

Thanks for coming to the Unleashed AI Summit! If you are interested in writing a book and telling your story or advancing your thought leadership, please join my writing course!

Visit my writing courses here:

Fiction

Non-fiction

Both Courses

The Power of Story includes:

1) 2 coaching sessions with Cameron
2) A year long writing program that takes you from idea to finished book
3) Help with self-publishing or pursuing traditional publishing
4) Advice on reading
5) Writing basics and resources to improve your writing

Enter Code: aisummitcode for $75 off for 6 months of the year long course!

America's Lost Generation

America's Lost Generation

Cameron Lee Cowan

Copyright 2025 Cameron Lee Cowan. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form whatsoever, by photography or xerography or by any other means, by broadcast or transmission, by translation into any kind of language, or by recording electronically or otherwise without permission in writing from the author, except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages in critical articles or reviews.

Printed in the United States of America
First Printing: 2025

ISBN: 978-1-954102-26-2 (paperback)
ISBN: 978-1-954102-27-9 (ebook)
Library of Congress Control Number: 2025941368

Edited by Karla Armbuster, Beth Rule
Cover design by Veronica Coello
Interior design by Amit Dey

Published by:
SOMETHING OR OTHER PUBLISHING LLC
Brooklyn, Wisconsin 53521
For general inquiries: Info@SOOPLLC.com
For bulk orders: Orders@SOOPLLC.com

Other Works by Cameron Lee Cowan

BOOKS

What the Hell Is Going On? A Primer to Understanding Our World in the Age of Trump (2019)

Cast Iron: A Novel (2020)

An unfinished coloring book (2020)

JOURNALISM

Brainz magazine, Senior Contributor

The Cameron Journal (cameronjournal.com), Creative Director

SOCIAL MEDIA

The Cameron Journal podcast (everywhere you listen to podcasts an on video on Spotify and Youtube)

@cameroncowan (X/Twitter, Instagram)

Cameron Lee Cowan (LinkedIn)

@cameronjournal (Tik Tok, Bluesky)

Contents

Introduction ix

SECTION 1: AMERICA'S LARGEST GENERATION 1

Chapter 1: How Did We Get Here? 5

Chapter 2: Who Are Millennials? 11

Chapter 3: Growing Up in Pax Americana 25

Chapter 4: It's All Our Fault 31

Chapter 5: Why No One Seems to Care 39

Chapter 6: Marginalized Millennials 47

SECTION 2: JAPAN 53

Chapter 7: Japan's Lost Decade(s) 55

Chapter 8: The Asian Financial Crisis 61

Chapter 9: Japanization 65

Chapter 10: Lessons from the Land of the Rising Sun 69

Chapter 11: Consequences 73

SECTION 3: WORK 79

Chapter 12: Modern Work Culture. 81

Chapter 13: Digitization and Adaptation. 95

Chapter 14: NEETs 119

SECTION 4: MONEY, POLITICS, AND LIFE 125

Chapter 15: The Great Millennial Myth 127

Chapter 16: Your Brain on Poverty 135

Chapter 17: Assets and Labor 147

Chapter 18: Millennials and Politics 161

Chapter 19: Eat the Rich 183

Chapter 20: Dating, Men's Rights, and PUA. 191

Chapter 21: Marriage, Houses, and Children. 199

Chapter 22: Millennials are Just Adult Children 205

Chapter 23: Housing, Food and Transportation 217

SECTION 5: IS THERE ANY HOPE?. 233

Chapter 24: Can Millennials Save Themselves? 235

Chapter 25: Debt and Retirement 241

Chapter 26: Conclusions 253

Bibliography. 259

Introduction

This book started as I began to analyze what had gone wrong in my life. Most importantly, I was hearing many of my own thoughts in the mouths of others. They reported feeling similarly, "I'm smart, talented, and educated…why am I working at Starbucks?"

When I discovered the Lost Generation subreddit on Reddit, I found a community of people who saw the same things, had similar experiences to mine, and were asking the same question: I did everything I was supposed to do. Why am I broke?

This book is here to tell the story of millennials who survived the Great Recession, also known as the Great Financial Crisis (December 2007 to June 2009), and how they have done it. I collected stories primarily on the r/lostgeneration subreddit on Reddit, then went around the internet and collected the best journalism I could find about people my age who are in their early 30s and looking for solutions and hope—wondering where it all went wrong. It has been more than a decade of grinding struggle. Even for those who reported some actual success, their fears and efforts were just as strong as those who never left the great train station of life.

I wanted to tell their stories and my own. It is time that millennials stood up and told what we have been through and how society has done everything but help us in our time of need. In my research, I found another country and another group of people who had already lived through this experience. Their situation is equally dire. I had been reading the Lost Generation subreddit for some time when I

discovered what happened after the 1991 Japanese real estate crisis and the resulting recession.

In 1991, the Japanese housing market collapsed, sending real estate prices across the island nation plunging. Employment skyrocketed in a country where having a job for life was a routine affair after the rebuilding efforts after World War II. That system that moved graduates from school and smoothly into the workforce broke, and it has never recovered.

The 1990s were described as a lost decade for the country as the Japanese economy stubbornly resisted growth despite the best attempts of successive Japanese governments and the Bank of Japan. Japan's national debt grew past its GDP and now stands at 121% of GDP (2022).

Many young Japanese in the early 90s and since have entered a world where the expectation was to have a job for life, and not being recruited out of school could be a career death sentence. The Japanese employment model also meshed with a conformist social attitude that prized group acceptance and conformity above all other concerns. The resulting economic situation has caused unemployment, made it necessary for many young people to remain in their parents' home, and created the unique Japanese phenomena of *hikikomori*, or young men who never leave their childhood homes and sometimes not even their rooms.

The Japanese experience is a cautionary tale. As the United States faces an economic future similar to Japan's, with low growth, high debt, and low demand leading to chronic unemployment, the U.S. can avoid some of the problems facing Japan. However, we should not be too hopeful. If the response to millennials' complaints has been any indication, the U.S. will do little to avoid "Japanization."

When I discovered that young Japanese in 1991 had gone through what has happened to millennials, at least economically, I wanted to know more. I dove into research, looked at online articles, and discovered the work of Michael Zielenziger. His book *Shutting Out the Sun* was invaluable in helping me understand Japanese culture, how

punishing it can be on young people, and how little has changed since the economic dynamo of Japan seemed to fail.

To my knowledge, this story has not been told, with personal anecdotes, in any central source with a comprehensive perspective on all the problems facing millennials. From the moment millennials took their first tentative steps into the world, society has constantly criticized millennials for going to college or not going to college and choosing the right degree or not choosing the right degree. Articles have lamented the rate at which millennials aren't getting paid fairly for their work and are stuck in unpaid internships early in their careers. As the years progressed, complaints have abounded about millennials not buying houses, spending too much on rent, demanding student loan relief, and not making the best personal finance decisions. Social media comment sections have been filled with people who don't think millennials have it together and are complaining too much.

However, seeing what happened to an entire generation in Japan was interesting. What to do with them has also been a topic in Japan, especially with the impending retirement crisis of workers who never recovered from the 1991 recession. Japan's pension system is threatened with collapse. The government has tried successive programs to retrain these workers and get them better-paying jobs. Reading their experiences, I found many familiar notes. Seeing as they had experienced the same phenomena seventeen years before the 2008 crisis in the United States, I thought it would be a helpful guide. Unfortunately, from most indications, Japan's lost generation never did recover. It paints a bleak picture for most millennials.

Telling the real experiences of individuals is an integral part of my work. Throughout the book, I begin and end sections with submissions from real Reddit users who wrote their stories to me as a part of this project. It is their tales that inspired me to write this book. Their stories drove me to dig deeper into their situations, their numbers, and more. These people come from a variety of backgrounds. Some are doing alright, while others are not doing well. I have done only basic

editing on their words and indicated where I have done so. Otherwise, their words are unvarnished as they were given to me. I included these narratives to show that I'm not the only one who has gone through a hard time. I also show that no matter how well people might have started, life has been difficult for millennials.

In this book, I have tried to take a complete view and picture of millennials and the challenges that we have faced in a world that is very different from the one we were promised. There are stories, as submitted and unedited, from various Redditors who inspired this book, and their stories add a patina of reality to the cold numbers and data. Between the stories and the research, we see how millennials are, as podcaster, NYU professor and author Scott Galloway puts it, "the unluckiest generation."

SECTION I:

America's Largest Generation

A submission from Reddit:

> Hello! I saw your post on r/lostgeneration and wanted to know how we could try to contribute to your book. I'm not sure my husband and I qualify because we're doing "just fine" from a boomer's perspective. My husband and I are 35 years old and have been fighting an uphill battle with student debt/trying to live the American Dream for over ten years. We have 160K of student loan debt that resulted from accrued interest on undergraduate loans. We're just now getting to a point where we can make more than minimum payments on the debts, and I know we're fortunate. I talked to my husband earlier today, and we were reflecting on what the past decade has done to us psychologically. If this sounds interesting, I can write up something better. I'm just not sure if you want to hear from people who are "winning" but have still lost more than we'd ever thought possible from a human perspective. Our success is pure luck in many respects, and it's tenuous. I was in pre-med at a solid-state school. With my parent's encouragement, I

took a long time to figure out what I wanted to do—ended up with a minor in microbiology and a BA in English when I graduated in 2008. Years later, my employer paid for me to complete an MS in Technical Communication. I'm working on yet ANOTHER employer-funded MS in Computer Science. My career field has changed accordingly. My husband also graduated in 2008 with two degrees, a BS in Chemistry and a BS in Applied Math. He's finally going back for an employer-funded MS in Applied Math from a very good school.

At our lowest point, in 2010, I was pregnant with our daughter. I had to quit my call center job because of pregnancy-related issues. He continued working there. We had no furniture in our apartment because my mom had taken back the furniture she gave me when we moved. He ended up painting fences and doing other odd jobs to make money. He jumped from temp job to temp job, never being hired full-time. We weren't able to pay on the student loans, so we were in default. Both of our parents were disgusted with us and basically blamed us for being in that situation. Ironically, it was my parents who advised us to take on the student debt, to begin with, and get married young because they disagreed with us living together. We're from conservative backgrounds, so we trusted their judgment at the time. (My political leanings have completely flipped since then.)

At the lowest point, I would subconsciously find myself grinding my teeth while I was awake because of the stress from the finances. This whole thing has made me hate the current system, even though we're now winning. I can't get the years back with our kids or undo the damage to the relationships with our family members.

My husband struggled with depression. Our marriage almost dissolved because the stress from the money/family side of things drove him to try to self-medicate. A low point was when he got angry at me for buying a bag of Cheetos with the 5-dollar footlong sub from Subway. It would be easy to think he's an asshole, but we didn't have the money for it. I get where he was coming from. I had anxiety so badly that I thought I had ADHD. I couldn't focus, and it was affecting my work. When we were finally able to pay our bills, my anxiety and the accompanying symptoms "magically" reversed themselves. We haven't been able to give our two daughters the lives we would have wanted for them. We moved to California (not our current state) so that I could take a high-paying job. My husband had just lost yet another chemistry contract, and we were about to be evicted. To do the job, I was gone on travel for business three months out of the year. It was horrifically stressful on my husband and kids. They were 3 and 5 respectively.

The move to California was a positive because it allowed my husband to change careers to software development. Chemistry is largely a dead field in the U.S. due to shipping jobs overseas. Even today, my kids are always asking me why we can't spend more time with them. Why we can't afford to put them in dance class/karate/etc. My oldest daughter has mild to moderate autism, and a lot of our money during the first 7 years of her life went to ABA therapy. That also was what tied me to the job that required me to travel constantly. They were the only ones with insurance that would cover her therapies. We are doing our best to pay for our kids' college so they are never in this position. I'm afraid they'll look back and think we only cared about money. I was always worried we'd end up homeless due to the student debt, as

that nearly happened several times when they were very young. The biggest eye-opener for someone coming from a more conservative background is just how little community support there is when you make this kind of mistake. We've lived all over the country following jobs. We've settled in Colorado and finally were able to buy a house last year. It still seems surreal when I see our kids playing in an actual backyard.

As for lingering mental health issues... I'm basically completely paranoid about ever being in that kind of position again. It's almost an obsession that I have to walk myself off of. I never feel secure. My husband is the same way. We never cared about money until we fucked up so badly. I know we're lucky, and I want better for others in our generation and our kids. The current system is broken. Nobody should have to do what we did just to have something approaching a middle-class life. I own my mistakes. We took on debt. We got married young. We had kids young. I know people who didn't make all these mistakes and are worse off. At a certain point, the system is the biggest problem.

CHAPTER 1:

How Did We Get Here?

A submission from Reddit:

> Mid-30s F(female) STEM Ph.D. here who "did everything right," yet I still feel like I'm stuck in a hopeless, rigged game where I will have to work for evil corporation after evil corporation enriching greedy boomers till I die, just to live semi-comfortably and be able to support myself. My dreams of having a family and/or being able to afford a simple home seem impossible, and instead, I feel like I should just feel lucky that I don't have five roommates or have to live out of a vehicle.
>
> Unlike people in prior generations, I feel like there are no feasibly-achievable life milestones to look forward to anymore (i.e., home ownership, having children, big vacation/time off, retiring), hence the aptly coined "Millennial Burnout." I did the math, and unless I encounter some kind of cash windfall, I'll just be financially treading water for the rest of my life. I save money and live frugally, but with most decent-paying jobs that are good for my career in expensive, high-income-tax locales, there's really no way I can keep up

> with the cost of living and get on the real-estate ladder. I frequently think about how my dad bought multiple houses and comfortably supported a family of 4 with a job that required less education and effort, and then I'm left dumbfounded at how Boomers can point to us and call us the "lazy, entitled" ones.
>
> I know my situation is still better than most, so I feel like I shouldn't complain. But that's precisely why I decided to post. Even as a millennial who has "done well" by millennial standards, I'm left feeling overworked, underpaid, and like life is nothing but a long slog of endless work with little reward.

In 1921, Gertrude Stein had a problem with her car, and she took it to the mechanic for repair. Frustrated with a lack of a good repair by her chosen mechanic, a young man back from World War I who failed to fix her car, she declared, "You are all part of a lost generation." Hemingway would later put this remark in the epigraph for his 1926 book *The Sun Also Rises*. It seemed an apt way to describe those who had come of age during World War I. While the 1920s raged around them and America became its own economic force and a rising global superpower to compete with the old-world empires of Europe, the young people of the 1920s seemed utterly incapable of finding their place in the world. Kate O'Connor, author of an article titled "Lost Generation" published by the University of Oxford wrote, "This accusation referred to the lack of purpose or drive resulting from the horrific disillusionment felt by those who grew up and lived through the war, and were then in their twenties and thirties. Having seen pointless death on such a huge scale, many lost faiths in traditional values like courage, patriotism, and masculinity. Some in turn became aimless, reckless, and focused on material wealth, unable to believe in abstract ideals." The war was over, and while America rushed forward into the twentieth century, it left its young people behind.

After World War II, America focused on putting its discharged soldiers to work or in education. A concerted effort was made to build America into an even larger powerhouse, and young men returning from war were at the center of that project. The returning men and their desire to settle down resulted in a baby boom as these men got married and produced the largest generation in U.S. history. The "Greatest Generation" (a term coined by Dan Rather) gave their children everything they never had in the Depression. Schools were funded, higher education was inexpensive or free, and much of the boomer cohort graduated into a thriving economy with plentiful jobs that often required nothing beyond high school, at least in terms of education.

The boomers and the next cohort, Gen X, would go on to create more children and that resulted in a generation larger than either the Baby Boomers or Gen X. Millennials, born between 1980 and 1995, would exceed their parents in number and grow up in a very different society from the one their parents had known. Unlike the Greatest Generation, the boomers did not give their children the same opportunities that were given to them. Despite this, millennials are the most educated generation in U.S. history. Thirty percent of millennials went to college believing it was the pathway to a better life. Due to the financial management of boomers at all levels of society, the center cohort of millennials would graduate into the worst economy since the Great Depression and be subject to years of austerity. On top of that, they would be burdened with student loan debt that could never be discharged. Even millennials who didn't go to college would be subject to working service industry jobs for low wages that would halt their ability to advance their lives.

In 2008, the American housing market, which had been a source of economic expansion and prosperity since the 1990s and the subsequent dot-com collapse of the early years of the twenty-first century, collapsed under the weight of its debt. American banks had leveraged themselves so much that when the price of housing, which hadn't

gone down in decades, finally did, the banking system was brought to its knees. Billions in taxpayer bailouts followed to save the banks, the auto industry, the airlines, and other businesses. No bailout came for regular people, and no bailouts came for the millions of young people born between 1986 and 1991 who had the unfortunate luck to graduate from high school and college during the Great Recession and the long, slow recovery that came after. For those in their early 20s during the Great Recession, there has been little recovery. This book is about these people.

Millennials have struggled to find their place in a world that left them behind and then blamed them for it. In the years after the Recession, the media couldn't publish articles fast enough proclaiming that millennials were killing "industries" ranging from napkins to casual dining restaurants. When millennials sent out hundreds of resumes and got no reply, older people on social media declared that millennials were too lazy, earned the wrong degree, or simply weren't trying hard enough to get a job.

The Great Recession sped up several major economic changes already on the horizon. In 2009, when I was 21 years old, I remember a scrap of an article asking, "What will companies do when they realize they can live without all the clerks and secretaries they have employed?" Companies learned that they could do much more with far fewer people. Entry-level jobs across the economy were eliminated. Even in law firms, clients no longer wanted to pay for a lawyer fresh out of law school to learn the ropes of being a lawyer. Pressure to lower rates forced even large firms to cut staff and hire fewer graduates. Even now, the legal field is saturated with new lawyers. Once seen as a safe profession, the conventional wisdom now is that if you don't attend an elite law school, there's almost no point in going to law school.

College has also suffered from the same conventional wisdom. As Professor Scott Galloway has said over and over again on the popular Pivot podcast with Kara Swisher, elite schools offer an opportunity for

ordinary people to do extraordinary things. The millennial who received a liberal arts degree from an unremarkable institution was blamed for not getting into a better school and getting a useful degree. Gen Z has figured out that a college degree is not enough if you want to advance. It has to be in the right field and from a recognizable school. For those of us who went to the second-tier school for a humanities degree, the message from society has been, "Sorry, your help is not wanted."

Although I started researching this book before the outbreak of COVID-19, COVID-19 has only made the situation worse, especially on the inflation side. During the pandemic, we had deflationary pressures (insufficient money was moving). As the pandemic eased, the price of everything seemed to skyrocket, shortages were common, and inflation became a valid concern. This was also combined with high savings rates and less household debt. The pandemic has been the double-whammy millennials collectively feared. Much like how the Asian Financial Crisis was devastating to young Japanese of the 1990s, COVID-19 sent struggling millennials, this time in their late 20s and early 30s (up to 40), back to live with their parents, , and destroyed millions of service sector jobs that had been the financial bread-and-butter of millennials over the past decade.

One quote from my research that stood out to me came from a book called *The Theft of a Decade*, which ends as follows, "The worst boomer theft of all would be to deny us an opportunity to solve our own problems." What are those problems? How did we get here? How do we avoid the fate of the Japanese? How did society change so quickly and so abruptly? How do millennials make a life for themselves that might include the elusive house and children? Those are the questions we're going to explore together.

CHAPTER 2:

WHO ARE MILLENNIALS?

A submission from Reddit:

> When I graduated from college in 2015, I sent out applications and did interviews for months. Eventually, I went broke and started delivering sandwiches to the same offices where I had tried to get a job. I lived in a state capital at the time and had a degree in economics and public administration. But ironically, I couldn't even get an internship. It was a difficult period of my life, and it made me bitter for a while. Luckily, I was able to regroup, financially and emotionally, and get on a different professional path. But I had to totally sacrifice my 20s to the god of money to get it done. I don't have a single friend left. All I care about is working because I'm so scared of being broke again.

Another submission from Reddit:

> Graduated in 2012. Could only get hired as a temp, making 12 bucks an hour. I was lucky enough to move into a

> full-time role and changed jobs a few times within the firm to make about 45k salary.
>
> Then, I took a big leap of faith and joined a big company. Moved away from my family and got a big raise. I did well, excelled, created millions of dollars in value for big company. I got good raises and am now at about 75k.
>
> The problem is I'm still well below market value and even below my peers. I've never been paid fairly in my career regardless of experience or value I bring. Now with COVID, prospects in my field are slim.
>
> I'm hitting a wall where it's impossible for me to grow my career while being underpaid for what I do. Hasn't stopped my firm from hiring others for my job at a higher rate. I've been formally acknowledged as the best in my company (in) my field too.
>
> I'm one of the lucky ones and I'm still fucked.

GENERATIONS

Before we dive into the conditions in which America created this lost generation, let's clarify who millennials are and how old they are. Many people think that millennials are those born after the year 2000. A generation refers not only to when you were born but, more importantly, when you came of age. The baby boomers were born between 1945 and 1964 and came of age as early as the early 1960s and as late as the mid-1980s.

Millennials were born between 1980 and 1995. Some researchers note a micro-generation between Generation X, which ended in 1977-79, and more traditional millennials born after 1985. The Xennials, or those born between 1978 and 1985, are a tiny group of people that are also called the "Oregon Trail Generation" because they were the first to play the DOS-based multiple-choice computer game.

These people share some of the experiences of being raised in the 1980s but are also digital natives like their younger counterparts. The Xennials also escaped the worst of the Great Recession because they were out of college before 2008 and had a foothold in the workforce. This advantage would not wholly save them from the layoffs and employment freezes of the Great Recession, but those few extra years of working have left them in a better position than those born after 1985. Millennials had mostly boomer parents, with some first-cohort Gen X parents. There are also late cohort millennials with boomer grandparents.

Millennials are very much a bridge generation, as we will find out. Much has changed during the lifetime of millennials. Economic, technological, and social changes have abounded. In this group, people have lived through a recession, a pandemic, the September 11 attacks, and all the attendant social upheaval that brings. This generation has grown up in a world where being gay was taboo and being LGBT is far more common than it was in the past. The earliest part of the cohort knew of the AIDS epidemic and its associated social changes. The last forty years have been significant, and it has not been easy for young people on any account. It is hard to forge a path forward in a constantly changing world.

The focus of this book is on those born between 1986 and 1991. These millennials were in high school and college right as the Great Recession gutted the American economy. This also means that millennials are now approaching middle age. The oldest millennials turned 40 in 2020. This conversation is not about lazy, entitled college students anymore. This is about people with children to raise, rent to pay, and regular adult bills.

Millennials are curious because they came of age during significant societal transformations and the American economy. They were in high school and college when social media arrived. They tended not to drink or do drugs as much as their older cousins. They were raised strongly about environmentalism, responsibility, staying in school,

and success. They were also raised during a great expansion of the American economy and with unprecedented prosperity.

Millennials were the first generation of workers to enter the workforce under truly globalized economic conditions. They had to compete with workers from all over the world. While this certainly affected Gen X and the late cohort of boomers, they also arrived in the workforce after the power of unions had been soundly defeated, beginning with Reagan and his breaking the strike of the Air Traffic Controller's Union and leading into the right-to-work movement of the 1990s and the aughts. This meant that millennials arrived in the workforce with contract work, unpaid internships, and jobs with no benefits being a relatively standard aspect of their working life. This contrasts with their parents, who had robust wages, pensions (sometimes), and higher unionization rates. Their working life has always been a precarious combination of at-will employment with little social safety net, adversely affecting those at the bottom more than those in the middle or the top of wealth and income distribution.

Consequently, millennials have had to make some tough decisions in their lives. Some of the sacrifices might seem trite and small, like not buying napkins and fabric softener, but many of the sacrifices are also far larger, including not being able to buy a home, have children, or have the peace of mind of stable income. They have been balancing childcare costs (for those who had children) and student loan payments on loans accruing interest at eight percent. The millennial story is also about social class, and no discussion of America's lost generation would be complete without breaking down the situation by class.

RACE AND CLASS

A submission from Reddit:

> 31F: My dad moved to the U.S. as a legal immigrant in 1998, then brought my two younger siblings and me here to get

a better education than we would've in the old country. He worked 2-3 jobs to make ends meet while also studying for a degree in civil engineering (he got his degree in early 2008 and was immediately hired for a really well-paying job, only to be laid off right before Christmas due to the 2008 economic downturn. He's never been able to recover from that and has had to work minimum-wage jobs ever since). As a result, we barely saw him, and when we did, he was usually in a stinky mood because he was always so exhausted. And despite all of his efforts, he had his car repo'ed four or more times, and almost every fall/winter, we'd have our gas shut off since he couldn't always afford to pay the bill on time. Imagine being in the top floor apartment of a 3-story unit without heat in the middle of a northeastern U.S. winter! We'd have to heat up water in the stove if we wanted a warm shower. My siblings and I worked hard to learn the language, assimilate, and get good grades, while missing our mom, relatives, and childhood friends like crazy.

I started 10th grade in the U.S. and excelled in school. As the oldest, I also had an after-school job to help my dad with bills. My teachers saw that I had real potential, especially in math and science, so they encouraged me to apply to the computer engineering program at a private, prestigious, and crazy expensive university. My dad, not having grown up in the U.S., didn't know anything about the college application process or how I was going to pay for it, so I had to figure it all out on my own. I managed to get into said prestigious university, scored a couple scholarships, but still had a $40k/year gap that needed to be covered by student loans. Again, being relatively new to the country and all we didn't understand how this all worked so I naively took on those loans. Well, I got to college and immediately realized that I was at

a huge disadvantage. The majority of the student body was insanely wealthy and had been preparing for college their entire lives.

During our very first computer engineering intro class, I knew I was screwed. The teacher asked some questions to get a feel for where everyone was, and, besides me, literally, everyone else in the lecture hall spoke fluent computer engineering, so the teacher announced to the class that he was going to skip the basics and get right to the meat of things. I floundered for an entire semester and eventually went to my college counselor, who helped me switch to civil engineering, which was supposed to be more manageable. Nope. After two more semesters of pure misery, of not having money to eat despite being on the school's dining plan, of not being able to afford to go home during spring break while everyone else was off partying for the week, of not having the money to buy proper shoes and clothes for the brutal upstate NY winters, of not being able to afford the expensive textbooks that had to be bought brand-new every semester and, thus, not completing my school work and falling behind, I had to switch to an "easier" degree.

So I went into hospitality management, and well, that shit degree hasn't gotten me anything other than a gigantic boulder of a student loan debt that I've defaulted on multiple times since hospitality jobs don't pay well, totally damaging my credit. Because of my bad credit, I can't qualify for a mortgage or any other type of loan. I live in an apartment complex where rent has gone up by at least $100/month every year since I moved here four years ago, which is a lot, even though I have a roommate. It's now at just shy of $1,700/month but I can't afford to move out to a cheaper place (yep, you read that correctly). Because of my

bad credit, I'd be required to pay a security deposit as well as first and last month's rent, not to mention application fees and moving costs. Last April, I finally scored a job that paid just shy of $50k/year, which was huge for me. I don't have any kids, so that amount of money, coupled with my frugal lifestyle, would go a long way.

I was finally able to start paying off my debts and get on track with cleaning up my credit. Fast forward to early March (2020) of this year when my company decided to eliminate my position due to the pandemic, leaving me high and dry. They managed to find new positions within the company for the other two girls that worked the same position as me, but I was let go despite having recently had an excellent performance review and great rapport with everyone in the office. Well, now I'm back to square zero with no idea when I'll be able to get another job because of our current situation. I've got a college degree, speak five languages fluently, have excellent work ethic, can do just about anything that's thrown my way without complaining, have an easy to get along with demeanor, and yet I don't qualify for most high-paying jobs even if my resume matches the job description. So much for the American dream and pulling yourself up by your bootstraps.

One of the issues I ran into in working on this book was quantifying two seemingly disparate stories and outcomes. When I read submissions like the ones I have printed in this book, it is easy to see how millennials have been given a short shrift in life opportunities. However, there are many millennials who have no such problems. I told someone about this book, and they said, "I have four millennial children, and I don't know about anything you're talking about." Luckily, they are not affected by many of the factors that follow in this book. I realized between looking at the data and listening to people

that class structure and hierarchy have a deleterious effect on millennial progress.

I can split the situation into a few groups that I have identified:

1. Upper-class millennials who are surprised by downward mobility
2. College-educated millennials but not working in their field.
3. College-educated and working in their field for low pay
4. College dropouts/high school graduates who are surprised by the lack of upward mobility.

It should be noted that while millennials are the most educated generation in U.S. history, two-thirds of millennials did not go to college. The picture has been equally bleak for these young people. Each of these groups has a disparate but connected set of problems.

The story has been very different for millennials from economic privilege who could afford to take an unpaid internship, move home with parents, change careers, or get help buying a home. Many of those who made it out did not understand the experience of the rest of us. A coach told me that his friend moved to New York City for a finance job and got laid off soon after because of the Great Financial Crisis. He spent a year and a half unemployed and then was fine. He was lucky, but there was no word on how he survived during his unemployment. For those upper-class millennials who had family help to smooth over a job loss or false career start, they were likely able to get back on the ladder and continue on with life. However, for those in the middle class and below who did not have access to family resources, or in the case of minority and immigrant groups who needed to help their families, the situation that those millennials have had to endure is more complicated.

The recession hurt the aspirational working class and lower middle class kids the most. Why? They needed those entry-level jobs fresh out of college the most. Some could not return home to their parents or

get help. They had to take whatever job they could get and hope they could afford to live. They were shunted into the low-paying service-sector jobs that abounded post-2008. Those stories are in this book, too. There were also other ways in which millennials who aspired to social mobility were disadvantaged.

The massive gap in understanding the workforce and college is a factor that isn't often studied but has outsized effects on those who are the first in their family to go to college. The problem doesn't stop there either; after college, millennials with connections to the job market left their peers behind. Unlike in years past, it is hard to start a career when you know no one connected to that career. I learned the hard way how important it was to develop a network and use those connections for job opportunities. Creating these networks is even more complicated for people of color due to discrimination and bias. Combine that with coming from a working-class background and needing to work after classes in college. You can get a great education and have no foot in the door to any sort of career. I will explore this further when we discuss entry-level jobs and the catch-22 of needing experience, as it's difficult to get hired unless you have experience. This hiring dynamic is combined with a hollowing out of the entry-level job market following the 2008 recession as well.

The result is that the people who have suffered adversely in the economy are trying to maintain their middle-class status or move into the middle class. The economic gains have been so unevenly distributed that the real story of the post-Great Financial Crisis period is how the middle class, especially the lower middle class and working class, have been impacted by these economic changes and how people have been economically left behind.

Millennials are also the most diverse generation in U.S. history, with nearly fifty percent of millennials being BIPOC (black, indigenous, people of color). America's new racial diversity has been felt across the culture wars as our country has engaged in new conversations on race, police brutality, and structural racism. The rise of the

"social justice warrior" (SJW) or "woke" person started with millennials back in 2011-2013. New social attitudes emerged that caused a cascading set of social changes that have rocked the country to its core. Social change ramped up and was further amplified by the George Floyd protests of 2020 and the many Black Lives Matter protests that would follow.

Popular protests have been happening since the Great Financial Crisis, but the conversation on race has not been as charged since 1968. Millennials and Gen Z have grown up in a more diverse world than their parents. By 2050, the United States will no longer be majority "white" (European-descended). This shift will be felt primarily by millennials and now Gen Z. Interracial relationships, while not terribly common, are more acceptable now than ever before. These changes are all credited to the fact that the picture of the country has changed. Millennials helped put Barack Obama into the White House in 2008, a watershed moment for the nation. As I have written elsewhere, America is trying to find out if it can still be a country with more than one voice at the table, and it will be millennials who will lead the charge and make the decisions that will answer that question. If diversity is our strength, then it will be up to millennials to make that a reality. The question remains: will older generations let us do it?

ENTITLED AND LAZY

No two words about millennials have been thrown around more than entitled and lazy. Pundits like Simon Sinek and many others have complained that millennials want everything—they want it right now and don't want to work for it. Most publications spent most of the late aughts and 2010s complaining about this. Much digital ink has been spilled about what is wrong with millennials and why they can't get it together. Most comments boil down to the old canard: Millennials are entitled and lazy.

America's largest and most educated generation seemed unwilling to work to build a successful life. However, the situation is far more complicated than that.

Annie Lowry, a reporter for *The Atlantic,* tweeted on Twitter (now X) this prescient post in the summer of 2020:

> The millennials entered the workforce during the worst downturn since the Great Depression. Saddled with debt, unable to accumulate wealth, and stuck in low-benefit, dead-end jobs, they never gained the financial security that their parents, grandparents, or even older siblings enjoyed. They are now entering their peak earning years in the midst of an economic cataclysm more severe than the Great Recession, near guaranteeing that they will be the first generation in modern American history to end up poorer than their parents. Compounding their troubles, millennials are, for now, disproportionate holders of the kind of positions disappearing the fastest: bartenders, half of restaurant workers, and a large share of retail workers. For the most part, kids of the 1980s and 1990s did it right: They avoided drugs and alcohol as adolescents. They went to college in record numbers. They sought stable, meaningful jobs and stable, meaningful careers. A lot of good that did.

It seemed like this wasn't a mere career problem either; it extended into dating. Why get to know someone when you could just swipe? Simon Sinek in his viral video on millennials pointed out that it is nearly impossible to build a relationship when millennials don't have any sense of delayed gratification. Are we so broken?

These attitudes about millennials have persisted, too. Erstwhile demographic researcher and public intellectual Peter Zeihan tweeted in 2022: "One of 1000 ways the #Millennials are no longer the cool kids. The generation after them - #GenZ- is smarter, harder-working,

more competitive, more responsible, and neurotic messes like their parents." He commented on an article from the Telegraph about how millennials aren't traveling as much, which would have ramifications in the travel industry. We can't win, can we?

Millennials have struggled with perception. I've had too many people on social media and even in person complain about everything wrong with millennials. Even as Gen Z has burst onto the scene, people still complain about millennials. We can't seem to get a win. Any speech about demographics causes an eye roll when millennials are brought up.

So why do people perceive millennials as lazy and entitled? How can the most educated generation in American history who didn't drink or do drugs nearly as much as their boomer parents or their Gen X cousins be entitled and lazy? Again, this is a perception issue. Older people felt like millennials showed up to the workplace ready to work but already wanted to be in charge and advance quickly through the ranks rather than spend years grinding away. Of course, this supposes they could get those entry-level positions (more on that later). Others were stuck in service and retail roles, which also garnered critique that millennials simply weren't working hard enough to get good jobs. There was never a discussion about the fact that those good jobs simply didn't exist anymore.

The other problem with the idea that "if you work hard, you will succeed" is that it can be hard to see any reward for working hard. Given the stagnation of wages and the rise of inflation in the post-pandemic period, many folks have expressed online (and to me personally) that the reward isn't the same as it once was for their parents. I have friends who work, make good money, and do not own their own homes. They pay high rents to live in various apartments. These economic conditions worsen for those who live in major cities where most job creation has occurred over the past decade. The consensus advice has always been the same: "don't get a useless degree," or "learn to code," or even "go into the trades." There is no talk about how to fix the problem (wages and benefits) or find a workaround.

Instead of a productive discussion on the structural issues around employment in this country, the advice is always the same: work harder and figure it out. Those who don't find this course of action compelling are called "entitled and lazy." Apparently, it is entitled and lazy to desire a wage high enough to live like an adult where you can afford to pay all your bills, save money, and improve your life over time. Instead, millennials have been criticized for not jumping at the chance to work a job that pays $15 per hour but still requires a degree.

We live in a country where the minimum wage is no longer a living wage, and even in places where the minimum wage has risen to $15 per hour, it's still not a living wage for many people. That is when another piece of advice is thrown about, "get a better job that pays more." Incidentally, during the Great Resignation of 2021-2022 and the Quiet Quitting movement, people were often doing precisely that. It impacts the service industry as restaurants and others struggled to hire the staff they need.

The conversation has never turned toward what could help Americans—especially millennial Americans—improve their lot. Instead, we have simply chosen to vilify millions of people who are struggling and make it all their fault.

INTERNET AND TECHNOLOGY

Millennials are the last generation to remember life before the internet. They were early adopters of smartphones and social media and were some of the first people to use those devices and services. Many millennials grew up with a computer in their home and were the first kids to have cellphones. Gen Z may be native to the internet, but millennials were the pioneers that have made our current media ecosystem possible.

Millennials are in the uncanny valley, stuck between the old and new worlds. Indeed, the 2008 crisis was the breaking point of the old world of the millennials' youth, and after 2008, nothing was

the same. The senior advice didn't work anymore. The old working methods did not fit, and millennials were adrift. The contributions of technology have undoubtedly fueled the feeling of disconnection. Social media has been a force for new connections and new ways of discovering content and content creators, but its effects on mental health are now being understood. Millennials have been on the front lines of the enviable Instagram photos and curated experiences over video and other mediums. The effects on culture, mental health, and even relationships have been profound. As we will find throughout this book, the influence of technology is inextricably linked to the story of millennials.

Now that we understand more about millennials and who they are, we can understand their background and the world millennials grew up in. This is important because major geopolitical events occurred between 1980 and the present day. Two stand out particularly: The fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001. I like to call this period Pax Americana.

CHAPTER 3:

GROWING UP IN PAX AMERICANA

A submission from Reddit:

> If you want another perspective, I'm 32 and skipped college completely and have had a great life. In the middle of high school, I realized that college was just a really expensive culling mechanism and thought it would be better to skip completely. Bet has paid off well. I don't want to distract from the overall message, but pm (private message) me if you'd like. Good luck with the book.

On Christmas Day, 1991, Mikhail Gorbachev announced that the Soviet Union was breaking up. The great nuclear threat from the Cold War was over. Communism had been defeated by market economics, and the world was ready to enjoy permanent peace among its great powers for the first time since before World War II. It had been seventy-seven years of two major world wars and decades of detente between the world's great ideological systems. A world of peace had finally arrived, in time for the celebration of the new millennium coming at the end of the decade.

Economically, things were improving in the United States as well. Bill Clinton would defeat George H.W. Bush in the 1992 presidential

election, and he would preside over the most significant expansion of the American economy until that time. Serving as the first boomer president, Bill Clinton built on Nixon's work opening China and grant China the most favored nation trading status within the World Trade Organization. He passed and signed the North American Free Trade Agreement, among other foundational treaties that would create the world of globalization that we know today and was ever-present in pre-pandemic America.

Culturally, the 1990s were a heady time. Racial tensions pock-marked the early years of the decade, with the Rodney King riots breaking out in Los Angeles after the police responsible for beating Mr. King were acquitted of any wrongdoing by a nearly all-white jury. The rise of crack and other street drugs would lead Congress to pass the now-infamous 1994 crime bill that would bring mandatory minimums for certain crimes and would ramp up mass incarceration within the United States.

The message to children during this time was straightforward, and millennials would follow it (mostly) to the letter: stay in school, care about other people, care about the state of the planet, don't do drugs, stay out of jail, go to college, and you will do well in life. A quick tour of children's programming of the late 80s and early 90s will show this message repeated over and over again. Shows like Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Captain Planet, Arthur, The Magic School Bus, and others would reinforce this message repeatedly. The message the boomers had been given by their parents was very different but just as insidious.

Unlike the boomers who took the list of "rules" their parents had oppressively shoved onto them and discarded it, millennials adopted the message from their boomer and early Gen X parents and tried to follow it. Gen X was given very little by their parents and expected less. Dubbed the generation that checked out, Gen X has always gone their way with things and is fiercely independent. Boomers rejected the

system, Gen X checked out of the system, and millennials tried to win the system.

No conversation about the 1990s would be complete without discussing the rise of technology. The personal computer and its smartphone progeny would figure heavily in the lives of millennials. They were the first generation to be raised with computers in many homes and the last generation to remember a world before everything had become digital. Many millennials are digital natives who know how to use a phone book and a paper map. The rise of technology in every aspect of our lives was just beginning when millennials were children, and by the time most millennials were graduating from college and moving back in with their parents, tech had all but taken over. Millennials were, by and large, ready for this change and have since demanded an ever-increasing digital marketplace. Millennials would rather use an app than make a call. Growing up in digital environments is where many of the youngest members of the generation are most comfortable. Millennials also benefitted from the rise of gaming culture and the rise of the internet. The internet would change our lives, and millennials were the young people at the forefront of these changes. They were the young explorers of a world of websites, chat rooms, chat apps, and blogs. Later, they would forge a new frontier in social media and be a major contributor to social media takeover, cord-cutting, and digitization. Gen X might have invented the tech, but millennials made it cool and famous.

I do not think it to be nostalgic to say that it felt like the world was moving forward and we were making significant progress toward a hopeful future. It felt like things were getting better and that many of the demons our country faced were finally behind us. A particular upward trajectory seemed to be pervasive in the air. Even in the social sphere, the 1990s sported many firsts on the LGBTQIA+ front. People have forgotten that Ellen Degeneres coming out as a lesbian on national television was major news for nearly a month.

This age was also marked by peak consumerism. Shopping was not merely an activity but a hobby, a pursuit. Splashy catalogs and glossy ads flooded mailboxes, showcasing shiny goods to buy. Part of this was due to major credit expansion. The American economy had finally shaken off the malaise of the 1970s and 1980s, and President Bill Clinton presided over unprecedented growth. Alan Greenspan was treated like an economic god because he was able to manage the economy to create prosperous growth without the terrible inflation that had plagued the economy before.

Many people who grew up in these years probably remember it as a magical time. It was not so magical; human memory is faulty this way, but many of the problems that we have now were much less present in the years after the Cold War. Most middle class people owned their own homes; college was far cheaper for Gen X; and "good jobs" were still available. How this system came undone will be discussed in due course.

