

# THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

THE DAKOTAS' OLDEST NEWSPAPER | FOUNDED 1861

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## OPINION

# The Gravity Of James Brady

A few words — and some serious national soul searching — are needed today as we remember James Brady, the former White House press secretary and gun control champion, who died Monday at age 73.

However, whatever words we can conjure can never adequately reflect the unimaginable suffering this man endured — nor can they properly portray the gravity he exerted on the gun control debate in this nation.

On March 30, 1981, Brady was gravely wounded during the assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan in Washington. The wound was so severe that, at one point, he was even declared dead by a White House official and one television news anchor asked for a moment of silence. Nevertheless, the damage was done. The bullet that ripped through Brady's head caused him to lose 20 percent of his frontal brain tissue, according to the *New York Times*; it left him in a wheelchair, with slow, slurred speech and lifelong pain.

Another way to put it: Brady was a victim of gun violence in America — and, by chance, a survivor.

But he became much more than a statistic. He and his wife Sarah turned into outspoken champions of the gun-control movement in this country, and their years of hard work against powerful resistance paid off when the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act, known widely as the Brady bill, was signed into law in 1994. This law required federal background checks and a five-day waiting period for handgun purchases.

In the second paragraph, we used the word "gravity" to describe Brady's influence, and that is precisely the right word. The key element to the bill's success was James and Sarah Brady's ability to pull Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives — even his former presidential boss, who was a National Rifle Association member and Second Amendment advocate — together to pass a law for the greater good. So, it turns out that such things can happen in Washington, at least if the right people are making the case AND if the right people are willing to listen.

How many lives has this law saved? It's impossible to know, but it's estimated that the Brady bill has interceded in more than 2 million attempted handgun purchases in the 20 years of its existence.

Brady made a difference in what was and still is one of the most polarizing cultural issues of our age. That says a lot about the man and about his spirit, neither of which could be slowed or bound.

Once upon a time, a shooting tragedy in this country led to a change in the gun laws. Now, even a massacre at a grade school in Connecticut, for example (of which there are too many), cannot move the needle the way Brady was able to do it two decades ago.

That may say a thing or two about Brady, but it also says a lot about us.

Brady's courageous legacy will live on, but finding the people who can carry the torch forward may be the tougher task.

*kmh*

## OUR LETTER POLICY

The **PRESS & DAKOTAN** encourages its readers to write letters to the editor, and it asks that a few simple guidelines be followed.

■ Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.

■ In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the **PRESS & DAKOTAN** will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses.

■ Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue.

■ Only signed letters with writer's full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Please mail to: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email to [views@yankton.net](mailto:views@yankton.net).

## ON THIS DATE

### By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, August 6, the 218th day of 2014. There are 147 days left in the year.

**Today's Highlight in History:** On August 6, 1914, Austria-Hungary declared war against Russia and Serbia declared war against Germany.

**On this date:** In 1813, during the Venezuelan War of Independence, forces led by Simon Bolivar recaptured Caracas.

In 1825, Upper Peru became the autonomous republic of Bolivia.

In 1862, the Confederate ironclad CSS Arkansas was scuttled by its crew on the Mississippi River near Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to prevent capture by the Union.

In 1926, Gertrude Ederle became the first woman to swim the English Channel, arriving in Kingsdown, England, from France in 14 1/2 hours.

In 1930, New York State Supreme Court Justice Joseph Force Crater went missing after leaving a Manhattan restaurant; his disappearance remains a mystery.

In 1945, during World War II, the United States dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan, resulting in an estimated 140,000 deaths.

In 1956, the DuMont television network went off the air after a decade of operations.

In 1961, Soviet cosmonaut Gherman Titov became the second man to orbit Earth as he flew aboard Vostok 2.

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act. In 1978, Pope Paul VI died at Castel Gandolfo at age 80.

In 1986, William J. Schroeder died at Humana Hospital-Audubon in Louisville, Kentucky, after living 620 days with the Jarvik 7 artificial heart.

In 1993, Louis Freeh won Senate confirmation to be FBI director.

**Ten years ago:** A court found two former top East German officials guilty of failing to stop the killing of people trying to escape across the Berlin Wall and sentenced them to probation. Funk legend Rick James, whose life and career were marred by cocaine addiction and a prison term for assault, died in Los Angeles at age 56.

