

# BEST QUOTES ON SOCIOLOGY

Our society is so constituted that most people remain all their lives in the condition in which they were born, and have to depend on their imagination for their notions of what it is like to be in the opposite condition.

--George Bernard Shaw

Poverty is the openmouthed relentless hell which yawns beneath civilized society.

--Henry George

Always I have felt sorry for boys and girls who haven't spent the first 16 years of their lives in a small American town. There one finds a nice balance of leisure and society which makes for richness in living.

--Edna Ferber

There is no greater impact made on our present society than the images seen, the sounds heard, and the drama brought daily by the media.

--Harry Belafonte

We have unmistakable proof that throughout all past time, there has been a ceaseless devouring of the weak by the strong.

--Herbert Spencer

The first man to fence in a piece of land, saying 'This is mine,' and who found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society.

--Jean Jacques Rousseau

Man is by nature a social animal, being compelled to live in society because of the many needs he cannot satisfy out of his own resources.

--St. Thomas Aquinas

Society would be a delightful thing if only people were interested in each other.

--S. R. N. Chamfort

The primary duty of organized society is to enlarge the lives and increase the standards of living of all the people.

--Herbert Hoover

People who are much too sensitive to demand of cripples that they run races ask of the poor that they get up and act just like everyone else in the society.

--Michael Harrington

One cannot raise the bottom of a society without benefiting everyone above.

--Michael Harrington

People of privilege will always risk their complete destruction rather than surrender any material part of their advantage.

--John Kenneth  
Galbraith

Man was formed for society and is neither capable of living alone, nor has the courage to do it.

--Sir William Blackstone

There never has yet existed a wealthy and civilized society in which one portion of the community did not, in point of fact, live on the labor of the other.

--John C. Calhoun

Put together all the existing families and you have society. It is as simple as that. Whatever kind of training took place in the individual family will be reflected in the kind of society that these families create.

--Virginia Satir

The other America, the America of poverty, is hidden today in a way that it never was before. Its millions are socially invisible to the rest of us....The very development of American society is creating a new kind of blindness about poverty. The poor are increasingly slipping out of the very experience and consciousness of the nation.

--Michael Harrington

Traditions are group efforts to keep the unexpected from happening.

--Barbara Tober

If you tell people the world is complicated, you're not doing your job as a social scientist. They already know it's complicated. Your job is to distill it, simplify it, and give them a sense of what is the single [cause], or what are the couple of powerful causes that explain this powerful phenomenon.

--Samuel P. Huntington

In contemporary America, if one is born into the middle or upper-class, one is unlikely ever to have to step outside that class. One stands to go to school with people from the same social class, marry into that class, raise one's children within it, live out one's days among its members. Members of the working classes are more cruelly class-bound and isolated. The ingredients in the once famous American melting pot thus remain frozen.

—Joseph Epstein

Our approach to social problems is to decrease their visibility: out of sight, out of mind. This is the real foundation of racial segregation, especially in its most extreme case, the Indian 'reservation.' The result of our social effort has been to remove the underlying problems of our society farther and farther from the daily experience and daily consciousness, and hence to decrease, in the mass of the population, the knowledge, skill, resources and motivation necessary to deal with them.

—Philip Slater

America is egalitarian, and snobbish. The city looks down on the countryside, the north on the south, the coastal meccas on the flyover interior—and of course each object of disdain looks back with its own reverse snobbery. A version of today's hierarchical awareness is the concept of the 'big sort.' This is the idea that if you have first-rate abilities and more than middling ambitions, you'll need to end up in one of a handful of talent destinations. New York for finance; the San Francisco Bay Area or Seattle for tech; Washington, D.C., for politics and foreign policy. If you can make it there...

—James Fallows

High school is closer to the core of the American experience than anything else I can think of.

--Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

My students often ask me, 'What is sociology?' And I tell them, 'It's the study of the way in which human beings are shaped by things that they don't see.'

—Sam Richards

I want to close the leadership gap: to elect a woman president and 50 women senators; to ensure that women are equally represented in the ranks of corporate executives and judicial leaders. Only when women wield power in sufficient numbers will we create a society that genuinely works for all women. That will be a society that works for everyone.

--Anne-Marie Slaughter

I thought society would do the right thing. Now I look around and I think -- society never does the right thing. Sometimes people do the right thing. Sometimes one person makes a difference. But civilization has rules, and I've learned them well— never be helpless, never be sick, never be poor.

—Christina Dodd

At times it seems that the media have become the mainstream culture in children's lives. Parents have become the alternative. Americans once expected parents to raise their children in accordance with the dominant cultural messages. Today they are expected to raise their children in opposition to it.

--Ellen Goodman

Through the electronic media, young children are witnesses to 'facts' that contradict social myths and ideals even before they learn about the myths and ideals in school. Children see politicians disgraced, police officers and teachers on strike for higher pay, parents accused of battering their children. Through television news and entertainment, children learn too much about the nature of the 'real' life to believe the ideals their teachers try to teach them. The result is not only that they grow up fast, but that they grow up having an image of society and roles that differs markedly from that held by children of earlier generations.

--Joshua Meyrowitz

The first duty of society is to give each of its members the possibility of fulfilling his destiny. When it becomes incapable of performing this duty it must be transformed.

—Alexis Carrel

Wealth affects not only how much money is given but to whom it is given. The poor tend to give to religious organizations and social-service charities, while the wealthy prefer to support colleges and universities, arts organizations, and museums. Of the 50 largest individual gifts to public charities in 2012, 34 went to educational institutions, the vast majority of them colleges and universities, like Harvard, Columbia, and Berkeley, that cater to the nation's and the world's elite. Museums and arts organizations such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art received nine of these major gifts, with the remaining donations spread among medical facilities and fashionable charities like the Central Park Conservancy. Not a single one of them went to a social-service organization or to a charity that principally serves the poor and the dispossessed. More gifts in this group went to elite prep schools (one, to the Hackley School in Tarrytown, New York) than to any of our nation's largest social-service organizations, including United Way, the Salvation army, and Feeding America (which got, among them, zero).

--Ken Stern

Researchers have found that online behavior is dominated by ‘homophily,’ a tendency to listen to and associate with people like yourself, and to exclude outsiders. Social networks are bad at helping you empathize with people unlike you, but good at surrounding you with those who share your outlook. The new information ecosystem does not challenge biases; it reinforces them.

—Emerson T. Brooking  
and P. W. Singer

For any American who had the great and priceless privilege of being raised in a small town there always remains with him nostalgic memories of those days. And the older he grows the more he senses what he owed to the simple honesty and neighborliness, the integrity that he saw all around him in those days.

--Dwight D. Eisenhower

Public education does not exist for the benefit of students or the benefit of their parents. It exists for the benefit of the social order.

We have discovered as a species that it is useful to have an educated population. You do not need to be a student or have a child who is a student to benefit from public education. Every second of every day of your life, you benefit from public education.

So let me explain why I like to pay taxes for schools, even though I don’t personally have a kid in school: It’s because I don’t like living in a country with a bunch of stupid people.

—John Green

In our society to admit inferiority is to be a fool, and to admit superiority is to be an outcast. Those who are in reality superior in intelligence can be accepted by their fellows only if they pretend they are not.

--Marya Mannes

In all societies—from societies that are very meagerly developed and have barely attained the dawnings of civilization, down to the most advanced and powerful societies—two classes of people appear—a class that rules and a class that is ruled. The first class enjoys the advantages that power brings, whereas the second, the more numerous class, is directed and controlled by the first.

—Gaetano Mosca

The greatest failure is that although we have created institutions, we have not created a civil society.

—Paddy Ashdown

I am as frustrated with society as a pyromaniac in a petrified forest.

—A. Whitney Brown

Sociology is the rigorous academic study of things we pretty much already knew.

—*TL;DR Wikipedia*

We are not concerned with the very poor. They are unthinkable, and only to be approached by the statistician or the poet.

—E. M. Forster

Under the draft, the American social fabric would change—and, judging from my experience, for the better. I write as a former draftee who served in the Army from 1958 to 1960. I was, in other words, a Cold War soldier, and never for a moment in danger. Much of my time in the military—I worked on the post newspaper at Fort Hood, in Texas, and later as a clerk, typing up physicals, in a recruiting station in Little Rock, —was excruciatingly boring. Yet I am grateful for having served. Doing so took me out of my own social class and ethnic milieu—big-city, middle-class, Jewish—and gave me a vivid sense of the social breadth of my country. I slept in barracks and shared all my meals with American Indians, African Americans from Detroit, white Appalachians, Christian Scientists from Kansas, and discovered myself befriending and being befriended by young men I would not otherwise have met. I have never felt more American than when I was in the Army.

—Joseph Epstein

One consequence of racism and segregation is that many American whites know little or nothing about the daily lives of African Americans. Black America's least-understood communities are those poor, hyper-segregated places we once called ghettos. These neighborhoods are not far away, but they might as well be on the moon. The only news most people ever hear about the inner city comes from grim headlines; the only residents they can name are characters on *The Wire*. Of course, ignorance of a community doesn't stop outsiders from having opinions about it or passing laws that govern it. But those opinions, based on stereotypes and catchphrases, make it difficult to conduct meaningful public deliberation about social policy. And the laws, all too often, harm people who have enough going against them already.

—James Forman Jr.

I was told that an impassable gulf divided the Rich from the Poor; I was told that the Privileged and the People formed Two Nations, governed by different laws, influenced by different manners, with no thoughts or sympathies in common; with an innate inability of mutual comprehension.

--Benjamin Disraeli

Suburbia is where the developer bulldozes out the trees, then names the streets after them.

--Bill Vaughan

Civilization is a stream with banks. The stream is sometimes filled with blood from people killing, stealing, shouting, and doing the things historians usually record—while, on the banks, unnoticed, people build homes, make love, raise children, sing songs, write poetry, whittle statues. The story of civilization is the story of what happens on the banks.

--Will Durant

The world is populated in the main by people who should not exist.

--George Bernard Shaw

Society is a cage of idiots.

--Marie de Jars

Poverty is an anomaly to rich people: it is very difficult to make out why people who want dinner do not ring the bell.

--Walter Bagehot

Society is composed of two great classes: those who have more food than appetite, and those who have more appetite than food.

--Sebastien Chamfort

There is nothing to which men cling more tenaciously than the privileges of class.

--Leonard Sidney Woolf

No fear can stand up to hunger, no patience can wear it out, disgust simply does not exist where hunger is; and as to superstition, beliefs, and what you may call principles, they are less than chaff in a breeze.

--Joseph Conrad

Socialism is a condition of society in which there should be neither rich nor poor, neither master nor master's man, neither idle nor overworked, neither brainsick brain workers nor heart-sick hand workers, in a word, in which all men would be living in equality of condition, and would manage their affairs unwastefully and with the full consciousness that harm to one would mean harm to all—the realization at last of the meaning of the word commonwealth.

--William Morris

Social work is a band-aid on the festering wounds of society.

--Alexander Chase

You will always be poor if you are poor....Wealth is given today to none save the rich.

--Martial

Our culture has not been very successful. Our education, politics, and economics lead to war. Our medicines have not done away with disease. Our religion has not abolished usury and robbery. Our boasted humanitarianism still allows public opinion to approve of the barbaric sport of hunting. The advances of the age are advances in mechanism—in radio and television, in electronics, in jet planes. New world wars threaten, for the world's social conscience is still primitive.

--A. S. Neill

The only worthwhile achievements of man are those which are socially useful.

--Dr. Alfred Adler

The true test of a civilization is not the census, nor the size of cities, nor the crops—no, but the kind of man the country turns out.

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

Short of genius, a rich man cannot imagine poverty.

--Charles Peguy

Society is immoral and immortal; it can afford to commit any kind of folly, and indulge in any sort of vice; it cannot be killed, and the fragments that survive can always laugh at the dead.

--Henry Adams

The world is a paradox of technological progressiveness and social primitivism.

--Simon Rams

There are people into whose heads it never enters to conceive of any better state of society than that which now exists.

--Henry George

There appears to be irrefutable evidence that the mere fact of physical overcrowding induces violence.

--Harvey Wheeler



You can tell the ideals of a nation by its advertisements.

--Norman Douglas

Not to admit poverty is a disgrace—but not to get away from it by work is a greater disgrace.

--Thucydides

The only foes that threaten America are the enemies at home, and these are ignorance, superstition, and incompetence.

--Elbert Hubbard

Customs represent the experience of mankind.

--Henry Ward Beecher

If we do not learn from history, we shall be compelled to relive it. TRUE. But if we do not change the future, we shall be compelled to endure it. And that could be worse.

--Alvin Toffler

We should all be concerned with the future—we will spend the rest of our lives there.

--Charles Kettering

Perhaps the greatest impulse to trying to foresee and plan the future comes from the combination of having new tools with which to do it and the growing realization that every technological and social innovation has repercussions which spread like a wave through the complex interlocked sections of society.

--Ward Madden

Place the real disgrace of poverty not in owing to the fact but in declining the struggle against it.

--Thucydides

You will always have the poor among you.

—*Matthew 26:11*

The law, in its majestic equality, forbids the rich as well as the poor, to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets and to steal bread.

--Anatole France

Here is the most familiar version of social blindness: 'The poor are that way because they are afraid of work. And anyway they all have big cars. If they were like me they could pay their own way. But they prefer to live on the dole and cheat the taxpayers.'

--Michael Harrington

Not he who has little, but he who wishes more, is poor.

--Seneca

The big majority of Americans, who are comparatively well off, have developed an ability to have enclaves of people living in the greatest misery without almost noticing them.

--Gunnar Myrdal

America is an enormous frosted cupcake in the middle of millions of starving people.

--Gloria Steinem

The worst country to be poor in is America.

--Arnold Toynbee

Town life nourishes and perfects all the more civilized elements in man—Shakespeare wrote nothing but doggerel lampoon before he came to London.

--Oscar Wilde

The problem of the cities...is the most urgent, the most difficult, and the most frightening American domestic problem, since the Civil War.

--Joe Alsop

We must have towns that accommodate different educational groups, different economic groups, different ethnic groups, towns where all can live in one place.

--Margaret Mead

The United States spends less proportionately on social welfare than almost any other industrial country.

--*Time*

Social science affirms that a woman's place in society marks the level of civilization.

--Elizabeth Cady Stanton

A society in which women are taught anything but the management of a family, the care of men, and the creation of the future generation is a society which is on the way out.

--L. Ron Hubbard

There was never any reason to believe in any innate superiority of the male, except his superior muscle.

--Bertrand Russell

The child was diseased at birth—stricken with an hereditary ill that only the most vital men are able to shake off. I mean poverty—the most deadly and prevalent of all diseases.

--Eugene O'Neill

The poor on the borderline of starvation live purposeful lives. To be engaged in a desperate struggle for food and shelter is to be wholly free from a sense of futility.

--Eric Hoffer

The seven deadly sins....Food, clothing, firing, rent, taxes, respectability and children. Nothing can lift those seven millstones from man's neck but money; and the spirit cannot soar until the millstones are lifted.

--George Bernard Shaw

A hungry man is not a free man.

--Adlai E. Stevenson

Poverty often deprives a man of all spirit and virtue; it is hard for an empty bag to stand upright.

--Benjamin Franklin

Poverty is constructed so as to destroy aspiration; it is a system designed to be impervious to hope. The other America does not contain the adventurous seeking a new life and land. It is populated by the failures, by those driven from the land and bewildered by the city, by the old people suddenly confronted with the torments of loneliness and poverty, and by minorities facing a wall of prejudice.

--Michael Harrington

East Harlem isn't a German camp. But it is worse. Because in East Harlem the sun is shining and there's not a gate or a lock or a machine-gun post....I'm beginning to feel that I'm in prison.

--Julius Horowitz

Poverty is not measured by history. It is measured by the standards of a man's own community. If most of America is well-fed, the man who can't find three meals a day for his family is poor. If most of America has modern weather-proof housing, the man whose home is leaky and has no piped water is poor. If most of America has enough medical care to stay alive until age seventy, the man who can't afford to live beyond age fifty-five is poor. Such a man is poor statistically. But he is poor in a more damaging way: he is a failure in his neighbor's eye and in his own.

--Ben H. Bagdikian

Bedbugs are what people mean when they say: Poverty.

--Michael Gold

To the frontier the American intellect owes its striking characteristics. That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance that comes from freedom.

--Frederick Jackson  
Turner

One of the distinctive traits of the American people which the foreign visitor remarks is the prevailing democratic-folksy spirit. In contrast to some other countries, class consciousness among higher ranking persons is weak if not absent. People are not ashamed of a humble origin, but rather tend to be proud of it if they have made headway in life.

--Omer Celal Sarc

The American secret became open to me, after a while, and I applied it to everything: all things were to be produced with the least effort for the comfort and satisfaction of the largest number of people.

--Luigi Barzini, Jr.

To watch an American on a beach, or crowding into a subway, or buying a theater ticket, or sitting at home with his radio on, tells you something about one aspect of the American character: the capacity to withstand a great deal of outside interference, so to speak; a willing acceptance of a frenzy which, though it's never self-conscious, amounts to a willingness to let other people have and assert their own lively, and even offensive character. They are a tough race in this.

--Alistair Cooke

We are as rootless as so many traveling salesmen living out of suitcases in cheap hotels, and are so committed to thinking that change means progress that we alter the shape of America as rapidly and as completely as a demented child, wildly shaking a kaleidoscope, changes its patterns.

--John Keats

America did not exist. Four centuries of work, of bloodshed, of loneliness and fear created this land. We built America and the process made us Americans—a new breed, rooted in all races, stained and tinted with all colors, a seeming ethnic anarchy. Then in a little, little time, we became more alike than we were different—a new society; not great, but fitted by our very faults for greatness, *E Pluribus Unum*.

--John Steinbeck

Men in all societies possess the biological equipment to remove their hats or shoes, but it is the birth within a particular culture that decides that a Jew will keep his hat and his shoes on in his place of worship, a Mohammedan will take off his shoes, and a Christian will keep his shoes on but remove his hat.

--Peter Farb

It is in the city that one finds the excitement of modern life. It is in the city that life pulsates and vibrates; it is the city life that is attractive and increasingly beckons young and old alike.

--Arthur T. Naftalin

Nobody who has read of crime in the streets and decaying of inner cities can want to live in the large cities. Or would opt to work in the city and spend a large portion of his life commuting to and from his suburban home as they do in Chicago and New York.

It isn't my kind of life and the people who live it are not my kind of people. I love Wisconsin's small towns, the air of the bucolic that exists just outside of Milwaukee....I worship the splendor of her lakes, the green of her trees and the purity of her northern waters.

Wisconsin of the small town halls, the shuttered country churches, steeples rising on prairie horizons and barns and silos looming in the Kettle Moraine country.

I visited New York City once and thought I was in a foreign country.

--Larry van Goethem

City life: Millions of people being lonesome together.

--Henry David Thoreau

Through its concentration of physical and cultural power, the city heightened the tempo of human intercourse and translated its products into forms that could be stored and reproduced. Through its monuments, written records, and orderly habits of association, the city enlarged the scope of all human activities, extending them backwards and forwards in time. By means of its storage facilities (buildings, vaults, archives, monuments, tablets, books), the city became capable of transmitting a complex culture from generation to generation, for it marshaled together not only the physical means but the human agents needed to pass on and enlarge this heritage. That remains the greatest of the city's gifts.

--Lewis Mumford

A woman cannot be herself in modern society, with laws made by men and with prosecutors and judges who assess female conduct from a male standpoint.

--Henrik Ibsen

In the slums of our great cities today boys and girls who could easily be brought to the full use of their powers are left stunted, inarticulate and angry.

--John W. Gardner

It is not the man who has too little but the man who craves more, that is poor.

--Seneca

He who can bear poverty without shame deserves it.

--Unknown

A great city is that which has the greatest men and women,  
If it be a few ragged huts it is still the greatest city in the whole world.

--Walt Whitman

Fields and trees teach me nothing, but the people in a city do.

--Socrates

High mountains are a feeling, but the hum of human cities torture.

—Lord Byron

Cities force growth and make men talkative and entertaining, but they make them artificial.

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

From cities humming with a restless crowd,  
Sordid as active, ignorant as loud,  
Whose highest praise is that they live in vain,  
The dupes of pleasure or the slaves of gain;  
Where works of man are clustered close around,  
And works of God are hardly to be found.

—William Cooper

A great city, a great loneliness.

--Latin Proverb

Love and business and family and religion and art and patriotism are nothing but shadows of words when a man's starving.

--O. Henry

A nation, like a tree, does not thrive well till it is engrafted with a foreign stock.

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

The great social adventure of America is no longer the conquest of the wilderness but the absorption of fifty different peoples.

--Walter Lippmann

Poverty is the parent of revolution and crime.

--Aristotle

Poverty is taking your children to the hospital and spending the whole day waiting with no one even taking your name—and then coming back the next day, and the next, until they finally get around to you.

--Janice Bradshaw

The rich man may never get into heaven, but the pauper is already serving his term in hell.

--Alexander Chase

There is no scandal like rags, nor any crime so shameful as poverty.

--George Farquhar

If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.

--John F. Kennedy

The more humanity owes him (the poor man), the more society denies him. Every door is shut against him, even when he has a right to its being opened: and if he ever obtains justice, it is with much greater difficulty than others obtain favours.

--Jean Jacques Rousseau

The greatest man in history was the poorest.

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

Cities have always been the fireplaces of civilization, whence light and heat radiated out into the dark.

--Theodore Parker

The city is, in fact, the most important thing constituted by human reason.

--St. Thomas Aquinas

A city is a continuous association of people gathered together to live according to law.

--Regesto del Codice  
Palavicino

The desire to understand the world and the desire to reform it are the two great engines of progress, without which human society would stand still or retrogress.

--Bertrand Russell

He whose belly is full believes not him whose is empty.

--Thomas Fuller

It is not easy for men to rise whose qualities are thwarted by poverty.

--Juvenal

A hungry stomach cannot hear.

--Jean de La Fontaine

For each of the four hundred and four bodily ailments celebrated physicians have produced infallible remedies, but the malady which brings the greatest distress to mankind—to even the wisest and cleverest of us—is the plague of poverty.

--Ihara Saikaku



They (the Americans) have all a lively faith in the perfectibility of man, they judge that the diffusion of knowledge must necessarily be advantageous, and the consequences of ignorance fatal; they all consider society as a body in a state of improvement, humanity as a changing scene, in which nothing is, or ought to be, permanent; and they admit that what appears to them today to be good, may be superseded by something better tomorrow.

--Alexis de Tocqueville

Democracy and socialism have nothing in common but one word: equality. But notice the difference: while democracy seeks equality in liberty, socialism seeks equality in restraint and servitude.

--Alexis de Tocqueville

Becky Sharp's acute remark that it is not difficult to be virtuous on ten thousand a year has its application to nations; and it is futile to expect a hungry and squalid population to be anything but violent and gross.

--Thomas Henry Huxley

Sociology is the science with the greatest number of methods and the least results.

--Jules Henri Poincare

When poverty comes in at the door, love flies out the window.

--George Frederick Watts

The great society is a place where men are more concerned with the quality of their goals than the quantity of their goods.

--Lyndon B. Johnson

Every society to which you remain bound robs you of a part of your essence, and replaces it with a speck of the gigantic personality which is its own.

--Jose Rodó

Society is a kind of parent to its members. If it, and they, are to thrive, its values must be clear, coherent and generally acceptable.

--Milton R. Sapirstein

Slums may well be breeding-grounds of crime, but middle-class suburbs are incubators of apathy and delirium.

--Cyril Connolly

I have found by experience, that they who have spent all their lives in cities, improve their talents, but impair their virtues; and strengthen their minds, but weaken their morals.