It was not uncommon to have single-earner households with a stay-at-home parent. However, two working parents were more common, especially as boomer and early cohort Gen X women tried to have it all, an erstwhile subject of popular TV. Productivity was up; technology was enabling people to do more than before. The world was changing, but it seemed more manageable. As the world moved into the new millennium, there was a hope that we could move into a new era of cooperation under the "new world order" of democratic values, economic liberalism, and peace.

Growing up in this time was unique but also insidious. We were preparing for a world and a future that wouldn't exist just a few short years into the new century. It was far too late when we figured out what had gone wrong or that there was a problem. In the background of the fall of the Soviet Union, housing was being commodified, globalization would further undermine developed world economies, and a transfer of wealth from the bottom to the top would hit its stride. It would be trite to say that no one said anything about this. Sadly, the

warnings of people like Noam Chomsky did not reach broad appeal. Senator Bernie Sanders was just a weird guy from Vermont to whom attention need not be paid.

Trying to write about the 1990s is like trying to write about an impossible dream. The vibrancy of pop culture, the ability to go into careers that pay from the earliest stage, and the capacity for skills and education to pay off in significant ways make it seem like they are from another planet. It is so foreign to how we live now, where things are much more precarious.

Pax Americana wasn't all roses. There were a variety of violent incidences like Desert Storm, the Oklahoma City bombing, the attack at Waco, Ruby Ridge, and the attacks on American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania that hinted at the troubles that were bubbling underneath. The degradation in wages and wage growth had already gone on for 20 years by the decade's end. Productivity was increasing rapidly, but wages stopped tracking that metric in 1977. Still, the availability of credit card debt, the falling cost of authentic goods, and relatively low interest rates allowed the American consumer to power the global economy and post significant economic gains. It is no secret why younger people, millennials and Gen Z, romanticize the 1990s as much as their parents might romanticize the 1950s or 1960s.

CHAPTER 4:

IT'S ALL OUR FAULT

A submission from Reddit:

> I also think millennials are like 3% to blame for their plot in life, if they finance a useless education, and experience agony for the simple dilemma of being at home for a while. It was the humble pie I needed to eat, but I can't speak for a cohort of what, like 74 mils?
>
> What is NOT millennials fault is staggering obscene ungodly exploitative rent prices, prohibitively expensive travel, the shackles of student debt and debt peonage if you want to better yourself generally, and the outsourcing of jobs by magnitudes that are kind of unspeakable. I think more people should become CNAs though and that for the roughly 1,000 whatever dollars it costs to get the license to do that it will and does pay off handsomely...I've definitely developed what I coined "career Tourette's"—like a neurological compulsion to think about career every second of every day or just overfocus on it anyway—a term I often share with some pride, I think it's kind of neat and to the

> point, but yeah…I had the same staggering rude awakening everyone else did. Upon almost graduating and having thousands dollars debt and working at a Wendy's full- time while doing school full-time absolutely busting ass making like 9k things definitely dawned on me. I have a weird tic where I do the "wilhelm scream" sound partially ironically partially not at a very low volume, basically as a tic sometimes because I'm so burnt out. I just let er' rip if I'm at a low wage job where they need me desperately and it's clear it doesn't matter.

It would not be hyperbole to say that millennials have been unfairly blamed for the problems that they face. We've all seen the comment sections on social media around the same articles complaining about millennials' decisions. During this height during 2010-2019, the infamous avocado toast and iPhone became easy criticisms of the younger generation. If young people were serious about improving their financial conditions, they would do without "luxuries" like smartphones, avocado toast, and coffee. When the future seems uncertain, why not buy that avocado toast, take that Instagram-worthy trip, and buy that nice item? Much of the criticism around millennials has been their odd economic and financial decisions.

In the years after the financial crisis, many older adults complained that if millennials were so badly off, why were they traveling so much, eating expensive foods, and buying iPhones? As if mere objects could solve life's problems like low wages and rising rent costs.

Millennial trauma is different. There are certainly those who have trauma from war, but despite the 20-year war in Iraq and Afghanistan, the number of young people who have served is relatively small as compared to the population. However, the trauma of 2008 and its resulting non-existent recovery are quite another kind of trauma.

American millennials suffer much of the same malaise. Life is too expensive and wages are too low. Pass the avocado toast and

the iPhone. The criticism of phones is particularly poignant. The rise of the smartphone put the power of a personal computer into everyone's pockets, and cellphone companies soon found a way to make phones more affordable with monthly leasing plans. A smartphone might be perceived as just another dry status symbol, but it is increasingly an important tool in today's modern world. Many jobs require online applications and email follow-ups before an interview. Socialization takes place online, too, meaning social media apps are an essential way to keep up with friends and social obligations, and managing money and other bills can often be done through an app with paperless billing. This means many millennials usually run their entire lives from their phone. This millennial certainly does. I paid all my monthly bills before working on this part of the book today. Using seven different apps, I updated my Mint budgeting app and paid all my bills in about 15 minutes.

Commentator and social media darling Simon Senek, an outspoken critic of millennials, blames millennials' propensity for instant gratification for their inability to build a career or maintain a relationship. Our world has made it seem like everyone else is living a magical life of travel and sex with attractive people, and with dating apps, it looks like the right person for us should be just a swipe away. A career takes time to build. It requires connections, a proven work history, and plenty of time, as the prime working and earning years don't happen until the ages the millennials are hitting.

Senek has a fair point on the surface, especially for those who like to criticize the under-45 set, but it doesn't reflect the realities millennials have faced, especially in their early working years. What is the point of trying to build a career when a college degree is no guarantee of a prosperous future and building a career requires endless job changes, especially if greater pay is desired? The connections aspect certainly has merit, but what about those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who might find building those connections difficult? And what about those stuck in jobs where the chance for advancement seems hopeless?

This is partly due to older workers not retiring and companies trimming their labor force to the minimum to save on costs.

The modern hookup culture has indeed characterized millennial dating. Although millennials, despite inventing hookup culture, are having less sex than their parents. There are various reasons why marriage and household formation have been falling for those in their prime working years. For women, forming a household with a partner, especially a man, can be a losing game economically, and this has primarily to do with the dimming job prospects of men, especially uneducated men. Another factor, which is very similar to Japan, is that women are more career-focused than their mothers. In the 1990s, women were told they could have a successful career, a wonderful marriage, and happy children. Looking at popular culture today, that doesn't exist as much. Millennials lived with their mothers, who tried to have it all and lived with the consequences. Much like Gen X before them, they became latchkey kids or shuffled to various schools and daycares with parents who were too busy with work to give them the attention they desired. As it turns out, women couldn't quite have it all, and millennials have made a decisive choice. Women of my generation, especially career-minded women, have often chosen to sacrifice childbearing in favor of career pursuits, and even that is an economic decision.

Much of this decision not to have children comes down to cost. Living on one income isn't sustainable in many areas, so parents need daycare services. According to the Department of Labor, the annual cost of childcare is extreme, "childcare prices range from $4,810 ($5,357 in 2022 dollars) for school-age home-based care in small counties to $15,417 ($17,171 in 2022 dollars) for infant center-based care in very large counties. These prices represent between 8% and 19.3% of median family income per child." That means if someone has two children in a high cost living area, $30,000 could be needed for just childcare. Even in poorer areas, where wages are lower, two children would have parents putting out nearly $10,000 in childcare expenses

annually. This is an outsized amount for a modest household income of $55,000. For many families, this means that one parent stays home. I've seen this among my friends. I recall when a long-time friend of mine finally placed her son in preschool and returned to work, she called me and said, "I talked to adults for the first time in four years!" She and her husband worked opposite shifts for years to avoid having to pay for childcare. They saw each other for about two hours per day. They don't plan on having more children.

On top of this burden, children also bring other commitments like being involved at school, various fees for activities, scheduling concerns, and much more for the career-minded woman to consider. Children are a huge expense. Raising a child in America can cost $500K by age 18, and for many women, the motherhood penalty for salaries and promotions is an authentic problem. Even in a loving, stable relationship, the entire household loses money and income from this situation.

Many mothers, especially poorer women, have to give birth and hurry back into the workplace in a society with no maternity or paternity leave, paid or otherwise. My mother was in this very boat as a single Mom. She was lucky to have family child care available but returned to her job dispatching ambulances a week after giving birth (which took three days because I do my own thing).

Unsurprisingly, many millennials either delay having children or choose not to have them. As we will find out, similar calculations are made by our friends in Japan, a country with demographics far worse than those in the United States.

When all the hallmarks of adulthood, home ownership, and family seem out of reach, avocado toast seems like a good option. Doing something today, much like the Japanese with their handbags and other symbols of prosperity, makes more sense than denying themselves any pleasure for nearly no hope of ever achieving the American Dream. Two thousand dollars is hardly a drop in the bucket for buying a home where down payments routinely are tens of thousands of dollars, but thanks to cheap travel (pre-COVID-19), it can be the start of paying for

a nice trip to Southeast Asia or even a week in Europe. The Instagram posts are merely a social media bonus.

In an unstable world where the future seems uncertain, which was undoubtedly true in the years after 2008, self-denial today doesn't make any sense. The COVID-19 crisis has proven that the future remains uncertain. It is hard enough to get human beings to plan for the future, but when the world seems doubtful, it is easier to take what you can today because tomorrow is not promised. For millennials, this has been true for their entire working lives.

Life can present all sorts of challenges to people. There are health challenges within a family, job loss, a car breaking down beyond repair, a career change, and bigger things like a house fire or the sudden death of a spouse. In this environment and for this generation of people, we have quickly learned that you can't make a mistake. When it comes to money or any situation in life, you have to be hyper vigilant because you might never recover once you fall. The ladder to stability and success is complex; mistakes or missteps can have catastrophic consequences for years.

One of the comments that I received via Reddit stood out to me:

> We've managed to scrape some semblance of middle class, but it was so fucking tiring. I feel like I've lived a whole lifetime at 30. There was no room for error, I made the right choice numerous times and it was barely, through luck alone, enough. My fate was almost never in my hands, job loss now would still be almost unbearable. It's taken hundreds, maybe thousands, of applications, dozens of interviews to eke out a wage increase more than a pittance each year. Any lapse in vigilance would slowly lead to poverty. The world does not want us to succeed. All the while, someone with capital could have made as much as I have in a decade in a few weeks on the market. People owning yachts and shit because they come from money, while others less fortunate

> are basically homeless. We obtained the "American dream" and not only is it nothing special, the guilt of our relative success being a lottery sucks. I spend frivolously because the future is so uncertain, nihilism has been beaten into me. There is no bright-eyed and bushy tailed in my world. We happened to avoid major catastrophes, that's it. If either of us had ever lost our ability to work, or needed major medical care, or any of our parents needed help, we'd not be where we are now, and others our age were not so fortunate.

The experiences of people like this comment define what economist Guy Standing calls the new precariat. In the example from this Redditor, he achieved education as a certified pharmacy technician and, alongside his wife, managed to buy a house with help from his parents. In previous times, two incomes with solid jobs would have made them solidly middle class. Currently, they are scraping by with housemates and have no plans to have children. This is what millennials face today.

Doing well in life is a combination of mistakes, luck, and intelligent decisions. One of the struggles for millennials is that they did indeed try to make all the "right" decisions. Millennials had less sex than boomers or Xers. They committed less crime, too. Teen cigarette smoking plummeted to the single digits. Millennials tried to win the system.

However, millennials also had pressures. Kids who couldn't pay attention in class were often drugged with Ritalin or Adderall. Helicopter parenting became a common phrase for parents who were always around their kids and seemingly overly involved in their lives. The infamous participation awards eased the ego hits of losing at sports or any competition. Millennials also had a greater cultural awareness than previous generations, fueled chiefly by the burgeoning internet and its connections.

The boomers' greatest mistake was simple: a lack of investment in the system that created the Great Prosperity. Instead, boomers

extracted everything that they could from a system designed for their success by their parents, who knew what it was like to go without food, water, and money and live in actual deprivation of the Depression and war. The boomers were a generation that voted with self-interest at the first opportunity (Reagan) and have continued to build and create a system to enrich themselves. This is especially true in the upper echelons of society. Instead of creating a future for their children, they were more concerned with their property values.

The world has changed in a short period of time. I think there is a certain lack of understanding of how the world has changed. I, for one, am lucky to have parents who understand how hard it has been and how the world has changed. They respect the hard work I have put in to create something for myself and all my random jobs. Many are not so lucky, and there are plenty of boomers who are unsympathetic to the millennial plight.

So why does it seem so hard to care about the problems of millennials despite them being real human people in our society?

CHAPTER 5:

WHY NO ONE SEEMS TO CARE

A quote found on Facebook:

> My generation was in elementary school when 9/11 happened, which started the longest undeclared war in U.S. history. In the year of my high school graduation the 2008 subprime mortgage bubble burst and crippled the world's economy. Wages have not kept up with inflation or productivity since the 70s, college tuition has gone up over 1000%, the war on drugs is still a thing, our government is a corrupt gaggle of corporatist whores, identity politics is in full swing, the "throw away" life styles of past generations has left a country-sized mass of plastic in the ocean and the climate got skull fucked by humanity's greed. But yeah, we use smart phones (access to the collective knowledge of humanity in your pocket) and eat avocados. Real pieces of shit we are.

One of the great mysteries of our time is how little has been done to solve the problems of younger people. Social media comment sections are usually filled with two groups: those who acknowledge the

issue and those who deny its very existence and blame the under-45 folks for simply not working hard enough. One of the tropes that were quite popular over the last decade was the 25-year-olds (usually a couple) who bought a house through "hard work" and "saving money" but had help from mom and dad. People will praise their virtue and say, "See, if they can do it, why can't you?" Without understanding that underneath the surface is family support to make that advancement possible. Their parents didn't need a loan from the Bank of Mom and Dad to buy a house. Social media makes it seem so easy, and frustrated people open their banking app and wonder why they aren't keeping up. This is an area where class has a great effect. For millennials who come from an economic background where they enjoy family resources, much of the impact of our present economic situation has been mitigated. For everyone else, the world has nothing to offer but a new status of precarity.

It remains a mystery to me why there has not been more focus on improving the lot for young workers. Ann Helen Peterson wrote an article for the PBS Newshour titled "Can't Even: How Millennials Became the Burnout Generation." She wrote, "Millennials 'Can't Even' get ahead—they're already too far behind, … Millennials live with the reality that we're going to work forever, die before we pay off our student loans, possibly bankrupt our children with our care, or get wiped out in a global apocalypse. That might sound like hyperbole—but that's the new normal, and the weight of living amidst that sort of emotional, physical, and financial precarity is staggering."

Here is where a dose of reality might be helpful. Human history is filled with tragedy. Most of human history has been "brutish and short." War, disease, famine, and much more have filled the human story across the planet. Humanity has spent most of its development finding ways to control things threatening lives and collective security. From this perspective, being a millennial is pretty good. We don't face the challenges of our forebears. In this way, Scott Galloway is correct. Millennials aren't particularly put-upon, but they are unlucky.

Unfortunately, the world our parents prepared us for no longer exists, so this age is to feel a certain amount of disconnection. It is easy to look outside or on social media and wonder where everything went wrong. Boomers certainly think about the world, but the disconnection feels much different at age 60 than at 30. Disconnection from the world is hard to handle when balancing student loans, deciding whether to have children, and wondering how to make enough money to survive in an unfriendly job market.

The year 2008 ended a large credit expansion, and the austerity policies of the world's governments meant a slow recovery. Like the Japanese after 1991, the economy didn't bounce back and people were left behind. For many millennials, this feeling of being left behind will haunt them their whole lives. The trouble is that when people complain about being left behind, few people want to hear their complaints or even acknowledge a problem. This was also true for the Japanese. As we will find out, the issue of the employment ice age only began to garner government attention when it started to affect the pension system.

There has been no social program to help millennials who needed to retool for a different world than we were promised. There has not been a federal response to prime-age males' lack of labor participation. In my first book, *What the Hell is Going On?*, I wrote an essay on the ten million missing men. It was based on an article in *The Atlantic* about the same subject. My tone was a bit dismissive at the time. However, as the years passed, I realized this problem deserved to be taken seriously. Of those prime-age males (25-55), millennials entirely fall within that age range. When the labor force participation rate is a modest 62 percent (in 2022), it means millions of people are economically marginalized.

This should be the subject of presidential debates, but it did not come up in 2016 or 2020. The only person to address it at some level was Donald Trump. He did an excellent job speaking to the marginalized people who had been economically left behind. Despite the nature of his message, it certainly resonated. He received the most votes in American history in 2016 and the second most in American history

in 2020, only bested by Joe Biden, who took the top spot. In 2020, he increased his vote share among every demographic except white men. This trend reversed in 2024 with white men and white women breaking decisively for President Trump. Politically, the lack of help for people, especially men, has political consequences. Much of our current discourse swirls around these problems.

Some people will still complain that millennials are simply too entitled, too selfish, too-anything, and that there is no reason to focus on the problems of millennials. This attitude is another marginalization. Millennials are real people raising kids, buying houses, and trying to afford childcare and retirement. For many, those milestones took many more years than they had planned. They have been through the double punch of a recession and a pandemic. Millennials have had complete economic devastation twice before the age of 50. In our modern era, this will have life-long consequences for most. While millennials might not face famine, disease, and flood like in ages past, in our current capitalistic economic model, an economic downturn is just as bad as the floods and diseases of old. It can be the difference between getting to buy a house or grinding on as a member of the new precariat.

Within the millennial soul, at least for some, there is a certain sense of disappointment and loss. We are living in a future denied. This is when you can do everything right and lose for no reason other than dumb luck and bad timing. History is full of that, too. The poor person who opened a business in 1929 had no idea there wouldn't be a functioning economy shortly afterward. Someone with big plans in 1939 might have turned their whole life upside down by an inconvenient European invasion. I'm sure someone in 1941 had a charming picnic planned for December 7, and it was ruined by the Japanese deciding it was time to bomb Pearl Harbor. Those are just recent examples. History is full of these sorts of bad luck scenarios.

The reality is that despite the message of individual responsibility and accountability that has been a hallmark of the neoconservative economic mindset that has dominated our system since 1980, we are

often victims of things far beyond our control. People like Chairman and CEO of Lehman Brothers Dick Fuld, Chairman of the New York Federal Reserve (and later Treasury Secretary) Timothy Geithner, and Treasury Secretary (under Bush) Hank Paulson made decisions that profoundly affected the lives of everyone on the planet and managed to completely screw over an entire generation of people in their own country. No matter where you look, there's a silent army of people responsible for the 2008 financial crisis. From Louis Rainieri, who invented mortgage-backed securities, to every person who traded in them, thousands of decisions impacted the lives of millions of people. How individualistic can we be?

It has been easy to dismiss the complaints of my generation. No one likes us, and no one ever will. We are a punchline to every joke. The word "millennial" has taken on a toxicity usually reserved for political and sex scandals. It is hard to get traction to have these conversations and realize how people have been screwed over. To some degree, this is a rejection of the cry of the collective. Instead of acknowledging the collective problem, people would sooner reject the idea of a problem than deal with the haunting realization that no matter how much individualism we might cling to, we are a collective society, and what people do in our community matters and must be a concern for us all. This is likely why socialism is quite popular with the under-45 group in the United States.

Acting collectively, especially for collaboratively minded millennials, is appealing when you realize we cannot change society to fit our view. Part of this concerns money in politics, corporate statism, or our political system. Still, much of it also has to do with the fact that we are subject to the desire for constant growth by hedge funds and investors on Wall Street and elsewhere who make decisions to enrich themselves at the collective expense. As Scott Galloway says, "Privatize the gains and socialize the losses."

Even how the 2008 crisis was handled demonstrates this problem. Banks were bailed out, but people were not. Instead of forcing all the companies to offer fixed-rate mortgages to people with variable-rate

mortgages, the banks were given billions to save them. The Obama administration had an opportunity to take the banks to task, and he chose to follow the lead of Timothy Geithner and decided not to bring "Old Testament justice" to America's bankers. In the years that followed with quantitative easing (QE), assets like houses, stocks, and bonds were propped up with cheap and easy money. Calls to increase the wages of working people were met with deaf ears until the pandemic.

Years of low interest rates pumped up the stock market but rarely helped regular working people. During the pandemic, retail investing exploded as people figured out that if one could get rich playing the stock market, they might as well try it, too. It is no surprise that products like cryptocurrency have become so popular. Its entire appeal is that a decentralized currency was not controlled by the banking system that had screwed over so many people in 2008. This ability to make money from computers, technology, and math was seemingly magical for some. A new language developed around crypto trading. People could buy and sell these assets or simply hold them and ride the wave to ever higher prices and be able to afford the American dream on their own terms. "Hodling" until you "Lambo" was internet parlance used to signal that someone was going all in on a cryptocurrency—holding no matter what—until it made them enough money to buy a Lamborghini.

Millennials' problem at this stage of life is finding a way to achieve the American Dream. It seems like there is no natural way to win anymore. There is no map, and there is no clear path like there once was for us. When you look at things from this perspective, much of people's seemingly irrational behavior makes sense, even avocado toast, iPhones, and Starbucks. The problem is that despite it all, no one will ever care about these issues. Bernie Sanders popularized the idea of wealth and income inequality, but only post pandemic has the problem been taken seriously at a high level within our society. There is much conversation about the issue, but not much is being done.

There is much desperation these days. I think that is why many people are so pessimistic about the future. Talking about the world like it's on fire and society is failing all around us has become relatively common online. It has become fashionable for right-wing people in digital spaces to refute the idea and simply blame ordinary people for complaining.

The student loan discussion is also symbolic of the lack of caring around issues affecting millennials. During the pandemic, businesses were given billions of Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans. *The New York Times* reported in 2022 in an article titled, "Little of the Paycheck Protection Program's $800 Billion Protected Paychecks" that the program had been riddled with fraud and grift, "Jobs and businesses are two separate things," said David Autor, an economics professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who led a 10-member team that studied the program. "We tried to figure out, 'Where did the money go?'—and it turns out it didn't primarily go to workers who would have lost jobs. It went to business owners and their shareholders and their creditors."

However, when it comes to providing relief for high-interest student loans, there is little desire to help. In June 2023, the Supreme Court said $10,000 of student loan debt forgiveness per individual was unconstitutional. There is no word from the high court on the constitutionality of stolen funds from the PPP.

CHAPTER 6:

MARGINALIZED MILLENNIALS

We begin with a submission from Reddit:

> Here you are. Take this as a single data point, but you can take it for face value. Every word is my own. Use it as you will in your writing, or not at all (whatever helps with your book). Although I hope you can!
>
> On my youth:
>
> Looking back on the 2010s, decade of my youth gone by now, I can officially say I spent my entire 20s jumping from one financial crisis to the next. Constant sinking ships everywhere I went. I've known a few fulfilling relationships and even found peace with who I am, but I have never tasted financial security for more than a couple of months. It's affected my mental health in ways that I'm just now becoming aware of.
>
> I grew up with nothing, with parents who refused to plan for a reasonable future. So I educated myself and paid for every red cent. I never grew bitter at my folks or asked for money ONCE; just always balanced doing what I was coached to do with following my personal goals.

'Don't ever take govt assistance, don't take vacations until you manage to find salaried work and save up for a home down payment. Save for retirement now. Take out as many college loans as you need. 50/30/20% rule for living/discretionary/savings.'

Bookmarked all the personal finance blogs. Downloaded the savings apps. Read "Forbes 30 Under 30" to keep my dreams alive. Done, done and donesky. With great resilience and confidence to try, try again. Studied hundreds of articles with titles like "Everything you should start (and stop) doing as a 20-something to save for retirement." I started that Roth IRA and 401k. I graduated college with a sustainable (enough) degree. Suddenly, now when I meet people my parents' age, they smile real big and tell me "See the world while you're young. Enjoy it before you have great responsibility to stress over." Thanks. Too fucking late but thanks. I know I'll never have another youth, but all I'm searching for now are answers. No Reddit hugbox, no excuses from me or anyone else. Just, what the hell am I missing? Seriously. Whatever it is my few successful counterparts have been doing, or have internally, I am simply lacking enough of that. Thing is, I recognize a few things I could have sacrificed, daily consumption habits that weren't very conducive to savings, or maybe having the gumption to take risks and place myself in the right company at the right time....but when? Where? And with whom? I swear to God the one thing that still eludes me is how the gatekeepers of this gotcha economy expect you to be able to invest in financial risk or even save more than 5% of a paycheck at a time to ever GET off the ground. To know what the value of a dollar actually is. If I'm supposedly only worth my contribution to the GDP. They're telling us a lot of lies, at a minimum. Fuck

> it. If I've had the audacity to stick around til 30 with nothing to show for it but a semi stable job, I'll continue to the bitter end out of spite. Anyone else experiencing similar?

Another submission from Reddit:

> Daily life from the perspective of a few of us gay 30 somethings living in middle TN:
>
> Does anybody feel a decade behind? (Originally posted in by the same user r/AskGaybrosOver30)
>
> Yep. '80s gaybies have an odd life timeline so far. Old enough to remember when the world was super homophobic and struggled being accepted/taught basic life skills from estranged parental and mentor figures, but young enough to have experienced things like marriage equality and majority societal acceptance during our 20s.
>
> Things were definitely tense if you add a fundamentalist upbringing like ours. I'm 30 right now, but by the time I was out of college, I was the only one out of every gay person I knew whose parents were proudly homophobic.
>
> As an aside, my earliest memory was mom calling a family member from a freaking rotary dialer, but by the time I graduated high school, the iPhone was released. Times change quickly.
>
> I still cannot properly shop for groceries. It should be the simplest thing ever, but it's as if I'm learning to ride a bike at 30 and feeling lost. I have a best friend who graduated a year before me, and she's exactly the same. Married even. This is after having a good job for the better part of a year now, moving cities and securing a stable LTR (long-term relationship). I buy less than a week's worth of grub at a

> time. Buying anything more makes me feel almost physically nauseous, while the back of my head is preoccupied with things like car maintenance and sudden medical bills, even though I have insurance now. Call those 1st world problems but I call not being able to invest in biweekly food expenditures a serious hurdle for independent adulthood. If one can't get over that, how are they ever gonna put down for a home? Getting there one step at a time.
>
> My older sister once found a dusty box of tax papers in my parents basement, from well before they filed online. The year my brother and I were born they net over $100k. In fucking 1989. My dad was just a blue collar union carpenter. What the HELL did they do with all of it? We never found out. I started college penniless and ended it dozens of thousands less wealthy. I'm almost his age from that time, and will almost crack 35k at the rate I'm going in sales. God help us.

Millennials are the largest generation in history. The baby boomers had many children so, as millennials hit 18 and college, American society braced for their impact on society and the workforce. Companies studied spending habits and tried to keep up with the changing tastes of millennials. Companies, industry, and anyone not a millennial has been mystified by their choices and habits. However, there is a deep economic story here to be told.

There are many stories about millennials. For the past decade, the media has become obsessed with America's largest generation. So far, millennials have killed casual dining like Applebees, Chilis, and TGI Fridays. Napkins, diamonds, and the suburbs have also become victims of millennials' refusal to participate in the greater economy. However, despite the popular news stories and the resulting social media perception, the situation is more nuanced. The numbers show that millennials aren't deliberately killing anything. There was no meeting on Instagram or Snapchat to determine what parts of the American economy would

be destroyed. The simple fact is that millennials do not have the money to spend at these establishments or on these products.

The average millennial does not own their own home (although the rarity of homeownership has increased post pandemic) and does not own a new car. Despite the oldest of them being well over forty, they have less sex, use less drugs, are more faithful to their partners, and are more likely to live with their partner before marriage. The average millennial is a victim of circumstances that began long before they were born. Many of the problems millennials face began when Gen X was born in the late 1960s and 70s.

As discussed in my first book, *What the Hell is Going On?,* wages for labor remained stagnant between 1977 and 2021, although they have recently begun to rise in real terms (adjusted for inflation). There are multiple factors to why wage growth stagnated for so many years. One of the most important is that in a world where capital is valued more than labor, returns from capital will generate more wealth than labor (which was the basis of the work of Thomas Piketty). I add that this is because capital seeks a frictionless return.

For Gen X and boomers, this wage problem has presented economic difficulties because they did not create as much wealth as they might have otherwise; however, for the youngest workers, millennials, and now Gen Z, this lack of wage growth has been catastrophic. This has led many millennials to stay with their parents in their early 20s and move out with roommates well into their 30s, and, of course, this transition was deeply class-based.

When buying a home, millennials are far more likely to rely on help from family than previous generations. One of the most essential reasons that millennials coming out of the great recession are marginalized across race and, to a lesser degree, class is simple: they've been left on the economic sidelines. The effect has been to delay the normal stages of life for millennials entirely. And even worse is that Gen Z is no better off in this regard. Every trend that millennials started has only increased for Gen Z, especially after the pandemic.

One of the most tragic parts of America's lost generation is the delays in major life milestones. Among the stories sent to me, there were mentions of delaying having children or simply giving up on the idea of being able to be a parent. There was also a story from a man in his early 30s who had given up dating because he simply couldn't afford to date or give gifts. As we delve into dating later in this book, we'll see that not being able to participate in society as a regular adult or a regular person is deeply traumatizing and damaging.

All of this has led to the extreme marginalization of millennials. Every society marginalizes someone; not everyone is included. In Japanese culture, this often results in the *hikikomori* phenomenon. We'll learn more about that in the next section as we explore how Japan gave us a preview of what would happen to millennials.

In America, the results of marginalization can be even more damaging because there is little or no safety net for the marginalized amongst us. American parents aren't usually willing to humor their children's lack of success. Society isn't that kind, either. In the early days after the financial crisis, these students were ridiculed as the 1986-90 cohort of millennials moved to the safety of home amid the slowdown of the American economy. Millennials still are ridiculed for killing napkins, casual dining, cars, and home ownership.

Rather than realize that society was in crisis, Gen X and boomer politicians told millennials to figure it out. Even within families, parents sternly told their children to figure out how to put all their talents and expensive educations to work. Many people I spoke to talked about being rejected by family when they most needed them. This has caused great depression among the refugees of the 2008 financial crisis.

The impetus of this book was the economic devastation of another real estate boom: Japan in 1991. In the next section, we will take a little trip to Japan and see how an entire generation of Japanese was lost due to economic devastation and how a lack of government action and failed policies have led to terrible economic consequences at Japan's individual and societal level.

What The Hell Is Going on?

A primer to understanding our world in the age of Trump

Cameron Cowan

About the Author

Cameron Cowan, M.A. is the former host of The Cameron Cowan Show. He is a writer, thinker, and human being enjoying the sights and sounds of the Washington D.C. area.

Acknowledgements

Patricia Tyson (for picking me up off the side of the road)
Nina Rice (your editing work was invaluable)
Delilah Kieffer (for your generosity)
RJ Stewart (for teaching me the book business)
Mom and Dad (for always being helpful to your crazy artist/son)

All the reporters who do the amazing work everyday that makes books likes these and a free democracy possible.

What the Hell is Going On? A primer to understanding our world in the age of Trump

Copyright © 2019 by Cameron Cowan and Widgery Omnimedia

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means graphic, electronic, or mechanical including photocopying, recording, scanning or by any other information storage and retrieval systems without permission in writing from the author: cameronjournal.com

1st Edition

ISBN: 978-0-578-54953-8

Printed in the USA

cameronjournal.com

Forward

Our world is a seemingly crazy place. On the one hand, the lives of people are improving all around the world. More people have access to healthcare more than ever before and we've seen improvements in drinking water, disease management, and life expectancy around the globe. The world of 2020 is much better than the world of just 20 years ago. However, this has come at quite a cost, especially if you live in a developed country. Wage stagnation and income inequality has taken their toll at hollowing out economies and personal futures. Things that people once took for granted, like well paying employment and access to housing, have been wiped away. The heartland of the United States, the midlands or England, and other rural areas, once dominated by industry, have seen towns disappear as the jobs that supported them were moved overseas to foreign countries. The modern global economy is more integrated than ever before. This has led to a fascist backlash that has taken the form of Brexit, Donald Trump, and right-wing movements on the continental Europe, in places like Austria and Italy.

There are long-term trends in retirement plans, corporate debt, sovereign debt, and birth rates that paint a troubling picture for the world economy moving forward. Capitalism has reached its zenith in this century and it isn't exactly the shining example of freedom and equality that many thinkers would have you believe. Capitalism has changed our world in numerous ways that we are only beginning to understand and experience. It has created outsized problems that most societies, even progressive European societies with its strong social safety net, cannot begin to solve.

Technology has changed our lives in ways that we could only imagine decades previously. While social networks have brought us closer together, their lack of regulation and free-for-all nature have allowed lies, hate, and deception to spread quickly to billions of people. Social media has toppled governments, started genocide, and has affected elections throughout the world. That power is contained especially in the smartphone. People are able to carry the internet, a wealth of information and powerful communications, in their pockets, accessing them wherever they are located. More so than anything else, this constant connectivity amplifies whatever is blended through it.

This economic output has come at a cost. Ecologically, the planet has never been worse. There are worrying trends in temperature and climate changes that we do not fully understand and often are not fully prepared to manage. Agriculture and our relationship to the natural world is changing. A renaissance in energy has changed the landscape in North America and elsewhere. A relaxation of regulation on emissions promises more of the same.

However, while things might seem dire, there is great hope. There are specific and strategic things that nations can put in place now to reverse these trends and create a container for success in the future. The only thing that is lacking is the political will to do so. The solutions are evident.

My goal in this book is to take some of the signature essays from The Cameron Cowan Show and use them together to give the reader a picture of what exactly is going on in our world. One of the biggest things I believe in is context. Events only matter when you understand what came before and what they might be leading to in the future. When you understand where we are, it gives us tremendous insight into the future and answers the important question of why things are they way and to truly understand what is going on.

The world is confusing and hopefully this book will empower the reader to understand it better and be able to navigate the news, world events, and their own futures with the necessary information to stay informed and to have the background to understand the news in context.

In this book, I have updated and revised the original essays and I've added some more information about different parts that would have been impractical for online reading. The essays are grouped by broad topic. Feel free to jump around in the book. You do not need to have read the previous work to understand any of the essays; they stand alone.

Have fun with this book and if I have done my job, you will have a much better understanding of what the hell is going on.

Introduction

If you are reading the daily news on your favorite device then the world might look quite dire to you. It seems like there are a variety of problems. As of this writing, we live in a world where the President of the United States is scandal ridden, the economy seems to be doing well but the wealth is not shared, and the environment seems like it is on the verge of collapse. There is a crisis in the insect population and in the overall climate. There is a crisis within the economy, especially when the labor participation rate, those actually working, is so low. Right now we have a tax system and an economic system that privileges the wealthy and those who control capital. The nation does not work for the general population who make, on average, $50,000 per year. We have a system that prioritizes those who make many multiples of that. It seems that everywhere, there are innumerable problems and policy makers are helpless to solve them.

This book was spawned out of a question someone asked me personally, "What the hell is going on?" Why is it the richest, most powerful nation on earth cannot feed all of its citizens, keep up roads and bridges, educate its children, and keep the water and air clean?

I want to remind the reader as we go through these problems, there is not a single problem discussed in this book that we cannot solve. We don't have to wait for technology to develop or hope that something breaks through. We can solve these problems today. However, we lack the political will, as a people, to elect people in power at the local and federal level who are committed to solving these problems in a real way. We lack the resolve to make tough decisions and come up with radical solutions to move forward for the whole nation.

Context

In the 2 years of The Cameron Cowan Show, my focus was always on giving people context to what was going on. So much of our news seems to exist in a vacuum. It is very hard to understand problems without fully knowing how we got here. Many people have no idea of history beyond their own lived experiences. However, when it comes to public policy, it can take years for a situation to develop regardless if that situation is considered good or bad.

To understand what is going on and propose some smart solutions, we need to understand how exactly these problems started in the first place and what the whole story is about any situation. The goal of this book is to take some issues and give some context as to what is happening and give the reader a fuller picture of the world around us and to truly understand what the hell is going on. The world seems bewildering, but I would argue it isn't as bewildering as the news might make it seem. We don't have to throw up our hands and give up on these big issues. What we need to do, as a society, is to not be afraid to take on big issues and begin the process of making the world a truly better place. America used to be the country that did big things. Americans have created powered flight, the assembly line, the cell phone, radio, television, modern media, and many other advancements. Even as a people, we put a man on the moon, launched a modern communications infrastructure, and even created a reusable space vehicle in the form of the Space Transportation System or the Space Shuttle. We did this with our powerful school system. We did this with the grit of the workers that painstakingly built these machines bolt by bolt. When Eisenhower could not easily move from coast to coast, we built the interstate highway system. When we needed to transport things by ship, quickly and easily, we created containerization, a simple but revolutionary concept. There is nothing that we cannot do and nothing that we cannot fix. We can create a country that works for everyone, not just the few. However, it takes common sense solutions and true understanding of the problems that we face. We can open new opportunities for ourselves.

The world is changing. We now live in a multi-polar environment where there are a variety of powerful nations with influence. The world will not be the same as Pax Americana. However, we can take this opportunity to reset this country and chart a better path for the 21st Century than we've been on for 19 years. The 21st Century was filled with such promise as we entered it in 2000; however, much of the dream patina that we painted has worn off through war and strife. The 21st Century still offers hope. The whole world can and should do better. This book should fill you with knowledge and hope that we can have a better future. This book should empower you to approach your elected representatives with ease and speak knowledgeably on issues and help to push for change in your community. Over and over again throughout United tates. history, the efforts of a group of determined people can create great change.

Women's suffrage, civil rights, abolition, and many more social problems were solved through the work of people, just like the people reading these pages. This should be a guide to you and should activate you, empowered with knowledge, to begin the changes that are needed in this country.

Do not be discouraged by the problems that we face. The United States did not create a continental nation by being afraid to walk across deserts or homestead raw land. Those powerful people faced up to challenges and built farms, railroads, and a civilization. It was not always done in the right way, especially considering the Native populations that suffered a terrible genocide as a result of this settlement. However, people overcame adverse circumstances to create the nation we live in. It's time that we do the same. Our new manifest destiny is to manifest a new nation for ourselves that feeds everyone, educates everyone, and works for everyone and not just the few.

