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Rockin' In The Free World

BY BILL O'REILLY
Creators Syndicate

While watching the Grammy awards last Sunday, it occurred to me that American culture has been defined by music ever since the end of World War II. After the Germans and Japanese surrendered in 1945, millions of GI's returned home to marry and begin families. The big-band era of good-time music accompanied that, and romantic singers like Frank Sinatra ruled the day.

In the '50s, many young people, tired of conformity, began to rebel. The rise of Elvis Presley illuminated that rebellion. Then the angst kind of died out as Chubby Checker ushered in "The Twist" in 1960, and Americans began dancing all over the place.

Exhausted from doing "The Pony," young consumers eventually began to respond to the snappy melodies of an English group called The Beatles, and once again, music mania gripped the nation. The British invasion featured the four mop-tops, The Rolling Stones and The Animals, among others.

Then came Vietnam. That led to protest music and drug-fueled lyrics, as well as introspective tunes by The Doors, Jefferson Airplane and Bob Dylan. Acid rock soon followed, and everything was very far out, man.

After about seven years, that intensity died down. The dark themes receded, and dancing once again came back. The age of disco took hold as the Bee Gees and other polyester-clad groups dominated the charts. The good times of the late 1970s and early '80s featured Madonna, Michael Jackson, and Earth, Wind and Fire. But it all ended when the AIDS scare arrived in 1984. Suddenly, the uninhibited party became dangerous.



Bill O'REILLY

Then music kind of meandered for a while until rap emerged. At first, the anger-fueled recordings were confined to urban radio stations and a niche audience. But when Elton John sang a duet with the white rapper Eminem on a Grammy telecast, rap went mainstream. Massive parental headaches followed.

The rise of the Internet signaled the slow collapse of record stores, and the music industry quickly fragmented after the turn of the century. Consumers could now download songs into portable machines and pop at will. Americans no longer had to depend on the radio to hear their favorite tunes.

Since then, there have been a series of pop superstars but no real purpose or point-of-view to the music, which again may reflect the current times. I mean, what do Lady Gaga and Jennifer Lopez really stand for? Narcissism? Just asking.

The talent is still there. I heard Justin Bieber do a knockout version of Paul McCartney's classic "Let It Be." And Bruno Mars with his little hat was pretty good on the Grammy show this year.

We are definitely living in confusing, rapidly changing times, as machines now dominate leisure options for many consumers. Fifty years ago, we all were humming the same tunes heard over and over on AM radio. The good vibrations of The Beach Boys thrilled Maine, as well as Malibu. The music actually brought Americans together.

Today, the tuneless lure of cyber-space has pulled us apart. Perhaps forever.

Veteran TV news anchor Bill O'Reilly is host of the Fox News show "The O'Reilly Factor" and author of the book "Pinheads and Patriots: Where You Stand in the Age of Obama."

Hiding Behind Tortured Definitions

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.
Tribune Media Services

If it is true, as the writer Samuel Johnson once said, that "patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel," then the dictionary must be the first.

Consider how readily our leaders, in justifying what cannot be justified, parse definitions down to microns of fineness or invent obfuscating euphemisms to hide behind. As in Bill Clinton's memorable attempt to deny he had misled the American people about his relationship with a White House intern. "It depends on what the meaning of the word 'is' is," he said. Then, there was the Bush administration's attempt to make waterboarding, sleep deprivation, clothes deprivation, stress positions and other filthy instruments of torture sound as antiseptic as an operating room: "enhanced interrogation," they called it.

To those acts of violence against clarity, we can add a new one. A Justice Department memo recently obtained by NBC News authorizes drone strikes to kill U.S. citizens who join al-Qaida, saying this is legal when three conditions are met. The third is that the operation be conducted "consistent with applicable law of war principles." The second is that capture is infeasible. But it is the first that puts ice down your back. It requires that "an informed, high-level official of the U.S. government has determined that the targeted individual poses an imminent threat of violent attack against the United States."

If you don't see why that should shiver your spine, perhaps you use a different dictionary than the government. Merriam-Webster for instance, defines "imminent" as an adjective meaning, "ready to take place; especially: hanging threateningly over one's head."

But in its memo, which surfaces as the Senate ponders confirming John Brennan as director of the CIA, the Justice Department says its definition of "imminent threat" doesn't require "clear evidence that a specific attack on U.S. persons and interests will take place in the immediate future."

In other words, "imminent" doesn't mean "imminent." And if U.S. intelligence — which we all know is infallible,

right? — determines you to be a member of al-Qaida, that determination, absent any evidence of a planned attack, gives the government the legal pretext to vaporize you. Worse, the government contends this may be done without oversight, judicial or otherwise. The president becomes, quite literally, your judge, jury and executioner.

