

# The Press & Dakotan

THE DAKOTAS' OLDEST NEWSPAPER | FOUNDED 1861

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## OPINION

# The Perceptions Of Ferguson

What would happen if that Missouri grand jury decides to indict the police officer who shot and killed a teen in the St. Louis suburb of Ferguson last summer?

That's a fair and compelling question, but it doesn't seem to be the one many people have been asking — or waiting for the answer for — the last several days.

It seems that Missouri officials and the national media are preparing for something else.

The grand jury has been weighing the evidence in the death of Michael Brown, a black teen whose shooting death last summer ignited a powder keg in the predominantly African-American St. Louis suburb. Ferguson police officer Darren Wilson, who is white, has become an object of heated scorn and impassioned empathy, depending on the given sentiments, since the incident. He now faces indictment by the grand jury for the death of the unarmed Brown.

But there has already been a rush to judgment of sorts. It's not aimed so much at Wilson as it is at the anxious atmosphere in Ferguson — and it preemptively assumes the worst.

On Monday, Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon declared a state of emergency, allowing him to activate the National Guard to confront the situation — should it arise — and directly address protesters — should they materialize.

And the FBI is warning law enforcement agencies across the country that the grand jury's decision "will likely" prompt extremists to target and threaten police.

And to no one's surprise, the national media has picked up this story line and run with it, as if it's a fuse that is burning down to one tense, unavoidable conclusion.

Unfortunately, this also flirts with self-fulfilling prophecy. While acknowledging the situation that occurred in Ferguson and its aftermath last summer, what we're seeing now seems like an overreaction to the angry echoes from August. It has turned the upcoming grand jury decision into a litmus test of the state of racism in America — even though most of us have no idea what kind of evidence these jurors are seeing and hearing.

There have indeed been protests since the fiery days of August, but they have been peaceful and orderly. Now, some of these protesters are reportedly upset with the portrayal of the current situation, as well as with Nixon's own preemptive response.

It draws attention to an anger that the media and some officials are themselves stoking and might in fact breed some of the reaction that is being predicted.

We all hope it doesn't come to that, one way or another. We all hope that rational heads can prevail.

But to this point, we are seeing an almost giddy bracing for what might happen next — rather than taking all measures to keep it from happening at all.

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## ABOUT THIS PAGE

The View 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 on current topics. Questions regarding the Views page should be directed to Kelly Hertz at kelly.hertz@yankton.net/.

## ON THIS DATE

### By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, Nov. 19, the 323rd day of 2014. There are 42 days left in the year.

**Today's Highlight in History:** On Nov. 19, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln paid tribute to the fallen from the Battle of Gettysburg as he dedicated a national cemetery at the site of the Civil War battlefield in Pennsylvania.

**On this date:** In 1600, King Charles I of England was born in Dunfermline, Fife, Scotland.

In 1794, the United States and Britain signed Jay's Treaty, which resolved some issues left over from the Revolutionary War.

In 1831, the 20th president of the United States, James Garfield, was born in Orange Township, Ohio.

In 1919, the Senate rejected the Treaty of Versailles by a vote of 55 in favor, 39 against, short of the two-thirds majority needed for ratification.

In 1942, during World War II, Russian forces launched their winter offensive against the Germans along the Don front.

In 1959, Ford Motor Co. announced it was halting production of the unpopular Edsel.

In 1969, Apollo 12 astronauts Charles Conrad and Alan Bean made the second manned landing on the moon.

In 1977, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat became the first Arab leader to visit Israel.

In 1984, some 500 people died in a firestorm set off by a series of explosions at a petroleum storage plant on the edge of Mexico City.

In 1985, President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev met for the first time as they began their summit in Geneva.

In 1990, the pop duo Milli Vanilli were stripped of their Grammy Award because other singers had lent their voices to the "Girl You Know It's True" album.

In 1997, Iowa seamstress Bobbi McCaughey gave birth to septuplets, four boys and three girls. The space shuttle Columbia zoomed into orbit on a two-week science mission.

**Ten years ago:** A notorious NBA brawl that came to be known as the "Malice at the Palace" erupted as Ron Artest and Stephen Jackson of the Indiana Pacers charged into the stands and fought with Detroit Pistons fans, forcing officials to end the Pacers' 97-82 win with 45.9 seconds left. (Artest was suspended for the rest of the season, Jackson for 30 games. Fellow Pacer Jermaine O'Neal, who also was involved, was suspended for 15 games and six other players for at least one game.)

