

Five Best Monday Columns

By: J.K. Trotter – June 17, 2013

Heidi Moore at *The Guardian* on the recent impact of financial lobbying "A fellow sitting in an office in Hamburg or London is as likely to change our financial world as the guy sitting in a trading room on Wall Street," Heidi Moore writes. "That's why it's so baffling that the House of Representatives came down, this week, on the side of ignoring abuses of US-made derivatives — known as swaps — as soon as they're wired overseas." Moore is wary of Amanda Renteria, who is poised to lead the Commodity Futures Trading Commission: "A capable congressional staffer, Renteria has minimal financial experience ... No matter how strong the personality, knowledge matters, and it takes years to understand the Wall Street fast-talking game." Daniel Dicker at The Huffington Post highlights the stakes: "The reforms of Dodd-Frank legislation are so critical to the future safety of our financial system, but have been sabotaged by the complexities of global, borderless markets, as well of course, by the outright and more clandestine blockage of progress by the investment bank community."

Joan Walsh at Salon on the return of Sarah Palin What does the comeback of former Alaska Governor and one-time Vice Presidential nominee Sarah Palin — at least to Fox News — mean for the conservative movement? Joan Walsh emphasizes the strategy of Fox chief Roger Ailes: "Palin's return to Fox shows that Roger Ailes knows the GOP can't win back the White House in 2016, so he may as well focus on consolidating his audience, and keeping them comfortable as they watch the further decline of what Bill O'Reilly called 'the white establishment' that was vanquished by Barack Obama." She adds: "Palin's star really is rising again, at a time of heightened racial insecurity on the white far-right. They need a hero, and here she is again." Greta Van Susteren offered a different frame of mind. The long-time Fox News host told Politico: "[Palin's return] is free [promotion] for Fox since it will drive [Palin's] TV critics crazy! They are obsessed with her!"

Mary Ann Mason at Slate on the challenges women face in academia Mary Ann Mason attempts to target the reason women apparently wash out of academia. "What makes academia so difficult for mothers? In large part it is because it is a rigid lockstep career track that does not allow for time out and which puts the greatest pressure on its aspirants in the critical early years," she writes. "Most Ph.D.s are achieved and tenure granted in the critical decade between 30 and 40; the 'make or break decade' as we call it. It is also the decade in which women have children, if they have them at all." She goes on: "Low fertility is not a coincidence among tenured women; they believed they must wait to get tenure (average age around 40) before beginning a family. The university does little to provide a more flexible career path or to put in place family responsive programs that would make it possible to balance work with babies." Sarah Kendzior at Al Jazeera, meanwhile, throws in her support for complaining — often a

taboo practice in prestigious fields like academia: "It could always be worse, they say. They don't like to say that it could always be better, because that would require redress."

Hendrik Hertzberg in *The New Yorker* on the security state laid bare What do we know now about the global surveillance apparatus built by the United States? Hendrik Hertzberg admits that much of what Edward Snowden revealed was, if not widely known, then at least somewhat understood. Still, the harms are evident: "The critics have been hard put to point to any tangible harm that has been done to any particular citizen. But that does not mean that no harm has been done. The harm is civic. The harm is collective. The harm is to the architecture of trust and accountability that supports an open society and a democratic polity. The harm is to the reputation and, perhaps, the reality of the United States as such a society, such a polity." And, as Julian Sanchez at the Cato Institute adds, "While short term visual tailing and surveillance was surely possible at the time of the Founding, 24-hour monitoring for weeks at a time would not have been. It should go without saying that what would have been impossible at an individual level was simply inconceivable at the level of society as a whole."

Adrian Walker at *The Boston Globe* on Gabriel Gomez's troubled Senate campaign What kind of candidate — what kind of politician — is former Navy SEAL and private equity executive Gabriel Gomez, who is running for Senate in Massachusetts? Adrian Walker says Gomez is no Scott Brown: "Brown, for openers, could answer questions about issues. He more than held his own in his debates against Martha Coakley. I have no recollection of him refusing to discuss his career. Brown was a long shot, but he wasn't a novice — far from it." Walker continues: "Plainly, he was not prepared for the scrutiny that comes with being a candidate, or even the challenge of explaining what he thinks. Like many before him, he is learning that seeking office is one of the most reliably humbling experiences America has to offer." But at CNN, Alex Castellanos, highlighting Gomez's professional accomplishments and immigrant parents, sees in Gomez the future of the GOP: "Candidates like Gomez are the future. A GOP that wants a future should bet every chip on him. Gomez has adopted the SEAL ethic of 'team first' as his own. It would serve all Republicans well."