

Vital Signs



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*Can Our Politicians Solve the
Immigration Reform Problem?*

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EDITORIAL

Will the Lane Closures in Fort Lee Shut Down Chris Christie's "Road" to the White House?

HUDCONJA/WIKIMEDIA

The negative publicity surrounding Chris Christie's involvement with "Bridgegate" has compromised his potential as a candidate for the presidency in 2016.

BY MELANIE NARATIL

Although Chris Christie has not yet been, and may never be, proven personally responsible for Bridgegate, the negative publicity surrounding the incident has compromised his potential as a candidate for the presidency in 2016.

On May 13, 2014, Christie's longtime press secretary, Michael Drewniak, testified before a legislative panel in Trenton that is investigating a politically motivated four-day shutdown of access lanes connecting Fort Lee, New Jersey and the George Washington Bridge, a scandal known as Bridgegate. In his opening statement,



Drewniak said that he was led to believe that the lane closings were done to study traffic patterns, an explanation that has since been discredited. He described the September 2013 lane closings—which caused significant traffic tie-ups that delayed school buses, ambulances, and commuters—as reckless and perplexing. Drewniak expressed his confidence that Christie and other senior advisers had no advance knowledge of this political payback plot that occurred in the midst of Christie's successful re-election campaign.

State lawmakers and federal authorities are investigating the episode to determine who ordered the lane closures and for what reason. So far, two former Christie appointees have been accused of orchestrating the lane closures to punish Mark Sokol-

(Above) The majestic George Washington Bridge looking east towards Upper Manhattan. The shutdown of the access lanes between Fort Lee, New Jersey and the GWB has brought into question Chris Christie's viability as a Presidential Candidate for the 2016 Elections.

On the Cover: President Obama Speaks on Immigration Reform in Las Vegas, Nevada in 2013.

The opinions expressed in Vital Signs are not necessarily those of the Pingry School, its students, faculty, administration, or trustees. Articles, letters, and cartoons represent the views of their authors. Unsigned letters will not be published.

ich, the Democratic Mayor of Fort Lee, for refusing to endorse Christie's re-election. Bridget Anne Kelly, who was Christie's deputy chief of staff for legislative and intergovernmental affairs, sent a now infamous email stating that it was "time for some traffic problems in Fort Lee," to which David Wildstein, the highest-level Christie appointee at Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, replied, "Got it."

Lawyers that Christie hired to investigate and report on the lane shutdown plan have placed the blame entirely on Kelly and Wildstein. Randy Mastro of Gibson, Dunn and Crutcher, along with his team of former prosecutors argued that their comprehensive report, compiled from a review of a quarter million pages of documents and interviews with more than seventy people, proves that Christie had no advance notice of the lane closures. However, according to Assemblyman John Wisniewski, the chair of the New Jersey legislative committee investigating the bridge fiasco, Mastro's findings are little more than hearsay, since the interviews were not videotaped or recorded in any manner. Wisniewski's dismissal of the investigation's conclusions reflects poorly upon Christie, who spent one million dollars of taxpayers' money to fund the study. In addition, a Quinnipiac poll taken last month showed that, by a twenty-point margin, New Jersey voters did not accept the internal investigation's conclusion that Christie had nothing to do with the scandal.

In addition to the issue of political retribution against Fort Lee, Federal authorities are examining whether Christie's administration distributed federal aid after Superstorm Sandy in a way that punished enemies and rewarded political allies. Because Democrats are overseeing this investigation, some Republicans consider it nothing more than a politically motivated witch-hunt, but, nevertheless, it paints an unflattering picture of Christie as a bully. Wisniewski's committee is also investigating charges that the governor's office has used the Port Authority as a slush fund. Specifically, the committee is questioning the legality of Christie's use of Port Authority money to rebuild the Pulaski Skyway. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey can use money from its tolls and fares only for roads, bridges, and tunnels that are within its transportation network, unless both state legislatures agree to an exception. The Pulaski Skyway links Newark to the Holland tunnel, but for historical reasons the Holland Tunnel and its feeder roads are outside of the Port Authority's jurisdiction.

The obsessive coverage of the Bridgegate scandal is likely to continue for quite some time and is destroying the overall impression people have of Christie, regardless of his guilt or innocence. Federal prosecutors, a state legislative panel, and the Manhattan district attorney will continue their investigations of Christie. Charles Gasparino, a senior correspondent for the Fox Business Network, has commented that his Wall Street contacts with direct access to Christie and his inner circle believe that the Christie presidential campaign is on life support because "the stench from the scandal is starting to look impossible to overcome." They further see that Republican establishment types outside of the Northeast are giving Christie a cool reception, while fundraisers are switching their allegiance to former Florida Governor Jeb Bush. Gasparino's contacts are doubtful that Christie can win in the 2016 Republican primaries.

Weaknesses in Christie that were largely dismissed previously are now taking on greater significance as his overall reputation is being questioned after Bridgegate. Suddenly, his former supporters and the general public are reexamining his character and attitude. He has a tendency to think he can say or do anything that appears to enhance his personal popularity. As an example, critics point to the time he fell all over President Obama during Obama's visit to New Jersey in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, in spite of the fact that Mitt Romney was in

a very tight race against the President at that time. Some Republicans claim that Christie's warm embrace of President Obama contributed to Romney's presidential loss. As the Republican governor of a largely Democratic state, Christie has also come under attack from the far right for being a RINO – Republican in Name Only. For ideological and personal reasons, Christie has few Republican friends to help him through the Bridgegate scandal.

Perhaps an even bigger lapse of judgment than hugging Obama occurred when Christie invited hedge-fund manager Steve Cohen, a big Christie fundraiser, to a celebratory dinner for his reelection just one day after Cohen's fund, SAC Capital, pleaded guilty to insider-trading charges. The U.S. Attorney's office labeled SAC "a veritable magnet for market cheaters." This behavior will certainly not help the Republicans win the much needed votes of the working-class, who are sick of the unscrupulous behavior associated with the financial industry.

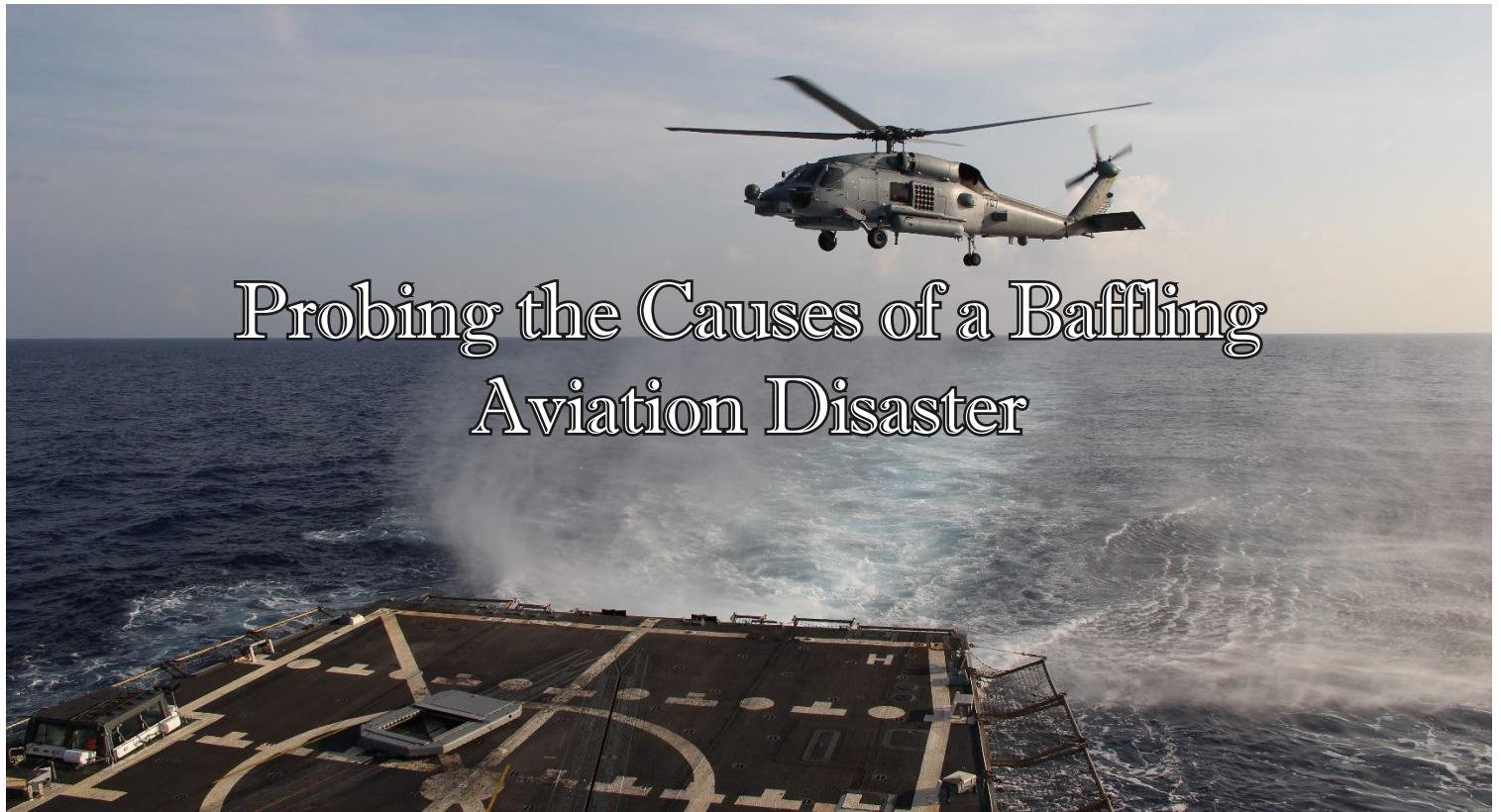
In the end, the fact that Christie's appointees behaved in a juvenile and punitive fashion by shutting down traffic lanes to further his political interests reflects poorly on Christie by association alone. This scheme was a blatant abuse of government power, and it raises the question of whether Christie has created a culture of bullying and enacting revenge on opponents. The perception of abuse of government power is particularly disturbing to grassroots conservatives, who already had policy differences with Christie. Perhaps the worst result of Bridgegate is that it led to a thorough scrutiny of anything questionable that Christie has done in his political career. Ultimately, the real winner of Bridgegate may just turn out to be Hillary Clinton.