Table of Contents

What The Hell Is Going on? i
Cameron Cowan i
About the Author ii
Acknowledgements ii
Forward iv
Introduction vi
Context vii

Part 1: The Economy 1

Capitalism and Democracy: 2
How "We the People" 2
Became "We the Corporation" 2
American Democro-Capitalism 3
Manorialism 4
Mercantilism 5
How are Capitalism and Mercantilism different? 6
The Corporation 7
A Quick History of Capitalism 9
Capitalism at Scale 10
Kapital 11
The American Gilded Age 11
Open Market Economies 12
Banks and Banking 14
Capital and Government 16
The Death of Mainstreet 17
The Squeeze of Labor 18
On-Demand Chickens 20
Forget the Global Village, It's the Global Corporation 21
Global Trade 22
Money in Politics 25
How Corporations Took Over America 26
Corporate Involvement in Government 27
Government for and by the Corporation 28
Capitalism as a Failure 30
Capitalism Detox 31
1977: The Rise of Discounters 34
and Deregulation 34
The Great Middle Class 34
Tough Times for Joe Six-Pack 36

The Rise of Neoliberalism and the "Open" Market 38
Chile and China: Neo-Liberalism Rises 40
Neo-Liberalism Grows 41
De-regulation 42
Banks 42
Trucking, Airlines, and Lowered Wages 43
The End of Big Labor 43
The Rise of Discount Stores 44
The High Cost of Wealth Concentration 45
The Real Problem 47
The Financial Crisis and 49
the Destruction of Our World 49
The world of 2007 simply no longer exists 52
Economic Changes 53
Our Changing World 53

Part 2: The Planet 55

The Bees are Not Alright 56
A Brief History of Bees 56
Threats Against Bees 57
Varroa Mite 57
Viruses 57
Monoculture Farming 58
Bumble Bees and Other Natural Pollinators 59
Pesticides: Spray On and Systemic 59
Neonicotinoids 60
The Death of Lawns and Weeds 61
Political Action 61
Beekeeping Practices 62
Conclusions 63
Genetically Modified Foods: A Story in Deception 64
In The Beginning There was a Seed and an Engineer 64
A Brief History of GMO Food 65
GMO Basic Facts 66
Why We Need GMOs 67
The Papaya 67
The Orange 68
The Potato 69
Nutrition and Climate Change 69
The Promise of Golden Rice 70
Anti- GMO Hype 70
Food Babe 72
The Non-GMO Project and Organic Foods 73
Organic Food is Not Better 73

GMOs and Pesticides: The Case 76
The Monsanto "Problem" 78
Conclusions 79
Our Changing Planet: Climate Change, Global Warming, Global Cooling, Ice Ages… And Wacky Weather 81
Introduction 81
The Climate is Changing? 81
What is Climate Change? 82
Climate Change Evidence 83
An Inconvenient Truth 83
The Science 83
Effects of Climate Change 84
Warming Planet 84
Sea Level Rise 84
Ecological 85
But What If It's Not True? 86
Here are some of the problems: 87
The Environmentalist Movement 88
A Greenpeace? 89
The Planet is Changing 90
The Failed Narrative 90
More than a Belief 92
How Do Humans Adapt? 93
Transportation 93
Geoengineering 93
Lifestyle 94
So Is it Real...or Isn't it? 95
A Guide to a More Sustainable Future 97
100% Recycling 97
Zero Waste Policies 97
Sustainable Farming 98
Natural Land Restoration 98
Our Ecological Future 98

Part 3: Automation, and the Forces of Change 99

The Death of the White, 100
Heteronormative, 100
Christian Narrative 100
There are People and Then There's Everyone Else 100
Immigrants, Poor People and Trump 101
American Culture 2.0 102
Is American Culture Strong Enough to Actually Include Everyone? 103
How Do You Lose 10 Million Men? 104
It's Time to be Worried 104

What's Wrong with the Economy? 105
Wages 105
Automation 106
Lack of Respectable Jobs 106
How Do They Survive? 107
Where Did These Men Go? 107
Voting for a Better Economy 108
Nations and Nationalism 109
The Beginnings of the Nation-State 109
America: A Nation? 110
Uniting All Nations 111
The World Before Globalization 112
Globalism Has Not Worked Out 112
Nationalism is A Reflection of Globalization 113
How Do We Make A Global Economy Work for Everyone? 113
Nationalism is Not the Answer 114
Racism 2.0 115
Racism toward Asian People 116
Hispanic Racism 117
Native American Racism 118
Jewish Anti-Semitism 119
Slavery and the African-American Experience 121
Underground Railroad 123
Abolition 123
Reconstruction 124
The Reconstruction Amendments 125
The Klan 125
Failed Opportunities 126
Jim Crow 127
Civil Rights 128
Brown vs. Board of Education 130
The Second KKK 130
Red Lining 132
Affirmative Action 133
Black Lives Matter and Police Violence 134
Black Lives Matter 134
Police Militarization 136
Race Riots 137
Rodney King and Latasha Harlins 138
The Violence Never Stopped 139
Angola Prison and Mass Incarceration 140
Economics and the Destruction of Black Wealth 141
The White Experience of Race 144

Why White People Are So Uncomfortable Talking About Race 144
Ignorance 144
Lack of Language 145
Fear and Fragility 145
White Supremacy 145
The White Trash Problem 147
White Racial Consciousness and Identity Politics 148
White Racial Consciousness 149
Bernie and Hillary: The Real Debate 150
Donald Trump and White People Left Behind 150
The Real Appeal of Donald Trump 151
A Better Idea Than the Democrats 152
Race and Racism in 2019 153

Part 4: The Age of Information 154
Teachers and Chalkboards: What Is Really Wrong with American Education 155
Introduction 155
The Problem 156
School Funding 158
In the Beginning There Was a One Room Schoolhouse 159
18th Century 159
19th Century 159
20th Century 160
21st Century 161
Race to the Top 163
Becoming American Through Educational Opportunity 165
Integration, Segregation, and Education 165
Why American Education Falls Behind – The Broken System Narrative 166
Johnny Can't Read 167
Why Do Teens Get Disinterested in Learning in High School? 167
School to Prison Pipeline 168
Getting Workers Ready for the Workforce 169
Higher Education and Jobs 170
Who Teaches the Teachers 171
How to Attract Better Teachers 172
The Teacher Wars 172
School Choice 176

Charter Schools 176
American Education is Trying to be Everything to Everyone 178
Why Does America Score So Low on International Tests. 179
American Culture Toward Education 179
Why Students Drop Out 180
Reforming American Education 181
Empowering Teachers 183
How to Get Better Teachers 183
The Federal Role in Education 184
Schools Have Changed 185
How to Fix Schools 185
Higher Education 187
Professors Are Almost Slave Wage Labor 187
The Sports Problem 188
Reforming Higher Education 189
Fewer People Going to College 191
Online Education Is Not the Answer 192
To Solve Schools you Have to Solve America 192
Notable Events, 194
Entertainment, Weather, and Sports 194
A Quick History of Media 194
Consolidation of Media 196
Doing Good Doesn't Always Pay the Bills 197
The Death of Journalism 198
Saving Journalism 199
The News and Social Media 200
Pizzagate 201
Radicalization 201
Flat Earthers, Anti-Vaxxers, and Others 202
Perceptions 202
Protest Movements and Political Change 202
Fox News and Roger Ailes 203
Talk Radio 204
Frightened Citizens 204
Modern Media Myths Debunked 206
Myth #1: There is a grand media conspiracy 206
Myth #2: The media isn't being "Fair" 206
Rules for Media Consumption 207
Rule #1: News Is a Narrative 207
Rule #2: Understand the Bias of the Story 208

Rule #3: Who Does the Story Affect? 208
Our Complicated World 209

Epilogue 210

Appendix A 211
A Note on sources and research 212
Capitalism and Democracy: How "We the People" Became "We the Corporation" 212
The Death of the White, Heteronormative, Christian Narrative 213
How Did we Lose 10 million men? 213
The Financial Crisis and the Destruction of Our World 213
Notable Events, Entertainment, Weather, and Sports 213
A Guide to a More Sustainable Future 213
Nations and Nationalism 213
1977: The Rise of Discounters and Deregulation 214
The Bees are Not Alright 214
Genetically Modified Foods: A Story in Deception 215
Teachers and Chalkboards: What Is Really Wrong with American Education 217
Our Changing Planet: Climate Change, Global Warming, Global Cooling, Ice Ages… And Wacky Weather 219
Racism 2.0 222

Part 1: The Economy

Capitalism and Democracy: How We the People Became We the Corporation

1977: The Rise Discounters and Deregulation

The Financial Crisis and the Destruction of Our World

Capitalism and Democracy:

How "We the People"

Became "We the Corporation"

We the People, the iconic line from the opening paragraph of the Constitution is firmly lodged in the American consciousness. It conjures up the idea of everyday people coming together, as one, to govern themselves. That singular idea, self governance, is as American as almost anything including Mom and Apple pie. However, democracy, as we've known it in this country, has radically changed. We have moved from an "up-from the people" idea of government to a "top-down" idea of government that is owned by the owners of capital.

This self-governance idea has since been twisted to include mostly the elite. Those with the dollars to pull the levers of power in this country for their favor have been busy taking power from the general people and sucking it up for themselves. This is not by accident. This is directly the result of capitalism. For capital, government is merely another cost center where proper investment must be made to reduce the chance of increase costs from regulation or other laws and anything that might increase risk to the goal of capitalism: frictionless return. This system is not merely the result of "evil" people invested in tearing a society apart.

America is slowly becoming one plutocracy under God with corporate ownership and poverty for all. Vitriolic articles and activist organizations have been founded to solve this problem. Corporate interest has become prescient in the political system. Everywhere we look, our society serves the corporate-capitalist interest with a disregard for the interests of everyone else.

In the 21st Century, the value of capital is greater than that of labor because such a system is the logical conclusion of capitalism, which seeks a frictionless, pure return on the gathered wealth of capital. This is the basis of our modern economy and what is in control of our democracy. A society serving the wealthy, corporate interest is not a new idea either. To understand our current system we have to understand the economic system of the 18th century and the founders of America themselves. Their political and economic views of their day have greatly informed both the present economic system and the myths surrounding the system. The current marriage of government and capital is a direct result of our unique economic system.

American Democro-Capitalism

From the start of the country, the term "We the People" never really meant all "people." In 1787, it meant white, land owning males and then later all white males, and then all males, and then all people, as long as you didn't live in a place with poll taxes and literacy tests. Even now with universal suffrage (voting rights), we know that the rights and privileges embodied in the Constitution must be assiduously defended in courts of law for people of backgrounds outside of the dominant Caucasian culture. Besides those problems, our democracy has an economic problem. Thanks to capitalism, "We the People" really means "We the Corporation."

The founders of the United States themselves called for a revolution against Great Britain to solve their own grievances with the regulations on business in the colonies. The very concept of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" stems from the regulations that caused the revolution like the Stamp Tax. The idea that anyone can and should be able to conduct business without a great deal of government interference was related to the mercantilist policies they had lived under. Consider who these men were and their station in life.

James Madison was a wealthy plantation owner in Orange County, Virginia. He gained his plantation from his father when he reached adulthood and was a prominent member of the community. George Washington came from modest means and married the wealthy widow, Martha Curtis, and became a planter of cash crops following his service in the Virginia Militia during the French and Indian War. John Adams also came from modest means and while he was never very wealthy, as some of the other men. He and Abigail were upper middle class and did fairly well in their Braintree, Massachusetts home, engaging mostly in business and trade. Alexander Hamilton may have died poor but his life was one of government service in the cabinet as the treasury secretary and as a partner in the First Bank of the United States. He was one of the authors, alongside Madison of The Federalist Papers, that argued for a federal union of states. Benjamin Franklin came from poverty and even at the end of his life described himself as a simple printer. His business was very successful and loved longer than most people at that time. These men were the intellectual, cultural, and social elite of their day and added others like Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and John Hancock who were the ones most affected by the economic changes and social changes instituted by Great Britain.

These men were educated in England and owned land. In the American colonies, land ownership as rare and had been since the first colonies were founded in 1605. Their background deeply affected what kind of government they created. When these illustrious men met in the Philadelphia Hall of Independence for the first hot summer of 1774, these men represented the intellectual, and in some cases, the economic elite of the colonies. The oppressive taxation of the British affected middle and wealthy class business people the most. As with most revolutions of the period, the bulk of

political change rested on those with the resources and wherewithal to cause it. While in France, the revolution began with the landed aristocracy who would later perish in the terror, in the United States the revolution started with landowners and business people and they are the ones who organized an army and won the war.

Once the dust of the revolution settled, they did not want to replicate the oppressive taxation and licensing schemes of the British and created a much more laissez-faire economy. This would allow prominent businessmen like them to flourish in a far more liberal environment. While this kind of economy was revolutionary at the time, the industrial revolution would soon grant certain economic advantages to the wealthy and landed. As industrialization occurred, the ability to form capital became the fuel for at-scale production. Rather than an economy of artisans and small businesses, industrialization put large enterprises and owners of capital, like the founders themselves at the advantage. That advantage was not new to European economic systems. While European revolutions often extolled the virtues of the common man and promoted equality, the American revolution offered "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness" a principle that is far easier when one has capital and is landed. The concentration of wealth was already underway and the new capitalist system would continue the trend because it was an outgrowth of what came before: manorialism and mercantilism.

Manorialism

Growing out of the feudal system, manorialism was the concentration of capital in its truest form. Like the feudal system, people were tied to the land. Where you were born was where you stayed, both physically and in your life station. If you were born the son of a blacksmith, the likelihood that you would grow up to be a blacksmith was high. If you were the oldest, you would inherit your father's business. Younger sons could apprentice elsewhere or with their father and then open their own shop but only if they could afford their license or join the local guild. They also work for their older brother and keep it all in the family. This was true for most professions, but one of the unique things about manorialism is that even though you owned a business or farmed, you had to pay rent to the manor or the local Lord who afforded you space to ply your trade and live. Most people did not own land outright, they rented. Between taxes and rents, wealth which could be denominated in labor, produce, and sometimes coin tended to transfer upward. Everyone had to contribute and the system only finally ended in the 20th Century when the last vestiges of feudal rents were abolished in Germany and Quebec.

Manorialism had its advantages in economic security and the ability to leverage the labor of the community to achieve its goals. Manorialism began to fall apart as the trading class in the 15th Century arose and labor began to be denominated in money rather than in products and services. The new trading classes were people not tied to the land and usually imported goods and sold them to the aristocracy and others who could afford their exclusive goods and technology. This basis of money based trade slowly replaced the manorial system, which was essentially a barter system.

Mercantilism

Beginning in the 15th century, a new money-based economy started to grow and trade between cities and nations began to rise in importance, thanks to the new trading class who was in the business of moving goods around Europe and even as far away as China. Trade of new goods and services were the primary impetus behind colonialism. As these two things converged, the economic system in Europe began to look more like a modern system but government control, licensing, and taxation rose in importance. This system was called Mercantilism. Mercantilism is the first instance of the formation and investment of capital. Nations protected their own technology and industries. There were taxes and regulations to be paid to the government for the privilege of operating a business within a realm.

Capital is the resources usually denominated in money that is used for investment toward the production of a good or service to generate a return. As the feudal system came to an end and the nation-state, as we know it, rose in 1648; the government backed investment corporation, known as a company, began to rise to prominence. It was a public-private partnership in the truest sense of the word.

Companies like the Dutch East India Company, the British East India Company, and others were commissioned and given special licenses with government kickbacks to take on the risky endeavor of exploring and dominating the New World. In this way, the crown did not have to bear all the expense or risk. In return, the men in charge of the special companies received vast land holdings in the new world as well as the ability to create vast sums of wealth.

These people were usually not aristocracy although that was not always true and within these companies, military or security forces gave others plenty of chances for advancement and wealth. This economic activity generated a new class of people. They weren't poor and they weren't the landed aristocracy; as such they were called the "middle" class because they weren't wealthy like the aristocracy but they weren't poor peasants. They were the middle children of the period. Although some countries embraced this new trading class and their intellectual pursuits, many countries weren't ready or prepared for this rising class. This class was distinct, hard working, protestant, and held a strong belief in creating wealth. The idea of a solid work ethic and a meritorious religion, based on a personal relationship, was much more synchronistic to the new trading class than the hierarchical, penance, and sacraments based Catholicism that preserved god-anointed monarchies and aristocracies both in the homily and in society.

This new class of people were egalitarian to a certain degree. They believed in giving a chance to every individual to advance and that education was a large part of that chance. Investment and talent, no title or inheritance were what really mattered in their new world. It was under these ideas that the fertile ideas of the Enlightenment took hold in the consciousness of the 18th Century middle class that produced America's founders. Free property, free enterprise, less government regulation, market decisions, and individual rights were prized above all. These ideas not only would foment revolution in the colonies but would come to define American success and "Americanism."

Before these ideals were bogarted by people like the Tea Party and everyone in the Republican party since 1964, these people believed that while the government should not restrict economic activity to the degree of having a stamp for every binding contract or prohibitive licenses, these people believed that government had a place in fostering economic growth within a nation that would benefit everyone. They believed that great civic undertakings, including roads, bridges, canals, ports, and ferries were a part of creating "common wealth." They believed that anything that increased the good of man and his relationship with God, as well as his potential economic output, was of concern to the public. The "up from your bootstraps" ideology is uniquely post-modern. Mercantile protestants were in favor with at least starting with some boots and making sure you had the freedom to be productive and govern personal affairs. Charity was also a huge part of their world view. Giving to the less fortunate was something directly from scripture and even was essential to a good Christian life. Between protestantism and global trade, the world was ripe for the rise of Capitalism.

How are Capitalism and Mercantilism different?

Mercantilism was much more government controlled and sponsored than our modern capitalist system. Capitalism had a freedom and a "Laissez faire" (loosely translated as "Leave us alone" from French) nature to it that was not present in the Mercantilist system. The idea that without government direction or interference, the wealth and means of production should be geared toward the economic activity that its owners think best, based on their ideas, information on price, resources, and other factors.

At one time, these ideas were new and unique. Adam Smith in his *Wealth of Nations* (the seminal work of capitalist economic thought) called this process and lack of central coordination the "invisible hand." By the beginning of the 19th Century, this system was budding in the Old World and exploding in the New World.

The economic world of Adam Smith was far different than the economic world we have now. Economies of scale had not yet come into being in his world. The economy was primarily agrarian and the other businesses that comprised the economy were shops, traders, and professionals. Personal freedom to operate a business would set the world of the artisan and small business owners free to create new products, services, and achieve for themselves and their own direction without excess government interference. Rather than crushing economic progress with licenses, taxes, and other restrictions that were common within the Mercantilist system, this new economic idea would allow anyone, anywhere to set up and business and direct that business as best they saw fit.

Our modern economy is dominated by three types of business.

Business A: Small Main Street Shop (hair/nail salons)
Business B: Service Professionals (doctors, lawyers, farmers, sales)
Business C: Major Corporation (Apple, IBM, Macy's)

When Adam Smith said that government needed to get out of the way of business people, he was thinking about businesses A and B, not Business C and he certainly would not think that we need to spend taxpayer dollars "saving" businesses, as the United States has done with airlines and automakers. While it seems like the free market principle is a good one because it allows Businesses A and B to thrive in a way that they otherwise could not, the free market principle becomes grotesque when you get to Business C because of the scale of the business in question.

The advent of Capitalism was for them, not for large, massive, government-funded corporations to take advantage of taxes, subsidies, and other incentives simply to do business or be so involved in the running of our economy that we couldn't live without them (i.e. too big to fail). Modern capitalism is a perversion of its originating principle and the reason this has occurred is due to the rise of the corporation as a primary societal institution.

The Corporation

What is a corporation? Most people can think of famous brands and even a few names but most people do not know what the essence of a corporation is as an institution. A corporation is an entity, an organization whose job is to return investment on capital to its investors/shareholders through revenue-generating lines of business. The job of the corporation is provide as much return on the gathered capital as possible. This is the fundamental push for frictionless return. In a business, revenue is generated from the sales of products and services. The profit is what is left over after costs. Businesses desire more profit and there are only two ways to increase profits: more sales and reduced costs. In mature economies, increasing sales is not always possible. There are only so many people who can afford to buy a certain product or service. That leaves reducing costs. Costs include buildings, labor, electricity, and other things needed to produce the product or service. For the capitalist, the ideal scenario is to achieve a return on capital with a few costs as possible. That is the goal of capitalism: frictionless return. Capital seeks to reduce friction (costs) to generate an ever higher return (profits).

The corporation, as a vehicle of capital, has been an important part of modern economics. When like-minded individuals pool resources together with the mind of creating a return on those resources, there needs to be a structure for that kind of arrangement. Out of that need for legally structuring the production of capital: the corporation was born. Our nation has had a very interesting relationship with corporations. From the early days, as a reaction to the mercantilist practices of the British government, there was an open policy toward corporations (except in banking) and people were free to create whatever corporations they wanted.

Corporations, due to their need for a charter, were rare. While it seems like everyone and everything is a corporation, in the 18th and 19th Century, corporations were not terribly common. Corporations were entities but it was the business partners who were responsible for its operation and the fulfillment of its contracts. Even under that system, the ability to form capital, a group of resources that generates a return, was powerful in starting businesses in everything from agriculture to shipping and eventually railroads, oil companies and other businesses where large amounts of money were required to operate the business.

There are many other matters missing from that definition. There is no place for "corporate" responsibility in the community and no place for taking care of the environment or the people that work for the company. Corporations do not exist to contribute to society. Corporations exist to make money and that is their only function. Most people view companies as something that is a part of the nation and part of society. The modern corporation is no such thing. A corporation will seek out the highest potential for investment regardless of where that value might exist or how to get it.

Before the progressive movement of the early 20th Century, corporations didn't think about the people that worked for them. Employees were part of the process of wealth creation, nothing more. The 19th Century was replete with stories in the newspapers of what would be considered egregious safety violations and worker deaths. The corporation and its associated modern regulations is an excellent vehicle by which to group together capital and invest that capital to create an ongoing return. The biggest advantage to the free-market corporate model was its meritocratic nature; the success of any company is based on its merits in the marketplace. Advancement within the company was also based on merit rather than by government decree, as it was under the mercantile system. Anyone (theoretically) could form a corporation and group together capital and use that capital to invest in a business and create a return and increased wealth.

There are a few considerations missing from the previous discussion.

1. Fair compensation for non-investors/capital holders
2. Worker's Safety (or any care for workers)
3. Environmental Resources Impact
4. Community/National Involvement

These simply weren't present until the 20th Century when government regulation and unionization changed the economy in the U.S. and especially in Europe. Only through the threat of violence can corporations be required to actually contribute to the society in which they exist and sell their products and services. This is one of the downfalls of corporate capitalism. Capitalism, at the modern scale, has serious consequences.

At first glance, the idea of singular economic individuation sounds spectacular, especially at the local level. Quite simply, protestant-based capitalism says that if your choose to own your body and its talents, as well as the talents of your mind, you can,

through the crucible of work, find success. But this principle is more for individual people than the corporation.

It sounds very American and it more likely rings true to the reader but it is this idea that has created the problems with income inequality that we now face. To the populist, it sounds like a great chance and to the conservative, the idea of self-reliance strikes a strong chord. But these ideas are unique to the U.S. because of our national heritage. The whole of the U.S. is based on people who were willing to pack up their lives and go to a land that was wholly new. Even now, that spirit rages on as Americans move for jobs or open new businesses. The scions of our day were built in a "start-up" culture of new business offering things we didn't even know we needed. In the 19th Century, there were several reactions to the unfettered capitalism that had taken root due to the industrial revolution.

A Quick History of Capitalism

The history of capitalism before 2008 was not well known. There just wasn't much written. The Great Recession was a shock to the system because it made us reflect on an economic system that, thanks to neoliberalism, we had practically taken it as God-given, God-blessed, and necessary to the American dream. But how true is that now? It has become obvious that while capitalism can produce income gains and move people away from subsistence, there are significant flaws. Those are just now being analyzed and discussed. Most of the economic discussion was on the history of labor and the workforce. There wasn't much written about owners and organizers of capital and their impact on the greater economy or even the wealthy in academia. This inward look to the economic system that dominates the entire planet has been productive. A clear picture of capitalism has been formed.

Capitalism is the organization of wealth put to productive means meant to generate a return for the owner of the gathered capital with as little friction as possible. Friction on return includes costs like labor, materials, and other operating expenses. The ultimate goal of capitalism is to create a return on gathered with wealth in a nearly frictionless manner. Because capital seeks a frictionless return, capitalism cannot, by its very nature, compensate workers fairly or contribute to society for the sum of its own greater costs.

After 2008, Americans woke up to the news that if we didn't chuck billions of dollars/pounds/euros/yen at our banks, the modern economy would collapse. Academics decided that perhaps we should turn a critical academic eye toward the underlying economic philosophy that has become synonymous with freedom, democracy, and economic security. Since the crash, books about capitalism have come out and the world has been forced to look at modern capitalism. This inward look has been amplified by the rise of China and its own unique brand of centrally managed capitalism.

Before industrialization, (before 1840 or so) business was not something that happened at a scale that is now common. The only area of pre-industrial economies where masses of stuffs were produced were agriculture goods, balanced between food and cash crops. A monetary based economy had been in place, but most businesses were small, local affairs. Printers, blacksmiths, farmers, livery stables, inns, and other places were owned by local people who lived in the area or on the site of the business and usually only did business with their local area. Manufacturing was labor and energy intensive and not at the scale we are familiar with now. Cottage industry was common, as people frequently sold home made products to other businesses that they could use. A farmer's wife might spin her wool into thread and sell it to the tailor and the weaver for a modest sum. Factories and places of production were not terribly common and the assembly line was yet to come.

These businesses were places where capital was gathered but the job of these resources was not for the generation of a return but to provide a living for the people that worked there. Capital generating a return was reserved for the investments of the aristocracy and trading classes that dealt with the import and export of items and resources for sale. Corporations, such as they were, existed with a strict mercantilist controls like licensing and taxes.

Capitalism is the result of a desire for less government interaction with the economy which had been common from the middle ages and into the 18th century. As mercantilism crumbled, a more liberal economic view took hold. This was partly out of necessity for greater economic output, a subject that began to be studied seriously in the mid-18th century. Capitalism also corresponded with new intellectual movements of the enlightenment and the ideas of personal property, personal liberty, and a changing role in society that moved the individual away from the land and toward their own personal goals and ideals of success.

The capitalism that is now so popular would have never thrived except for the industrial revolution. In some ways, the ability to form capital structures made the industrial revolution possible. The industrial revolution created new changes to make money and to employ far more people who would then go on to purchase goods and services.

1. It allowed for fewer people to achieve more economic output.
2. It allowed the pursuit of inventions, chemicals, and processes that radically changed and improved human lives.
3. It allowed wealth to perpetuate itself more quickly through greater return.
4. Goods and services became democratized through mass production and scale.

This was achieved by the ability of anyone to interrupt older technology by inventing a better way to perform a task. Mercantilism punished this sort of innovation. Under the mercantile system, the established business people, through associations and guilds,

would have had someone arrested for breaking the status quo but under capitalism, there was no such regulation. If you were a button maker in Paris and an inventor brings an automatic button maker, you could be out of business due to his ability to produce 30 buttons for every 1 button you produced. The lower prices would have the guild out of business in a few years, at best. In Europe, the process and transition was hastened by the Napoleonic wars and the success of British industry and the continental desire to keep up. But it was still haphazard, highly disruptive and in the case of the Luddites: violent.

In America, it was a lot less glamorous. New technology, ranging from the mould board plow to the cotton gin, radically changed the economic equation. The advent of steam power rapidly changed things further. Once the Civil War was over and westward expansion was underway, ever-hastened by the railroad, the ripple of industrialization could be felt throughout the land. We were no longer content to produce goods and services for our local area or through cottage industry. Industrial production was making goods for the masses. These new technologies also created vast wealth.

By the late 19th Century, this income disparity had become depressingly obvious leading to Samuel Clemens coining the term "Gilded Age" (in reference to a shiny exterior but cheap and poor interior). In Europe, this was compounded by the strict class system that dominated the life of the citizens. There was little to no mobility for most citizens except for the lucky few that were able to gather wealth and ascend via their merits. This world was dominated by a clear set of "haves" and "have-nots."

Kapital

It was in this setting that Karl Marx would pen his famous work, "Das Kapital," the most complete and accurate critique of Capitalism. He introduced the idea of the working class, called the "Proletariat" uniting and attacking the "Bourgeoisie" or those who controlled the means of production. His theory of communally owned and controlled factories, farms, and industry was called Communism. Marx believed in the public ownership of everything so that it would guarantee the well-being of the proletariat and the relative subjugation and elimination of the Bourgeoisie. Marx extolled the virtues of the working proletariat despite never working or holding a job his entire life and being supported by his philosophical partner, Friedrich Engels, who owned several factories in England and supported Marx and his family. Marx, who called for the proletariat to unite, was a member of and supported by the Bourgeoisie. Marx was not the only one who noticed the income disparity or the frequent currency shocks that plagued global markets in the 19th Century. By the 1890s, it was a common scene in the newspapers. For workers this meant frequent job layoffs and a resulting loss of income coupled with the changing value of currency.

The American Gilded Age

The country to whom individual economic freedom had defined both western expansion and industrial economic output needed some regulations so that the whole nation could actually enjoy the benefits of the new economy and the new wealth. The

wealthy men who owned utilities, railroads, and manufacturing were not going to be regulated so easily. They were not going to go without a fight. This is always true when you have any economic elite. Violence ensued in a variety of cases and the labor standards that we now consider normal were fought for with blood, sweat, and tears from 1870 onward. Per usual, the wealthy realized they were losing the battle and did what they do best; retreat to the halls of government. The seeds of modern plutocracy was born. The chance for plutocracy to take hold was ever present from July 4, 1776 to now.

Although it is not evident within the Federalist papers or elsewhere, the Founding Fathers were not particularly thinking of preventing a plutocracy when they designed the system. It was assumed and presumed because they were apart of it. They knew they had to protect minority rights and prevent the government from being taken over by various factions but they did not think to prevent powerful monied interests from buying up the government for their own economic gain. But that is one of the things capitalism does. If anything gets in the way of creating a return, it either has to be bought or destroyed. By the end of the 19th century, powerful companies and the families that controlled them owned an ever increasing part of the American economy. Wealth trended toward the top because of the radical free market that dominated the American economy.

Open Market Economies

An open market that wasn't burdened by the government was the innovation of capitalism. Capitalism liberated people from those worn out institutions of guilds and government. Its the hallmark of capitalism. Capitalism allowed people to invest their resources for a return wherever they wished within national boundaries for a return as well as sell goods and services to enlarge their wealth.

The much-ballyhooed term: Laissez-Faire was first bantered about the French countryside in the 18th Century. It is not clear who said it first but it is credited to a farmer who, when asked what the French government could do to improve economic output stated, "laissez faire" which loosely translated means, "leave us alone."

Laissez-Faire was never meant for big corporations producing at scale but rather small traders and other merchants common to rural France. These businesses had been crushed by the excessive regulations that local and national governments often levied as a way to raise money. The merchants wanted to be able to sell their goods with as little friction as possible because it meant that they could provide for their families; not shareholders. This makes sense at a local level. However, when this logic is applied to economies of scale, things get a bit more difficult.

Capitalism encouraged more open markets where anyone could begin a new business concern without an expensive license, charter or joining a guild and most importantly, it encouraged competition. Mercantilism stifled competition leaving markets rigid and with few choices for consumers. At the local level, this was disruptive but not

life threatening for the local business. Some businesses succeeded while others failed without the guild/mercantilist protections they had before.

Businesses also innovated to provide their products and services at a low cost. An excellent example of this occurring was in fashion. Before capitalism and under the guild and mercantilist systems, a tailor would be required to source all his goods from the appropriate specialized makers. From fabric to buttons, he would have to source and purchase all those goods at some expense. The system was closed off to many newcomers and fiercely rejected innovation. This system was highly sustainable and kept people in those businesses and employed. There was a system of apprentices and a way for people to work their way into the system. Although not as centrally planned, it was much like a corporation, especially in the large cities and had grown out of the Roman household system. Two things ended this tight-knit system: the beginnings of international trade and the beginnings of industrialization leading to economies of scale.

Textile manufacturing was one of the first, labor intensive areas to see the benefits of industrialization. Industrialization needs massive resources in order to produce the tremendous amount of goods at scale and at a low cost. Machines and labor for industrial scale manufacturing all represent large input costs. For industrial production to happen, money must be organized and often borrowed to finance these input costs. Industrial production also requires the supply chain of plentiful raw goods. Early adopters had to struggle with a localized, non-industrial raw goods system to power their early factories. However, like any human institution, adaption came quickly and the industrialization of materials, like wool and cotton, were soon to follow. This also led to the industrialization of agriculture in an early and rudimentary way. Organizing agricultural production and producing large amounts of raw material for manufacturing or consumption would come to redefine agriculture even as early as the 17th century. Industrialization opened these possibilities even further. Much like manufacturing, capital was required to create larger farms and more production.

By the 20th Century, tractors and other equipment had reduced the amount of labor needed for agriculture to about 38% and by 2008, it was less than 2%. Meanwhile, production has steadily risen over time. Machines ranging from the cotton gin to the sewing machine and the lathe have made making goods cheaper and faster than ever before leading to great advances in the productivity of workers and the companies that employ them. Thanks to machines, the number of people needed to make appliances, cars, and electronics is less than ever before and will continue to fall with automation.

From capitalism's inception, it was dependent on low-cost and slave labor for raw goods and manufacture. Slavery, low cost labor, and coercive work is bred into Capitalism in order to create nearly frictionless return on the entity of capital. We are still living in a world where many of the raw resources we rely on for the devices we use in our daily lives are mined by poorly paid workers in Africa and Asia where these resources are extracted. Emerging market manufacturing reduces the cost-per-item of goods, meaning that while companies can charge high prices for an item, they can manufacture it at such a low cost and take the remaining money as profit, less other expenses, like R&D and transportation. Often, these profits do not go into expanding a

business or employing more Americans at better wages in services, instead they go into the hands of shareholders because shareholders invest in a company with their capital to get a return. It is the duty of the corporation to generate that return.

Labor and everyday people who depend on working for a living, isn't in the equation. That's what unions in the 19th Century and early 20th Century learned. Through organization, they were able to insert themselves into the conversation. The modern 8 hour work day, weekends, safety regulations, regular breaks, lunch breaks, and other requirements for modern workers were not things that companies willingly gave to workers in most cases. These were protections that were fought for by unions in response to the abhorrent 19th century working conditions that are common throughout modern developing economies. Unionization has been so undone that there is little point in unionizing. Corporations will simply find someone else to do the work, as what happened to the Air Traffic Controllers in 1982. When Ronald Reagan brought in new people, he made the protest of the union completely irrelevant. Unionization has never had the same sting. That is to the advantage of capital, as an entity, because capitalists never have to worry about the workers protesting because the workers know it won't do them any good; in our modern economy, they're simply too broke and too afraid that a strike or even organization will lead them to being unemployed entirely and unable to provide for themselves and their family.

From time to time, you'll hear a bold move of a union striking and it sticking until the negotiations can work themselves out. Many companies avoid the progressive nature of U.S. union laws and make sure to stop unionization before it starts and in many cases, they simply off-shore what jobs they can so that they do not have to worry about unions or labor problems at all. The horror stories we see on documentaries now would have been familiar to workers fighting for better conditions and rights in 1880. Crowded, unsafe factories, people jumping from windows, and long working hours with 1 day a week off were all incredibly common in the 19th Century. This is a modern reality for workers all over the world in emerging markets. Capitalism can't help itself, this kind of exploitative labor is "baked" into the system.

Capitalism seeks one thing only: frictionless return on capital. All other concerns are secondary, if considered at all. Capitalism and exploitative corporations didn't just spring up on their own. There is a system behind them as well. No history of Capitalism, would be complete without a discussion of banking, currency, and the origination of capital. Banks and banking are an integral part of global capitalism because they are able to give the system of invested capital resulting in return a kickstart, indeed they began it. Modern capitalism would not exist without banks and there is no discussion of capitalism without an understanding the original capitalists: banks.

Banks and Banking

Capitalism would be nothing without banks and banking. Banking is the backbone of the modern global economy. Banks handle payments, store wealth, and provide trillions of dollars in loans to corporations to produce goods and services and to the government to finance the affairs of state. Banking is a very old system of storing

wealth that stems from societies as early as ancient Babylon where banks used grain as a currency.

Until the 20th century, most banks issued their own currency and exchanged it between themselves or a national currency. However, this led to unreliable currencies and people were often left with nothing if the bank failed and the resulting currency became worthless. Centralized, government backed currencies became far more reliable and were easier to use than real gold and silver or the bank-issued currency backed by those reserves. Now, most currencies are printed by central banks and backed by a national government. Central banks also provide security for smaller banks by allowing them to freely borrow money in order to stay solvent and destroy the savings and wealth of depositors.

Along the way, as wealth grew, banks went from small, local, and regional institutions to global powerhouses of capitalism who have investments in locations all over the world. This ability was made possible by globalization and the global flows of capital. At first glance, it seems attractive. Capital seeks out places for a return and companies and banks look for places to create return, value, and growth. New markets for goods and services are prime locations for this. Countries who need capital to begin their own industries are also places for increased chances on return. The Asian Financial Crisis (triggered by the collapse of the Thai Baht) and the South American bank failures (triggered by a variety of problems stemming from socialist governments to bad investments) have shown that this pathway is fraught with difficulties and those difficulties are frequently shouldered by people thousands of miles away from the problem.

When it comes to powering the industrial means of production, banks are an integral part of the equation. Companies borrowed the massive amounts of cash that were needed upfront to fund production. When it came to buying machines, building facilities, and other capital-intensive projects, banks were on the front line of investing in businesses that would be able to pay back the loaned money with interest. This was the first rudimentary form of capitalist practices. Banks invested in projects they thought had a good chance of making them money because their source of capital was the depositors of the banks. When people deposit money into banks, banks aren't merely keeping that money there out of convenience, they invest that money, via loans to companies for a return. Then, from the interest they have made (that's the return), they give you a small portion for the use of your money and keep the rest for themselves. Savers who leave money in a savings account for 30 or more days receive a small amount of interest because the bank has loaned out that money and earned interest from it.

Banks also make money from the government. One of the ways banking expanded in a monetary-based economy was through lending to governments. This was pioneered by Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici who founded the Medici bank. Using his tremendous family wealth, they were able to finance a variety of artistic projects in 13th century Florence. Later generations of the Medici family became patrons of the arts. The conspiracies around the family and their banks is legendary in the shadows of the internet. The Medici family is an excellent example of the power of capital. Giovanni

expanded the fortune when he loaned money to governments to fund things from civil projects to wars. This is an area where banking, capitalism, governments, and debt converge together in a confluence of financial interests.

Capital and Government

Governments have a fundamental problem. Governments often take in massive amounts of money, but it is not available all at once. Taxes are paid several times a year and many people pay in installments. This means that while you may take in taxes totaling 1 trillion dollars, those dollars are spread throughout the year. Medici allowed kings of the 13th Century, who needed funds to wage war right away, to borrow the money using their future tax receipts as collateral. It's the same idea as how banks now loan consumers money via credit cards on future pay from jobs. In those early days, banks loaned money to the landed aristocracy whose wealth was tied up in lands and future tax gain from agricultural and other yields. Banks allowed them to spend the wealth of tomorrow, today. Banks allow companies to produce the goods needed to make money tomorrow, today. Banks have made a global business and trillions in wealth on this process of loaning money and charging fees and interest that enlarge their balance sheets. Debt is an integral part of the economy. From the federal government and its $21 trillion (and counting) in debt to personal credit cards, everyone pays banks for the privilege of borrowing money from tomorrow to spend today. Income taxes move from the federal government's accounts right over to the owners of U.S. Treasury Bonds so the federal government can issue more debt that banks and financial institutions buy up. The cycle continues: more capital and more return.

Corporations would not be able to do business the way they do on the basis of industrial scale without banking and the ability to borrow wealth to create more wealth. This is another manifestation of the capitalistic impulse to create capital and generate return.

When I was in graduate school, I wrote a paper called, "The New Colonialism" and I talked about how wealthy countries use their tremendous resources to invest in poorer nations to generate a return on their investment and that this often leads to wealth leaving the country in question. When the wealth leaves (raw materials, goods, services), then there is no chance for the local people there to begin their own capital expansion. No capital to invest means no return and no return means wealth does not grow no matter how you denominate that wealth. African countries that grow the world's cotton should be tremendously wealthy. Instead, they remain poor while the profits of their labors line Western pockets. The result is cheap cotton and cheap textiles for the world's consumers but the consequence is that cotton farmers in Africa remain poor.

The Death of Mainstreet

Modern capitalism has a potential for growth for ordinary people. When regular people can start businesses and sell goods and services they become apart of the economy and make better lives for themselves and for their communities. Modern capitalism, as it is operated now, has taken that to an extreme. Most people do not own their own businesses, most people derive their wealth from labor for a capitalist enterprise. Worker protections and wages have been eroded away in recent decades due to a reduction of labor unions and deregulation this has to do with growth centered capitalism which has often killed mainstreet.

Capital is always seeking a way to grow. "Put your money to work" was a common phrase in the 90s and early Aughts to encourage people to rigorously invest their savings into the global financial system. Modern corporatized capitalism is focused on growth and shareholder value. Shareholder value takes prominence over all other concerns. In the years from 1945-1977 the economy produced sustainable returns from new products and happy employees. These priorities were higher than mere return on investment. Companies now chase growth on a quarterly basis.

The cult of shareholder value and the idea that the economy works only with more growth rather than a consistent return over time is uniquely modern. At one time business was apart of a system that also worked for the improvement of the general society. Thanks to the ideas of people like Jack Welch, the former CEO of General Electric, who declared a commitment to shareholder value, the idea of a sustainable return was discarded in favor of explosive growth for shareholders. In many areas of the economy, from mortgage-backed securities to corporations, the focus was on growth over a short period of time, not sustainable return. The more explosive growth that could lead to a higher stock price, the better.

Everything that a corporation does is in the name of shareholder growth. From raising the price of prescription drugs, like in the case of Turing Pharmaceuticals, to closing plants and mills to send the work overseas simply to save money, everything is done to increase profit and thereby shareholder value. What's even worse is that this money never trickles down. It stays in the pockets of the wealthy and that is why trickle down economics does not work. The trickle only happens when there is an economy to invest in, a business to expand, and employees to hire. The economy trickled down in China but Main Street, USA was left out of the equation.

The American economy used to be a robust place. Indeed, many nations had robust local economies. Stores bought finished goods from manufacturers and placed them for sale. Those manufacturers bought raw materials from suppliers and so money moved to all the businesses involved. Their employees were paid and those employees were able to buy what they needed to live and support a variety of businesses. Although the 19th Century was racked by currency crises and other problems, this system generally worked. When a community did well, all the businesses benefited. The money, goods, and services generated in a community had an impact there.

By the 20th Century, thanks to the innovations of central banking and improved labor laws, the entire American economy had taken advantage of this system. Companies created goods and services and those dollars went out and supported a variety of small businesses who then were able to create a vibrant local economy. When wages remain high and corporate profits go to business expansion, the wealth created from capital is shared between both the shareholders and the workers who are integral in the process. This meant people could save money, stimulate the economy through consumption, and build lives for themselves and their children.

This system did not create tremendous growth. The stock market did not reach 25,000 points, and corporate profits and CEO pay remained modest. In fact, many corporations usually held out a good deal of debt to deal with their day to day obligations. Corporations didn't usually hang onto cash the way they do now because it was taxed at a much higher rate and that deterred them from keeping copious amounts of cash on hand. Now, they hold trillions offshore in tax-haven countries, like Ireland and the Isle of Man.

By 1977, the trend was shifting. Larger stores with cheaper goods, billed as discounters and providing more "value," began undercutting smaller, main street stores. These stores would buy in bulk, sell cheaply, and make higher profits, which meant higher value for shareholders. The small, main street stores did not have any shareholders to provide value for but simply couldn't compete with the far lower prices of discount stores. Even other retail giants fell to the lower prices of discount stores. These stores were killing main street shops but they did not pay the wages of those shops or department stores, which meant that their employees were putting less money back into the community. When Sam Walton opened Wal-mart in 1962, he was paying $1.65 an hour ($9.96 in 2016 dollars) and actively resisted any raise in the minimum wage so that he could continue paying low wages. His low wages were a part of how he kept prices low at his stores and began a downtrend of the cost of labor.

The Squeeze of Labor

The primary reason why modern capitalism is broken is because the basic premise of capitalism does not allow for the fair compensation of workers. The advancement of workers rights and wages was the result of unions and organized labor. Because capitalism seeks a frictionless return, reducing labor costs becomes essential. Every cost must be reduced or removed to generate maximum profit from a business. By reducing the power of organized labor, companies were able to keep wages down and enjoy windfall profits. This has had dramatic consequences to our modern economy. However, this is not a new problem. This is how capitalism works as a system. The modern economy is taking this idea of frictionless return to the extreme. By lowering wages and reducing labor costs, there are people who are working and yet cannot pay their bills. While this is not directly the fault of capitalism as an idea, it is the throughput of a system that prides itself on reducing costs to produce a greater, frictionless return.

