)

[Follow David Hasemyer on Twitter](#)

[Follow Lisa Song on Twitter](#)

Residents who live near areas of oil and natural gas fracking have long complained that the industry has poisoned their water with toxic chemicals. Now a new investigation is shedding light on another concern: air quality. The new report, "Fracking the Eagle Ford Shale: Big Oil & Bad Air on the Texas Prairie," is the result of an eight-month investigation by InsideClimate News, the Center for Public Integrity and The Weather Channel. We speak to David Hasemyer and Lisa Song, two of the reporters who worked on the investigation.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: We end the show by looking at a major new [report](#) titled "Fracking the Eagle Ford Shale: Big Oil & Bad Air on the Texas Prairie." It's the result of an eight-month investigation by InsideClimate News, the Center for Public Integrity and The Weather Channel. Now, a new investigation shedding light on—I'm sorry—

AMY GOODMAN: On really all of this.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: On all of this, and we're going to have a guest talk about it now.

AMY GOODMAN: That's right. We're joined in San Diego by David Hasemyer, and in Boston, Lisa Song. Lisa Song [and David Hasemyer were] also part of the team that won the Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting for the InsideClimate News [series](#), "The Dilbit Disaster: The Biggest Oil Spill You've Never Heard Of." We turn right now to Lisa Song.

Can you talk about what you found in this major new report you did on fracking the Eagle Ford Shale?

LISA SONG: Sure. This report that we did was done in collaboration with the Center for Public Integrity and The Weather Channel. And we decided to focus on air quality and air pollution issues from natural gas

development, instead of water, because the issues with water have been looked at before.

And what we found in the Eagle Ford is that—the Eagle Ford is a huge, 20,000-square-mile area in South Texas. And there is right now one of the biggest oil and gas booms in the nation. But it hasn't gotten the national attention that places like the Marcellus Shale in Pennsylvania have. And what you have there in South Texas is this boom. And looking through air permits and looking at the regulatory regime, we found that there all of these facilities, that the wells and compressor stations and all the infrastructure that comes with the boom, that are emitting industrial-sized air pollutants into the air. And you're talking about things like hydrogen sulfide, which can be deadly, volatile organic compounds like benzene that can cause cancer in the long term. And you have that alongside many, many hundreds of residential complaints about things that are related to the industry. So you have residents complaining to regulators about headaches and foul odors and trouble breathing and all kinds of respiratory problems.

And at the same time, you have a regulatory system that knows very little about the air quality in the area, because they have only five permanent air monitors in the entire Eagle Ford. And none of these monitors are in places with a lot of drilling. Also, you have regulatory agencies that are very business-friendly and very closely intertwined with the oil and gas industry. And that's something that David can talk about, because he looked into the politics.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: Yeah, and, David, what about that, in the state of Texas, and its basically laissez-faire attitude toward this kind of pollution?

DAVID HASEMYER: We went to Texas on a number of occasions with our colleagues from the Center for Public Integrity and The Weather Channel. And we spent a lot of time in the homes of people, walking the farms and the ranches of people who are affected by the emissions. These are folks who are longtime residents of this area, and it's a very rural, very quiet area of the state of Texas. These are people who had expectations of being able to live quiet lives in retirement and to farm and ranch without the threat of development near them. In the last five years, the Eagle Ford has boomed. These folks, who once lived in a rural area, are now finding themselves with dozens of wells and processing plants surrounding them.

They have very few places to turn for help. They have two regulatory agencies in Texas. The primary agency is the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, and this is an agency that has commissioners appointed by the governor of Texas, Rick Perry, who has made it publicly known that he'd like to dismantle the EPA. His attorney general has sued the EPA more than a dozen times. So the folks in Texas feel that they are somewhat disenfranchised and that they have very, very few people who are on their side who can champion their cause. These are truly the little people trying to fight government and trying to fight big business.

AMY GOODMAN: I mean, the kind of gassing off—the flaring off of the gas we see, I saw this in Nigeria in the Niger Delta. At the time, it wasn't even allowed in the United States. And the people, in watching your video, complaining of feeling like an elephant is on their chest as they breathe in the soot from this flame. This is an area the size of Massachusetts, Lisa?

LISA SONG: Yes, it's very nearly the size of Massachusetts.

AMY GOODMAN: And so, what happens now? What happens next? Even if you will not allow fracking on your own property, everyone around you has this—is allowing it, and so you're still deeply affected.

LISA SONG: Yeah. What we found was a clear story of people who have—there are some people who have benefited financially from this boom, and there are many others who have not. So, it's clearly a case

of the haves and the have-nots. And for the people who either can't or won't lease their land to the industry, they are often surrounded by neighbors who have done so. And so, to them, they see no benefit at all, and all they have are the odors and the flares and the lights and noise pollution, traffic. And they—all they end up seeing are the disadvantages of this boom. And so their lives have not gotten better, it's gotten worse.

AMY GOODMAN: We're going to have to leave it there, but we will certainly link to your [report](#). Lisa Song and David Hasemyer, reporters with InsideClimate News, who worked on "Fracking the Eagle Ford Shale: Big Oil & Bad Air on the Texas Prairie," an eight-month investigation done in collaboration with the Center for Public Integrity and The Weather Channel.

2014, March 1 **Happy NEW MOON in Pisces March 1, 2014!**

NEW MOON is here in Pisces on March 1, 2014 12:00 AM PST.

We are called back into the watery realms of Spirit to take a moment to just Be and feel all that is... So much has been moving, shifting, transforming. This Moon cycle calls us to pause, rest and reflect.

