

FS news: FOSTER CARE Edition Q2

Happy Spring!

It's time for spring cleaning, and what better place to start than with our minds?!

For starters, we can clear out the noise of the pontificators and propagandists by simply walking away from the TV or other gizmo that delivers the 'news'. Long-time readers here know I give this 'lecture' every year to celebrate "TV-free week" or, as it is now known "Turn-Off Your Screen Week"....because there are so many types of screens to perpetually obfuscate our most important, deeply human, non-transactional needs with flashy, superficial, 'affordable' diversions and distractions.

Screen-Free week is a global event that spans the first full week in May every year (May 5-11, 2025). Your supporters can find out more about it by visiting <https://screenfree.org> .

It's critically important for us to take a break from our screens to realize how much they influence our lives. Try it and see! Turn off the gizmo, walk away from the TV, read an entire article in a newspaper or magazine and consider how the author is trying to persuade you. Read a novel or play and think about the world view of the various characters. Play a game, go for a walk, assemble a puzzle...all relaxing, yet stimulating, for your crucially important brain.

I realize you communicate through the gizmo (preparing you for the constant barrage that is to come) ...but aside from calls and emails, can you reduce your screen time by 50% for a week to try different things?

When I tell people that I haven't had a TV in 35 years, the number one response I hear is "how do you get the news"? My response is: "Do you believe that you know what's going on after watching 'the news' on TV?"

For instance: Ever wondered why you hear the same few stories on every 'news' channel, when you know there is a whole world of stories that seem to go unreported? It's called consolidation. Not quite monopolization, but close. In the 80's, more than 50 companies owned 90% of the U.S. media: radio, TV, music, books, movies, and magazines. Thanks to the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which reduced ownership regulations, today 90% of the U.S. media is owned by just 6 companies. Their obligation has nothing to do with getting accurate information to you; their only commitment is to generate profits for their shareholders.

I suspect this is why the public does not see any uncomfortable stories about prisons.

We know that the federal Bureau of prisons is in crisis! The Director was fired on January 20th and the Acting Director, along with several administrators, announced their resignations before the end of February. They are grossly short-staffed, and they cut both halfway house time from folks going home and retention bonuses for the staff who agreed to take the job because of that promise. Where is Attorney General Bondi? And isn't this something taxpayers should know about?

Of course it is. This is news! But it's not what the 6 media companies want our citizens to hear. They want us to think about the prison in El Salvador; ICE grabbing people in the street, the ridiculous stock market and the price of eggs. (Easter's coming, after all.)

I'm not trying to convince you to not watch TV; just to think about watching it defensively. It's hard to own your future when powerful forces know how to take the steering wheel away from you.

I titled this edition Foster Care because May 6th is National Foster Care Day! I've lived in no less than 5 foster homes and I figured other readers here may have experienced the foster care system, too. It's important for all of us to consider the role 'foster care' plays in our society. It's also important for us to consider the words 'foster' and 'care' as an invitation to action:

Foster: encourage or promote the development of (as in: Preschool teachers foster learning.)

Care: feel concern or interest; attach importance to something. (as in "I care about you.")

Do you have ideas about how we can foster care in our lives and/or our communities? I'd love to hear them!

The Fair Shake donors offer a fine example of fostering care: they donate envelopes, stamps and funds to ensure the Fair Shake website, materials and tools are well maintained for everyone to use. They also connect directly to folks they will never meet by providing the vehicle that delivers the Fair Shake flyers. Thank you donors! Without you, Fair Shake would not be possible. Fair Shake is because we are. Ubuntu! and gratitude!!

A lot of news is relevant, but not necessarily cause for alarm. It's important to get our minds in good shape to think up good strategies for the future.

And speaking of the future...have you written any

LETTERS TO THE DEPT. OF EDUCATION?

According to the higher-education-in-prisons publication 'Open Campus', the person responsible for opening mail from incarcerated student loan borrowers has been "laid off." If you need to send a letter, do so...so it's post marked and there...but be patient for an answer.

SOCIAL SECURITY I know you are aware of the mess. I don't have any advice except to be sure to check on their website to see what the current protocol is because there might be a tiny court-ordered window when you can get things done over the phone instead of having to go to an office. (You'll need to check online to see which offices are still open, anyway.)