The commodification of labor and creating an economy that prioritizes the individual worker over the collective force of labor. Overtime pay for the salaried middle class has disappeared as the requirement fell close to the poverty line. For many salaried workers,

they could claim overtime Now, if more than 40 hours are worked, if allowed at all, are simply paid at regular hours. Companies have reduced the cost of labor by working to get laws passed raising the threshold for overtime to $69,000 and making it mandatory for all professions. Where ordinarily money would be pouring into the pockets of the worker, companies are able to reduce labor costs and the workers lose out on increased earnings. To stop this simply requires changing the law but that would take public action, regulation, and a variety of changes that are unlikely. An increase in the cost of labor would interfere with frictionless return.

By categorizing workers as self-employed and responsible for their own expenses and turning them into "little businesses," corporations (like the manor before them) are able to offset the expense of actually having people involved in their business. In the United Kingdom, Ryanair pilots are independent contractors who have to buy their own uniforms and pay for their stop over hotels. Uber, Lyft, Instacart, and other on-demand economy services also predicate their business model this way. It is very hard to unionize and demand greater wages if all the workers are all separate, decentralized individuals, dependent on a corporation for survival.

Even as a hired employee, things can be perilous. Corporate life can be so stultifying that it takes medication to stay there. The stereotype of the Wall Street trader, who takes any combination of Adderall, Zoloft, Xanax ,and Ambien, exists for a reason. The work is so often so soul-sucking that in order to do it, they have to be drugged to feel better, to be more balanced, to be anything other than confront the harsh reality of what they do and how they have traded some part of their humanity for money.

Those that can't handle that or can't take enough drugs end up harming themselves or others and some simply overdose on illegal substances. Peter Fleming, in his book *The Mythology of Work* talks about the actively disengaged worker who spends his days in the office or cubicle reading things online and doesn't offer solutions to help the organization. This type of worker represents about 23% of the workforce.

According to Peter Fleming, working anything more than 3-4 days a week for 20 hours is basically slavery. Modern capitalism has fetishized work. Thanks to the protestant/confucian work ethic, we define ourselves by work. Socially, people define their lives by work. Think about a recent social interaction, it is one of the first things people ask someone upon meeting them. Occupation is a basic fact about someone and is as important as where they are from, if they married or single, or if they have children. By tying up identity in labor, the importance of other status symbols in society has been reduced. People are tied to what they do for money, "You are what you do" is the cultural outgrowth of corporate capitalism.

People used to be tied to the land, they are now tied to corporations. Apps like Uber, Lyft, and Instacart make this even more apparent. When someone's income source is tied to a corporation, who has no other interest in them beyond their providing a service to them, then that person cannot freely move or act in an independent way. Just like the manors before them, corporations and their offloading their expense of employment onto the workers themselves, corporations are creating new manors. This is essentially digital feudalism; what is an Uber driver without Uber? A guy who picks

up well-dressed hitchhikers. This modern labor market is the result of decades of small changes that no one really noticed but made significant changes to our economy. Part of the on-demand economy changes that have become common started with something as innocuous as chickens.

On-Demand Chickens

Tyson Chicken is one of America's most iconic chicken companies. They are the largest distributor of chickens in this country. In the 1970s, they only controlled about 15% of the broiler chicken growth market (that means chickens that we eat). These companies usually supplemented their own growth operations by contracting with local farmers for so many chickens and left the growth of those chickens up to the local farmer and only came into the equation when it was time to process those chickens and sell them.

In 1973, they found that most of their expenses at the corporate level was in raising chickens. Tyson executives discovered that if they changed the contracting system to control every part of the growth process, they could pay the farmer a modest per pound fee for the work of raising the chickens while increasing quality, production, and reducing costs at the corporate level. By doing this, they could off-load the actual cost of chicken production onto their contract farmers. This has led to several small farmers losing their farms to debt collectors after they had taken out loans to meet the ongoing requirements of Tyson. Like any modern capitalist business, the farmers borrowed money to finance their operations.

Farmers are finally fighting back and Tyson is building more of their own growth operations. Many people have been hurt and dispossessed by this simple system of basic corporate greed. Growing up during the summers in northwest Arkansas with my Grandma, it seemed like everyone had a story about Tyson and trying to make money off growing chickens and how well it had or had not worked.

The idea that the cost of something could be off loaded to an independent contractor for less money has powered a corporate culture of outsourcing. Why own a factory, employ workers, and deal with the associative costs when you can pay someone else to build your product for less and simply deliver it to the consumer. This extends to all industries. Why hire 100 software developers and be responsible for all human resource costs when you can simply hire them as contractors? Why create a new on-demand taxi company when you can simply hire hundreds of thousands of people to do it part-time on a contract basis? The company saves money and the workers have no benefits, protections, and become subject to the whims of companies in whom they have no vested interest and no labor protection. This is capitalism run amok.

Services have been particularly hard hit by this trend. There are plenty of areas where people work as "Independent Distributors of Products." The 1099 form is no longer reserved for car salesmen, real estate agents, and a handful of high powered consultants and freelancers. It is becoming the default employment arrangement for many workers. FedEx is an example of a large-scale adopter of this trend.

FedEx built its model on hiring its drivers as independent contractors and off loading the cost of drivers onto the driver's themselves. Long before Uber and the On-Demand economy became an economic buzz-problem, FedEx was exploiting its drivers and now will have to settle in court for billions of dollars that it owes to its drivers. Soon, workers themselves won't even be a problem, as their jobs are eliminated due to automation, which only increases the ability for capitalism to create a frictionless return.

The labor force is in danger like never before. The likelihood that the very institution of employment will exist in 100 years is at an all-time low. For low wage workers, the squeeze is already on and their jobs will be the first to go in the new economy, even though low wages are the reason we have our current economic troubles.

The lowering of wages has reverberated throughout the economy. When people do not have money to spend, they cannot keep mainstreet afloat and they flee to discounters offering them a good life for less money. That's how Wal-Mart killed mainstreet.

By lowering wages, lowering prices, and lowering the economic conversation, they drove smaller businesses out of business and in time, have put bigger stores like K-Mart, Sears, and JCPenney on the chopping block. It is good wages that keep the economy going. Wealthy people and their ability to create businesses and hire people are a component of that important system.

In our modern age, the only people who are doing that are small shops, and professionals who essentially own their jobs. Corporations would rather lower wages by moving jobs elsewhere and in the cases where they do move jobs back to the American shore, the wages start at $9-11 an hour, which is much lower than an inflation adjusted wage that would have been common in the 1970s and 1980s when those jobs left. The hollowing out of the American economy has killed mainstreet. How did that happen? What policies were put in place to let those jobs be moved overseas? The ability to create a globalized labor market was not by accident, it was caused by a grand policy to create a wholly new, entirely interdependent global economy through globalization.

Forget the Global Village, It's the Global Corporation

Modern global trade has worked on a basic assumption by the famous french economist Frederic Bastiat: "Soldiers do not pass over borders where goods do also." His idea was simple, if countries are trading and making money they won't bother to go to war with each other. Trade has been used to prevent military conflict around the world, especially in war-prone Europe. This system of international trade had grown to include the entire world. The whole globe participates in a system of interdependent global trade.

Although globalization became a buzzword in the 1990s, truly global trade is something corporations have been seeking and is just another step in capitalism. Global trade isn't a modern phenomena. Goods and services have been moving around the globe for centuries. Even in ancient times, raw materials and goods powered robust trade

and trade routes have been vital to any civilization. The Romans traded with China. Marco Polo became famous for exploring the Silk Road which was a hub for trade throughout Asia and Europe. The Incan, Mayan, and other nations of the Americas had vast trading networks that stretched from Peru to Nova Scotia. The discovery of the New World began trade on an even greater scale that moved gold and raw materials from Spanish, French, Portugese, Dutch, and English colonies to Europe. European nations expanded their colonial empires in pursuit of ever larger trading opportunities which increased wealth by staggering sums. To trade for products and services is a human activity.

Industrialization accelerated this process and with the advent of faster and efficient travel with steam ships, global trade took off. Textile mills in Britain and France often imported cotton not only from their colonies but from cotton fields in the American south and throughout the world. Manufactured goods moved by the same means and the beginnings of the global trade that we see today began to flourish. Companies who could master global trade grew wealthy in their ability to sell goods and services to an international audience. This system of global trade for centuries was limited by mercantilist policies, however, in the 19th and 20th centuries global trade began to expand to include more trading partners creating opportunities for frictionless return.

Global Trade

In the 19th Century, trade deals among European powers were negotiated bilaterally or between two countries without other powers involved. Companies were restricted from engaging in trade without the express permission of their government. Those that sought to preserve peace on the European continent theorized that trade/profitable exchange would deter nations from going to war for fear that it would hurt business. This ethos powered the Bretton Woods system that was created to encourage global trade to rebuild Europe, starting in 1945. The Bretton Woods system then led to the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs, one of the first truly global trade agreements that standardized the tariffs/taxes on trade, which then lead to the World Trade Organization in 1991 which uses GATT as its basis for trade rules to reduce trade wars.

Throughout the 20th Century, when it comes to business, nations and their corporations have sought an ever closer union. Not only has this allowed the spread of goods and services but also the movement of capital. Corporations weren't happy simply making a return in their own countries, they wanted a chance to make a return wherever value could be found. These agreements have allowed corporations to spread their operations all over the world and to occupy almost every day of our lives.

We are confronted with the realities of globalization every day. If you have looked at a label on anything in the past 20 years, you will have noticed that more and more things have said, "Made in China." Those labels will also say, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, India, and Bangladesh. Even services like banking or customer service have gone global often frustrating consumers.

While products have been made overseas on a limited basis since the 1970s and raw resources have been a global business, the internet has made the world much smaller and has allowed companies to have truly global supply chains and keep those supply chains centrally managed. Even small businesses, increasingly order from far away places for their goods. Convenient as it is, to order a variety of merchandise from around the world and to enjoy the lower prices of cheaply produced goods, globalization has taken a toll on national economies of developed nations. Valuable manufacturing jobs that paid well and powered the middle class have largely disappeared. The associated jobs with them have also disappeared leaving massive holes in communities in the United States, Great Britain and throughout other parts of Europe. Communities have had to rebuild their tax bases around services, creative endeavours, technology, and local businesses that are less affected by global shifts.

For better or for worse, these outsourced jobs will most likely not be seen again. While some companies have imported their jobs back to American shores, many of those jobs will soon be eliminated in favor of automation and expense-minded companies are not too likely to leave their Chinese investments behind, especially as China and Asia serve as a sector for growth. The chance for a frictionless return is far too great to bring back the jobs that many American, British, and European workers are used to taking on.

It is the very system of capitalism that underlies the global economy that is directly responsible for the current problems we now face. In a system where profits are prized over people and the value of return on capital takes a higher precedence than the creation of a solid society or economy, the current system is the result. If one is wealthy and has capital, this system is beneficial. However, if one must work to earn money in order to survive, then the current economy puts workers at a severe disadvantage. That worker must now compete with workers from around the world. Those international workers are often in places where the cost of living is much less making them more competitive. As with many Americans, this has directly touched my life.

In 2004, I started out as a freelance business writer with three services. I used popular freelance sites to get my work and I enjoyed the fact that I could work 2-3 days a week and make $300-$400. As a teenager/college student that was quite a bit of cash in my pocket for comparatively little work. I freelanced off and on through college and when I graduated in 2009, I set out to expand my business and continue on to graduate school. I had some money that I was able to use for this purpose and I had high hopes. Even though things weren't going well at that moment, I had made money in the past and I figured that I could expand my business and make money into the future.

Plenty of places were talking about the wonders of freelancing and I believed the fantasy. The Great Recession was in high gear and being 21 at the time, I didn't realize what that meant. For my business, it meant lots of clients ordered work but never paid for it because their businesses had gone under and they were figuring out how to keep the lights on. For me, it meant poverty. It meant working long hours for overseas clients on a piece work basis of $1-$2 per item. I was barely able to scrape by and when I finally shut down my business in 2011, I was sick, tired, and in debt. Fortunately, I was able to find a job. But I will never forget having to compete against Indian and

Malaysian writers who could make $500 a month and live very well while workers like myself here in America couldn't pay bills at the same rate. I felt like I was out of date and simply useless in the economy. Eventually, I had to move on. This story is similar for so many Americans who have watched their jobs move overseas and had to try to figure out what was next for their own survival.

This is not an uncommon story for the American worker. As plants and mills started to close around 1977 and well into the 1990s, many American workers struggled to find a way forward with decreasing opportunities. Families had to move; jobs in the service sector were taken and some people went back to school. It was on the back of that struggle that a certain California governor, Ronald Reagan floated into office in 1980. Promising a new day for America, Ronald Reagan was offering a solution to the American people that corporations and poor trade deals caused this problem in the first place. Promising people a chance to work and earn a living without pesky unions or regulations, Ronald Reagan sold the American people on a policy that ultimately would hurt them. Unfortunately, no one realized it until 2008, long after the policy had hollowed out the American economy and after its salesman had passed on. Donald Trump continued this trend as well. His appeal was to give voice to disappointed and disaffected workers who had seen the affect that Most Favored Nation status for China had on the American economy. Once the United States granted China MNF privileges under the trade rules of the WTO, manufacturing jobs fell precipitously from 1.5 million jobs to 300,000 jobs (according to Pew Research) in less than a decade.

Multinational corporations or MNCs wield an increasingly large share of power. Considering their wealth alone comprises the GDP of some small nations, how these companies move has an impact in every area of our lives, planet, and economy. Increasingly, these organizations are not tied to any particular state and they will move their wealth, if not themselves physically, to wherever the most advantageous place might be. In this way, MNCs continue the capitalist story of seeking the goal of frictionless return.

Globalization has created the entire world as a giant competitive market that can create value and a return on capital. Nations, individual workers, and institutions no longer have to compete with their counterparts in their geographical area. Workers and businesses have to compete in a global marketplace. This was sold as a great advantage. Every time new trade is announced from NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement) to CAFTA (the Central American Free Trade Agreement) and the TTP (the Trans Pacific Partnership), the deal is always billed as an agreement that will create jobs. The reality is that workers in developed nations cannot compete with workers in developing or poor nations without driving themselves into poverty. In this post-recession environment, that's exactly what has happened.

The new manufacturing jobs that companies are bringing back from Asia pay much less than those same jobs paid when they left. The benefits and job security that were common under union-negotiated contracts have been wiped away in favor of wages between $9-$15 with sparse health benefits, little retirement, and no job security. Union membership is very low and unlikely to recover because that drives up costs increasing the friction of the business. Corporations enrich their bottom line to "increase value to

shareholders" and that means that those profits must come from the paychecks of the workers. Capitalism requires a frictionless return on investment and the cost of labor is the biggest expense (friction) in any business.

In a global environment, it is important to "stay competitive." That is a passphrase for keeping wages and benefits at the bare minimum to ensure shareholder value. That basic principle of globalized capitalism is not only something that only affects workers here in America. The entire world is now subject to this economic system that prizes shareholder value over anything else. This enriches the wealthy by taking the money from the pockets of workers. From raw resources in Africa to manufacturing in China and innovation in America, the fetishization of shareholder value has debased local economies, political systems, and collective humanity.

Companies do not merely create these deals all at once, indeed, it takes time to sell stakeholders on these deals. The infrastructure must be in place to create these opportunities. However, when a proper investment in government takes place, corporations can do quite a bit to create a very different business environment for themselves. It takes the meeting of government and business to create this economic environment.

Money in Politics

In our modern parlance, you will hear a lot about "the money in politics" and campaign donations, super pacs (political action committees), and "dark money." This all has contributed to the billions of dollars that are spent in Presidential election campaigns and for every political position that is up for grabs. Even a mayoral election in a medium-sized town can cost $10,000 for a serious bid for the office. If a candidate is not economically successful, it is hard to get started in politics without some wealthy backing.

Although Barack Obama made a name for himself with the small donations he received from supporters via social media in 2008 and while Bernie Sanders has charted a similar path, candidates simply cannot get from Chicago or Vermont to the White House without people who can donate millions (or at least hundreds of thousands) to your campaign via PACs and party committees.

Elections used to not be that expensive but the increase in money reflects the stake that more and more businesses and wealthy people are taking in politics. They do not merely fight bad laws but they make sure that when they lobby congress and state houses, they have friendly politicians to actively promote their agenda. Bribes lead to scandal but if you can legitimize bribes through campaign donations and jobs after public service, then everyone is happy.

No two men have done more of this for the GOP than the Koch brothers who run the massive Koch Industries that makes everything from paper products to chemicals. On the Left, George Soros and many others, including celebrities, have thrown money at various causes to promote their political agenda. From think tanks to lobbyist groups, politics is powered by money. If an interest group does not have money to give to a

politician, they do not have much pull in Washington, D.C. anymore and the political power in state capitals is quickly evaporating. In modern American politics, money is power because money wins elections.

While it may seem that a protest movement, like the Tea Party and the Occupy movement, can cause sweeping change and make the news, the difference between the long-lasting influence of the Tea Party and the irrelevance of Occupy is one thing: Money. The Tea Party raised funds and elected people into office; Occupy did not do any of those things. One can argue that those of us who participated in Occupy did more in terms of direct actions, actually helping people, and causing street-level change but the Tea Party was able to articulate their message in a way that had actual political change within the GOP and within the government. The Tea Party was able to speak the monetary language of politics.

How Corporations Took Over America

How did this happen? How did the American government, which was created to create an environment of self-governance and freedom, become a vessel of corporate greed? Who represents the public? Who represents "we the people?" It is supposed to be the government but to some degree the government's hands are tied and between that and the money in politic problems, the public is under-represented in corporate action.

Original capitalism involved real people, modern capitalism is institutional. There were many incidents that helped bring this about and one of the biggest was the public-private partnership. In theory, the public-private partnership sounds like a pretty good deal. The Public, through the government, agrees to reduce taxes, contribute money, or use its power of eminent domain to make something more feasible or possible than it would be in an entirely private deal.

Corporations (because they look for return on their capital) are not likely to invest in things that do not have great chances of return. They will simply move toward that which promises a better return. However, if a community wants the private sector to do something different, they have to offer a compelling reason and by compelling reason, I mean money. These partnerships can take a variety of forms. In fact, you have probably benefited from one already.

Toll roads are a good incidence of this as are convention centers and other public buildings. These are often built with taxpayer dollars but then contracted out to be run/managed by a private firm. It is not often that a municipality will actually deal with the day-to-day running of its public facilities. This translates into millions of dollars flowing from public coffers into private hands. Lately, energy has been a source of this as well. Business people always tout how much benefit we all gain in these partnerships, but the reality is that, we the people, are basically making it easier for them to make money often without the government/public interest gaining anything other than access (for a usual fee) and the ability to point at our new shiny object. When guaranteeing loans, if things go badly, the taxpayer is sent the bill while private industry

moves on. Sometimes, if the company is paying a lease, the government will make some money but often this is simply not the case.

Real estate is another area where government and business work close together. Government wants to redevelop an area or a building and to spur that on, the government partner creates a grant or simply finances the operation in yet another partnership. When it comes to things like malls, historic downtown areas, and other municipal projects, it can be expensive for private industry to take on these projects on its own. There are also zoning laws and parking lot requirements and other regulations can cause projects to be delayed, too expensive or stalled.

However, these much lauded partnerships come at a cost. The Public-Private partnership is a vehicle through which taxpayer dollars are being funneled (often with corruption) into private hands simply to encourage them to do something that they will make money from for decades. Meanwhile, the local taxing entity has reduced taxes from the project and must find other ways to fund city operations.

How has there been so much involvement between corporations and the government? That answer is simple. Government has become a revolving door for politicians, executives, and anyone looking to make money and advance within the capitalist system. For the corporation, Government has simply become another cost area to be controlled.

Corporate Involvement in Government

The men who have held office in this country have usually come from the political, social, and economic elite. There have been some notable exceptions like Harry Truman and Andrew Jackson as well as Ulysses S. Grant. But you also have presidents from the upper class, including Howard Taft, Wilson, Harding, and Roosevelt. Although there have been a few exceptions in the 21st Century, presidents are not too often common men of the people. They have been relatively successful and are usually connected with business interests as a way to fund their careers in politics.

Savvy readers might notice a pattern in presidents. The closer we get to the modern age the less "of the people" the presidents get. Until recent times, this has been very necessary due to the fact that presidents were paid poorly and had no retirement. In 1965, Harry Truman was the recipient of the first medicare card from then-President Johnson, as a part of the Great Society Reforms. Obviously times have changed, but the fact remains that the men that choose to run are not people who might have worked at a fast food job in their lives.

In this country, due to culture and the money needed to have a political career of any note, not just anyone is elected president. This has allowed corporations to take a more active role in elections from the White House to state legislatures. However, that is simply not enough. Corporations also have another effective way of getting their way from Sacramento to Denver to Bangor. It is an institution as old as government itself: The Lobbyist.

The Lobbyist is one of the oldest institutions in any kind of representative government. It is the job of the Lobbyist to go and represent an interest to a representative. In Washington, D.C., some Lobbyists pay people to stand in line for them, a long-standing tradition stretching back to the earliest days of the Republic. Corporations have spent millions on campaigns as well as millions on Lobbyists to get legislation modified and to get bills passed. Many of the progressive victories of recent memory have taken place in the hallways of the Congressional office buildings. However, many losses have taken place in those same halls.

Lobbyists have a significant and well- financed part in our political system. They also represent a huge part of what can be wrong with Lobbyists. While the informed expertise that a Lobbyist can provide is an important part of legislation, it is important to remember the interest that Lobbyist represents. However, there is no Lobbyist representing you and me. There are even Lobbyists for your favorite charities and organizations who do not really represent you. Between corporate donations to the people who are tasked to represent you and the Lobbyists paid to keep their attention, who does that leave to actually represent the interests of "we the people?" The simple answer in our modern system is "no one." But of course, this is America and nothing is that simple. The interests of the business world in 2016 and the needs of the people or even what most would consider good governance do not often converge. Although companies are often pressured by PR reasons to make some concessions, little actual change occurs. Business gets what it wants and the people in government benefit. We the People are given platitudes and promises.

Government for and by the Corporation

Ultimately, this change has led the government, the only institution tasked to represent the interests of the people, to become an institution that does the bidding for wealthy interests. Corporate executives realized that the government could cause increased cost through taxes and regulations, often passed and advocated by people outside. The desire to control this cost center began a process of what is not called, regulatory capture. Regulatory capture occurs when former executives of corporations in certain regulated industries take jobs within the government agencies that regulate their former employers. Often, they will work for the government for a brief time and then return to the industry. These former executives like Ajit Pai at the Federal Communications Commission are lauded for their industry expertise but often do not work on behalf of the American people but rather for their former employers.

Modern economics would have us believe that regulation is the enemy of innovation and growth, that simply is not true. Usually, regulation spurs growth because it creates an environment in which business can proceed in a fair manner.When Congress created the Interstate Commerce Commission to regulate railroads in 1887, it was due to the explosive growth of the railroad and the schemes that the various lines used to compete with each other. In this case, regulation created stable pricing, profits, and allowed 4 railroad companies to operate together and serve the public. A similar story happened with airline ticket prices until the deregulation of airlines. Airline ticket prices were

regulated, all companies made about the same amount of money and competed on routes, services, and comforts. After the deregulation of airlines, pricing became a race to the bottom for all airlines and the American air travel industry has consolidated since 1982 when the regulations were lifted. In neither case did regulations kill railroad travel or air travel. Regulations allowed fair and equal competition and reduced gouging of consumers. Regulation does not always allow for tremendous windfall profits or for corporations to offload certain costs onto general society.

From the perspective of the corporation, their interests and the government are inextricably linked. Companies that do not keep the government in its pocket can suddenly find themselves under fire. Many readers are probably not old enough to remember the breakup of AT&T, a phone company that grew so large it had an effective monopoly on phone service in this country. They never thought that the government would sue them, take them to court, and use anti-trust laws (laws that govern the behavior of companies and prevent monopolies, price gouging, and so on) to break up the company into several smaller companies split up by region.

Microsoft, also had to spend the better part of a decade and millions in legal fees to defend itself in America and the EU as those governments accused them of having a monopoly on the PC Market. Microsoft never contributed to political campaigns before their antitrust suit. Now, they give regularly, as does Google, Apple, and every other company seeking to stay on the side of government that is most advantageous to them. These corporations are not giving this money to politicians out of the goodness of their corporate soul. Like any other form of capital, they expect a return. Those returns come in the form of favorable regulations, reduced threats of antitrust problems, and in many cases, attractive contracts and product subsidies.

Subsidies have become so common that many corporations, after filing their taxes, get a refund from the government. This is entirely legal because their lobbyists, oftentimes consulting firms, help write these laws and are paid to scrutinize legislation for clauses that may affect them as well as write in things that will help their business. This is no longer odd, it is simply expected due to their investment in government. The government is no longer of and for the people, it is of and for the corporation and serves its purpose like any other vessel of capital; to provide a return on investment.

One of the areas where a little change has occurred is with the auto industry. Seat belt regulations, smog regulations, and safety regulations are all things that protect people but would not have actually occurred without government help. As we speak, companies pollute rivers and streams and the only time it gets cleaned is when there is a tax incentive or, as in the case of BP, there is PR and government pressure. It often takes the force of law or public scrutiny to gain moral footing with a corporation. Corporations aren't moral; they create shareholder value.

Political pressure notoriously does not work very well with corporations. Corporations have enough money to be able to tell the government (the entity that is to represent the masses) – No. That should be concerning enough for democracy. In that way, because corporations have the power to work the levers of power in their favor and the ability

to say no, they can adjust our democracy to fit their idea of what society should be like and how best to benefit themselves; this is exactly what has happened.

Capitalism is a philosophy that touches every single area of our lives. Nothing in our world hardly moves without a capital return. It takes work, dedicated people, and a bit of luck to make those few things happen. Politics is no different. If return on capital is what powers your world, the government is no different and the current political system is a result of 30 years of unregulated, rabid capitalism. This is all supposed to somehow benefit everyone. In many ways it has. In consumer products, there is an increase in the variety of choices and there seems to be some new option coming to the market everyday. But there are areas where capitalism is a bad philosophy and when it comes to essentials like healthcare, food, water, and shelter; capitalism unfairly advantages those with capital and leaves the rest of society out in the cold.

Capitalism as a Failure

Rather than creating a market with a free exchange of goods that allows for an open competitive environment of like goods and services from which we can all benefit, Capitalism aligns people, wealth, and resources with only things that can produce a dynamic and sufficient return; it is not sustainable and is forever stuck in between scarcity and over-production. Under capitalism, this also includes essentials like food and water. Despite Capitalism as an innovation from Mercantilism, the government was involved with corporations from the start due to the licensing of corporations, enforcement of contracts, and the taxes that they have always exacted.

Capitalism's reputation as a system that does not need, want, or desire government has been a farce from the beginning. In modern times, we are familiar with corporations getting tax incentives to move to certain states and moving profits offshore to save on taxes. This is yet another example of what is fundamental in capitalism: frictionless return. This marriage of capital and government is not cheap. Although the cost is overt, it is quietly tucked away within the government and within society, out of sight of most people. While capital has sought its frictionless return, the rest of society is sent the bill.

Wal-Mart has spent $65.4 billion on stock buybacks in the past 10 years (2005-2015). That could have become a $4,670 a year raise for each of its employees. It is also very close to the $62 billion we, the taxpayer, spend subsidizing their underpaid employees. IBM doesn't research much these days. Since 2003, it does spend $117.5 billion in stock buybacks to maintain a high share price. These trillions of dollars in lost economic activity could solve pressing problems like healthcare, infrastructure, and student loans.

Capitalism only creates value where there is return. When an entire society is built around only the services that capitalism can provide, those without money to pay a business will be left out of the system. Obviously, this disadvantages anyone who isn't wealthy enough to participate in a system that can only provide a service if the price is right. Essential services like emergency services, healthcare, fire, basic infrastructure, housing, and food can eventually be priced out of reach for many people. There is no

way for those with very little cash to also continue to survive within this system. This has come into sharp focus in the past decade. Many people struggle along to survive often going into debt to continue to fund their lifestyle or even just survive. Historically marginalized people also are disadvantaged by the system. Due to the system of employment, anyone can be disposed of when capital decides there is no more return to be gained from the value that workers provide. When the cost of running a factory is too high, capital simply lays off the workers and moves the factory elsewhere. The loyalty of the workers or their desire to continue working is immaterial to this system.

No matter what, capitalism works for a frictionless return. To increase profits and increase return and provide greater shareholder value, corporations have to cut costs somewhere. The reason the trickle down does not work is that it is supposed to mean new investment in jobs and business expansion but it frequently ends up with shareholders in stock buybacks.

Trickle down works on mainstreet but not Wall Street. When money is spent in a local community, that money can spread around quickly. Money spent at one shop ends up at another shop. Those shops can pay workers and those workers in turn can consume other goods and keep other businesses going. Modern capitalism often removes money from communities and puts it in the pockets of shareholders.

Modern capitalism is not the result of success or ingenuity, it is the result of capitalists like Jeff Bezos, Bill Gates, Elon Musk and other titans of industry. These people are able to adjust the rules to their favor and basically create a system for legally-sanctioned theft. A variety of changes have occurred since the watershed date of 1977. It is time for a cleanse.

Capitalism Detox

It seems that Capitalism isn't all that is cut out to be for most people, especially if you derive your wealth from labor. It certainly is not a system that promotes democracy at any level. If someone isn't making money from capital, then the current economic system that we have engaged puts them at a disadvantage in every area of society. Most people work for someone else and among small businesses, most businesses provide a form of self-employment to their owners and aren't businesses in the corporate sense. If the owner disappears, so does the business and the jobs that go with it.

Corporations tend to endure because the entity of capital can keep them together and continue in some capacity to generate a return no matter how meagre. The 21st Century will be dominated by Capital as Thomas Piketty said "The new economy will be a backwards leap toward many things being made small time and artisanal. Items made at scale will be made in fully automated factories. People will provide specialized services for individual parts of corporations and to the public." In the beginning of the industrial revolution, the goal was to make things at scale and everything and everyone was centralized and then the finished product was distributed outward from that central hub. Small time specialized shops simply couldn't keep up and went out of business in favor of large competition that could create cheaply at scale. In many ways,

we're jumping backwards to the small shop system. Even Corporations understand this singular principle. Corporations are hoarding cash because they believe that the future will be very expensive and will require massive capital investment to adjust their businesses to the new economy. This is an indicator that the 21st Century will be ruled by acquisition of and ownership of capital.

The continuation of this system of frictionless return on capital will eventually help people who derive their wealth from labor but that will take rising wages, which will most likely not occur unless it is forced. Corporations have worked to reduce labor costs to increase the profits that they are stockpiling and as the years unfold, they will reap the rewards of that in their ability to launch new technologies and products. Capitalism wants a frictionless return on capital and eliminating labor is a significant part of that strategy. If the future is moving toward an economy of freelancers, every aspect of the economy will have to be rebuilt and changed to reflect this new reality of people without a regular means of income that we have become used to seeing in the general economy. What is next? What comes after Capitalism? What does the economy look like when people no longer derive their living from wages?

There are a few solutions:

- Raise wages and reduce working hours (the early 20th Century solution)
- Universal Basic Income (we give everyone a set amount of money per month)
- Socialism/Democratic Socialism
- Higher Taxes (similar to the taxes levied in the middle of the 20th Century)
- A Global Tax on Capital (Thomas Piketty)
- Resource based Economy

Two things seem to be at odds; how do we keep the dynamism of capitalism and its ability to move people into new socio-economic statuses while also making sure that we retain opportunities to do that? Different aspects of these systems provide for the general people in a different way and offer different opportunities for success. Generally speaking, most of these systems allow for most everyone to access the basics of survival and do allow for capital to continue with more modest returns and less burden on society. None of these are a perfect solution.

They still leave us with questions:

- How do we make sure that our economy has enough money to survive in an environment where full-time employment may become a thing of the past.
- How does capital work for everyone and not just for the few?
- How does the American people reclaim their government from the power of capital?

Economic changes aside, the government should work for the people, not just for wealthy corporations. Recapturing the government and electing representatives interested in the general well-being of people will be a step-forward in facing up to these new economic realities and making sure that most people are able to navigate them.

It will require new thinking to solve these problems. There seem to be no clever solutions as to what comes after capitalism or what that system might look like. Such a new system must provide for everyone while also allowing business to grow and for people to enjoy the freedoms both economic and civil that we have come to enjoy. Solutions ranging from strong social safety nets to new proposals like Universal Basic Income are now being bantered about as possible solutions. One reality that isn't likely to change anytime soon is that capital will continue to seek a frictionless return and that will generate economic changes that we do not yet fully understand. Regular working people are already at a disadvantage and that will continue well into the foreseeable future. It's time to detox from capitalism as it has operated so far. It is time to create new thinking around the economic system and find a way to create a solution that works for everyone and not just the few. Frictionless return on capital can no longer be what rules the American economy and American life. It is long past time for Americans to decide what kind of society they want to live in: one where everyone is able to access the basics of survival or one where the only ruler is capital.

1977: The Rise of Discounters and Deregulation

Why 1977? 1977 because it was an interesting moment in time and I'm a great fan of Disco. Many of the economic trends I'm talking about were already underway by then. The late 70s were known for insane interest rates upwards of 21%, stagflation as a result of the new fiat currency that left the Bretton Woods standard behind, and rising prices and transformative changes in the economy.

1977 is the last year wages increased in real terms for hourly workers in this country. Many of the economic problems of the late 1970s are applicable today. The American landscape had radically changed as well. By 1977, the white flight from the urban areas to the suburbs was complete leaving the inner cities of most large metros in terrible shape; inhabited by the poor who couldn't leave, minorities who were stuck there due to race based housing policies, and the criminally inclined. Life was happening out of city centers and in a checkerboard of fiat towns created around the developer-planned neighborhoods in areas around the cities. Cities were still centers of business and people still flocked to these cities for work and promptly left them for the wide streets of the safer, quieter, nicer suburbs at 5 p.m. Life was good for American until a series of economic changes caused the whole economy to begin a series of changes from which the middle class would never recover.

The Great Middle Class

The period from 1945 to 1977 was one of the most prosperous in world history. In no other time had so many people achieved such wealth and such quality of living. People had jobs, owned homes, owned cars, television, and an array of consumer products took vacations. However, this was based on some basic assumptions, norms and standards that had been hard-won before the war.

Unlike the Europeans, who expanded socialist social policies in the years after the war, the US hesitated to do so. Roosevelt, in 1933-1934 had strong-armed congress to pass something as simple as Social Security so that no one would go hungry in their old age. Congress appropriated a massive amount of money into the trust fund so that the program would be able to fund itself from payroll taxes and earnings on the trust fund in perpetuity. However, when it came to other sorts of social politics like universal

healthcare for all, even FDR was unable to get support for that program. At the time, the idea of universal healthcare was not new. It has been proposed in the 19th century and through the Progressive period in the early 20th century. Britain and France both embraced social medicine. The US, meanwhile, had begun to include health insurance and health care as a part of employment. Until recently, this would be a standard feature of most full-time work. This was also part of the efforts of unions.

Unions were bringing new changes to the workplace. The 1930s were dotted with a series of strikes including a strike at General Motors. Steel workers went on strike and other unions took to the picket line to demand better treatment and better wages. Unions were responsible for such changes as retirement pensions, unemployment insurance being required, workman's compensation for injuries, and the 8 hour work day. Healthcare also became a contentious issue for union members and employer sponsored health insurance or healthcare was born. The unions of the early 20th century began to create the social safety on which everyone relied. This safety net would expand in post war America.

As World War II set in, offering healthcare became not just something unions demanded. It also became part of what companies offered to attract workers. Workers and companies often shared the cost of this care. Because most people had access to reasonable healthcare through their jobs, there seemed to be no need for universal healthcare in the United States. Those who stayed in the military longer were offered healthcare by the Veteran's Administration both directly and eventually through Tricare. By the mid-60s however, there were already cracks in the social safety net due to the nature of it being tied to employment and closely associated with business.

Lyndon Johnson proposed sweeping social changes he called "The Great Society." Despite the wealth of the day and the wide employment opportunities, there was still quite a bit of grinding poverty in America. Much of this was in the inner cities and among older people. Because health insurance was tied to employment, when workers retired, they were left to bare all their own healthcare costs at the time of their lives when their resources were the least and their healthcare needs the greatest. Workers often retired with their pension and social security and that was the totality of their income. Some unions had negotiated for health insurance to extend into retirement but for many, old age healthcare was a big expense and a bigger problem causing them to rely on family or go without essential to pay for it.

Children and single mothers also suffered from a lack of healthcare and often a lack of cash. Women did not often have skills or access to learn skills to maintain a job. What jobs they often took were low skill and low paying and sometimes didn't come with great benefits. The plight of these women was severe. To combat the lack of old age healthcare, the lack of healthcare for those that simply couldn't work, and to combat poverty, Johnson proposed The Great Society which launched his so-called War on Poverty. This is the closest America would come to European democratic socialism. The Great Society legislation included Medicare (healthcare for the elderly), Medicaid (managed by the states to provide healthcare for those who can't work, children, etc.), Welfare (cash assistance), Section 8 (Housing Assistance) Food Stamps, and programs that would go on to become Temporary Assistance for Needy

Families (TANF) and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Former President Truman and his wife were the first people to receive a Medicare card, as former presidents did not have a retirement program at the time and President Truman, having only been a professor and author, did not have a reliable access to healthcare. The Great Society seemed to be the next phase of fulfill the important part of a social contract between regular working people and America. These programs were not inexpensive but they only compromised a small part of the Federal budget and were passed while America was spending billions in Vietnam. These programs were meant to lift people out of poverty and give them the necessary help that they needed to become part of a functional part of society. The results were mixed at best and because of those mixed results, the programs became easy targets for more conservative politicians who wanted them eliminated. This discussion began in 1977 and would help a certain California governor move into 1600 Pennsylvania Ave.

The American social safety net was partly private and partly public. It was deeply tied to having a job and being employed. For those who lost a job there was some help available but nothing on par with what various European nations were offering. Although it is obvious now that America's social safety is worn though and many people get lost in the cracks, 1977 saw that this whole system was already coming apart at the seams.

Tough Times for Joe Six-Pack

Things were getting tough for the Middle Class. Jobs were becoming scarce, the economy had been slowing down since 1960, and the oil shocks of the early 70s had only exasperated the problem. In almost every sector, there was a struggle. Companies were trying to cut expenses, unions were fairly unforgiving in these cost cutting attempts, which led to terrible conflicts; things were simply difficult everywhere you looked.

The 1970s was a time where exciting things were happening in sports and even around the nation including a New York City blackout, Egypt recognizing Israel as a state, and a historically significant speech from President Jimmy Carter telling Americans that they had to curb their consumption of oil for the national interest. Economically, things still struggled between the changing nature of currency, inflation, stagflation, and the oil shocks from the Middle East oil producers deciding to embargo oil, the US economy struggled along through the decade. The U.S. had run its last trade surplus in 1975 (current to 2015) and had begun to run the now-infamous trade deficit, assiduously tracked by the media and those in the financial sector. The world has changed. America imported more than it exported in a variety of goods and the largest economy was at the mercy of leaders in the Middle East and their valuable oil.

For the period from 1945 to 1974, the American economy had produced unparalleled prosperity by expanding its exports and welcoming back millions of single GIs who all began to go to school, start businesses, and families. Thousands of new and exciting products were introduced to fill these needs. From soft goods to cars and homes, the

economy boomed as a new American paradigm formed around the American century. People were able to make enough money not only to buy a house and a car but good enough to raise a family in a decent lifestyle. A $47,000 (adjusted) salary was average and afforded people an excellent life. With a single income, people could raise a family. With two incomes (which was rare), you could excel even more. 1977 began the end of this trend.

Before 1977 and into the 1980s, when businesses generated a return, they tended to reinvest it in growing their business and not stashing it in overseas bank accounts. Auto companies offered more cars in more variety. Textile companies expanded their operations, bought out competition, or expanded factories. Wages also grew during this period. The more productive workers were the more they were paid. This process that created prosperity had all but evaporated by 1977. One of the largest reasons for this was the workers themselves.

It was at this point that labor had simply "become too expensive for most companies." Companies were looking for a way to generate growth and increase profits. These new profits couldn't come from savings in resources considering the price of extraction and acquisition was fairly stable and the price of energy had increased. Instead, the growth came from the elimination of workers and from the workers' paychecks. Workers had been emboldened by long terms of employment, little prospect of unemployment, and because of that, they were willing to push back against their bosses. With the rate of unionization nearing 50%, labor was well connected, well organized, and was not willing to budge with the white collar executives.

The shock to the American economy started in a simple but dramatic act; companies started closing plants. From steel plants to automobile factories, newspapers were filled with blaring headlines talking about plant closures and the resulting unemployment. In some cases, dozens of plants were shut down at a time. This rocked communities where the entire local economy depended on these factories, mills, and plants as primary sources of economic activity. When a plant or mill closed, the stores and other businesses in the town weren't far behind or struggled to survive as people had to move away to find work. This pattern was on the minds of many Americans in 1977, especially in hard hit communities in the mid-west. It was a feverish time as people wondered if the plant where they worked at could be next. Sometimes the closures were so sudden that the companies simply locked the doors leaving product sitting on the line in the middle of assembly. Businesses were getting more efficient as a way to cut costs and generate growth and profits. While some businesses really had cash squeezes due to the on-going credit crunch, it was more often a way to simply cut costs. Manufactured emergencies and dour-faced executives made it seem like these companies would go under if they didn't take these drastic steps. While there was a credit crunch, the reorganization had more to do with increasing shareholder profits than any other concern. Rather than spread out production over a wide area of small plants, the idea was to centralize production into a few plants, reduce the total amount of workers, and then to increase production with the same amount of workers at those plants paid "competitively." With the threat of unemployment or simply being replaced, unions began to buckle and unionization rates began to fall.