--Charles Caleb Colton

In the infancy of societies, the chiefs of the state shape its institutions; later the institutions shape the chiefs of state.

--Montesquieu

Poverty in youth, when it succeeds, is so far magnificent that it turns the whole will towards effort, and the whole soul towards aspiration. Poverty strips the material life entirely bare, and makes it hideous; thence arise inexpressible yearnings towards the ideal life.

--Victor Hugo

It is not the man who has little, but he who desires more, that is poor.

--Seneca

There is no virtue that poverty destroyeth not.

--John Florio

To be poor and independent is very nearly an impossibility.

--William Cobbett

The poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard.

--*Ecclesiastes* 9:16

Cheerless poverty has no harder trial than this, that it makes men the subject of ridicule.

--Juvenal

Poverty is not a shame, but the being ashamed of it is.

--Thomas Fuller

Any city, however small, is in fact divided into two, one the city of the poor, the other of the rich; these are at war with one another.

--Plato

It is the nature of the poor to hate and envy men of property.

--Plautus

One half the world knows not how the other half lives.

--George Herbert

Poverty eclipses the brightest virtues, and is the very sepulchre of brave designs, depriving a man of the means to accomplish what nature has fitted him for, and stifling the noblest thoughts in their embryo. Many illustrious souls may be said to have been dead among the living, or buried alive in the obscurity of their condition, whose perfections have rendered them the darlings of Providence, and companions of angels.

--Turkish Spy

Poverty is very terrible, and sometimes kills the very soul within us; but it is the north wind that lashes men into Vikings; it is the soft, luscious, south wind, which lulls them to lotus dreams.

--Ouida

Few save the poor feel for the poor.

--Letitia Elizabeth  
Landon

Poverty possesses this disease, that through want it teaches man to do evil.

--Euripides

If poverty is the mother of crimes, want of sense is the father of them.

--Jean de la Bruyere

It is only luxury and avarice that make poverty grievous to us; for it is a very small matter that does our business; and when we have provided against cold, hunger, and thirst, all the rest is but vanity and excess.

--Seneca

Not to be able to bear poverty is a shameful thing; but not to know how to chase it away by work is a more shameful thing yet.

--Pericles

He is poor whose expenses exceed his income.

--Jean de la Bruyere

Wealth is the parent of luxury and indolence, and poverty of meanness and viciousness, and both of discontent.

--Plato

Cities force growth, and make men talkative and entertaining, but they make them artificial.

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

The union of men in large masses is indispensable to the development and rapid growth of their higher faculties. Cities have always been the fireplaces of civilization, whence light and heat radiated out into the dark, cold world.

--Theodore Parker

The city has always been the decisive battle ground of civilization and religion. It intensifies all the natural tendencies of man. From its fomented energies, as well as from its greater weight of numbers, the city controls. Ancient civilizations rose and fell with their leading cities. In modern times, it is hardly too much to say, 'as goes the city so goes the world.'

--S. J. McPherson

God made the country, and man made the town.

--William Cowper

The difference between a rich man and a poor man is this—the former eats when he pleases, and the latter when he can get it.

--Sir Walter Raleigh

Society prepares the crime; the criminal commits it.

--Henry Thomas Buckle

The distinctions separating the social classes are false; in the last analysis they rest on force.

--Albert Einstein

Mankind is divided into rich and poor, into property owners and exploited; and to abstract oneself from this fundamental division and from the antagonism between poor and rich means abstracting oneself from fundamental facts.

--Joseph Stalin

Let him who expects one class of society to prosper in the highest degree, while the other is in distress, try whether one side of the face can smile while the other is pinched.

--Thomas Fuller

The ignorant classes are the dangerous classes.

--Henry Ward Beecher

Society...practices a social tyranny more formidable than many kinds of political repression...penetrating much more deeply into the details of life, and enslaving the soul itself.

--John Stuart Mill

Nazi Germany, at its peak...was a society in which force, ostracism, ridicule, occupational control, belief systems, spheres of intimates, the contract, and deception were applied with great energy. The result was one of the most efficient and effectively organized large-scale social systems in history.

--Ray P. Cuzzort

Equality is the result of human organization. We are not born equal.

--Hannah Arendt

The Family of Man is more than three billion strong. It lives in more than one hundred nations. Most of its members are not white. Most of them are not Christians. Most of them know nothing about free enterprise, or due process of law, or the Australian ballot.

--John F. Kennedy

A civilized society is one that exhibits the five qualities of truth, beauty, adventure, art and peace.

--Alfred North Whitehead

There is no solitude in the world like that of the big city.

--Kathleen Norris

The haves and have nots can often be traced to the 'did's and didn't dos.

--William Raspberry

Culture is dynamic, never fixed or static; it is learned and shared by a people; it is creative and meaningful to the lives of individuals....it has value and belief systems that guide people in their thinking, feeling, and acting...in short, culture is the total way of life of people in a society.

--Cheng

The best way to fight poverty is with a weapon loaded with ambition.

--Septima Clark

The interests of an economically dominant class never stand naked. They are enshrouded in the flag, fortified by the law, protected by the police, nurtured by the media, taught by the schools, and blessed by the church.

--Michael Parenti

No culture can live if it attempts to be exclusive.

--Mahatma Gandhi

No society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable.

--Adam Smith

They do not easily rise whose abilities are repressed by poverty at home.

--Juvenal

Most Americans agree...that to help lift the underclass out of poverty will require some combination of government help and greater personal responsibility. But...conservatives don't want to admit the need for government help and liberals don't want to tell poor people to take responsibility for their lives, so nothing gets done.

--Michael Nelson

It is possible...for a culture to be overwhelmed physically but not culturally. That is what has happened to the American Indian. It is a strange kind of conquest over the white conquerors. Almost half the states have names borrowed from Indian lore, and so do thousands of cities, rivers, towns, lakes, and mountain ranges. Americans drink hooch, meet in a caucus, bury the hatchet, have clambakes, run the gauntlet, smoke the peace pipe, hold powwows, and enjoy Indian summer. Today's highways, a triumph of American technology, are concrete tracings of trails Indians pioneered and trod for tens of thousands of years.

--Jamake Highwater

Small groups or communities may be far more oppressive to the individual than larger ones. Men are in many ways freer in large cities than in small villages.

--Morris R. Cohen

Nobody objects to a woman being a good writer or sculptor or geneticist if at the same time she manages to be a good wife, good mother, good looking, good tempered, well groomed and unaggressive.

--Leslie M. McIntyre

There are only two families in the world, as a Grandmother of mine used to say, the haves and the have-nots.

--Miguel de Cervantes

Every generation is a secret society and has incommunicable enthusiasm, tastes and interests which are a mystery both to its predecessor and to posterity.

--Arthur Chapman

The major advances in civilization are processes which all but wreck the societies in which they occur.

--Alfred North Whitehead

The poor don't know that their function in life is to exercise our generosity.

--Jean-Paul Sartre

Poverty is less a matter of income than of prospects. While the incomes of the poor have steadily risen through Great Society largesse, their prospects have plummeted as families have broken into dependent fragments.

--George Gilder

All men plume themselves on the improvement of society, and no man improves. Society never advances. It recedes as fast on one side as it gains on the other. It undergoes continued changes; it is barbarous, it is civilized, it is christianized, it is rich, it is scientific; but this change is not amelioration. For every thing that is given something is taken. Society acquires new arts and loses old instincts.

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

It is not from top to bottom that societies die; it is from bottom to top.

--Henry George

The original of all great and lasting societies consisted not in the mutual good will men had towards each other, but in the mutual fear they had of each other.

--Thomas Hobbes

There is only one class in the community that thinks more about money than the rich, and that is the poor. The poor can think of nothing else. That is the misery of being poor.

--Oscar Wilde

Poverty has many roots, but the tap root is ignorance.

--Lyndon B. Johnson

A city of many people can rarely, if ever, be well-governed.

--Aristotle

If you would be known, and not know, vegetate in a village; if you would know, and not be known, live in a city.

--Charles Caleb Colton

Cities degrade us by magnifying trifles.

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

When we get piled upon one another in large cities, as in Europe, we shall become as corrupt as Europe.

--Thomas Jefferson

To say the least, a town life makes one more tolerant and liberal in one's judgment of others.

--Henry Wadsworth  
Longfellow

In the country you live longer than in the city—or does it just seem longer?

--Unknown

Modes and customs vary, but human nature is the same.

—Lord Chesterfield

Civilization can be defined at once by the basic questions it asks and by those it does not ask.

--André Malraux

The city is permanently cruel.

--Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.



If there hadn't been women we'd still be squatting in a cave eating raw meat, because we made civilization in order to impress our girlfriends.

--Orson Welles

A woman is her mother.

--Anne Sexton

Male and female are really two cultures and their life experiences are utterly different.

--Kate Millett

God made man, and then said I can do better than that and made woman.

--Adela Rogers St. John

Most women would rather cuddle a baby than a typewriter or a machine.

--Phyllis Schlafly

Man is not the enemy here, but the fellow victim. The real enemy is women's denigration of themselves.

--Betty Friedan

Women have childbearing equipment. For them to choose not to use the equipment is no more blocking what is instinctive than it is for a man who, muscles or no, chooses not to be a weightlifter.

--Betty Rollin

The more advanced the civilization, the less powerful the individual.

--Sir Arthur Helps

The upper classes are...a nation's past; the middle class is its future.

--Ayn Rand

Socialism: If you have two cows, you give one to your neighbor.

Communism: If you have two cows, you give both to the government and then the government gives you some milk.

Fascism: If you have two cows, you keep the cows and give the milk to the government then the government sells you some milk.

Naziism: If you have two cows, the government shoots you and keeps the cows.

Capitalism: If you have two cows, you sell one and buy a bull.

—James A. R. Nafziger

The image of woman as we know it is an image created by men and fashioned to suit their needs.

--Kate Millett

I have no relish for the country; it is a kind of healthy grave.

--Sydney Smith

Within the context of most human societies to date, women of strength and achievement are exceptions to the rule. This is reflected in novels about the past or present.

--Pamela Sargent

Women are the real architects of society.

--Harriet Beecher Stowe

There are two kinds of restrictions upon human liberty—the restraint of law and that of custom. No written law has ever been more binding than unwritten custom supported by popular opinion.

--Carrie Catt

Society is a madhouse whose wardens are the officials and the police.

--August Strindberg

As society advances the standard of poverty rises.

--Theodore Parker

Poverty is the step-mother of genius.

--Josh Billings

For every talent that poverty has stimulated it has blighted a hundred.

--John W. Gardner

In a country well-governed, poverty is something to be ashamed of. In a country badly-governed, wealth is something to be ashamed of.

--Confucius

In cities no one is quiet but many are lonely; in the country, people are quiet but few are lonely.

--Geoffrey Francis Fisher

Poverty ... It is life near the bone, where it is sweetest.

--Henry David Thoreau

No society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable.

--Adam Smith

Poverty is the only load which is the heavier the more loved ones there are to assist in supporting it.

--Jean Paul Friedrich  
Richter

Poverty does not mean the possession of little, but the non-possession of much.

--Antipater

Well, let the world change on—still must endure  
While earth is earth, one changeless race, the poor!

--Bulwer-Lytton

I have found little that is good in human beings. In my experience, most of them are trash.

--Sigmund Freud

When people are free to do as they please, they usually imitate each other.

--Eric Hoffer

What are people for? What is living for? If the answer is a life of dignity, decency, and opportunity, then every increase in population means a decrease in all three. The crowd is a threat to every single being....People minus space equals poverty.

--Marya Mannes

Every society honors its live conformists and its dead troublemakers.

--Mignon McLaughlin

What is a city? A city is more than buildings and roads. A city is families to feed and to house; children to educate; men and women to employ and to transport. A city is businesses to build; profits to be made; culture and recreation to be enjoyed; opportunities to be realized. But, more important than anything, a city is people. A city is all of us.

--Annette Strauss

A free society is one in which it is safe to be unpopular.

--Adlai Stevenson

A society without an aristocracy, without an elite minority, is not a society.

--José Ortega y Gasset

True individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence. People who are hungry and out of a job are the stuff of which dictatorships are made.

--Franklin D. Roosevelt

Hunger does not breed reform; it breeds madness and all the ugly distempers that make an ordered life impossible.

--Woodrow Wilson

Boredom is the keynote of poverty...for when there is no money there is no change of any kind, not of scene or of routine.

--Moss Hart

Idiot: a member of a large and powerful tribe whose influence in human affairs has always been dominant and controlling.

--Ambrose Bierce

Conformity may not always reign in the prosperous bourgeois suburb, but it ultimately always governs.

--Louis Kronenberger

Tradition grows ever more venerable—the more remote its origin the more confused the origin is. The reverence due to it increases from generation to generation, until it becomes holy and inspires awe.

—Friedrich Nietzsche

A tradition without intelligence is not worth having.

--T. S. Eliot

Loneliness: It is a continual, almost palpable quality which the country gives off like a heat shimmer. It is no less present in the utter separateness and indifference of city life, the blank size of the buildings, the self-sufficiency of the different ethnic ghettos, than in the deserts and mountains of the Southwest.

--A. Alvarez

It is pure illusion to think that an opinion which passes down from century to century, from generation to generation, may not be entirely false.

--Pierre Bayle

Hardened round us, encasing wholly every notion we form, is a wrappage of traditions, hearsays, mere words.

--Thomas Carlyle

Very few people have settled entirely in the country but have grown at length weary of one another. The lady's conversation generally falls into a thousand impertinent effects of idleness, and the gentleman falls in love with his dogs and horses, and out of love with every thing else.

--Lady Mary Wortley  
Montagu

The greatest of evils and the worst of crimes is poverty. . . our first duty—a duty to which every other consideration should be sacrificed—is not to be poor.

--George Bernard Shaw

When you are a rich, you are hated; when you are poor, you are despised.

--Ashanti Proverb

When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford.

--Samuel Johnson

We are lonely even in the milling crowds of a city, where we may only be recognized as customers for goods and services. Our personalities are weakened and starved by the impersonal life in a city.

--Lyman V. Cady

Life in the country teaches one that the really stimulating things are the quiet, natural things, and the really wearisome things are the noisy, unnatural things. It is more exciting to stand still than to dance. Silence is more eloquent than speech. Water is more stimulating than wine. Fresh air is more intoxicating than cigarette smoke. Sunlight is more subtle than electric light. The scent of grass is more luxurious than the most expensive perfume. The slow, simple observations of the peasant are more wise than the most sparkling epigrams of the latest wit.

--Beverley Nichols

Poverty is not dishonorable in itself, but only when it comes from idleness, intemperance, extravagance, and folly.

--Plutarch

Man is the missing link between the ape and the human being.

--Unknown

It is in the midst of the city that one writes the most inspiring pages about the country.

--Jules Renard

Everything that's worth having goes to the city—the country takes what's left.

--Finley Peter Dunne

New York is the perfect model of a city, not the model of a perfect city.

--Lewis Mumford

Many a New Yorker spends a lifetime within the confines of an area smaller than a country village. Let him walk two blocks from his corner and he is in a strange land and will feel uneasy till he gets back.

--Elwyn Brooks White

Most of the people living in New York have come here from the farm to try to make enough money to go back to the farm.

--Don Marquis

If you've not in New York you are camping out.

--Thomas W. Dewing

Buildings will collapse, power plants will stop generating electricity. Generals will drop atomic bombs on their own populations. Mad revolutionaries will run in the streets, crying fantastic slogans. I have often thought it would begin in New York. This metropolis has all the symptoms of a mind gone berserk.

--Isaac Bashevis Singer

The only credential the city (New York) asked was the boldness to dream. For those who did, it unlocked its gates and its treasures, not caring who they were or where they came from.

--Moss Hart

Anthropologists have found that around the world whatever is considered 'men's work' is almost universally given higher status than 'women's work.' If in one culture it is men who build houses and women who make baskets, then that culture will see house-building as more important. In another culture, perhaps right next door, the reverse may be true, and basket-weaving will have higher social status than house-building.

--Mary Stewart  
Van Leeuwen

The chief obstacle to the progress of the human race is the human race.

--Don Marquis

A sociologist is a scientist who blames crime on everything and everyone, except the person who commits it.

--Laurence J. Peter

The American city should be a collection of communities where every member has a right to belong. It should be a place where every man feels safe on his streets and in the house of his friends. It should be a place where each individual's dignity and self-respect is strengthened by the respect and affection of his neighbors. It should be a place where each of us can find the satisfaction and warmth which comes from being a member of the community of man. This is what man sought at the dawn of civilization. It is what we seek today.

--Lyndon B. Johnson

Cities are the abyss of the human species.

--Jean Jacques Rousseau

There are people in our society who should be separated and discarded. I think it's one of the tendencies of the liberal community to feel that every person in a nation of over 200 million people can be made into a productive citizen.

I'm realist enough to believe this can't be. We're always going to have our prisons, we're always going to have our places of preventive detention for psychopaths, and we're always going to have a certain number of people in or community who have no desire to achieve or who have no desire to even fit in an amicable way with the rest of society.

And these people should be separated from the community, not in a callous way but they should be separated as far as any idea that their opinions shall have any effect on the course we follow.

--Spiro T. Agnew

The psychological pain—and the ethical shame—of American poverty are made greater by the fact that this country possesses the wealth and the energy to raise all children to a minimally decent standard of living.

--Kenneth Keniston

The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons.

--Fyodor Dostoevsky

The chief cause which made the fusion of the different elements of a society so imperfect was the extreme difficulty which our ancestors found in passing from place to place. Of all inventions, the alphabet and the printing press alone excepted, those inventions which abridge distance have done most for the civilisation of our species. Every improvement of the means of locomotion benefits mankind morally and intellectually as well as materially, and not only facilitates the interchange of the various productions of nature and art, but tends to remove national and provincial antipathies, and to bind together all the branches of the great human family.

--Thomas Babington  
Macaulay

A great civilization is not conquered from without until it has destroyed itself within. The essential causes of Rome's decline lay in her people, her morals, her class struggle, her failing trade, her bureaucratic despotism, her stifling taxes, her consuming wars.

--Will Durant

All socialism involves slavery....That which fundamentally distinguishes the slave is that he labours under coercion to satisfy another's desires.

--Herbert Spencer

The nature of a society is largely determined by the direction in which talent and ambition flow—by the tilt of the social landscape.

--Eric Hoffer

What makes America unique in our time is that confrontation with the new is part of the daily American experience. For better or worse, the rest of the world learns what is in store for it by observing what happens in the United States.

--Zbigniew Brzezinski

We are game-playing, fun-loving creatures, we are the otters of the universe.

--Richard Bach



The person who is bored in the modern world shows that he is in no full sense a member of it.

--Brand Blanshard

Those who find America an especially violent and oppressive country have apparently never read the history of England or France, Germany or Russia, Indonesia or Burundi, Turkey or Uganda.

--Eugene D. Genovese

Those who assert that capital punishment is wrong because the state should not itself take on the guilt of murder completely miss the point. For by failing to take the life of those who murder their fellow men, the state becomes a passive accessory after the fact.

--Nettie Leef

Our society has become more segregated by age than any previous society in history to a degree that is becoming intolerable to all concerned.

--Sister Mary Dorothy  
Ann

Even very recently, the elders could say: 'You know I have been young and you never have been old.' But today's young people can reply: 'You have never been young in the world I am young in, and you never can be...' This break between generations is wholly new: it is planetary and universal.

--Margaret Mead

I call the older generation depression-scarred and the younger generation prosperity-scarred.

--Walter E. Hoadley

You mustn't forget that the key feature of living in an oppressed condition is the assassination of all hope.

--Livingston Wingate

Living in a frustrating, stress-inducing environment like a ghetto every day of your life makes many people walking powder kegs. There's a pent-up rage that isn't vented elsewhere; when something happens to trigger that rage, it can be murderous.

--Dr. LaMaurice Gardner

Poverty is no disgrace, but there are few disgraces that cause such keen humiliations.

--Leonard Merrick

Poverty—It kills love, it debases men and women, it stunts life, it withers the marrow.

--Christy Brown

Modern society is like a Calder mobile: disturb it here and it jiggles over there, too.

--George F. Will

Is a society which frequently takes five to ten years to dispose of a single criminal case entitled to call itself an 'organized' society?

--Chief Justice Warren E.  
Burger

You can measure a society by who shows up on skid row.

--Jerome Hannaman

It has been said that a society can be judged by the way it treats its children.

--Richard N. Gottfried

Social progress can be measured with precision by the social position of the female sex.

--Karl Marx

My own test is this: How does that society treat its old people and, indeed, all its members who are not useful and productive in the narrowest sense?

--Kenneth D. Kaunda

The contrived homogeneity of many suburbs, in violation of the American tradition of pluralism, has produced a kind of cultural dehydration.

--*President's Task Force  
on Suburban  
Problems, 12/14/68*

Poverty is the mother of crime.

--Marcus Aurelius

Every American baby has a 1 in 4 chance of being born in poverty here in the richest nation in the world. No other industrial nation allows its children to be the poorest part of their population.

--Marian Wright  
Edelman

The worst country to be poor in is America.

--Arnold Toynbee

The slum is the measure of civilization.

—Jacob Riis

I like the idea of society as a salad, in which the fruits and vegetables keep their own flavor.

--Studs Terkel

We won't have a society if we destroy the environment.

--Margaret Mead

One of the truly stupid ideas of the 29th century is that if you give people indoor plumbing, free housing, free food, then they'll stop killing each other. It sounds silly when I say it that way, but really that is in fact the underlying axiom of most of the welfare state.

--Robert Rector

What people say behind your back is your standing in the community in which you live.

--Edgar Watson Howe

The domestic life of most classes is relatively shabby, as compared with the éclat of that overt portion of their life that is carried on before the eyes of observers....People therefore habitually screen their private life from observation.

--Thorstein Veblen

In my experience, the more people have, the less likely they are to be contented. Indeed, there is abundant evidence that depression is a 'disease of affluence,' a disorder of modern life in the industrialized world. People who live in poorer countries have a lower risk of depression than those in industrialized nations. In general, countries with lifestyles that are furthest removed from modern standards have the lowest rates of depression.

--Dr. Andrew Weil

The more 'modern' a society's way of life, the higher its rate of depression. It may seem baffling, but the explanation is simple: the human body was never designed for the modern postindustrial environment.

--Stephen Ilardi

There are two nations between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are formed by a different breeding, are fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws...THE RICH AND THE POOR.

--Benjamin Disraeli

Poor Americans are, by their own admission, so very unhappy. Man is a social animal who can only really be happy in four social domains: family, work, local community, and faith. In poor America, all four are in a state of collapse.

--Charles Murray

The tendency to form and join tribes is a fundamental part of what makes us human. No man-made idea—no matter how subversive or compelling—can withstand the sheer force of the tribal impulse. That impulse gives us our identities and serves as the source of our deepest convictions. It also leads to conflict—and very often, barbaric slaughter.

--Tina Brown

Civilization appears to be the ultimate redeeming product of competition between groups. Because of it, we struggle on behalf of good and against evil, and reward generosity, compassion, and altruism while punishing or downplaying selfishness. But if group conflict created the best in us, it also created the deadliest. As humans, this is our greatest, and worst, genetic inheritance.

--E. O. Wilson

People yearn to be in one of the best—a combat marine regiment, an elite college, the executive committee of a company, a religious sect, a fraternity, a garden club—any collectivity that can be compared favorably with other, competing groups.

--E. O. Wilson

Well before Facebook, digital technology was enabling our tendency for isolation, to an unprecedented degree. Back in the 1990s, scholars started calling the contradiction between an increased opportunity to connect and a lack of human contact the 'Internet paradox.'

