

## THE PRESS &amp; DAKOTAN

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## OPINION | OUR VIEW

Heroin's Toll Takes  
On A New Face

The death of actor Philip Seymour Hoffman this past week-  
end transforms a talented but tormented man into a grim  
contradiction: He becomes a face and faceless.

The 46-year-old Oscar winner was found dead Sunday  
from an apparent overdose of heroin. A syringe was still  
in his left arm, and packets of heroin were strewn about his New  
York City apartment.

He died in the clutches of a demon.

With that, Hoffman becomes the handy face — at least for a few  
moments of our attention — of the terrible toll of drug addiction.  
(He ousts actor Cory Monteith, who died last summer and was  
found to have a combination of heroin and alcohol in his system.)  
Substances ranging from heroin and meth to prescription pain  
killers are still being used and abused in a society that is filled with  
cautions and warnings about such dangers.

Hoffman's poison was heroin, a familiar drug that is making a  
21st century comeback. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, the  
use of heroin has nearly doubled since 2007, with an estimated  
660,000 Americans using it in 2012. Part of this surge is due to the  
drug's inexpensive monetary cost, running as low as \$8 a dose. But  
it can be lethal: an estimated 3,000 people died from overdosing on  
it in 2010. In some parts of the East Coast and the southwest, heroin  
usage is currently likened to a plague.

Such facts and dangers were not unknown to Hoffman, who had  
long wrestled with the beast and had been sober for 23 years before  
relapsing in 2012, according to *Time's* website. For those 23 years,  
he was fighting and winning a war for his own soul. He reportedly  
gave inspirational talks to other people trying to kick their habits.  
The TMZ website said Hoffman was looked upon as a "guru" of sobriety.

He knew the demon well.

But then came his 2012 relapse and his rapid, mad descent. He  
was in and out of rehab programs, and reportedly told friends in De-  
cember he was afraid he was going to fatally overdose. But that  
knowledge and fear could not stop his self-destruction.

On Sunday, that prediction came true with the lonely, meaning-  
less death of a father of three young children and an actor with the  
brightest of futures in the profession he loved.

How is that *not* madness?

Alas, there are too many others like him. Perhaps you know  
some of the other faces: You see them in everyday places, their eyes  
giving away either nervous desperation or weary surrender. Per-  
haps you see them in your workplace or in your own home. Perhaps  
you see it in the mirror.

This is the most terrifying specter of the war on drugs: when  
those moments of temptation and weakness arrive and users are no  
longer in control; they lose the will to resist; they have no strength  
to fight back. Their lives are no longer their own.

And that could happen to any of us, in theory.

We can only hope to learn. And there is much to learn from a  
case like Hoffman's and the image of his inglorious final bow: a sy-  
ringe left in his arm, packets of the poison scattered all about him; a  
life thrown away.

On Sunday, Hoffman, the familiar face of screen and stage, also  
became faceless.

He fell helplessly into the parade of so many other victims of  
substance abuse: people who could not resist the lure of these mali-  
cious spirits — people whose faces melt into a blur of anonymous  
human wreckage for our consideration.

And from that, we *must* learn.

Apart from that, however, we can only look upon such people,  
no matter what their station was in life, and summon up the same  
bitter eulogy:

What a waste.

kmh

## THE VIEWS PAGE

■ The PRESS & DAKOTAN Views page provides a forum for open  
discussion of issues and interests affecting our readers. Initialed editorials  
represent the opinion of the writer, but not necessarily that of the PRESS  
& DAKOTAN. Bylined columns represent the view of the author. We  
welcome letters to the editor on current topics. Questions regarding the  
Views page should be directed to Kelly Hertz at views@yankton.net.

## ON THIS DATE

## By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, Feb. 5, the  
36th day of 2014. There are 329 days  
left in the year.

**Today's Highlight in History:** On  
Feb. 5, 1937, President Franklin D.  
Roosevelt proposed increasing the  
number of U.S. Supreme Court jus-  
tices; the proposal, which failed in  
Congress, drew accusations that Roo-  
sevelt was attempting to "pack" the  
nation's highest court.

**On this date:** In 1783, Sweden  
recognized the independence of the  
United States.

In 1811, George, the Prince of  
Wales, was named Prince Regent due  
to the mental illness of his father,  
Britain's King George III.

In 1914, "Beat Generation" author  
William S. Burroughs was born in St.  
Louis.

In 1919, movie studio United  
Artists was incorporated by Mary  
Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, D.W.  
Griffith and Charles Chaplin.

In 1922, the first edition of  
Reader's Digest was published.

In 1940, Glenn Miller and his or-  
chestra recorded "Tuxedo Junction" for  
RCA Victor's Bluebird label.