Tune in, feel the fullness and feel yourself held in this moment of infinite Beingness. Lots of planetary shifts occurring so stay grounded and connected to Mother Earth.

Here are the MYSTIC MAMMA Astral Insights from the most tuned in readers of the planetary movements. First from [Cathy Pagano](#) from her [Wisdom of Astrology.com](#):

"We've come to the end of the astrological year, diving into the deep ocean of Pisces from the starry heights of Aquarius. The ocean is the womb where life first arose on our beautiful planet Earth. The ocean also symbolizes the collective unconscious, the womb of our spiritual heritage and past life karma as well as the collective database of all experience and wisdom of life here on Earth.

"As we approach the end of the Age of Pisces, our task is to learn to use the powers of life and death with wisdom, love and joy. Our test will be to see through the illusion that separateness, greed and violence are the proper way to run the world.

"The waters of Pisces symbolize the fluid, enchanted, illusionary realm of the Imagination, the source of Spirit within us..."

"When we enter Pisces' domain, the Cosmic Story tells us to let go of society's rules and the Ego's needs (not my will but Thine) and go back to the Source.

"The Story of Life says, 'Here at the end, allow the chaos of endings and beginnings into your awareness. Let go of past behaviors, ideas, beliefs and wounds as well as future expectations that no longer serve your soul's needs. Let Spirit guide you to the eddy in the river of life you need to be at when the fire of Aries rises at the Spring Equinox.'

"...We need downtime for our inner check-ins to keep us centered, self-aware and capable of exercising our free will. This is vital for us now. As the world continues to undergo disruptions which will ultimately force us to make changes, we need people who are capable of leadership, healing and innovation...."

"The Sabian symbol for the Sun and Moon at 11 Pisces is: Pilgrims traveling a narrow path, seeking illumination. This image speaks to the power of spiritual ideals, of a hoped-for mystical union. It speaks of a pure and loving heart, of holding to our spiritual principles. It opens our ability to see into others' hearts and souls—giving us opportunities for spiritual unions with others. Remember, Aphrodite was born out of the waters and so when you plant seeds this month, plant the seeds of love and compassion and wisdom. We will need them this year."*

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From [Pat Liles](#) from [The Power Path](#):

“As we are beckoned into the watery, nebulous world of Pisces, we are invited to give over to the infinite energy of the Divine Feminine.

“Pisces rules the vastness of the oceans, the humble feet as they touch the Earth, the deep compassion that can encompass all the suffering of the world, the world without boundaries of our dreams, and all experience of our conglomerate of past lives – our karma, if you will.

“Pisces represents the completion of the zodiac wheel, and what do we find at the end of the cycle? Our spirituality, unity, merging with something greater than our selves, surrender of our self importance, and compassion for each one we encounter as they engage the wheel of life and all its lessons and gifts.

“Now, as a group, we don’t go to this place easily, so Pisces has the help of the large, gaseous planet, Neptune. Neptune dissolves, confuses, and makes the energy feel nebulous, vague and unidentifiable. This loosens our strong tendencies to lead with our analytical, over amped linear minds and give over to the great mysteries of life – love, synchronicity, miracles, déjà vu, art, intuition, healing...”

“The New Moon is always the time to reset our intentions and begin anew; the energy is intensified and supported by having both the Sun and the Moon in the same sign. Boosting this energy into the collective level is greatly aided by having Neptune in its ruling sign of Pisces. Neptune hasn’t been in its own sign for 165 years – about the time it was ‘discovered’ and brought into our awareness.

“Chiron is in Pisces, too (2011-2019) encouraging us to go ahead, dig even a layer deeper into unconscious patterns, showing us how we have gotten too comfortable with our well-known and obviously ancient patterns that keep us in separation from All That Is. Let those just be dissolved. Release!

“As we flip from February 28 to March 1 with the New Moon right near that midnight hour, we are experiencing a LOT of planetary reshuffling and changes in direction:

Mercury goes direct Feb 28

Mars goes retrograde Mar 1

Saturn goes retrograde Mar 2

Jupiter goes direct March 6

“That’s a noticeable amount of shift/chango. When planets change direction (going retrograde or direct) their energy is intensified because they are essentially at a stand still. When you get so many, it can be disorienting or loosening of the usual constructs and realities we carry. So, be fluid, go with the flow, stay buoyant, invite in the mysterious.

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“The New Moon is always the time to reset our intentions and begin anew; the energy is intensified and supported by having both the Sun and the Moon in the same sign. Boosting this energy into the collective level is greatly aided by having Neptune in its ruling sign of Pisces. Neptune hasn’t been in its own sign for 165 years – about the time it was ‘discovered’ and brought into our awareness.

“Chiron is in Pisces, too (2011-2019) encouraging us to go ahead, dig even a layer deeper into unconscious patterns, showing us how we have gotten too comfortable with our well-known and obviously ancient patterns that keep us in separation from All That Is. Let those just be dissolved. Release!

“As we flip from February 28 to March 1 with the New Moon right near that midnight hour, we are experiencing a LOT of planetary reshuffling and changes in direction:

Mercury goes direct Feb 28

Mars goes retrograde Mar 1

Saturn goes retrograde Mar 2

Jupiter goes direct March 6

Lastly from astrologer [Divine Harmony](#):

“...it’s definitely a deep time right now! this astrology is a playground for the Soul and Spirit, yet for the ego it can feel more like detention. Knowing when to push and when to rest, when to swim upstream and when to call it a day are going to be valuable assets this weekend and into next week.