--Stephen Marche

Within this world of instant and absolute communication, unbounded by limits of time or space, we suffer from unprecedented alienation. We have never been more detached from one another, or lonelier. In a world consumed by ever more novel modes of socializing, we have less and less actual society. We live in an accelerating contradiction: the more connected we become, the lonelier we are. We were promised a global village: instead we inhabit the drab cul-de-sacs and endless free-ways of a vast suburb of information.

--Stephen Marche

Today, the one common feature in American secular culture is its celebration of the self that breaks away from the constrictions of the family and the state, and, in its greatest expressions, from all limits entirely. The great American poem is Whitman's 'Song of Myself.' The great American essay is Emerson's 'Self-Reliance.' The great American novel is Melville's *Moby Dick*, the tale of a man on a quest so lonely that it is incomprehensible to those around him. American culture, high and low, is about self-expression and personal authenticity. Franklin Delano Roosevelt called individualism 'the great watchword of American life.'

--Stephen Marche

My unhappy reactions to Facebook may be more universal than I had realized. When I scroll through page after page of my friends' descriptions of how accidentally eloquent their kids are, and how their husbands are endearingly bumbling, and how they're all about to eat a home-cooked meal prepared with fresh local organic produce bought at the farmers' market and then go for a jog and maybe check in at the office because they're so busy getting ready to hop on a plane for a week of luxury dogsledding in Lapland, I do grow slightly more miserable. A lot of other people doing the same thing feel a little bit worse, too.

--Stephen Marche

Facebook's isolation is a grind. What's truly staggering about Facebook usage is not its volume...but the constancy of the performance it demands. More than half its users...log on every day. Among 18-to-34-year-olds, nearly half check Facebook minutes after waking up, and 28 percent do so before getting out of bed. The relentlessness is what is so new, so potentially transformative. Facebook never takes a break. We never take a break. Human beings have always created elaborate acts of self-presentation. But not all the time, not every morning, before we even pour a cup of coffee.

--Stephen Marche

The Internet leads to behavior that people are conscious is not in their best interest and does leave them anxious and does make them act compulsively.

--Nicholas Carr

My own view is that this planet is used as a penal colony, lunatic asylum and dumping ground by a superior civilization, to get rid of the undesirable and unfit. I can't prove it, but you can't disprove it either.

--Christopher Hitchens

These days, insecure in our relationships and anxious about intimacy, we look to technology for ways to be in relationships and protect ourselves from them at the same time.

--Sherry Turkle

What Facebook has revealed about human nature—and this is not a minor revelation—is that a connection is not the same thing as a bond, and that instant and total connection is no salvation, no ticket to a happier, better world or a more liberated version of humanity. Solitude used to be good for self-reflection and self-reinvention. But now we are left thinking about who we are all the time, without ever really thinking about who we are. Facebook denies us a pleasure whose profundity we had underestimated: the chance to forget about ourselves for a while, the chance to disconnect.

--Stephen Marche

I wish I were a technoptimist. It must be heart-warming to believe that Facebook is ushering in a happy-clappy world where everybody 'friends' everybody else and we all surf the net in peace (insert smiley face). But I'm afraid history makes me a depressimist. And no, there's not an app—or a gene—that can cure that.

--Niall Ferguson

The Web fosters our obsessions, dependence, and stress reactions. It encourages—and even promotes—insanity.

--Larry Rosen

Most college students are not just unwilling, but functionally unable, to be without their media links to the world.

--*University of Maryland*  
Study

The gap between an 'Internet addict' and John Q. Public is thin to nonexistent. One of the early flags for addiction was spending more than 38 hours a week online. By that definition, we are all addicts now, many of us by Wednesday afternoon, Tuesday if it's a busy week.

--Tony Dokoupil

The more a person hangs out in the global village, the worse they are likely to feel. Web use often displaces sleep, exercise, and face-to-face exchanges, all of which can upset even the chirpiest soul.

--Tony Dokoupil

She now reveals a sad, stressed-out world of people coated in Dorito dust and locked in a dystopian relationship with their machines.

--Sherry Turkle

About three-quarters of nonviolent movements get some or all of what they want, compared with only about a third of the violent ones.

--Erica Chenoweth and  
Maria Stephan

The core gay experience throughout history has been displacement, a sense of belonging and yet not belonging. Gays are born mostly into heterosexual families and discover as they grow up that, for some reason, they will never be able to have a marriage like their parents' or their siblings'. They know this before they can tell anyone else, even their parents. This sense of subtle alienation—of loving your own family while feeling excluded from it—is something all gay children learn. They sense something inchoate, a separateness from their peers, a subtle estrangement from their families, the first sharp pangs of shame.

--Andrew Sullivan

This is the gay experience: the discovery in adulthood of a community not like your own home and the struggle to belong in both places, without displacement, without alienation.

--Andrew Sullivan

The point of the gay-rights movement, after all, is not about helping people be gay. It is about creating the space for people to be themselves.

--Andrew Sullivan

Theology is never any help; it is searching in a dark cellar at midnight for a black cat that isn't there. Theologians can persuade themselves of anything.

--Robert A. Heinlein

We've switched from a culture that was interested in manufacturing, economics, politics—trying to play a serious part in the world—to a culture that's really entertainment-based.

--Stephen King

Sixty-two percent of gun fatalities every day (53 out of 85) are suicides. Our large surplus of guns makes us not more likely to commit crimes, or even to prevent them; it makes us most likely to kill ourselves.

--Adam Miller

Why do Americans have such a tough time understanding the rest of the world, and, from the rest of the world's perspective, why are Americans so damn hard to understand? Aaron David Miller...writes, 'The United States is the only great power in the history of the world that has had the luxury of having nonpredatory neighbors to its north and south....the luxury of America's circumstances' has made its people, by and large, optimistic and idealistic, and has inclined them to self-delusion when dealing with societies where ethnic, religious, and social hatreds are embedded deep in the DNA. Geography has indulged what Miller calls the Americans' 'schizophrenic' blend of isolationist ambivalence and missionary arrogance. But they have to remember, he says, that 'not everyone is lucky enough to have Canadians, Mexicans, and fish for neighbors.'

--Christopher Dickey

If you're poor, your health care's going to suck, your housing is going to suck, your infrastructure is going to suck...if you're poor, everything sucks.

--John Hope Bryant

Of all the modern social sciences, anthropology is the one historically most closely tied to colonialism since it has often been the case that since the mid-nineteenth century anthropologists and ethnologists were also advisors to colonial rulers on the manners and mores of the native people to be ruled.

--Edward Said

Tradition is a guide and not a jailer.

--W. Somerset Maugham

Choice is an illusion, created between those with power, and those without.

--Wachowski Brothers,

*The Matrix  
Reloaded*

I suppose society is wonderfully delightful. To be in it is merely a bore. But to be out of it is simply a tragedy.

--Oscar Wilde



Whatever the one generation may learn from the other, that which is genuinely human no generation learns from the foregoing...Thus, no generation has learned from another to love, no generation begins at any other point than at the beginning, no generation has a shorter task assigned to it than had the previous generation.

--Søren Kierkegaard

Rich folks always talk hard times.

--Lillian Smith

The life of the wealthy is one long Sunday.

--Georg Buchner

The jury consist of twelve persons chosen to decide who has the better lawyer.

--Robert Frost

Why should we take advice on sex from the pope? If he knows anything about it, he shouldn't!

--George Bernard Shaw

The burden of disease falls on the poor.

--Gro Harlem Brundtland

Having been poor is no shame, but being ashamed of it, is.

--Benjamin Franklin

Pervasive economic inequality in America and elsewhere is the outcome of fair competition: what's being rewarded in life—with income, wealth, good jobs, social prestige—is no more than the talent and energy that each individual brings to the contest. The social world is much fairer than many would expect.

--Gregory Clark

Property is not the sacred right. When a rich man becomes poor it is a misfortune, it is not a moral evil. When a poor man becomes destitute, it is a moral evil, teeming with consequences and injurious to society and morality.

--Lord Acton

Will dissent be permitted? The answer to that question will determine whether the society is a free society or a fear society.

—Natan Sharansky

A study by a pair of business-school professors found that when subjects were made to feel a lack of social power, they were willing to pay more for high-status goods, presumably to compensate for lower status. Perhaps this is why blacks and Hispanics—groups that have historically had lower social status than whites—spend more on clothing, jewelry, and cars than do whites of comparable income.

—Matthew Hutson

Many in law enforcement recognize that poverty, unemployment, and the drugs and violence that accompany them are social problems that cannot be solved by arresting people. But the police and the courts are not equipped with social solutions. They are equipped with handcuffs and jail time.

—Alice Goffman

Three-quarters of the world's population doesn't have enough to eat!

—Helen Reddy

The poor prey on one another because their lives offer no hope and communicate the tragic message to these human beings that they have no possibility to attain a decent standard of living.

—Thabo Mbeki

You know how I define the economic and social classes in this country? The upper class keeps all of the money, pays none of the taxes. The middle class pays all of the taxes, does all of the work. The poor are there...just to scare the shit out of the middle class. Keep 'em showing up at those jobs.

—George Carlin

Written laws are like spider's webs; they will catch, it is true, the weak and the poor, but would be torn in pieces by the rich and powerful.

—Anacharsis

Do not waste your time on Social Questions. What is the matter with the poor is Poverty; what is the matter with the rich is Uselessness.

—George Bernard Shaw

Class warfare, America's exceptionalist credo holds, is something that happens elsewhere. This is, after all, the country that likes to take credit for inventing the idea of the middle class. With no history of royalty and no hereditary social orders, everybody is supposed to have an equal opportunity to rise.

—Kim Phillips-Fein

Gossips are only sociologists upon a mean and petty scale.

—Woodrow Wilson

There is no such thing as society.

—Margaret Thatcher

Anyone who's been through middle school might agree that 'reputational aggression'—aka vicious gossip, or even verbal abuse—seems to play a role in the status struggles of teenagers. Using data from North Carolina high schools, Robert Faris uncovered a pattern showing that, contrary to the stereotype of high-status kids victimizing low-status ones, most aggression is local: kids tend to target kids close to them on the social ladder. And the higher one rises on that ladder, the more frequent the acts of aggression—until, near the very top, aggression ceases almost completely. Why? Kids with nowhere left to climb, Faris posits, have no more use for it. Indeed, the star athlete who demeaned the mild mathlete might come off as insecure. 'In some ways,' Faris muses, 'these people have the luxury of being kind. Their social positions are not in jeopardy.'

—Jerry Useem

If you are poor, shun association with him who measures men with the yardstick of riches.

—Kahlil Gibran

Poverty's a disease that's cured by the medicine of money.

—Ernest Hemingway

If the whole human race lay in one grave, the epitaph on its headstone might well be: 'It seemed a good idea at the time.'

—Dame Rebecca West

The most distinguished hallmark of the American society is and always has been change.

—Eric Sevareid

It is impossible to mentally or socially enslave a *Bible* reading People.

—Horace Greeley

I think the American Dream for most people is just survival.

—Sandy Scholl

The Seven Social Sins are: Wealth without work. Pleasure without conscience. Knowledge without character. Commerce without morality. Science without humanity. Worship without sacrifice. Politics without principle.

—Frederick Lewis  
Donaldson

What I like about cities is that everything is king size, the beauty and the ugliness.

—Joseph Brodsky

You have to look at history as an evolution of society.

—Jean Chretien

You can gauge the success of a society by how it treats its women.

—Barack Obama

The focus in successful towns was not on national division but on practical problems that a community could address. The more often national politics came into local discussions, the worse shape the town was in.

—James Fallows

Research universities have become the modern counterparts to a natural harbor or a river confluence. In the short term, they lift the economy by bringing in a student population. Over the longer term, they transform a town through the researchers and professors they attract: When you find a Chinese or German physicist in the Dakotas, or a Yale literature Ph.D in California's Central Valley, that person probably works for a university.

—James Fallows

The proper study of Mankind is Man.

—Alexander Pope

When one who is by nature a worker attempts to enter the warrior class, or one of the soldiers tries to enter the class of guardians, this meddling brings the city to ruin. That then is injustice. But the doing of one's own job by each class is justice and makes the city just.

—Plato

It is better that some should be unhappy, than that none should be happy, which would be the case in a general state of equality.

—Samuel Johnson

Equality in society beats inequality, whether the latter be the British-aristocratic sort or of the domestic-slavery sort.

—Abraham Lincoln

Society exists for the benefit of its members; not the members for the benefit of society.

—Herbert Spencer

The automobile has long been a symbol of everything great and everything terrible about America. On the one hand: freedom, individualism, power, speed. The taming of millions of miles of varied wildernesses through roads, then highways, then interstates. The capacity of American industry—Pittsburgh’s steel, Akron’s rubber, Detroit’s factories.

But on the other hand: gas-guzzling SUVs. Traffic and sprawl. The abandonment of mass transit. The suburb and then the exurb, with their undeniable ties to white flight and segregation. The decline of the Rust Belt, the near-collapse of the Big Three automakers during the Great Recession of 2008, and the slow death of American manufacturing and blue-collar work.

—Ian Bogost

Some economists attribute the need for credit and the drive to spend with the ‘keeping up with the Joneses’ syndrome, which is so prevalent in America. I never wanted to keep up with the Joneses. But, like many Americans, I wanted my children to keep up with the Joneses’ children, because I knew how easily my girls could be marginalized in a society where nearly all the rewards go to a small, well-educated elite.

—Neal Gabler

A simple way to take the measure of a country is to look at how many want in...and how many want out.

—Tony Blair

Professional-class parents and their children are tightly bound to each other in the relentless pursuit of admission to a fancy college. A kid on that track can’t really separate from her parents, as their close involvement in this shared goal is essential. Replicating the social class across a generation is a joint project. That’s why it’s so hard to break into the professional stratum of society: The few available spots are being handed down within families. From this has flowed a benefit that parents love—deep emotional closeness throughout adolescence, with no shadow of a future parting.

—Caitlin Flanagan

I used to think I was poor. Then they told me I wasn't poor, I was needy. They told me it was self-defeating to think of myself as needy, I was deprived. Then they told me underprivileged was overused. I was disadvantaged. I still don't have a dime. But I have a great vocabulary.

—Jules Feiffer

College drinking, including extreme heavy drinking, has been a tradition since the 19th century. Because of this, it can be hard to convince middle-aged people that something has changed. But the consistent—at times urgent, at times resigned—report from college officials is that something has gone terribly awry and that huge numbers of students regularly transform the American campus into a college-themed spin-off of *The Walking Dead*. They vomit endlessly, destroy property, become the victims or perpetrators of sexual events ranging from the unpleasant to the criminal, get rushed off in ambulances, and join the ever-growing waiting lists for counseling. Depression and anxiety go hand in hand with heavy drinking, and both are at epidemic proportions on campus.

—Caitlin Flanagan

Education, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men—the balance-wheel of the social machinery....It does better than to disarm the poor of their hostility towards the rich; it prevents being poor.

--Horace Mann

Education is the vaccine for violence.

--Edward James Olmos

Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another.

—G. K. Chesterton

The religion of the Indian is the last thing about him that the man of another race will ever understand.

—Charles Eastman

Half of the harm that is done in this world is due to people who want to feel important. They don't mean to do harm. But the harm does not interest them.

—T. S. Eliot

Until you understand Capitalism you do not understand human society as it exists at present.

—George Bernard Shaw

A baby born today stands roughly a 50-50 chance of keeping his father. This is the first generation of American kids who must face not the sad loss of fathers to death, but the far more brutal knowledge that, to their fathers, many other things are more important than they are.

--Maggie Gallagher

Ambivalence reaches the level of schizophrenia in our treatment of violence among the young. Parents do not encourage violence, but neither do they take up arms against the industries which encourage it. Parents hide their eyes from the books and comics, slasher films, videos and lyrics which form the texture of an adolescent culture. While all successful societies have inhibited instinct, ours encourages it. Or at least we profess ourselves powerless to interfere with it.

--C. John Sommerville

Much of the pressure contemporary parents feel with respect to dressing children in designer clothes, teaching young children academics, and giving them instruction in sports derives directly from our need to use our children to impress others with our economic surplus.

--David Elkind

The U.S. is becoming an increasingly fatherless society. A generation ago, an American child could reasonably expect to grow up with his or her father. Today an American child can reasonably expect not to. Fatherlessness is now approaching a rough parity with fatherhood as a defining feature of American childhood.

—David Blankenhorn

One of the most surprising, and perhaps confounding, facts of charity in America is that the people who can least afford to give are the ones who donate the greatest percentage of their income. In 2011, the wealthiest Americans—those with earnings in the top 20 percent—contributed on average 1.3 percent of their income to charity. By comparison, Americans at the base of the income pyramid—those in the bottom percent—donated 3.2 percent of their income. The relative generosity of lower-income Americans is accentuated by the fact that, unlike middle-class and wealthy donors, most of them cannot take advantage of the charitable tax deduction, because they do not itemize deductions on their income-tax returns.

--Ken Stern

Huge fortunes that flow in large part from society should in large part be returned to society.

--Andrew Carnegie

The health of a democratic society may be measured by the quality of functions performed by private citizens.

—Alexis de Tocqueville

The most solid stone in the structure is the lowest one in the foundation.

—Kahlil Gibran

The higher the social class of other students the higher any given student's achievement.

—James S. Coleman

People in the city are poor because they are oppressed, discriminated against and alienated; people in the country are poor because they're too stupid to realize they ought to be living in the city.

—Garret Keize

Fixed ideas about Americans seemed, among Miami Cubans, general. Americans, I was frequently told, never touched one another, nor did they argue. Americans did not share the attachment to family which characterized Cuban life. Americans did not share the attachment to patria which characterized Cuban life. Americans placed undue importance on being on time. Americans were undereducated. Americans, at one and the same time, acted exclusively in their own interests and failed to see their own interests, not only because they were undereducated but because they were by temperament 'naive,' a people who could live and die without ever understanding those nuances of conspiracy and allegiance on which, in the Cuban view, the world turned. Americans, above all, lacked 'passion,' which was the central failing from which most of these other national peculiarities flowed.

—Joan Didion

Students in the '60s were responsible for great changes, politically and socially.

—Tom Ford

'Our students didn't used to come from such damaged families,' Louis mused. 'It's true what they say. This country really is coming apart at the seams.'

—Paul Russell

## **AFTER SCHOOL SPECIAL**

Dear Mr. Schneider,  
I attended your elementary  
School almost thirty years ago



And I'm very sure that  
You will remember  
Me.

My name is Suzy.  
I'm that hyperactive girl  
From the Egyptian family  
Who used to always play dead  
On the playground during  
Recess.

You used to keep me  
After school a lot,  
And then my father would  
Force me to make the long  
Walk home in the cold or rain.  
Sometimes I would arrive  
After dark.

I'm writing to tell you  
That I was bored as a kid.  
I was bored by your curriculum  
And the way I was always taught a  
Bunch of useless  
Junk.

I did not like being locked up  
In a prison of scheduled time  
Learning about irrelevant material,  
And watching belittling cartoons and  
Shows approved by academia that  
Made me even more  
Bored.

As a kid  
Who was constantly  
Growing, evolving, and  
Being shaped by all around me,  
I wanted to travel,  
See other kids

In the world like me,  
To understand what was going  
On amongst us and around us,  
To know what we were here for  
And what was our real purpose  
For existence.

I have some questions  
I would like to ask you, Mr. Schneider,  
Now that I know that you are no  
Longer a school principal,  
But the new superintendent  
Of the entire school  
District.

I want to know  
Why racism today  
Was not clearly explained to me  
Even though we covered events  
That happened long ago.  
I want to know why you  
Never shared with us  
Why other countries  
Never liked us,  
Why we are taught to compete,  
To be divided in teams,  
And why conformity is associated  
With popularity, while  
Eccentricity is considered  
Undesirable?

I want to know  
Why my cafeteria lunches  
Were slammed packed  
With bottom-tier  
Processed junk food  
Only suitable  
For pigs?  
And why is it  
That whenever a bully

Slammed a kid into a locker for  
His lunch money,  
Nobody explained to us  
That egotism, selfishness and greed  
Were the seeds of  
War?

I want to know  
Why we were never taught  
To stick up for each other,  
To love one another, and that  
Segregation sorted by the  
Occupations of our fathers,  
The neighborhoods we lived in, our houses,  
Choices of sport, wealth, clothing,  
Color of our skin  
And the texture of our hair  
Should never, ever  
Divide us?

And lastly,  
I want to know why  
Is it that whenever I pledged  
Allegiance to the flag,  
I was never told that I was  
Actually hailing to the  
Chief?

You used to say that  
I was a troubled child,  
A misfit, and that I needed  
Obedience training,  
But you never acknowledged that  
I was the fastest runner in the district  
And that I took the school  
To State and Nationals to compete  
In the Spelling Bee among kids  
Grades higher than me.  
And that it was me,  
Who won that big trophy

That sat in your office when you  
Used to detain me for hours  
And tell me I was no  
Good.

Mr. Schneider,  
If we are not taught truths as kids,  
Then how do you expect us to  
Grow up to be truthful citizens?  
If we are only being taught the written way,  
And it has not shown positive effects  
In societies of yesterday or today,  
Then how can we progress as a  
United and compassionate  
Nation?  
What good is it,  
To memorize the histories  
Of our forefathers,  
Without learning what could be  
Gained from their lessons and mistakes  
To improve our future  
Tomorrows?

And finally,  
I want to thank you;  
For I know you have a tough job  
Dealing with rebellious children like me.  
Your job of mass processing and boxing  
The young minds of America has not been an easy one,  
And I congratulate you  
On your recent promotion.  
But I sincerely want to thank you,  
Thank you,  
And thank you,  
For always pointing out  
That I was  
Different.

—Suzy Kassem

When our society looks at us and says our schools are troubled, what they are really saying is that our society is troubled and by implication they are saying, 'Help us, dear teachers. You are our hope.'

--Linda Holt

There is a social burden placed on schools by poverty, drug abuse, violence, and hopelessness. Troubled children carry the ills of their homes and neighborhoods into their classrooms every day. In too many parts of the United States, teachers must feed their students' bodies and souls before they can even begin to feed their minds.

--Nan Stone

In short, my little school, like the great World, is made up of Kings, Politicians, Divines, L.D. (LL.Ds), Fops, Buffoons, Fiddlers, Sycophants, Fools, Coxcombs, Chimney Sweepers, and every other Character drawn in History or seen in the World.

--John Adams

Attempting to fix inner city schools without fixing the city in which they are embedded is like trying to clean the air on one side of a screen door.

--Jean Anyon

Schools have to be the glue of our society; they are our greatest means of social stability.

--Shirley McCune

School is the advertising agency which makes you believe that you need the society as it is.

—Ivan Illich

There's a growing consensus that the most important input toward student achievement is child poverty and all the factors that go along with it. Unless and until we recommit ourselves to ending child poverty and reducing inequality, not just in schools but in families and communities, I don't see us reinventing ourselves. We can't put the cart before the horse. We've spent too long at this point saying, 'If we improve schools we'll erase poverty.' I think it's really time to try the other way around.

—Anya Kamenetz

Books are, in one sense, the basis of all social progress.

--Karl Marx

The day Johannes Gutenberg finished his wooden printing press in 1440, Western civilization turned onto a path toward more efficient, accessible communication of knowledge. The ensuing democratization of ideas had a profound impact on societies in the second half of the second millennium.

--Christina H. Paxson

Do you know what we are those of us who count as pillars of society? We are society's tools, neither more nor less.

—Henrik Ibsen

We will be able to achieve a just and prosperous society only when our schools ensure that everyone commands enough shared knowledge to be able to communicate effectively with everyone else.

--E. D. Hirsch

No drug, not even alcohol, causes the fundamental ills of society. If we're looking for the source of our troubles, we shouldn't test people for drugs, we should test them for stupidity, ignorance, greed and love of power.