**Five years ago:** Sonia Sotomayor was confirmed as the first Hispanic Supreme Court justice by a Senate

vote of 68-31. John Hughes, 59, Hollywood's youth movie director of the 1980s and '90s, died in New York City. Sam, the 4-year-old koala who'd gained worldwide fame and sympathy when she was rescued during devastating wildfires in Australia, was euthanized after a veterinarian found the cysts that threatened her life were inoperable.

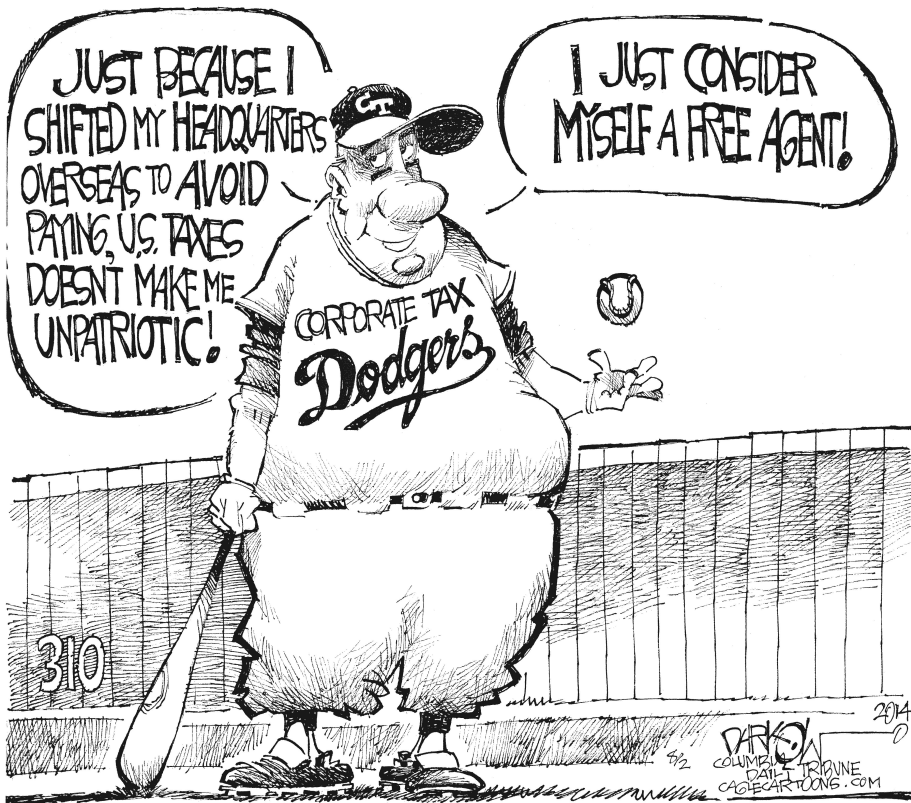
**One year ago:** President Barack Obama said during an appearance on NBC's "The Tonight Show" that he was "disappointed" that Russia had granted temporary asylum to National Security Agency leaker Edward Snowden, defying administration demands that the former government contractor be sent back to the U.S. to face espionage charges. U.S. Army Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan went on trial at Fort Hood, Texas, charged with killing 13 people and wounding 32 others in a 2009 attack. (Hasan, who admitted carrying out the attack, was convicted and sentenced to death.)

**Today's Birthdays:** Actor-director Peter Bonerz is 76. Actress Louise Sorel is 74. Actor Michael Anderson Jr. is 71. Actor Ray Buktenica is 71. Actor Dorian Harewood is 64. Actress Catherine Hicks is 63. Rock singer Pat MacDonald (Timbuk 3) is 62. Country musician Mark DuFresne (Confederate Railroad) is 61. Actress Stephanie Kramer is 58. Actress Faith Prince is 57. Rhythm-and-blues singer Randy DeBarge is 56. Actor Leland Orser is 54. Country singers Patsy and Peggy Lynn are 50. Basketball Hall of Famer David Robinson is 49. Actor Jeremy Ratchford is 49. Country singer Lisa Stewart is 46. Movie writer-director M. Night Shyamalan is 44. Actress Merrin Dungey is 43. Singer Geri Halliwell is 42. Actor Jason O'Mara is 42. Singer-actor David Campbell is 41. Actress Vera Farmiga is 41. Actress Ever Carradine is 40. Actress Soleil (soh-LAY') Moon Frye is 38. Actress Melissa George is 38. Rock singer Travis McCoy (Gym Class Heroes) is 33. Actor Leslie Odom Jr. is 33. Actress Romola Garai is 32. Rock musician Eric Roberts (Gym Class Heroes) is 30.

