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We Need Don Corleone, Rodney King And Mr. Rogers

I always considered Rodney King's plea to be underrated. [Can't we all just get along?](#) It seemed heartfelt, a plea for emotions to calm tempers and cool rhetoric. The L.A. riots and their aftermath needed something to calm people. Even if you don't agree that King helped, he didn't make it worse.



The situation prompting his comment was worse than the fiscal battlefield we now face.

Taxes are at the heart of our national angst. Who pays, who is in the 1% or 47% (if these are even fair terms) can get emotional or downright personal.

[Don Corleone](#) may not have been a model citizen, but even he called a halt to the mob war after Sonny's death. He asked the Heads of the Five Families, "How did things ever get so far?" We could all ask this. We all get caught up, matters escalate, and it can be hard to remember.

Regardless of where you are on the economic spectrum, we all could pay more and we all could pay less. A look around the globe shows places

most of us would be better off or worse off. Some people today proclaim that our [tax Code may be the most progressive since 1979](#), noting that the country's top earners now face a heavier tax burden than at any time since Jimmy Carter was president.

The last-minute deal struck by Congress raised taxes on the highest-earning Americans. Statistics say 99.3% of households experienced no change in their income taxes. Yet the payroll tax hit—whether you call it a 'tax increase' or the 'expiration of a tax cut'—is painful for many. See [Fiscal Cliff, Dairy Cliff, What About The Payroll Tax Cliff?](#)

I'm not sure anyone can adequately answer who is well off and who is not. It is endlessly comparative. We all ask [how much will our taxes jump?](#) There are [websites](#) that can help you crunch your numbers. It is all painful but it also could be a lot worse.

Although he may not have known much about taxes, Mr. Rogers, famous for creating and hosting [Mister Rogers' Neighborhood](#) (1968–2001), knew a lot about people and decorum. He received the [Presidential Medal of Freedom](#), some 40 honorary degrees, and a [Peabody Award](#). He too would have calmed us all down.

No one really likes paying taxes or feeling that others are paying less than their fair share. It is understandable that we get emotional and even angry about it, especially when someone else is saying that we should do more or that they should do less. Many of us have put things indelicately or worse.

Plainly, our tax system needs reforming in fundamental, even radical ways. See [U.S. Taxes: Certain as Death, Complicated as Hell](#). If Mr. Rogers were here, I'll bet he would improve the caliber of our discourse. And we do need a higher caliber of discourse to fix the mess that our bizarrely complicated tax system has become. No matter where you fit in, remember Rodney King, Don Corleone and Mr. Rogers.

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