—P. J. O'Rourke

The media, sometimes intentionally, but often unintentionally, have the function of providing models for behavior. In some instances, propaganda is used in a deliberate attempt to influence values and beliefs. In other instances, the content of the ads and entertainment functions to convey particular norms of society.

--John W. Kinch

The programs that we see on TV do not 'reflect our society,' as the industry likes to claim, but a distorted vision based on the tastes of a relative few.

--Sen. Joseph Lieberman

Television is much more than mere entertainment: it is also a major source of observational learning experiences, a setter of norms. It determined what people judge to be appropriate behavior in a variety of situations. Indeed it might be that television has become one of the most important agencies of socialization that our society possesses.

—J. Philippe Rushton

The bond of human society is reason and speech.

—Cicero

Cheerful obedience to the computer leads to worse performance by society. It makes it easier for dictators to accomplish their ends. It brings a lessening of freedom. Being loyal to the computer means selling out....The computer is there only to serve man—not to be served by him.

--H. Matusow

We think American society is an insane anthill, and the human being has been living for, you know, hundreds of thousands of years before we had any of the things we consider so necessary in American life today. You can actually live, you can make love, you can enjoy food, you can raise children, without being a computerized mechanized American.

--Timothy Leary

If there is technological advance without social advance, there is, almost automatically, an increase in human misery.

--Michael Harrington

The ratio of rich math whizzes to poor ones is 3 to 1 in south Korea and 3.7 to 1 in Canada, to take two representative developed countries. In the U.S., it is 8 to 1. And while the proportion of American students scoring at advanced levels in math is rising, those gains are almost entirely limited to the children of the highly educated, and largely exclude the children of the poor. By the end of high school, the percentage of low-income advanced-math learners rounds to zero.

—Peg Tyre

It is from the artist that society gains its loftier images of itself.

--Joseph Wood Krutch

In times of crisis, it is to art that one can turn to find the center of a society. Societies are not remembered by their battlements, but by their art. Art is an essential reminder of what it is in life that lasts, of why one lives. Art communicates, clarifies, celebrates, mourns and remembers. What else in our lives can do this?

--Bella Lewitzky

Social history might be defined negatively as the history of a people with the politics left out.

—G. M. Trevelyan

The rich experience of history teaches that up to now not a single class has voluntarily made way for another class.

--Joseph Stalin

History never repeats itself; if it did, it would be sociology.

—Unknown

Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both.

—C. Wright Mills

It's not a ladder we're climbing, it's literature we're producing....We cannot possibly leave it to history as a discipline nor to sociology nor science nor economics to tell the story of our people.

--Nikki Giovanni

The teaching of any science, for purposes of liberal education, without linking it with social progress and teaching its social significance, is a crime against the student mind. It is like teaching a child how to pronounce words but not what they mean.

--Vernon Carter

The big companies and their short-term bottom line rule this country.

—Alexandra Paul

Society is well governed when the people obey the magistrates, and the magistrates obey the law.

—Solon

Jail has become the biggest mental health hospital.

—Steven Magee

Women like me don't have a life. We choose clothes, and pay calls, and work for charity, and do the season, but really we're stuck in a waiting room until we marry.

--Lady Mary, Upper  
Class Heroine of  
*Downton Abbey*

The labor of women in the house, certainly, enables men to produce more wealth than they otherwise could; and in this way women are economic factors in society. But so are horses.

—Charlotte Perkins  
Gilman



Society, because it is composed of living humans, is organic and if healthy, supple. It is like a rubber band. As long as the groups that compose society are flexible and social and emotionally supporting, it serves its constituency well. It bends, weaves, twists, turns, and envelops everyone in diverse manners. If opposing forces become too locked into their polarized viewpoints, though, other things happen.

Like two grumpy siblings, they hold their views with anger or self-righteousness and utter vulgar and crass words, but it amounts to the same thing. The two groups pull on the rubber band and rigidly hold to their position without empathy.

The rubber band (society) grows taut and then eventually it snaps and collateral damage ensues and the proverbial baby is thrown out with the bath water.

—Leviak B. Kelly

The ghettos of America are the direct result of decades of public-policy decisions: the redlining of real estate zoning maps, the expanded authority given to prosecutors, the increased funding given to prisons. And all of this was done on the backs of people still reeling from the 250-year legacy of slavery. The results of this negative investment are clear—African Americans rank at the bottom of nearly every major socioeconomic measure in the country.

—Ta-Nehisi Coates

The unemployment rate among black college graduates (4.1 percent) is almost the same as the unemployment rate among white high-school graduates (4.6 percent). But that college degree is generally purchased at a higher price by blacks than by whites. According to research by the Brookings Institution, African Americans tend to carry more student debt four years after graduation (\$53,000 versus \$28,000) and suffer from a higher default rate on their loans (7.6 percent versus 2.4 percent) than white Americans. This is both the result and the perpetuator of a sprawling wealth gap between the races. White households, on average, hold seven times as much wealth as black households—a difference so large as to make comparing the ‘black middle class’ and ‘white middle class’ meaningless; they’re simply not comparable. According to Patrick Sharkey, a sociologist at New York University who studies economic mobility, black families making \$100,000 a year or more live in more-disadvantaged neighborhoods than white families making less than \$30,000. This gap didn’t just appear by magic; it’s the result of the government’s effort over many decades to create a pigmentocracy—one that will continue without explicit intervention.

—Ta-Nehisi Coates

The natural superiority of women is a biological fact, and a socially acknowledged reality.

--Ashley Montagu

I want my children—I want Malia and Sasha—to understand that they’ve got responsibilities beyond just what they themselves have done. That they’ve a responsibility to the larger community and the larger nation, that they should be sensitive to and extra thoughtful about the plight of people who have been oppressed in the past, are oppressed currently. So that’s a wisdom that I want to transmit to my kids...But I would say that’s a high level of enlightenment that you’re looking to have from a majority of the society. And it may be something that future generations are more open to, but I am pretty confident that for the foreseeable future, using the argument of nondiscrimination, and ‘Let’s get it right for the kids who are here right now,’ and giving them the best chance possible is going to be a more persuasive argument.

—Barack Obama

Imagine if you had genuine, high-quality early-childhood education for every child, and suddenly every black child in America...is getting a really good education. And they’re graduating from high school at the same rates that white are, and they are going to college at the same rates that whites are, and they are able to afford college at the same rates because the government has universal programs that say that you’re not going to be barred from school just because of how much money your parents have.

So now they’re all graduating. And let’s also say that the Justice Department and the courts are making sure, as I’ve said in a speech before, that when Jamal sends his résumé in, he’s getting treated the same as when Johnny sends his résumé in. Now, are we going to have suddenly the same number of CEOs, billionaires, etc., as the white community? In 10 years? Probably not, maybe not even in 20 years.

But I guarantee you that we would be thriving, we would be succeeding. We wouldn’t have huge numbers of young African American men in jail. We’d have more family formation as college-graduated girls are meeting boys who are their peers, which then in turn means the next generation of kids are growing up that much better. And suddenly you’ve got a whole generation that’s in a position to start using the incredible creativity that we see in music, and sports, and frankly even on the streets, channeled into starting all kinds of businesses. I feel pretty good about our odds in that situation.

—Barack Obama

Sports serve society by providing vivid examples of excellence.

--George F. Will

Theoretically, you can make obviously a powerful argument that centuries of slavery, Jim Crow, discrimination are the primary cause for all those gaps [wealth, education, housing, employment.] That those were wrongs to the black community as a whole, and black families specifically, and that in order to close that gap, a society has a moral obligation to make a large, aggressive investment, even if it's not in the form of individual reparations checks but in the form of a Marshall Plan.

—Barack Obama

The researchers Josh Pasek, Jon A. Krosnick, and Trevor Tompson found that in 2012, 32 percent of Democrats held anti-black views, while 79 percent of Republicans did.

—Ta-Nehisi Coates

We are seeing an increasing level of attacks on the 'selfishness' of women. There are allegations that all kinds of social ills, from runaway children to the neglected elderly, are due to the fact that women have left their 'rightful' place in the home. Such arguments are simplistic and wrongheaded but women are especially vulnerable to the accusation that if society has problems, it's because women aren't nurturing enough.

—Grace Baruch

I've done a lot of surveys and interacted with a lot of students, and I was shocked to see that at 12 years old, girls are already talking about dumbing themselves down.

—Danica McKellar

One might well say that mankind is divisible into two great classes: hosts and guests.

—Max Beerbohm

Money is the most egalitarian force in society. It confers power on whoever holds it.

--Roger Starr

Wealth in modern societies is distributed according to opportunity; and while opportunity depends partly upon talent and energy, it depends still more upon birth, social position, access to education and inherited wealth; in a word, upon property.

--Richard H. Tawney

Technology is the most tremendous and far-reaching engine of social change which has ever either blessed or cursed mankind.

--Charles Francis Adams

There is something about prosperity, the hunger for it, the pretense in all these middle-class Americans, that makes the soul sick.

--Sherwood Anderson

Priorities are reflected in the things we spend money on. Far from being a dry accounting of bookkeepers, a nation's budget is full of moral implications; it tells what a society cares about and what it does not care about; it tells what its values are.

--Senator J. W. Fulbright

In our society, we admire people who have a lot of money and exhibit it in homes or in cars. In small societies (not based on market economies) that kind of exhibitionism is denigrated.

--Susan Russell

Economic growth without social progress lets the great majority of the people remain in poverty, while a privileged few reap the benefits of rising abundance.

--John F. Kennedy

In our culture we make heroes of the men who sit on top of a heap of money, and we pay attention not only to what they say in their field of competence, but to their wisdom on every other question in the world.

--Max Lerner

Taxes, after all, are the dues that we pay for the privileges of membership in an organized society.

--Franklin D. Roosevelt

What kind of society isn't structured on greed? The problem of social organization is how to set up an arrangement under which greed will do the least harm; capitalism is that kind of a system.

--Milton Friedman

The forces in a capitalist society, if left unchecked, tend to make the rich richer and the poor poorer.

--Jawaharlal Nehru

It is the wretchedness of being rich that you have to live with rich people.

--Logan Pearsall  
Smith

In order to stand well in the eyes of the community, it is necessary to come up to a certain, somewhat indefinite, conventional standard of wealth.

--Thorstein Veblen

Half the world is composed of idiots, the other half of people clever enough to take indecent advantage of them.

--Walter Kerr

Society cares for the individual only so far as he is profitable.

--Simone de Beauvoir

It is hard to interest those who have everything in those who have nothing.

--Helen Keller

The poverty of our century is unlike that of any other. It is not, as poverty was before, the result of natural scarcity, but of a set of priorities imposed upon the rest of the world by the rich.

—John Berger

I have always maintained that the one important phenomenon presented by modern society is—the enormous prosperity of Fools.

—Wilkie Collins

I saw the rich for what they were: a goddamn blight like the fungus that kills tomatoes.

—Ernest Hemingway

This country has socialism for the rich and rugged individualism for the poor.

—Dr. Martin Luther  
King, Jr.

I know of no industrial society where women are the economic equals of men. Of everything that economics measures, women get less.

— Ivan Illich

Bankers just get into the habit of complaining about compensation and sort of thinking that they're entitled to be paid 50 times what a firefighter that runs into a burning building to save a little baby gets paid. That entitlement is sort of endemic within banking.

—James Gorman

Advertising has done more to cause the social unrest of the 20th century than any other single factor.

—Clare Boothe Luce

You get relationships with people and neighbors that you would never get in a city. People in small towns are a lot more open.

—Genevieve Gorder

Those who are once found to be bad are presumed to be so forever.

--Latin Proverb

There never was a social change in America without angry people at the heart.

—Keith Miller

The world does not grow better by force or by the policeman's club.

--William J. Gaynor

Deeds of violence in our society are performed largely by those trying to establish their self-esteem, to defend their self-image, and to demonstrate that they, too, are significant. Violence arises not out of superfluity of power but out of powerlessness.

--Rollo May

The vices of the rich and great are mistaken for errors, and those of the poor and lonely for crimes.

--Countess of Blessington

'Our earth is degenerate in these latter days. Bribery and corruption are common. Children no longer obey their parents....The end of the world is evidently approaching.' Sound familiar? It is, in fact, the lament of a scribe in one of the earliest inscriptions to be unearthed in Mesopotamia, where Western civilization was born.

--C. John Sommerville

A decline in supervision is not the entire story. Even in the fifties there were under-supervised children...who nevertheless did not become pregnant at thirteen...and who did not smoke anything stronger than an occasional Camel or Lucky Strike....It took a combination of unsupervised children and a permissive, highly charged sexual atmosphere and an influx of easily acquired drugs and the wherewithal to buy them to bring about precocious experimentation by young and younger children. This occurred in the mid-seventies.

--Marie Winn

We should expect the best and the worst from mankind, just as we do from the weather.

--Vauvenargues

Gangs are everywhere. They are the catchall of throwaway kids.

--Unknown

Gangs are only as strong as the community allows them to be.

--Robert D. Ramsey

Every baby born in this country gets on one of two trains—one bound for heaven or one bound for hell. And the children on the train to hell see the kids on the other train. The tragedy is that our society has built so few switching stations to help youngsters change their lives.

--Eli Newberger, M.D.

The rich middle-and high-school kids...show higher rates of alcohol and drug abuse on average than poor kids, and much higher rates than the national norm. They report clinically significant depression or anxiety or delinquent behaviors at a rate two to three times the national average. Starting in the seventh grade, the rich cohort includes just as many kids who display troubling levels of delinquency as the poor cohort, although the rule-breaking takes different forms. The poor kids, for example, fight and carry weapons more frequently....The rich kids, meanwhile, report higher levels of lying, cheating, and theft.

—Hanna Rosin citing a  
Yale Psychiatry  
Department Study  
by Suniya Luthar

Popularity is a trap. The research is overwhelming. For instance, a study tracking nearly 200 13-year-olds over the course of a decade found that those who acted old for their age by sneaking into movies, forming early romantic relationship, shoplifting, and basing friendships on appearance were considered by their peers to be the popular kids. The 'cool kids,' the same study found, had a 45 percent greater rate of problems due to substance abuse by age 22, and a 22 percent greater rate of criminal behavior, compared with the average teen in the study. Such behavior made the popular group far less socially acceptable as young adults than they were at 13, which suggests that while the cool kids achieved temporary social status, they never developed the skills needed for deep, durable friendships.

—Ron Fournier

It is true that many of the causes of discipline problems lie within the nature of our society as well as within the nature of our schools.

--Eugene R. Howard

What's done to children, they will do to society.

—Karl Menninger

A 'snapshot' feature in USA Today listed the five greatest concerns parents and teachers had about children in the '50s: talking out of turn, chewing gum in class, doing homework, stepping out of line, cleaning their rooms. Then it listed the five top concerns of parents today: drug addiction, teenage pregnancy, suicide and homicide, gang violence, anorexia and bulimia. We can also add AIDS, poverty, and homelessness....Between my own childhood and the advent of my motherhood—one short generation—the culture had gone completely mad.

--Mary Kay Blakely

In their landmark survey of single parenthood, Sara McLanahan and Gary Sandefur showed that children in single-parent homes do not do as well as children who are living with both biological parents. They are more likely to have trouble in school, more likely to drop out of school and, later, more likely to become single parents themselves. Some of this is simply the fact that unstable people are more likely to become single parents and also more likely to have difficulty parenting. But even the children of widows and widowers do worse on many measures than children of intact homes—a problem that was recognized back in the 19th century, when disease and work accidents frequently carried off parents in their prime. Something about living with only one parent holds kids back. That 'something'...is fewer resources. The Internet overflows with essays on the resourcefulness, grit, and sheer heroism of single parents who manage to be 'both mother and father' to their children. But while we should have nothing but admiration for people who do their best in a bad situation, we should still recognize that for the child, and often for the parent, it's a bad situation.

--Megan McArdle

To educate a man in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society.

—Theodore Roosevelt

Japanese and American fourth and fifth grade children were asked why they shouldn't hit, gossip or fight with other kids. 92 percent of the American kids answered 'because they'd get caught or get in trouble.' Ninety percent of the Japanese kids asked the same question responded, 'because it would be hurtful to someone else.'

—Christine Gross-Loh



Many students arrive at college after having been ‘helicopter parented,’ with their access to alcohol and sex strictly policed until the day they leave home. They’re then plunked into an environment full of unfamiliar rituals, bravado, enough booze to put the Russian army into a coma, and more sexually available people than they’ll ever encounter again.

—Michael Kimmel

Most of the time, all that separates a class president and a gang leader is numbers: a zip code, a paycheck, or a drug dealer’s phone number.

—Thomm Quackenbush

One day in my pharmacology class, we were discussing the possibility of legalizing marijuana. The class was pretty evenly divided between those that advocated legalizing marijuana and those that did not. The professor said he wanted to hear from a few people on both sides of the argument. A couple students had the opportunity to stand in front of the class and present their arguments. One student got up and spoke about how any kind of marijuana use was morally wrong and how nobody in the class could give him any example of someone who needed marijuana.

A small girl in the back of the classroom raised her hand and said that she didn’t want to get up, but just wanted to comment that there are SOME situations in which people might need marijuana. The same boy from before spoke up and said that she needed to back up her statements and that he still stood by the fact that there wasn’t anyone who truly needed marijuana.

The same girl in the back of the classroom slowly stood up. As she raised her head to look at the boy, I could physically see her calling on every drop of confidence in her body. She told us that her husband had cancer. She started to tear up, as she related how he couldn’t take any of the painkillers to deal with the radiation and chemotherapy treatments. His body was allergic and would have violent reactions to them. She told us how he had finally given in and tried marijuana. Not only did it help him to feel better, but it allowed him to have enough of an appetite to get the nutrients he so desperately needed.

She started to sob as she told us that for the past month she had to meet with drug dealers to buy her husband the only medicine that would take the pain away. She struggled every day because according to society, she was a criminal, but she was willing to do anything she could to help her sick husband. Sobbing uncontrollably now, she ran out of the classroom. The whole classroom sat there in silence for a few minutes. Eventually, my professor asked, ‘Is there anyone that thinks this girl is doing something wrong?’ Not one person raised their hand.

—Daniel Willey

The further a society drifts from the truth, the more it will hate those who speak it.

—George Orwell

People use drugs, legal and illegal, because their lives are intolerably painful or dull. They hate their work and find no rest in their leisure. They are estranged from their families and their neighbors. It should tell us something that in healthy societies drug use is celebrative, convivial, and occasional, whereas among us it is lonely, shameful, and addictive. We need drugs, apparently, because we have lost each other.

—Wendell Berry

The life of the nation is secure only while the nation is honest, truthful, and virtuous.

--Frederick Douglass

There is this to be said in favor of drinking, that it takes the drunkard first out of society, then out of the world.

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

The war on drugs had created a permanent under-caste of men convicted of drug offenses. Men who, even after their release from incarceration for relatively minor crimes, would never again be able to navigate the world on equal footing with the rest of us.

--Joshua DuBois

In the three decades since the war on drugs began, the U.S. prison population has exploded from 300,000 to more than 2 million people, giving our country the highest incarceration rate in the world—higher than Russia, China, and other regimes we consider repressive.

--Joshua DuBois

Society can exist only on the basis that there is some amount of polished lying and that no one says exactly what he thinks.

—Lin Yutang

Truth is the greatest of all national possessions. A state, a people, a system which suppresses the truth or fears to publish it, deserves to collapse.

—Kurt Eisner

When there is a lack of honor in government, the morals of the whole people are poisoned.

--Herbert Hoover

The law requires a paper towel ad to be scrupulously honest, but allows political candidates to lie without reproach. What's wrong with this picture?

--Jef I. Richards

Every violation of truth is not only a sort of suicide in the liar, but is a stab at the health of human society.

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

Power breeds isolation. Isolation leads to the capricious use of power. In turn, the capricious use of power breaks down the normal channels of communication between the leader and the people whom he leads. This ultimately means the deterioration of power and with it the capacity to sustain unity in our society. This is the problem we face today.

--George Reedy

In the crowd, herd, or gang, it is a mass-mind that operates—which is to say, a mind without subtlety, a mind without compassion, a mind, finally, uncivilized.

--Robert Lindner

Imagine a society that subjects people to conditions that make them terribly unhappy then gives them the drugs to take away their unhappiness. Science fiction. It is already happening to some extent in our own society. Instead of removing the conditions that make people depressed, modern society gives them antidepressant drugs. In effect antidepressants are a means of modifying an individual's internal state in such a way as to enable him to tolerate social conditions that he would otherwise find intolerable.

—Theodore J. Kaczynski

The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country. ...We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of. This is a logical result of the way in which our democratic society is organized. Vast numbers of human beings must cooperate in this manner if they are to live together as a smoothly functioning society. ...In almost every act of our daily lives, whether in the sphere of politics or business, in our social conduct or our ethical thinking, we are dominated by the relatively small number of persons...who understand the mental processes and social patterns of the masses. It is they who pull the wires which control the public mind.

—Edward L. Bernays

Those who steal from private individuals spend their lives in stocks and chains; those who steal from the public treasure go dressed in gold and purple.

—Marcius Porcius  
Cato

Any time you have young people who are not in school, that is a negative drain on society as a whole. Often, we find truancy is a gateway to other forms of delinquency.

—Patrick Dobard

Many truants live in abject poverty, and some are being reared by parents who are little more than children themselves. Others are the victims of neglect, physical and sexual abuse, drug addiction, gang activity or broken homes. For these children, attending school takes a back seat to simple survival.

Today's truant officers understand, this reality. They know dragging a student back to school isn't enough, not if a personal problem has been keeping the child out of school to begin with. That problem must be resolved, and truant officers nowadays seek as best they can to resolve it. As a result, they often find themselves immersed in heart-breaking stories of personal tragedy.

It's not a job for the meek. To reach these kids, truant officers walk neighborhoods most people prefer to avoid. They see close up the ugly side of our society—the dilapidated public housing, vacant lots piled high with garbage, boarded-up homes, graffiti-covered walls, and dark doorways where grim-faced men loiter, drinking out of brown-paper bags. They run risks most teachers and administrators never even consider; they see sights most of us would rather pretend didn't exist.

—Del Stover

Crime is a social problem, and education is the only real deterrent. Look at all of us in prison; we were all truants and dropouts, a failure of the educational system. Look at your truancy problem, and you're looking at your future prisoners. Put the money there.

—Wilbert Rideau

The fundamental concept in social science is Power, in the same sense in which Energy is the fundamental concept in physics.

—Bertrand Russell

If we were really tough on crime, we'd do more to stop it from happening in the first place.

—Carrie P. Meek

Is the world a dangerous place? Children certainly think so when TV news cameras expose them to scenes of mass killings of children at a school in Scotland and a day care center in Oklahoma City, not to mention disastrous plane crashes, car accidents, and gun violence. A recent list of the top ten children's fears includes gangs, drive-by shootings, drugs, death, nuclear war, guns, knives, and AIDS. And that's not counting young children's fears of thunder and lightning, monsters under the bed, or ghosts in the attic. Child psychologists take children's fears seriously and they have done a number of studies to find out their causes and effects. They discovered that it is difficult to distinguish fear from anxiety in children. As a general rule, fear is a response to a situation, like being afraid of an animal, while anxiety is defined as being worried about something that hasn't happened, such as an upcoming test.

—*National Association of  
Elementary School  
Principals*

We do not look in our great cities for our best morality.

—Jane Austen

Among advocates of any group—black, white or Oriental—social research is welcome only to the degree that it can be used to advance a desired cause.

--Walter Goodman

It is good work well done that holds the fabric of civilization together and gives a sense of significance to the individual life.

--*N.E.A. Journal*

The first duty of a human being is to assume the right relationship to society—more briefly, to find your real job, and do it.