**Thought for Today:** "A successful lie is doubly a lie; an error which has to be corrected is a heavier burden than the truth." — Dag Hammarskjöld, U.N. Secretary-General (1905-1961).

## FROM THE BIBLE

*Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. Mark 9:42. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis*



# Workers Who Serve Society Aren't Rewarded

BY ROBERT B. REICH

Tribune Content Agency

What someone is paid has little or no relationship to what their work is worth to society.

Does anyone seriously believe that hedge-fund mogul Steven A. Cohen is worth the \$2.3 billion he raked in last year, despite being slapped with a \$1.8 billion fine after his firm pleaded guilty to insider trading?

On the other hand, what's the worth to society of social workers who put in long and difficult hours dealing with patients suffering from mental illness or substance abuse? Probably higher than their average pay of \$18.14 an hour, which translates into less than \$38,000 a year.

How much does society gain from personal-care aides who assist the elderly, convalescents and persons with disabilities? Likely more than their average pay of \$9.67 an hour, or just over \$20,000 a year.

What's the social worth of hospital orderlies who feed, bathe, dress and move patients, and empty their bedpans? Surely higher than their median wage of \$11.63 an hour, or \$24,190 a year.

Or of child care workers, who get \$10.33 an hour, \$21,490 a year? And preschool teachers, who earn \$13.26 an hour, \$27,580 a year?

Yet what would the rest of us do without these dedicated people?

Or consider kindergarten teachers, who make an average of \$53,590 a year.

Before you think that's generous, consider that a good kindergarten teacher is worth his or her weight in gold, almost. One study found that children with outstanding kindergarten teachers are more likely to go to college and less likely to become single parents than a random set of children similar to them in every way other than being assigned a superb teacher.

And what of writers, actors, painters and poets? Only a tiny fraction ever become rich and famous. Most barely make enough to live on. (Many don't, and are forced to take paying jobs to pursue their art.) But society is surely all the richer for their efforts.

At the other extreme are hedge-fund and private-equity managers, investment bankers, corporate lawyers, management consultants, high-frequency traders and top Washington lobbyists.

They're getting paid vast sums for their labors. Yet it seems doubtful that society is really that much better off because of what they do.

I don't mean to sound unduly harsh, but I've never heard of a hedge-fund manager



Robert  
**REICH**

whose job entails attending to basic human needs (unless you consider having more money a basic human need) or enriching our culture (except through the myriad novels, exposes and movies made about greedy hedge-fund managers and investment bankers).

They don't even build the economy.

Most financiers, corporate lawyers, lobbyists and management consultants are competing with other financiers, lawyers, lobbyists and management consultants in zero-sum games that take money out of one set of pockets and put it into another. They're paid gigantic amounts because winning these games can generate far bigger sums, while losing them can be extremely costly.

It's said that by moving money to where it can make more money, these games make the economy more efficient.

In fact, the games amount to a mammoth waste of societal resources.

They demand ever more cunning innovations, but they create no social value. High-frequency traders who win by a thousandth of a second can reap a fortune, but society as a whole is no better off.

Meanwhile, the games consume the energies of loads of talented people who might otherwise be making real contributions to society — if not by tending to human needs or enriching our culture then by curing diseases or devising new technological breakthroughs, or helping solve some of our most intractable social problems.

Graduates of Ivy League universities are more likely to enter finance and consulting than any other career.

For example, in 2010 (the most recent year for which we have data), close to 36 percent of Princeton graduates went into finance. Add in management consulting, and it was close to 60 percent.

The hefty endowments of such elite institutions are swollen with tax-subsidized donations from wealthy alumni, many of whom are seeking to guarantee their own kids' admissions so they too can become enormously rich financiers and management consultants.

But I can think of a better way for taxpayers to subsidize occupations with more social merit: Forgive the student debts of graduates who choose social work, child care, elder care, nursing and teaching.

*Robert Reich is Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley and Senior Fellow at the Blum Center for Developing Economies. His new film, "Inequality for All," is now out on iTunes, DVD and On Demand.*

## YOUR LETTERS

### Give Them Thanks

Tom Kunkel, Yankton

It is very common today to talk about all the things our government does wrong. I would like to thank our local government for something they did right.

The other day, I went to the courthouse to register a car and I noticed the Marine Corps flag was faded to a point of looking pink. That's not good! A pink Marine Corps flag is a disgrace. I immediately complained to the clerk at the auditor's counter. (The head guy was not there.)

The next time I drove by the courthouse, all the service flags on the memorial had been replaced. If you are a vet, be sure and thank them the next time you are in the courthouse.

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