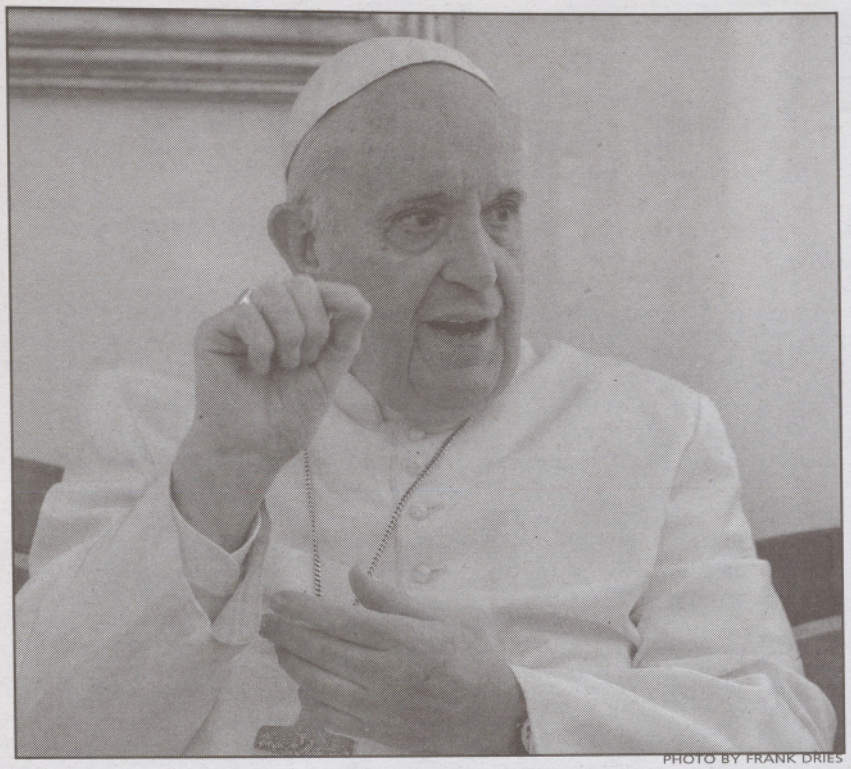

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Notable & quotable

Words of wisdom – and then some – from our favorite profiles of 2015

The social conditions that produce the environment in which the blues was created, in which jazz was created, in which hip hop music was created, those conditions haven't really changed that much. So there is always going to be an authentic expression that comes from the cultural experience of the people who are oppressed.

– Musician and activist, Mic Crenshaw, Jan. 9

Teachers are not against tests. We invented tests. We want to know if students learn what we're teaching them. The problem is, these tests are not assessing what we're teaching. Oftentimes we don't get the results until the next year. The assessments that we make every day, whether it's checking for understanding by asking questions or more formal assessments, give us much better feedback. By inundating our schools with high stakes testing, we're actually eliminating assessment altogether and actually aren't getting any useful feedback on the things we're actually teaching.

– School teacher, Jesse Hagopian, Jan. 23

We entered the mainstream, but on our own terms without compromising who we are. At all. It's not that we changed or we're asking other queer people to change. We made demands, not on queer people to change, but on straight people to change. That's not heteronormative, assimilist sell-out shit. That's radical-queer-barging-in shit.

– Author, advocate, publisher, Dan Savage, Feb. 6

Why are (tests) normed to upper middle class white students? Because those are the students whose parents have the money to pay for them to go to test prep, so that they can then do well on these tests. So that the tests – as one scholar said – are better predictors of the car your parents drive than they are predictors of how well you're going to do in college.

– Professor and theorist, Lani Guinier, Feb. 13

Gentrification doesn't fix the problem, it just relocates it.

– Author, Mitchell S. Jackson, Feb. 27

I'd tell my 16-year-old self not to take everything so seriously. I'm stunned when I look back at how monumentally important I thought everything was. I was incredibly intense, ridiculously up myself. It was all about me, and books and poetry. Not that those things aren't important to me any more but in those days it felt like do or die. Now I want to say to my younger self, if you think of life as a play, you're the bumbling forgetful character who appears in Scene 7 looking for his keys.

– Comedian, actor and filmmaker, Dylan Moran, March 6

Jesus came into our world without a home, and he chose poverty. The church seeks to embrace us all and says that it is a right to have a roof over your head.