--Charlotte Perkins  
Gilman

The rise of women is not the result of any ideology or political movement; it is a result of the widespread realization, sometime after the Second World War, that families in which women work are families that prosper. And countries in which women work are countries that prosper. In 2006, a database created by the *Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development* demonstrated what common sense tells us; with few exceptions, countries in which women have more economic and political power are richer than countries where women are relatively powerless. Patriarchy is damn expensive. That's why it's doomed.

--Stephen Marche

Workaholism is one of the only addictions in society that we boast about, that we're proud of, that we actually support.

--Diane Fassel

We've made undeniable progress. In the United States, women now earn more college and graduate degrees than men do. We make up half the workforce, and we are closing the gap in middle management. Half a dozen global studies, conducted by the likes of Goldman Sachs and Columbia University, have found that companies employing women in large numbers outperform their competitors on every measure of profitability. Our competence has never been more obvious. Those who closely follow society's shifting values see the world moving in a female direction.

--Katty Kay and Claire Shipman

There is no social program in this country that is as important as a good job that pays well, that gives someone an opportunity to go to work, have some security, have benefits, and take care of their family and have a good life.

--Byron Dorgan

Youngstown's story is America's story, because it shows that when jobs go away, the cultural cohesion of a place is destroyed. The cultural breakdown matters even more than the economic breakdown.

—John Russo

Americans work so hard because their culture has conditioned them to feel guilty when they are not being productive.

—Derek Thompson

Until the Second World War, it was unthinkable for a married woman of the working or middle class to disgrace her husband by working after marriage, because her employment indicated that he was a poor provider.

--Sandra Scarr

The all-American work ethic, destructive enough by itself, also packs a gender double standard that strip-mines the natural resources of both parents. It has taught us that as their earnings and success increase, men become 'more manly,' while women become 'less feminine.' This perverse cultural dynamic gives fathers an incentive to stay away from their families and kill themselves at work, while coercing mothers to limit their career commitment, which in turn limits their wages and shortchanges their families.

--Letty Cottin Pogrebin

Whether it's a \$50,000 platinum grill (worn by rapper Lil Jon) or an opulent necklace eyed by a woman in Beverly Hills, the desire for bling cuts across race, class and gender....In our culture, a lot of what drives us is this quest for more—money, fame, beauty. This is an addictive quest. And you can know it's bad, but you're still addicted.

—Lauren Greenfield

No man can be a good citizen unless he has a wage more than sufficient to cover the bare cost of living, and hours of labor short enough so that after his day's work is done he will have time and energy to bear his share in the management of the community, to help in carrying the general load. We keep countless men from being good citizens by the conditions of life with which we surround them.

--Theodore Roosevelt

A nation, as a society, forms a moral person, and every member of it is personally responsible for his society.

—Thomas Jefferson

True law, the code of justice, the essence of our sensations of right and wrong, is the conscience of society.

--Walter Van Tilburg  
Clark

It is change, continuing change, inevitable change, that is the dominant factor in society today. No sensible decision can be made any longer without taking into account not only the world as it is, but the world as it will be.

--Isaac Asimov

America is the first country to have gone from barbarism to decadence without the usual intervening period of civilization.

—Oscar Wilde

Our culture—or lack of it, for our culture is in a state of flux and crisis—places a high value on materialism, and, by extension, greed. Our culture's emphasis on greed is such that people have become immune to satisfaction. Having acquired one thing, they are immediately ready to desire the next thing that might suggest itself. Today, the object of desire is no longer satisfaction, but desire itself.

—Neel Burton

It is always the minorities that hold the key of progress; it is always through those who are unafraid to be different that advance comes to human society.

--Raymond B. Fosdick

I think we're moving toward a world where all the consumers under a certain age will probably tend to identify more with their consumer status or with the products they consume than they would with ... any sort of antiquated notion of nationality.

—William Gibson

Every society through history has picked some trait that magnifies success for some. We've picked academic skills.

—Robert Sternberg

Simply killing everyone who is already a terrorist today won't solve the problem.

—Brent Scowcroft

Just being a Negro doesn't qualify you to understand the race situation any more than being sick makes you an expert on medicine.

--Dick Gregory

To be a Negro is to participate in a culture of poverty and fear that goes far deeper than any law for or against discrimination.

--Michael Harrington

If you are black the only roads into the mainland of American life are through subservience, cowardice, and loss of manhood. These are the white man's roads.

--LeRoi Jones

Goddammit, look! We live here and they live there. We black and they white. They got things and we ain't. They do things and we can't. It's just like living in jail.

--Richard Wright

I am an invisible man...I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me.

--Ralph Ellison

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others....One feels his two-ness—An American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

--W. E. B. Du Bois  
(1868-1963)



It is obvious that the urban crisis stems in large part from the failure to resolve the problems that confront the Negro.

--Whitney Moore  
Young, Jr.

We are not fighting for integration, nor are we fighting for separation. We are fighting for recognition as human beings. We are fighting for...human rights.

--Malcolm X

Black power...is a call for black people in this country to unite, to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of community. It is a call for black people to begin to define their own goals, to lead their own organizations and to support those organizations. It is a call to reject the racist institutions and values of this society.

--Charles Vernon  
Hamilton

What does the Negro want? His answer is very simple. He wants only what all other Americans want. He wants opportunity to make real what the *Declaration of Independence* and the *Constitution* and the *Bill of Rights* say, what the *Four Freedoms* establish. While he knows these ideals are open to no man completely, he wants only his equal chance to obtain them.

--Mary McLeod Bethune  
(1875-1955)

The most certain test by which we judge whether a country is really free is the amount of security enjoyed by minorities.

--Lord Acton

There's no idea in the world that is not contained by black life. I could write forever about the black experience in America.

--August Wilson

Violence is black children going to school for 12 years and receiving 6 years' worth of education.

--Julian Bond

America's greatest crime against the black man was not slavery or the lynching, but that he was taught to wear a mask of self-hate and self-doubt.

--Malcolm X

In the United States, having a French or German accent is to be considered cultured, educated. But if you have a Spanish accent you are ignored, even if you are a Ph.D.

--Hugo Piñeda

Public assistance/welfare, crime and a lack of education is the syndrome of failure in the immigrant community.

--Francisco Avelar

The whole gangster mentality, it's killing our youth. Black males, we're really just choking ourselves with this whole macho shit, where you can't show any tenderness, no vulnerability, no nothing. You have to be granite, 100 percent. And that's just not natural. And another thing: you have a hundred thousand black kids across this country failing class's on purpose because of peer pressure. And if you speak proper English, and you get straight A's in school, then you're considered a white boy or a white girl. But if you're hanging on the corner, scratching your nuts, drinking, then you're down. So, you know, the whole value system is fucked up; ignorance is being championed over intelligence.

--Spike Lee

There is something systemic, however, between the environments in which young black males are reared and incarceration rates.

--Ronald V. Mincy

A vast number of black and Latino youths in the inner cities are trying desperately to make some sense of their lives. But they are caught in a crossfire between a small group of the sociopaths in their midst and the larger society that ignores their potential and has written them out of the future.

Every time a delivery man is murdered, a drama teacher shot off his bike in the park, public opinion hardens against taking steps to remedy the desperate condition of urban youth including those who carry dreams instead of guns...

Trapped between the shooters in their neighborhood and a society that fears and quarantines them, a generation of city teen-agers is turning inward, away from counsel from the old heads in their community and communication with the larger society.

--Greg Donaldson

Discrimination is a hellhound that gnaws at Negroes in every waking moment of their lives to remind them that the lie of their inferiority is accepted as truth in the society dominating them.

--Martin Luther King, Jr.

Race prejudice is not only a shadow over the colored—it is a shadow over all of us, and the shadow is darkest over those who feel it least and allow its evil effects to go on.

--Pearl S. Buck

Black people will never gain full equality in this country. Even those herculean efforts that we hail as successful will produce no more than temporary 'peaks of progress,' short-lived victories that slide into irrelevance as racial patterns adapt in ways that maintain white dominance. This is a hard to accept fact that all history verifies. We must acknowledge it, not as a sign of submission, but as an act of ultimate defiance.

--Derrick Bell

You can't expect white kids to be the same after they get to be 12 and 13.

--A Black Mother  
preparing her  
daughter for the  
reality of racism in  
America

Instead of seeking true equality with whites, too many blacks sought acceptance. They fled their own communities to live instead among the whites, because they saw whites as successful and blacks as doomed. This is a manifestation of self-hatred that many believe is a far greater obstacle to African-American economic empowerment than racial hatred.

--George C. Fraser

FBI agents are looking for the man who pulled the trigger and surely they will find him. But it doesn't matter if they do or they don't. They can't catch everybody, and Martin Luther King was executed by a firing squad that numbered in the millions.

--Mike Royko

An odd thing occurs in the minds of Americans when Indian civilization is mentioned: little or nothing.

--Paula Gunn Allen

It was common practice for me to take my children with me whenever I went shopping, out for a walk in a white neighborhood, or just felt like going about in a white world. The reason was simple enough: if a black man is alone or with other black men, he is a threat to whites. But if he is with children, then he is harmless, adorable.

--Gerald Early

As much joy as I take in being a writer, I take an equal amount of joy being black. I think being black is really the coolest thing to be in this country. It is certainly bad from a socioeconomic standpoint. Certainly we get the last hired, first fired; and the crap beat out of us all the time. But really, if you look at this culture, this American culture, it is, I think, essentially black. The whole culture! From rock and roll to language. . . Just look at basketball. . . I think the essence of this culture extends from the contributions of black people. So I think being black is really cool. If we could only recognize that. If we only could see that and draw our strengths from what we've contributed.

--Eddy L. Harris

As I traveled the country to a series of welfare-reform hearings late last year, I met many African-Americans who believe that the welfare system is one of the worst things that ever happened to poor people in general and to African-Americans in particular. Many people still remembered times when we, as a group, would do any kind of honest work and were too proud to accept 'handouts.' They believe that welfare has robbed us of our dignity and sense of self-determination. They feel that this system, ostensibly devised to help uplift women and children, has actually made us poorer as a people.

--Avis LaVelle

If you're poor and ignorant, with a child, you're a slave. Meaning that you're never going to get out of it. These women are in bondage to a kind of slavery that the 13th Amendment just didn't deal with. The old master provided food, clothing and health care to the slaves because he wanted them to get up and go to work in the morning. And so on welfare: you get food, clothing and shelter—you get survival, but you can't really do anything else. You can't control your life.

--Dr. Jocelyn Elders

What a horror it must be for a child to discover that his skin is the wrong color.

--Sam Levenson

America does not seem to remember that it derived its wealth, its values, its food, much of its medicine, and a large part of its 'dream' from Native America.

--Paula Gunn Allen

Confronted with the unhappy facts of exclusion, we sometimes reassure ourselves by telling stories: the poor boys who made it, the blacks who became a 'credit to their race,' the women elected to high office, the handicapped who made 'useful contributions' to our society....Just as we believe in the self-sufficient family, we also believe that any child with enough grit and ability can escape poverty and make a rewarding life. But these stories and beliefs clearly reflect the exceptions.

--Kenneth Keniston

'Crisis' seems to be too mild a word to describe conditions in countless African-American communities. It is beyond crisis when in the richest nation in the world, African Americans in Harlem live shorter lives than the people of Bangladesh, one of the poorest nations of the world.

--Johnnetta B. Cole

Black people are the only segment in American society that is defined by its weakest elements. Every other segment is defined by its highest achievement. We have to turn that around.

--Jewell Jackson McCabe

Pa said white men called the Indians savages because that made it easier to hate them, and hating them made it easier to drive them off or kill them and take their land. He said that as long as folks thought of the Shawnees as savages, they didn't have to think of them as people.

--Cynthia DeFelice

Where today are the Pequot? Where are the Narragansett, the Mohican, the Pokanet, and the many other once powerful tribes of our people? They have vanished before the avarice and the oppression of the White Man, as snow before a summer sun.

—Tecumseh (1768-1813)

The central question that emerges—and it is not a parliamentary question or a question that is answered by merely consulting a catalog of the rights of American citizens, born Equal—is whether the White community in the South is entitled to take such measures as are necessary to prevail, politically and culturally, in areas in which it does not predominate numerically? The sobering answer is Yes—the White community is so entitled because, for the time being, it is the advanced race.

--William F. Buckley, Jr.,  
(1957)

To be black and female, in a society which is both racist and sexist, is to be in a unique position of having nowhere to go but up.

--Rosemary Brown

Having been enslaved for 250 years, black people were not left to their own devices. They were terrorized. In the Deep south, a second slavery ruled. In the North, legislatures, mayors, civic associations, banks, and citizens all colluded to pin black people into ghettos, where they were overcrowded, overcharged, and undereducated. Businesses discriminated against them, awarding them the worst jobs and the worst wages. Police brutalized them in the streets. And the notion that black lives, black bodies, and black wealth were rightful targets remained deeply rooted in the broader society.

--Ta-Nehisi Coates

As in the rankest soil the most beautiful flowers are grown, so in the dark soil of poverty the choicest flowers of humanity have developed and bloomed.

—James Allen

Children growing up poor and black in the city are more likely to witness gun violence and street drug sales than their middle-class peers are. Once teens, they are more likely to attract the suspicion of the police, to be arrested if they break the law, to spend their lives behind bars, and to die young. If they make a mistake—fall in with the wrong crowd, antagonize the wrong adults, drop out of school—they are less likely to get a second chance. One study found, for instance, that marijuana use among whites is slightly higher than among blacks, yet blacks are arrested for it nearly four times as often.

—Sarah Carr

Our nation was born in genocide when it embraced the doctrine that the original American, the Indian, was an inferior race. Even before there were large numbers of Negroes on our shore, the scar of our racial hatred had already disfigured colonial society. From the sixteenth century forward, blood flowed in battles over racial supremacy. We are perhaps the only nation which tried as a matter of national policy to wipe out its indigenous population. Moreover, we elevated that tragic experience into a noble crusade. Indeed, even today we have not permitted ourselves to reject or feel remorse for this shameful episode. Our literature, our films, our drama, our folklore all exalt it. Our children are still taught to respect the violence which reduced a red-skinned people of an earlier culture into a few fragmented groups herded into impoverished reservations.

—John Kennedy

We like to think of college as a meritocracy, a place where only the dedicated and smart survive. But it seems to be something else. Between 1970 and 2012, the proportion of American 24-year-olds who came from affluent families and had a bachelor's degree rose from 40 percent to 73 percent—quite an enlightenment period for privileged kids. But over the same period, the proportion of American 24-year-olds who came from low-income families and had a bachelor's degree rose from 6 percent to just 8 percent. The country's uneven public-school systems cannot be blamed entirely for this state of affairs. Too many people come to college unprepared academically, it's true. But even those low-income students who outperform their affluent peers on tests are less likely to graduate from college.

—Amanda Ripley

You are a black boy, and you must be responsible for your body in a way that other boys cannot know. Indeed, you must be responsible for the worst actions of other black bodies, which, somehow, will always be assigned to you. And you must be responsible for the bodies of the powerful—the policeman who cracks you with a nightstick will quickly find his excuse in your furtive movements. You have to make your peace with the chaos, but you cannot lie. You cannot forget how much they took from us and how they transfigured our very bodies into sugar, tobacco, cotton, and gold.

—Ta-Nehisi Coates

Segregation had become so deeply entrenched in urban America it couldn't be uprooted, no matter what the law said.

—Kevin Boyle

There's an official measure of segregation that the U.S. Census Bureau does once every 10 years in metropolitan areas with more than 500,000 people. It's called the Index of Dissimilarity. That measure says on a scale of 0 to 100 what percentage of African Americans would have to move in order to make the entire metropolitan area actually integrated. If you get 100 on this scale, you are completely segregated. If you get zero, you are completely integrated.

According to the last measurement, in 2010, the most segregated metropolitan area in the country is Milwaukee. Eighty percent of African Americans in Milwaukee would have to move [to make the city completely integrated]. That's one step away from apartheid!

So the level of segregation in the United States, physical separation in American metropolitan areas, is absolutely through the roof. And it's all better than it was 10 years ago but not by a heck of a lot.

—Kevin Boyle

In the '20s you had white people saying, 'Look, I don't want black people living next to me.' The thing is that, even in the '20s, not all whites were that racist. But the forces of the marketplace came in, and realtors said, 'Look, if a black family wants to see a house in a white neighborhood, we won't show it to them.' Banks started to say, 'If African Americans want to buy in a white neighborhood, we won't loan to them.' So you had this racism that some white people felt, and then you combined it with these forces of the marketplace and you institutionalized it.

I really believe that whites are much less racist than they used to be. but those forces of the marketplace still sit there, though most of them are illegal now. The challenge is to try to break those structures.

—Kevin Boyle

One of the things that history can do for people is give them a sense that the struggles against segregation and discrimination are all in the past. It's painfully obvious that they're not in the past. All you have to do to see the continuation of segregation, if you happen to be a Northwestern student, is take the Red Line from Howard down to its end point at 95th Street. You'll watch segregation roll by you.

—Kevin Boyle

Martin Luther King said, and it is sadly still true, that one of the most segregated times in America is the hour of worship.

—Barney Frank

Prison is no longer a rare or extreme event among our nation's most marginalized groups. Rather it has now become a normal and anticipated marker in the transition to adulthood.

—Devah Pager

Ex-offenders are excluded from a wide variety of jobs, running the gamut from septic-tank cleaner to barber to real-estate agent, depending on the state. And in the limited job pool that ex-offenders can swim in, blacks and whites are not equal. For her research, Devah Pager pulled together four testers to pose as men looking for low-wage work. One white man and one black man would pose as job seekers without a criminal record, and another black man and white man would pose as job seekers with a criminal record. The negative credential of prison impaired the employment efforts of both the black man and the white man, but it impaired those of the black man more. Startlingly, the effect was not limited to the black man with a criminal record. The black man without a criminal record fared worse than the white man with one.

—Ta-Nehisi Coates



By 2000, more than 1 million black children had a father in jail or prison—and roughly half of those fathers were living in the same household as their kids when they were locked up. Paternal incarceration is associated with behavior problems and delinquency, especially among boys.

—Ta-Nehisi Coates

The blacks incarcerated in this country are not like the majority of Americans. They do not merely hail from poor communities—they hail from communities that have been imperiled across both the deep and immediate past, and continue to be imperiled today. Peril is generational for black people in America—and incarceration is our current mechanism for ensuring that the peril continues. Incarceration pushes you out of the job market. Incarceration disqualifies you from feeding your family with food stamps. Incarceration allows for housing discrimination based on a criminal-background check. Incarceration increases your risk of homelessness. Incarceration increases your chances of being incarcerated again.

—Ta-Nehisi Coates

None of you white people in the audience would change places with me, and I'm rich.

—Chris Rock

The development of a tree depends on where it is planted.

—Edward Joyner

Many black communities have been robbed of the stability and prosperity on which long-term monogamous relationships are most readily built.

—Spencer Kornhaber

Understanding the past was more than an abstract obsession. History became a way for me to understand the challenges within my own life. I grew up in a town in New Jersey where there were very few black people. Race shaped my life at an early age. I remember a time from elementary school, when we were playing ball and it was really hot. We lined up on the steps in back of one kid's house, and his mother came out and started handing out glasses of water. And when she saw me, she said, 'Drink out of the hose.' As I got older, I wanted to understand why some people treated me fairly and others treated me horribly. History, for me, became a means of understanding the life I was living.

—Lonnie G. Bunch III

Throughout the migration, wherever black Southerners went, the hostility and hierarchies that fed the Southern caste system seemed to carry over into the receiving stations in the New World, as the cities of the North and West erected barriers to black mobility. There were ‘sundown towns’ throughout the country that banned African-Americans after dark. The constitution of Oregon explicitly prohibited black people from entering the state until 1926; whites-only signs could still be seen in store windows into the 1950s.

—Isabel Wilkerson

Those black males who try to hold women down are expressing in sexist terms the same kinds of expressions in racist terms which they would deny.

--Jacquelyne Jackson

There is no liberal America, no conservative America, no black America, no white America, no Latino America, no Asian America, only ‘the United States of America.’

—Barack Obama

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro... two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self.

--W. E. B. Du Bois  
(1868-1963)

All politics is rich people screwing poor people. Poor people are too stupid to know they’re just chess pieces in a game. All the poor white people, all the poor black people, all the Hispanics, they’re in the same boat. They got no economic opportunities ... they spend all their time blaming each other because rich people throw words at them like, illegal immigration, and racism and things like that. If poor people ever get smart, and realize like, ‘We should band together, rise up, instead of fighting each other,’ we probably can make a difference.

—Charles Barkley

Most American schools today operate according to a philosophy of discipline that has its roots in the 1980s and '90s, when a belief that schools would be safer and more effective if they had 'zero tolerance' of violence, drug use, and other types of misbehavior led to a sharp rise in suspensions. In 2010, more than a tenth of all public-high-school students nationwide were suspended at least once. And suspension rates are substantially higher among certain demographic groups. African American students, for example, are suspended three times as often as white students. In Chicago public high schools (which have particularly good and well-analyzed data on suspensions), 27 percent of students who live in the cities poorest neighborhoods received an out-of-school suspension during the 2013-14 school year, as did 30 percent of students with a reported personal history of abuse or neglect.

—Paul Tough

You've never seen a Columbine done by a black child. Never. They always say, 'We can't believe it happened here. We can't believe it's these suburban white kids.' It's only them!

—Van Jones

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1969 against a Des Moines, Iowa, school district, finding that students had a right to protest peacefully on school grounds. In this case, the Court said, the teenage plaintiffs could wear black armbands in protest of the Vietnam War, as long as they did so without 'materially and substantially' disturbing class. Justice Hugo Black issued an ominous dissent. 'It is the beginning of a new revolutionary era of permissiveness in this country,' he wrote. 'Groups of students all over the land are already running loose, conducting break-ins, sit-ins, lie-ins, and smash-ins.' Following the federal ruling, state and local officials passed a flurry of laws that would punish students who were disturbing class, anywhere from universities to elementary schools. At the time, it's worth remembering, black students weren't just protesting; they were also integrating white classrooms, backed by the federal government. 'As soon as we started introducing black bodies into white schools, we got these laws,' says Jenny Egan, a public defender for juveniles in Maryland who regularly represents clients charged with disturbing school. 'That's not a coincidence.'

—Amanda Ripley

For most African Americans, white people exist either as a direct or an indirect force for bad in their lives.

—Ta-Nehisi Coates

My motto for the home, in education as in life, is this: For heaven's sake, let people live their own lives. It is an attitude that fits any situation.

--A. S. Neill

The American Indian is being ravaged by alcohol, and their survival is threatened. At nearly all organizational levels on the reservation they report social dysfunction. Their drug problems are unique.

—Wes Smith

I can say anecdotally that every kid I knew who was chronically truant came from a home in chaos. I had a student last year who was absent about half the time because his father had been shot and his mother, who had lost her job, cried every night because she didn't know how she would pay the rent. My student walked the streets day after day looking for a job, even though no one would hire him because he was only 15. His mother begged him to stay in school and graduate, assuring him she would figure something out. Our counselor referred the family to public services, but because my student's mother was undocumented, she was afraid to seek them. And my student continued to be absent about half the time.