That's what happened to Anwar al-Awlaki, the Muslim cleric, born in New Mexico, who was dispatched to meet Allah in 2011 after a career of planning and inciting terrorist attacks in the United States, including the failed bombing of Times Square in 2010.

No one weeps for this man. Yet it is possible to be glad the planet is rid of him and yet, deeply concerned about the means used to achieve that goal. Not for his sake, or for the sake of any other plotter against this country but, rather, for the sake of the country itself.

Barack Obama came to office decrying just this sort of Bush-league overreach, the end-justifies-the-means rationalizations of an administration that reserved the right to imprison without trial and issued memos contemplating the legality of scalding a prisoner with water or putting his eyes out. Of course, Michael Corleone was critical of the Don, too, until he assumed that power.

So it was welcome to hear the president pledge greater transparency, in last week's State of the Union address. And administration officials say they have been pondering ways to create independent oversight of the counterterrorism program.

But it is time to stop pledging and pondering and just do. The idea of a secret killing program, answerable to no one, is jarringly inconsonant with who and what we are supposed to be. One fears that, in the name of expedience, we will become what we abhor. Indeed, the danger is imminent.

Whatever that means.

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YOUR LETTERS

Expensive Expenses

Jerry Apa, Lead
House Bill No. 1212 raises legislative daily expense allowance from \$110 to \$175 — a 60 percent increase.

This legislation could easily read: An act to stick it to the taxpayers of South Dakota. This is clearly a back door attempt by certain self serving legislators to circumvent the voters to obtain a pay raise.

Presently a legislator receives a salary of \$6,000 per year, \$110 per day expenses, 37 cents per mile for travel during session except for the first day in and last day out; that reimbursement is 5 cents per mile. In other words a legislator receives \$10,400 plus mileage for a 40-day session.

I served in the Legislature for 12 years and there is always a breakfast, lunch or supper that is hosted by some group or organization. In reality a legislator could go all session, with very little deprivation, and never buy a meal.

The prime sponsor, Rep. David Novstrup from Aberdeen, is in his seventh year and now he thinks he is underpaid. Did he make a raise in per diem an issue in his bid for re-election? I think not.

Too many legislators are skewing the public instead of serving the public.

Money Management

Ruth Ann Dickman, Utica

I was appalled when I heard that Yankton School Board hired a consultant for \$8,000 to look for a superintendent. They say they don't have any money! Then why, when there's no money, do something like this? I always made sure I had the money before I did anything.

When I was going to school many years ago, the school board always took care of finding the right people for the jobs. I'm wondering what happened over the years?

Now I hear that the school board is crying that they have no money. I suppose they will be trying to get us older people, who are on fixed incomes, to bail them out!

We always knew how to manage our money: by not overspending! I'm wondering why the school board didn't put the search for a new superintendent on the Internet?

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OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

Two Strikes Against Nebraska Tax Plan

LINCOLN JOURNAL STAR (Feb. 10): Gov. Dave Heineman's plan to eliminate the income tax already is behind in the count, as they say in baseball.

The governor went for the long ball with LB405, which would eliminate individual and corporate income taxes and replace that revenue by eliminating \$2.4 billion in sales tax exemptions.

An alternative bill, LB406, would eliminate only the corporate income tax and reduce personal incomes taxes by exempting the first \$12,000 of income for married taxpayers and the first \$6,000 of income for individuals.

The plan already has a couple of strikes against it. Strike one came with release of a study by the OpenSky Policy Institute that said 80 percent of wage earners in the state would pay more in taxes if the bill were implemented.

Taxes would go up by an average of \$631 a year under LB405 for people earning less than \$21,000 a year. Taking the biggest hit were taxpayers earning between \$37,000 to \$59,999, who would pay an additional \$722 a year. Taxes would go down by \$4,851 for people earning more than \$91,000 a year, the institute said.

Admittedly, the analysis is made on more than a few assumptions. In the absence of any other credible analysis with different findings, however, the institute's report carries considerable weight.

State Tax Commissioner Doug Ewald seemed to confirm the findings in a general way when he said it was a fair assessment that the biggest beneficiaries of the plan would be people earning more than \$100,000 a year.

And if the average taxpayer can't find any benefit to the plan, who is going to support it? Not the state's biggest business groups.

Strike two came when testimony at a public hearing on the plan showed that reaction of the business community ranges from outright opposition to neutrality.

Wendy Birdsall of the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce said the bills would have too many negative effects on many businesses. David Brown of the Omaha Chamber said the organization will remain neutral on the bill because it would cause too much uncertainty for many businesses.

John Ceberberg, speaking for the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce and Industry, asked that LB405 be killed quickly. "We don't want LB405 hanging over our heads," he said.

So call it a whiff. The governor's plan to do away with the income tax entirely still may be at the plate, but one more strike, and it's out.

On deck is LB406, which is the governor's attempt to play small ball, as they say in baseball, which means going for singles and scratching out runs by any means that works.