It was under these conditions that a new economic contract was forged and championed by a bright faced actor who had been governor of California: Ronald Reagan. Without the economic troubles and foreign policy ineptitude of Jimmy Carter, Reagan would have had a much harder time unseating the incumbent President. However, speeches about being able to find work wherever someone could and giving people "economic freedom" spoke to the hearts of hard-working Americans. Little did they realize that economic freedom also meant the freedom to be functionally impoverished. It also meant that the luxuries they had of a reasonable work day, unemployment insurance, and healthcare would often become a thing of the past.

Beginning in 1977, America moved from an economy focused on the well being of all the players involved and moved toward an economy that was focused on improving the value for shareholders invested in American corporations and practically no one else. The country has been paying the price ever since.

The Rise of Neoliberalism and the "Open" Market

Capitalism is oriented toward finding growth wherever growth can be found. Places where growth is greater tend to attract capital. Capital has one goal and that is to generate return to its owner. When resources are taken together and invested in something that generates profit, the capital grows and the proceeds from that are either reinvested for more return or are taken out and saved or spent. This is the system on which the entire world economy is based. In a developed economy, the chance for growth is more limited than a developing economy. Developing economies can buy more products ranging from essentials to luxury goods making for higher sales and better growth on the return of capital invested in those businesses who are selling these goods. Developed economies do tend to be more stable and predictable but grow less as the market for new goods and services is smaller and is spread farther out over time as people more slowly adopt new goods and services.

The economic environment before 1977 was much more constrained and regulated than the world that appeared afterwards. During the Great Depression, FDR had used the power of government to regulate all sorts of areas of the economy to stabilize it following the crash and subsequent deprivation. This trend to end those Depression-era regulations was called De-regulation.

De-regulation can occur when technology or costs change and the old rules about how to conduct business just don't seem to apply anymore. In this case, the previous regulatory environment had become inconvenient for the desires of banks and corporations. The appeal of de-regulation seemed fairly clear: unfettered business could grow, hire more workers, and expand more quickly without having to jump through government red tape on things like worker safety, benefits, or price. This narrative fed into the psyche of the average American worker who worked a solid week and worked hard for his or her money to provide for their family. People were frustrated by the failing policies of the liberal age. The New Deal had worked out well and it seemed like Medicare/Medicaid and Great Society reforms held the same promise.

By 1977, in the eyes of the American public, these policies had failed. When neo-liberalism came along proclaiming a dream of creating a new future where a honest person could go out and get an honest day's wage with little interference from a predatory governmental system, people were ready for that change because they were ready for a chance to make a good living. Little did they know that it would come at the expense of the society that they had become used to having and that rather than things getting better, things were going to get worse, much worse.

As the economy squeezed people's wallets, Regan promoted an insidious public narrative, "why should someone get something for free in the welfare system while I work hard and fear unemployment?" At first blanche, this logic seems sound and uniquely American. The social contract had always been that the abundance of this continent was available to anyone who could work hard to capture it and exploit it. Genocidal westward expansion was predicated on that idea. The idea that society should take care of those less fortunate had less appeal by 1977 because many people felt that they too had become less fortunate with wild fluctuations in prices, job insecurity, and squeezed wages brought on by a recession that seemed unwilling to loose its grip on the average American. People were desperate for good and prosperous times to come around again. Neo-liberal economics, dressed up as "trickle-down" economics, seemed to offer this on a silver platter with the only expense being the size of government.

Neo-liberalism has a rather deceptive name. In the 18th Century, Adam Smith wrote a book called, "The Wealth of Nations." In this book, he advocated for market liberalization, in so much as he argued that markets should be open, more free, and have less regulations. At the time, under Mercantilism, government frequently charged great sums of money for certain licenses, appointments, and other documentation to operate businesses of a wide variety. It was a way to control the market so that only a few organizations could get involved and greatly empowered the wealthy. The miracle of free-market capitalism was the relative lack of governmental involvement in deciding who could and could not sell bread, wagons, or other products. Fast forward to today, past the industrial revolution, the picture isn't so rosy. Thanks to the investiture required to create the means of production to produce product cheaply at scale, most people had been removed from the small shops and farms that began the basis of capitalism in the first place. Instead, most people work for large companies which are merely concentrated places of capital and not for themselves.

The Chicago School of neo-liberalism maintained that to generate growth and prosperity, the key was to grow out of the problems that had arisen. To do that, the government needed to get out of the way of businesses and let businesses grow, exploit, and hire workers at whatever cost they chose with a nearly complete disregard to any kind of advantage to the worker, the environment, or the overall market. Together with advantageous trade deals created to reduce costs by moving jobs to a variety of places ranging from Mexico to China, many businesses were able to reduce labor costs and increase profits. Jobs moved quickly off-shore, thanks to the liberalization of trade through NAFTA, permanent trading partner status with China, and other large scale trade deals that allowed the free movement of goods and capital around the globe. This led to what we now call, Globalization. This trend accelerated after the fall of the U.S.S.R. However, the consequences here at home were fairly stark.

Globalization, powered by new technology like containerization, faster ships, improved communication, and jet air travel, allowed companies to put the whole planet to work on their capital-return process. This damaged the robust manufacturing base in the U.S. that employed millions of people in stable jobs that allowed them to thrive. Neo-liberalism is uniquely American but it wasn't tried in America first. The first test was in somewhere farther south: Chile.

Chile and China: Neo-Liberalism Rises

Augusto Pinochet had been dictator of Chile since 1973 and had continued the socialist policies that were popular in South America but the Chilean economy refused to grow and create jobs and financial security for people. Pinochet was approached by Milton Friedman and his Chicago School of economists. They proposed hallmark neo-liberal policies like privatization of public industries and low taxes. Pinochet decided to adopt the Chicago School policies to bring jobs and prosperity to Chile. Outwardly, it seemed to work. The open environment allowed in foreign investment and brought jobs to Chile. Pinochet, through his dictatorial powers, slashed any regulation Milton Friedman demanded and any regulation that a potential employer might find inconvenient. Pinochet was pleased and Chile served as a ringing example of the power of the open and free market. Neo-liberalism then turned its eye toward a much larger customer: China. China began to liberalize over a 20 year period following the death of Mao Zedong and the rise of Deng Xioping in 1989 who wanted to capture the prosperity of western economies. By any account, China is communist in name only. China can be described more like totalitarian capitalism than anything resembling a Marxist or Trotskyist policy. The government lightly regulates business and chooses to focus more on exports. This policy has drug hundreds of millions out of poverty and drawn them away from villages and farms into the large cities to work in factories. While raising people out of poverty is good, this policy has also produced places like Foxconn (builder of the iPhone/iPad) where the solution to workers jumping from the windows to their deaths was to put up nets to catch them as they fell. What about changing the worker's conditions? What about improving pay? What about making it a better place to work? That is where neo-liberalism fails. It advantages those that own capital over the advantage of regular people who are trying to survive and thrive in the world.

Neo-liberalism reduces those regulations and instead creates solutions to stop workers from killing themselves, not actually solving any grievance around the work. Thousands died in the 19th Century when this kind of treatment was common in this country and yet in 2016, we have the same problems and while problems in China may seem far away and unimportant, we have problems of our own here in America. The Chicago School had two successes under its belt. On the surface, the policies seemed to work and that success lead to media exposure that proposed neo-liberal economies as the way forward for all economies.

Neo-Liberalism Grows

As neo-liberalism rose in prominence, a series of seemingly small but not insignificant changes began to take place. Technology is a huge driver of de-regulation. The idea is that regulation prevents innovation and prevents the market from growing at any rate it chooses because government forces or discourages certain economic activity. The idea behind deregulation was simple: times are changing, technology is changing, and government's rules are not; get rid of them.

1977 brought the beginning of automation in factories and in many aspects of everyday American life. This not only reduced the need for employees but accelerated the desire for less regulation especially around labor. Labor saving technologies were already coming into the market. From the computer to the fax and copy machine, new technology promised time and cost savings. Having to keep excess employees around when you're "innovating" is no way to run a business, at least so the argument was made.

The bottom line and the shareholders were the business priority. Employees are expensive and hard to deal with at times. Labor is the biggest cost for any business. This began to infect business life in all areas. Even if a machine hadn't been invented to do someone's job, the permanent understaffing of workplaces began in earnest. Soon, people were doing the duties of 1-3 people. The neo-liberal logic was simple: everyone had to work hard to earn a living and keep the economy going; at least that was the argument at the time. Union rules that prevented employees from flexing between different jobs at the work site or shop floor became the comedic poster children of inefficiency and an argument for deregulation and de-unionization. No care was given to people who were doing the job of two people, staying late, and possibly having wages stolen when companies asked employees to do things off the clock? A hard days work earned a hardworking person an honest wage and that is the American way. Neoliberalism used patriotism as a way to paper over the real suffering of workers. Employees were told to be grateful for what jobs they could find because employment was becoming artificially scarce.

By scaring people with the possibility, that if they didn't make a change, their plant might be closed or their job might be sacrificed; the bourgeoisie,who wanted neoliberal reforms got what they wanted: fewer workers working for less money and fearing for their lives. But of course, it all trickles down, doesn't it? If the march of technology hadn't been so swift, people would have noticed these trends far sooner but the advent of women in the workforce and the arrival of the personal computer increased productivity dramatically.

Productivity between 1979 and 2009 increased steadily and was up 80% from that 1979 baseline. Wages have stayed flat or declined. If wages had kept up with the rate of increase that stopped in 1977, the median household income would be $92,000. The economic boom and credit boom that began in 1984 and eventually came to a halt in 2008 also covered up the lack of wage growth, as people borrowed to finance their lifestyles. Between 2 incomes and high credit card balances, Americans were able to

maintain and increase their lifestyles, power the economy, and not notice that wealth was slowly concentrating at the top and that it was not trickling anywhere; much less downward into their wallets. Instead, the only place that money trickled was overseas.

De-regulation

Much has been made of deregulation in the last 40 years. The economy that caused what Robert Reich refers to as "the virtuous cycle" was highly regulated. Prices on freight, airline ticket prices, and other areas of the economy were regulated by the government. Labor practices were regulated by the government and enforced by unions. Capital was hard to move out of the country and the wealth of most nations stayed within that nation, especially in the United States. Trans-national corporations were few due to the expense of exchange rates and the trouble with moving capital to new markets. Companies that were in the export business faced tariffs both from importing goods to the United States and exporting their goods to other countries. These tariffs protected American industry by inflating the price of foreign goods. However, in the years after 1977, these helpful regulations that made the economy work for everyone were eroded away.

Banks

Banking was one of the first areas to look for ways to de-regulate as a way to expand their operations. In 1976, Congress allowed branch banking, which allowed banks to work across state lines using branches that did not have to be accountable for every deposit held on file or dollar loaned out. This early deregulation led to the late 1980s Savings and Loan crisis where the taxpayers bailed out several companies who had overextended themselves due to excessive lending in the housing market. The lack of regulations of financial activities and risk would also lead to the 2008 economic collapse. This was one area where regulations, although they might have been perceived as onerous were born out of a need to protect regular people and their money.

Due to the Great Depression and the numerous bank failures between 1929 and 1934, the Roosevelt administration instituted, in concert with the Federal Reserve, several new banking regulations to make sure that banks did not fail and wipe out the life savings of average Americans. Banks were insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) and any banks, not in the Federal Reserve system at that time, quickly joined it for their own existence. Many of the more public parts of these regulations stayed but many of the more technical aspects began to be dissolved in the years following 1977. Allowing the free movement of capital and credit was deemed to be necessary and in the 1980s, there was a president in the White House who agreed.

This allowed banks to expand rapidly and find new ways to lend money, write mortgages, and encourage consumer spending with a disregard for the greater macroeconomic consequences. The best part was that they could make billions of dollars doing it and in the case of mortgages, do it with securities that were guaranteed by the federal government. Banks began investing for themselves and taking on investment clients, something that previous banks were not allowed to do. Investment banks and regular banks were kept separate to protect depositors, those lines soon blurred in the 1980s.

This change in banking regulation did not happen overnight but in a series of small changes over time.

One of the best ways to learn about this change is the introduction of the oscar-nominated film, The Big Short. Banks went from sleepy institutions that loaned out money and kept people's money safe to high-flying places that steered the engine of global growth. This banking de-regulation eventually manifested itself in the financial crisis, as the highly sophisticated structures of credit collapsed.

Trucking, Airlines, and Lowered Wages

The practice of causing a strike and then hiring non- union workers at a lower cost was spurred on by indirect attacks on Big Labor beginning around this pivotal time in 1977. From copper mines to air traffic controllers, companies squeezed their employees for ways to cut costs and as Jack Welch of GE put it, "serve the shareholder better." Industry frequently packed the regulatory agencies with their own people to gain advantages that lead to the de-regulation. The changes were seen all around the American landscape. The privatization of utilities was first. Soon the freight prices of trucking were relaxed. Regulations around airline ticket prices, taxi prices, and a variety of other industries that the Commerce Department focused on were all relaxed in the name of the free market. De-regulation was sold as a cost savings and the source of why the economy was broken. By 1977, people were desperate for a solution. If getting rid of regulations was the key to getting the economy going again, then regulations had to go. Ronald Reagan arrived in 1980 with just that plan; people bought it.

The End of Big Labor

One of the biggest problems that companies had to face with this strategy was breaking the back of incredibly well-organized and well connected unions. From 1947 through to 1977, 50% of the American labor force was unionized. There were plenty of corrupt practices that were not doing much good to the average worker. However, corrupt people do not make an entire institution useless. If that were true, the entire American government should have been scrapped a while ago. The reason workers enjoyed good wages, the 8 hour work day and the institution of the weekend, were all due to early 20th Century advances in progressive labor laws. Labor in the 19th Century was an ongoing, never ending, 12-16 hour, 6 day a week affair. If that didn't work for the worker, factory owners would simply fire them and find someone who would work at these grueling paces.

Unionization rates started to fall rapidly in the years that followed. Inflation increased and the economy started to grow. Rather than the return of the growth and productivity going to the workers in the form of new investment in equipment, wages, or expansion, as it would have before 1977, it went to the executives and the shareholders. More stocks paid out dividends and CEO's pay skyrocketed.

The corporate bourgeoisie has used productivity increases, available credit, and an expansion of the workforce to cover up the fact that the American worker has been

squeezed since 1977 in the name of cost cutting, increasing profits, and a transfer of wealth from the bottom to the top. Rather than the tremendous economic growth that has occurred since 1977 being shared by everyone, it has been shared by an increasing smaller group of people. The financial crisis exposed, in full view, the real problems that had existed in the economy since 1977 and made regular Americans finally take stock of the absolutely terrible deal that had been sold to them. There was nothing to hide the downturn, there was nothing to stop millions of foreclosures and homelessness. Wealth inequality has been exposed and there is nothing to save workers from an economy that uses its tremendous engine of exploitative growth for the enrichment of the global elite. While wages stay the same and fall downward, productivity has increased and the pay for executives has skyrocketed to 600 times the lowest paid worker. No other institution demonstrates this better than discount stores.

The Rise of Discount Stores

The 1980s saw the closure of many main streets in small towns across America as malls and discount stores, like Wal-Mart, became preferred places to shop not only for the variety of merchandise but the lower prices. When I was doing research at the Greeley Historical Society and collecting relevant data on a local historical building, I read advertisement after advertisement of prominent downtown retailers closing due to the competition by the Greeley Mall (opened in 1974) and by stores like K-Mart, Target, and Wal-Mart as well as major department stores that inhabited popular malls at the time. As I looked through the newspapers, more and more ads of popular but small main street shops were placed in the Greeley Tribune announcing their closure due to "prices in favor of the discounter" and the rise of "larger, more popular, discount stores." With fewer dollars, Americans had to "tighten their belts" and "make their dollar go farther" and Americans did that by eschewing the popular stores on the main streets of their towns and heading just outside the city limits to buy things cheaper at the discount stores. If someone lived in a suburb of a major city, the drive was even easier: that shopper could avoid the mall and the crowds and park close to the store they wanted and head in for fabulous goods at even better prices. In the years that followed, most of those goods would not be made in America. They would be made overseas and imported leaving American workers in the unemployment line.

The discount store is not a new concept. Woolworths/Ben Franklin built an empire on a five and dime strategy of goods delivered cheaply. For many, a middle class and poor child in the 20th Century, these stores were wonderlands of possibility because the things on the shelves were affordable to them. Sales and discounts on goods were common at the department stores but their high quality goods were expensive and were only bought a few times a year or by wealthier people.

Even among the department stores, there was a hierarchy. Stores like Barney's, Saks Fifth Avenue, and Nieman Marcus ranked near the top as stores like Sears, Montgomery Wards, JCPenney, Foley's, and even Macy's filled in the middle and lower tier of department store goods. Department stores attracted sales professionals and department experts that may stay on for years and earn a good salary. They often were not paid enough to shop there, but they were paid enough to live a decent life from that

job and be respected for knowing how to fit a suit, take a measurement for curtains, or assist someone with a wedding registry.

Sales were often and unregulated (unlike Europe where sales are strictly regulated) and people seemed to find all their goods at a reasonable price. However, discount stores started to become popular around 1977 because prices has dramatically increased in many areas of life and discount stores were able to appeal to the ability to save money and get similar goods for less. A store like Lohman's was able to buy remainders from department stores and resell those items to people at a markdown. This was a key to helping Americans feel like they were maintaining or even advancing their lifestyle without everyday people noticing that they weren't getting ahead at all.

Stores like Target and Walmart competed on price by reducing their labor cost significantly, making many of their own goods, and working directly with manufacturers, and thus, cutting out the wholesaler in the process. The new discount stores were faster, cheaper, and people were excited that they too could live well without having to wait to buy a good lifestyle at the department stores when everything went on sale. Discount stores also did away with things like counters and lots of sales help. People picked out their own goods and took them up to the central checkout counters instead of paying for it in a department. At first, discount stores and department stores tried to compete but the price advantage of the discounter brought wages down at the department stores and the change lead them to optimize supply chains and cut out wholesalers as well. This eliminated jobs and turned retail from a profession to something one does in college to gain experience in the working world. In that way, the cost-cutting of the discounter translated into depressed wages for everyone else as well. The guiltiest party of this trend is Wal-Mart, itself. When a Walmart arrives in town, wages drop $1–$3 for everyone, especially in retail.

The High Cost of Wealth Concentration

Walmart had begun its rise throughout the South and by 1980 had over 1,100 stores. Walmart has used several strategies to make sure that wages were kept low throughout their entire supply chain. They frequently demanded that their supplies reduce their prices by 5-10%. Overtime, this adds up to real savings. On the labor side, Walmart hires low wage, temporary workers from agencies to unpack the containers from China and repackage the merchandise to go to distribution centers and on to stores. Many of these workers have had the same job for many years and are far from temporary but keeping them in that status saves money. Due to low worker wages, which has been the policy at Walmart since its start in 1962, Walmart presses down wages where it goes, including non-retail sectors. The worst part is that when Walmart announced it was raising the minimum wage at is stores in 2015, the political pundits (including myself) had to cheer that they had raised their starting hourly worker to $9 an hour, which is still not a sufficient wage. If wages had stayed on track from 1977 onward, the current wages would be more than double Walmart's increase. This is the level of survival that has become commonplace in a country that generates $17 Trillion in GDP per annum. But this is replete throughout the system, the success of the current economy has come at the expense of everyday people and the biggest symbol of this is the discount store.

The rise of the discount store coincided with the freezing or outright reduction of wages of the workers. By breaking the back of the unions, employees became fearful that their jobs would disappear. The attitude became one of fear and confrontation: be grateful for what the company so generously has decided to pay you. Long gone was the attitude of collaboration and that employees were an important part of the organization as an executive. Employees were reduced to being an expense line item on an spreadsheet. A bothersome and troublesome problem that management spent time trying to reduce the cost in order to increase profits. Wages weren't about what workers earned or contributed but money from a generous corporation to whom the worker should be grateful. As the decades progressed and the ability to make goods overseas became more cost-effective workers were threatened again by cheap overseas labor and outsourcing.

Companies soon found that whatever they didn't want to buy, they could make themselves and now they could make it in Asia for pennies on the dollar and reduce labor costs further. Before 1977, a business might reinvest this cost savings into their stores or into their domestic employees but instead that wealth went straight to the top of the company in the form of stock dividends to shareholders and bonuses for Executives. As Represntative Barbara Lee (D-CA) states in one of her fire brand articles, "CEOs are rewarded for keeping their employees poor."

It has to be disheartening, as an employee, to walk into work at a discounter and need to take things from the community collection box around the holidays because you simply aren't paid enough to live your life. Shareholder value is far more important than the value of human life and existence in our modern society and the current situation into which we now find ourselves stems to changes that began in 1977. The very idea that someone works and is still poor would have been and odd thing to hear 60 years ago. The term, "working poor" describes millions of Americans.

As time has gone on, this practice has reduced the wages in retail and now there is a movement to raise those wages forcibly through government intervention. If wages had kept wages up with inflation (as they do in Australia) it would be almost $20 an hour. The protesters are only asking for $15, which isn't even on par with where wages should be from 1977.

Discount retail has also spawned another ill that now plagues society: On-demand scheduling. As stores like Walmart and Target sought to reduce the cost of labor by making sure that they only had as many people in the store as was absolutely necessary; they increasingly used sophisticated programs to create the ideal schedule to have as fewer workers as they really needed in the store at any given moment. This led to the most bizarre shifts for workers and in the UK, the policy has earned itself universal ridicule. At first they computed the number of workers by daily traffic. Less workers during the week and more on the weekends. But now, thanks to computerized scheduling and Big Data, they know how many people are in their stores at any given time almost instantly. Computers can factor in weather, customer trends, and other data to decide how many workers are needed. This may leave someone with "a job" but only working 12 hours a week or worse yet, being scheduled or poised to work and then being told that they aren't needed. Workers struggle scheduling child/elder care or transportation around

those requirements. Although there have been some concessions with on-demand scheduling, it is fundamental in the discount strategy of keeping prices very low at the expense of the workers. The very existence of Uber, Lyft, Doordash, and Instacart are the poster children for billion dollar businesses built on the back of workers who aren't actually hired but brought on as contractors to perform individualized tasks for a set rate of pay with little to no safety for them. This is the natural throughput of the union busting strategies that began in 1977.

The wealth concentration that is currently on display in this country comes with a high cost. It has cost advancements in healthcare and other social services. America has been hollowed out by this policy. Workers are disadvantaged and are left to struggle with low wages. Tax bases have been reduced to fund services, and long-term problems like retirement for millions of Americans has been jeopardized. These neo-liberal attitudes are the beginning of a much larger problem and this problem creeps up in areas that we don't even really think about, like education and infrastructure.

The Real Problem

It's not about any single issue. It's not about any single problem.1977 was a critical moment in the economic history of this country. This time was when a conscious decision was made to enrich the wealthy at the expense of the workers and dope them up with the false philosophy of trickle-down economics and cheap goods to help them forget how they were being screwed over. In 2008, the proverbial chickens finally came home to roost. And now we find ourselves in a situation that doesn't have any easy solutions. The years of low wages have left us with an economy that only works for the few and cheap goods from Wal-Mart can no longer make up for the loss in real wages. This problem is about to be amplified in a new way.

The march of technology is fast-paced and we're facing another turning point where millions of jobs will be once again eliminated in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Automation, robotics, and interactive technologies will slowly eat away at jobs that allowed people to survive and thrive. Think of the jobs a technology like the internet has eliminated. Unlike in the past, those jobs aren't coming back and won't pop up in some other sector. Those tasks simply don't exist anymore thanks to new technology. The trend of understaffing and low wages will continue into every area of life. Labor will continue to move to wherever it is cheapest and offering ever-more goods to people with meager funds to afford them.

If we don't take a new tack in economic policy in the near-future, the trend that I have described will expand and enlarge itself. Much as the wealthy were able to take advantage of the concentration of wealth around the means of production in the early 19th Century, this will remain true in the 21st Century. Inequality will widen as more and more wealth is concentrated in fewer and fewer hands.

This problem infects everything about our American way of life. When everyone doesn't contribute something, the whole country fails. This country knows how to pull together when times get tough. Thanks to neo-liberal attitudes that began to coalesce

around 1977, we've lost that spirit. We the People have let our wealthy citizens and corporations run away with the country and left everyone else to deal with the problems they refuse to acknowledge that are there.

- Does anyone want to live in a country where a good life is only available to those who can afford it?
- Does anyone want to live in a country where being poor is criminalized?
- Does anyone want to live in a country where we have to cheer over the most petty increases in wages and act like grateful serfs when we get them?

What is happening in the present moment is the result of 30 years of neo-liberal, individualized, so-called business friendly policies. Corporations and the wealthy have hijacked the government to their own ends and made people believe it is for their own good and benefit. There are many things that are best left in the common space and within the governmental sphere. Running a society of individuals working only in their own self-interest does not create a society that most of us want to live in. This creates ever-widening inequality and a host of associated problems that no one wants to solve. We are a part of the greater organism that is society and humanity and if we want to go on with this grand experiment, we need to start acting like a group of people who are interested in a greater society rather than people who work only for our own self interest. Self interest can be good and positive in the right setting. It creates amazing products and services but we have to harness self-interest for the greater whole as they are inexorably linked. No one is an island unto themselves.

However, since 1977 we have begun to live in an ever-more individualized culture that has broken down the things that bind people together like common goals and an economy that works for everyone and not just the few. The world of 1977 can only exist when the economy and the country works for everyone and not just a wealthy few. Deregulation and discounters have changed the economy from a virtuous one where everyone enjoys the benefits of growth to an economy where only owners of capital can get ahead. This system is slowly breaking down. The economy cannot continue on as it has since 1977. It is time for the wealth of America to help everyone and for the economy to work for everyone.

The Financial Crisis and the Destruction of Our World

Before I canceled The Cameron Cowan Show, I was working on a significant article on the 2008 Financial Crisis. I had read the report and other books and movies to really understand what was going on. When I finally sat down to write, I realized my material was light on substance but heavy on my personal story of how something as banal as a mortgage-backed security pretty well torpedoed my life. Much ink has been spilled about how and why the financial crisis started. The world was introduced to Margot Robbie in the blockbuster hit "The Big Short" about the men who made money off realizing the world was going to implode.

I can think back on 2007 as a halcyon time for me. I was just in college (finally) and I was making decent money as a freelancer and I had some other business developing. I had a great school/work balance and my future seemed bright. Little did I know my bright future would be interrupted by something that was happening in the background of my bucolic life. While I was looking forward to a bright future on the campus of the University of Northern Colorado, the debt-based underpinnings of the world economy were slowly coming apart.

The Mortgage-Backed Security or MBS is the brainchild of a one Louis Rainieri who, in the 1980s bond boom, worked at Solomon Brothers, one of the biggest brokerage houses in the world. Mortgages were a fairly boring product and didn't produce much return. For most of the 20th century, banks didn't really engage in residential mortgages. Those were the domain of credit unions and Savings and Loan institutions. However, when the S&Ls fell apart in the late 1980s, due to rock bottom interest rates on home mortgages, the MBS came around to bundle mortgages together in a bond that produced great returns from government-backed investments (mortgages). All of a sudden, Banks could court their large institutional investors to invest in these bond products that produced more return than a treasury with the same safety. However, as time went on, there weren't enough mortgages to create more bonds. Demand was high; supply was low. The big banks, who had filled in the mortgage lending gap left by the S&Ls, loosened their lending policy and wrote millions of new mortgages. They allowed people to put down their income without proof. Claims made on forms were often not checked or backed up with any documentation. People with ever lower credit scores were granted home loans. The housing market boomed with new construction. People took out loans at 120% of the value of the home. Those old enough to have been listening to the radio or TV ads from about 2002 to 2007 will remember mortgage

brokers who would give a loan to practically anyone with a pulse. The big banks would buy them quickly, package them in MBS bonds, and then sell them to investors. Bonds that couldn't be sold would be placed in CDOs or Collateralized Debt Obligations, which the ratings agencies would declare diversified, low risk, and would slap a coveted AAA rating on those products. The MBS and CDO products would then be insured (mostly through the insurance giant, AIG) with Credit Default Swaps wherein if the bond should fail, AIG would pay the investors back their money. From 2002-2007, thanks to a loose regulatory environment, this house of cards was built ever higher by large investments banks on Wall Street.

Then, in 2008, it all started to crumble. People were unable to make their house payments and the collateralized debt obligations and the mortgage backed securities began to fail. The Credit Default Swaps began to come due causing AIG to hemorrhage billions in losses over night. These financial products had been stacked together and sold so many times that it was hard to unwind what they were much less value of them or assess the risk. When the crisis happened, the collapse occurred so quickly that many people didn't even understand what had happened. However, the problem quickly reached major financial institutions.

When Bear Sterns announced weak earnings and losses, Treasury secretary Hank Paulson announced a sale of the bank to JP Morgan Chase. However, when the far larger Lehman Brothers announced that it needed to raise capital, the Treasury secretary resisted another bailout and instead, initiated talks for another sale. Lehman found no one interested in buying it with its billions in toxic MBS debt that was defaulting. Merrill Lynch subsumed itself into Bank of America and Lehman declared bankruptcy after over 100 years in business. On top of that, the calls on the Credit Default Swaps and CDOs was bankrupting AIG, who was running out of cash due to the payouts. In about a week, 2 banks had been sold, another had failed, and the federal government was writing a check to AIG for $80 Billion to save the troubled insurer before it liquidated millions of innocent people's pensions and retirement funds in its collapse.

The aftermath of this mess affected every corner of this country and the globe. The MBS products had produced such great returns that nearly every bank and every nation was invested in them or had toxic assets of their own. The collapse of these investments caused governments to fall and triggered revolutions. Who knew that something so benign as a bond could radically change the world? And change the world, it did. It changed my world.In the economic crisis that arrived in September and October of 2008, the world lost trillions in wealth seemingly overnight. Jobs and companies evaporated like water in a desert. 2008 was bad. 2009 and 2010 were even worse. The world economy didn't start to really recover until 2011. However, one of the biggest stories about the recovery is how the recovery hasn't reached many regular people. That lack of a "main street recovery" had political implications beginning as early as 2009.

The Financial Crisis added "Income Inequality" to our vocabulary in the mainstream. We experienced the revolutionary power of the Occupy and Tea Party movements. Problems with student debt totaling over $2 Trillion had come home to roost. Employment in real terms hasn't improved that much. The unemployment rate is down

but the labor force participation rate is at its lowest since 1977.

Millions of young people, like myself, were left out in the employment wilderness looking for whatever was left to hope to support ourselves. I can say for myself that I've had terrible luck with regular employment of any kind since 2008. I've had a few jobs but they have often been short-lived. I can honestly say that if I didn't have business and freelancing abilities, I probably would have been in a worse way during these difficult years. Many other Americans didn't have anything to fall back on.

While it has been frustrating to have 2 degrees, great skills, and even some modest experience, education and work experience has led to little employment potential. This is a common story for anyone born between 1986 and 1990. I do understand that many of the employment trends we are now experiencing would have proceeded on anyway. The economy needed to get more efficient. The rise of the on-demand gig economy would have arrived with the advent of the smartphone anyway. The discussions around all of these changes probably would have occurred anyway. However, the picture would be very different. People would not have had to depend on this sort of freelance economy in order to survive and millions of young people would have managed to find places in the regular wage-paying economy. Instead, they were left to wonder what they were going to do when they weren't getting calls after the 200th application. Would change have happened? Of course. Would it have been gradual and manageable? Most likely.

Thanks to the 2008 crisis, everything sped up and in the alchemical crucible of crisis, changes that would have outraged the public, were ushered in and accepted because survival was at stake. Millions of people have suffered adversely due to the financial crisis. Mine is just one story.

The Atlantic reports that there are 10 million prime working age males missing from the economy. The Atlantic acts as if it can't find them. I know exactly where they are. They are the Uber driver I've had who has been driving for 2 years because he can't find a job. I can find some more guys doing under the table handyman and construction jobs. I can find more who are doing contract work and may not be counted in the employment data. I can also find them in entrepreneurs who often wouldn't be counted in the unemployment data, either.

One of the things I have struggled with at a very personal level is a longing for the world I (and many others) were promised as children. "Go to college, do well, get good grades, stay off drugs, and your future will be bright." I used to say, "I want my life back." What I meant is that I wanted the life I was promised and was never able to enjoy. I've been wishing for a world that no longer exists except in my memory. The reality is that jobs are often sorted into fewer industries, are increasingly technical, and are simply hard to find. The demand is for particular skills. Someone who can do anything, like a political science problem solver and many other humanities majors, ends up doing nothing or scratching by at a job they could have gotten without going to college at all.

The world of 2007 simply no longer exists

We would all do well to just let it go. This is the world that we have now. The modern job market is tough with limited employment opportunities, and the need for specific job skills. This is a new, precarious economy where nothing is guaranteed. It's still quite stunning that 11 years on, the US still doesn't have the necessary regulation to stop another 2008 crash. Certainly the election of Donald Trump has not helped.

In the aftermath, Americans had to learn very quickly about a new way to live. We became a nation of renters. More people now rent than own a home. For those of us that graduated in the years afterward, the job market was moribund. The only people skating into good jobs were those with focused degrees in specific fields. Everyone else was left out in the cold. The labor participation rate remains low and the country has had to learn how to handle a much larger homeless population that is far more visible. Homeless numbers have decreased in the years since but the housing crisis has only gotten worse. Young Americans were faced with crippling student loans and mediocre jobs and wages to pay them. The story of the student loan crisis continues to this day. Think pieces wondered if companies would ever replace many of the entry level and low end positions in administration that were the first to go during the cost cutting of the recession. As it turns out, they never did. Entry level work is scarce making entering the workforce difficult for young people.

At the national level, some countries are still looking for recovery. Greece is only just now beginning to think about recovery. However, their economic output seems dire. Their debt to GDP ratio remains at 150% of GDP and youth unemployment is still 24%. I first wrote about the crisis in 2009 when I was at Liberty Ink Journal. 10 years later, we're still talking about the Greek debt crisis. Europe decided austerity was the solution to their economic woes and the regular people are the ones who suffered as benefits were cut, funding for services reduced, and employment became even more difficult.

The only nation to take action was Iceland. When the people realized their banks and government had gambled away their money, people were put in jail. Bankers and the Prime Minister all ended up behind bars. However, Iceland was an exception, for other nations, the bankers were never arrested. Politicians were not questioned. They collected the $700 Billion in bailout funds and paid out bonuses with a promise to the American people that they would just be more careful in the future.

Economic Changes

Companies used the crisis as an excuse to automate and force the remaining staff to work harder. People got used to working 2 or more jobs just to survive. Multi-generational households began to appear again and young people moved in with their parents or grandparents moved in with their children. Sometimes both occurred.

A whole generation of people adjusted our expectations about our lives. The American dream shifted from a house and vacations to just being able to pay the bills without worrying. Healthcare that was based on employment went away for many low-end workers and others were left with plans they could no longer afford. At one time the average age of the car on the road rose to 11 years. The *Cash for Clunkers* program removed $1 billion worth of old polluting cars that cratered the used car market. The program has lead to a new bubble in auto lending based on the same principles of securitization that broke housing.

In the United States, we have become a nation of renters and working multiple temporary jobs is beginning to become a normal affair. For many people, getting 40 hours a week means stringing together 2 or even 3 jobs. Rather than the old system of simply "getting a job" survival now includes many jobs. For others, having a job doesn't even mean survival. There are people who have jobs but cannot afford housing to any kind. These people often must live in their cars or even a tent in the wilderness. Before the financial crisis, this would have been unthinkable to most people. However, it is now the new normal.

Our Changing World

The 2008 crisis changed everything about our world and what we could expect. Eventually, 2 movements would be spawned: the tea party and occupy Wall Street. They both started out complaining about similar things and similar problems but had radically different solutions to them. For the Tea Party, it was to lower taxes and cut government spending. In that way, the country would be set free to pursue a better economy, for everyone to have jobs, start businesses and have their own chance at the American dream. For them, government was holding everyone back.

Occupy took a very different tack. When masses of students came out of their educational careers to discover the only jobs available to them were the same ones they had in high school and college and which didn't pay enough to survive, they took to the street and seized public spaces. They demanded an opposite set of demands than the Tea Party. While the Tea Party wanted lower taxes and more business opportunity, Occupy shouted about the 1 percent and the desire to tax the rich to pay for programs for regular people.

Indeed both movements started over a set of broken social contracts and certainly the death of the American dream. Rich Santelli's famous rant on the floor of the Chicago

Commodities exchange is credited with starting the Tea Party movement. When news came across that the government may invest some money in helping regular people with their mortgages he loudly shouted "No!" and asked the commodities traders around him how many of them wanted to pay for someone who had bought too much house and if they really wanted their tax payer dollars to go paying down a mortgage for someone with more bathrooms or more bedrooms than them. A chorus of "No!" emitted from the assembled traders. The rant has gone down in television history and certainly started a movement that wanted to reduce the amount of government involvement in their lives.

Occupy didn't have such auspicious beginnings. Occupy began when protesters moved in Zuccoti park as a result of protests in Greece. Soon cities around the world saw people take over public spaces. Every major city in America had a protest. People used phones to coordinate direct actions. Everyday, people drove by protests and people holding signs announcing that they were the 99% and they weren't taking it anymore. Certainly, neither Occupy or the Tea Party would have spawned the way they did without the Financial Crisis.

It will take several more years for history to gavel a final verdict on the Financial Crisis. However, 11 years out, it is clear the Financial Crisis changed the world forever and we will be living in it's shadow for decades to come.

Part 2: The Planet

The Bees Are Not Alright

Genetically Modified Foods: A Story in Deception

Climate Change and Global Warming

The Bees are Not Alright

Bees are a small, seemingly insignificant annoyance, particularly if you have an allergy to the stings. Most people don't think about bees on a daily basis. However, bees serve as a very important part of our food ecosystem. Most people know that bees pollinate flowers but bees also pollinate a variety of crops from almonds to apples, oranges, and other fruits and vegetables. Most plants need some mechanism to pollinate and bees have served that purpose, tireless and for free: until now. Bees are in trouble. One in 3 bites of food are from pollinated crops, which means that if pollination ends, things like a fruit smoothie will be a thing of the past, among other foods. Many people could be eating grits soon because if bees don't recover soon, pollinating crops could suffer to such a degree that those foods are simply to expensive to produce or consume.

Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) is what experts are calling the phenomena of bees dying for inexplicable reasons, especially over winter. In the summer of 2015, a new article about the perils of bees seemed to be in a Facebook news feed every other day. When it comes to agricultural production, bees are irreplaceable. In one area of China, people are paid to pollinate apple orchards by hand. All over the globe, bees are in peril. In Europe, 1 out of 10 species are in trouble. Despite the limited data, there have been a variety of factors looked at in the decrease in natural bee populations. From the rise of nitrogen-based fertilizers to the lack of clovers and other natural flowering plants in fields, bees are being squeezed and they are not alright.

A Brief History of Bees

Mankind has been keeping bees since at least ancient Egypt when farmers would float hives down the Nile to pollinate crops. Their cultivation has been traced to early mankind in the caves. Early scientists learned of their power to pollinate gardens that created vegetables, as well as, the lovely, sticky substance that resulted from the bee's hard work: honey. People found that the energy of these industrious insects could be focused for a delicious benefit. Since then, mankind has been keeping bees and making sure we have plenty of bees to keep crops requiring outside pollination (monoculture farms) growing.

This practice has persisted for thousands of years fairly unchanged. Like anything in nature, bees have predators, including the varroa mite, which breeds on their larvae. Bees, like many insects being their life as larvae and they are susceptible to viruses and fungi. Although there are many varieties of bee, the domesticated bee only exists in its domesticated form. The only place where the domesticated bee exists in nature is in Australia. In recent times, thanks to bee die offs and CCD, bees have become an important export for the land of Oz.

It is also important to note the prevalence of solitary bees and other kinds of bees that do not hive or exist in small groups in the ground or elsewhere. It is these species that bear the brunt of pollination and suffer the most. While the news has focused on honeybees in cultivation, their wild cousins aren't doing much better.

Threats Against Bees

Althought much has been made in the media about pesticides, bees face a variety of threats including the Varroa Mite, viruses, and overall habitat change. Colony Collapse Disorder is still being researched but CCD could possibly be a combination of all of these threats coming together in a "perfect storm" of stressors that bees cannot handle.

Varroa Mite

Reports on the rise of this mite have been rising up as of late alongside the reports of CCD. This makes finding the exact cause of Colony Collapse Disorder hard to nail down, specifically. The mites first arrived in the 1960s from the Far East (where bees and Varroa get along splendidly) and measures have to be regularly taken to protect the bees as the mite can only reproduce within bee hives, particularly in the larvae cells of the drones (male) bees. The Varroa mite is a parasite as well and is generally the leading cause of bee death.

However, this is another area where chemicals have struck again. There are several chemicals sold commercially by Bayer and others, to kill the Varroa Destructor mite. These chemicals are often administered by putting it in sugar water and flooding the hives with it. However, new systems Bayer have the bees collect the chemical on their way into the hive by brushing against a small board or to pass through some treated tubes. However, does adding yet more chemicals to bee hives solve the problem or add to it? According to a study by PLOS (Public Library of Science), the common chemicals for the Varroa mite (Apistan and Checkmite+) does not significantly reduce the Varroa mite population and can have adverse effects to bee health.

Varroa mites also bring other viruses with them and can contribute to the spread of Foulbrood. The spread of the mite has taken beekeeping from a very natural, non-chemical practice to a deeply chemical dependent industry, particularly in commercial and transitory beekeeping.

Viruses

There are several viruses that affect bees ranging from Nosema to American Foulbrood. Healthy colonies have few diseases and many of these diseases are caused or exacerbated by stress. Often when these viruses attack, often the only solution is to burn the hives and equipment. To stop the development of viruses, various chemicals can be applied. There are also natural solutions that include oil essences of lemon and thyme to stop viruses from destroying an entire hive.