—Ellie Herman, Teacher

Esmeralda, a Latina sophomore, was the best softball player on the high school team that I coached. Nearly every time she came to the plate, she hit a triple or a double. While the other parents routinely came to the games, Esmeralda's parents were never there. One day, Esmeralda came to practice with a new tattoo of a boy's name. I assumed that it was the name of a new boyfriend, but she corrected me and told me it was her father's name. Her father was serving a life sentence in state prison. He had been in prison since Esmeralda was a child. The following year, Esmeralda was absent from school for four consecutive days. When she showed up on Friday, I asked her where she had been. She told me that over the weekend federal agents broke down her front door at 4:00 in the morning; they searched the entire house and arrested her mother and aunt. Esmeralda was terrified and had no idea what was going on. She later found out that her mother was part of a drug smuggling operation, and the police had found large amounts of drugs and money in the home. After her mother's arrest, law enforcement seized their home, and Esmeralda and her older sister, who was only 20 years old, needed a place to stay. The two of them had no money, so they stayed with their mother's friends. From then on, Esmeralda only came to school about once a week, until she finally dropped out. Esmeralda was a very talented student-athlete, and any college would have been lucky to have her, but her family's circumstances prevented her from ever having a chance.

—Adriane Kayoko  
Peralta

The pop culture of the '60s, with all its ideological ramifications and projections, was a by-product of the drugs.

—James Parker

The tools of conquest do not necessarily come with bombs and explosions and fallout. There are weapons that are simply thoughts, attitudes, prejudices—to be found in the minds of men. For the record, prejudices can kill and suspicion can destroy, and a thoughtless, frightened search for a scapegoat has a fallout all its own—for the children and the children yet unborn.

—Rod Serling

Another essential to a universal and durable peace is social justice.

—Arthur Henderson

The elimination of war should be the major task of social education.

--Konrad Lorenz

Teasing is universal. Anthropologists have found the same fundamental patterns of teasing among New Zealand aborigine children and inner-city kids on the playgrounds of Philadelphia.

--Lawrence Kutner

It is persons least like ourselves who often teach us most about ourselves. They challenge us to examine what we have uncritically assumed to be true and raise our eyes to wider horizons. When people who are very different from one another must live and work together, tolerance and civility are the only hopes for peace. How we deal with our differences, how we nurture our shared bonds, will in large part determine the future...of our society and of our country.

--James O. Freedman,  
President,  
Dartmouth College

People today will have you believing life is a blank slate upon which you can write anything at all—this is poetic, even romantic. Unfortunately, it's also a lie, because life exists in, is bound by, shaped by, controlled by, and functions within a construct. Attempt to function outside that construct, or bend it to our will, or remove it completely, and you throw all of society into chaos. We're seeing that now. Like it or not, birds don't fly upside down...and neither can we.

—Northern Adams

Throughout history, females have picked providers for mates. Males pick anything.

--Margaret Mead

American women are good mothers, but they make poor wives.

--Margaret Mead

Marriage is a fundamental social institution. It is central to the nurture and raising of children. It is the 'social glue' that reliably attaches fathers to children. It contributes to the physical, emotional and economic health of men, women and children, and thus to the nation as a whole. It is also one of the most highly prized of all human relationships and a central life goal of most Americans.

--David Popenoe and  
Barbara  
Whitehead

What's unusual in the human record, then, is not men cheating on their wives. No, what's unusual is male fidelity. The idea that men should be lovingly faithful to a single wife emerged as a Western middle-class ideal only in the 18th century.

--Kay Hymowitz

When you're writing about black people, white people may assume it's unconnected to them. But the reality is that what's happened to the black family is already beginning to happen to the white family. In 1950, 64 percent of African American women were married—roughly the same percentage as white women. By 1965, African American marriage rates had declined precipitously....Black marriage rates have fallen drastically in the years since—but then, so have white marriage rates....In 1965, fewer than 25 percent of black children were born out of wedlock; in 2011, considerably more than 25 percent of white children are....Just as the decline of marriage in the black underclass augured the decline of marriage in the white underclass, the decline of marriage in the black middle class has prefigured the decline of marriage in the white middle class.

--Kate Bolick

With society, marriage laws, and the courts the way they are (anti-male), why would any sane man with means get married today? Just as women have choices, so do men. Men can adopt, have babies through surrogates, etc. All without a wife. The woman holds all the cards in a relationship. She chooses whom she will date, whom she will have sex with, whom she will marry, whom she will have children with, and when she will divorce him (and get a big payday). TV tells a woman she does not need a man. The 'it takes a village' crowd tells her she does not need a man. The courts tell her she does not need a man. Until she hears her biological clock loudly ticking in her ears, she does not think she needs a man. For the past 40 years, women have been making their bed, and now they are starting to worry that men don't want to sleep in it.

--onlyabill (*TheAtlantic.com*)

In nearly 40 percent of American marriages, the wife earns more than the husband. Data indicate that this power inversion can trigger not just problems with gender identity but a troubling amount of male infidelity (peculiar new trend: women who are financially dependent on their husbands tend to be faithful, while, paradoxically, financially dependent men tend to stray). One 2010 study showed that when a woman's contribution to household income tops 60 percent, the couple is more likely to divorce.

--Sandra Tsing Loh

Gay marriage can function as a controlled experiment, helping us see which aspects of marital difficulty are truly rooted in gender and which are not. A growing body of social science has begun to compare straight and same-sex couples in an attempt to get at the question of what is female, what is male. Some of the findings are surprising. For instance: we know that heterosexual wives are more likely than husbands to initiate divorce. Social scientists have struggled to explain the discrepancy, variously attributing it to the sexual revolution; to women's financial independence; to men's failure to keep modern wives happy. Intriguingly, in Norway and Sweden, where registered partnerships for same-sex couples have been in place for about two decades (full-fledged marriage was introduced several years ago), research has found that lesbians are twice as likely as gay men to split up. If women become dissatisfied even when married to other women, maybe the problem with marriage isn't men. Maybe women are too particular. Maybe even women don't know what women want.

--Liza Mundy

As our economy has transitioned away from manufacturing and industry, men with a high-school education can no longer expect the steady, well-paying union jobs that formerly enabled many to support their families. Out-dated assumptions that men should bring something to the table, and that this something should be money, don't help. Surveying their prospects, many working-class mothers reject marriage altogether, perhaps reasoning that they can support a child, but don't want a dependent husband.

--Liza Mundy

There will be changes to marriage, changes that some people will find scary. 'When [conservatives] say that gay marriage threatens my marriage, I used to say, 'That's ridiculous.' Now I say, 'Yeah, it does. It's asking you a crucial question about your marriage that you may not want to answer: If I'm a man, am I actually sharing the duties and responsibilities of married life equally with my wife? Same-sex marriage gives us another image of what marriage can be.

--Gary Hall

Black women who do marry are more likely than any other group of women to ‘marry down.’

--Kate Bolick

There is no such thing as a traditional marriage. In various places and at various points in human history, marriage has been a means by which young children were betrothed, uniting royal houses and sealing alliances between nations. In the Bible, it was a union that sometimes took place between a man and his dead brother’s widow, or between one man and several wives. It has been a vehicle for the orderly transfer of property from one generation of males to the next; the test by which children were deemed legitimate or bastard; a privilege not available to black Americans; something parents arranged for their adult children; a contract under which women, legally, ceased to exist. Well into the 19th century, the British common-law concept of ‘unity of person’ meant a woman became her husband when she married, giving up her legal standing and the right to own property or control her own wages.

--Liz Mundy

The central conflict of domestic life right now is not men versus women, mothers versus fathers. It is family versus money. Domestic life today is like one of those behind-the-scenes TV series about show business. The main narrative tension is: ‘How the hell are we going to make this happen?’ There are tears and laughs and little intrigues, but in the end, it’s just a miracle that the show goes on, that everyone is fed and clothed and out the door each day.

--Stephen Marche

In many pockets of 21st-century America, the idea of the wedding as something communal is anathema—a relic from a bygone era or the realm of the devoutly religious. Nuptials today are defined by your Pinterest board, of which there are a multiplying number of wedding-related ones, three-day destination extravaganzas, and \$200 spoons from Michael C. Fina. So, many American weddings have evolved into a fixation with material details, trials of abject devotion by members of the wedding party, and resigned acceptance of bridal crusades for perfection that threaten to crush all in their path. Because, well, you deserve it—it’s your day.

--Hannah Seligson

According to a 2010 Pew poll, almost all millennials accept interracial dating and marriage—and the younger the person, the more likely that person was to have a friend of a different race.

--Caroline Linton



American marriage is faltering—and the baby is being thrown out with the bath water. Forty-four percent of millennials agree that marriage is becoming ‘obsolete.’ And even among those who support tying the knot (including many of those who say it’s obsolete), just 41 percent say children are important for a marriage—down from 65 percent in 1990.

--Joel Kotkin and  
Harry Siegel

The childless and even the partnerless life has gained something of a cultural cachet, with some suggesting they represent not just a legitimate choice but a superior one. It’s a burgeoning movement that’s joined cultural tastemakers, academics, neo-Malthusians, greens, feminists, Democratic politicians, urban planners, and big developers—each with their own reasons for advancing ‘singlism,’ the term coined by University of California, Santa Barbara, psychology professor Bella DePaulo. Unlike families, whose members, after all, are often stuck with one another, she praises singles as enjoying ‘intentional communities’ and being more likely ‘to think about human connectedness in a way that is far-reaching and less predictable.’

--Joel Kotkin and  
Harry Siegel

Unattached is the new fancy-free, a strategy for success that translates to later marriages, easier divorces, fewer kids, and a tendency to keep running toward the next horizon, skipping family dinner in the process.

--Thomas Joiner

Marriage is no longer the thing that kicks off a woman’s adult life. As sociologists put it, marriage is now a capstone event instead. It’s the thing you do when your life is in shape, when you have the right amount of money—and particularly in middle and lower-income communities, when you know you have the right partner, and in many cases, when you already have a kid. Marriage is popularly a sign that your life is in order, which contributes to this renewed positioning of marriage as aspirational.

—Rebecca Traister

Domestic violence occurs at all socioeconomic levels.

—Asa Don Brown

Our untidy sexual urges and the uneven rhythms of our lives can’t be regimented, no matter how much society expects otherwise.

—Tennessee Williams

We must face up to the fact that the phenomenon of out-of-wedlock births has reached epidemic proportions and is undermining the viability of our community. We've simply got to persuade our young people that they ought not to bring their own flesh and blood into this world unless they are fully prepared to love, nurture and provide for them.

If they aren't ready and willing to assume full responsibilities of parenthood, then this is an almost surefire prescription for poverty for their own flesh and blood. They owe their children and our people a better shot at success in life.

--Hugh Price

Abuse in any form by either party is wrong, duh, but whine to me when violence against men is the same as violence against women, because newsflash, it's not. The risk that men pose to women is not the same as the one we pose to men, statistics prove that. Y'all have to worry about a crazy girlfriend keying your car, we have to worry about a crazy guy KILLING us.

—Katie Miller

The purpose of dating is not much clearer than its definition. Before the early 1900s, when people started 'dating,' they 'called.' That is, men called on women, and everyone more or less agreed on the point of the visit. The potential spouses assessed each other in the privacy of her home, her parents assessed his eligibility, and either they got engaged or he went on his way. Over the course of the 20th century, such encounters became more casual, but even tire kickers were expected to make a purchase sooner rather than later. Five decades ago, 72 percent of men and 87 percent of women had gotten married by the time they were 25. By 2012, the situation and basically reversed: 78 percent of men and 67 percent of women were unmarried at that age.

—Judith Shulevitz

During the Progressive era, with women beginning to vote and race riots breaking out across growing urban centers, lawmakers seized on flirting as a menace to social order. New York City police set up flirting dragnets, using 'pretty blonde girls as bait,' according to a syndicated newspaper column from June, 1920. 'The enormous recent growth of the crime of flirting...must be ascribed to a growing laxity of conduct in general, and also to the rise of the short skirt,' the article continued. 'It should be promptly and drastically suppressed.'

—Amanda Ripley

Those who are able to see beyond the shadows and lies of their culture will never be understood, let alone believed, by the masses.

—Plato

Many religions start with the notion that the deity is male and that, therefore, males are superior to women. This irrational idea informs boys' sexual map as they grow into men and breeds ideas such as the following: women are subservient to men; men have control over women's bodies; and men are more intelligent and closer to their god.

—Darrel Ray

Narcissistic fathers leave their daughters with deep doubts about whether a man can love them, since the first important man in their life was so in love with himself that he had no love left for them. If you are a daughter of a narcissistic father you may have withdrawn from men and bound yourself to mother, either overtly or emotionally. Or you may be engaged in a self-destructive attempt to be his kind of girl, whatever that is, as you try desperately to extract his love. Perhaps you have transferred this into a masochistic position with other men, finding a narcissistic man incredibly attractive as you try to master the mystery of winning his love. And narcissistic men appeal to you because you wish you could be that way yourself — assertive, not giving a damn, self-important — but you lack the confidence to do it yourself so you identify with the man who has their quality, even if it's at your expense. (I have often seen this revealed in those instances where a woman has suffered through a degradingly submissive and abusing relationship with a man, or a series of men, and then, gaining the strength to break that kind of bondage, violently overturns the tables and abuses that man, or the next man in her life, as degradingly as she was misused. It's not just revenge, but the release of hidden desire to be powerful and to be able to control father and make him beg for her love.)

—Howard M. Halpern

Living in a society where the objective social position and the reputed virtues of white women smother whatever worth black women may have, the Negro male is put to judging his women by what he sees and imagines the white woman is.

--Calvin Hernton

Good-looking individuals are treated better than homely ones in virtually every social situation, from dating to trial by jury.

—Martha Beck

Sociologists in general believe that when society robs people of self-control, individual dignity, or a connection to something larger than themselves, suicide rates rise.

--Tony Dokoupil

One half of the world cannot understand the pleasures of the other.

—Jane Austen

The life-saving power of belonging may help explain why, in America, blacks and Hispanics have long had much lower suicide rates than white people. They are more likely to be lashed together by poverty, and more enduringly tied by the bonds of faith and family. In the last decade, as suicide rates have surged among middle-aged whites, the risk for blacks and Hispanics of the same age has increased less than a point—although they suffer worse health by almost every other measure. There's an old joke in the black community, a nod to the curious power of poverty and oppression to keep suicide rates low. It's simple, really: you can't die by jumping from a basement window.

--Tony Dokoupil

As a physician, I feel awash in the decrepitude of patients who desire just one more medical procedure to extend their bionic existence. No one discusses the ethics of therapeutic intervention, simply the mechanics of medication, surgery, hospitalization. I had hoped that the rise in palliative-care services would help channel elderly, chronically ill patients to a more natural death. As a society, we cannot support this current trend toward eternal existence, either financially or emotionally.

—Mary Kemen, M.D.

We have many cases of men committing suicide rather than face their own individuality. I know of no case of a woman who committed suicide because she was gay.

—George Weinberg

Hitherto man had to live with the idea of death as an individual; from now onward mankind will have to live with the idea of its death as a species.

--Arthur Koestler

Normal people—people who otherwise have no signs of derangement or a lack of a grip on basic human moral principles—do evil stuff all the time...that's the human condition: We don't have easy access to a zoomed-out view of morality and empathy. We do what the people around us are doing, what our culture is doing.

—Jesse Singal

America has the longest prison sentences in the West, yet the only condition long sentences demonstrably cure is heterosexuality.

—Bruce Jackson

Morality is the custom of one's country and the current feeling of one's peers.  
Cannibalism is moral in a cannibal country.

—Samuel Butler

If people become ecstatic the whole society will have to change, because this society is based on misery. If people are blissful you cannot lead them to war—to Vietnam, or to Egypt, or to Israel. No. Someone who is blissful will just laugh and say: This is nonsense!

—Osho

Running around the outside of an insane society, the healthiest thing you can do is laugh.

--Warren Hinckle

'And that,' put in the Director sententiously, 'that is the secret of happiness and virtue—like what you've got to do. All conditioning aims at that: making people like their unescapable social destiny.'

--Aldous Huxley

There are four varieties in society; the lovers, the ambitious, observers, and fools.  
The fools are the happiest.

--Hippolyte Taine

In American culture, descended from Puritans, all universal sources of pleasure are eventually medicalized, then politicized and finally policed—if not prohibited altogether: witness alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, fat, pornography, masturbation.

—Prof. Richard Klein

Society is like a stew. If you don't stir it up every once in a while then a layer of scum floats to the top.

—Edward Abbey

We are a society of notoriously unhappy people: lonely, anxious, depressed, destructive, dependent — people who are glad when we have killed the time we are trying so hard to save.

—Erich Fromm

Woman knows what Man has too long forgotten, that the ultimate economic and spiritual unit of any civilization is still the family.

--Clare Boothe Luce

The most ancient of all societies, and the only natural one, is that of the family.

--J. J. Rousseau

A healthy society is based on the family, operating as a free and responsible agency, and each time the family relinquishes any of its functions to the social group or the state, our society is thereby weakened.

--Mortimer Smith

The strength of a nation, especially of a republican nation, is in the intelligent and well-ordered homes of the people.

--Lydia H. Sigourney

The family is the basis of society, the nation and civilization.

--Ruby Dee

No one family form—nuclear, extended, single-parent, matrilineal, patrilineal, fictive, residential, nonresidential—necessarily provides an environment better for humans to live or raise children in. Wife beating, child abuse, psychological terror, material deprivation and malnutrition take place in each of those family forms. And our responsibility, whether single parents or coparents or no parents at all, is to do all in our power to help create a healthy nonoppressive family environment for every living human being.

--Dr. Johnetta B. Cole

As are families, so is society. If well ordered, well instructed, and well governed, they are the springs from which go forth the streams of national greatness and prosperity—of civil order and public happiness.

—Frank Thayer

It is important for practical and psychological reasons to call any reasonably stable group that rears children a family....The advantage of this view is that traditional and nontraditional families can all be seen to serve the interests of children. Children can also feel comfortable with an approved family form, even if it is not traditional.

--Sandra Scarr

Families and societies are small and large versions of one another. Both are made up of people who have to work together, whose destinies are tied up with one another. Each features the components of a relationship: leaders perform roles relative to the led, the young to the old, and male to female; and each is involved with the process of decision-making, use of authority, and the seeking of common goals.

--Virginia Satir

It is now clear to me that the family is a microcosm of the world. To understand the world, we can study the family: issues such as power, intimacy, autonomy, trust, and communication skills are vital parts underlying how we live in the world. To change the world is to change the family.

--Virginia Satir

Children belong in families, which, ideally, serve as a sanctuary and a cushion from the world at large. Parents belong to society and are a part of that greater world. Sometimes parents are a channel to the larger society, sometimes they are a shield from it. Ideally they act as filters, guiding their children and teaching them to avoid the tempting trash.

--Louise Hart

Far from being the basis of the good society, the family, with its narrow privacy and tawdry secrets, is the source of all our discontents.

--Sir Edmund Leach

Our notion of the perfect society embraces the family as its center and ornament, and this paradise is not secure until children appear to animate and complete the picture.

--Amos Bronson Alcott

There are laws for everything except the harm families do.

—Sue Grafton

Seven million American families live in gated developments. These modern suburban fortresses are the kinds of places that mostly white and affluent Americans choose to live in when they want to feel safe—from crime, from economic uncertainty, from Americans who are not mostly white and affluent.

—Franz Lidz

If you keep your food in a refrigerator  
your clothes in a closet  
if you have a bed to sleep in  
And a roof over your head  
You are richer than 75% of the world population.

D. L. Hughley

Society is like the air, necessary to breathe but insufficient to live on.

—George Santayana

The only remedy against hunger is reasonable birth control.

—Friedrich Durrenmatt

A good father is one of the most unsung, unpraised, unnoticed, and yet one of the most valuable assets in our society.

—Billy Graham

I am opposing a social order in which it is possible for one man who does absolutely nothing that is useful to amass a fortune of hundreds of millions of dollars, while millions of men and women who work all the days of their lives secure barely enough for a wretched existence.

--Eugene V. Debs

History will smile to think that this is the species for which Socrates and Jesus Christ died.

—Julien Benda

In a word, most Negro youth are in danger of being caught up in the tangle of pathology that affects their world, and probably a majority are so entrapped. Many of those who escape do so for one generation only: as things now are, their children may have to run the gauntlet all over again. That is not the least vicious aspect of the world that white America has made for the Negro.

—Daniel Moynihan in  
*The Negro Family:  
The Case for  
National Action,*  
[1965]

No Negro can saunter down a street with any real certainty that violence will not visit him on his walk...[He knows] in the cells of his existence that life [is] war, nothing but war.

—Norman Mailer

If black people kill black people every day, why not have a week and kill white people? You understand what I'm saying? In other words, white people, this government and that Mayor were well aware of the fact that black people were dying every day in Los Angeles under gang violence. So if you're a gang member and you would normally be killing somebody, why not a white person?

—Sister Souljah



It is not enough for ninety-five out of every hundred Negroes to be lawful. The ninety-five must band themselves together to restrain or suppress the vicious five.

—Kelly Miller, [1899]

## **BULLET**

Somebody shot a bullet, and my  
brother died.

Somebody shot a bullet, and for a day  
my momma cried.

Somebody shot a bullet, and my  
brother's not here anymore.

Somebody pulled a trigger, and I  
never will know why.

Somebody pulled a trigger, and my  
brother had to die.

Somebody pulled a trigger, and I  
won't forget that bang.

Somebody pulled a trigger, to be  
accepted by a gang.

Somebody changed my world that  
night, and I'm still asking why.

Somebody changed my world that  
night when my brother had to die.

Somebody changed my world, and if  
I could, I know what I'd do,

But I don't want to be like them—  
So God, I'll leave it up to you.

—Anonymous Teen

Every conversation about gun deaths should begin by recognizing one blindingly clear fact about this problem—the United States is on its own planet. The gun death rate in the U.S. is 10 times that of other advanced industrial countries. Places such as Japan and South Korea have close to zero gun-related deaths in a year. The United States has around 30,000.

—Fareed Zakaria

We in Europe ... do not consider the freedom to buy weapons a human right.

— Gisela Kallenbach

States that have some of the highest percentages of gun ownership have some of the highest gun-related death rates (Alaska, Wyoming, Montana, Arkansas), and those with some of the lowest rates of gun ownership generally have the lowest gun-related death rates (New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island).

—Fareed Zakaria

Connecticut passed a law in 1995 that made it harder to buy guns. In the following decade, the gun-related homicide rate was 40 percent lower than projected had the law not been passed, according to Johns Hopkins researchers. On the other hand, Missouri in 2007 made it much easier to buy a gun. Over the next five years, the gun-related homicide rate was 25 percent higher than projected.

—Fareed Zakaria

One of the main government agencies that sponsors research on public health, the *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, has been virtually forbidden by law from doing any research on gun violence and public policy for two decades. Buried in a 1996 law is a provision, championed by the *National Rifle Association*, that prohibits the CDC from funding research that might advocate or promote gun control. In America, in 2017, we essentially have a ban on scientific research that might lead to inconvenient conclusions.

—Fareed Zakaria

Roughly 9 million people carried loaded handguns at least once a month, including 3 million who carried them every day. People who carry handguns at least once a month were disproportionately likely to be conservative men between the ages of 18 and 29 residing in Southern states.

—*American Journal of  
Public Health*

So long as you have a society with a lot of guns—and America has more guns per capita than any other county in the world—children will be at risk of being shot. The questions are how much risk, and what, if anything, is being done to minimize it? If one thinks of various ways in which commonplace items, from car seats to medicine bottle tops, have been childproofed, it's clear that society's general desire has been to eliminate as many potential dangers from children as possible, even when the number of those who might be harmed is relatively small. If one child's death is preventable, then the proper question isn't 'Why should we do this' but rather 'Why shouldn't we?' It would be strange for that principle to apply to everything but guns.

--Gary Younge

When we protect guns more than we protect children, we become an uncivilized society.