Sources: <http://nypost.com/2014/02/24/wall-street-bearish-on-chris-christies-futures/>; <http://www.thenation.com/blog/179678/chris-christies-bridge-scandal-goes-beyond-george-washington>; <http://www.thenation.com/blog/179283/feds-state-legislative-committee-accelerate-inquiries-bridgegate>; http://www.cbsnews.com/news/still-wading-through-controversy-chris-christie-tries-to-revive-wh-ambitions/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+primary_source; <http://www.msnbc.msnbc/chris-christies-2016-life-support>; <http://www.commentarymagazine.com/topic/chris-christie/>; <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/brad-bannon/2014/01/16/hillary-clinton-is-the-big-winner-of-chris-christies-bridge-scandal>; <http://abclocal.go.com/wabc/story?section=news/politics>; <http://news.yahoo.com/aide-jersey-governor-christie-called-testify-bridgegate-probe-110846964--finance.html>; <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/05/13/chris-christie-michael-drewniak>; <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/13/us-usa-politics-christie-idUSBRE4C0BE20140513>; http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2014/04/14/140414fa_fact_lizza.

"Jersey Shore Boys" – Chris Christie and President Obama meet post-Sandy, when it seemed like Christie could do no wrong.



EDITORIAL



SENIOR CHIEF PETTY OFFICER CHRIS D. BOARDMAN/US NAVY

Probing the Causes of a Baffling Aviation Disaster

As the search for Malaysian Airlines Flight 370 carries on with little success, the Malaysian government's questionable choices at the outset of the investigation continue to baffle and infuriate onlookers around the globe.

BY TANAY GUPTA

"Good night, Malaysian three-seven-zero." At 1:19 AM local time on March 8, 2014, Malaysian Airlines Flight 370 en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing sent this, its last message to air traffic control. The weather was calm and all indications from the flight deck suggested a normal flight. And yet, 239 passengers and crew went missing after the aircraft presumably ran out of fuel seven hours later—a surprising prospect given that both Malaysian Airlines and the Boeing 777 have excellent safety records. Every few days during the first few days of the search, the media reported some type of "significant" find that made locating the jet appear to be just within grasp. Each time however, the excitement receded back to a diligent search effort. The questionable actions of the Malaysian government and failed aircraft locating systems have made never finding the flight an eerie, but real possibility.

While planes have crashed into the ocean before—currently the most plausible theory behind MH370's disappearance—this particular region in the depths of the Southern Indian Ocean hampers the search effort in an unprecedented way. Identifying the



correct search area is perhaps the most important first step in finding the wreckage of an aircraft lost at sea. However, Malaysia's delay in communicating the known series of events after the co-pilot radioed into the control tower for the last time have created a large potential for error in that first crucial step of finding the wreckage. In the last major commercial flight disappearance, Air France Flight 447 from

Rio de Janeiro to Paris, the search radius was eventually narrowed down to roughly 45 miles according to *Financial Times'* Mark Odell. Since radar contact with the Malaysian flight was lost shortly after takeoff, the large amount of fuel on board has resulted in a much wider area that spans approximately 2500 square kilometers southwest of Perth, Australia. Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott calls the location "about the most inaccessible spot you could imagine on the face of the Earth."

This region is also so remote that the *Houston Chronicle* reports, "it takes aircrafts longer to fly there – four hours – than it allows for the search," which can last only two hours for each flight. On March 11th, the Singapore News Agency *Straits Times* vastly underestimated the difficulty in locating the Malaysian Airlines flight compared to the Air France flight,

(Above): As a part of a multinational search for the missing Malaysian Airlines aircraft in the Gulf of Thailand, a U.S. Navy MH-60S Seahawk helicopter prepares to touch down aboard USS Pinckney, a guided missile destroyer.



LAURENT ERRERA (L'UNION, FRANCE)/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The 239 individuals that have gone missing since March 8, 2014 were aboard this particular aircraft: a Malaysian Airlines Boeing 777-200ER. The fact that both the airline and the type of jet that disappeared had excellent safety records only adds to the mystery.

saying the latter “crashed further away from the coast and into very deep waters, a complicating factor for the investigation.” At just three days after the crash, investigators did not realize the full extent of the daunting set of challenges posed by the search area being 1400 miles out at sea. This demonstrates the amount of time and effort that goes into figuring out just the basic details that must be understood before a search area can be established. What started as the size of the Indian ocean, this area had been narrowed down to a still immense “size of Ireland” in the words of Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston in early May. The head of the Royal Australian Air Force aptly described the investigation by saying “we’re not searching for a needle in a haystack, we’re still looking for the haystack.”

The uncertainty as to which country should lead the search effort further added to the complexity over the first few days of the search. In an accident involving a Malaysian aircraft, 153 Chinese passengers, and a total of fourteen different nationalities represented on board, who takes charge? On March 16th, the Malaysian Transport Minister Hishammuddin Hussein said that the number of countries assisting in the search and rescue operations had nearly doubled to 25. While this adds to the resources available, it also makes it critical to have a strong and experienced body organizing the various efforts—neither of which the Malaysian government has embodied.

The lack of transparency with which the Malaysian government has dealt with the media gives it a degree of culpability, which has perhaps kept the operations from progressing as far along as possible. In previous air disasters, all knowledge is quickly relayed to the public so that experts around the world can try to think independently as to how the clues piece together. These authorities’ inexperience with major crises however, has made them sluggish in reporting information to the outside. The *New York Times*’ Thomas Fuller suggests that since the government has generally not been “seriously challenged in any meaningful way,” they have grown “complacent and comfortable.” This has caused them to be increasingly alarmed when being held accountable for aspects of the flight’s vanishing.

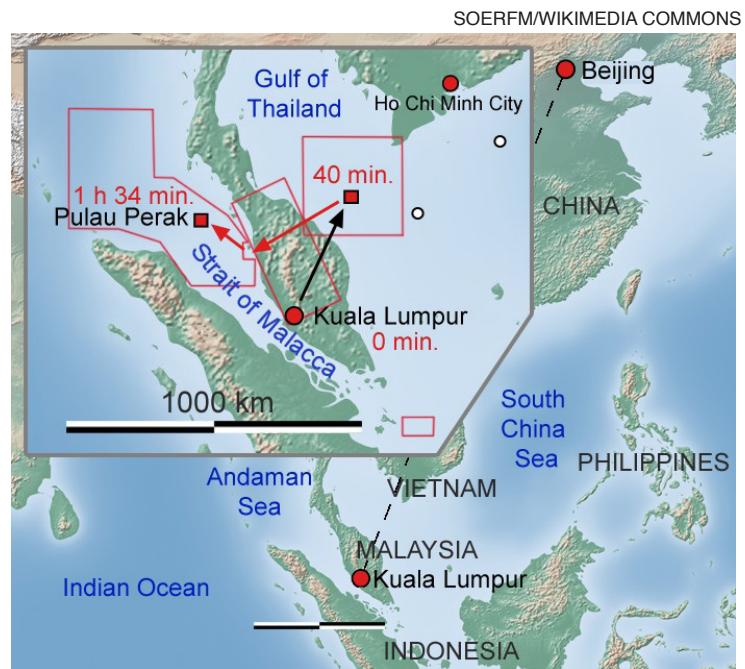
The embarrassment that resulted from the Malaysian government’s inability to deal with being thrust onto the world stage was mitigated only by the massive search effort that is underway. Only after knowing for four days did Malaysian leaders reveal that mili-

tary radar had picked up the flight heading on a westerly course after the last communication with the Lumpur Tower, *New York Times*’ Fuller explains. During these first essential days, the search area was focused around the South China Sea, when officials were aware that the flight had actually been flying far away from that area. Though one can only speculate how the plane ultimately went down, had passengers remained alive after a crash, these few days could have made the difference between life and 239 bodies sunk 15,000 feet below the Indian Ocean.