“Finding balance between the DOING that the world demands of us and the BEING that our Souls and Spirits need to feel fulfilled is the work right now. Be sure to take time to give yourself a breather in the coming days. When things get hot under the collar or chaotic- know that this, too, shall pass!”

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NEW MOON Blessings to us all!

~MM

<http://www.mysticmamma.com/new-moon-in-pisces-march-1-2014/>

I Ching For The Week of February 24, 2014

#61 Zhong Fu The Conforming Center

Above Sun Root, Foundation, inspiration

Below Dui Open, Free, unhindered

Pattern of Meanings

Open/Responsive: Free movement with no blame or judgment.

Grow/Harvest: Open, pleasant, free, unhindered.

The Wisdom:

Inner truth is your beacon.

Like the wind it

Guides you, through

Inspiration, to tranquility

And abundance.

Your connection to Spirit is made solid

The wind is unseen as it stirs the waters of your heart and soul. Invisible forces are at work to bring you abundance, health, and success. This is a very favorable time. Your situation has, in some cases, seemed untenable. You have tried to influence others with words and common sense, and it hasn't worked. You have perceived your situation incorrectly. Examine your truth, your inner wisdom. For it is in this quiet place that the answers reside. Love has a sweet song...hear it with your open heart.

Though it appears that associates, old stale influences of family, church and state or your relationships may be blocking your progress, they will soon be moved toward your favor. This is assured. In the teaching offered by this hexagram, you will do this gently and without words. It will be done by means of the invisible forces of gentleness, compassion, kindness, and joyfulness.

Your heart knows the truth.
Limit your words;
They have no effect.
Your actions and thoughts
Benefit all for the greater good.

To correctly have influence over others, you must, as Native peoples say, walk a mile in their moccasins. This will allow you to know their position and their thoughts. With this knowing, you can access your intuition, which will counsel you on correct thoughts and actions. This is the way: with compassion.

At this time, move forward with no prejudice or hidden agenda. This will create openness, which is the wordless, gentle joy of which this hexagram speaks.

Thoughts have great influence.
Correct thoughts free of prejudice
Bring a bountiful outcome.
Negative thoughts will undo
The good you have accomplished.
Change your way of thinking.
No blame, no guilt, no shame.

Exerting influence can be a tricky business. Thoughts and actions that attempt to manipulate or gain power over others leave nothing but hate and animosity in their tracks and will not achieve your goals. Look to your motives in exerting influence. When you are confident that you are coming from your highest good, for the good of all, you will find that your influence, though apparently invisible, is as powerful as the wind that stirs the waters.

You stand on the brink of success and release from bondage, and are now challenged as never before. It is not that you have done anything incorrectly; far from it. It is rather a law of the universe that we are challenged to rise to our greatest good.

The teaching in this hexagram says to go inward and begin the task of gentle self-correction. Where it may be easy to control the words you say, it is more difficult to shift your thoughts so that they are without prejudice, divisiveness, retaliation, or anger.

There are times when you must move stubborn or obstinate people, whether in your work or in your personal life, toward the greater good. Such an approach must be well considered. Be gentle, with no judgment or preconceived notions. Try to understand where they are coming from and then adjust your thoughts, not your words, toward a more beneficial outcome for all involved. In this way, influence is directed by compassion.

Having compassion for those who are slowing or blocking progress leads us to a deeper understanding of others and, ultimately, ourselves.

Outwardly, communicate directly, and be honest and sincere. Inwardly, correct any negative or judgmental thoughts. This will release your untapped life force, or prana, which in turn will have a profound beneficial effect on your relationships, your health, and your business, and will deepen your spiritual journey—all toward the greater good.

It is well documented that we can heal many illnesses through right thought and meditation. You can apply this truth to your present situation. You are the healer. Look to the words that come to you. Discard the negative ones and replace them with right action and compassionate thoughts, which will influence all aspects of the self to move toward a higher, more compassionate understanding. In this way, you will change the situation: It will move toward the highest, most

beneficial good for all.

You will not gain the trust of others until you trust yourself. This hexagram gives a teaching on how to gain the kind of trust that comes from knowing your inner truth. Consciously look to your highest good. To be loved, you must love yourself. To be heard, you must hear yourself. To correct a situation, you must correct yourself and your inner thoughts. Open your heart and let yourself be loved

The outcome of this process is rich, but the process itself is even richer. At this time, this process is not about choice: It is about necessity. Love, compassion, and knowing your inner truth are necessary to bring about the grand success that awaits you.

This week be the gentle wind and feel the strength of Gaia, the earth, as she beckons you home. Do not talk of love, be love. Do less, be more.

Many Blessings

BobbyK



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2014, Feb 26 Chokwe Lumumba~ Remembering "America's Most Revolutionary Mayor"

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Guests

[Akinyele Umoja](#), associate professor and chair of the Department of African-American Studies at Georgia State University. He is a founding member of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement and the New Afrikan Peoples Organization. He is also the author of the book, *We Will Shoot Back: Armed Resistance in the Mississippi Freedom Movement*.

[Benjamin Jealous](#), former president and CEO of NAACP. He recently wrote an article for *The Huffington Post* called "Remembering Chokwe Lumumba."

[Bill Chandler](#), a close ally to Mayor Lumumba, and was a member of his transition team. He is also a veteran of civil rights struggles in Mississippi and is the founding executive director of the Mississippi Immigrant Rights Alliance, where Lumumba served as legal counsel before he became mayor.

[Kwame Kenyatta](#), former Detroit city councilman who moved to Jackson last year to serve as Mayor Chokwe Lumumba's contract compliance officer.

