


Substantial Disruption



Priceless

By Mike Tully

The Frequent Flyer has [flown the coop](#) and the restless news cycle has already moved on like a tumbleweed in June. But, let us pause to commemorate the bum's rush visited upon former Secretary of Health and Human Services, Thomas Edmunds Price, by breathing in a healthy waft of schadenfreude. There is a heady aroma from the tailspin of a self-righteous twit spiraling into the granite face of accountability like a bee on a windshield. If the universe abides justice, there will be more to follow, since the current administration is populated with self-righteous twits. So many to choose from, where to start? ("Mr. Sessions and Mr. Mulvaney, table for two!")

Tom Price was a high flyin' frequent flyer who preferred private charter flights and military aircraft to commercial airlines, which would have forced him to mix with the hoi polloi. One does not mix with the hoi polloi; one takes their health care away. If it costs [more than a million bucks](#) of taxpayer funds to avoid the hoi polloi, the Price is Right. If that seems hypocritical for a guy who once berated Nancy Pelosi for flying "over our country in your luxury jet," that was then, this is now. Price insists that "[was a different matter](#)." Not different enough, apparently. In the now, high flyin' Tom has been fired because of the air travel. *Schadenfreude!*

Martin Shkreli will look like Tom Price when he's older – maybe when he's paroled. Both are famous, gained wealth by gaming the health industry in unhealthy ways, and neither cares how many fellow humans are injured by his actions. Each man has a backed-up drain for a soul. Shkreli's fifteen minutes of fame [began in 2015](#) when he raised the price of a prescription drug from \$13.50 to \$750 per pill. That display of cannibal capitalism earned him the media moniker, "Pharma Bro." The public awarded him a more appropriate honor: The Most Hated Man in America. (Tom Price was not yet well known.) Unfortunately, his drug rip-off was not illegal, but how far can a brakeless car travel without crashing into a tree? Shkreli, estimated to be worth [70 million dollars](#), wanted more. He wanted more so badly that he stole it and got caught - - busted on securities fraud charges. When Shkreli faced trial in 2017, the ultimate issue was not whether or not he was guilty. (Spoiler alert: he was.) No, the real challenge was trying to select an unbiased jury. Everybody loathed The Most Hated Man in America. [Harper's Magazine](#) published this typical exchange with a prospective juror:

Juror No. 1: I'm aware of the defendant and I hate him.

Benjamin Brafman: I'm sorry.

Juror No. 1: I think he's a greedy little man.

The Court: Jurors are obligated to decide the case based only on the evidence. Do you agree?

Juror No. 1: I don't know if I could. I wouldn't want me on this jury.

The Court: Juror Number 1 is excused.

And so on and so on and so on and so on. Two hundred jurors were excused until the court sat a jury that finally convicted The Most Hated Man in America, who currently sits in jail.

Schadenfreude!

Shkreli, on Facebook, called his trial a "[silly witch hunt](#)." If there's any doubt he was channeling the Tweeter in Chief, he concluded the "witch hunt" posting with this: "MAGA." Price and Shkreli owe the President a certain amount of gratitude for flicking them off the media radar. Trump overwhelmed the news media by verbally attacking and tweet-storming professional football players, the possibly unstable leader of undeniably unstable North Korea, and the desperate Mayor of San Juan, Puerto Rico, Carmen Yulín Cruz. All three attacks are questionable (and, in the case of North Korea, dangerous), but the latter is the most nauseating. The Mayor and her home got clobbered by Mother Nature's buzz saw and the federal response does not justify bragging, not now, not when millions are still desperate. It's better to declare America will not rest until everybody in Puerto Rico and the U. S. Virgin Islands is safe and their homes and lives are being rebuilt. That's what a leader would do, but the Chief Tweeter, with his need for instant gratification and ceaseless praise, had to brag about the federal response, even though bragging was unwarranted, then attack Mayor Cruz when she called him on it. He even attacked her fellow Puerto Ricans: "They want everything to be done for them."

That comment reveals a human unburdened by empathy. Trump is so unfamiliar with empathy, he can't even fake it. On the day this column was written, Trump read a teleprompter statement reacting to the mass shooting in Las Vegas. It included appropriate expressions of condolences and Biblical quotations, but Trump delivered it with all the authenticity of a hostage tape. *Sad.*