The Malaysian leaders have continued their politics when it comes to who is tasked with interpreting the flight data recorders (black boxes) should their efforts to find them pay off. The Malaysian Acting Transport Minister Datuk Hussein said that the Attorney General must determine if deciding which nation in charge of analyzing the data “is a challenge which [necessitates] diplomacy as...it involves 40 nations.” The Malaysian government may wear a façade suggesting that it does not matter who is given custody of the data, but anyone who thinks that they will give up that responsibility without intense negotiations is mistaken. Even so, by no means are the Malaysians the only group that has made missteps in this devastating mystery. The red herrings that have surfaced during the search seem to imply that some flaws may exist in the flight data recorders themselves.

Politics and diplomacy aside, there appear to be holes in the technology behind finding aircraft. The flight data recorders have locator beacons installed inside the devices, which last for thirty days, precisely for occurrences such as these. Through a combination of a towed pinger locators attached on ships as well as passive sonar buoys, a total of five ‘pings’ originally believed to have originated from the flight have been detected. And yet, not one has resulted in

MH370 was scheduled to fly from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia to Beijing, China. However, it first deviated off course less than an hour after take-off. The two white circles indicate the claimed sighting of debris. Only after knowing for four days did the Malaysian Officials publicly announce that the aircraft had taken on a westerly course; after its last communication with Lumpur tower, it would never be heard from again.



"We're not searching for a needle in a haystack, we're still looking for the haystack."

a credible lead according to Captain Mark Matthews, on board the Australian Royal Navy Ship that was spearheading the Indian Ocean Search. Moreover, according to CNN's Holly Yan, the black boxes only retain information from the last two hours before impact. Since these mechanisms are so fundamental to obtaining a clear understanding of what happened to Malaysian Airlines flight 370, they should be made much more robust, yielding as many answers as possible. To invest so much time and capital to installing the data recorders on all commercial flights and yet not even be able to find them on unfortunate occasions such as these seems appallingly obsolete in the twenty-first century.

The unprecedented challenges in finding MH370 are noteworthy without a doubt; still, Malaysian politics and a black box locator that could still be improved upon kept the rescue operations from being as efficient as possible. That being said, failures are bound to happen at one point or another, and each one just makes high speed travel that much safer. It may take a while, but with so many experts, family members and aviation enthusiasts invested into this endeavor, the

truth behind what happened to the Malaysian triple-seven that vanished in the early dawn hours of March 8, 2014 will be discovered.

Sources: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/0d7c7f4c-b056-11e3-8058-00144feab7de.html>; <http://www.chron.com/news/world/article/Air-search-expands-in-remote-south-Indian-Ocean-5335475.php#photo-6045661>; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-26695830> [search area size]; <http://www.firstpost.com/world/missing-jet-malaysia-razak-calls-mammoohan-singh-for-help-1437141.html>; <http://www.straitstimes.com/the-big-story/missing-mas-plane/story/missing-malaysia-airlines-plane-mh370-draws-comparisons-air-fr>; <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-26727229>; http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/13/world/asia/missing-jet-exposes-a-dysfunctional-malaysian-elite.html?_r=0; <http://www.cnn.com/2014/04/14/world/asia/malaysia-plane-bluefin-explainer/>; <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-03-21/missing-plane-flew-steady-speed-over-ocean-inmarsat-estimates.html>; <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2603249/MH370-search-teams-stop-listening-black-box-pings-just-days-unless-new-signals.html>; <http://www.thestar.com.my/News/Nation/2014/04/15/mh370-search-hisham-muddin-hussein-truth-more-important>; <http://www.itv.com/news/update/2014-04-01/mh370-current-search-area-size-of-ireland>.



SPECIALIST 1ST CLASS PETER D. BLAIR/US NAVY PHOTO

Technicians aboard the Australian naval vessel Ocean Shield prepare to deploy the US Navy Bluefin-21 submersible on April 14, 2014. Its search of the Southern Indian Ocean floor failed to locate signs of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370.

What's Up with the Latest \$19 bn. Investment in the Tech Industry

Some believe that Facebook's acquisition of WhatsApp is a mistake, but it may be a calculated strategic decision that could yield the company substantial gains over the long-term.

BY PRADYUTH MAGANTI

The \$19 billion that Facebook spent acquiring WhatsApp could certainly be used to promote greater causes, but the transaction could also be worth it. The app, which allows users to message family and friends, processes approximately 50 billion messages daily and has 430 million active users—a figure that is projected to double in the coming year. The company can only grow at this point, since there appears to be no end in sight for the increasing utilization of the application.

The WhatsApp acquisition represented only one transaction during a period marked by an increased interest in mobile messaging services. The multi-billion dollar deal occurred a week after the Japanese company Rakuten purchased Viber, another messaging service for smartphones, for \$900 million. Six months before the deal was struck, Google allegedly offered \$10 billion for WhatsApp. After those reports came in, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg decided to almost double Google's offer in order to persuade WhatsApp founder, Jan Koum, to deal exclusively with Facebook.

All signs point to WhatsApp receiving the better end of this transaction. However, this assumption may not be accurate. The company may be making billions, increasing its user base, and gaining worldwide exposure.

Yet, Facebook is getting a greater potential return on its multi-billion dollar investment.

A few advantages exist for Facebook in the deal. First, Zuckerberg keeps WhatsApp from competing with his company. From now on WhatsApp customers will be Facebook customers too, so Facebook will not have to worry about losing its share of the huge mobile messaging market. Second, the deal prevents Google from getting WhatsApp and its users. Google, which has already branched off into many different sectors, would have begun to dominate the messaging market had they succeeded in buying WhatsApp, simply because of the "Google" brand name. One last substantial advantage remains for Facebook – with the influx of WhatsApp users, there exists the potential to create tremendous revenue through advertisements and the annual \$1 fee for every user. This can lead to far greater revenue than had been previously imagined by either company as individual entities. As of 2013, Facebook had 556 million people access its site from their phones daily, and generated one billion dollars every three months solely through mobile advertising. Zuckerberg will likely try to implement such a model with WhatsApp.

Facebook knows that the benefits of its acquisition of WhatsApp, which include Facebook's increased mobile messaging market share and a massive potential to increase revenue, will probably not be displayed in the short-term. They must first inculcate interest in WhatsApp and help it grow in terms of additional unique users.

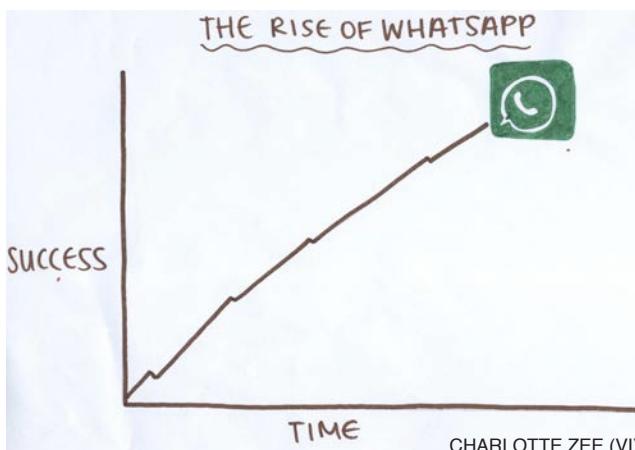
Financial growth will be far simpler once the user base is both dedicated and more extensive. With this in mind, the revenue will eventually be even greater with the aforementioned advertisements and annual fee for each user after an initial 12-month free trial.

WhatsApp also seems to give Facebook a greater inter-

national presence. Facebook has about one-third of its entire activity within the United States alone. On the other hand, WhatsApp has a majority of its users in Latin America and Europe, two regions in which Facebook would like to grow. *On Device Research* conducted a study to discover which social messaging apps were most popular in five different markets: United States, Brazil, South Africa, China, and Indonesia. The findings showed that WhatsApp has at least a 20% more market share than Facebook in Brazil, South Africa, and Indonesia. While the US appears to favor Facebook, China is a distinctive case, as the application WeChat dominates 93% of its market.

This potential for Facebook in the global sphere can immediately translate into generated activity with the help of WhatsApp and its users. Because Facebook owns WhatsApp, it also technically owns all of WhatsApp's users. Thus, on mobile devices featuring WhatsApp, there could be cost-free advertisements promoting Facebook and prompting users to join the site. Still, Facebook would like these users to become Facebook customers without compromising their activity on WhatsApp.

The price tag of WhatsApp foreshadows great things for other mobile services as well. For instance, the photo messaging app, Snapchat, was offered deals of \$3 billion and \$4 billion by Facebook and Google respectively, but opted instead to maintain its autonomy. Perhaps a potential buyer must be paying a sum closer to WhatsApp's deal for Snapchat to accept an acquisition. Anything said about Snapchat at this point is pure speculation, since relatively new internet companies are known to be mercurial. WhatsApp itself illustrates this point, as it previously seemed determined to reject every merger or acquisition offer. Many of these services are deciding to go public too, instead of being purchased by larger companies. Whichever direction these growing applications take, the companies could very well be making far more revenue than they had previously imagined.



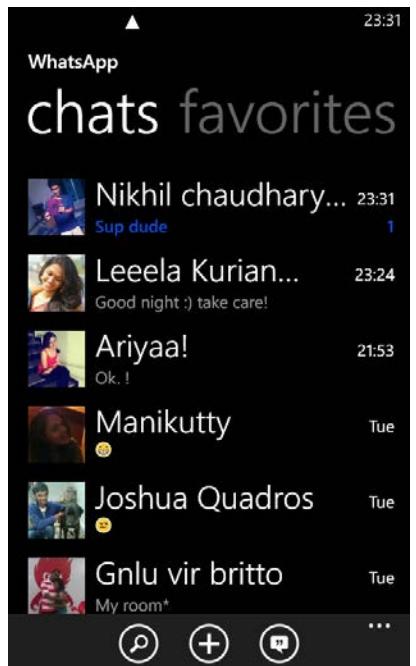
ined.