**Five years ago:** President Barack

Obama wrapped up his weeklong Asia trip in South Korea, where he said the United States had begun talking with allies about fresh punishment against Iran for defying efforts to halt its nuclear weapons pursuits. President Hamid Karzai pledged to get tough on corruption and strengthen security in Afghanistan as he started a second five-year term. Artist Jeanne-Claude, who helped create various "wrapping" projects with her husband Christo, died in New York at age 74.

**One year ago:** Suicide bombers struck the Iranian Embassy in Beirut, killing 23 people, including a diplomat, and injuring more than 140 others. Virginia state Sen. Creigh Deeds was attacked and stabbed multiple times by his mentally ill adult son, Gus Deeds, who then took his own life. Diane Disney Miller, 79, daughter of Walt Disney and one of his inspirations for building the Disneyland theme park, died in Napa, California. The Disney animated feature "Frozen" had its Hollywood premiere.

**Today's Birthdays:** Actor Alan Young is 95. Talk show host Larry King is 81. Former General Electric chief executive Jack Welch is 79. Talk show host Dick Cavett is 78. Broadcasting and sports mogul Ted Turner is 76. Singer Pete Moore (Smokey Robinson and the Miracles) is 75. Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, is 75. Actor Dan Haggerty is 73. Former Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy G. Thompson is 73. Fashion designer Calvin Klein is 72. Sportscaster Ahmad Rashad is 65. Actor Robert Beltran is 61. Actress Kathleen Quinlan is 60. Actress Glynnis O'Connor is 59. Broadcast journalist Ann Curry is 58. Former NASA astronaut Eileen Collins is 58. Actress Allison Janney is 55. Rock musician Matt Sorum (Guns N' Roses, Velvet Revolver) is 54. Actress Meg Ryan is 53. Actress-director Jodie Foster is 52. Actress Terry Farrell is 51. TV chef Rocco DiSpirito is 48. Actor Jason Scott Lee is 48. Olympic gold medal runner Gail Devers is 48. Actress Erika Alexander is 45. Rock musician Travis McNabb is 45. Singer Tony Rich is 43. Actress Sandrine Holt is 42. Country singer Jason Albert (Heartland) is 41. Country singer Billy Currington is 41. Dancer-choreographer Savion Glover is 41. Country musician Chad Jeffers is 39. Rhythm-and-blues singer Tanika Scott (Xscape) is 39. Rhythm-and-blues singer Lil' Mo is 37. Olympic gold medal gymnast Kerri Strug is 37. Actor Reid Scott is 37. Actress Katherine Kelly (TV: "Mr. Selfridge") is 35. Actor Adam Driver is 31. Actress Samantha Futerman is 27. Rapper Tyga is 25.

**Thought for Today:** "The misfortunes hardest to bear are these which never came." — Christopher Morley, American author and journalist (1890-1957).

## FROM THE BIBLE

*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. John 3:3.* Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Uplifting Facts

### Lois H. Varvel, Yankton

For those readers of Jim Van Osdel's "letter of errors" to the editor (*Press & Dakotan*, Nov. 12), I offer these more factual explanations of the miraculous feature of the Meridian Bridge referred to as a Vertical Lift Span, found on pages 30-31, 71-73, 132-33, 156 and 213 of the book "The Bridge We Built:

The Story of Yankton's Meridian Bridge," written by Kathy K. Grow and Lois H. Varvel. This book can be found at our Yankton Community Library or purchased at the Dakota Territorial Museum, the Corps of Discovery Welcome Center, the St. James Marketplace and the Yankton College gift shop, for those who want to own this book for their reference shelf.

WE RELIED ON THE STUPIDITY OF THE AMERICAN VOTER.

JONATHAN GRUBER  
OBAMA CARE  
ARCHITECT



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EDICALLIE  
CARTOONIST'S  
PULICIOUSINFER

# America's 'New Birth Of Freedom'

On Nov. 19, 1863, Abraham Lincoln stated the case for the future and the hope of our republic.

It was at the cold, silent battlefields of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania — the site just 4 1/2 months before of one of the pivotal battles of the Civil War — that Lincoln delivered a few brief remarks during a ceremony that officially dedicated those fields of war as a national cemetery.

His speech took barely two minutes, and the crowd's reception to it seemed muted — taken by surprise, perhaps, at the brevity of the statement.