— POPE FRANCIS, NOV. 13

The problem is you have these ideologues who run the Republican Party today, and who are very attuned to that group of regulatory foes and the extremists of the Fox network and elsewhere, who really don't think the government has a positive role in our society. And there's very little they let the government do besides defense and law enforcement. This is a manifestation of their ideology.

– American politician, author, Barney Frank, March 13

On one hand, pain specialists and pharmaceutical companies were convincing Americans that (an opiate painkiller) is how you treat pain and this is a safe thing and it's virtually non-addictive. That was a big, big part of it. And on the other hand you have the classic street drug dealers in the form of the Xalisco Boys, who are masters of marketing – who understand the power of marketing, of customer service, of convenience. So the stories dovetailed organically into one large tale, but it was really two stories of the marketing of drugs in America.

– Author, Sam Quinones , April 3

Creative people will use anything they have. If you take away their paints, they'll use mud. If you take away their mud, they'll use their blood. If you take away their blood, they'll fucking just use dust. They will do anything they can to do their thing."

– Musician and Flaming Lips front man, Wayne Coyne, April 24

The reason I decided to tell people I was a Christian was because when I looked around in the United States, evangelical Protestants, the group that I'm in, were the least likely to agree that the climate is changing due to human activities. My community, my church, my neighbors – the people who believe much of the same theology as I do – they were the ones being deliberately misinformed about climate change.

– Atmospheric scientist and professor, Katherine Hayhoe, June 19

I know this neighborhood, and I know the city. Folks love it, and they have reasons to love it, but the things that I loved about it most aren't here anymore. So I think what my childhood experience does is allows me to be a mythbuster when it comes to, "Oh, well, Portland is so great now; it's so much better than it ever was before." That's not true for a lot of Portlanders.

– President of the Urban League of Portland, Nkenge Harmon Johnson, June 26

It isn't money that makes the world go around. I really believe that. That is the corporate hallucination by which we are controlled. It's not as if we have to get up in arms and go and fight the world. No. You don't. No, no. Stay calm and decolonize.

– Musician and activist, Buffy Sainte-Marie July 3

Very big business is in bed with very big government, for their mutual benefit, not to the benefit of news consumers, and not as a public service. The sense of public service is what's been drained out of a bunch of journalism of the last 25 to 30 years.

– Journalist Dan Rather, Aug. 21

It's hard to point to any particular death and say, "This one is due to the war on drugs," but if we weren't there, getting into the middle of their turf wars, and if our policies did not promote this massive corruption within the ministry of the interior, people would not be having an insurgency against their own government. So I am quite sure there were deaths of American service members in Afghanistan that would not have happened had it not been for the war on drugs.

– Former U.S. military advisor in Afghanistan and current drug prohibition adversary, Inge Fryklund, Sept. 18

Comedy is the place where you get to celebrate those parts of yourself that used to be the things that people would pick on you for. The things that make you unique and different and stand out are the things that make your voice unique and distinct and awesome.

– Comedian, curator All Jane Comedy Festival, Stacey Hallal, Oct. 9

What if I'm walking and someone just like – they have no ill intentions, nothing against me personally, but just because of a stereotype, they call the police? It could be something where I end up getting arrested or end up being dead. I dream of a world where I never have that fear.

– Joshua Davis, participating in the National League of Cities Black Male Achievement Initiative symposium, Oct. 23

People are willingly giving up an enormous amount of information every minute of the day. When the FBI was going after Martin Luther King, they actually had to have a room in the hotel next to him or somebody had to follow his car in a car; there was visible evidence. None of that's needed now. MLK wouldn't survive two weeks with the FBI now. They would know every thought and every person, contact, piece of food he ate, everything.

– Journalist, author, Robert Scheer, Nov. 6

I'm in a constant vise and crossfire – any mayor is – between the folks who say criminalize the homeless and get those people out of here and those who say it's our responsibility as a city to take care of these people. Unfortunately, we don't have good answers today for these complex problems. Until we can say we have got housing for people, we can't just criminalize people who are homeless. If we want to get on with the problem and try to solve it, it's the only solution I can see. It's one of our greatest challenges, but it can be done.

– Portland Mayor, Charlie Hales, Nov. 27