The way it's going, however, the game might be over before the bill even gets to the plate. Under the mercy rule, a game can be called when the score gets too lopsided.

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.

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press
Today is Monday, Feb. 18, the 49th day of 2013. There are 316 days left in the year. This is Presidents Day.

Today's Highlight in History: On Feb. 18, 1913, Mexican President Francisco I. Madero and Vice President Jose Maria Pino Suarez were arrested during a military coup (both resigned their positions the next day, and both were shot to death on Feb. 22).

On this date: In 1735, the first opera presented in America, "Flora, or Hob in the Well," was performed in present-day Charleston, S.C.

In 1861, Jefferson Davis was sworn in as provisional president of the Confederate States of America in Montgomery, Ala.

In 1885, Mark Twain's "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" was published in the U.S. for the first time.

In 1930, photographic evidence of Pluto (now designated a "dwarf planet") was discovered by Clyde W. Tombaugh at Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff, Ariz.

In 1943, Madame Chiang Kai-shek, the wife of the Chinese leader, addressed members of the Senate and then the House, becoming the first Chinese national to address both houses of the U.S. Congress.

In 1953, "Bwana Devil," the movie that heralded the 3D fad of the 1950s, had its New York opening.

In 1960, the 8th Winter Olympic Games were formally opened in Squaw Valley, Calif., by Vice President Richard M. Nixon.

In 1970, the "Chicago Seven" defendants were found not guilty of conspiring to incite riots at the 1968 Democratic national convention; five were convicted of violating the Anti-Riot Act of 1968 (those convictions were later reversed).

In 1977, the space shuttle Enterprise, sitting atop a Boeing 747, went on its debut "flight" above the Mojave Desert.

In 1983, 13 people were shot to death at a gambling club in Seattle's Chinatown in what became known as the Wah Mee Massacre. (Two men were convicted of the killings and are serving life sentences; a third was found guilty of robbery and assault.)

In 1988, Anthony M. Kennedy was sworn in as an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 2001, auto racing star Dale Earnhardt Sr. died in a crash at the Daytona 500; he was 49.

Ten years ago: Declaring that America's security should not be dictated by protesters, President George W. Bush said he would not be swayed from compelling Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to disarm. An arson attack involving two South Korean

subway trains in the city of Daegu claimed 198 lives. (The arsonist was sentenced to life in prison, where he died in 2004.) Country singer Johnny Paycheck died in Nashville at age 64.

Five years ago: The Pakistan People's Party of assassinated ex-prime minister Benazir Bhutto won the most seats in parliamentary elections. A suicide car bomber targeting a Canadian military convoy killed 38 civilians in southern Afghanistan. Republican John McCain picked up the support of former President George H.W. Bush. Andy Pettitte apologized to the New York Yankees, Houston Astros and his fans for the "embarrassment" he'd caused them by taking human growth hormone. Writer Alain Robbe-Grillet died in Caen, France, at age 85.

One year ago: A funeral service was held for pop star Whitney Houston at New Hope Baptist Church in Newark, N.J., a week after her death at age 48. Syrian security forces fired live rounds and tear gas at thousands of people marching in a funeral procession that turned into one of the largest protests in Damascus since the 11-month uprising against President Bashar Assad began. Vitali Klitschko's 10th successful defense of his WBC heavyweight title in Munich ended in chaos when challenger Dereck Chisora brawled with former WBA champion David Haye during the post-match news conference.

Today's Birthdays: Actor George Kennedy is 88. Former Sen. John Warner, R-Va., is 86. Author Toni Morrison is 82. Movie director Milos Forman is 81. Singer Yoko Ono is 80. Singer-songwriter Bobby Hart is 74. Singer Irma Thomas is 72. Singer Herman Santiago (Frankie Lyman and the Teenagers) is 72. Singer Dennis DeYoung is 66. Actress Sinead Cusack is 65. Actress Cybill Shepherd is 63. Singer Juice Newton is 61. Singer Randy Crawford is 61. Rock musician Robbie Bachman is 60. Rock musician Larry Rust (Iron Butterfly) is 60. Actor John Travolta is 59. Game show host Vanna White is 56. Actress Jayne Atkinson is 54. Actress Greta Scacchi is 53. Actor Matt Dillon is 49. Rapper Dr. Dre is 48. Actress Molly Ringwald is 45. Actress Sarah Brown is 38. Actor Kristoffer Polaha is 36. Singer-musician Sean Watkins (Nickel Creek) is 36. Actor Tyrone Burton is 34. Rock-singer musician Regina Spektor is 33. Roots rock musician Zac Cockrell (Alabama Shakes) is 25. Actor Shane Lyons is 25. Actress Maiara Walsh is 25.

Thought for Today: "Nothing great in the world has been accomplished without passion." — Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, German philosopher (1770-1831).

FROM THE BIBLE

Come to Me ... and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

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