In 1953, Walt Disney's animated  
feature "Peter Pan" was first released.

In 1967, "The Smothers Brothers  
Comedy Hour" premiered on CBS-TV.

In 1971, Apollo 14 astronauts Alan  
Shepard and Edgar Mitchell stepped  
onto the surface of the moon in the  
first of two lunar excursions.

In 1973, services were held at Ar-  
lington National Cemetery for U.S.  
Army Col. William B. Noldie, the last of-  
ficial American combat casualty be-  
fore the Vietnam cease-fire took  
effect.

In 1989, the Soviet Union an-  
nounced that all but a small rear-  
guard contingent of its troops had left  
Afghanistan.

In 1994, white separatist Byron De  
La Beckwith was convicted in Jack-  
son, Miss., of murdering civil rights  
leader Medgar Evers in 1963, and  
was immediately sentenced to life in  
prison. (Beckwith died Jan. 21, 2001  
at age 80.) Sixty-eight people were  
killed when a mortar shell exploded in  
a marketplace in Sarajevo, Bosnia-  
Herzegovina.

Ten years ago: CIA Director

## FROM THE BIBLE

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes. Proverbs 12:15. Por-  
tals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

STAR TRIBUNE CapleCartoons.com

SAC

The Lack Of Outcry  
Over Inequality

BY ROBERT B. REICH

Tribune Content Agency

People ask me all the time why we don't have  
a revolution in America, or at least a  
major wave of reform similar to that of  
the Progressive Era or the New Deal or  
the Great Society.

Middle incomes are sinking, the  
ranks of the poor are swelling, almost  
all the economic gains are going to the  
top and big money is corrupting our  
democracy. So why isn't there more of  
a ruckus?

The answer is complex, but three  
reasons stand out.

First, the working class is paralyzed  
with fear it will lose the jobs and wages  
it already has.

In earlier decades, the working  
class fomented reform. The labor  
movement led the charge for a minimum wage,  
40-hour work week, unemployment insurance  
and Social Security.

No longer. Working people don't dare. The  
share of working-age Americans holding jobs is  
now lower than at any time in the last three  
decades, and 76 percent of them are living pay-  
check to paycheck.

No one has any job security. The last thing  
they want to do is make a fuss and risk losing the  
little they have. Besides, their major means of or-  
ganizing and protecting themselves — labor  
unions — have been decimated. Four decades  
ago more than a third of private-sector workers  
were unionized. Now, fewer than 7 percent be-  
long to a union.

Second, students don't dare rock the boat.

In prior decades, students were a major force  
for social change. They played an active role in  
the Civil Rights movement, the Free Speech  
movement and against the Vietnam War. But  
today's students don't want to make a ruckus.  
They're laden with debt. Since 1999, student  
debt has increased more than 500 percent, yet  
the average starting salary for graduates has  
dropped 10 percent, adjusted for inflation. Stu-  
dent debts can't be canceled in bankruptcy. A de-  
fault brings penalties and ruins a credit rating.

To make matters worse, the job market for  
new graduates remains lousy. Which is why

Robert  
REICH

record numbers are still living at home. Reform-  
ers and revolutionaries don't look forward to liv-  
ing with mom and dad or worrying about credit  
ratings and job recommendations.

Third and finally, the American pub-  
lic has become so cynical about govern-  
ment that many no longer think  
reform is possible.

When asked if they believe govern-  
ment will do the right thing most of the  
time, fewer than 20 percent of Ameri-  
cans agree. Fifty years ago, when that  
question was first asked on standard  
surveys, more than 75 percent agreed.

It's hard to get people worked up to  
change society or even to change a few  
laws when they don't believe govern-  
ment can possibly work.

Was all this the result of a giant  
conspiracy among right-wing Republi-  
cans, corporate executives and Wall  
Street moguls to cut jobs and wages in order to  
cow average workers, bury students under so  
much debt they'd never take to the streets and  
make most Americans so cynical about govern-  
ment they wouldn't even try for change?

It's more likely they and others simply al-  
lowed all this to unfold, like a giant wet blanket  
over the outrage and indignation most Ameri-  
cans feel but don't express.

Change is coming anyway. We cannot abide  
an ever-greater share of the nation's income  
and wealth going to the top while median  
household incomes continue to drop, one out  
of five of our children living in dire poverty, and  
big money taking over our democracy.

At some point, working people, students and  
the broad public will have had enough. They will  
reclaim our economy and our democracy. This  
has been the central lesson of American history.

Reform is less risky than revolution, but the  
longer we wait, the more likely it will be the latter.