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In Mississippi, the city of Jackson is grieving today following the sudden death of Mayor Chokwe Lumumba, less than a year after he was elected. He suffered from heart failure on Tuesday. A longtime black nationalist organizer and attorney, Lumumba had been described as "America's most revolutionary mayor." Working with the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, Lumumba advocated for participatory democracy and the creation of new worker-run cooperatives in Jackson. Over the past four decades, Lumumba was deeply involved in numerous political and legal campaigns. As an attorney, his clients have included former Black Panther Assata Shakur and the late hip-hop artist Tupac Shakur. As a political organizer, Lumumba served for years as vice president of the Republic of New Afrika, an organization which advocated for "an independent predominantly black government" in the southeastern United States and reparations for slavery. He also helped found the National Black Human Rights Coalition and the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement. We air our June 2013 interview with the then-newly elected Jackson mayor and speak to several of his close associates.

AMY GOODMAN: The city of Jackson, Mississippi, is grieving today following the sudden death of Mayor Chokwe Lumumba, less than a year after he was elected. He suffered from heart failure Tuesday. He was 66 years old.

A longtime black nationalist organizer and attorney, Lumumba had been described as "America's most revolutionary mayor." Working with the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, Lumumba advocated for participatory democracy and the creation of new worker-run cooperatives in Jackson. Over the past four decades, Lumumba was deeply involved in numerous political and legal campaigns. As an attorney, his clients have included former Black Panther Assata Shakur, as well as her godson, the late hip-hop artist Tupac Shakur. As a political organizer, Lumumba served for years as vice president of the Republic of New Afrika, an organization which advocated for "an independent predominantly black government" in the southeastern United States and reparations for slavery. He also helped found the National Black Human Rights Coalition and the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement.

In June, Juan González and I [interviewed Chokwe Lumumba](#) just after he was elected. We began by asking him how he was able to win the mayoral election in a place like Jackson, Mississippi, given its history and his history as a radical activist in the black liberation struggle.

CHOKWE LUMUMBA: Thank you for having me, and a shout out and thank you to your listening audience.

I attribute the victory that we had this last week to the people, the people of Jackson, who were more than ready to have leadership that was forward-looking and ready to raise Jackson to a different level of development, ready to embrace the ideas that all government should do the most to protect the human rights of the people in that jurisdiction. And we were very pleased with the outcoming of people to vote, with their participation, and with their continued support.

We have—I am now running for the mayor—or have, in fact, won the mayor of the city of Jackson, because I think it's necessary. We are a population here now in the need of a lot of development. Development is one of the tracks or one of the roads to human rights and to the recognition of human rights, especially our economic human rights. And some of that development is going to take the kind of leadership and the kind of consistency that we had in the struggle for voting rights and other kinds of rights, which has been unique to our history.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: Well, Chokwe Lumumba, I'm not sure that many people around the country understand the symbolic—the symbolism of Jackson, Mississippi, as a center of racism and racial oppression over the—really, over centuries. The very name of the city—the city was named after Andrew Jackson by the white settlers when Jackson in 1820 was able, as Indian commissioner, to basically pressure the Choctaw Indians to give up 13 million acres of land and move to Oklahoma in the Treaty of Doak's Stand. And that's why the white settlers named the city after Jackson, because of his success at ethnic cleansing. And then, of course, its history throughout the—through slavery and Jim Crow. How did this change occur? How were you able to put this together, this coalition to be elected, given your history as a radical and an activist in the black liberation struggle?

CHOKWE LUMUMBA: I think it's a tribute to our consistency. It's a tribute to our refusal to say that we would bow to the oppression that was around us. It's a tremendous story of our people. You talked about Medgar Evers, but the continuation since Medgar Evers of fighting against oppression, fighting against economic oppression, fighting against the kinds of things which have surfaced in our decades, which are similar to the kinds of things you cite in the distant history of Jackson, we have been persistent. And with that persistence, see, our people now are ready to move to a different level of development.

And I should say that people should take a note of Jackson, because we have suffered some of the worst kinds of abuses in history, but we're about to make some advances and some strides in the development of human rights and the protection of human rights that I think have not been seen in other parts of the country. And I want to caution folks that we've got to be careful now when we talk about any one particular place in the United States. All over, we've seen intense oppression. I'm from Detroit, initially, and we've seen a lot of oppression there, historically as well as currently. New York has certainly seen its share. Washington, D.C., has seen its share. So, we don't want to be like people on different plantations arguing about which plantation is worse. What we have to do is to correct the whole problem, and we're about correcting the problem here in Jackson. And we're going to be inviting people to come here, and people want to come here, in order to participate in the struggle forward. And this is not a phony struggle. We're not just putting a false face on—we tell you we've had real problems, and we still have some real problems, but we're solving these problems, and we're going to try to solve a lot of them through economic development, which is going to involve the masses of the people, not just a few folks.

AMY GOODMAN: Can you tell us about your platform and the Jackson-Kush Plan?

CHOKWE LUMUMBA: Well, the platform is to advance the ideas of development and to advance the ideas of empowerment of the populations which exist in the city of Jackson, specifically. We have a population, the demographic here, 80 percent of the population is black, about 20 percent is white. And we have with us brothers and sisters who are of East Indian origin, as well as some Asian and some Hispanic folks coming in. Our slogan was "One city, one aim, one destiny." And the idea is to blend these populations into a struggle forward. There are some people historically who have always tried to separate the populations and to have a certain portion of the population oppress the rest of the population. We're not going to tolerate that. We're going to move ahead. We're going to let everyone participate in this movement forward. We're going to invite everyone to participate in this movement forward.