Changes in Habitat

The loss and changing of habitat all over the country is a direct threat to bees. Manicured lawns and roadways are not bee friendly. A lack of open mud patches or

non-vegetated ground is a problem for burrowing, solitary bees. However, on that front there is good news from a variety of sources. More and more people (including Morgan Freeman) are using their properties to create habitat for bees. The lack of habitat for bees is a direct result of human activity and the average American yard of grass and monoculture farming are both to blame. An increase in agriculture can also reduce the opportunities for bees to have a healthy supply of all-summer pollinating plants or places to borrow and build a nest. The more humans change the ecology, the more stress exists for bees.

Monoculture Farming

One of the biggest threats to bees is monoculture farming. In the days before industrialized corporate farming were common, farmers tended to grow a variety of crops. This could include things like wheat, corn, and alfalfa but often included large gardens of vegetables and other produce. As farming became more "standardized" and "industrial" farmers started to grow one crop. Soybean, corn, wheat, winter wheat, and so on became the new way to classify farms. A farm wasn't merely a place that grew food, farms began to be places where agricultural products were grown simply for cash. This new style of farming meant that farmers were planting hundreds of acres of exactly the same crop. From a corporate numbers perspective, it was more efficient but monoculture farming killed one thing the environment craves: diversity. Diversity of plants is important. Nature has a symbiotic relationship to itself.

As plants take from the earth they also give back in a variety of ways. This cycle is what keeps forests and natural areas vibrant and full of life. Monoculture farming interrupts this process and instead of using a variety of plants to assist in the overall bounty of the land and the diversity of the environment (which contributes to the long-term sustainability of agriculture and our natural environment), farmers have substituted biodiversity for chemicals, pesticides, and machines. This even extends to homes and gardens. Much fruitful land is wasted on non-flowering grass that bees cannot pollinate or live in (not to mention the impact to the water supply).

Monoculture Farming and fields of lawns are a real problem for bees. In California, there are hundreds of hectares of almond trees and little else. The almond groves stretch as far as the eye can see. For pollen dependent bees, whose food supply is dependent on pollen, these almond tree groves are great places to live for only about 2 weeks a year, during the time which they are flowering. This also holds true for apple trees or any other place where there is only one kind of tree for thousands of acres. Once the flowering period is over and the trees are pollinated, the flowers turn into fruit (almonds, apples, oranges, etc.). For the bee, there is no more food source, which means the bee has to fly ever farther trying to find something to eat for its young and the queen.

Monoculture farming is terrible for bees. The chemicals that are used on the crops to save it from pests are harmful to bees immediately and over time. The lack of biodiversity is so bad that these farmers now have bees trucked in to pollinate their crops. Natural bees, who build their hives in the ground and live in much smaller numbers, are even more affected. Pesticides, neonicotinoid pesticides especially, are

directly a result of monoculture farming. The less biodiversity in the local environment results in more pesticides to keep pests, fungus, and weeds out of hundreds of hectares of the same crop. Not only does this contribute to the increase of chemicals in our food supply, but it is directly harmful to bees over time. One of the difficulties is that while the death of these bees is not obvious in many cases, it is obvious over time and that makes it even more difficult to trace.

Bumble Bees and Other Natural Pollinators

Domesticated bees aren't the only species threatened. There are hundreds of varieties of bees, many of them solitary. The same threats also affect bumblebees and solitary bees. The pesticides affect these bees the most because if the bees do n't replace themselves, the population is far lower and it is much harder for humans to help them recover their numbers. As an article in *Wired* stated, in test fields of canola, ground-dwelling bees disappeared and bumblebee colonies were much smaller. Wild bees, including single bees, that burrow in dirt and bumble bees need help as well. If humans can foster their populations, those bees will help create a natural, resilient ecology that allows agriculture, yards, and fields to be pollinated. Jeremy Hemberger from the University of Wisconsin is on that mission right now. His job, besides gluing computer chips to bumblebees, is to study how to create habitat for them around agricultural fields so they can survive year round while also assisting in the pollination of fields. They won't ever replace honey bees but they can help with the overall pollinator ecology that keeps the planet running smoothly.

Pesticides: Spray On and Systemic

The main culprit that we keep coming back to with bee health is pesticides. Pesticides come in a few application processes. Pesticides can be sprayed on. They are usually diluted in many gallons of water and then sprayed on the crops. Surfactants help the active chemical to stick to the plant. Commercial applications can vary depending on the product but spraying is a very common application method for everything from pests to fungus and even weeds.The second application method requires no application at all. These pesticides are called systemic and they coat the outside of the seed. This process turns the entire plant into a poison. When the pest eats the plant, it dies shortly thereafter with no need to spray. However, for bees, this kind of pesticide can be terrible.

The biggest issue here is that the chemical pesticide becomes a part of the plant and the resulting food products that we eat. That is a problem all on its own, not just for humans, but bees. When bees gather pollen from the plant, the pesticide is in the pollen and it is transported back to the hive where the entire hive gets exposed to the pesticide and where larvae, the beginning of the bees lifespan are particularly vulnerable to the poison.

The last application method is called soil conditioning and is usually applied before planting. This not healthy for important soil biomes and the trace amounts of chemicals

end up in plants to be collected in pollen by bees (and eaten by humans). In the past, soil conditioners had not been a big problem for commercial beekeeping or even solitary bees. When pesticides were sprayed, the beekeepers tended to move their bees away from the application sites until the chemicals had been applied.

However, with the systemic pesticides, the chemicals are native to the plant and can't be avoided. They build up in the hive and create a level of toxicity that scientists are only beginning to understand. The build up of chemicals in the soil and in the agricultural environment is reaching a tipping point that, if not understood quickly, could spell doom for millions in terms of food supply. Beekeepers are worried about a new class of pesticides now commonly in use. The type of pesticide on a beekeepers most wanted list is the relatively new-to-market Neonicotinoids commonly called "neonics."

Neonicotinoids

Neonicotinoids are a new class of insecticides that are usually delivered by a seed coating and share a common mode of action that affect the central nervous system of insects, resulting in paralysis, addiction, inefficient pollinating, lack of navigation ability, and death. They include active ingredients like imidacloprid, acetamiprid, clothianidin, dinotefuran, nithiazine, thiacloprid, and thiamethoxam.

They are supposed to stay within the sap and water in the stem of the plant and not get up to the blossoms where bees are pollinating but studies have not been done in that area. The study performed, as described in *Vanishing Bees*, was that they took a colony of bees, subjected them to 25 times greater than the regular application of the chemical, and they did not die instantly. No longer term study has been done to track how the chemicals affect overall hive health in a period of seasons.

A study in *Nature* proposed that bees actually prefer neonic crops because many of the chemicals are similar to nicotine.The latest studies have found that bees will go to feeders with these chemicals more often due to their similarity to nicotine and that even though it affects their weight and the weight of their offspring, they prefer it because they get addicted to it. In other words: the bees are addicted to these pesticides like a 2 pack a day smoker of Newport 100s.

In a 2015 *Atlantic* story, farmers and scientists found that bumblebees were adversely affected and were inefficient pollinating apple trees and that it might not only affect the farmer using the chemicals but their neighbors as well. This was also mentioned in a popular story in the *New York Times* amid a ban on neonics in Europe and the EPA stating that it was going to delay approval for new uses and new products until pollinator studies had been done in a significant way.

The problem with neonics is that they don't kill the bee immediately, even in the required lab testing where they give an unsuspecting bee many more times the dose than she would get in the field, the test bees survived. So the EPA let it on the market. The problem with neonics is that because they are inside the plant and in the pollen, which the bee turns into nectar and honey, it builds up, very slowly over time. Larvae don't grow as big (in some cases) and then as the hive becomes more and more toxic,

the colony collapses because their home has become a chemical infested cesspool. The difficulty around this is that scientists and beekeepers are only now discovering that these chemicals (plus the ones that the beekeepers use) build up over time and start to create problems for hives over the long term. The toxicity and its effects are slow at first and then grow overtime.

The simple solution might seem obvious: stop using neonics so that by the time farmers begin planting, the coated seeds are no longer in circulation. Sadly, it's just not that simple. There are a handful of companies (Bayer, Syngenta, Monsanto) that control the seed market and they prefer to sell their seeds coated with pesticides and other chemicals for greater yield. For the discerning farmer looking for uncoated seed, the options are getting fewer and fewer by the season. This is even hitting the consumer market with plants from big box stores. However, consumers are beginning to fight back and even help local bee populations.

The Death of Lawns and Weeds

Over the past 60 years, more and more people have used a cocktail of chemicals to get that perfect lawn. For farmers, reducing weeds is essential for crop yield. While a dearth of weeds creates the perfect lawn and a higher crop yield, it is death to pollinators. Grassy lawns and hectares of crops (monoculture farming) can't provide the food that pollinators need.

Fortunately, everyday people, can help by planting annual and perennial flowers for the bees to feast on. Leaving flowering weeds in the yard can also help bees. Less weeding for gardeners can directly help bee populations. At first look, this idea seemed simple enough and starting several years ago many people decided to go out and plant flowers. However, many of these flowers contained dangerous systemic pesticides that only contributed to the problem. Last summer, things began to take a turn for the better. After public outcry on social media, major box stores eliminated the pesticides from their plants and flowers so that when consumers planted flowers to help the pollinators, the flowers weren't contributing to the massive disappearances.

The best way to grow flowers for bees is to grow them from seed, neonics are mostly sold for commercial application. If seeds are an unnatural color, look for natural, heirloom, or natural looking seed. Consumers might also consider letting part of their yard go natural or to tear out some sod and let some natural plants to the local region grow. Having open ground helps burrowing and solitary bees as well. Having a diverse ecology in yard across America will help bees and a variety of other pollinating moths, butterflies and bees.

Political Action

President Obama, in 2015 announced more land allocation for pollinators including 7 million acres in the next 5 years to create places that are relatively toxic free and have plenty of food. While this won't help out domesticated bees, it is great news for

solitary bees and bumblebees and revives the resilient ecology that our planet relies on to function properly.

This new political movement will also manifested itself in a new program focusing on planting ragweed along I-35 for Monarch Butterflies. As states eliminated the plentiful midwest weed along interstates and farmers eliminated it from their fields, scientists found that the transitory Monarch Butterfly had no food or place to rest on its long journey from the United States to Mexico. The solution? Planting weeds. When Monarchs traveled to Mexico beginning in 2015 and 2016, the beautiful pollinators had plenty of food to eat on their journey, as crews planted ragweed along the sides of the interstate along their migration route.

There is some other good news: The EPA, in 2015, rolled back the approval of sulfoxaflor, thanks to new studies that show it contributes to the death of bees. Also, in the documentary, more than honey, they found that when Europe banned neonics, bee populations returned to normal in 2 years. This means that quick action today can make for better bees tomorrow. But as I mentioned, getting the likes of Monsanto, Bayer, and Syngenta go along with this plan will take major action from the federal government. They aren't going to give up the coated seeds easily.

Beekeeping Practices

Industrial Beekeeping practices aren't helping Colony Collapse Disorder either. Two-thirds of cultivated bees are migratory, inasmuch as their hives spend a good deal of time on the back of 18-wheelers going from the apple blossoms in Washington to the almond groves in California to the orange groves of Florida. For many decades this practice was just fine, but now it seems to be affecting the bees in a new way that beekeepers don't yet understand. In my research about industrial beekeeping practices, I found two schools of thought: bee-centered beekeeping and production centered beekeeping. The success of beekeeping is often centered on the production of honey and how much honey the bees are producing as a measure of bee colony health. Bee centered beekeeping reduces the amount of chemicals applied, doesn't feed bees sugar water all winter, and looks at honey as a helpful byproduct. They believe that having healthy and happy bee colonies, over time, leads to adequate production. This is the kind of beekeeping practice that needs to be encouraged. The bee-centered keeping style tries to use as few (if any) chemicals in their hives and seeks natural and harmonious solutions common to beekeeping problems. Considering all the chemicals that bees face, the fewer chemicals beekeepers are using the better.

Conclusions

Bees have many things they have to navigate through in order to live their 6 week lives successfully. It's not just neonicotinoid pesticides or varroa mites, it's all of those things. Between the needs of managed honey stocks and the needs of wild and solitary bees, the culprits become clear: lack of habitat and food as well as too many chemicals.

The problem is obvious: the chemicals in our delicate ecosystem. Scientists and beekeepers do not yet know how the variety of chemicals in the field are affecting bees or how they work together to stress bees. There is a pollinator crisis and farmers and beekeepers have simply shoved too many chemicals into the ecosystem and the ecology simply can't survive with these chemicals.

Farmers, beekeepers, and agronomists have to start thinking about the ecology in holistic terms. By which I mean, we don't need to strip naked and start dancing in the fields under the moonlight (although if that helps your garden please do so) but we need to start thinking about how one change in one area might affect another. Changes need to be explored in terms of chemical test and how the science is done around those changes.

Rather than dosing bees in laboratories and claiming that something is "safe," multi-seasonal studies in greenhouses need to be performed and a chemical's affect on everything, from soil to humans, needs to be tested, measured, and studied.

Agricultural fields are becoming toxic with the amount of chemicals needed to sustain this level of agriculture. It is time to think about these issues in the wholeness of the planet, environment, and humanity. Although, the effect isn't direct, it is time to start thinking long term on these issues. What does the use of a chemical now mean in 50 years? How does its buildup in the soil affect soil health? How might natural methods and chemicals work together for a better, less chemically-filled future? What chances might GMO crops offer that reduce the need for chemicals? These are all unanswered questions that farmers, seed companies, and others have yet to consider fully or even begin to think about.

I would call on the government not only to think about the "environment" but to think about ecology and to think about how everything plays a part in everything else. It all matters to the greater whole and if we're going to solve these problems, then we have to think about that as well. The wholeness of our world is what is most important about the planetary habitat that we all rely on to live. It is long past time that we are mindful of how we affect the entire ecology of the planet and not just certain isolated parts as if those actions don't affect the whole planetary system.

Genetically Modified Foods: A Story in Deception

In The Beginning There was a Seed and an Engineer

I started this article because of a challenge from a loyal reader. I was committed to not discussing this subject. This is one of "those" topics like gay marriage, abortion, and other hot topics that should never be talked about unless you already agree with the person on the subject. Most of the people against GMOs are fierce in their fanatical opposition to these crops. This made it a touchy issue for me to discuss.

If you've been on Facebook lately and you have just one super-human, healthy-eating friend then you've probably seen more than one article or meme on the dangers of genetically modified foods. It's easy to buy into the hype. It sounds scary, the process sounds very strange, and why the hell are scientists modifying food that we've been eating for hundreds or thousands of years? But the tide might be turning. More and more articles are coming out in favor of GMO foods.

Many people would think that GMOs must be bad or why would companies like Similac, the makers of the popular baby formula, or Chipotle swear them off? If they weren't bad, it seems, companies would be using them, right? Not so, and it has to do with public discourse.

The dialogue historically has been that GMO foods are bad and that they are in everything, and therefore, are poisoning and killing us. This debate touches into anti-corporatist tendencies exacerbated by income inequality. The debate touches into latent American ideals of "healthy living" and "pure living" that are built into the puritanical roots of American society.

There are a few problems with the debate. As you can imagine, most people don't really know what GMOs actually are or how they are made. The current dialogue intersects at some otherwise popular ideas especially when it comes to the feeling of anti-corporatism, money in politics, and central control of food. Indeed, those concerns

are very real and steps should be taken to ensure transparency, public oversight, and a model to ensure a stable, safe, and available supply of seeds for agricultural producers. This regulation extends not just to Monsanto, the infamous boogey man of the GMO debate, but to other companies working on the same technology.

This debate also taps into some well founded but latent fears about new technology. For those old enough to remember the 50s, 60s, and 70s, many technological advancements were hailed as futuristic and fantastic and the companies that made them always spoke about how much better life would be with the new products but what they never talked about was the long-term side effects of those products, not just on the general public, but on the workers and the environment. As people began to get cancer and die, the future didn't seem so great. After all, what good is the future if you don't live long enough to see it?

This time around, people are being more cautious and rightly so. It's wise to be cautious about the potential dangers involved in new technology. The nice thing about GMO crops is that they produce no additional toxic waste, they are not intrinsically toxic (although some of the chemicals they are made to work with can be), and the process by which they are made is a clean process. All of these concerns are important, however, in the debate about GMOs. The nasty rhetoric, false pictures, and in some cases, outright lies, have not helped move the discussion forward at all. GMOs can save the planet, if we let them.

A Brief History of GMO Food

GMO stands for Genetically Modified Organism (also known as GE or Genetically Engineered). This engineering allows scientists to find favorable resistances or traits in one crop or crop variety and transmit that genetic code to another variety or crop. Crop, farm animals, soil bacteria, and other organisms have been subject to this new kind of engineering. Genetic Engineering has been used to make crops more drought resistant and resistant to pests and fungi. GMOs usually reduce costs and increase crop yields. So how did this all start? It all comes down to the universal code of life on earth.

Since the advent of DNA in 1937 (Russia) and 1955 (UK) by Watson and Crick, the discovery of the double helix code for all of life has been one of the single greatest discoveries of the 20th Century. Once the code was found, it could be unlocked; once unlocked it could then be changed. After 1955, things proceeded quickly as far as modifying DNA. Progress sped up with the advent of rDNA or recumbent DNA that humans could make themselves. By 1980, a modified molecule made to clean up oil spills, earned the first patent for a living organism and 14 years later, the Flavr Savr tomato, a tomato modified to ripen later and last longer, reached American groceries stores. By 1997, over 100 million acres of farmland was under production using genetically modified crops like corn, soybeans, cotton, rice, and alfalfa.

Many GMO crops are made to resist certain pests, weeds, or fungi. Often, these crops are made to work with certain pesticides. The most commonly cited case for this idea is Monsanto's GMO corn and soybeans, both of which are made to work with

a commercial preparation of Roundup (active ingredient known as glyphosate), their best selling herbicide product and billed as the world's safest herbicide. There are a few facts to consider about GMOs before we delve into their problems, the debate, and the Monsanto problem.

GMO Basic Facts

Fact #1: Humans been modifying plants through selective breeding for thousands of years.

Mankind has been using selective breeding for thousands of years. GMO technology allows scientists to do the same thing, more accurately. Most people don't understand the process because it sounds esoteric and anti-GMO groups have used this ignorance as a PR weapon.

The simple fact is that much of the media around GMO foods really has to do with propaganda, much of it false. I've also found that GMO arguments tend to fall along a certain line and also tend to highlight the pesticides many GMO crops have been modified to work with in the field. The sad part is that the one thing that could save crops, food supplies, and human lives is being banned, maligned, and lied about causing some scientists to consider if they should start advocating for GMO foods in the hopes that reason can save them. GMO technology is far more accurate and far safer than old-fashioned selective breeding.

Even the imagery that is used can be misleading. Many GMO stories usually use an image of a scientist in a lab with a needle looking device holding a wholesome piece of food. This kind of imagery is misleading. When scientists go about looking for genes to turn on or off or to blend together, there are no needles in existing fruit and nothing is injected. The genetics of fruit are like a code that has been unlocked and now can be modified just like the code that powers your laptop or smartphone. GMO scientists aren't injecting our food with chemicals, they are just ever so slightly re-programming it. Genetic modifications are closer to a smartphone update.

Fact #2: There is no good evidence that GMOs are unsafe.

There are hundreds of studies, including a 25 year European Union, European Commission study to back up that conclusion. The reason is simple: genetic modifications start with genetic material that is often already present in soil and crops. That means, in small amounts, we've already been eating these things for awhile.

Here are just a few of the organizations that deem GMOs safe:

- The World Health Organization
- American Medical Association
- American Association for the Advancement of Science
- The National Academy of Sciences

Consider this, these are places of liberal, climate change advocating, kale eating, passionate people. Would there be any reason for them to green light something like this? They would get more press if they were against it. We can look at funding and donations and this sort of thing but especially when it comes to government run agencies, there is no reason for them to come out, voluntarily, and support GMOs, if those foods were really a threat.

Fact #3: Not all GMOs are created equal.

There are some GMOs that are created to resist a pest natively (Bt corn) or GMOs that are meant to work with pesticides (Monsanto soy and corn). The best GMOs to focus on are the kind that reduce pesticides helps create truly sustainable agriculture.

Fact #4: There have never been any reported and verified cases of GMOs killing anyone or causing any harm.

In simple terms, the evidence just does not exist. Arguments for pesticides are a different story. The wanton use of chemicals on crops has already caused problems in Argentina and Brazil and will surely cause more. But GMOs could be a solution to the overuse of pesticides. GMOs could make pesticides a thing of the past.

Why We Need GMOs

Although the propaganda has vilified GMOs, they are necessary for the continuation of agricultural products that are threatened by molds, fungi, and other pests. The papaya, the orange, the potato, and golden rice are all examples of where GMOs are doing excellent work at making pest resistant crops.

The Papaya

In Hawaii, the papaya is a tremendous cash crop and is a great example of how genetic engineering can save the planet and food. In the early 1990s, the Hawaiian papaya crop was in trouble thanks to a ringspot virus. They had tried selective breeding, crop rotation, and quarantine. Nothing worked. Dennis Gonsalves from Cornell had an idea, based on the Monsanto technology, he could transport a protein from a harmless part of the virus to make the papaya immune to the virus. Monsanto wasn't interested in the project because while papaya is a big seller in Asia and in other developing economies, it does not sell in the volume of corn or soybeans. Gonsalves licensed the technology with a group of farmers and restricted it to Hawaii. It was a smashing success.

In 1997, the U.S. government gave the green light after many field trials and found that the environment and people were not harmed because the protein in question was already all over nature in stems, fruits, and leaves anyway. Gonsalves moved a protein (the building blocks of organic matter) that we eat every single day. He just moved it into the papaya so that when the virus tried to infect the papaya the virus would

be unable to do so. However, despite a blessing from the EPA, and wide use of the seeds with the new genetics, critics said that it could create more dangerous pathogens and in 2000, vandals destroyed the test crop at the University of Hawaii calling the trees "genetic pollution." Despite the science, Greenpeace and other organizations flagged and publicized a Dutch study that claimed the protein matched a sequence in an allergenic protein created by worms. The resemblance was only partial, according to the study, and despite the fact that no one had reported any problems from eating GE papaya, groups alongside Greenpeace cried "genetic pollution" and that scientists were "playing with nature."

This lead to several more studies by the USDA and Japanese agencies and they found out that not only was the protein as harmless as claimed but that it was less harmful than the Dutch study had originally claimed. By 2009, people had been eating the papaya throughout the Pacific Basin and not a problem had been reported. The only problems with the papaya were the Greenpeace activists burning down and uprooting groves of GE papaya trees.

The papaya is a great example of GMOs hard at work and now, more than 20 years out, there have never been any reported problems with GE papaya. Not only were no humans or animals harmed, it didn't cross pollinate to other fields and reduced the use of pesticides. This left the anti-GMO protesters with two choices: accept science and reality or cling to a false belief in a wasteland created by genetically modified foods. Keep in mind, this was not created by a big, nasty-sounding corporation. The farmers themselves had funded the creation of the new seeds and the research. This all came to the forefront when Hawaii considered a ban on GMO crops.

Fortunately, for papaya farmers, the Hawaii County Council rejected the notion and the GE papaya earned final, full approval from the Japanese government. The case is still in court as of this writing, although there has been news that Hawaii has banned GMO crops with an exemption for papaya and corn. GMO crops must also be labeled. Unfortunately for the farmers, the new labeling law just says that it's GMO. It doesn't give you the history and context for why the fruit was changed, how it was modified, or that the money from the sale goes to a organization of Hawaiian farmers, not a big nasty corporation. Public perception, which creates reality, strikes again. Another case of this kind of genetic engineering is taking place again, as we speak and it's privately funded, not by Monsanto, but by a large orange juice producer.

The Orange

The Orange has been cultivated in Florida since the Spanish arrived in the 16th Century. However, a new blight threatens the entirety of orange production not just in Florida, but the world over. Greening disease or citrus greening is a bacteria that leaves oranges under-developed and with a distasteful color. When the blight arrived in Florida in 2005, Ricke Kress decided to get busy with a plan. They looked for a resistant tree, they burned trees that had gone bad, and they sprayed an ever wider variety of chemicals to kill the flying insect that spread the bacteria that was affecting the fruit. They never found a tree with a resistance and the blight was spreading fast. Mr. Kress turned to genetic engineering to save the orange crop. Farmers kept burning

and spraying as the years carried on and his company, Southern Gardens, and other scientists, kept investigating virus, bacteria, and other solutions to stop the psyllid from spreading the deadly bacteria. As of this writing, they are working to begin testing the juice of trees that were created with a gene from spinach that has been introduced for resistance to the blight. Not only are they testing with new trees but the genes have been grafted on to mature trees as well. While trees in the field without the gene have the greening disease, the new engineered trees are all healthy. The orange juice, after testing and regulatory approval, should be ready for sale in 2020.

The Potato

What is going on with oranges and papaya is now going on with potatoes in upstate New York with fresh research from Cornell researcher, Walter De Jong. Potato blight is a massive problem. It's why Boston is so Irish and John Kennedy's relatives came to America. But the potato blight and the beetles that attack them are soon to have much less food. He is working to develop new breeds of potatoes that taste good and are resistant to the fungus. He grew up as an old fashioned selective breeder like his father. He is ready to offer GMO potatoes as a fresh new crop that uses fewer pesticides.

Simply put, we need GMOs to reduce the amount of pesticides we put on crops. These chemicals destroy the soil biomes, filter into the water supply, and build up into the whole food system, including we food-consuming humans. The choice is quite simple: eat food that has been ever-so-slightly modified to resist certain pests or food that has been drowned in pesticides, insecticides, and herbicides?

Nutrition and Climate Change

As I worked on this essay, I would tell people, "I'm working on an article on GMOs" and they would reply, "Yeah, they're bad for us, right?" and I would smile and reply, "Not at all, they're going to save us all." GMOs can reduce the use of harmful pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides, one of which is killing bees and other pollinators.

Regardless of who you blame, our climate is changing and the planet is going to be 3 degrees Centigrade warmer by the end of the 21st Century. However, there are some people working on that and they are using genetic modification to do it. The International Center for Tropical Agriculture is apart of CGIAR (Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research) consortium, which is a network of international gene banks around the world that house, work to preserve, and in some cases, modify crops for the future. Many cultures have had to move or have been lost due to a change in climate and their food source. We could be next unless genetic engineering allows us to modify the staples of our food supply to be able to survive a changing climate.

What's even better is that we can use these plants to help us actually eat better food and gain more nutrients. For people in developed countries with diverse diets, the nutrient deficiency isn't as pronounced or as worrisome. GMOs have promise in fighting obesity and raising nutritional values in processed foods. However, for people in developing countries, quality nutrition is hard to come by and GMOs can help there as well and the best example is Golden Rice.

The Promise of Golden Rice

Scientists in Switzerland developed a new variety of rice called Golden Rice. The rice was modified to create beta-carotene which, when broken down by the body, produces Vitamin A. The new rice would allow subsistence farmers in Asia, whose families rely on rice as their primary source of nutrition, to continue to eat rice and also gain Vitamin A, which prevents childhood blindness.

Greenpeace activists weren't pleased with the idea of poor, malnourished children eating a GE form of rice. They decided it would be better to require that Vitamin A be mixed into other foods like flour, sugar, and margarine. They also promoted the idea of having people grow small gardens with vegetables that were high in Vitamin A. Because the evidence about the intrinsic toxicity of golden rice was lacking, Greenpeace then claimed that it didn't produce "enough beta carotene." The point of their opposition was not based in science or evidence, it was based on the simple narrative that anything genetically modified was bad while everything "natural" and unspoilt by man was "good." The testing of golden rice in the field continues as of this writing.

Anti- GMO Hype

Anti-GMO hype has been highly effective. In 2014, a Pew Research Center study found that 57% of Americans said it was unsafe to eat genetically modified foods. The state of Vermont was the first in the nation to require labeling of foods that are genetically modified or contains ingredients of the same.

Social media has been awash in popular memes talking about the supposed dangers of GMO foods. These are particularly popular in holistic, natural living, and sometimes anti-vaccination communities and groups throughout different social platforms, especially Twitter and Facebook. This plays into a typical American narrative about natural and pure living, a narrative that has been revived in recent years.

The social convention is this: if you are a progressive person who desires to live a healthy lifestyle, you most likely are friends with or acquainted with people who think the same way. These people are focused on putting the best most healthy things into their bodies. These people also tend to post content that confirms this narrative. Social media feeds and conversation are filled with people posting the same things and some of the images are quite disturbing. The iconic image of a tumor filled rat that "was only given GMO foods" has been passed around social media for almost 10 years despite the study that generated the picture having been disputed and withdrawn from peer-reviewed journals.

Match that with the lack of understanding around what GMOs are and how they are made, it is easy to create a conspiracy. People also think in images and concepts, not facts. A scary picture expressing a visual concept is far more powerful to many people than any facts that I, or others, might bring out in regards to GMOs. In short, scientists and others have lost significant PR ground on GMO foods.

Another Part of the Anti-GMO hype has primarily to do with a latent desire in American culture to have the best, purest, most beneficial food on the planet. Let's compare this debate to the debate over bread in the 1920s. Women mostly baked bread at home before WWII. In fact, the 19th Century articles encouraged people to bake bread at home for its increased nutritional value, quality control, and lack of disease. However, by the early 20th Century, the tune had changed. In the 1920s, articles in popular women's magazines like *Harper's Bazaar* started to be published about how, "your little oven just can't keep up" and how that bread baked in factories with the better ingredients, more accurate temperatures during baking, and standardized processes made bread baked at home simply inferior. By WWII, buying bread in stores was much more common than baking it at home. The same conversation is now happening with GMOs.

The controversy of the safety and purity of food is not new either. Muckrakers, like Upton Sinclair, made their names as writers and reporters in the early 20th Century for exposing the terrible working conditions in the meat-packing industry, which not only exposed the working conditions but how meat was being packed and shipped. As motion pictures became popular, there were movies lambasting the meat packing industry for selling tainted meat. At the time, being vegetarian had become popular due to the lack of transparency in the meat-packing industry and the popular idea of tainted meat. Whether the meat was actually tainted or not did not matter and the actual reality of the situation was immaterial to the popular notions in the media at the time.

The desire to keep food "pure and healthy" has not gone away. This year, Scotland decided to ban GMO foods in Scotland over consumer backlash and trying to keep its "clean and green" brand globally with the purity of its food. In short, the popular logic is this:

GMOs = science = not natural = not pure = not good. This logic is severely misplaced.

One of the most interesting scientific cases against GMOs that is easily meme-able and shareable were the grotesque pictures of tumor ridden rats from a French study by Gilles-Éric Séralini. Once the study was published in 2009, the Anti-GMO groups seized upon this fresh scientific data tying GMO corn to tumors in rats. By the time other scientists tore into the study, it had simply fallen apart due to its lack of size, its poor research conditions, and the overall way the research was conducted to create specific claims that had been pre-supposed in the beginning. Ultimately, the only difference between the control (non-GMO corn eating rats) and the experimental group (GMO-corn eating rats) was simply genetics and biology. What's even worse is that Seralini has tried to publish other articles against GMOs and his institute was known to be anti-GMO and performing studies designed to show GMOs were bad. That is not good science, that's scientific agenda.

That hard part is that the pictures of the rats are what made it to the social media and the scientific critique of his "usual antics" did not make for a very good meme. His one bad study has mis-shaped the discussion on GMO foods.

Some people might think that if we can't trust this scientist then who can we trust with scientific data about what is really going on with GMOs? Activists have used this argument to destroy the credibility of the scientific community in regards to the safety of this food. The first thing consumers can do is look at quality studies published in more mainstream, widely read, and critiqued journals (unlike the Seralini Study) and also consider the effects on people from the 30 years GMOs have already been in regular food.

In 30 years of eating GMOs, there have been no adverse side effects reported.

Now there are people on the Anti-GMO side that say they have been able to cure asthma, allergies, chronic conditions, and gut problems by eliminating GMOs from their diet. Unless they fastidiously research the sourcing of everything they consume, they are still consuming some GMOs and no amount of genetic engineering is going to stop the side effects from eating a better diet, exercising, and decent nutrition through supplementation.

But I'm also here to report that eliminating GMOs will not help as much as working for your overall wellness through a balanced diet, good nutrients via food and/or supplementation, and proper medications, as needed by medical professionals. If you have visited a Whole Foods or a local health store, you will meet people who are adamant that once they eliminated GMOs from their diet, they immediately felt better or had chronic conditions improve.

There are multiple things at work. Those people who make that claim usually stop eating highly processed food, become more conscious of their food choices, and what they are putting in their body and when. Many people who make these claims, like the "Food Babe" also usually begin some kind of supplementation that gives the body the nutrients that it needs.

The people against GMOs and who are for healthy living are quite popular. It's far easier to blame things like GMO foods for people's health problems rather than their actual diet, medical conditions, or lack of activity. One of the people who ride this popular wave is the now-infamous "Food Babe."

Food Babe

The Food Babe scandal is one of the recent examples of someone who has come out vehemently against GMOs only to find out that they are not the threat that they are supposed to be.

Vani Hari was a former consultant and started a blog called the "Food Babe" and she became quite famous for "exposing" the dangerous chemicals in food as a consumer rights activist. However, over this past summer, the *New York Times* exposed one of her expositions as being entirely wrong, based on the actual chemical evidence. She used her 54 million page view strong blog to force Kraft to remove a dye from their macaroni and cheese products in 2014. Hari has taken on topics as interesting as the amount of nitrogen in the air in airplanes (the atmosphere is 78% nitrogen) and has warned people against being sprayed personally for pests before boarding international

flights. Her work has been criticized by outlets as wide as *Gawker* and the *New York Times* to even a *Vox* story about her incredible claims. This kind of cursory Google searching, low information, propaganda has dominated the GMO discussion for the past 5-8 years. It has turned public opinion against GMO foods. It is far easier to vilify foods grown from GMO crops than it is to actually convince people to change their lifestyles. "This food is killing you!!" Makes for far better click-bait than, "Why you should start exercising!" or "Sensible diets to try!" This anti-GMO hype has spawned new organizations on a mission to end GMO foods once and for all.

The Non-GMO Project and Organic Foods

The Non-GMO Project has been a front runner organization for the Anti-GMO movement. They have been behind many of the food labeling initiatives. The project was founded by Michael Funk, a natural food distributor, who pioneered putting products through the Non-GMO verification process so that consumers at natural food stores could know that they weren't consuming GMO products of any kind.

In the early days of the project, in 2007, he made some dubious claims that "GMO foods didn't belong in the organic food supply" and that "There is no scientific data that GMOs are safe" and that "there are now studies coming out that prove the dangers of GMO foods." The last claim is only partially true. Those studies have issue with the pesticides used on GMO crops, not the actual genetic modification itself.

Now, many of the Anti-GMO protesters would have you think that GMOs must be bad because so many countries have banned them, including the much ballyhooed EU. However, according to an EU press release in regards to a report on a study that the EU (via the European Commission) performed for 25 years, they found that there were no reasons to think that GMOs were unsafe, yet the EU banned them anyway, due mostly to public pressure.

Organic Food is Not Better

Many people buy organic food to get a better and purer quality product. Organic farmers and food distributors are charging a premium for that demand. However, consumers' chief concern, pesticides, is not a problem solved by organic produce. Organic producers use pesticides but they use different pesticides. Some of them can be quite concerning.

One of the examples of an "organic chemical" is Bt which is short for Bacillus thuringiensis. It was discovered in 1901 by a Japanese scientist who was investigating the death of silkworms, which at the time was a big problem and costing silkworm farmers and silk makers in Japan profits from silk manufacturing which was an entirely natural process at the time. This bacteria was isolated and used a natural pesticide. When insects ate it, it killed them from the inside out and since it is naturally occurring in nature. Spraying it on crops was not harmful to the soil or anything around the crops because it was already present in the ecology. No one had a problem with Bt until the

1980s when scientists in Belgium put a gene from the bacteria into tobacco plants. This way, the plants could produce the protein on their own without the need for spraying. Bt spray has live bacteria which can reproduce on food. In fact, the scary stories about Bt crops have to do with the substances in the sprays used on organic food, not the actual Bt GE crops. It isn't a far venture to say that having Bt in crop DNA is actually safer than spraying a live bacteria on organic crops. When GMO critics heard about this they were horrified. Never mind that Bt had been used for most of the 20th century as a perfectly safe pesticide and is still used by organic farmers today, these plants were genetically modified and that was "bad."

The EPA soon approved Bt modified potatoes, corn, and cotton and since the Bt in the modified crops was just like the material in the bacterium already present in nature, there were no dangers about it killing non-target organisms or harming humans. This means that humans have been eating Bt the whole time anyway, just not in the location that the scientists moved it to in the genome. According to Greenpeace's own consultants and lawyers, they found that the only harm from Bt came from various applications of Bt sprays (it is only supposed to be sprayed every 5–7 days) and that the build up in the soil could be harmful over time. All of the evidence against Bt really was about Bt sprays, not the genetically modified crops which merely express the protein in a greater way. With Bt crops, there was no need to spray, which means the food consuming public would be eating less pesticide residues of a pesticide that naturally occurs as bacteria in nature.

One of the most common "organic" pesticides is rotenone or rotenone-pyrethrin. Although plant derived, the long term effects of this on soil and on humans have not been studied due to the fact that governmental agencies do not study the chemicals in the same way.

This is also a very common pesticide dust sold to consumers and has various commercial applications. It kills several kinds of beetle and worms that damage cash crops. It's most sinister use is its non-selective killing of fish by suffocating them. It is commonly used by organic farmers but is being phased out in some areas due to its contamination of rivers and streams and its aforementioned killing of fish.

The interesting thing is that the WHO rates this chemical as fairly toxic both of humans and animals and it has been on "organic" crops for decades. However, organic farmers don't want to reveal that they are using chemicals just like conventional farmers and pesticide companies are interested only in selling pesticides whether they be "organic" or not.

But this isn't the only myth about Organic food, ask the average person on the street and you'll find out that most people, even saavy consumers, think that organic food automatically means no pesticides or chemicals, and that is simply not true.

Although different organic organizations have tighter rules, to get a USDA organic certification you can use chemicals such as:

- Copper (builds up in soil to toxic amounts over time)
- Sulphur (builds up in soil to toxic amounts over time)
- Potassium salts of fatty acids (form of soap)
- Neem extract/oil (an indian lilac tree)
- Adzirdaractin (from Neem) (sold as Neemix)
- Pyrethrin
- Bacillus thuringiensis
- Spinosad (sold as Entrust)

And this doesn't include the chlorine chemicals and solvents for irrigation that the USDA allows on crops called organic.

Organic farming has branded itself as the ecologically wise, tastier and healthier option when the simple fact of the matter is, organic farming is no better for the environment or humans. In an article by Christie Wilcox, in the Scientific American, she breaks through many of the myths surrounding organic produce. As far as health goes, organic produce is subject to a greater presence of E.Coli and Salmonella due to the heavy use of raw manure on crops. In terms of nutrition, a study tracked food studies from 1958 to 2009 and found no differences in the presence of nutritional value between conventionally farmed foods and organic farmed foods.

According to Jeff Gillman, a professor of nursery management at the University of Minnesota, in an NPR interview, he said that the best way to find out how many pesticides had been used on your food would be to visit the local farmers market and ask the grower yourself and learn about where your food comes from and how they grow it because the farming methods used by farmers large and small vary wildly.

It's time to ask some tough questions to organic farmers and the non-GMO lobby. Organic food may not be as morally superior as one might think. Since evidence in favor of organic food is lacking and the push for this kind of food has been mostly a PR question, where is the real problem? Where is the real evidence supported by a large consensus of scientists? What is behind the meme? The answer is simple: nothing. It is all a matter of public perception and fear of the unknown. Couple that with the morality of "better food for better people" and soon the debate between GMO and organic becomes one of perception, PR, and ego rather than actual science.

Organic farming could benefit from GMOs and the fact that organic growers resist them shows what the real priority is around GMOs. GMOs would cause organic farmers to use far less pesticide than they do now. They could deliver quality, chemical-free food to tables and to ranchers both outside and within a greenhouse. They could even achieve conventional farming yields with the new seeds. But they won't even think about using a GMO seed, why is that? If it creates better, higher quality food that has fewer chemicals, the support for GMO foods should be obvious. The debate is less about high quality food and has far more to do with maintaining the 150 year old notion that natural is simply better and morally superior.

GMOs and Pesticides: The Case

Many arguments against GMOs begin and end with herbicides, fungicides, and pesticides. Many GMO crops are made to work with or be resistant to certain commercial pesticides, especially glyphosate (Roundup). There's a good case for more study and oversight in this area. Toxic pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides have been a problem since the end of World War II.

DDT, created in 1939, was very popular with farmers and the military for use in eliminating all kinds of pests. However, studies in the 1970s showed that it was harming bird and reptile eggs by making their shells thinner and making them more susceptible to predators and not reaching full development. This ended the use and manufacture of DDT in most of the world and this is just one example of a pesticide gone bad. The next example is far more damaging.

The use of chemical herbicides and pesticides beginning in the 1950s by the U.S. Military is most likely one of the worst ecological disasters of the past 60 years. The military used so much of the herbicide chemicals, including DDT, that areas around military bases are toxic, including the Panama Canal Zone. Reports of birth defects and long-term health problems of the soldiers tasked with this toxic duty are common.

Pesticides for use in agriculture, are a fairly modern phenomena. The first synthetic pesticide: DDT wasn't discovered until 1939. The aforementioned Bt, began use in Europe in 1920. Until then, the best defense against birds in a field was a scarecrow. Children would make noises to scare away other pests and much of the crop was simply lost to pests and other problems like blight and fungus. Complimentary planting was common to reduce pests. Lining fields with cover crops and other plants that deterred pests were common. Farmers would spread cow and horse manure on their fields, not only as a form of fertilizer but as a way to reduce pests. Often, if a crop had simply gone bad with disease, it would be burnt to save other farmers around from having the same blight. This was common with boll weevil infestations in cotton fields. The advent of chemicals not only allowed monoculture, but great yield, profit, and labor reduction.