*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, "In-  
equality for All," is now out on iTunes, DVD and  
On Demand.*

## Leonard Pitts Jr.

## Change Across The Universe

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.

Tribune Content Agency

It's an odd thing.  
Sometimes, when I speak before high school  
or college students, someone in the audience,  
knowing I began my professional life as a pop  
music critic, will ask what I think of music today.  
I always demur that I don't listen to a lot of it,  
but that most of what I do hear kind of, well ...  
bores me. While there are exceptions — i.e.,  
Adele — much of it feels corporate, cold, plastic,  
image-driven, less reflective of talent than tech,  
more programmed than played.

Of course, the old folks are not supposed to  
get the young folks' music. That's the whole  
point of the young folks' music.

But here's the odd part: After I've said all this,  
as I'm bracing to take my lumps for being an-  
tique and out of touch, the young people —  
many of them, anyway — tell me I'm right. They  
agree with me. That's not supposed to happen  
and it says something that it does.

What it says is worth pondering as we com-  
memorate a milestone in popular music and cul-  
ture. On Friday, it will be 50 years since the  
Beatles landed in New York City. They would ap-  
pear on "The Ed Sullivan Show" — in 1964 Sulli-  
van was what passed for music television — over  
three successive Sundays, twice from New York,  
once from the Deauville Hotel in Miami Beach.  
They also squeezed in a concert in Washington.

There is a great photo that captures the pan-  
demonium of that era: It shows a hapless New  
York City cop carrying some girl who just fell  
out, limbs splayed, knocked senseless by prox-  
imity to the "lads from Liverpool." John Lennon,  
Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr  
brought their bright harmonies, jangling guitars,  
long-for-1964 hair and cheeky irreverence to  
America, and American girls responded in  
shrieks while suddenly-ignored American boys  
practiced looking indifferent, as if they were cin-  
derblocks who could stand, unmoved and un-  
changed, by the wave now washing over them.

But they were not cinderblocks, they were  
sandcastles. We all were. The Beatles rode the  
forefront of a wave that would reshape every-

## YOUR LETTERS

## Farm Safety

Fred Bender, Yankton

I read with interest your paper's lead story in  
the Feb. 3 *Press & Dakotan* regarding efforts to  
keep OSHA out of farming. It is a long-term inter-  
est to me, having grown up on a farm and having  
been a farmer for 23 years.

I have heard concern from farmers for most if  
not all of my life. The aspect that has never made  
sense to me is that farming IS a dangerous occu-

thing — music, fashion, culture, politics — and  
neither America nor the world would ever be the  
same.

It is hard to imagine that Justin Bieber or  
Chris Brown, extraordinarily popular as they are,  
gives anyone that finger-stuck-in-a-wall-socket  
shock of something new, that lunar landing sense  
of discovery, that fizzy realization that you have  
found something made for you, about you, defi-  
nitive of you and your times — not them and  
theirs. Has that happened since hip-hop hit mid-  
dle age? Hasn't the culture become repetitive  
and pro forma, contenting itself with staged  
provocations (Madonna kissing Britney, Kanye  
mugging Taylor) that pretend to portend Some-  
thing New Happening, but really do not? Like  
they're all just trying too hard?

It's too bad. That moment of Something New  
Happening is the birthright of every generation.  
To hear young people agree with some aging  
boomer about their music is to feel they have  
been cheated. Apparently, some of them know it.  
They're the ones telling me I'm right and listen-  
ing to Beatles songs on their phones. When I was  
that age, I'd have put my ears out rather than lis-  
ten to Nat King Cole.

Because popular music is about breaking  
away from the staid normalcy of what came be-  
fore. But maybe in an era where mom has tattoos  
and dad has a boyfriend, there's nothing left to  
break away from. That's pop culture's victory  
and burden, the unseen thing Justin Bieber and  
Rihanna struggle against.

They ply their trade in a day when change  
has a tour jacket and a corporate sponsor. But as  
that girl passed out in a policeman's arms could  
tell you: It's just not the same. Fifty years ago,  
change stepped off a jet at JFK and sent the  
country into an uproar. We have gained much —  
but lost a few things, too — on the long and  
winding road since then.

*Leonard Pitts is a columnist for The Miami  
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ers may contact him via e-mail at lpitts@miami-  
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pation and OSHA pursues "occupational safety  
and health." I'm sure it is flawed. What in our  
world isn't? My father lost a brother in a farm ac-  
cident. I lost a brother in a farm accident. I al-  
most died in a farm accident. Every year there  
are stories of farmers dying in grain bin acci-  
dents. Farmers are flawed as well. Everyone is.

Where is the sanity in opposing improve-  
ments in safety and health in an occupation as  
dangerous as farming?