And we have formed like a people's assembly, that's key to what we've done here, where we have—every three months, the population can come out and participate in an open forum to say what's on their mind. They can come out and learn some of the problems that the city is facing and some of the solutions that some of the problem solvers are supposed to be offering. And this will bring about more public education and political education to the population of the city, make our population more prepared to be motivated and organized in order to participate in the changes which must occur in the city of Jackson in order to move it forward. We say the people must decide. "Educate, motivate, organize." That's the slogan we use for it.

AMY GOODMAN: The late Chokwe Lumumba speaking on *Democracy Now!* on June 6. He was elected mayor on June 5th, the mayor of Jackson, Mississippi.

We're joined right now by three guests to talk about his shocking death, but also his life and his legacy. We're going to begin with Akinyele Umoja. He's an associate professor and chair of the Department of African-American Studies at Georgia State University, a founding member, like Chokwe Lumumba, of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement and the New Afrikan Peoples Organization. He's author of the book, *We Will Shoot Back: Armed Resistance in the Mississippi Freedom Movement*. He's joining us from Los Angeles. And we're going to be going to Jackson, Mississippi, as well, to speak with the former head of the NAACP, Ben Jealous, on the phone. But let's go first to his longtime ally. We're joined right now by Akinyele Umoja.

Can you talk about his life and what you understand happened yesterday, his death?

AKINYELE UMOJA: Well, I'm in Los Angeles right now, so I can't give you a lot of details about his death. But in terms of his life, Chokwe Lumumba was born 1948 in Detroit, Michigan. He grew up in a working-class family. He was the second-oldest child in that family. His mother, when he was a child, involved him in civil rights activity. Interestingly enough, they were raising money to go to Mississippi to support the movement, the Student of Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and other groups in Mississippi. He became a student athlete. Chokwe was a very gifted athlete, went to Kalamazoo College, and there he became a student activist also.

He was attracted to the Black Power movement, particularly after the assassination of Martin Luther King. You know, like, a tremendous event occurred after the assassination of King. Many young black people joined the Black Power movement. And Chokwe was attracted to a group in Detroit that was based in Detroit, the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika, that demanded five states in the South, that also talked about creating a new society for black people, a society where there would be diversity, a society that would have cooperative economic and socialistic principles.

And those are things that Chokwe carried with him to his last days. He believed in black self-determination. He believed that black people should form—and black people and other folks, because Chokwe was definitely an internationalist also—believed that there should be a new economic system that was more humanistic than the system we live in today. In 1984, Chokwe helped found the New Afrikan Peoples Organization, which would be more activist than the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Afrika, and then, a companion with that, in 1990 formed the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement.

Chokwe was actually drafted to run for mayor of Jackson, Mississippi. Many people—he had been there, moved to Jackson in the late '80s. And he had been engaged as an attorney, being an advocate for people, for workers' rights, being an advocate for victims of police brutality. He had challenged activity of the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacist organizations in Mississippi. And because of his consistency of work in the state, many people said he should run for mayor. And the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement agreed with that, encouraged Chokwe to run, and—but decided to organize a different type of black politics there. We felt the traditional black politics weren't really working for us at this time.

So, in Chokwe's ward, first, before he ran for mayor, in his ward, when he ran for city councilman in 2009, a People's Assembly was organized. And so, when you heard the clip of him saying the people will decide, that slogan was put into practice by organizing an assembly that would develop his platform. So his platform actually came from the community and not out of his head or not out of our organization. Chokwe—they formed from this People's Assembly that helped him get elected, formed his platform, but also stayed organized while he was serving the City Council to provide him with direction on how he should proceed on policy.

So it was a different form of politics that was being pursued, as you mentioned earlier, encouraging participatory democracy, encouraging people to get active and also to become politically educated. The hope was—and the

hope is still—after his election for mayor, that we would organize a People's Assembly. In fact, this May, May 2nd through 4th, in Jackson, Mississippi, there also will be the New Economies Conference, Jackson Rising conference, that will look at new economies, cooperative economic development, things of that nature. In the legacy of Chokwe Lumumba, we have to continue these initiatives, even though his—even though his untimely death. He died of a sudden heart attack. And our prayers go out to his family.

AMY GOODMAN: We're talking to Akinyele Umoja, who is associate professor and chair of the Department of African-American Studies at Georgia State University, a longtime friend and ally of Chokwe Lumumba, who died suddenly yesterday, the mayor of Jackson, Mississippi. When we come back, we'll also go to Jackson, Mississippi, and speak to people around the country. This is *Democracy Now!* We'll be back in a moment.

[break]

AMY GOODMAN: "Lumumba" by Miriam Makeba, here on *Democracy Now!*, democracynow.org, *The War and Peace Report*. I'm Amy Goodman. We're talking about the sudden death of Chokwe Lumumba yesterday in Jackson, Mississippi. He was voted the mayor of—he was elected mayor in June of 2013. Chokwe Lumumba was born Edwin Finley Taliaferro. He told the *Jackson Free Press* why he chose his name. He said, "I picked the name Chokwe because in my African history class I learned that the Chokwe tribe, which is a tribe that still exists, was one of the last tribes to resist the slave trade successfully in northeast Angola. The name literally means 'hunter.' The second name, Lumumba, was the name of a great African leader who began to lead Africa to decolonize, to independence. He was from the Congo. Lumumba means 'gifted.' So literally, it means 'gifted hunter.'"

I want to go back to Akinyele Umoja, associate professor and chair of the Department of African-American Studies at Georgia State University and founding member, like Chokwe Lumumba was, of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement. The significance of the mayor's name, the late mayor's name?