Of course, the Gettysburg Address has lived on. Its simply stated sentiment of unity in the face of division, its honoring of sacrifice, its prayer for "a new birth of freedom" and its reaffirmation that ours is a government of, by and for the people speak timelessly of the soul of what we are.

Today, on the 151st anniversary of perhaps the most important speech in American history, we offer Lincoln's words as a reminder of who we are and of an ideal of what this sometimes-divided nation can really be.

**FOUR SCORE AND SEVEN YEARS AGO** our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war.

We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate,

## Robert B. Reich

# The Growing Wealth, Clout Of The Richest .01 Percent

BY ROBERT B. REICH

Tribune Content Agency

The richest Americans hold more of the nation's wealth than they have in almost a century. What do they spend it on? As you might expect, personal jets, giant yachts, works of art and luxury penthouses.

And also on politics. In fact, their political spending has been growing faster than their spending on anything else. It's been growing even faster than their wealth.

According to new research by Emmanuel Saez of the University of California at Berkeley and Gabriel Zucman of the London School of Economics, the richest one-hundredth of one percent of Americans now hold more than 11 percent of the nation's total wealth. That's a higher share than the top .01 percent held in 1929, before the Great Crash.

We're talking about 16,000 people, each worth at least \$110 million.

One way to get your mind around this is to compare their wealth to that of the average family. In 1978, the typical wealth holder in the top .01 percent was 220 times richer than the average American. By 2012, he or she was 1,120 times richer.

It's hard to spend this kind of money.

The uber-rich are lining up the new Aeron AS2 private jet, priced at more than \$100 million, that seats 11 and includes a deluxe dining room and shower facilities, and will be able to cross the Atlantic in just four hours. And for duplexes high in the air. The one atop Manhattan's newest "needle" tower, the 90-story One57, just went for \$90 million.

Why should we care?

Because this explosion of wealth at the top has been accompanied by an erosion of the wealth of the middle class and the poor. In the mid-1980s, the bottom 90 percent of Americans together held 36 percent of the nation's wealth. Now, they hold less than 23 percent.

Despite larger pensions and homes, the debts of the bottom 90 percent — mortgage, consumer credit and student loan — have grown even faster.

Some might think the bottom 90 percent should pull in their belts and stop living beyond their means. After all, capitalism is a tough sport. If those at the top are winning big while the bottom 90 percent is losing, too bad. That's the way the game is played.

But the top .01 percent have also been investing their money in politics. And these investments have been changing the game.

In the 2012 election cycle (the last for which we have good data), donations from the top .01 accounted for more than 40 percent of all campaign contributions, according to a study by



we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract.

The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced.

It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us — that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion — that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.

professors Adam Bonica, Nolan McCarty, Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal.

This is a huge increase from 1980, when the top .01 accounted for 10 percent of total campaign contributions.

In 2012, as you may recall, the two largest donors were Sheldon and Miriam Adelson, who gave \$56.8 million and \$46.6 million, respectively.

But the Adelsons were only the tip of an iceberg of contributions from the uber-wealthy. Of the other members of the Forbes list of the 400 richest Americans, fully 388 made political contributions. They accounted for 40 of the 155 contributions of \$1 million or more.

Of the 4,493 board members and CEOs of Fortune 500 corporations, more than four out of five made political contributions. (Many of the non-contributors were foreign nationals who were prohibited from giving.)

All of this money has flowed to Democrats as well as Republicans.

In fact, Democrats have increasingly relied on it. In the 2012 election cycle, the top .01 percent's donations to Democrats were more than four times larger than all labor union donations to Democrats.

The richest .01 percent haven't been donating out of the goodness of their hearts. They've donated out of goodness to their wallets.

Their political investments have paid off in the form of lower taxes on themselves and their businesses, subsidies for their corporations, government bailouts, federal prosecutions that end in settlements where companies don't affirm or deny the facts and where executives don't go to jail, watered-down regulations and non-enforcement of antitrust laws.

Since the top .01 began investing big time in politics, corporate profits and the stock market have risen to record levels. That's enlarged the wealth of the richest .01 percent by an average of 7.8 percent a year since the mid-1980s.

But the bottom 90 percent don't own many shares of stock. They rely on wages, which have been trending downward. And for some reason, politicians don't seem particularly intent on reversing this trend.

If you want to know what's happened to the American economy, follow the money. That will lead you to the richest .01 percent.

And if you want to know what's happened to our democracy, follow the richest .01 percent. They'll lead you to the politicians who have been selling our democracy.

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.