In the years before that, farmers lost significant amounts of their crops to wildlife and pests of a wide variety. Crop rotation and companion planting were the only real defenses against crop loss. Pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides became an important part of the growing food supply and increased wellness leading to longer lives at the time. When more food was able to be eaten and not lost to pests, fungus, and weeds, more people were able to eat with greater quality and nutrition at a lower price.

Fewer people were sick merely from eating bad food and thus they lived longer. Food borne illness, once common is rare now among developed countries. However, there was little research done on the chemicals that were used to create this new abundance. The chemicals weren't used excessively and were deemed safe because they were used over a wide area. However, as farming became mechanized and monoculture farming became more common following WWII, the use of pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides skyrocketed alongside the advent of monoculture farming. The ability to kill pests and weeds enabled farmers to plant acres of the same thing and make more

money. Monoculture farming only works with pesticides making monoculture farming unsustainable over the long term.

The following example is helpful when thinking about the dangers of monoculture farming as it exists today:

> *Let's say that we're pests, some insect that feasts on corn let's say. If there is a plentiful supply of our food (say 100 hectares of it) then we, in our insect form, can eat a lot, destroy crops, and reproduce, which then becomes a massive problem for Farmer Brown, who is trying to grow his crop and sell it. Farmer Brown then has to apply more and more pesticide to kill we pests before we get out of control. Now, if Farmer Brown used complementary planting and crop variety, not only would we pests be far less prolific but he would use less chemicals. Farmer Brown could also plant crops that are naturally resistant to we the pests, then his farm would be less chemical-ridden and have more quality produce.*

The pesticide debate gets particularly interesting around Glyphosate. New studies are coming out talking about the perils of using herbicides in farming, especially herbicides that contain the chemical: glyphosate. Glyphosate is one of the active ingredients of Roundup and classified as a carcinogenic substance by the International Agency for Research on Cancer. Although there was controversy about the substance, according to Dr. Cami Ryan head of social sciences at Monsanto, it is less toxic than caffeine or chocolate. Farmers, especially small farmers, often cite its safety record and how little of it is sprayed on crops.

Although I agree that the dose makes the poison (water can kill you if you drink excessive amounts) often the dangers of chemicals take decades to affect people. From studies in the 1990s, we know that fruit retains chemicals and that these chemicals in the fruit can take years to build up and can cause everything from infertility and bowel disease to cancer. A recent MIT study published in *Entrophy* in 2013 questioned the safety of this chemical and the GMO crops that are made to work with it. While the study didn't address the actual crops, which are simply engineered to be resistant themselves to Roundup, it did discuss the danger of long-term consumption of glyphosate residues on food from Roundup.

The evidence against pesticides is pretty damning. Another study in the *Journal of Organic Systems* in 2014 studied databases that track disease and found a correlation between the rise of herbicides, pesticides, and fungicides and the increase of 26 diseases ranging from Autism to Parkinson's. Pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides are made to kill natural things and those chemicals that build up in the soil and within the food system are beginning to affect humans in ways that are not yet fully understood.

GMOs have marginally increased the use of pesticides, herbicides, and insecticides, especially Roundup Ready varieties by Monsanto that can be sprayed with the world's most popular weed killer with impunity. This is true as pesticide application increased 7% after the introduction of Roundup Ready varieties. However, other GE crops have reduced the amount of pesticides by 37% because herbicides and insecticides (both pests) are often lumped into the same category.

Certainly, food with less chemicals involved is far better and in this way, some GMOs are not as good as others. It would be far better create resistant crop varieties than varieties that simply aid the use of chemicals. But one fact remains, the big culprit here is not GMO crops and their new genes they possess, it is the chemicals that we use in and on food and that sometimes work with GMO crops. The real promise of GMOs is fewer pesticides in the field like the orange and the papaya. That is a future of agriculture worth creating and GMOs make that possible.

The Monsanto "Problem"

"Monsanto is the devil, you'll understand." I heard this more than once from well-meaning friends of mine who shop food co-ops and erroneously thinks that somehow I'll, as if by osmosis, understand that I've been lied to about GMO food and that I'll "just understand" that Monsanto is out to get us all. Monsanto has its issues; The way it hires private investigators to investigate farmers by spying on them using a variety of means and the use of scare tactics for the "crime" of saving seeds in spite of their seed application agreements (those agreements legally bind them to return all unused seeds and buy new seed each year from Monsanto) is not the best way to enforce their intellectual property. Suing your customer is not quality business practice; even though most farmers settle for some amount of money out of court to avoid trial. Their massive campaign contributions and lobbying efforts in Washington speak to the problem with money in politics. That being said, if society vilified every company that makes hundreds of thousands of dollars in political contributions every year, society would soon grind to a halt. Corporate money in politics has become business as usual, and Monsanto would most likely be spending those dollars, if GMO products didn't exist. Corporate lobbying is a separate issue.

Monsanto, now owned by Bayer, is not the best company on the planet. Monsanto was a chemical company before it was into the genetic engineering business. Founded in 1901 by John Frances Queeny, Monsanto's first product was an artificial sweetener, saccharine, mostly manufactured in Germany, that is until Queeny undercut the market. The Germans tried to put him out of business by lowering the price but Queeny won out due to his business relationship with a new company from Georgia: Coca-Cola.

By WWI, Monsanto was manufacturing a variety of products and when European chemicals were cut off due to the war, Monsanto had to in-house the entire process and that led to Monsanto taking the market by storm. By WWII, Monsanto was a global chemical company under the leadership of John's son, Edgar. Monsanto has manufactured things like PCBs, a known carcinogen and the component of Agent Orange. Their history in terms of taking care of the environment is fairly checkered. Cities near their old manufacturing facilities are essentially super-fund sites. Monsanto poisoned the entire town of Anniston, Alabama, including all the local rivers and streams. In Wales, Monsanto had been pouring manufacturing waste down an old mine. The UK is still trying to understand how to clean-up their mess. Lawsuits, beginning in 1971, from workers abound as the ill-health effects of their products became obvious. One of their lubricants, Pydraul 150, was refused by the U.S. Navy due to the fact it killed every rabbit they tested it on and could not find a safe way to use the chemical.

Knowing that information, it can be hard to accept that this company, a company that has killed, maimed, and injured hundreds of people with its chemicals is going to save the world. It's a hard argument to make. However, for the sake of our future and our food supply; I will try.

Chemicals aren't seeds and chemical manufacturing isn't genetic engineering. In fact, Monsanto doesn't even produce chemicals beyond a handful of herbicides, like Roundup, anymore. That business was packaged up as Pharmacia and sold to Pfizer. When The Climate Corporation, a very scientific, if liberal organization, whose purpose is dedicated to researching weather, climate change, and long-term food supply, as it pertains to weather and many other matters, decided to partner with Monsanto, many people were concerned. And rightly so, partnership with an "evil" company could yield disastrous results. David Friedberg wrote an impassioned note reassuring supporters and the public about what that partnership would mean in the *New Yorker*.

In short, the Monsanto problem is simply one of PR. This accounts for their recent merger with Bayer. Bayer plans to discontinue the use of the Monsanto brand. When it comes to trusting corporations, it can be hard to trust the ones that don't make the best corporate citizens. There's no evidence that Monsanto, the new agribusiness, is such a bad corporate citizen. If Monsanto needed to do anything right, it would be in the public relations sector of their business. Most of the things they touch turn to gold, but when it comes to GMOs, an innovation that could literally save the planet as climate changes, Monsanto has done a poor job of educating the general public about what GMOs really are and what Monsanto is doing with them or how they work. Monsanto isn't even the only company in the industry. There is no reason to kill all GMOs just because one company has a sullied reputation. They hold great promise.

Conclusions

Humans been using selective breeding to create new crops or save crops; this is just a more modern version of that. GMOs can add in new expressions of the plant or new things that make it more resistant to a pest or work with a common pesticide. The government needs to regulate all pesticides, including organic pesticides and test organic pesticides in labs. All in all, and I think this is the biggest take away, pesticides are killing us all, if slowly, even so-called organic pesticides that have been in use for decades. The testing of organic pesticides is poor and we need to focus on reducing the chemicals within the food supply. GMOs that make the crop naturally resistant are the best way to do that. GMO foods have often been created to work with pesticides. It is better if they have to use fewer pesticides or no pesticides at all so that those products can be phased out over time. GMO foods can save a starving and warming planet by needing less water or tolerating hotter temperatures. Farmers need to address monoculture-farming practices, not only because it will require less pesticides and not breed super pests or fungi but will also help bees, butterflies, and other pollinators. This can be addressed in a variety of ways including sustainable agriculture practices and improving the biodiversity of farms, both large and small. The best part is that this can be immediately implemented through the tremendous amount of farm subsidies that

the federal government appropriates every year. If the USDA incentivizes the behavior, corporate agriculture producers will follow suit. The best part is that new GMOs can be created to make this happen even faster than traditional breeding. Scientists, farmers, and others need to come together and work on the PR front to dispel the myths around GMO foods. In this piece by David Kroll, he walks us through why scientists are reluctant to advocate for discovery. In the end, he thinks that scientists need to work harder at advocating for GMOs and I couldn't agree more. Farmers and others need to work toward sustainable agriculture at current yields through complementary plants, crop rotation, fewer pesticides, better pesticides (if needed) that aren't intrinsically toxic, and using the power of GMOs to create that sustainable farming future that uses outdoors, green houses, and other methods to create greater biodiversity, which will be better for food and better for pollinators, and the overall ecology of both developed and undeveloped nations. Labeling isn't helpful. For first, GMOs are in almost everything. Therefore, everything would need a label. Only the most fastidious sourced items would be label free. The labels also don't tell you what pesticides were used or in what amounts and what side effects those residues, over time, might yield. The label movement isn't making the food supply better. GMOs hold great promise and they aren't killing consumers. The pathway forward is to mobilize people against the dangerous chemicals in our food so that we can have a safe and chemical free food supply that can survive whatever our planet might throw at it. The future for food can be bright and GMOs is our way to that future.

Our Changing Planet: Climate Change, Global Warming, Global Cooling, Ice Ages…And Wacky Weather

Introduction

When I first wrote this essay, my goal was to ask a simple question, "Is Climate Change Real?" At the time I was not convinced in catastrophic and global climate change. I thought the evidence was lacking and the research simply wasn't available to tell us if the climate was changing and if man-kind was responsible for it. However, in the intervening period, events have brought the nature of our changing climate into sharp focus. Oceans are acidifying which is killing fish and coral reefs. Even without climate change, the death of fish means billions may starve. After grain and rice, fish is the most commonly eaten food.

I am going to do my best to present both sides of the debate. Those who are firm in their conviction about climate change will criticize me for presenting the opinions and evidence of "climate deniers" and those who aren't convinced about climate change. However, I specialize in context. In order to be intelligent and have intelligent discussions about climate change, both perspectives must be clearly understood. Each side shouting at each other without listening first and addressing concerns will not help the situation and it appears the situation could get quite dire in a relatively short period of time.

The Climate is Changing?

It all seems rather confusing doesn't it? Our changing planet has become one of the most contentious issues today. World Leaders met in Paris in 2015 to find out how to tackle the problem of increased carbon emissions and our warming planet and agreed together to create and implement solutions to stop this globally pressing problem. There isn't anything more of a hot button issue, especially in American politics, with Democrats looking like the enlightened ones while Republicans look like they are stuck in the dark ages. It has all the classical signs of an old-fashioned American debate.

There are deep economic consequences depending on how things move forward and the most telling detail of the entire debate is how important it is to both sides. Both sides of the debate are convinced that they are right and that the very existence of civilization depends on them being right. On the one hand, those who are convinced we are killing the planet are convinced that we have to stop the way we exploit and destroy the environment in order to maintain any existence. Those that oppose it are convinced

that we have to keep the current system going because if we don't then what would we do? What would people do without jobs? How would survive without the modern economy? How would we feed ourselves or look after our health problems.

Those for climate change usually are in favor of a more holistic kind of living that often includes less use of fossil-fuel burning transportation, unsustainable foods, and at the most extreme any parts of modern society that aren't considered "natural" or "of the earth." I think the most surprising thing I've observed is the very real emotional response that some people have toward parts of civilization that we all take for granted.

I rented from a lovely couple in England for several months. The lady of the house took a trip from the small town she lived in and went to the larger city of Bath. She swore she would never go again because there were "car parks" (parking lots) and "people just buying things in stores and rabidly consuming." To the bulk of people, the prospect of a future with no products, services, and veganism just doesn't appeal.

Indeed, Climate Change is a question of our very existence. The answer is not within either side of this equation. As humans, we get very touchy when our existence (Regardless of how you define that) is threatened and that can lead to the kind of vitriolic debate that we currently find ourselves engaged. We have several problems none the least of which is a matter of religious-like faith and belief of one half of the argument. The question I put to myself and my research was, "Is Climate Change real?"

What is Climate Change?

For those that don't know, global warming/climate change is the result of increased CO2 production and the fact that those gases keep more of the sun's rays in our atmosphere than before. The more gas, the more rays that get stuck and the warmer that the surface of the planet gets. In the years following the Industrial Revolution, when we began burning massive amounts of coal and oil, the result of that burning was Carbon monoxide (1 carbon and 2 oxygen molecules) and that gas has gathered on the planet. Newspapers reported on the potential damage from excess atmospheric carbon at least as early as 1911 when the first story in a small newspaper reported, in just two and a half column inches that by the end of the 20th century there could be adverse impacts to the weather if the release of carbon continued.

The climate change scientists and others would like us all to believe that this carbon gas release has irreparably caused warming and has resulted in climate change that manifests itself in a variety of ways. That includes increased sea levels as the result of melting ice, the death of a variety of animal species, and an increase in dramatic weather events like hurricanes, wildfires, and winter storms.

When it comes to the so-called climate change deniers the media does a fairly good job of invalidating their objections and the poor presentation doesn't help. However, there are some commentators that present what I think is a compelling case to at least question the discussion we have around climate.

Climate Change Evidence

There is a variety of evidence for climate change. Often, people around the globe are already feeling the effects of climate change. From Al Gore's popular film to a variety of government agencies, inter-government agencies, and popular nature films, the evidence of climate change is pervasive.

An Inconvenient Truth

Even before he was Vice-President and lost to George W. Bush in 2000, Al Gore has been ringing the alarm bells for climate change. His 2006 film, An Inconvenient Truth, discussed the potentials of climate change. Al Gore had been giving the same slideshow presentation since the 1970s to pretty much anyone who would listen to him.

In the film he looks to a NASA graph that shows global CO2 levels over the past 800,000 years. They go up and down, however, in 1950, we exceeded the normal range for CO2 concentration in the atmosphere and the graphs shows a dramatic increase to 400 ppm (parts per million) in the atmosphere. He points to our modern industrialized society as the cause. Since the invention of the steam engine and the economic progress that fossil fuels have created, mankind has been burning carbon in the form of coal and oil to create energy. The result of this burning of these fuels has released these gases into the atmosphere at a greater amount than the planet can remove from the atmosphere. When sunlight strikes the atmosphere, these gases retain some of that heat from the sun in various forms like UV and other rays. Rather than letting this heat go back out into the cold of space to dissipate, that heat is staying here on the planet and causing warming. Al Gore's solution? A phase out of fossil fuels and an increase in more sustainable forms of energy production including solar, wind, and geothermal.

The planet is already approaching 1.5 to 2 celsius of warming. That amount of warming could be reached in the next several decades if drastic reductions are not taken by every nation. To put that in fahrenheit terms: 34.7 degrees to 35.6 degrees. This means that since pre-industrial times the planet has warmed up quite a bit.

Al Gore had never found a large audience until his 2006 film. He was a senator from Tennessee and then Vice-President but he always knew that fossil fuels were damaging the planet. However, in 2006 he sparked a global conversation about global warming and climate change that has never died down. His sequel film, An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power culminates in his important work around the Paris Climate accords which almost every nation on earth signed at the time. Under President Trump, the United States later withdrew, although individual states like Colorado, Washington and California are committed to abiding by the treaty which even sparked a visit from Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany, early in 2017.

The Science

One of the biggest questions is on the science behind climate change. Climate change science is difficult because you cannot reproduce planetary-sized experiments in a lab. We can't build another Earth with the same conditions and then inject a bunch of carbon and see what happens. So scientists rely on our natural laboratory for answers. Most

of the measurements that make the case for climate change come from temperature records which extend to the 19th century, and then tree ring and ice core data. Using this data, scientists can tell which years were wet causing more ice and thicker trees and which years were dry causing thinner trees and less ice.

Ice also holds atmospheric data in the form of little bubbles. The gases from these tiny bubbles are used to analyze what the air was like when the ice was formed. This allows scientists to look at the planet as it was. In recent years, photographs have been fairly stark as well. Arctic exploration began in the late 19th century and by that time, photography had been invented. From this historic photos we can see what those explorers in the early 20th century saw. In many cases they confronted mountains of pure ice, ice that now is no longer there.

By almost every measure, the planet is changing, warming is happening, and the warming is tied to the emission of CO2 and other gases. This warming is even starting to become recursive with the current warming causing more warming.

Effects of Climate Change

The effects of climate change will be extreme if carbon emissions are not reduced to net zero by 2050. These include a warmer planet, sea level rise, catastrophic ecological changes, and weather changes that would threaten all life on earth.

Warming Planet

To stop catastrophic warming that would end almost all human life on earth, the doomsday date is sometime in 2040-2050. If carbon output is not reduced by that time, then there is no going back. The planet will begin to warm to level above 3 degrees celsius which would cause sea level rise due to melting ice caps and increasingly unpredictable weather. Many coastal cities would soon be underwater. Fresh water would evaporate more putting more water vapor in the air causing more heating. That increase in water vapor would also increase the frequency and severity of storms around the globe. That gives humanity roughly 25 years to halt these climate problems and reduce the amount of carbon output to nearly zero.

According to Professor Anis H. Bajrektarevic writing in the Asia Sentinel. In order to make the necessary changes happen to stop catastrophic warming, $2.4 trillion dollars (about the annual US federal budget) would need to be invested in clean energy. He also claims that we would need to link research and environmental policy together to look at new products and services and how those interact with the environment. In order to make a change, we have to rethink everything and there is good reason to do so. The effects are extreme.

Sea Level Rise

Sea level Rise has the potential to radically affect billions of people. Most of humanity lives near a coast line. Most major cities, with only a few exceptions, are on a coast line. According to Richard Alley in Rollingstone, if fossil fuel burning isn't cut significantly soon (within a decade) we could see a 15-20 foot rise in sea levels. This kind of sea level

rise would see most of Florida underwater. New York, London, Tokyo, Los Angeles, Seattle, Mumbai, Beijing, Jakarta, and other major cities would be underwater as well. There is no current number to calculate the economic loss in both productivity and real estate that this would cause.

Cities under sea level like New Orleans, Florence, Venice and parts of the Netherlands would need taller sea walls in order to remain habitable. For small islands in Oceania (the area around Australia) the sea level rise will wipe them out entirely. In some places like the Maldives and Micronesia, the sea level rise already happening forcing inhabitants to move.

These small nations whose land is right at sea level or just above, have already had to evacuate some people from certain islands that are simply disappearing into the sea. The loss of life would be catastrophic, as well as, the losses suffered by the world economy. When storms did come, the storm surge would be higher as well. Areas that used to be safe from storm surge and flooding would have walls of water innudating them causing untold amounts of damage.

Sea level rise can come from the loss of ice at the poles and especially the loss of ice in West Antarctica and in Greenland. This is melting due to the fact that the oceans are getting warmer and that warm water is eroding the massive ice sheets from beneath which means that the ice will melt faster, break away from the main ice sheet and be surrounded by warmer water, causing more melting.

For example, think of a tray of ice cubes that were overfilled and all stuck together. Pouring some warm or hot water on top will break them away from the rest f the cubes. Then, when the ice in put in the warmer liquid in the glass, it slowly disappears, increasing the volume of liquid in the glass. This is the same principle on a global scale.

Ecological

Many of the ecological impacts are already beginning to be evident. Currently, there are more species of natural creatures dying than in any other time in human history. Large mammals are already being decimated and insects are even suffering from the effects of climate change. This has caused some insects to move into more northerly latitudes to seek out temperatures they are more accustomed to existing and thriving in.

According to the Copenhagen Climate Diagnosis, a major report preceding the 2009 Copenhagen climate talks, the report stated that physical changes would be dramatic including the only good thing about the changes: the Sahara may become a lush forest due to increased water vapor and rain that would turn the desert into the world's largest forest.

However, for the rest of the planet, the situation is much worse. In India, the change of the monsoon could exacerbate the water crisis. In Canada, there could be major deforestation. In Brazil, the Amazon could die back and practically kill off the forest which has been described as "the lungs of the planet." In Russia, there could be a

massive loss of tundra and permafrost. At the poles, a significant loss of ice would occur and the Greenland ice sheet would all but disappear. This would affect animal populations that rely on these climates and would have dire effects on human life as well. The additional heat could also make some parts of the planet nearly uninhabitable. Increased heat waves in India and China would make working outside nearly impossible. Even parts of the American southeast would experience heat waves that would make the outdoors completely inaccessible during the day. Air conditioning is not an easy fix. Energy consumption increases up to 20% on hot days and parts of the electrical grid like above ground transformers would overheat and explode from the strain.

The story isn't just about atmospheric carbon either. It isn't even just about the loss or gain of forests or the rise of sea levels. Climate Change is also about eco-systems. Recently, the New York Times Magazine reported on the onset of the insect apocalypse. Those brave souls who do the tedious work of counting insects, collecting them, and studying them often need decades to do their work. Even now, shorter terms, they are discovering that we have fewer insects. Some people over 30 or 35 have even begun to notice this change. The article starts out with a danish man who noticed that when he was riding his bike as a child, he would end up swallowing insects. However, his son, in the present, didn't have that worry. His observation started a study where people drove around the country with insect collection devices strapped to the tops of their cars to replicate insects striking their windshields. They found that in all that driving, they weren't collecting very many insects. This has a huge effect on the entire food chain. Birds rely on insects to eat. Studies have shown that in Europe, the number of farm birds is declining, due to a lack of insects. When there are fewer birds that means higher food chain creatures don't have a food source either. This even extends to oceans. If there are fewer dying whales, nutrient poor areas of the ocean have no food which means there are fewer fish which means there are fewer whales. This is due to the loss of plankton which means fewer whales to die which means fewer things can eat the whales to create nutrients that keep that ecology strong.

We are just beginning to understand how warming might be affecting insects but the largest force that is affecting them is humanity. Humanity uses pesticides for agriculture in great numbers. That means farmers are killing off insects and it may have reached a tipping point where pesticides have done such a good job killing insects that the entire ecology of the planet is beginning to feel the changes. Increased temperatures and a lack of water are also factors that could be causing this insect apocalypse.

But What If It's Not True?

It seems like a done deal, the evidence seems to be all around. Greenland is melting, the poles have less ice coverage and there are pictures of skinny polar bears unable to find food. Everyone, in their day to day lives seems to be able to tell some story about weather just not being the same. There are all kinds of storms, from super snow storms to hurricanes, that seem to be buffeting us all about. Looking at the global picture, things are even more grim with desertification (expansion of deserts) drought (and the resulting starvation) and flooding.

In 2017, Boston spent months digging out of the biggest snowstorm in history while California was wondering if their state was going to be able to flush a toilet for much longer. Cape Town, South Africa was the first city to completely run out of water. India is deep in a water crisis. Hurricanes have gotten more powerful and caused more damage. There is observable evidence that something is going on with the planet. Science points the finger at global warming and the cause of that warming being greenhouse gases and the creature who is emitting all those gases: humans.

Wacky weather has been the narrative for awhile and no news story has suffered more in terms of narrative journalism than climate change. Every time something "odd" happens in the weather around the nation, the first question is if it is yet another sign of climate change and global warming. Usually, the friendly and well-meaning broadcast meteorologist nods their head affirmatively. Even in the evidence that is presented, there are some problems.

Here are some of the problems:

1. Scientists only have ice sheet data since 1979 because that's when they started tracking it with satellites. Before then, scientists have ice core data; there is no long-term data about the cycles of ice sheets.
2. Temperature data, especially over time, can vary, not wildly, but it is difficult to rely on.
3. Even with the temperature data issues, the planet goes through natural warming and cooling cycles. Even in Al Gore's chart, the planet has warmed and cooled several times
4. Despite the hype, CO_2 is a very important to life as it powers plants that provide food and oxygen. Scientists, like Jay Lohr, point out that the increase in CO_2 is good for crops and is causing reforestation.
5. The Earth goes through ice ages and periods of glacial expansion and retreat.
6. The planet has not warmed at the rate it was supposed to warm in the past 15 years.
7. Climategate revealed there may be some problems with how data was handled.
8. Although 2000-2009 was a warm decade, in 2014 and 2015, polar ice sheets expanded.
9. Atlantic hurricanes have decreased in number over the past 15 years. The data predicted they should have increased in number and intensity.
10. The predicted increase in allergies and lyme disease did not materialize.
11. Many of the arguments for climate change tend to be economic not scientific.
12. Humans are just beginning to be able to accurately measure how the planet is changing and we don't know if humans are to blame or not.
13. This exists on such a time scale that we cannot begin to understand it to draw conclusions from it.

The simple fact is this: there is no smoking gun for climate change. There is data that the planet already warmed 1 degree Celcius since 1950 and there are climate anecdotes from all over the globe. Lots of people talk about how times have changed when it comes to the weather. I spent the end of 2015 in Somerset, England and the residents

I talked to were people who commented that it "used to snow here." Meanwhile, when I stopped in Iceland for a layover of 2 days, one of my taxi drivers commented on how it didn't used to be as cold in Reykjavik and that he hated the cold and was tired of how cold it was outside. Apparently, even in Iceland, winters weren't as harsh in recent memory. But all of this has not centered on a singular crisis. The signs of climate change are scattered around the planet, in isolated things that seem disconnected, but all have something in common: the planet is changing.

In the absence of overwhelming evidence and a smoking gun, the media has done a great job of using indicators, images, and dour-faced experts to create the perception that climate change is a real thing and that with every puff of smoke from a smoke stack, humans are slowly but surely killing the planet. It seems like the very fabric of modern civilization is simply tearing the planet apart and the natural system on which we have depended since the end of the last ice age is just falling apart at the seams and humanity is the only culprit.

The Environmentalist Movement

One of the first people one might describe as an environmentalist as John James Audubon. He founded the famous Audubon Society that specializes in researching, cataloging, and studying nature as well as running a few small parks. Audubon was doing his study of nature around the same time as John Muir was creating his stunning photos of Yellowstone and other natural features around the United States.

Teddy Roosevelt, after exploring the vastness of the American west, thought that instead of merely exploiting the land and its natural features, some of it should be preserved. As President, he went on to create the national parks system which was revolutionary at the time and used the power of the federal government to specifically restrict the use of land for its preservation in its natural state. Both of these men were the early pioneers of what would later be called the environmental movement.

Caring and preserving of the environment wouldn't be a high priority after the progressive period of the early 20th century until the 1960s. Much of the modern environmental movement was a cultural reaction to the consumerist culture of the 1950s as well as a strong desire to identify with nature and the natural world as opposed to the "ticky tacky" world of suburbia. This was with good reason. The United States was an industrial powerhouse following World War II, however, environmental regulations were virtually non-existent. Manufacturing processes created air and water pollution. Industrial cities like Chicago and Pittsburgh would be choked with air pollution from steel mills and factories. One of the cultural changes coming over the horizon would be the defense of the natural world of animals against the encroachment of mankind.

In the 1970s, Americans lived in environmental conditions that most would now consider barbaric. Cleveland is the classic example, before the clean air and water acts, the Cuyahoga River was filled with so much foul material in the river that the river itself was flammable and on July 22, 1969, it burst into flames. Oil and other debris littered the surface and it simply burned.

This river goes through populated areas and feeds into one of the largest reserves of freshwater on the planet: Lake Erie. The river was so polluted the local papers referred to it as "oozing." If there was a major American river flowing through a populated area that was filled with that much waste today, there would be outrage and there are most likely some places where some outraged is called for due to this very problem.

Thanks to the environmentalist movement, the times have changed and now the picture looks much better. Although environmental accidents and degradation still occur, it is not simply tolerated; it is fixed and cleaned up and our rivers, streams, and coastal areas are the better for it. Humanity is a part of the environment and the way people thought about human involvement in ecology reflected that view. The current climate change narrative suggests that if humanity doesn't go back to living in mud huts and dying off at 35 years of age, not enough is being done to protect and keep the planet in a perfect and pristine state. Some of the arguments sounds like the only way to solve this problem is for humanity to disappear and quit existing. The EU was one of the first organizations to recognize that to meet its own 2030 targets, significant lifestyle changes have to occur. Climate Change narratives focus on changing every aspect of modern life.

A Greenpeace?

Patrick Moore of Greenpeace fame very famously came out against Greenpeace and the modern environmental movement calling them "eco-fascists." He founded Greenpeace to stop a nuclear test off the coast of Alaska in 1971 not only as part of the nuclear non-proliferation movement but also for the environmental disaster that the release of radiation would cause in ocean eco-systems. Greenpeace, through its direct actions, brought the environmental movement into the public discourse and brought harmful practices, like whaling and clubbing seals for their fur, right into the living rooms of people all over the world. However, he ended up leaving the organization after financial problems and the realization that it was being dominated by those "eco-fascists."

In a popular presentation in front of a conference speaking out against the climate change narrative, Dr. Moore points out that, in the same place where the IPCC claims that it is "extremely likely that human influence has been the dominant cause of the observed warming of the planet since the mid-20th century," they also claim that it is a judgement. It's an opinion based on the observation. He made that statement 12 years ago in 2007. Meanwhile, he presents a quote from the Global Warming Petition Project signed by 31,000 scientists and professionals in just the United States that "There is no convincing scientific evidence that human release of carbon monoxide and dioxide will, in the foreseeable future, cause catastrophic heating of the Earth's atmosphere and disruption of Earth's climate."

He also claims, like others, that an increase in CO_2 is a good thing. Plants will thrive and agricultural production will increase. He also points to data that shows the reason we are warming is that we are actually leaving an Ice Age. According to the data he presents, the average global temperature over the last several million years has been about 22C. We're only at 14.5C. This could mean that the planet is actually getting back

to normal. Yes, the planet may be warming, but that is because the planet is getting back to its "normal" non-Ice Age temperature. Dr. Moore also goes on to point out that even the IPCC agrees good forests are a great way to help the planet and serve human needs as well. He argues that trees are a sustainable resource and should be planted widely and used for products like homes and furniture.

Dr. Moore presents the idea that climate change has more to do with private people being against the way we conduct civilization than reporting fairly on what is going on with the planet. He cites Greenpeace's opposition to chlorine in the 1980s. Chlorine is an important element but once it was branded as "bad," many people decided to come out against it even though it is a vital compound for safe drinking water and other uses. This is the problem with climate change, rather than create a narrative around science and actionable way to change the way humanity conducts itself on the planet, the climate change narrative often focuses more things that do not matter (chlorine) and less on serious matters like agricultural chemicals or plastic.

The Planet is Changing

Unfortunately for the narrative, the planet was not cooperating with the warming idea. There were isolated incidences of warming but the overall picture was changed but stable. There could was a political angle as well. As the environmental movement floundered in the late 1970s, unable to get people to change their lifestyles to meaningfully reduce waste, pollution, and other outputs and reduce industry, a massive destructive, man-made caused event sounded like it was a good way to get people's attention. Climate alarmism began as early as 1980. After much media attention the idea worked. The debate has moved from a question of if the planet is changing to whether mankind is having an adverse effect on the global climate system on which we are all are dependent.

One thing is clear, the planet is changing and for the first time, we've had the technology to quantify those changes and understand them in new ways that were unknown to people in the past. Even as late as early discoveries of North America, Greenland, and Iceland, those early explorers recorded a very different landscape in those places than we know today. The planet is constantly changing, our ability to understand those changes is in its infancy, which makes it a difficult task to convince everyone that we have to remake the global economy in order to stop or at least mitigate these changes.

The Failed Narrative

The whole scientific narrative around the nature of our changing planet is difficult to understand and harder to accept. There is a now infamous National Geographic story, from July 1980, where the magazine announced that the science was in, and we were headed for another ice age. For northern latitudes, this was a real problem. Much of Canada, northern parts of the United States, and Europe were under ice during the last ice age. The Canadian shield in Nova Scotia is the remainder of that glacial expansion. The Great Lakes along the border between the United States and Canada

are there because the glaciers dug out these future lake beds and melted during the retreat. However, just 10 years later, the narrative had changed again. No need to fear another ice age, instead the planet was doing the exact opposite. This is where the narrative around this science has been a failure.

Climate change advocates have sold the problem all wrong.The goal is to stop another 1 degree of temperature rise over the next 100 years. Even the babies of today will be in their 80s and 90s by the time 2100 comes around and this degree of temperature rise comes to pass. Most people don't want to sacrifice their job today to stop the warming of the planet in 80 years. The simple fact of the matter is that we have been affecting his planet since we left the caves and began the expansion of civilization at the end of the last ice age, when the planet warmed dramatically.

Early farmers were busy warming up the planet and stopping the ice ages that had happened periodically in pre-historic days. We've eliminated whole species from our planet via over-hunting. Human impact on this planet has been constant since the early days of civilization when began to organize into villages and hunting bands and exploit the planet for human needs.The planet makes all sorts of interesting changes on a nearly constant basis, both because change is constant on a living organism like Earth and due to the changing ecological profile of different areas. The climate and the planet were not perfect and pristine in the centuries before the industrial revolution. From rivers filled with raw sewage and dead bodies to awful deforestation in Europe, humans have had an impact on the planet for thousands of years. Humanity has been burning fuels and pumping the results into the atmosphere for thousands of years. And yet, the climate change narrative holds that, thanks to the industrial revolution accelerating this process, mankind has been able, in 200 short years, to radically change the planet.

If the climate change advocates want to change the way people live, they have to address things that people can see results from in their lifetimes. There is no shortage of problems worthy of address. Sea level rise is certainly going to affect billions, as coastal cities flood and eventually succumb to the ocean. Places that are cold and unpleasant now, by mid-century, may become the new sun belt of moderate temperatures and more desert locations simply become unbearable due to the heat.

Deforestation is a massive problem that affects the temperature and the atmosphere. Positive forestry and managed forests can create a sustainable material (wood) and also work as an important part of the ecology. Saving oceans from being choked in plastic and other waste is as important as cleaning up the Cuyahoga River. All of these things can be adapted to and solved in ways that will both serve the climate change narrative and also move the needle on how we treat the planet. New methods can create ways of moving cities or mitigating flooding along coasts. Cleaning the ocean and creating new waste systems that don't just dump the problem into the ocean would be a positive benefit for everyone and preserve a significant food source. In order to solve these problems, the narrative must move from, "Your lifestyle is wrong" to "here's how to help the planet and create positive change for the future survival of everyone."

Even in the face of all that is being done and all that can be done, to some greater or lesser degree, humanity cannot stop the way the planet is changing. The best thing to

do is adapt to it. Creating barriers for cities along coastlines is an important project to begin, and in many cases, those cities may need to be abandoned and moved elsewhere. Humanity can mitigate carbon emissions and other chemicals in the system.Agriculture can be made more sustainable in a way that uses less land, fewer chemicals, and do it in a way that works with the ecology of the planet. Complementary planting, organic farming practices, and GMOs all hold promises for a new kind of food production that would benefit everyone and the planet. Countries can rethink energy in new ways but those new ways have to be reliable. Natural gas holds some of that promise, as does nuclear power. Nuclear power plants can even use the waste that we've already created. Old nuclear waste is an energy commodity. Managing waste and products and packaging at the end of their lives is vital to the planet. Working toward a zero waste society is something that we can work toward. Receptacles for compost, recyclable materials, and other waste is important. By creating packaging that rots and go away, we can reduce the actual waste to a footprint so small that it can be stored, incinerated, or otherwise disposed of in a way that is not damaging to the ecology. It starts with industry and ends with the consumer. It seems like a bother and it seems like it will be a waste of time and energy, but this sort of thing is what will actually save the planet and the best part is that the results are immediate. Humanity will see results from these practices within 5–10 years.

More than a Belief

Any time, you have to talk about something in terms of belief, I think you lose something in the debate. In learned circles, you will hear the following, "I believe in climate change" or "I believe in global warming." If science cannot produce such evidence that makes it so that we can say, "I know that global warming is true" or "I know about climate change," then there is a problem. When something so important as the state of the planet is reduced to mere belief and faith, massive policy decisions cannot be based upon that. The same people who proudly proclaim the belief in this cause would no sooner ascribe that same idea to any other area of their life. There are people in this world who believe that the world is a flat disc bound by two walls of ice. Their belief is nice and they are welcome to it, but we can definitively say that we know the Earth is a sphere and we have overwhelming evidence to that idea.

To some greater or lesser degree, it seems to be that human civilization in its industrial form is the root of the problem. In all things, there are actions and reactions, this is a basic law and climatology is no different. I do not see a way in which we can all live and do so in a way that has no impact. Our very existence as reasonable human beings, who are engaged together in villages, towns, cities, and nations, is impactful. Animals impact their environment, they just do it in a way that is more harmonious to the greater wholeness than the way we have lived for the past 10,000 years. We are all part and parcel of the planet.

How Do Humans Adapt?

Climate Change is already coming. It's already happening and if steps aren't taken, it may be too late before the warming of the planet can be halted or even reversed. The best course of action for climate may be adaptation to the new climate reality that the planet is offering. This will mean radical changes to entire way people live all over the globe.

Transportation

One of the biggest outputs of carbon comes in the form of transportation. Cars, buses, planes, ships, and trains all rely on carbon in some form. Either through electric generation or through direct output. In order to stop further warm of the planet, all of these would need to be phased out by 2050. Professor Bajrektarevic argues that air travel as we know should be all but phased out in places like Europe where trains are faster, safer, and more environmentally friendly. In a climate adapted future, we could see air routes restricted to just crossing the oceans and transcontinental air travel possibly cease as apart of adaptation.

While governments have forced cars, trucks, and buses to get more efficient as a matter of public health (no one wants to breath in those gases). Airplanes, trains and ships have not had the same regulation. Jet engines have gotten more efficient at the behest of cost-cutting airlines, they still inject massive amounts of carbon directly into the upper atmosphere where some scientists say it has greater effect because it does not come down out of the atmosphere and just stays in the higher atmosphere helping to keep in more sunlight. Trains and ships are only just beginning to come into any sort of regulation in regards to their carbon output.

The advances in autos has been great. Electric cars are finally coming online. Manufactures have embraced hybrids that use much less gas than before and startups are trying to disrupt the automotive industry. Companies like Tesla and Rivian are re-thinking personal transportation. Matched with green alternatives to energy, these vehicles could reduce one of the biggest sources of carbon output in our economy. There still lies the problem in how energy is produced. Electric cars merely transfer the output of carbon from the tailpipe to the smoke stack but even this can be overcome with green and renewable energies.

Geoengineering

One of the biggest ways we could help mitigate many of the changes would be through geoengineering. One of the ways to cool the planet would be to inject particles into the atmosphere and reduce the amount of sunlight that reaches the surface. This would cool the planet. There are also new, large-scale air filters being tested that would remove carbon from the air, which would reduce the effect of greenhouse gases. There are also other ways in which the climate can be changed to slow these effects and maintain the planet that we have known.

Lifestyle

Now the debate has centered on what kind of changes are to be made in order to halt the change of our climate. From vehicle emissions, to cleaner extraction practices, and renewable energy, billions of dollars have been spent working on finding ways to move our economy toward a new future that is not dependent on putting millions of tons to carbon into the atmosphere. However, the solution to our problem is not that simple or straightforward.

While the changes made are fairly positive, the fact of the matter is that, in real terms, these changes just aren't moving the needle that much. More fuel efficient cars are great but these processes still pump carbon into the atmosphere for transportation. Even the the vaunted Tesla, with its electric motor, still needs electricity, which we create through a release of carbon. Solar panels are nice but they are dependent on rare earth metals and carbon based transportation as well as being marginally effective on cloudy days. Wind power is dependent on the wind, which means that on a windy day, we can function normally but once winds die down, something else has to fill in the gap for homes and businesses. Windmills also have a habit of killing birds who crash into them. If that is not enough, the human cost of extracting the metals and hydrocarbons from the earth is also to be considered. Twenty-one people a year die in the extraction of coal (it was 233 in the 1930s). That is a very high cost of human life for the privilege of pumping that in the air for the convenience of electricity. Even so-called renewable resources aren't that renewable when you look at the total picture. Solar and wind are nice to have but are unreliable and deadly to winged members of our ecology. Few people want to adopt nuclear power, as France did in the 1970s with a standardized design, and so that leaves us in a difficult place. Our long lives, plentiful food, and modern conveniences are dependent on energy and extraction. It seems like no matter where we go or what we do, there is no perfect solution.

Climate Change advocates seem to think that technology is going to save us. Most people do not realize that technology is dependent on extraction and exploitation and that even our most clever solutions will involve extraction and exploitation. The planet will be changing whether we like it or not.

I think many of the people who are dead set on climate change are simply unhappy with civilization at large and the ways humans live. We have become far less exploitative of natural resources in recent decades but that is often a luxury reserved for developed countries and one denied to undeveloped countries. Journalists, working to reinforce this narrative, are quick to write stories about towns who must be vacated due to lead poisoning (Picher, Oklahoma) or places where the population was poisoned by the creation of C8s; the chemicals that make Teflon (Parkersburg, West Virginia and surrounding areas). Even in places like Libby, Montana where the town was contaminated with asbestos from its vermiculite mines, the groups around the environmentalist movement have been quick to trumpet the naturally destructive and lethal nature of humanity and to expose the shadow side of civilization.