AKINYELE UMOJA: Well, Chokwe, he, as you mentioned, is a—was a black nationalist. He was inspired by Malcolm X, and Malcolm X talked to us about the legacy of the names that we were born with in this country, of having a legacy that was connected to slavery. And so, Chokwe very much embraced the necessity of black people having a culture that was liberating. And in that context—and many people who were a part of the New Afrikan movement with Chokwe, began to change their—like myself, changed our names to African names to try to embrace that heritage, but not only looking back, but also looking forward to try to develop new societies and new communities and to be able to give our children a legacy that's connected to a liberation movement as opposed to a legacy that was connected to slavery. And so, he very much believed that—for instance, one of the major issues, as we talked about Jackson, he felt that the curriculum needed to be changed in the schools to be able to give our children more knowledge of their history and heritage. He thought that was connected to a low academic achievement in Mississippi, which you know generally rates in one of the lowest-achieving school systems in the country. And so, he believed in that.

I also want to point out that Chokwe was an internationalist. One of the last times we spent extensive time together, we were in Haiti. I know, Amy, you've covered the fight for democracy in Haiti.

AMY GOODMAN: Right.

AKINYELE UMOJA: And we went there in 2010 to examine what was going on after the earthquake. And we found at that time—and Chokwe and I both held a press conference in Port-au-Prince, looking at that many of the funds that had been collected for people who were abused in—who were victims of the earthquake hadn't been distributed to them. We also called for the return of President Aristide. So, Chokwe—and this is just one example of the campaigns around the world or issues around the world that Chokwe began to speak about and speak on, as well as his support for human rights for people who had immigrated to Jackson and other parts of

the United States from other countries and the rights that they had. He was very much opposed to the legislation that was occurring in Arizona and in the state I live in, in Georgia, that racially profile immigrants. So, he was a champion. I mentioned he was a black nationalist. He was also an internationalist who campaigned for the human rights for all people.

AMY GOODMAN: Professor Umoja, we're also joined by Bill Chandler, a close ally of Mayor Lumumba, was a member of his transition team. Bill Chandler is also a veteran of the civil rights struggles in Mississippi and is founding executive director of the Mississippi Immigrant Rights Alliance, where Lumumba served as legal counsel before he became mayor. I know Jackson, Mississippi, is mourning right now, Bill. Our condolences to all of you. Can you talk about what Mayor Lumumba was pushing forward before his unexpected death yesterday?

BILL CHANDLER: Well, I think both of us came to Jackson, Mississippi, with the same goal in mind, and that is the realization that in the South, this is where change is going to occur that's going to affect our country and move it in a more progressive direction. I started with organizing public workers. Chokwe was involved in supporting that effort in Mississippi. There is now a state employees' union, and also workers for the city of Jackson have organized and are in the process of renegotiating a new contract with the city of Jackson. Further, we recognized that with the in-migration of immigrants from Africa, from Asia, from Latin America and Mexico into Mississippi, that it would create a possibility of significant political change here. And many of the things that Chokwe was fighting for were the same things that we were fighting for. So, 13 years ago, when we formed the Mississippi Immigrant Rights Alliance, we did it with unions and churches and civil rights organizations coming together, and Chokwe became our counsel.

We worked together on many issues related to the human rights struggle—you know, for example, the effort to free the Scott sisters, two young women that were arrested and sent up with life sentences for allegedly stealing \$11. We worked together on other issues, as well. When he was attacked by a white supremacist judge in Durant, Mississippi, we joined in the effort to prevent him from being disbarred. We spent time on the picket lines in front of the Bar Association, among other things.

But he was a strong supporter of immigrant rights, and I think almost every—in fact, every conference that we had, in terms of unity, trying to build unity between immigrants, brown folks and African Americans, he was part of the efforts to demonstrate the need for unity. And so, it was a natural thing when he announced that he was running for City Council that we would join with him in that effort. That was very successful. And it was very much a grassroots movement here in Jackson. We spent a lot of time going door to door. We had house meetings in communities. And it was a very successful campaign.

And one of the first things—basically, following the example of the city of Detroit, where Councilman Kenneth Cockrel Jr. had initiated an ordinance to prevent racial profiling by public officials, we adopted that idea in Jackson. And together with the legal project director, Patricia Ice, who is—of MIRA, who is also a native of Detroit, we crafted an ordinance that prohibited any public official in the city of Jackson from profiling racially or people that were immigrants in the city. And that really has created a foundation for an effort to make the city of Jackson a more welcoming community for immigrants as they come into Mississippi seeking refuge and seeking work here.

And so, we have worked together many times, in really a constant relationship. And when the community basically encouraged him to run for mayor, and in effect drafted for mayor, we joined his campaign with enthusiasm from the very beginning. And again, it was a people's campaign. We had the People's Assembly that developed in Ward 2, which he represented in the City Council, began spreading throughout the city. And as a matter of fact, this Saturday we had—we had planned to have a People's Assembly for the whole city to talk about the issues that people face here.

So, the loss of Chokwe Lumumba was very shocking to us here. I heard about it shortly after he had passed yesterday afternoon. And, you know, it's something that is very hard to take. And we extend our thoughts and our prayers to his family, who is very close in the community here. And we look forward to continuing his vision for the city of Jackson.

AMY GOODMAN: I want to talk more about the Scott sisters. In Mississippi, in January of 2011, two African-American sisters were freed from life sentences in jail, as you mentioned, for an \$11 armed robbery. The sisters, Gladys and Jamie Scott, had spent 16 years in prison—for \$11. The NAACP and other civil rights groups had campaigned for years for their freedom. Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour suspended their sentences on condition that Gladys donate a kidney to her sister, who was on dialysis.