With the acquisitions of Instagram for \$1 billion and WhatsApp for \$19 billion in the last couple of years, Facebook looks to significantly increase its presence on the mobile platform. The inclusion of these popular mobile services helps Facebook not only branch into other forms of sharing media and photos but enables them to catalyze more interest in its own site, which has been declining in popularity as of late. Although Facebook had 174 million people signing up for the social network last year, this number does not meet previous standards. From 2007 to 2012, Facebook grew from 58 million to an astonishing 1.056 billion users. In the immediate future, Facebook may not be concerned with increasing the popularity of its own site, but increasing that of its recent acquisitions. Despite what seemed to many observers as an overpriced acquisition, Facebook has gained

(Right): A screenshot of the WhatsApp interface reveals the simple, sleek design that has won over millions of users around the world.

the upper hand in a messaging market where the revenue has the potential to greatly surpass the \$19 billion break-even threshold.

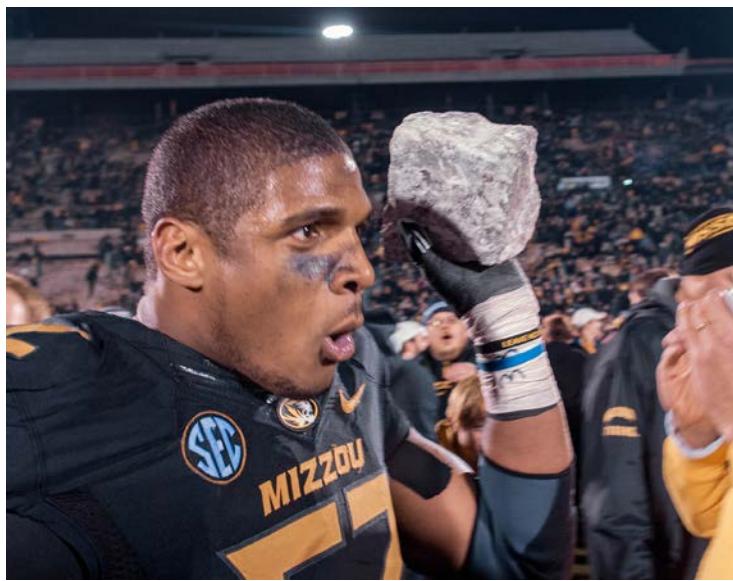
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UNCLE TOM WOOD/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Michael Sam: Ushering In the New Era of Professional Sports

Gay athletes are now making their public debut in professional sports. While they have widespread support, they still face deep-rooted challenges in the fabric of athletic culture.

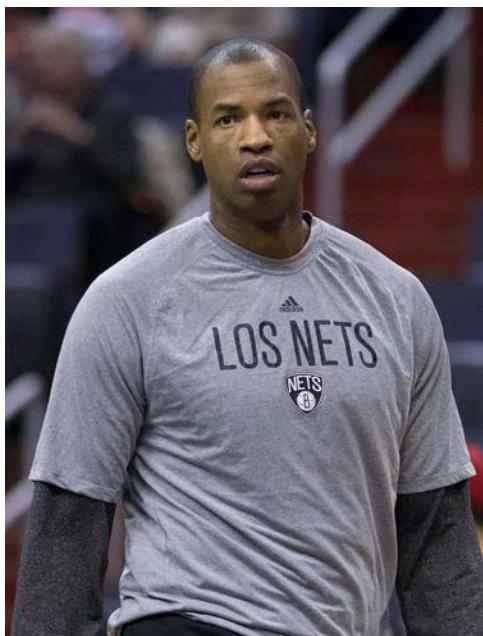


MARCUS QWERTYUS/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS
After winning his final home game on the Missouri team, Michael Sam, who will become the first openly gay NFL player, celebrates as he carries a souvenir, a piece of the Missouri rock "M."

BY BRYCE WEISHOLTZ & SAMUEL KECECI

"I'm not afraid to tell the world who I am. I'm Michael Sam: I'm a college graduate. I'm African-American, and I'm gay." Michael Sam, a football player for the University of Missouri recently came out as the first openly homosexual player attempting to enter into the National Football League through the draft. Sam's announcement was met with sharp criticism from many who claimed that the brutal atmosphere of a football locker room was no place for a gay athlete. Michael Sam might only be one gay athlete, but his success in entering the league would help reduce the discrimination on sexual orientation that has been the norm in team sports. However, the professional sports world does not appear to be ready to accept a gay player into its culture; during his attempt to bring equality to all athletes, Sam will likely face extreme bullying and hazing.

Although accepted by his coaches and teammates at the University of Missouri prior to his announcement, Sam faces a new set of challenges as he enters the NFL. Football locker rooms have proven to be among the least accepting and discriminatory cultures in sports, especially so in the NFL. The recent Miami Dolphins scandal that involved Richie Incognito and Jonathan Martin, revealed players abusing their teammates for seemingly insignificant reasons, and pro-



KEITH ALLISON/Flickr

After publicly announcing his homosexuality at the end of the 2012-13 NBA season, Jason Collins would not step back on the court until February 23, 2014. He would then sign with the Brooklyn Nets and be featured on the cover of Time Magazine's April 2014 issue of "100 Most Influential People in the World."

vided insight into the often-hostile dynamic of a professional football locker room. Even the highly-paid professional athletes of the NFL appear willing to bully others either for personal gain or to assert power over a team. Therefore, Michael Sam will be faced with severe obstacles in attempting to gain respect and support from a largely prejudiced NFL community.

Michael Sam is effectively advocating equality among all football players, regardless of sexual orientation, just as the earliest African American athletes fought for equality for all races in sports in the mid twentieth century. In a recent anonymous survey, conducted by ESPN, athletes were asked to respond to four questions relating to sexual orientation in the locker room. Nearly 90 percent of the athletes stated that they would be willing to have a gay teammate, and more than half of them stated that an openly gay teammate would be comfortable in their locker room. The poll results sound promising. Despite the opposition expressed by some to Michael Sam's entrance into the NFL, other players, such as Baltimore Raven Torrey Smith, have voiced their support for Sam. Smith explains that "if he is a great football player and can help us win our next Super Bowl, [we] could care less about who or what he likes as long as he performs on the field." Even so, the ESPN survey also showed the vast majority of the athletes reporting that their teammates and coaches regularly use homophobic slurs and insults, thus making the integration of gay athletes that much more challenging.

NBA forward Jason Collins played for several teams under the guise of being heterosexual. However, in the past year, Collins came out as he finishes his career. His announcement is, nevertheless, an important one, as it makes him the first openly gay athlete to have competed in an NBA professional game. It will be Michael Sam's challenge to prove—just as Jackie Robinson did in 1947—that it is not about the player's identity, but rather his ability to lead his team to a championship.

Michael Sam and Jason Collins have brought professional sports into a new era. Using athletics as a gateway to the issues facing our modern society, these athletes are the modern-day figures in the continuing struggle for equality and civil rights. The first major problem was officially addressed when the Brooklyn Dodgers signed Jackie Robinson. Here, the Dodgers targeted the prejudice against African-Americans and Robinson disproved all of his dissenters by becoming one of the greatest baseball players of all-time; his number is, in fact, the only one retired by every Major League Baseball team. Just as Jackie Robinson opened the way for African Americans, the time has come for the age of the gay athlete to be ushered into the world of professional team sports, a movement that will be spearheaded by Michael Sam.

At first glance, Michael Sam and Jason Collins appear to be simply attempting to gain recognition for a minority that faces a large amount of discrimination in today's sports world. However, both Sam and Collins represent a larger struggle for equality in society for the LGBT community. Because athletes are viewed as role models for the younger generation, Sam and Collins have been given the opportunity to prove that homosexuality can be accepted in even the most difficult of circumstances: a sports locker room. Sam and Collins represent only the first step in a journey towards equality in this sphere, similar to those undertaken by the civil rights leaders of the mid 20th century. Although both of these athletes face incredible challenges, they are doing what needs to be done to bring acceptance.

A Fall from Great Heights

Evidence that Olympic runner Oscar Pistorius murdered his girlfriend, Reeva Steenkamp, is rapidly piling up, but Pistorius's celebrity in South Africa could complicate the administration of justice.

BY JULIA AXTELL

Oscar Pistorius of Sandton, Johannesburg in South Africa was once the hometown hero, celebrated for his ability to overcome the amputation of his legs and compete in the Olympics. However, his celebrity image is starting to tarnish quickly as he faces charges of murder, the illegal possession of ammunition, and an additional two charges of firing a gun in a public place. The *New York Times* claims that the prosecutors will call upon nearly one hundred witnesses and extensive forensic evidence. As the prosecution's evidence is rapidly stacking up against Pistorius, he looks guiltier than ever.