—Internet Meme

Let us have it plain: my society is comprised of metal-worshipers. They pray to metal, are owned by metal, and metal uses them; it shoots them, it stabs them. I witness its sycophants, grave zombies, moved about humorlessly as its agents. My minions are spiritually rapt as the ages climax in gunpowder. One notes that, upon first being handed a rifle—by Burton or Speke?—a chieftain blithely shot one of his own lackeys, expressing radiant joy as the man tumbled dead. Do not stop there, happy Klansman, but watch with me early in the morning as I come in from work: across the street here in the clean ‘burbs’ your white policeman goes reverently to his car with a deer rifle coddled in his right arm like a precocious, beautiful child. This man lives with a pistol on his hip all week, but that is not enough, no, he is devout and it is the Christmas season. His own cowardice, affirmed by the use of guns, would not occur to him any more than the cowardice of God. The gun lobby, oh my peaceful friends, you may hate, but first you had better understand that it is a religion, only secondarily connected to the Bill of Rights. The thick-headed, sometimes even close to tearful, gaze you get when chatting with one of its partisans emanates from the view that they're holding a piece of God. There is no persuading them otherwise, even by a genius, because a life without guns implies the end of the known world to them. Any connection they make to our ‘pioneer past’ is also a fraud, a wistful apology. Folks love a gun for what it can do. A murderer always thinks it was an accident, he says, as if a religious episode had passed over him.

--Barry Hannah

One of the arguments that authoritarian governments use to ward off the call for greater political freedom is to argue that American-style democracy is no guarantee of good policy.... Over the years, I've grown used to these arguments, and my response has rarely wavered: Sure, we might make dumb choices sometimes, but we will defend, to the end, the right to make choices at all, because we believe that our collective conscience, freely expressed, will eventually lead us in the right direction. When it comes to guns, it is getting harder to muster that argument abroad. Every new shooting, every new failure of will and citizenship, slashes another hole in our credibility as a way of life.

--Evan Osnos

This country will not be a good place for any of us to live in unless we make it a good place for all of us to live in.

—Theodore Roosevelt

The regularity of mass killings breeds familiarity. The rhythms of grief and outrage that accompany them become — for those not directly affected by tragedy — ritualised and then blend into the background noise. That normalisation makes it ever less likely that America’s political system will groan into action to take steps to reduce their frequency or deadliness.

Those who live in America, or visit it, might do best to regard them the way one regards air pollution in China: an endemic local health hazard which, for deep-rooted cultural, social, economic and political reasons, the country is incapable of addressing.

This may, however, be a bit unfair. China seems to be making progress on pollution.

—*The Economist*

My biggest frustration so far is the fact that this society has not been willing to take some basic steps to keep guns out of the hands of people who can do just unbelievable damage. We’re the only developed country on Earth where this happens. ... And it happens once a week. And it’s a one-day story. ... The country has to do some soul-searching on this.

—Barack Obama

The Second Amendment has no place in modern society.

— Alan M. Dershowitz

The world is a harrowing place and sometimes you just don’t know what to say about it. You want to do something, but nothing gets done. No one does anything. And that seems insane. And it can make you feel hopeless. Now, I don’t know what to do, but I know that hopelessness is not the answer. You cannot give up in the face of evil.

Now, this hopelessness, this powerlessness you feel when nothing gets done is something, as I said, we can’t give into ’cause I actually think that there are some people out there—some truly evil people out there—who want you to feel powerless, just for a buck. Because if you feel powerless enough, you know what might make you feel more powerful? Going to buy a gun.

It’s a vicious cycle. Violence happens, nothing gets done to get rid of the guns, and people buy more guns to protect themselves and now there are just more guns out on the street.

Get the power back. You can go vote. Vote for someone who will do something.

—Stephen Colbert

The savior who wants to turn men into angels is as much a hater of human nature as the totalitarian despot who wants to turn them into puppets.

—Eric Hoffer

A remarkable 75 percent of children killed with guns this year have been under the age of 12. Since the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, three years ago, an American child under 12 has died by intentional or accidental gunfire every other day, according to analysis by NBC News. And those children are far more likely to die from guns held by family members and acquaintances than strangers, according to an NBC News analysis of FBI data.

On August 18, 9-year-old Jamyla Bolden was killed by a bullet fired into her Ferguson, Missouri, home as she did her homework on her bed. ‘Usually when we hear the gunshots, she’s the first one who yells ‘Mom, they’re shooting!’ her mother told KMOV.com, a local news station. ‘I noticed Jamyla wasn’t saying anything. That’s the main thing I remember: her not moving.’

—Jennifer Mascia

The main vehicle for nineteenth-century socialization was the leading textbook used in elementary school. They were so widely used that sections in them became part of the national language. Theodore Roosevelt, scion of an elite New York family, schooled by private tutors, had been raised on the same textbooks as the children of Ohio farmers, Chicago tradesman, and New England fishermen. If you want to know what constituted being a good American from the mid-nineteenth century to World War I, spend a few hours browsing through the sections in the McGuffey Readers.

--Charles Murray

In the Postwar Era, advertisements and TV shows often painted a clear vision of the ideal American life: you get married, buy a home, find a ‘good’ job, and build a ‘normal’ life— generally in that order. And to achieve these goals, you put your head down and worked hard.

The counterculture revolution of the 1960s helped ignite a greater interest in achievements beyond material possessions— as well as a movement toward personal expression, meaning, and truth. With that heightened awareness, though, there was still a desire to show the world we had ‘made it.’ Whether it was taking a vacation, buying our first home, or starting a landscaping business, we kept people in the loop by sending postcards, having housewarming parties, or buying newspaper ads. We had realized our ambitions—and we didn’t mind showing it.

—*Synchrony Financial*

As the society has gotten larger and more complex, individuals have lost their ability to influence any of the institutions that affect their lives.

—Robert Teeter

I began pulling out old pictures and yearbooks from our Los Angeles high schools and UC Berkeley. Suddenly there we were, thousands of trim-haired, neatly-dressed, conservative-looking youngsters, with perky, forced smiles, encased in identical inch by inch-and-a-quarter boxes for our children to snicker at. Only they did not snicker.

‘Mom, this isn’t the 60s, is it?’

—Elise Frances Miller

Who has not felt that he has surrendered all his powers to others, to the ‘system’ which he must work through to gain anything back? Who is not felt that all his rights have been taken away and deposited for safe-keeping in institutions to which he must humbly petition for each small withdrawal? The Church doles out in small allowances the spiritual teachings which God gave us liberally. The government allows us to pull a lever once a year to voice all our discontents with the way it is running things; or we can write a letter to another institution—the press—and hope that our small voice will be amplified there. The courts allow us to bring a suit, if we can muster the resources and time and money to begin a lifetime court battle against some corporation behind which our unknown enemy is hiding in his gray suit. We have given the right to defend and protect us over to the police, and who of us is not afraid of the police? For the universities we have given the right to educate us, and they measure out small portions from the centuries’ storehouse of wisdom and then certify us with a paper that says we are ‘Doctors a Philosophy.’ Often we must also petition a board of examiners to get a license to use our knowledge. We wait humbly for our businesses to ration out annual raises and promotions—our annual allotment of self-worth. We dumbly wait for doctors and hospitals to give us our dispensation of good health. Culturally we enter competitions—sports, arts, etc., then wait for committees to award us our measure of success. Or worse yet, we give over the power to entertain ourselves to the media who dole out our pitiful allowances of enjoyment. As consumers we dutifully pay our bills and devoutly hope that our goods and services will hold up so that we will not have to be Davids initiating individual action against corporate Goliaths. ‘Give us this day our daily bread’ is our meek prayer to all the lords to whom we have given away ourselves. We spend our lives waiting for crumbs from the tables of giants. Who is that felt, when the returns on our investment of patient effort and trust seemed meager and niggardly, that he would rather put off this meek submission and violently take back to himself the powers he has surrendered to the gods. No wonder we are a violent society!

—Mary Rose  
Shaughnessy

It is impossible to have a healthy and sound society without a proper respect for the soil.

--Peter Maurin

I think there [are] very good reasons why the Negro in this country has been treated for such a long time in such a cruel way... Some of them are social, and... they have to do with our social panic, with our fear of losing status. This really amounts sometimes to a kind of social paranoia. One cannot afford to lose status on this peculiar ladder, for the prevailing notion of American life seems to involve a kind of rung-by-rung ascension to some hideously desirable state. If this is one's concept of life, obviously one cannot afford to slip back one rung. When one slips, one slips back not a rung but back into chaos and no longer knows who he is. And this reason, this fear, suggests to me one of the real reasons for the status of the Negro in this country. In a way, the Negro tells us where the bottom is: because he is there, and where he is, beneath us, we know where the limits are and how far we must not fall. We must not fall beneath him. We must never allow ourselves to fall that low.

—James Baldwin

In the beginning I thought that the white world was very different from the world I was moving out of and I turned out to be entirely wrong. It seemed different. It seemed safer,...it seemed cleaner, it seemed more polite, and, of course, it seemed much richer from the material point of view. But I didn't meet anyone in that world who didn't suffer from the very same affliction that all the people I had fled from suffered from and that was that they didn't know who they were. They wanted to be something that they were not. And very shortly I didn't know who I was, either. I could not be certain whether I was really rich or really poor, really black or really white, really male or really female, really talented or a fraud, really strong or merely stubborn. In short, I had become an American. I had stepped into...the bottomless confusion which is both public and private, of the American republic.

—James Baldwin

The societies kids naturally form are tribal. Gangs, clubs, packs. But we're herded into schools and terrified into behaving. Taught how we're supposed to pretend to be, taught to parrot all kinds of nonsense at the flick of a switch, taught to keep our heads down and our elbows in and shut off our minds and shut off our sex. We learn we can't even piss when we have to. That's how we learn to be plastic and dumb.

—Marge Piercy

Why do people move to suburbia? To have kids! So no wonder it seemed boring and sterile. The whole place was a giant nursery, an artificial town created explicitly for the purpose of breeding children.

—Paul Graham

Striving for perfection in mind, body and spirit is a Korean way of life, and the cult of endless self-improvement begins as early as the hagwons, cram schools that keep the nation's children miserable and sleep-deprived, and sends a sizable portion of the population under the plastic surgeon's knife.

—Gary Shyteyngart

The numbers are stark: One in four U.S. students will witness or experience a traumatic event before the age of 4, and more than two-thirds by age 16. These children do not—they cannot—simply close their eyes to what they've seen or experienced. With each forced eviction, each arrest of an adult in their home, each abuse to their own bodies, an instinctive trigger to 'fight or flee' is pulled over and again. Over time, a child's developing brain is changed by these repeated traumatic experiences. Areas that govern the retention of memory, the regulation of emotion, and the development of language skills are affected. The result is a brain that has structurally adapted for survival under the most stressful circumstances,—but not for success in school.

—Mary Ellen Flannery

For the first time in recent memory, the majority of U.S. public school students come from low-income households. The student body includes a larger proportion than ever of students who are still learning to speak English. And it includes many students with disabilities who would have been shut out of public school before passage of the 1975 law now known as the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, which guaranteed all children 'a free appropriate public education.'

—Erika Christakis

Extensive research has conclusively demonstrated that children's social class is one of the most significant predictors—if not the single most significant predictor—of their educational success. Moreover, it is increasingly apparent that performance gaps by social class take root in the earliest years of children's lives and fail to narrow in the years that follow. That is, children who start behind stay behind—they are rarely able to make up the lost ground.

—*Economic Policy  
Institute*

The streets [of Delhi] seemed alive with people. People eating, people walking, people sleeping. People visiting, arguing, and screaming. People thrust their hands through the taxi window, begging. People defecating and urinating. People clinging to buses. People herding animals. People, people, people, people....Since that night, I've known the feel of overpopulation.

—Paul Ehrlich



As 1968 began, Paul Ehrlich was an entomologist at Stanford University, known to his peers for his groundbreaking studies of the co-evolution of flowering plants and butterflies but almost unknown to the average person. That was about to change. In May, Ehrlich released a quickly written, cheaply bound paperback, *The Population Bomb*. Initially it was ignored. But over time Ehrlich's tract would sell millions of copies and turn its author into a celebrity. It would become one of most influential books of the 20th Century—and one of the most heatedly attacked.

The first sentence set the tone: 'The battle to feed all of humanity is over.' And humanity had lost. In the 1970s, the book promised, 'hundreds of millions of people are going to starve to death.' No matter what people do, 'nothing can prevent a substantial increase in the world death rate.'

—Charles C. Mann

We are all immigrants to the future; none of us is a native in that land. Margaret Mead famously wrote about the profound changes wrought by the Second World War, 'All of us who grew up before the war are immigrants in time, immigrants from an earlier world, living in an age essentially different from anything we knew before.' Today we are again in the early stages of defining a new age. The very underpinnings of our society and institutions--from how we work to how we create value, govern, trade, learn, and innovate--are being profoundly reshaped by amplified individuals. We are indeed all migrating to a new land and should be looking at the new landscape emerging before us like immigrants: ready to learn a new language, a new way of doing things, anticipating new beginnings with a sense of excitement, if also with a bit of understandable trepidation.

--Marina Gorbis

The adequate study of culture, our own and those on the opposite side of the globe, can press on to fulfillment only as we learn today from the humanities as well as from the scientists.

—Ruth Benedict

Charity is salt in the wound. It is painful. The state gives charity with the bitter hatred of a victim to his blackmailer. The receiver of free money is subjected to harassment, insult, and profound humiliation. Newspapers are enlisted to heap scorn on the arrogant bastards who choose to beg instead of starve or let their children starve. It is made clear that the poor seek charity as a great and sordid chicanery in which they delight. And there are some who do. As there are people who take delight in sticking hot needles deep into their abdomens, swallow pieces of broken bottles. A special taste. Speaking for humanity in general, the poor accept charity with a shame and loss of self-respect that is truly pitiful.

--Mario Puzo

Personally, I believe ‘if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it’. I’d rather use film cameras and vinyl records and cathode ray tubes than any sort of the digital technology available. Look around! The streets are full of people who would rather have their eyes on their cell phones than on the world around them! Scientists are researching technology to erase specific memories from people! Our thrown-away digital technology is showing up overseas in huge piles of toxic heavy metals and plastic!

There are still people who keep wanting technology and the future to keep going. They dream of flying cars, or humanoid robots, of populated cities on Mars. But do we really NEED this stuff? Maybe before we try to keep turning our world into an episode of *The Jetsons*, we should focus more on the problems that are surprisingly being overlooked now more than ever. Before we design another stupid cell phone or build a flying car, let’s put a stop to racism, to sexism, to homophobia, to war. Let’s stop buying all our ‘American’ products from sweat shops overseas and let’s end poverty in third-world countries. Let’s let film photography never go obsolete, let’s let print books continue to be printed. Let’s stop domestic violence and child abuse and prostitution and this world’s heavy reliance on prescription drugs. Let’s stop terrorism, let’s stop animal cruelty, let’s stop overpopulation and urbanization, let’s stop the manufacture of nuclear weapons...

...I mean come on, we have all these problems to solve, but digital tech enthusiasts are more concerned that we don’t have flying cars or robotic maids yet? That’s pathetic.

--Rebecca McNutt

Just about every year, Congress passes another crime bill—spending billions of dollars to build more prisons, to place more band-aids on society’s scars.

—Carrie P. Meek

The real 1960s began on the afternoon of November 22, 1963. It came to seem that Kennedy’s murder opened some malign trap door in American culture, and the wild bats flapped out.

—Lance Morrow

I work hard to stay cynical enough! I keep my expectations of our culture and our leaders low, low, low, and I do it so I don’t have to be let down. And yet again I am lowballed by the brokenness of the American cultural machine.

--Vinnie Tesla

Over recent years, [there's been] a strong tendency to require assessment of children and teachers so that [teachers] have to teach to tests and the test determines what happens to the child, and what happens to the teacher...that's guaranteed to destroy any meaningful educational process: it means the teacher cannot be creative, imaginative, pay attention to individual students' needs, that a student can't pursue things [...] and the teacher's future depends on it as well as the students'...the people who are sitting in the offices, the bureaucrats designing this—they're not evil people, but they're working within a system of ideology and doctrines, which turns what they're doing into something extremely harmful [...] the assessment itself is completely artificial; it's not ranking teachers in accordance with their ability to help develop children who reach their potential, explore their creative interests and so on [...] you're getting some kind of a 'rank,' but it's a 'rank' that's mostly meaningless, and the very ranking itself is harmful. It's turning us into individuals who devote our lives to achieving a rank, not into doing things that are valuable and important.

It's highly destructive...in, say, elementary education, you're training kids this way [...] I can see it with my own children: when my own kids were in elementary school (at what's called a good school, a good-quality suburban school), by the time they were in third grade, they were dividing up their friends into 'dumb' and 'smart.' You had 'dumb' if you were lower-tracked, and 'smart' if you were upper-tracked [...] it's just extremely harmful and has nothing to do with education. Education is developing your own potential and creativity. Maybe you're not going to do well in school, and you'll do great in art; that's fine. It's another way to live a fulfilling and wonderful life, and one that's significant for other people as well as yourself. The whole idea is wrong in itself; it's creating something that's called 'economic man': the 'economic man' is somebody who rationally calculates how to improve his/her own status, and status means (basically) wealth. So you rationally calculate what kind of choices you should make to increase your wealth—don't pay attention to anything else—or maybe maximize the amount of goods you have.

What kind of a human being is that? All of these mechanisms like testing, assessing, evaluating, measuring...they force people to develop those characteristics. The ones who don't do it are considered, maybe, 'behavioral problems' or some other deviance [...] these ideas and concepts have consequences. And it's not just that they're ideas, there are huge industries devoted to trying to instill them...the public relations industry, advertising, marketing, and so on. It's a huge industry, and it's a propaganda industry. It's a propaganda industry designed to create a certain type of human being: the one who can maximize consumption and can disregard his actions on others. It's massive, and it starts with infants.

—Noam Chomsky

Even as the cell is the unit of the organic body, so the family is the unit of society.  
—Ruth Nanda Anshen

Human societies exist on three levels: the clan (your family and close friends), the village (your local community) and the tribe (your larger group). In America today you would say that the clans have polarized, the villages have been decimated and the tribes have become weaponized.

That is, some highly educated families have helicopter parents while less fortunate families have absent parents. The middle ring cross-class associations of town and neighborhood have fallen apart. People try to compensate for the lack of intimate connection by placing their moral and emotional longings on their political, ethnic and other tribes, turning them viciously on each other.

—Robin Dunbar (2018)

Nowhere are the mechanics of the growing geographic divide more evident than in the system of primary and secondary education. Public schools were born amid hopes of opportunity for all; the best of them have now been effectively reprivatized to better serve the upper classes. According to a widely used school-ranking service, out of more than 5,000 public elementary schools in California, the top 11 are located in Palo Alto. They're free and open to the public. All you have to do is move into a town where the median home value is \$3,211,100. Scarsdale, New York, looks like a steal in comparison: The public high schools in that area funnel dozens of graduates to Ivy League colleges every year, and yet the median home value is a mere \$1,403,600.

—Matthew Stewart

Beyond a certain threshold—5 percent minority or 20 percent, it varies according to the mood of the region—neighborhoods suddenly go completely black or brown.

—Matthew Stewart

Men speak about peace but prefer war. Men head the majority of governments and control the increasingly lethal weapons, using women and gods as moral shields. Unsparing in its portrayal of men's nature, *The Iliad* should be read by everyone who hopes to understand mankind.

—Esmeralda Santiago

Maya Angelou's poem 'Human Family—Her signature plea, 'We are more alike my friends, than unlike,' is truly universal.

—Don Marine

I have spent all my life under a Communist regime, and I will tell you that a society without any objective legal scale is a terrible one indeed. But a society with no other scale but the legal one is not quite worthy of man either.

—Aleksandr  
Solzhenitsyn

Historians and archaeologists will one day discover that the ads of our time are the richest and most faithful reflections that any society ever made of its entire range of activities

—Marshall McLuhan

Children in their games are wont to submit to rules which they have themselves established, and to punish misdemeanors which they have themselves defined. The same spirit pervades every act of social life.

—Alexis de Tocqueville

Voluntary associations have provided the people with their greatest school of self-government. Rubbing minds as well as elbows, they have been trained from youth to take common counsel, choose leaders, harmonize differences, and obey the expressed will of the majority. In mastering the associative way they have mastered the democratic way.

—Arthur Schlesinger Sr.

Whatever may be tolerated in monarchical and despotic governments, no republic is safe that tolerates a privileged class, or denies to any of its citizens equal rights and equal means to maintain them.

—Frederick Douglass

For all its flaws, the United States is uniquely equipped to unite a diverse and divided society. Alone among the world powers, America has succeeded in forging a strong group-transcending national identity without requiring its citizens to shed or suppress their subgroup identities. In the United States, you can be Irish American, Syrian American, or Japanese American, and be intensely patriotic at the same time. We take this for granted, but consider how strange it would be to call someone ‘Irish French’ or ‘Japanese Chinese.’

Most European and all East Asian countries originated as, and continue to be, ethnic nations, whose citizens are overwhelmingly composed of a particular ethnic group supplying the country’s name as wells its national language and dominant culture. Strongly ethnic nations, such as China and Hungary, tend to be less embracing of minority cultures.

—Amy Chua and Jed  
Rubenfeld

In most of history, societies have not been free. It's a very rare society that is free. The default condition of human societies is tyranny.

—Michael Novak

There would be no society if living together depended upon understanding each other.

—Eric Hoffer

Law helps organize human beings in communities that allow them to obtain the benefits of living together productively and in peace....The rule of law is the keystone of the effort to build a civilized, humane, and just society. At a time when facing facts, understanding the local and global challenges that they offer, and working to meet those challenges cooperatively is particularly urgent, we must continue to construct such a society—a society of laws—together.

—Stephen Breyer

Academic failure contributes to poverty and poor health and undermines workforce productivity in ways that harm the entire society.

—Anthony Biglan

Society's contempt for the poor becomes the poor person's contempt for herself.

—Sarah Smarsh

I am convinced that imprisonment is a way of pretending to solve the problem of crime. It does nothing for the victims of crime, but perpetuates the idea of retribution, thus maintaining the endless cycle of violence in our culture. It is a cruel and useless substitute for the elimination of those conditions—poverty, unemployment, homelessness, desperation, racism, greed—which are at the root of most punished crime. The crimes of the rich and powerful go mostly unpunished. It must surely be a tribute to the resilience of the human spirit that even a small number of those men and women in the hell of the prison system survive it and hold on to their humanity.

—Howard Zinn

The engine of ancient society was religion but the engine of contemporary society, as I see it, is advertising.

—Kit Williams

Every society has the criminals that it deserves.

—Havelock Ellis

You must read to your children and you must hug your children and you must love your children. Your success as a family, our success as a society, depends not on what happens in the White House, but on what happens inside your house.

—Barbara Bush

The privileged man, whether he be privileged politically or economically, is a man deprived in intellect and heart.

—Mikhail Bakunin

The more expensive a school is, the more crooks it has—I'm not kidding.

—J. D. Salinger

If you know the right people, they can help you do anything, be anybody, rules and hard work be damned—as long as they like you.

—Casey Gerald

Married women predominantly voted Republican....Even once-married women—widows and women who are separated—were more likely to vote Republican....proximity to white men incentivizes white women to shore up white male power wherever possible, and endorse policies and parties that protect the economic and political status of the men on whom they depend.

—Laura Kipnis

Academic and aristocratic people live in such an uncommon atmosphere that common sense can rarely reach them.

—Samuel Butler

Eighty-six percent of women in the U.S. have children....The majority of mothers also have jobs, which means that vast numbers of women of all races and classes are grappling with the same old problem: child care....and let's not prettify things. Maternity can be impoverishing—the result of yet more social decisions. Female-headed households were overrepresented in families living below the poverty line, and black mothers are far more likely to be in this group than white mothers are. (By contrast, in France, to take one much-cited example, publicly funded nurseries and preschool are regarded as a social right; 95 percent of children attend the latter, and the percentage of GDP spending on children is more than twice what it is in the United States.)