GLADYS SCOTT: You know, I'm praying to God that I am a match, because I don't want her to have nobody else's kidney. I want her to have mine. Whether I was, you know, released because I had to give her a kidney, I was going to give it to her anyway if I had to give it to her in prison. Didn't nobody had to release me, because if they would have let me give it to her when her kidney first failed, I would have gave it to her without a shadow of a doubt. I love my sister.

AMY GOODMAN: That was Gladys Scott. Her sister, 36-year-old Jamie Scott, reflected on how much the world had changed since they were sent to prison in 1994.

JAMIE SCOTT: Last night, I didn't sleep at all last night. I see pictures of stuff in magazines, different things, as the world is changing and everything—cellphones, up-to-date cellphones and all these things. And today—and today, I've done used mostly everybody's cellphones that's with me. I just wanted to touch them, and I've been playing with them and everything. And it's so amazing, you know, how the world has changed since 1994. And up to today, it is so amazing, and I'm still trying to soak it all in.

AMY GOODMAN: That was Jamie Scott and, before that, Gladys Scott, released from jail after 16 years in prison for an \$11 robbery. Standing next to them was Chokwe Lumumba, their attorney at the time, now mayor—well, until yesterday. His sudden death is why we're talking about him today, though we interviewed him the day after he was elected. Also standing there was Ben Jealous, former president and CEO of the NAACP, who recently wrote a [piece](#) for *The Huffington Post* called "Remembering Chokwe Lumumba." Remember him for us, Ben.

BENJAMIN JEALOUS: Sure. Well, you know, that was the fourth or fifth time we had stood next to people that we had worked together to free from prison over the last 20 years. And that was what was so remarkable about Chokwe. I mean, he was a man who was, you know, a true man, if you will. He was active in his church. He had a great marriage to his wife. He had two wonderful kids that he poured all of his love into. He was a well-respected coach. He was an incredible lawyer.

And he chose his—and he also was, you know, somebody with very strong ideals. And he chose to live and practice those ideals on the ground in one of the poorest places in our country. And he brought all of those things with him into the courtroom—all the compassion, all the insight, all his skill as a lawyer—on behalf of the poorest people in the state. And that's ultimately why Bill and Derrick Johnson, the president of the NAACP in Mississippi, and so many others, they say he was drafted to run for mayor, because everybody had basically fallen in love—let me put it this way: An overwhelming majority of Jackson—I won't say everybody, because there were definitely some people who were on the other side—but an overwhelming majority of Jackson, black and white, had fallen in love with Chokwe over the years that he had lived in town, because he was just such a good person. And you knew in your heart, when you live in Jackson, that the toughest thing in Mississippi to be is to be poor and black and in court without good counsel. And he would, at oftentimes risk to his own financial stability, defend anyone who he thought he could help, who he thought needed help, and, most importantly, who

he was convinced that nobody else would help.

AMY GOODMAN: I want to go back to our interview with Chokwe Lumumba on *Democracy Now!* the day after he was elected. We talked to him June 6th. I asked him about the FBI's decision last year to place his former client, Assata Shakur, on the Most Wanted Terrorists list. But before we play that clip, I wanted to ask you, Ben, about the media coverage, both of Chokwe Lumumba, his election, and the significance of the man who some who called the most revolutionary mayor in America—the lack of the coverage. Last night, I was watching the networks, and I opened *The New York Times* today, the actual paper edition, and I didn't see a reference. Last night watching MSNBC for hours, now, I didn't watch every single second, so I might have missed something, but I did not see a reference. As Bill Chandler said, he died late yesterday afternoon.

BENJAMIN JEALOUS: Yeah. So, you know, I know that I saw something in the *Times* this morning online.

AMY GOODMAN: Online, yes.

BENJAMIN JEALOUS: Yeah, I mean, Chokwe—I mean, look, Chokwe is somebody who you have to give this much time to really talk about. This is a man who lived, if you will, sort of multiple journeys in his life and who was quixotic to people because, on the one hand, you could easily stereotype him as being some sort of radical—he would say he was a radical, because he didn't see that as being a bad thing. You know, he was somebody who thought that, frankly, having ideals and practicing them in this country full of so much hypocrisy was a radical thing. But he was also somebody who was an extremely committed mayor, very good at working across the aisle, even in his short tenure, with people in the business community, in the most conservative corners of the city, if you will. And he was somebody who at the end of the day, yes, stood up for black people, but was ultimately committed to fairness for everyone in our country.

And so, you know, for, I think, many in the media who sort of deal in sound bites, there's just too much there to quickly understand in 30 seconds, and so they move on. But he's ultimately the type of person that we need to understand better in our country, because our country ultimate is greatest, if you will, because of the contributions of idealists over the years who, yes, may have staked a far-out position at times in their lives, but ultimately served to pull our country closer to its own closely held ideals of fairness and equality and justice and the universal dignity of all humanity.

AMY GOODMAN: So let's go to that [clip](#) right now when Chokwe Lumumba came on *Democracy Now!* Juan González and I interviewed him, and I asked Mayor Lumumba—well, he was mayor-elect at the time—about the FBI's decision to place his former client Assata Shakur, who is in Cuba, on the Most Wanted Terrorists list.