Local people surround the courthouse everyday hoping to capture a photograph or even just a glimpse of their "hometown hero." Whether or not Pistorius is guilty may be irrelevant to many of them, as, in their eyes, he is their local celebrity. However, as the defense tries to refute all the damning charges made by the prosecutors, it would appear that they are burying their client in a web of lies. For starters, Pistorius is claiming self-defense as well as pleading not guilty. Pistorius says he was asleep when he heard noises in the bathroom; he feared it was an intruder and so, without putting on his prosthetic legs, he hobbled over to the bathroom to fire shots into the locked bathroom door, thereby killing his innocent girlfriend, Reeva



CHRIS GEATCH/Flickr

Steenkamp. The apparent abundance of his lies shifts the case increasingly in the favor of the prosecutors.

The prosecutors have used forensic evidence to negate Pistorius' claims, contending that the trajectory of the bullet shows the shots must have been fired by a man of at least five foot ten to six foot two, which Pistorius is when his prosthetics are on. In fact, police pictures of the crime scene even show that Pistorius was wearing his prosthetic legs. There are also numerous lines of circumstantial evidence against the defendant. Pistorius' claim that he feared an intruder seems highly unlikely, since he lives in a gated, secure neighborhood. In fact, an article in *The Christian Science Monitor* describes Pistorius' elite neighborhood, Silver Woods Country Estate, as "protected by high walls, electric fencing, security guards, laser sensors, biometric 'thumbprint' locks, all overseen by closed-circuit cameras." With all of this security, the idea that an intruder could possibly gain entry seems highly unlikely. Pistorius' version of how the night went down indicates that he believed Steenkamp was in bed next to him. He said while he was shooting he was yelling for her to call the police, but that begs the question -- if he was not getting a response from Steenkamp, why would he keep shooting? The first responder to the scene was a neighbor of Pistorius, Dr. Johan Stipp, who testified that when he arrived on the scene, Pistorius had still not called for help. Pistorius was holding his girlfriend's body crying, but had failed to call for an ambulance.

The prosecution has produced other witnesses to undermine Pistorius' version of events, including neighbors, friends, and family. Neighbors have even claimed they heard a shouting match going on in the Pistorius household shortly before Reeva Steenkamp was shot to death. According to an article in *The Independent*, the first witness to testify on day one of the trial claims she heard "bloodcurdling screams" that were followed by the sound of gunshots. The witness in question, Dr. Michell Burger, lives in a neighboring house with her husband, who also testified against Pistorius. Dr. Burger contends "the fear in that woman's voice, you only fear like that if your life is threatened."

On Thursday March 13, the accused actually vomited in court when shown the horrific images of Steenkamp's dead body. This is not the first time Pistorius has thrown up in court, as he did so dur-

ing the Coroner's report as well. Those who suspect Pistorius would argue that he was in shock that his own two hands had inflicted that much pain on Steenkamp. Maybe, his guilt came out in the form of vomit.

According to a recent testimony by the boxer Kevin Lerena—one of Pistorius' friends—the night of the shooting was not the first time Pistorius was found behind a smoking gun. Lerena recalled sharing a meal with Pistorius in a restaurant on January 11, 2013 where Pistorius accidentally discharged a gun, grazing Lerena's toe. Darren Fresco, another friend dining with them, was the actual owner of the gun and had brought it to dinner because Pistorius was looking to purchase a similar weapon. Fresco was not only the owner of the gun, but also became the scapegoat, as Pistorius convinced him to take the blame for firing the gun. Why Pistorius was looking to buy a gun is unclear, but it adds to the premeditated murder theory, since only a month later Pistorius shot his girlfriend.

On March 25, 2014, the prosecutors wrapped up their case, sinking Pistorius into a deeper hole by introducing angry text messages sent just prior to the fatal shooting. The messages indicated that the couple had been fighting more than usual; in one text Steenkamp even admitted to the Olympian that she was scared by his violent behavior, including a recent jealous outburst in front of other people. Pistorius has yet to testify, although defense lawyer, Brian Webber, claims that it is only a matter of time until Pistorius does so, since it is likely he will open the defense's testimony. Judge Thokozile Masipa is in charge of determining whether or not Pistorius is a credible witness. He, along with two other assessors, will determine whether or not Pistorius is guilty, as there is no jury system in South Africa.

Given his extensive knowledge of firearms and the couple's known disputes, it is hard to see how Oscar Pistorius could be ruled innocent. Even if Pistorius is not charged with premeditated murder, he will at least be charged with negligent homicide, a lesser offense, but still serious. In addition to a negligent homicide, he could also face up to five years for each gun indictment and an additional fifteen years for the other firearms charge he also faces. It is always sad to see such a highly regarded man such as Pistorius who was able to go so far despite his physical limitation, fall victim to his own motives and personal relationship struggles.

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"Given his extensive knowledge of firearms and the couple's known disputes, it is hard to see how Oscar Pistorius could be ruled innocent."

The Immigration Reform Debate: Still Unresolved



CHARLES REED/US IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT

As the debate on illegal immigration flares once again in the halls of Congress, analysis reveals that the question of granting a path to citizenship is complicated by political, economic, and moral dilemmas.

BY PETER SHIM

Ever since America became an industrial power, drawing millions of immigrants a year, immigration reform has been one of the most heavily debated topics in Congress. While there is significant disagreement about how to best structure the immigration policies to benefit the American economy and safety, there is a consensus that reform is needed. Recently, the new “Gang of Eight” bill that aims to include a path to citizenship in immigration reform, has made it into Congress, raising the controversial question of whether millions of undocumented immigrants should receive legal status.

While many liberals believe that all conservatives are hard-set against immigration reform, recent polls have shown otherwise. A Public Religion Research Institute study documents bipartisan support for immigration reform, indicating that “more than 7 in 10 (71%) of Democrats, nearly two-thirds (64%) of independents, and a majority (53%) of Republicans favor an earned path to citizenship.” If anything, negative reactions to Republicans’ traditional hard-line stance on immigration have caused them to reconsider their position. Further polls show that about half of the Republican Party believes its stance on immigration reform has hurt the party, while a mere 7% believes that their party’s stance on immigration has helped it. Thus, many Republicans will be willing to change their stance for the benefit of the party.

Many liberals think that undocumented immigrants should be given citizenship outright for a number of reasons. First, there is substantial evidence indicating that immigrants are good for the economy. A growing immigrant population will result in an increased number of consumers and taxpayers, whose spending increases demand for

(Above): *Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Homeland Security Police apprehend suspects in Project Southbound in Dallas, Texas. The operation targets illegal immigrants who are affiliated with criminal gangs and returns them to their home countries.*

goods, which, in turn, stimulates the economy. Furthermore, immigrants complement the economy by occupying a specialized niche. American workers with more schooling are less likely to accept menial labor. As a member of the Council of Foreign Relations, Gordon H. Hanson’s “The Economic Logic of Illegal Immigration” report finds, “Between 1960 and 2000, the share of working-age native-born U.S. residents with less than twelve years of schooling fell from 50 percent to 12 percent.” The number of Americans willing to accept unskilled jobs is decreasing rapidly, leaving a vacuum of unfilled positions in occupations like agricultural labor. Immigrants rapidly take up such jobs, allowing resources to be used more efficiently and increasing productivity. Hanson continues, “Increasing the [immigrant] supply of labor to [harvest] fruits, for instance, means that each acre of land under cultivation generates more output.” Because undocumented immigrants are able to more easily uproot themselves, they can flow to match the supply and demand for labor, thus filling jobs that otherwise would not have been taken—thereby reducing what is known as frictional unemployment that occurs because of the friction in the economy’s ability to connect the unemployed with available jobs.

The benefits that the liberals clearly see in granting foreign immigrants citizenship are not as easily understood by conservatives. Many Republicans, for example, argue that undocumented immigrants should not be given citizenship because they are detrimental to the economy. It may seem that since illegal immigrants pay roughly \$11.2 billion in taxes, they are certainly an asset to the nation. Making these immigrants citizens, however, would open them up to the possibility of accessing welfare and healthcare services. The Center for Immigration Studies finds that this increased access to social welfare programs would allow immigrants to use \$20 billion more annually.

ally than they would be paying in taxes. Furthermore, after the illegal immigrants receive citizenship, minimum wage laws will now apply to them, increasing the amount that they are making. As employers would now have to pay these workers more, their expenses would rise, leading to increased prices for the company's products. Finally, a path to citizenship will actually increase the total number of immigrants in this country, since a guaranteed path to citizenship creates an incentive to cross the border illegally in order to obtain citizenship later. Indeed, there was a fourfold increase in immigrants after the 1986 "amnesty" bill, or approximately an additional 30 million new immigrants, according to the Congressional Research Institute. These "chain immigrants," conservatives claim, would further intensify the aforementioned social and economic problems. The advantages that the pro-immigration activists have identified appear far less favorable when these difficulties are taken into account.

Many human rights activists have claimed that a path to citizenship should be implemented not for economic reasons, but because it is inhumane to have illegal immigrants. Illegal immigrants currently form an under-class in America. They are traditionally ignorant of

Protestors in Tacoma, Washington march to demand that ICE's Northwest Detention Center be shut down.