—Laura Kipnis

Why do children join gangs? Gangs can fill an emotional need for children that is not being met at home. Kids who join gangs are looking for something that is missing in their family life. Gangs offer acceptance that the family may not be offering. They also offer solidarity which may be missing from families where parents are absent or not available. Gang dress and rituals provide a sense of stability and belonging, and gang membership brings respect and a feeling of power that children find alluring.

—*National Association of  
Elementary School  
Principals*

For though my faith is not yours and your faith is not mine, if we are each free to light our own flame, together we can banish some of the darkness of the world.

—Rabbi Lord Jonathan  
Sacks

The idea that some lives matter less is the root cause of all that is wrong with the world.

—Internet Meme

Researchers have proven, scientifically, that humans are all one people. The color of our ancestors' skin and ultimately my skin and your skin is a consequence of ultraviolet light, of latitude and climate. Despite our recent sad conflicts here in the U.S., there really is no such thing as race. We are one species—each of us much, much more alike than different. We all come from Africa. We all are of the same stardust. We are all going to live and die on the same planet, a Pale Blue Dot in the vastness of space. We have to work together.

—Bill Nye

The society to which we belong seems to be dying or is already dead. I don't mean to sound dramatic, but clearly the dark side is rising. Things could not have been more odd and frightening in the Middle Ages. But the tradition of artists will continue no matter what form the society takes. And this is another reason to write: people need us, to mirror for them and for each other without distortion—not to look around and say, 'Look at yourselves, you idiots!', but to say, 'This is who we are.'

—Anne Lamott

It's only one generation from a pick handle to a putter, and one more from a tuxedo to a tramp.

—Will Rogers



Today's problems can't be solved by today's people.

—Barbara Kingsolver

The key to understanding any people is in its art: its writing, painting, sculpture.

—Louis L'Amour

The goal shouldn't be to eradicate anger. We couldn't if we tried...we need our anger. We need it to air our grievances with our friends, family, and colleagues. We also need the moral outrage that motivates citizens to push for a more just society. Neither the left nor the right has a monopoly on justice; likewise, injustice can come from either side. But, in particular, people who have historically been denied the right to express their anger—the women of the #MeToo movement, the activists of Black Lives Matter—shouldn't be expected to give up the fight now.

—Charles Duhigg

Flapper signifies...pretty, impudent, superbly assured, as worldly wise, briefly clad, and 'hard-berled' as possible.

—F. Scott Fitzgerald

The Founders believed not just in individual rights but in the common good. They were not small-d democrats but rather small-r republicans. They embraced the notion of interdependence—that human beings have shared interests and need institutions to pursue those interests, and that liberty can be preserved only through such institutions. They believed that a good society is the product of active citizenship combined with responsible and virtuous leadership. And they viewed these truths as universal—the United States was not coming into existence to rise and fall as other powers had, but rather to transform the world.

—Jake Sullivan

Traditions are basically dead people peer pressuring us.

—*theChive*

I think every middle school teacher should know, or try to understand, the social whirlwind of statuses that form and so quickly harden with every student in their place. What may seem, to a teacher, a classroom full of students peacefully working, may be exactly the opposite to a student. It becomes a room full of pitfalls, danger signs, and safe havens situated carefully in familiar territory. Every student, throughout the day, moves cautiously on 'safe' paths from room to room. They will not read in another level (or) territory. They will not mix; everyone knows their place. Only a teacher or a student from a higher level will cause them to mix. The separation between boys and girls is even more pronounced. Boys have territory separate from girls, and their own divisions in that. Boys and girls will absolute-

ly not mix, except in the rare groups of girls and boys that are friends; these groups are either absolute highest status, or the very bottom. Every student, boy or girl has this place, their territory, their paths, the people they can stay with on their level. I think middle school teachers should know of and try to understand this code of the students. This network of statuses and levels is ever present in middle schools. While some students may not be directly aware of it, they always have a subconscious understanding of where they fit. This is very important for middle school teachers to know.

—Anonymous Middle  
School Student  
quoted by Nancy  
Doda & Trudy  
Knowles

The children and children's children of all of us have to live here in this land together. Our children's children will intermarry, one with another, your children's children, friends, and mine. They will be the citizens of one country.

—Theodore Roosevelt

Increasingly, Americans are pursuing a selfish individualism that is inconsistent with strong families and strong communities. This movement is fueled by the media...which suggests that personal happiness is the highest good and that it can be achieved by pursuing pleasure and material goods. This message stands in stark contrast to the traditional Judeo-Christian values of community and self-sacrifice for the welfare of others.

—Peter Uhlenberg and  
David Eggebeen

A paradox in American culture is the attitude we hold concerning youth. On the one hand, we idolize, emulate, and envy them. Youth fashions, fads, and idiosyncrasies readily make their way into adult culture. The 'groovy,' 'hip,' and 'now' adults let their hair lengthen, modify their speech, and wear distinctive apparel to indicate their acceptance of youth's mores and idioms. On the other hand, society exacts its toll upon youth. There is a constant pressure to make them less adolescent and more adult. Physiological maturation and the cultural changes have caused adolescence to decrease in terms of its length or importance. Eighteen-year-olds voting, pressure for career and vocational decisions, and access to economic and social status associated with adulthood are indications that youth are being pressured by our society. The consequence is that the period of youth is both venerated and depreciated.

—J. Merrell Hansen

If a society is to preserve stability and a degree of continuity, it must learn how to keep its adolescents from imposing their tastes, values, and fantasies on everyday life.

—Eric Hoffer

The secret message communicated to most young people today by the society around them is that they are not needed, that the society will run itself quite nicely until they—at some distant point in the future—will take over the reigns. Yet the fact is that the society is not running itself nicely... because the rest of us need all the energy, brains, imagination and talent that young people can bring to bear down on our difficulties. For society to attempt to solve its desperate problems without the full participation of even very young people is imbecile.

—Alvin Toffler

Like its politicians and its wars, society has the teenagers it deserves.

—J. B. Priestley

Older people sometimes talk about the good old days when life was better. In fact, they talk nostalgically about their own youth that was irretrievably gone. The past century has made enormous progress in all fields. The standard of living, work environment, health care quality and mobility, and the availability of cultural programs, recreational activities and information—all that clearly speaks in favor of nowadays.

—Eraldo Banovac

Something must be radically wrong with a culture and a civilization when its youth begins to desert it. Youth is the natural time for revolt, for experiment, for a generous idealism that is eager for action. Any civilization which has the wisdom of self-preservation will allow a certain margin of freedom for the expression of this youthful mood. But the plain, unpalatable fact is that in America today that margin of freedom has been reduced to the vanishing point. Rebellious youth is not wanted here. In our environment there is nothing to challenge our young men; there is no flexibility, no color, no possibility for adventure, no chance to shape events more generously than is permitted under the rules of highly organized looting. All our institutional life combines for the common purpose of blackjacking our youth into the acceptance of the status quo; and not acceptance of it merely, but rather its glorification.

—Harold Edmund  
Stearns

The history of the hobo is the history of modern America. Starts right after the Civil War and the building of America's great railroads. There had always been a small floating population of agrarian workers, but they were limited by geography and technology. They were regional. Local. Language historians and etymologists aren't sure, but the word 'hobo' may come from this original population of farmworkers: 'hoe boys.'

The railroads changed all that. After the war there's an expanding displaced population available to ride—and help build a transportation network running from coast to coast. As this is happening, America is industrializing too, and the need for a mobile work force, willing, adaptable and relatively inexpensive to transport, becomes evident. The hobo.

By the late 19th century, the heart of Hobohemia was the main drag in Chicago, where train lines radiated out into every corner of America. It was easy to find work there in the slaughterhouses to make a buck before you caught out again; easy to go west and build a dam or go east and take a job in a new steel mill. So for decades it was America's hobo home. The Hobo Code was written there in 1894, an outline of ethical hobo practice and communal etiquette. Based in mutualism and self-respect, it remains every hobo's founding document, a simple and forthright set of instructions to live by.

—Jeff MacGregor

Hobo slang can be intuitive, or impenetrable, but it's always colorful. For example, the 'jungle' is just the communal hobo camp, usually near the railroad yard. Your 'bindle' is your bedroll. Your 'poke' is your wallet. 'Hundred on a plate' is a can of beans, and the jungle kitchen is run by the 'Crumb Boss.' The 'bulls' are the railroad police. 'Flyers' and 'hotshots' and 'redballs' are all fast freights. 'Catching out' means hopping the train. To die is to 'catch the westbound.' And understand this, above all else: a 'hobo' is an itinerant worker; someone who travels and finds work. A 'tramp' travels, but mostly does not work. A 'bum' neither travels nor works.

—Jeff MacGregor

I used to think that top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change. I thought that thirty years of good science could address these problems. I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed and apathy, and to deal with these we need a cultural and spiritual transformation. And we scientists don't know how to do that.

—Gus Speth

It is easier to go to the Internet than to go to the library, undoubtedly. But the shift from no libraries to the existence of libraries was a much greater shift than what we've seen with the Internet's development.

—Noam Chomsky

Growing up in the 1970s, all I knew was the Army. As a kid, because of my father's job as a drill sergeant, I lived on Army bases and went to Army schools. Army life is a society within a society. As a child, I did not encounter prejudice. You have no choice who your neighbor is. It's whoever the Army assigns. If Koreans are assigned, then your neighbors are Korean. If blacks are assigned, then your neighbors are black. You all go to school together. You depend on one another. Your dads work together. You get to be friends with everybody. But then when I was 13, my parents got divorced—Eva is my stepmother—and I moved to Georgia with my mother. That was the first time I experienced prejudice. I'll never forget sitting in class and the kid next to me says, 'What are you, black or white?' I said, 'I'm Puerto Rican.' He said, 'No, you're black or white. And you ain't white.' It blew my mind because, in Army society, everyone was equal.

—Giovanni Gomez

We all have the same God, we just serve him differently. Rivers, lakes, ponds, streams, oceans all have different names, but they all contain water. So do religions have different names, and they all contain truth, expressed in different ways forms and times. It doesn't matter whether you're a Muslim, A Christian, or a Jew. When you believe in God, you should believe that all people are part of one family. If you love God, you can't love only some of his children.

—Muhammad Ali

If a phenomenon like upward mobility can be measured with enough precision, then it can be understood; if it can be understood, then it can be manipulated.

—Raj Chetty

When an economist gets lost, a sociologist can touch his elbow and say, You know, I've been noticing some things.

—*Opportunity Insights*  
Staff

If you want to go bomb somebody, there's remarkably little discussion about how much it might cost. But when you have a discussion about whether or not we can assist suffering people, then suddenly we become very cost-conscious.

—Andrew J. Bacevich

Dad: When I was your age, I had to walk two miles uphill to school in the snow while holding a hot potato...

Son: I had to hide in a closet while a mass shooter killed my teacher and friends.

—[www.facebook.com/Pension-101-Haismans-Pension-Page](http://www.facebook.com/Pension-101-Haismans-Pension-Page)

Let me make this absolutely, 100% crystal clear, as a Johns Hopkins-trained scientist and ER doctor: There are ZERO studies liking video games to gun violence. There are MANY, MANY studies linking increased access to guns to gun violence. @GOPLeader, you are a lying coward.

—John Jiao, MD

I was buying Maisy school shoes, and she told me she didn't want a pair of light up shoes. I figured it was because she's going into 5th grade and they felt childish to her.

She said, 'What if there's a lockdown drill or school shooter? Light up shoes would make me stand out.'

We have officially failed, as a country, when a 10 year old doesn't want light up shoes because she's afraid of being a shooting victim.

—Lindsay Van Allen

No one cares about the poor, or about their lives.

—Francisco Toledo

[Meritocracy] turns elite families into business enterprises, and children into overworked, inauthentic success machines, while producing an economy that favors the super-educated and blights the prospects of the middle class, which sinks toward the languishing poor...immense investments in money and time...well-off couples make in their children. By kindergarten, the children of elite professionals are already a full two years ahead of middle-class children, and the achievement gap is almost unbridgeable.

—Daniel Markovits

Just under a century ago, the Soviet Union embarked on one of the strangest attempts to reshape the common calendar that has ever been undertaken. As Joseph Stalin raced to turn an agricultural backwater into an industrialized nation, his government downsized the week from seven to five days. Saturday and Sunday were abolished.

In place of the weekend, a new system of respite was introduced in 1929. The government divided workers into five groups, and assigned each to a different day off. On any given day, four-fifths of the proletariat would show up to their factories and work while the other fifth rested. Each laborer received a colored slip of paper—yellow, orange, red, purple, or green—that signified his or her group. The staggered schedule was known as *neprieryvka*, or the 'continuous workweek,' since production never stopped.

—Judith Shulevitz

A body of research suggests that children whose parents work odd or long hours are more likely to evince behavioral or cognitive problems, or be obese. Even parents who can afford nannies or extended day care are hard-pressed to provide thoughtful attention to their kids when work keeps them at their desks well past the dinner hour.

—Judith Shulevitz

Were I'm from is dying. It's an entire ecosystem in decline. I was with my cousin recently, driving through the county seat where I grew up—a little town of about 5,000 people called Preston, Idaho. We were passing down the main street, and I saw that every single shop we'd gone to as kids was boarded up. But there was a brand-new funeral parlor, bringing the town's total funeral parlors to two. That means the town now has one grocery store and two funeral parlors. My cousin turned to me and said, 'You know what? It's getting so the only thing there is to do around here is die.'

—Tara Westover (2019)

Social media has changed the lives of millions of Americans with a suddenness and force that few expected. The question is whether those changes might invalidate assumptions made by Madison and the other Founders as they designed a system of self-governance. Compared with Americans in the 18th century—and even late 20th century—citizens are now more connected to one another, in ways that increase public performance and foster moral grandstanding, on platforms that have been designed to make outrage contagious, all while focusing people's minds on immediate conflicts and untested ideas, untethered from traditions, knowledge, and values that previously exerted a stabilizing effect. This, we believe is why many Americans—and citizens of many other countries, too—experience democracies as a place where everything is going haywire.

—Jonathan Haidt and  
Tobias Rose-  
Stockwell

I do not believe that just because you're opposed to abortion, that that makes you pro-life. In fact, I think in many cases, your morality is deeply lacking if all you want is a child born but not a child fed, not a child educated, not a child housed. And why would I think that you don't? Because you don't want any tax money to go there. That's not pro-life. That's pro-birth. We need a much broader conversation on what the morality of pro-life is.

—Sister Joan Chittister

Bill Clinton banned assault weapons in 1994; mass shootings dropped 43%. GOP let the ban expire in 2004; they went up over 230%.

—Internet Meme

No matter what the law says, women will continue to get abortions. How do I know? Because in the relatively recent past, women would allow strangers to brutalize them, to poke knitting needles and wire hangers into their wombs, to thread catheters through their cervixes to fill them with Lysol, or scalding-hot water, or lye. Women have been willing to risk death to get an abortion. When we made abortion legal, we decided we weren't going to let that happen anymore. We were not going to let one more woman arrive at a hospital with her organs rotting inside of her. We accepted that we might lose that growing baby, but we were not also going to lose that women.

—Caitlin Flanagan

What the longtime sportswriter Robert Lipsyte calls 'jock culture' (or what the boys I talked with more often referred to as 'bro culture') is the dark underbelly of male-dominated enclaves, whether or not they formally involve athletics: all-boys' schools, fraternity houses, Wall Street, Silicon Valley, Hollywood, the military. Even as such groups promote bonding, even as they preach honor, pride, and integrity, they tend to condition young men to treat anyone who is not 'on the team' as the enemy (the only women who ordinarily make the cut are blood relatives—bros before hos!), justifying any hostility toward them. Loyalty is paramount, and masculinity is habitually established through misogynist language and homophobia.

—Peggy Orenstein

Many corporations, well into the mid-20th century, barred married women from employment: Companies would hire single women, but if those women got married, they would have to quit. Demeaning and disempowering treatment of women was rampant. Women spent enormous numbers of hours trapped inside the home under the headship of their husband, raising children.

—David Brooks

To be a young homeowner in a suburb like Elmhurst in the 1950s was to participate in a communal enterprise that only the most determined loner could escape: barbecues, coffee klatches, volleyball games, baby-sitting co-ops and constant bartering of household goods, child rearing by the nearest parents who happened to be around, neighbors wandering through the door at any hour without knocking—all these were devices by which young adults who had been set down in a wilderness of tract homes made a community. It was life lived in public.

—Alan Ehrenhalt



The period from 1950 to 1965 demonstrated that a stable society can be built around nuclear families—so long as women are relegated to the household, nuclear families are so intertwined that they are basically extended families by another name, and every economic and sociological condition in society is working together to support the institution.

—David Brooks

A study of women's magazines by the sociologists Francesca Cancian and Steven L. Gordon found that from 1900 to 1979, themes of putting family before self dominated in the 1950s: 'Love means self-sacrifice and compromise.' In the 1960s and '70s, putting self before family was prominent: 'Love means self-expression and individuality.' Men absorbed these cultural themes, too. The master trend in Baby Boomer culture generally was liberation—'Free Bird,' 'Born to Run,' 'Ramblin' Man.'

—David Brooks

Over the past two generations, people have spent less and less time in marriage—they are marrying later, if at all, and divorcing more. In 1950, 27 percent of marriages ended in divorce; today, about 45 percent do. In 1960, 72 percent of American adults were married. In 2017, nearly half of American adults were single. According to a 2014 report from the Urban Institute, roughly 90 percent of Baby Boomer women and 80 percent of Gen X women married by age 40, while only about 70 percent of late-Millennial women were expected to do so—the lowest rate in U.S. history. And while more than four-fifths of American adults in a 2019 Pew Research Center survey said that getting married is not essential to living a fulfilling life, it's not just the institution of marriage they're eschewing: In 2004, 33 percent of Americans ages 18 to 34 were living without a romantic partner, according to the General Social Survey; by 2018, that number was up to 51 percent.

—David Brooks

The general American birth rate is half of what it was in 1960. In 2012, most American family households had no children. There are more American homes with pets than with kids. In 1970, about 20 percent of households had five or more people. As of 2012, only 9.6 did.

—David Brooks

Married people are less likely to visit parents and siblings, and less inclined to help them do chores or offer emotional support. A code of family self-sufficiency prevails: Mom, Dad, and the kids are on their own, with a barrier around their island home.

—Mandy Len Catron

It is the privileged Americans who are marrying, and marrying helps them stay privileged.

—Andrew Cherlin

The people who suffer the most from the decline in family support are the vulnerable—especially children. In 1960, roughly 5 percent of children were born to unmarried women. Now about 40 percent are. The Pew Research Center reported that 11 percent of children lived apart from their father in 1960. In 2010, 27 percent did. Now about half of American children will spend their childhood with both biological parents. Twenty percent of young adults have no contact at all with their father (though in some cases that's because the father is deceased). American children are more likely to live in a single-parent household than children from any other country.

—David Brooks

We all know stable and loving single-parent families. But on average, children of single parents or unmarried cohabiting parents tend to have worse health outcomes, worse mental-health outcomes, less academic success, more behavioral problems and higher truancy rates than do children living with their two married biological parents.

—David Brooks

If you are born into poverty and raised by your married parents, you have an 80 percent chance of climbing out of it. If you are born into poverty and raised by an unmarried mother, you have a 50 percent chance of remaining stuck.

—Richard V. Reeves

In the absence of the connection and meaning that family provides, unmarried men are less healthy—alcohol and drug abuse are common—earn less, and die sooner than married men.

—Kay Hymowitz

According to the *AARP*, 35 percent of Americans over 45 say they are chronically lonely. Many older people are now 'elder orphans,' with no close relative or friends to take care of them. In 2015, *The New York Times* ran an article called 'The Lonely Death of George Bell,' about a family-less 72-year-old man who died alone and rotted in his Queens apartment for so long that by the time police found him, his body was unrecognizable.

—David Brooks

Because groups that have endured greater levels of discrimination tend to have more fragile families, African Americans have suffered disproportionately in the era of the detached nuclear family. Nearly half of black families are led by an unmarried single woman, compared with less than one-sixth of white families. (The high rate of black incarceration guarantees a shortage of available men to be husbands or caretakers of children.)

—David Brooks

According to census data from 2010, 25 percent of black women over 35 have never been married, compared with 8 percent of white women. Two-thirds of African American children lived in single-parent families in 2018, compared with a quarter of white children. Black single-parent families are most concentrated in precisely those parts of the country in which slavery was most prevalent. Research by John Iceland, a professor of sociology and demography at Penn State, suggest that the differences between white and black family structure explain 30 percent of the affluence gap between the two groups.

—David Brooks

Back in the 17th and 18th centuries, when European Protestants came to North America, their relatively individualistic culture existed alongside Native Americans' very communal culture. In his book *Tribe*, Sebastian Junger describes what happened next: While European settlers kept defecting to go live with Native American families, almost no Native Americans ever defected to go live with European families. Europeans occasionally captured Native Americans and forced them to come live with them. They taught them English and educated them in Western ways. But almost every time they were able, the indigenous Americans fled. European settlers were sometimes captured by Native Americans during wars and brought to live in Native communities. They rarely tried to run away. This bothered the Europeans. They had the superior civilization, so why were people voting with their feet to go live in another way?

—David Brooks

In 1980, only 12 percent of Americans lived in multi-generational households. But the financial crisis of 2008 prompted a sharp rise in multigenerational homes. Today 20 percent of Americans—64 million people, an all-time high—live in multigenerational homes.

—David Brooks (2020)

Like their heterosexual counterparts, most gay men and lesbians insisted that family members are people who are 'there for you,' people you can count on emotionally and materially. 'They take care of me,' said one man, 'I take care of them.'

—Kath Weston

Despite the forces working to separate us—slavery, Jim Crow, forced migration, the prison system, gentrification—we have maintained an incredible commitment to each other. The reality is, black families are expansive, fluid, and brilliantly rely on the support, knowledge, and capacity of ‘the village’ to take care of each other. Here’s an illustration: The white researcher/social worker/whatever sees a child moving between their mother’s house, their grandparents’ house, and their uncle’s house and sees that as ‘instability.’ But what’s actually happening is the family (extended and chosen) is leveraging all of its resources to raise that child.

—Mia Birdsong

Lisa Fitzpatrick, who was a health-care executive in New Orleans...one day was sitting in the passenger seat of a car when she noticed two young boys, 10 or 11, lifting something heavy. It was a gun. They used it to shoot her in the face. It was a gang-initiation ritual. When she recovered, she realized that she was just collateral damage. The real victims were the young boys who had to shoot somebody to get into a family, their gang.

—David Brooks

Nations where a fifth of the people live alone, like Denmark and Finland, are a lot richer than nations where almost no one lives alone, like the ones in Latin America or Africa. Rich nations have smaller households than poor nations. The average German lives in a household with 2.7 people. The average Gambian lives in a household with 13.8 people.

—David Brooks

I often ask African friends who have immigrated to America what most struck them when they arrived. Their answer is always a variation on a theme—the loneliness. It’s the empty suburban street in the middle of the day, maybe with a lone mother pushing a baby carriage on the sidewalk but nobody else around.

—David Brooks

I am not sure if we are numbed to the reality of rape, but here’s the sad irony. While the word rape can add an edginess to your language, talking about actual rape is taboo. I didn’t know this until one of my friends was raped. Then I knew this, because I didn’t want to tell anyone. If she were mugged, I would have told everyone and raged.

—Christine Stockton

We live at the level of our language. Whatever, we can articulate we can imagine or understand or explore.

--Ellen Gilchrist

The family is the first essential cell of human society.

—Pope John XXIII