CHOKWE LUMUMBA: Well, I've always felt that Assata Shakur was wrongfully convicted, so she shouldn't be on a wanted list at all. She never should have been in prison. She was actually shot herself and wounded and paralyzed at the time that the person who she was convicted of killing was shot. So she obviously couldn't have shot him. And she also was arrested, which caused the incident for about eight different charges which she later was found not guilty of or were dismissed. So I think it's unfortunate. Assata Shakur, I believe, will historically be proven to be a hero of our times.

AMY GOODMAN: That was Chokwe Lumumba on *Democracy Now!* on June 6th. Akinyele Umoja, can you talk more about his representation of Assata Shakur and others, the significance of this man, this radical attorney, black nationalist, becoming the mayor of Jackson, Mississippi, and now his loss, as we wrap up?

AKINYELE UMOJA: Well, Chokwe was an excellent attorney. In fact, he went to law school inspired by the need for attorneys for people who had been political prisoners, such as Assata Shakur. He went to Wayne State Law School, and then after he went to Wayne State, he went—he successfully sued Wayne State for discrimination against African-American students there.

And then he began to dedicate himself to defending not only, as was mentioned before, the poorest of our community and victims of police brutality, victims of worker—people who had been fighting for their rights as workers and been unjustly fired or whatever, but he also took on the cases of victims of COINTELPRO, or people who had been targeted by J. Edgar Hoover's Counterinsurgency Program, a war against the black freedom movement of the 1960s and '70s. So, Assata was one of those people. In fact, in the case he had with Assata, the case was dismissed. He also was co-counsel in the case of Geronimo ji-Jaga, or also known as Geronimo Pratt, who was another person targeted by COINTELPRO; Dr. Mutulu Shakur, who was—and Sekou Odinga, who were charged with freeing Assata Shakur from prison in 1979. So he handled the cases that maybe others would shy away from.

He definitely believed—and even though Chokwe did believe in humanity and love all humanity, he did believe that the United States government was an unjust government, was a government that had a legacy of committing crimes against black people and other people of color and other oppressed people in the United States. And so, he was committed to—as an attorney, and he was committed as an activist, to try to have self-determination and a new system of social justice. Chokwe, even though he ran for mayor, and he believed in working—using every opportunity you had within the system to try to govern ourselves and use whatever influence we had inside of government to improve the lives of people, he did still believe that we needed more fundamental change, that we needed more systemic change.

AMY GOODMAN: In terms of where the city of Jackson goes right now, we're going to end with a guest who just showed up in Jackson, Mississippi, in the studio. But he didn't just show up in Jackson, though he did travel there to be with Chokwe Lumumba as he became mayor of the city. Kwame Kenyatta is with us, the former Detroit city councilman who moved to Jackson last year to serve as Mayor Lumumba—Mayor Lumumba's contract compliance officer. My condolences to the city of Jackson. This is a loss to the country. Kwame Kenyatta, as we wrap up this discussion—you're coming in just on the tail end—hold forth. Tell us the significance of your colleague, your friend, Chokwe Lumumba, and what this loss means for the direction the city of Jackson was going in.

KWAME KENYATTA: Well, it is a tremendous loss for the city of Jackson, the state of Mississippi—indeed, the country and the world. As you know, Brother Chokwe was a human rights activist, attorney, who fought for the liberation of all people, but definitely fought for the liberation of people of African descent here and around the world. He had developed a strategy to bring this city back, and as he said, not just Jackson, but Mississippi as a whole, who has a history, that's not a very good history, of treating people in the right manner. So, we had just won a 1 percent sales tax that would build up our infrastructure. The president is talking about building infrastructure. Brother Chokwe had moved to do just that. That sales tax go into effect this Saturday. With that, he intended to build new homes, new businesses, new institutions that would help the people. We live in a state that has the highest—

AMY GOODMAN: I mean, that's amazing, actually. He increased the taxes and had the support of the city to do that. It is a lesson to people all over the country about what is possible if that money is going back into shoring up the city.

KWAME KENYATTA: Correct—raised the water rates and as well as the taxes. And people understood that it was necessary in order—but that was because they had faith in his vision. They had faith in what he stood for all of his life and what he stands for now. And so, with that, they were willing to bite the bullet to make this place a better place to live.

AMY GOODMAN: You said, Kwame Kenyatta—you were just about to say this is the city with the highest—and I cut you off.

KWAME KENYATTA: Well, we have a state that is the highest—the poorest state in the country. It is the most

obese state in the country, and just recently found to be on the bottom when it comes to education. All of these things was in the mind of Brother Chokwe Lumumba as to how we can improve the quality of life here in Jackson. He could have lived anywhere, but he believed in the vision that the movement put forth years ago, the Malcolm X doctrine, that we must organize upon the land and organize the people upon that land, and he did just that. He gave up his home in Detroit to come here, to one of the five states to begin to organize. He never wavered on that. He never faltered on that. He was committed to that to the end. His last call was a call about a meeting that I was in, and he wanted to know what the outcome of that meeting was. And so, even in his hospital room, minutes before he died, he was working and doing the work of the people.

AMY GOODMAN: Kwame Kenyatta, I want to thank you for being with us, as well as all of our guests, the former Detroit city councilmember who moved to Jackson to be with the new mayor at the time in June, Chokwe Lumumba, Kwame Kenyatta.

KWAME KENYATTA: Thank you.

AMY GOODMAN: Thanks for joining us, Akinyele Umoja. Thank you for being with us, Bill Chandler and Ben Jealous. Again, the shocking news that the mayor of Jackson, Mississippi, has died. He died late yesterday afternoon, it was reported, of heart failure. This is *Democracy Now!* We'll be back in a minute.

http://www.democracynow.org/2014/2/26/chokwe_lumumba_remembering_americas_most_revolutionary