BRUCE WILKINSON/LATIN AMERICAN SOLIDARITY ORGANIZATION

American law, fear deportation, and speak a different language, all of which make them very easy to be exploited and abused. Virtually any person who knows that immigrants have no legal protection has the ability to abuse them. For instance, the National Employment Law Project, a group that works to re-establish a sense of equal economic opportunity in the American economy, reports that "76.3% of undocumented workers had unpaid overtime [and] 70.1% of workers reported no pay for work... We see that current citizens are OK with creating a slave status for immigrants." Negative stereotypes against undocumented immigrants cause xenophobia against the all of the 53 million Hispanic Americans in the US. A Pew Hispanic Center analysis has found that even though Hispanics account for about 17% of



CHARLOTTE ZEE (VI)

the population, over 40% of those targeted by stop and frisk searches were Hispanics. Such figures demonstrate that ethnically motivated discrimination is present in the country. The struggles that illegal immigrants face add to the reasons why immigration laws should be reformed.

Immigrants are arguably beneficial to the economy because although they may cause some welfare drain, standard economic theory prioritizes growth in the economy over a minimization of welfare expenses. Simply stated, making undocumented immigrants citizens is good for the economy because there are more people buying goods and stimulating production and imports. In accordance with human rights activists, we should strive to stop the atrocious human rights violations against immigrants and discrimination against Hispanics. However, the type of immigration reform we adopt should not be our sole concern. Even if all current undocumented immigrants became citizens, chain migration would introduce more immigrants into the pool, further amplifying human rights abuses, discrimination and xenophobia. Thus, regardless of the type of immigration reform we choose to implement, our goal must be to minimize further immigration, which can unravel all we will have worked to achieve.

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"While many liberals believe that all conservatives are hard-set against immigration reform, recent polls have shown otherwise."

American Health vs. Agribusiness: Which Is Winning?

Many studies have been conducted on the implications of consuming Genetically Modified Organisms, and yet the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) seems hesitant to take any meaningful action.

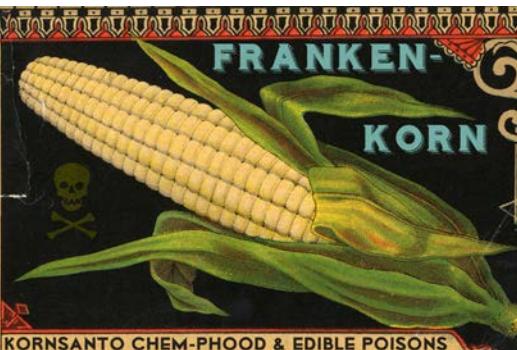
BY NATALIE LIFSON

Genetically modified organisms, which are commonly referred to as GMOs, are organisms in which the genetic material (DNA) has been altered to a form that does not occur under natural conditions. GMOs, which were initially employed for public consumption in the mid 90s, are resistant to pests, weeds, and disease, have a longer shelf life, and generally provide better flavor and nutritional value. In fact, common produce, such as certain varieties of cherry tomatoes, are the “fruits” of genetic engineering, and did not exist until this technology was developed. Yet, despite the many benefits, genetically modified organisms have proven to be quite dangerous.

While very little is known about the ultimate effects of GMOs on the human body, inhalation or consumption of genetically modified organisms have been known to trigger disease and allergic reactions. Of the workers who have picked or loaded genetically modified cotton, approximately 2/3 have developed severe allergies and reactions of the skin, eyes, and upper respiratory tract, and some laborers have even required hospitalization. Similarly, in 2003, while the corn was shedding pollen, over 100 people living in close proximity to a genetically modified cornfield in the Philippines reported nearly identical symptoms to the cotton laborers. In following years, other villages in the Philippines near genetically modified corn fields continued to exhibit similar symptoms, and the death of livestock has been attributed to these fields as well.

A great quantity of livestock that consumes GMOs becomes sick or sterile, or even dies. In lab experiments, GMOs have been the source of damage to virtually every organ in animals. For example, in a study performed on rats using genetically modified tomatoes, within two weeks of initially ingesting them, fourteen of the twenty rats that were fed genetically modified tomatoes began to spontaneously bleed from their stomachs and die. In North America, multiple farmers have reported that pigs and cows that have consumed genetically modified corn have become sterile as a result. It is possible that the obesity epidemic in the United States is partially due to

our increasing use of genetically modified organisms. The use of GMOs in food initially became popular in the United States in the mid 90s. Not-so-coincidentally, between 1991 and 1995, the obesity rate increased from 10% to 20%, and by 2000, approximately 25% of the population was obese. Since 1995, the obesity rates have risen a whopping 90%, which correlates to the increasing consumption of genetically modified foods in the United States. The question remains: is there causality? These side effects have been recognized as hazardous by significant members of the scientific community, and many countries, the United States of America excluded, have taken steps to protect their citizens from the dangers of genetically modified organisms.



JORDAN PONTELL/Flickr
A satirical ad for genetically modified corn.

Since 1988, more than 60 countries, including Japan, Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Greece, have banned genetically modified organisms for the reasons above. However, despite these significant risks to American's health and wellbeing, the FDA continues to allow genetically modified organisms to be freely engineered, cultivated and sold in the United States without a required label that identifies GMOs as such. In the United States, GMOs are not tested by the FDA, but by the very companies that make them. As a result, some of the information released to the public cannot necessarily be deemed reliable. At the very least, the studies done on genetically modified organisms should be performed by non-biased outside parties who do not have conflicting interests. Additionally, just because a food is labeled “all natural” does not mean it is not genetically modified, as the FDA does not currently regulate what constitutes a natural food. In fact, a good por-

tion of supposedly all natural foods has been chemically engineered, as well as those that aren't labeled all natural. Because the FDA does not ban the use of the likely harmful GMOs in American products, consumers face serious dangers as a result of being poorly educated about such goods.

An alarming number of foods in the US have altered genetic material, and it is virtually impossible to avoid genetically modified organisms when the FDA refuses to require labeling them for what they are. As consumers, we have the right to know exactly what we're putting into our bodies, and the fact that the FDA has resisted all attempts from scientists, experts, and concerned citizens to require a label that states what we're buying is unsettling, to say the least. We should be able to trust that our country will protect us from health risks like these, or at least give us the resources to protect ourselves. However, despite the warnings of multiple scientists employed by the FDA, the agency has elected to prioritize profit over public health. In October 2013, nearly 300 acclaimed scientists and experts signed a petition asserting that genetically modified organisms have not been proven to be safe and are potentially harmful, and so far the FDA has taken no further steps. We can hope that in the coming months the FDA will be forced to take action due to increasing public awareness, but until then, we will have to make our own conscious effort to maintain awareness of what we consume.

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JAMES42/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



(TOP LEFT): PRENSA PRESIDENCIA

JAMES42/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Venezuela: Presidents Face Popular Protests

Venezuela has been in a state of political crisis for the past 12 years. To restore order, the United States may have to get involved.

BY JOSHUA METZGER

In April 2002, the Venezuelan Right, supported by the Bush Administration, initiated a military coup against the Venezuelan government and its controversial president, Hugo Chávez. At first the coup appeared successful, but Chávez' supporters regrouped and restored him and his left-wing regime to power. The right then attempted to force a new presidential election by means of a general strike, but this campaign also failed. What connection could exist between the 2002 revolt and relapse and present-day Venezuela? Because the Venezuelan right

wing opposition was never able to overthrow Chávez and effectively establish a democratic state, economic turmoil, a sweeping set of socialist government policies, and tyrannical leadership have characterized Venezuelan politics for the last twelve years. In response, citizens have turned to violent protests and loudly called for President Nicolás Maduro to resign. The United States must intercede if Venezuela ever hopes to attain internal peace in the near future.

Venezuela's recent economic instability has caused tension between the government and the Venezuelan people. Financial failure in Venezuela has created a shortage

of common goods such as flour, milk, coffee, and sugar, spreading distress amongst its citizens. Moreover, the high inflation rate has handicapped commerce with other countries. Thus, economic stagnation has plagued the nation, leading to the embargo on the country's most profitable product: oil. According to *Forbes* profile on Venezuela, "oil production has fallen by about a quarter, exports by half," for a country that "depends on oil for 95% of its exports and 45% of its federal budget revenues." In addition, the United States has scaled back oil imports from Venezuela, looking to Canadian oil as an alternative. The lost commerce has starved Venezu-

(Above, clockwise from bottom left): 1) A political cartoon satirizes the tensions that exist between the Venezuelan government and its people. The sign comments on the alleged Cuban intervention in Venezuela. Current President Nicolás Maduro is caricatured as Fidel Castro's puppet, while Castro uses a burning Venezuelan flag to light his signature cigar. 2) The late President Hugo Chávez is shown hosting *Aló Presidente*, an unscripted talk show in which Chávez represented himself as a loving father to the people of his nation. 3) Demonstrators carry a banner that explains why they protest, with reasons varying from shortages to censorship. "Protesting is not a crime. It is a right," the sign reads.

ela of much needed capital. Finally, China's investment of "\$14-billion in Venezuelan oil development" has provoked an economic crisis for a government whose demand for oil has sunk. The economic turmoil has caused grave doubt about the future of Venezuela, and whether its citizens will ultimately be able to live an emancipated and peaceful life.