BOP: What the heck is going on? Why isn't AG Bondi doing anything? We can't forget that private prison contracts are available again. If you have someone to search the internet for stories for you, I've found that Walter Palvo, who was incarcerated at one time himself, frequently has good articles on the BOP. Here is a small excerpt from April 8th:

A Front-Line View From The Bureau Of Prisons (an excerpt) by Walter Pavlo 4.8.25

Share: www.prisonology.com/blog/a-front-line-view-from-the-bureau-of-prisons

"With the return of the Trump administration, policy attention has largely focused on tariffs, immigration, reducing government spending, and dismantling DEI initiatives. Each of these has been backed by visible public messaging and leadership—except when it comes to the

Federal Bureau of Prisons. Despite overseeing an \$8.3 billion budget, 36,000 staff members, and roughly 160,000 incarcerated individuals across 121 correctional facilities, the BOP has received only cursory attention.

There's growing concern about the possible resurgence of private prisons. Attorney General Pamela Bondi previously lobbied for the GEO Group."

A federal union director "has pleaded for immediate congressional intervention, warning that the agency's strategy of lockdowns and visitation restrictions is failing to address the real crisis: dangerously low staffing levels and plummeting morale.

Turning the BOP around will require transformative leadership—and it needs to happen now."

Would you like to read the entire article? Then please reply with "BOP" in the subject line and I'll send it to you!

TOM ASACKER on REALITY (another small excerpt)

"Reality, at its core, is relationship. Period. Relationship isn't just something that happens; it's what's going on. It is, unequivocally, what it's all about. This isn't philosophical abstraction; it's the essence of how we actually experience existence. Every sight, thought, and feeling is animated by relationship, by the intricate and mysterious ways in which everything and everyone connects and interacts.

To live fully is to awaken to this reality now, not in hindsight. It is to recognize that the breath we take is shared, that the love we give is an extension of the love we are, and that meaning is not something to be discovered or achieved but something to be lived—moment by moment, in deep, conscious relationship with all that is.

Everything else is bullshit."

If you'd like to read this entire article, hit reply and put 'Reality' in the subject line.

Foster Care: Invest in the Blood Bank!

You'll have to wait 1 year to donate blood or plasma after release, but please remember to donate. After all, the life you save may be your own!

Is anyone seeing reentry information on the SCORE tablets? In the fall I mentioned that Fair Shake should be available on a computer near you soon. I've since learned that the FS app should be available on the SCORE tablets. Would you please let me know if you see "Reentry and Enablement" apps?

The Fair Shake Ownership Manual includes a document called "How to Watch Television". The most important way is: defensively. The advertisers on all screens want us to buy their products, sure....but much bigger than that is the fact that all of the advertisers, and all of the shareholders, and even the TV station itself...they ALL want you to buy into a belief that you need more services and 'stuff' to find satisfaction in your life. What they want you to 'buy' – or believe – is that you are not satisfied, and you cannot be satisfied with the skills and the stuff that you have. When they get you to believe that, then they can sell you just about anything.

Three basic beliefs media fosters:

1. Value = \$\$\$ Value, of course, is subjective. Your values are unique to you. It is important for us to remember our values in order to see the true value in other things. (It's also important to review our values now and then, because they evolve!)
2. We need gizmos to 'know what's going on'. But sometimes the most important thing to know in a moment is how fluffy the clouds are as they move lazily across the sky. (In other words, it's good to turn it off once in a while!)
3. Quiet reflection should be avoided. They want you to believe this because we don't need their services or stuff when we find our 'flow' state...when we walk, or do yoga, or meditate, write in a journal, stretch, run, etc.

Fair Shake is founded on "self-determination for all". You can't get on your unique path while the advertisers and talking heads are telling you want, what you need, and what you 'should' do.

Feel Free to request any of these articles!

How to Watch TV

BOP

Reality (incl. bonus article: Why We Do What We Do)

Staring Back at the Panopticon - reflections on surveillance by Patrick Lin

Quotes:

Life's most persistent and urgent question is, What are you doing for others? ~ Martin Luther King Jr.

"Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. This is the interrelated structure of reality." ~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

"The leverage that matters in the future will be changing the systems that control us." – Daniel Goleman

"Without deviation from the norm, progress is not possible." - Frank Zappa

"I find television very educating. Every time somebody turns on the set, I go in the other room and read a book. – Groucho Marx

Stay strong in our liminal times.

Ubuntu! ~ sue

I hope you'll email me to reconnect after your release. Be sure to check out the website!

Newsletters are available to read or print at FairShake.net.

If you'd like to receive the Fair Shake flyers, please send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Fair Shake PO Box 63 Westby, WI 54667 And let me know in which state you'll be residing!