The policies of the socialist government have been a catalyst of protest for a large proportion of Venezuelan citizens. President Maduro continues to honor Hugo Chávez's legacy; however, a large percentage of the citizenry opposes the expansion of state control that Chávez set in motion. Characterized as a presidential system, the Venezuelan government has a powerful executive branch, which is a separate entity from the legislative branch. This form of government is prone to the abuse of authority and the forfeiture of checks and balances that regulates power of any one branch. The anti-government protests aim to revolutionize the political system so that citizens can aspire to a better quality of life without intrusive state authority. Moreover, intense polarization has plagued Venezuela since Hugo Chávez's presidency. President Maduro, Chávez' chosen successor, narrowly won the last "election" by what many believed was an infringement of electoral law. This breach has led to the call of protestors for President Maduro to resign. Nonetheless, just as during the uprising in 2002, the lower and working class seems

content with the present form of government. This opposing view is a hindrance to the progression of the anti-government protests and has created a clash between pro-government and anti-government forces.

Venezuela's authoritarian government has exasperated its own civilians. In spite of their anger, however, protestors are fed up with violence. The government has done little to stop the escalating violence since the death of Hugo Chávez. Moreover, protests have intensified due to the aggressive and violent police assaults upon demonstrators. Police try to discontinue protests and disperse the massive crowds in places such as Caracas where the protests have become fervent and frequent by using one particular lethal item: tear gas. Tear gas fumes billow over city landscapes and impair the sight of those who encounter it. In one instance, reported by *The New York Times'* William Neuman, a house was "filled with tear gas and the family inside, including two young children, choked in the fumes." Due to their ferocity, protests have caused \$10 billion in damages to date.

The United States must intervene in Venezuela's economic and social crisis for peace to be reestablished. Civil reconciliation will be difficult for the United States to mediate because President Maduro is accusing the United States of conspiring with the protestors; he believes they will ultimately devise a coup against his presidency. In one effort, explained by *International Business Times'*

After the death of Hugo Chávez, Nicolás Maduro became acting president on March 10, 2013. Maduro, leading the United Socialist Party, won the special election held the following month by a mere 1.5 percent margin.

PRENSA MIRAFLORES/FLICKR



Patricia Rey Mallén, "international governments and international organizations alike have asked for an end to the street war and for the government to listen to its people. Maduro reacted by laughing off all offers of mediation and kicking out diplomats from Panama and the U.S." The unprofessionalism and unscrupulous nature of President Maduro makes him unfit for the role of president. Perhaps Maduro is afraid of another U.S. inspired revolt against the Venezuelan government, as in 2002. However, the United States has denied all allegations of its influence on Venezuelan protests. A more pragmatic explanation for Maduro's "conspiracy theory" is that he is "just using the U.S. as a scapegoat – a sign of desperation," Mallén adds. Realistically, President Maduro has found little support for his socialist government. Both the violent protests and the country's economic turmoil have threatened his downfall. The United States' interaction with Venezuela is imperative for the survival of Maduro's presidency and the general welfare of the country.

The 2002 coup against Hugo Chávez and its unsuccessful outcome led to the loss of true democracy, the ultimate succession of President Maduro, and the chaos and protest occurring in modern day Venezuela. The nation's economic decline and resulting food shortages have given a powerful stimulus to the protests because of their destructive effect on citizens' quality of life. Also, the socialist government's attempts to suppress the largely anti-government population have poisoned political discourse. If Venezuela wishes to become stable in the near future, an American intervention is necessary to help negotiate the institution of a new form of government and to reconcile between the government and its people. By not requesting help soon as a civil war potentially looms on the horizon, President Maduro could very well be impairing the future of Venezuela.

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Elon Musk: The Man of the Century?

As a man with ambitions spanning from making space accessible to making solar energy a common household product, Elon Musk is set on a path to contribute greatly to this generation, and many more to come.



SHANKBONE/WIKIMEDIA

BY PARTH PATEL

A new age is here, one of innovation, excitement, and life changing events. Cures for major diseases and other health problems spew out of the reservoir of knowledge that is the human brain. Some new idea or technology is always working its way into our daily life through the marketplace, changing the world one sale at a time. In a world where the future is now, society needs talented leaders to help us navigate through these exciting times. Among these leaders is arguably the most visionary entrepreneur and business genius to live in our era, Elon Musk.

Even since his youth Musk has managed to do extraordinary things. He began his entrepreneurial journey at the age of 12 when he learned how to program, creating a game called *Blastar*, later selling it for \$500. He then grew up to start his first actual company with his brother Kimbal. They called it Zip2, an online city-guide. He then sold it for \$307 million, jumpstarting his future career. Even at this point, the brilliant tycoon had only begun to tap his full potential.

Musk's next big move was joining PayPal. He co-founded the now famous company and became the majority shareholder. When he

puts his mind to something, results will come. It was thanks to his ingenious campaigns for growth that PayPal grew to maturity, later being acquired by eBay for \$1.5 billion. Without the intellect of Musk, the company would never have become what it is today.

After PayPal, Musk wanted to have a more direct impact on enhancing people's lives; to do so, he founded SpaceX. This is the only privately owned space exploration company, which has been able to thrive even while competing with government organizations like NASA. At one point, SpaceX was given a \$1.6 billion contract by NASA for 12 flights to the international space station, further proving the worth and success of his company. SpaceX is revolutionizing this completely contemporary form of travel. His company will, for example, be the first to create rockets that are reusable. SpaceX's rockets will soon be able to execute missions in space and then return safely to earth, ready to refuel and embark on another journey.

Musk's greatest success so far is arguably Tesla Motors. Those cutting-edge all-electric luxury cars that glide down the street are his creation. Elon has made this company the company of the future. The interiors of Teslas look like spaceships; the quality control of the products is outstanding; and the sheer innovation that it takes to build something like that is dazzling. The cars are all aluminum as well, making them light-weight. Recently, Tesla stock has been skyrocketing like a SpaceX spaceship after launch. Elon believes strongly in sustaining the environment and lives up to his principles. In the process, he has changed industries such as the internet, space travel, and automobiles.

Even at this accounting, Musk's accomplishments would be remarkable, but the list also includes making solar power a more widely used energy source. In order to advance his long-held dream of promoting sustainable energy use, he co-

founded Solar City, the largest supplier of solar panels in America. He asserts that his goal is to make solar technology accessible for everyone. Solar City has already become one of the cheapest ways to get solar panels installed. Musk has very high hopes for the solar industry in the future, and is willing to make a monumental effort to help it grow. He predicts with great hope and confidence that "the primary means of power generation will be solar." With Musk as its driving force, Solar City should expand to bring America into a new era of solar energy. Musk explains in a few words, "I like to be involved in things that change the world."

With all of these amazing achievements backing him up, Musk has gotten recognition from many prominent people. His group of supporters includes Larry Page, the co-founder and CEO of Google. Page has gone as far as to say he would rather give his money to Elon Musk than to give it to a charity. The things Musk can and will do are extraordinary. With a current net worth of \$8.4 billion and his great mind, there is really nothing standing in his way of succeeding in changing the world.

Sources: http://www.ted.com/talks/elon_musk_the_mind_behind_tesla_spacex_solarcity; <http://elonmusk.com/>; http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Elon_Musk; <http://www.csmonitor.com/Business/In-Gear/2014/0323/What-Tesla-s-Elon-Musk-could-do-with-Google-CEO-Larry-Page-s-money>.

The Tesla Roadster: Tesla Motors is just one of a number of highly successful companies that Elon Musk has founded.

IFCAR/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS





NICHOLAS A. TONELLI/ WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

As we live in a time when Americans do not trust their leaders to do more than work toward their own reelections, the actions of a young Thomas H. Kean to save an obscure glacial pond from industrial development stand as a shining example of political courage that ought to have relevance and resonance for the modern age.

By HUNTER STIRES

Long before he rose to prominence as New Jersey's most respected governor, and decades before he made history as Chairman of the 9/11 Commission, Thomas H. Kean launched the first battle of his political career as a freshman State Assemblyman to save an obscure glacial lake from industrial development. In what would become a David-versus-Goliath encounter, Kean's seemingly minor environmental effort led him into a firestorm of opposition from special interests bent on quashing his cause in order to advance a multi-billion dollar energy program. By risking his political future on the widely ridiculed cause of environmentalism in an industrial state, Kean not only secured for posterity a unique natural wonder, but also charted a new course for the identity and future soul of the Garden State.

Even though it is only three miles from

Interstate-80, Sunfish Pond is one of the most remote places in New Jersey. Accessible only by foot, the path to the state's last glacial lake rises 1000 feet and winds its way over difficult and treacherous terrain. The fact this secluded natural rarity survived pressure from 1960s industry to be visited by, according to the Department of Parks and Forestry, over 250,000 people in 2013 speaks to a remarkable act of political courage against a modus operandi deeply ingrained in New Jersey's economic culture.

In 1967, environmentalism had yet to become a true force in American politics. The Environmental Protection Agency did not exist. There was no Earth Day. Most Americans had little awareness of humanity's effect on the planet. Conservationism was commonly derided, and Kean, who labeled himself the only environmentalist in New Jersey's government, was ridiculed by one assemblyman who exclaimed, "Essex

County has sent a bird-watcher to the state legislature". Part of this attitude stemmed from New Jersey's traditional role as handmaiden to the New York and Philadelphia metropolises. As an industrial backyard for two major cities, New Jersey had little sense of its own identity, and the political climate revolved around its status as an engine of economic growth. As Kean recounts, at the time, "jobs was the be-all and the end-all... no matter what it came at the expense of." With this zero-sum atmosphere and single-minded focus on economic development, any win for conservation was perceived as a loss for industry, while proponents of human "progress" saw the destruction of natural beauty as acceptable collateral damage.

The centerpiece of Kean's fight was the planned use of Sunfish Pond as a pumped storage reservoir as part of the Tocks Island Dam project, a proposed series of energy initiatives revolving around an earthen dam

(Above): Like Sunfish Pond, this glacial lake known as Crater Lake is situated in Sussex County within the Delaware Water Gap National Recreational Area.

on the Delaware River that would create a thirty-five mile lake in the Upper Delaware Valley, providing recreation and fresh water to the Mid-Atlantic region. In addition to the dam, the plan called for the construction of a three-reservoir pumped storage facility at the top of Kitatinny Ridge to generate electricity for the surrounding states. For Sunfish Pond, such an installation would spell the end of its uniquely pristine beauty, as the watershed and surrounding ecosystem would be essentially destroyed. At the outset of his involvement in the efforts to save Sunfish Pond, Kean saw no reason why the lake had to be incorporated into the Tocks Island Dam project. To the junior assemblyman, the matter was “a simple conservation effort—if you have something really beautiful and there’s nothing like it in the state, then you probably shouldn’t let it be ruined, you should probably preserve it”.

Unbeknownst to Kean, the focus of his “simple conservation effort” was inextricably tied to the Tocks Island concept and the special interest groups behind it. The pumped storage facility at Sunfish Pond actually comprised the keystone of the entire plan. As a result, Kean encountered opposition from many directions. He recalls, “It wasn’t until people started coming out of the woodwork did I realize I’d put my finger in a hornet’s nest”. Kean found himself surrounded by the project’s advocates, determined to persuade or compel him to withdraw his objection. According to Kean, “they tried everything to get me off the case—every single possible

thing”. The state’s two most powerful organizations, the Chamber of Commerce and organized labor, made their discontent known. Tocks Island supporters labeled Kean a “traitor to business” and suggested that psychological disorders were impairing his judgment. Lobbyists promised Kean additional campaign donations if he complied with the utilities’ demands, and threatened to give them to his next opponent if he did not. The chairman of the GOP in Kean’s home county told him that Kean’s environmentalism was “costing” the party. Kean’s opponents even menaced his brother, head of the Elizabethtown Water Company, intimating to Kean that his brother might not be successful when he went to request a rate increase unless the upstart legislator changed his stance on a certain glacial lake in the Delaware Water Gap.

Despite the fusillade, Kean pressed on. As he later acknowledged, “for a freshman assemblyman, it was a rough experience. But the more they came at me, the more I figured I was right”. Undaunted, he leveraged allies in the press to bring attention to his cause and soon won the support of most of the state’s newspapers. Kean authored a bill directing the state to purchase Sunfish Pond and successfully steered it through the Assembly four times, gaining cosponsors with each attempt. Even though the bill was defeated by utility allies in the Senate, Kean’s movement gained momentum across the political landscape. After the initial corporate attacks, Kean identified a number of significant flaws in the overall Tocks Island project, leading

Former New Jersey Governor Thomas Howard Kean with Hunter Stires ‘15.

DEBBIE WEISMAN/PINGRY COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE



EAGLETON INSTITUTE OF POLITICS/RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

Thomas Kean pictured with two bear cubs during his administration as New Jersey Governor from 1982-1990.

to final victory in 1972 when New York and New Jersey both withdrew support from the proposal altogether.

For most of its history, New Jersey resigned itself to a fate dominated by industry at the expense of its natural beauty. By refusing to allow the sacrifice of a special piece of his state on the altar of “progress,” Kean overcame the conventional wisdom of the zero-sum game between New Jersey’s economy and its ecology. Instead, he opted to, as he put it, “throw out the argument that it’s either the jobs or the environment. It’s a false argument because it’s all one”. As governor a decade later, Kean changed the way his state regarded itself, reminding his fellow citizens in a series of tourism advertisements that New Jersey was both an economic powerhouse and “America the Beautiful—only smaller”. By putting his political future on the line for a 44-acre glacial pond, young Assemblyman Kean opened the door for New Jersey to claim its rightful destiny as the Garden State.

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The Delaware Water Gap viewed from 720 feet above sea level along the Mount Tammany Trail.

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world dreams to ride the inside of a wave, a barrel, like Kelly Slater. And Kelly can take his fans there...having this incredible experience that before he was never able to share with anybody," says Woodman. More importantly, like Kelly Slater, people are able to share their passions, aspirations, or just simple life events that bring happiness.

The GoPro's popularity can be credited to the fact that almost every person can relate to it. The ability to record and share experiences is not only sought out by action sport athletes and daredevils. As *CBS News* reports, "GoPro's may be the perfect camera for a self-obsessed and selfie-obsessed generation." Everyone loves GoPro because the new tool allows him or her to make their lives more interesting. People realize they don't have to be snowboarding or rock-climbing to get photos they want to share with others, but instead can be dog walking or bird watching. *CBS News* reported an incident that occurred in the city of Cannes in which a GoPro was temporarily stolen by a seagull. Only later did the owner realize the incredible "bird's eye view" that had been captured! Or take the GoPro Super Bowl commercials that depicted a toddler learning to walk. The GoPro makes the ordinary lives of people extraordinary.

The best part for Woodman is that the camera advertises itself. When amazing mo-

ments and experiences are captured on the GoPro, it is "human nature" to share them. GoPro videos gone viral are the best advertising Woodman could have asked for. Woodman explains that some people even feel the need to credit GoPro when they post online. GoPro's slogan, "Be a Hero," says it all. Everyone wants to "be the hero" in a GoPro video. Everyone wants to be "the star of their own movie" to use the words of *CBS*. How often do people get the chance to not only do something amazing, but record themselves doing it? The GoPro isn't just a fad or trend. It's a small camera that will redefine the way people capture and share their lives—an activity that is not going lose importance in the eyes of humans anytime soon.

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(Right): A motorcycle policeman wielding the GoPro - "The World's Most Versatile Camera" - during the Stockholm Marathon in 2013.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE: A VERSION OF THE ESSAY PRINTED ABOVE WON SECOND PLACE IN THE 2014 JOHN F. KENNEDY PROFILE IN COURAGE ESSAY CONTEST.



ARILDV/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



The New Ease in Going Pro



LOUIS MONTEAGUDO '14

GoPro Digital Sports Cameras have attained widespread popularity through their ability to record footage usually seen only through the eyes of extreme athletes.

BY EMMA PALMER

On November 21, 2010, U.K. teenager James Trosh attached a camera and a robot to a weather balloon and sent it up into the air. At 95,000 feet the camera retrieved breathtaking footage of the robot's journey to the edge of space. The same camera has been used by scientists in labs at the Scripps Institute of Oceanography in California and by 11-time world champion surfing prodigy, Kelly Slater. The camera has been attached to a stick to record a game of fetch with a boxer and used to document a summer hiking adventure. Incredibly, each of these feats was made possible by nothing more than a small silver box known as the GoPro.

Advertised as the world's most versatile camera, the GoPro is a groundbreaking and hugely successful device for documenting the lives and experiences of all kinds of people. As 37-year-old founder Nick Woodman explained in a CBS news interview, GoPro was founded in 2004 with the goal

of creating a camera with which he could film himself and his friends surfing. Ideally, Woodman and his friends wanted the footage to make them look like pros, hence the name GoPro. The GoPro has since evolved from a bulky non-digital wrist camera to the top-selling camera in the world with a profit of \$521 million in 2012. Woodman explains, "Before GoPro, if you wanted to have any footage of yourself doing anything, whether it's video or photo, you not only needed a camera, you needed another human being. And if you wanted the footage to be good, you needed that other human being to have skill with the camera. The result was that most people never had any footage of themselves doing anything." For Woodman, the GoPro suddenly became about something much more than surfing footage.

The wearable, light, waterproof camera runs on its own, capturing high definition wide lens videos and photos. Costing less than \$400, the camera can record lapses of time as well as slow motion, and can be con-

trolled from an external remote or iPhone. It is made to withstand extreme environments and conditions in its hard, clear casing. There are also a variety of GoPro mounts—for a helmet, a surfboard, a ski or equipment involved in a range of other activities. And as customers soon proved to Woodman, there were no limits for the GoPro.

People inherently feel the need to document their lives not just for themselves but also for the sake of sharing experiences with others. While most are obsessed with sharing "snapshots" of their lives on Facebook or Instagram, the GoPro allows people to record and share those experiences that have been solely personal before the device. Previously, although defined by their experiences, people were limited in communicating them by the fact that many of these experiences were *completely* personal. After all, how were people supposed to be able to document and recreate something *while* they were experiencing it? Woodman explains, "Every surfer in the

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(Above) With the lightweight, digital, HD GoPro camera attached on their heads, Pingry Seniors Ryan Storms, Derek Hsue, Carter Allinson, Charles Duryee, and Louis Monteagudo set off to hike the Appalachian Trail as part of their Independent Senior Projects. Their use of the GoPro as part of a high school expedition underscores the widespread popularity that the device has already attained.