One of the overlooked items is that individual changes are unlikely to make a big difference in the climate conversation. While not having plastic straws and reducing the

use of plastic certainly does a good job reducing waste, industry is the primary emitter of carbon. This means that how we create products and services will need to change. Others even admit that in order to make big changes, we might have to abandon the automobile altogether and dramatically restrict the number of children that people have to gradually reduce the population much as China did with the one-child policy that was only recently rescinded. The whole of humanity needs to make changes that are more sustainable and work with and in concert with the ecology. Blowing up civilization is not the solution. We don't have to kill billions to stop climate change. We can be more adaptive, collaborative, and renewable in ways that actually help the planet and humanity together.

So Is it Real...or Isn't it?

The reality is that the planet is changing in ways that we have just begun to notice and measure. There are some problems with the climate change science and there are some problems with the common arguments. The climate change narrative also overlooks actionable things that could be done now like waste reduction and the reduction of pesticides that would really make a difference to the environment right away. The economic issues are huge. Ever since the arrival of oil, humans made the transition from using animal power to using mechanical power, as powered by oil, gas, and coal. To change the economy, takes money and a commitment and an acknowledgement of the reality that changing the global economy is not going to be an easy thing. To really get people ready for these changes, there needs to be clearer research and something viable and important to prove that climate change is real and that human life will be adversely impacted.

The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report is filled with important caveats about the climate situation. Different numbers and calculations are notated with how confident they are in the science behind climate change through planet warming due to the exposure of greenhouse gases (which includes methane). IPCC reports that confidence remains high that the changes observed are on track with the projected warming and that we are reaching an important tipping point where climate change may become irreversible.

We know from history that drastic changes in climate have an effect on human life. For example, the explosion of Krakatoa, a volcano in Indonesia, emitted so much carbon that global temperatures were cooled for several years causing crop failure in France and being a very indirect cause of the French Revolution.

If humanity continues on as it has, policy makers need to realize that to clean up lakes, rivers, streams, oceans, and land means that we're going to have to find better and smarter ways of dealing with these byproducts and producing them in the first place. Efforts need to be made to find ways of disposing of these wastes or simply not make those products. It also means changing what it means to consume products and how much consumption should occur. This challenge is even bigger when the entire world economy and the way we survive within that economy is based on some kind of consumption.

If one accepts the science as presented, the case for global warming seems clear. However, one must also acknowledge that the same set of data can yield different results. The planet is a large place with complex systems that we're only now beginning to understand clearly. Dr. Moore used the same ice core data as the IPCC and pointed out the problems.

Is the planet changing? Yes. Should we attribute it all to mankind's contributions? That is for the reader to decide. However, it is clear that climate change is a narrative. It is a perspective that posits one thing and that narrative has some problems. It is important in these discussions to be circumspect about the data, the science, and what is going on. When other science is presented, it is important to also present how the science might tell a different story. But it is unlikely that you will see the other side of the story presented in the mainstream media or by major climate organizations.

This is not to say adaptation to a changing planet or finding more sustainable ways to continue civilization as we know it should not be a major goal for all nations. However, it is disingenuous to say that the climate science is in, scientists know what is going on, and what must be done. That isn't fair to the data or science as a principle of discovery and observation.

A Guide to a More Sustainable Future

Sustainability has been a popular catch phrase within the next wave of the environmental movement for quite some time, now. Sustainability, the very word gives us some advice on what is necessary to sustain a system. A sustainable system is one where the process can be repeated over and over again with minimal input to that system for it to keep producing. The ecology of the planet works in this manner. Every creature through its life, reproduction, and death contributes to a sustainable ecology that requires no new input. To sustain something means that you should be able to do it over and over again in a way that doesn't require a constant new input of material to keep the system going. The way our society is now is fairly far from that. We have to put in many new resources to keep the system going and it produces quite a bit of waste that currently is clogging up the ocean, landfills, and the planetary system, as a whole. One of the reasons that I like to focus on this aspect of the climate is because humanity can, as a planet, move the needle on ecology immediately, if nations can make these changes. The results of 40 years of important environmentalism are all around. Air, water, and homes are cleaner and safer than ever before and more can be done to move the needle and save not only lifestyles but the planet, as well. Humanity can work in harmony. I've identified 4 areas for increased work in creating a more sustainable future.

100% Recycling

Recycling materials is the most important thing we can do to reduce extraction and increase the re-use of materials, especially materials like "rare earths" and other metals that power our modern electronics. By enacting national legislation to help communities start recycling programs, more glass, metal, paper, and electronics can be recycled and reused more than ever before. Recycling shouldn't just be for modern, trendy communities and big cities, every city, town, and county should have recycling available and in the future, recycling should be required not only for communities but especially for corporations.

Zero Waste Policies

The next step after required recycling is the move toward zero waste. Companies can design products with compostable items instead of disposable items. Companies can find ways to make their products not produce waste at the end of their life cycles. By doing this, waste can be reduced down to the absolute minimum and in time, down to zero. The landfill could be out of date in 25 years. The impact of not burying millions of tons of material in the ground, because there is nothing else to do with it, will be highly impactful to our ecology and to the climate. Landfills put off methane, which is not something being captured or used. It is released to go into the atmosphere and into people's lungs.

Sustainable Farming

Food production is an energy intensive process that requires many chemicals to be highly productive and low cost. As I demonstrated in my essay on GMOs, mono-culture farming is chemically and energy intensive. That can be changedright away here in the United States through farm subsidies. Farming is heavily insured and subsidized by the Federal government. When the USDA issues new rules and guidelines, farmers move quickly to bring their operations into line. If the USDA creates a program to promote sustainable farming using complementary planting practices, the increased use to resistant, non-chemical GMOs (like the orange and the papaya), then farmers will move quickly to change the way they grow food and our ecology will benefit. Ancillary problems, like bee colony collapse and dying soil biomes, will solve themselves. All we have to do is work in harmony with nature and not against using expensive chemicals and processes.

Natural Land Restoration

Natural Land Restoration is something already hard at work. The next step in natural land restoration is to find ways we can fit cities and towns into those models and paradigms. Growing up in the Denver area and exploring Boulder on a frequent basis, one could not but notice the vast tracts of farmland and open space around the growing city. That did not happen by chance. It happened very specifically using the "open space" program. Boulder pioneered it in the early 1970s as a way to preserve the rural and natural areas around Boulder. The City and County of Boulder will buy up land and then lease it back to farmers or simply let it grow wild in the natural state of Colorado. The benefit is that exploratory areas are created for outdoors activities and Boulder doesn't get absorbed completely into a concrete jungle like Denver. It's the perfect balance of town and country. Wetland restoration has saved the Mississippi Delta, the Everglades in Florida, and other sensitive areas around the country. This can become common practice. The future could offer the creation of cities that work in harmony with nature and where nature and society live together. It's possible, if policy makers start planning and designing for this future now.

Our Ecological Future

We can have a better ecological future that will help us help the planet and really move the needle on our changing climate. Humans have had to adapt to climate for millennia. Civilizations that can't adapt do not survive. Modern humans have the advantage of technology and a unique foresight to understand how to adapt to the changes in the planet. Creation of a sustainable future is something that is positive for people, animals, and the planet. It's possible with political will and a desire for a sustainable future that everyone can enjoy.

Part 3: Automation, and the Forces of Change

The Death of the White Heteronormative, Christian Narrative
How Do You Lose 10 Million Men?
Nations and Nationalism
Racism 2.0

The Death of the White, Heteronormative, Christian Narrative

It's hard when stories die; they define our lives and our identity. But what happens when the story ends, has to change, or becomes dated? That's what we face now.The cultural dialogue of America has taken a fairly, straight-forward course. The dialogue in this country, from the French and Indian War of the mid-18th Century and through to today, has been dominated by the White, heterosexual, and Christian narrative. For much of this time, anyone who didn't fit that profile was simply not a part of the overall narrative of American life. This excluded millions of people, and in many cases, White women, themselves. One could even add "male" to that list as well, seeing as female voices were often suppressed and continue to be until this day. Only now are women beginning to have full participation in modern society. However, as Oprah once said, "...a new day is on the horizon." This new horizon sees the death of one story and the beginning of something new and something that is unfamiliar to many Americans, especially white Americans.

There are People and Then There's Everyone Else

While there was only one narrative, things went fairly smoothly for those in the center of that narrative. Everyone who wasn't in that narrative had a derogative narrative told about them. Gay people, women, people of color, and so on. Thanks to the tireless work of hundreds and maybe even thousands of people, the barriers started to be broken down in such a way that everyone who lives in the country, not just the dominant cultural narrative of the aforementioned group. In music, art, literature, and in public discourse, a variety of voices are now being heard and to be quite honest, it's tearing our country apart.

Abraham Lincoln was onto something when he said, "A house divided cannot stand." Our current cultural dialogue is proving that. There are so many voices competing for attention and for a place in society that it seems impossible to bring everyone together. The America of today is one of many voices with many cultural values coming together to demand equality before the law in all things. Those voices demand changes in policy that no longer advantage a privileged few over the many. Those voices are bringing attention to the policies that have often advantaged white people over everyone else. These voices are also speaking out an economic system that often works only for the wealthy and not for the few.

America is unique, we are one of the oldest republics and the new challenge of the

American experiment is to see if the republican can stand with more than one singular voice at the table. Can America continue while a variety of cultures are represented? Can America synthesize Black, White Hispanic, Native, and Asian voices into one? That is the question of this time.

Immigrants, Poor People and Trump

For most of American history, this male, white, heteronormative narrative has been the national story. The myths that the country holds around the economy, social mobility, and social mores have all been founded in this idea. However, the country has changed and has begun to change this narrative. Rather than simply presuming "American" is simply a by-word for white, American has come to describe people of color ranging from African-Americans to people from the hispanic diaspora, Asian people, and even the native people that occupied the country before European settlers arrived in the 17th century. These groups bring their languages, cultural values, and their unique experiences to the table in America. For many years, the wealth, prestige, and privilege of one group was built on the back of the rest. The land the settlers forged their homesteads on was formerly land enjoyed by the Native Americans. The colonies were built on the indentured servitude of the poor and the slavery of Africans and the hard work of their many descendants.

In both American and British society, it has been easy to blame the ills of society on those on the lowest rungs of the ladder. In her signature book, *White Trash*, Nancy Isenberg catalogs the long history of the poor people of Britain being considered "waste people." These dangerous attitudes have been grafted over to the American experiment. Immigrants are given a double dose for not speaking the language, being an "other" and also being poor. Immigrants take on the jobs that hardly anyone else will often at wages that are barbaric. However, many people do not consider the place immigrants hold in our society. This is not unique to the 21st century. American has hold immigrants in a sort of societal tension from its earliest days. Calls for bans on immigration and quotas have been passed and repealed throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

Part of the reason Donald Trump won the White House was due to the fact that a variety of people, scared of what kind of society they will be forced to live in, voted out of fear. Indeed, Barack Obama represented the future of America that is diverse, international, and of a different skin tone than before. The browning of America has been anticipated for many years. It is already coming true in the schools system where white children no longer are the majority. It is evident in politics where people of color are gaining office in greater numbers not seen since Reconstruction. This represents an anxious future for millions of Americans.

And yet, the words on the Statue of Liberty evoke this idea that we are that "city on a hill" as Reagan described the country. A place that welcomed "the tired, the poor, the tempest tossed yearning to breathe free" and that America was a place where anyone could come and forge a brighter future for themselves and their children.

It is hard for many Americans, squeezed by regressive economic policies and stagnant wages to open their arms to newcomers while they cannot find a way to build a future for their family and cannot pay the bills with the money that they earn. When President Trump, in 2019 stood up and said, "The country is full." That statement does not stem from a concept of land area. America is vast. There is plenty of open space. There are not plenty of jobs and those jobs increasingly do not pay very well. This economic anxiety is amplified in the cultural anxiety that the dominant group is no longer in control of the country, culture, or the shared values.

The election of Donald Trump is reflective of the cultural dynamics at work. The 2016 election has as much to do with economic anxiety as it had to do with the fact that white voters learned to do something that other voting groups have done for a few decades: vote as a bloc. The white racial conscious that Trump has activated will affect American elections for 50 years. The sad thing is that many political commentators are still trying to understand the Trump voter without thinking about how certain groups of people are threatened by the changes occurring in modern American culture. Culture change is difficult but it must be done.

American Culture 2.0

We need a new culture that everyone can join. It sounds easier than it is. Cultures take time. They have shared opinions, values, and ideas. They have created a shared identity and a history. This is not forged overnight and considering that the old narrative has to fall away before this new one can take its place, this will not be an easy process. It will be fraught with anger, difficulties, name calling, and worse. The reality is that it is already beginning. As minorities push for a full seat at the table of society, invariably others must move around to accommodate them. This includes listening to the stories that have yet to be heard, acknowledges positive and negative influences in those stories, and a nice helping of humble pie for everyone involved. So many people are invested in stopping this policy or that policy or returning land to Native Peoples and all of this activism by so-called Social Justice Warriors and others are all trying to seek the same goal: a more equal society. They are pursuing often divergent paths to achieve this but the goal is all the same: change society so that everyone actually is seen and heard. This is a change from the exclusive society that we've seen and lived in the past. It means that gender expression can widen to include those who don't fit within the normal expression of gender. People's various racial cultures can live together in harmony under agreed upon rules and laws.

This is very difficult to accomplish but like many things in this country, the Roman Empire offers us some advice. The Romans had a far flung empire by any ancient standard and through administration and infrastructure they were able to keep it all under one roof for quite some time. This empire included a multitude of races, countless religions, languages, and cultures. But using the beacon of being Roman, they were able to allow a slave to eventually become free and through the household system help people fit within Roman society. Even religion, a hot button issue in this country, was something the Romans allowed, as long as Temples to Roman gods were built and kept up. In this strain, America was created as a country that as long as one was willing to adhere to the Constitution, anyone could join the country and be American. America

is a country not tied to an ethnicity but to an idea and a concept of freedom, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Is American Culture Strong Enough to Actually Include Everyone?

The fundamental conflict and the fundamental problem in society at this time. Can our culture absorb anyone or anything new, including people who've been here but have been marginalized? Only time will tell us the answer. Cultural change is hard. Many people will not want to participate in the change and will feel threatened by it. Americans will have to live and breathe into finding out how good of an inclusive culture that can be created for everyone that embraces everyone and gives space for every culture to exist. The new American culture requires society to co-create a new cultural paradigm that allows everyone to have their name, their culture, their people, and their ways without having to suppress everyone into a mold of similarity that clearly is not working.

The key is to do this without balkanizing. Splitting everyone up by culture and creating conflict is no way to create the next great American culture. Throwing up walls is not the answer and certainly doesn't create a whole culture that we can all believe in. The new culture must be inclusive, welcoming, and diverse with all voices represented and the problems of everyone addressed equally. This is what a true republican nation-state can achieve when all voices are heard and all problems addressed through a robust government that does not prioritize the wants of a few over the needs of the many. Ultimately, everyone wants a chance to live their life and to love and without that, we really have nothing. Of all the great fruits this country gives us, if our country can deliver the ability for people to be themselves and live their lives, the American dream can be fully realized.

How Do You Lose 10 Million Men?

The Atlantic is worried. Why should the reader care? Because The Atlanatic is worried about the 10 million missing men in the American Economy. It might be hard to believe in an economy with pre-recession unemployment levels that there are missing men. While the unemployment reports are good news for markets and the media, the number that is troubling is the labor participation rate. That number tells us, in real terms, of those who are available to participate in the workforce and how many are actually engaged in the workforce. There will never be total participation due to retirement, disability, and self-employed people. However, the vast majority of people should register in the labor force. You can't even account for the loss by looking at disability numbers. Disability is difficult to get and does not explain the men who simply aren't working. However, these 10 million missing men aren't too hard to find. A different understanding of the economy is required to find them.

The Atlantic is worried because when you look at prime wage earning males, between 25 and 55, the labor participation rate is low. In fact, it hasn't been lower since 1978. Prime age males usually represent the vast majority of the labor force. In decades past, they have enjoyed good wages and have used those wages to be an economic powerhouse. These men bought houses, cars, and raised children. That economic activity rippled out to the entire economy. It has been no secret that it has been a long and slow recovery. This is particularly true in hard-hit rust belt states and among non-educated white males. However, even that doesn't account for 10 million missing men. In a country of 351 million people, that is a large number of men and a huge economic opportunity that is sitting on the sidelines. The Atlantic spent pages wringing its hands about where these men have gone. It's far worse than the $50 Trillion dollars of capital sitting on the sidelines.

It's Time to be Worried

The Atlantic has a right to worry. The loss of these prime age working men is devastating to the overall economy. When men aren't working not only is there a loss of the $2.13 of economic activity that they generate but also there's devastation to communities. Households don't form, children are left without fathers, and the divorce rate skyrockets. There's also a cost in life. The suicide rate is far higher for men than women as it is and joblessness only exacerbates this trend.

There are powerful anecdotes as well. There are some notable video stories about men who lose a job and fall into homelessness. It has become a common story. Homeless affects men at greater rates than women; 51% of the homeless population is male and that is just the men they are able to count. The actual number could be far higher.

The labor participation rate was only 63.2% in 2019. That means that of Americans ages 18 to 65 who are eligible to work, 37% of them aren't working. That is tragic all by itself. The number for men has only recently rebounded to 91% early in 2019. For most of the decade, it was far lower, generating articles analyzing why men weren't showing up to work.

One need not look far for men who are chronically underemployed or unemployed. These men jump from job to job as they are available. For those in small and medium sized towns, the story is more dire. The factory jobs that once employed these men are long gone. Many young men, after a decade of bouncing between retail and food, begin their 30s unhappy and dissatisfied with their job prospects and are desperately searching for something—anything else that can provide them with a modicum of dignity in their work.

For older men, a job loss can be fatal to their whole career. Even in a growing industry like technology, a man who gets laid off in his 40s or 50s, the best salary years, will be hard pressed to find another job in his industry, even if he is up to date on the latest languages. When I first moved to Seattle, I had an Uber driver who had done 20 years with Microsoft. He had been driving 12 hours a day for one and one half years because he could not land an interview.

What's Wrong with the Economy?

An economy that's doing as well as it's supposed to be doing well should not have this large a gap for this many workers. Since the Great Recession, the economy has done fairly well. GDP recovered in 2011 and the stock market has boomed. The employment rate has fallen to what government agencies would consider full employment at below 5%. However, when you speak to many Americans, they just don't feel like the economy has recovered the same way for them as it has for major corporations and the 1%. That feeling isn't a wrong one, its a real reflection of a broken economy that advantages owners of capital over those who derive their wealth from labor.

Wages

Wages in the modern economy have been suppressed since 1977. Before that, productivity and wages increased in lockstep. In a recent survey, it has been reported by CNBC and quoted by Congresswoman Ocasio-Cortez that 62% of jobs in the United States cannot support the workers who hold them. This has held many Americans back and has caused the rate of household debt to increase steadily. However, wages aren't the only problem; the economy has changed, too, and it has adversely affected men.

Automation

One of the biggest economic stories of the past 40 years or so is the rise of automation. Modern technology has brought this into our everyday lives but workers have been subjected to these increases in efficiency since the 1970s. Automation was fairly narrow at first. Automation started in major manufacturing with machines that could speed up production. Machines that could weld quickly were the first. Then machines to paint and do other jobs. Slowly over time, those jobs were gone, never to return. Even white-collar workers have seen jobs disappear, thanks to the personal computer and the internet. Steel manufacturing once ruled the midwest in what is commonly referred to as, "The Rust Belt." Most of those plants and mills are gone and yet the steel output of the United States remains at 1,000 million tons per year. That's the sign of automation. Not all the jobs left for China, some of them simply disappeared because a machine could do it better and faster.

In the past, this has been good news for workers. Certainly, the automobile unemployed several people. Mechanization of farming unemployed farm workers. There were other jobs, often that paid more, that were available. In this next wave of automation, which will reduce jobs in warehousing, transportation, delivery, and manufacturing, there may not be enough jobs to absorb the displaced workers. There are some remedies to this problem. One of them is job retraining; however, it has to include job retraining that works with the economy of where people live. Silicon Valley has attempted some training programs. One such program, in Arkansas, sought to train people to gain simple skills they could sell online. The program ended after 2 years when the difficulties in helping these people were simply too great to overcome. Many of the people in the program lacked literacy skills and many had not graduated highschool. Still others had hardly used a computer on a regular basis leaving them with few computer or internet skills. The program pivoted to a different set of skills and the workers made the new trash dumpsters for their local town. It was something that they could actually do. It didn't require computer skills or reading skills but allowed them to be productive. This is the kind of job retraining that is essential.

Lack of Respectable Jobs

Another story that garners little sympathy in this modern economy is the idea of a respectable job. Another "lost" man I've met has been in and out of retail and other service jobs for most of his adult life. He stays at a job until he can't take it anymore and then moves on. Why is that? His complaint was simple. "I'd just like some respect. No one respects you as a person in those jobs, they treat you like shit, and I'm tired of being treated like that."

Obviously, not everyone is cut out to work in service and retail jobs. However, the post-2008 recession economy has seen a precipitous rise in these jobs as the industries of the past move offshore to Mexico, China, and elsewhere. Making sure everyone can have a job that maintains their own dignity, at least somewhat, is an important part of having a working society. The mental health of working people is improved when they feel as if their jobs have value and they can gain respect and dignity from those jobs. For men, modern service jobs and growing industries, like healthcare, do not offer much in the way of dignity and respect. Often, news stories will be published that ask

why more men aren't going into healthcare, a traditionally female occupation, save for doctors. The answer is very clear: respect and dignity. Creating jobs where dignity and respect can be achieved is a way for the economy to move forward and to pull the lost 10 million men back into the workforce.

How Do They Survive?

These 10 million men are living on unemployment, working for cash under the table, hustling on the streets by selling metal, or doing odd jobs for business owners. Many of these men are past unemployment collection or have not been in a job where they would get that kind of help. They just get by. Many people would be surprised at the economy, cash based, that still exists for these kind of people.

It doesn't take much to find a few men who have not been gainfully employed in some time. Another example, I'll call him David, is a painter who works under the table whenever this painting company needs him. He's talented and should have a great job. The Labor Department does not even count him because he's working for cash and is basically unreported. His income varies from month to month leaving him on the economic sidelines with little stability. He's 60, has plenty of long-term health issues, and the chronic pain that stems from them. He can't afford any kind of health insurance and so lives on the sidelines of the healthcare system.

Another man who is working in this secondary economy I'll refer to as Jacob; he's a word-of-mouth worker. He knows some people and when they need something they call him. When things need cleaned, hauled, or otherwise looked after, they call him. Until recently, he's always had a job of some sort. He's paid cash and is basically off the economic grid. He will most likely work until he has died.

Then there are those men who choose to retire on their savings, social security or pension and retirement. This man, who I'll call Harry, is the type of person that Trump supporters would readily identify as a "Good American." He was a union electrician for 30 years. However, thanks to the recession, he ended up taking off-union electrician jobs and decided to move to low-cost Idaho to reduce living costs and retire early with his wife. They pooled their retirement funds and decided that was their best option. He was a cash-paid, independent contractor and unemployed for 4 years before making this decision. He's very frustrated with the economy. He never intended to retire at 58 but the economy just didn't seem to have much room for him anymore.

Where Did These Men Go?

The reason they are missing is because the economy, as it is growing in the areas where that's happening, doesn't need them. Economic growth is happening in technology, administration, education, and healthcare. Construction even lags behind these fields. These fields, at the lower levels, tend to not be male dominated and often require education that many men do not have and may find hard to acquire without massive amounts of debt. It's easy to demonize people who make bad decisions or have lousy degrees but this problem reaches a far larger population than the people these articles

are written about. Many may complain about anthropology majors and their lack of job opportunities but the men most affected by this economic reality don't have degrees of any kind. They are solidly working class.

It is shocking to think that the economy, as large as it is, can't provide for everyone. This trend goes right in line with the rising productivity and lack of workers that is common in the modern economy and automation is only going to make this worse. Andrew Yang is spearheading the conversation on universal basic income. That conversation is becoming an essential part of political discourse. Some people may never be able to return to gainful employment. People sense that things are not good for them anymore and they have voted for the person to address this issue head on: Donald Trump.

Voting for a Better Economy

Trump voters might have voted for less trade and more domestic jobs but the sad reality is that many of the jobs formerly occupied by these missing men are gone and they aren't coming back. They often simply don't exist. Trump voters do have one thing right: they are the key to the recovery. However, rather than hoping for good paying jobs, it's time to really think about how the economy is structured and how best to bring people back into the mainstream workforce. There should be an easy to access and inexpensive pathway to job retraining. Job retraining must include people who might need to take time to brush up on skills that are out of date and maybe even find ways to move away from rural towns and toward cities where jobs are plentiful.

It's a sad thing but the age of well-paid manufacturing jobs that enabled people to have a great quality of life is simply no longer the case. Indeed, even low-end, white collar jobs are in danger. Men may flee to these jobs but the economic march is right behind them. It is within this process that we have lost 10 million men in our labor participation rate. This has staggering economic consequences and there are very few people talking about real policy solutions to these pressing problems. One of the great mistakes of the Obama presidency was the lack of real solutions for working people.

There is a certain amount of sexism within this as well. Most people don't want to bend over backwards to help men. Men, unless gay or black, are not a glamorous marginalized group worthy of help. To say that we need to do something dynamic for heterosexual, white men is a difficult sell in many parts of the country. Indeed, this is why so many of them voted for Trump. It was their way of making their voice heard to help themselves. Not only has the straight, white male, suffered repudiation socially with the rise of Black Lives Matter and LGBTQA visibility, but economically, he is more lost than ever before. The country he was promised simply no longer exists. While we cannot easily solve the social struggles, the economic struggles are easier to solve with smart policy.

These 10 million men need not be consigned to the dust bin. Policy makers can and should take steps to make sure that many more people are employed by jobs that can pay them a living wage. There is no reason to give up on men, especially those who did not seek higher education. This moment requires economic investment in America and Americans. It requires government action to put these men back to work.

Nations and Nationalism

Nationalism and global populism has been in the news over the past couple of years. Right-wing, nationalist movements have taken office throughout the Western world. For many thinkers and theorists, this sort of tribalism was dead in the water. There was, at one time, a sense that the world was moving toward a multicultural, pluralistic, diverse, interconnected world. But that's not quite what happened. As it turns out, a sense of national pride and a sense of having a place in the world tied to both ethnic group and geography is still and important part of personal identity for many.

The Beginnings of the Nation-State

The nation-state as we know it began in 1646. The Treaty of Westphalia established that all nations could decide their own religion, government and policies within their borders. This was an important change after over 100 years of wars over religion following the Protestant Reformation and the constant fighting between Protestant kingdoms and Catholic kingdoms. This would also begin a transfer of power from the landed aristocracy of feudalism to the general populace. That trend of empowering regular people for self-governance would continue well into the 21st century.

Obviously, this did not preclude the creation of empires nor did it stop war but it did give each kingdom certain agreed upon rights that could not be superseded by outside powers like the Catholic Church. A country is any area of land that controlled by a government that is recognized and validated by its people and preferably by the international community. A common language or languages is also an important part of a national identity. A country can pass laws that are enforceable within its boundaries and conduct business and diplomacy with other nations. Most nations are created by an ethnic group. These are called nation-states because a nation of people have created a state for themselves. In political science circles, France is always held up as the textbook example of the nation-state. However, other types, like the United States, have also formed. The United States was not founded by a specific ethnicity but was founded on an idea and a particular set of rules. Other nations can even by created simply due to geographic boundaries. This is common in the Middle East and in Africa. Generally speaking, nations work for their own benefit by creating policies through their government to benefit their people. This includes trade, foreign policy, and domestic policy.

Until after World War II, there weren't very many nations. This was mostly due to colonization. Nations in Europe tended to be small in geographic area and fairly limited in population. Large nations like Russia (and later the USSR), the United States, Canada, were rare and tend to be rare now. After World War II, as the European colonial powers faced independence movements in their colonies, international borders changed rapidly as new nations were created regularly through the 1950s and 1960s.

Nations have narratives and stories. They have complex histories. Nations have changes in government, periods of violence, wars, and can suffer moments of terrible upheaval. National histories can be incredibly interesting as the past was nearly as stable as the present for national boundaries. Nations are the stories of people and some nations, like the United States have unique and even special national stories and national heroes.

America: A Nation?

No one wants their nation to falter or fail. Failed states are hellish places where suffering is high and those with weapons exercise power with impunity. Somalia, Libya, and Yemen are all examples of what awful places a failed nation can be. Most people want their nation to be successful. A nation is an extension of the local community and in the modern world, being part of a larger community is essential as the world grows ever smaller.

In America, nationalism and racial politics often intersect. In the parlance, nationalism in America often pits white, European descended Americans against everyone else. Who is American? Who is a real American? This also delves into class as well as urban versus rural. This debate has gone one since the founding of the nation. This story is found in the extension of voting rights and the economic rights of different people, especially immigrant groups.

America is a unique nation. America is one of the few places anyone, from anywhere can come to live, work and find success. Most nations, due to their strong ethnic identity don't always welcome outsiders with open arms. Although not perfect, the US has been a place where the displaced people of the world with nowhere to go can come find a home.

Unlike other nations with more central controls and a strong sense of helping everyone, regardless of background, the federal government has been slow to create policies that help everyone outside of economic policy. America is a nation of loosely affiliated republics under one flag. America was founded by a group of men suspicious of government and involvement of government in everyday life. Historically, America has taken a light touch in society. That makes America different from many other nations that lack a federal system that prioritizes local control over central policy-making. America is changing with more direct policies that help people. The 20th century has seen the federal government has slowly created policies to help people where they were. For other nations, national parliaments spend their time solving problems for people. From housing to education, that is the primary concern. America has taken often taken

a different approach, one that is only beginning to change. America is trying to become a real nation that prioritizes everyone over just the few and takes an active role in the everyday lives of people rather than the "light touch" policy of the past. One of the central tensions around healthcare is that many people are unsure if they are comfortable with government being involved in their lives at that level.

Uniting All Nations

National conflict has been a constant in world history, especially in the last 300 years. Because of these bloody and expensive conflicts, philosophers and policy makers sought to find ways to unite people across national and ethnic boundaries and to find common ground as a species. The idea that people from all over the globe can live, work, and have productive lives without unnecessary conflict became an attractive option following 2 bloody world wars in the first 45 years of the 20th century.

Trade and economic progress was seen as a way to unite all nations together in a common goal. French philosopher Frederic Bastiat stated this philosophy in the 18th century, "Soldiers do not often travel over borders where goods do also." Global economic progress was seen as a way for nations to compete without killing millions, displacing millions more, and destroying each other.

After World War I, the League of Nations was the first international organization to be formed with the express idea of creating a forum where nations could solve problems through diplomacy in peace. The assembly even outlawed war in 1925. The League of Nations would be unable to stop World War II and had few powers of its own. It's follow up organization, the United Nations would take a more active role in collective security and would work with member nations to stop conflict around the world before it broke out into violent conflict. The UN has had some success but has been plagued by failures of its own and has been often neutered the international politics of its member states, especially the 5 permanent members of the Security Council: The United States, The Russian Federation (USSR before 1991), the United Kingdom, China (Taiwan/ Republic of China before 1971) and France. The UN and its sister organizations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the International Criminal Court, and the International Court of Justice would create the modern framework for what has been called globalization. Globalization is mostly used as an economic term but it is also denoted by the large inter-governmental organizations that have created the basis on which the modern global economy rests. Without that framework, the global economy would not be possible.

The World Before Globalization

The modern globalized economy is unique. Never before have the world's economies been so interlinked with each other. Global trade is not new. The Silk Road stretched across Asia to Europe bringing silk and other exotic goods from China to Florence. Whole kingdoms were based on trade and the act of buying and selling goods to willing markets. In the 19th and 20th centuries, trade was important but often restricted with

a complicated system of tariffs and currency exchanges that erected trade barriers around nations. Capital was difficult to move and nations often had restrictions on the movement of large amounts of wealth and often taxed that capital.

Imported goods were expensive and nations often protected their domestic industries with trade barriers. These mercantilist policies existed until the Bretton Woods Agreement would create the first global rules for world trade. This expansion of trade allowed Europe to rebuild and Asia to begin its own development cycle by exporting goods to the United States and reversing the large American trade surplus. Bretton Woods ended in 1972 and was later replaced by the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs which then went on to create the World Trade Organization. The WTO creates rules for trade and tariffs and settles disputes.

Before this modern trading system of low tariffs and abundant trade, companies spent large amount of capital to create overseas operations. Capital was difficult to move due to the expense and importing and exporting products raised prices. This left most nations with domestic industries that dominated their local markets.

For workers, this was to their advantage. Business created jobs and those workers then spent those wages in their community. Robert Reich, former Labor Secretary under President Bill Clinton, calls this the virtuous cycle. However, globalized trade ended this cycle. The people that make the goods no longer live in the country where the goods are sold. For owners of capital, this is to their advantage. However, for the worker, who most likely was laid off after production moved overseas, globalization has delivered cheap goods and less stable employment. For workers, globalization has not worked out.

Globalism Has Not Worked Out

For the capitalist, or a shareholder in a multinational corporation, globalism has been a tremendous boon. However, if you are a worker in a developed country, particularly a low-skill worker, globalism has been a loser for you. People throughout the western world have watched their jobs going overseas and their cities and towns drying up around them. Even in European countries where countries have taken more protectionist measures, many jobs have still left. Look at the United Kingdom, the midlands, once a manufacturing center, has watched those textile and other jobs move overseas as much as manufacturing jobs have left the United States for Mexico, China, and Southeast Asia. This has contributed to the rise of productivity but the lack of rise in wages.

For developed nations, consumer goods are cheaper than ever thanks to the low wage environments of the developing world. The cost for these cheap consumer goods has been a decrease in the number of manufacturing jobs in developed nations. This has left workers and their towns and cities behind.

Globalism has seen the international economy take precedence over the national. The national border has become porous for both capital and goods and services. This has been to the advantage of capital but the detriment of workers and this has greatly changed politics within developed economies. Workers, left behind by 30 years of

increasing global economic interdependence have begun to push back demanding that the jobs they once held return.

Nationalism is A Reflection of Globalization

For many working people, especially working Americans, the question starts to become obvious, "Why can't those jobs stay here? Why can't we have those jobs and make that money? Why does our money have to go overseas to support other countries?" By logic, the idea of "Make America Great Again" and "bringing the jobs back" starts to have a great deal of appeal. Building up your own nation, your own space, and helping your own people has much more appeal than supporting workers in a country you've hardly heard of and certainly never traveled to or visited.

There is also a racial element to this problem. Immigration from developing countries has increased and to many Americans, it seems like all the jobs are going to them while they are left on the sidelines. Products aren't made in America anymore and more of the economy is interdependent on every longer supply lines stretching from Asia to Europe and back to the United States. When the local economy is failing and it seems like other countries are doing far better than the local economy, nationalists in Europe and America take advantage of that for political gain. These politicians can dial into that latent sentiment and stoke it into an extreme ideology that encourages people to vote in politicians promising to fix these problems.

How Do We Make A Global Economy Work for Everyone?

One of the keys to creating change toward globalism and away from the nationalist response is to make sure that globalism raises all boats, including those in Western countries. However, exacting tariffs and trying protectionist methods is bound not to work and currently, the United States is proving this point through the current trade war. The economy is now global. All workers are competing with each other all over the world. Investments in education and giving tax benefits for production can attract companies to keep workers in certain countries.

However, this should not be a competition of wages. That would only be a race to the bottom of nearly zero wages, which makes the world economy impossible to sustain. However, with a robust and educated workforce, countries can create workforces that will attract companies to make goods there. Another area where things can improve is how services are taxed. Services are an important part of post-industrial economies but service jobs can end up being low wage because of tax environments of the difficulties of providing services at the price the market will bear. Using remote work, automation, and tax incentives can make services more attractive. However, the key to this solution is to also create opportunities for workers of all ages to take advantage of this new economic reality. Developing economies can provide a guide for how America should proceed.

South Korea has made investments in education and trades to create a developed economy with robust manufacturing and exports. China has invested in manufacturing and education as well, creating a miracle of economic progress. India's increased investment in this area promises great progress for their country over the next 25 years. America need not retreat from the global economy or hope for the past. Rather than impose tariffs, America simply needs to catch up with the reality of the modern globalized economy.

Nationalism is Not the Answer

Nationalism has great appeal. Especially to people unhappy with increases in immigration and unhappy with seeing their formerly vibrant towns and cities emptied out as their youth flee for better job opportunities. Stopping any problem that might seem to stem the tide of economic devastation can appeal to people who are desperate for any solution. An increase in nationalism is not the answer.

Everyone trying to retreat away from the global economy will only cause lower growth and fewer jobs. It will not help any of the economic problems that we face and will hold humanity back from conquering a variety of problems that affect everyone. If we can reform globalism to create prosperity for everyone, then more people will be willing to participate in the global economy. The 20th Century was a testament to what happens when Nations compete. It causes long and bloody wars. No one wants to see millions of people dead in a global conflict again. The only remedy is a robust, global economy that helps everyone, not more nationalism that only fuels hate and doesn't solve the problem.

Racism 2.0

Racism is something that I've been lucky to be somewhat insulated from. As a bi-racial person, I am light-skinned. As one college professor put it, "There's passing and then there's passing and you're not passing." Fair enough. However, I have had the privilege of walking into places most black people don't get to go to. Because of my white mother and her white husband I've been able to sit in restaurants where the only other colored face was from the wait staff.

I have this friend who always brings up racial politics. I think it bothers him. He's from a poor background and has done well for himself in technology. He and his wife live in a fashionable Denver loft. He's tall, good looking, and white. Broadly, he is liberal. He is the ideal Democrat voter, educated and urbane. Most of the times when we meet up, we end up talking about racial politics. His friend group isn't terribly diverse and I think he feels safe bringing up the topic around me. I've known him since mid-way through Obama's first term in office. Our first conversation had to do with the "myth" of racism in America. The complications of racial politics in America was something he thought was fairly well solved. During the Obama administration he boldly declared that racism was solved. Later, he nearly cried when I was begging him not to vote for Trump. "I just want people to stop dying." I told him that he was voting against me and my existence. He rebuffed the remark and I walked right out of his loft. He chased me to the elevator begging me to come back in. I was tired of the conversation, gave him a hug, and escaped to my car. Three months later he sent me a simple text about Trump. "That was a mistake." Our conversations on race were not to end any time soon.

Another time I told him that in his hiring process as a developer he should be "color brave" and make an effort to hire someone of color or a woman or both. "Why should we go to all that work when we already know a white guy who can do it?" I tried to explain the lack of diversity in technology and how he had an opportunity to give a much needed opportunity to someone looking to break into the industry; however, my reasoning fell on deaf ears. "It's just easier to hire the guy we know." The last time we met, the discussion again turned to race at some point. We talked for over an hour until he stood up and stomped his foot and said, "I don't want to be associated with slave masters." I shrugged my shoulders, "Sorry, I replied, "That's the legacy this country was built on. It's why you have an advantage and many others just don't."

He did not accept this and many still don't. The reality is that racism, and the idea that black people are different, dangerous, or inferior is built into the fabric of this nation.

The idea that racism is some archaic institutions that only existed when white men in hoods stood around lynching black people is what I call, racism 2.0. It is the entire erasure of the experiences of people of color and the very real and yet very subtle way in which American racism still exists in our society today. Racism is not just bigoted opinions or ideas. Racism, as it has occurred in the United States and other places like South Africa, is the systematic subjugation of a people based on their skin color or other characteristics. Racism excludes these people from jobs, voting, and other institutions creating a system of oppression and exploitation.

Racism is much less overt than it used to be. Racial epithets are rare in most instances. Racism 2.0 is far more subtle and far harder to find. Racism 2.0 is the fact that black families, who leave poverty and enter the middle class, often watch their children and grandchildren slip back into poverty. Racism is much more institutional than it used to be. That is what makes racism so unique in the United States. It is how the country is built to disadvantage black and other people of color. American racial attitudes and subjugation has not merely been limited to people of African descent. Almost all non-white groups in the United States have had to endure some sort of discrimination in this country. This has been reflective of a general idea of "white first" policies that have radically affected the success of people of color.

Racism toward Asian People

Asian immigration to California began as early as the 1820s. By the 1850s Asian immigrant was often in the thousands per day. Most of these immigrants were chinese looking for a better life in California. However, America was not as welcoming to these immigrants as it could have been. Asian people, specifically Southeast Asian people during the 19th Century, were often shut out of certain professions causing them to start businesses and work in more feminine perceived professions like food and laundries, which contributed to the cultural emasculation of Asian men.

The contribution of Chinese laborers to the construction of the trans-continental railroad is not talked about nearly enough in the historical discourse about its construction. No Chinese faces appeared in the famous "Golden Spike" photo that was taken in Utah upon its completion in 1869. So many Chinese people came from China to the United States that Congress banned Chinese immigration outright in 1882 and the ban was not repealed until 1943. An even worse blow was the ban of Chinese female immigration in 1875. This was the first act by Congress to ban immigration for a specific ethnicity of people.

Japanese people were interned during World War II for no other reason than their heritage and the fact that they might be working for the enemy or might be a spy. For many of those people, they lost everything. Their land and farms in California were often not returned to them unless a neighbor or someone else could help them. The Japanese internment is one of the darkest moments of American history and descends, like George Takei are still alive to tell the story of America's own homegrown concentration camps.

Although Asian-Americans in political science circles are the "model minority" against which Hispanics and African-Americans are judged, they have not been free from stereotypes similar to the racist caricatures that black people have suffered from. Cartoons from early film and characters from early silent motion pictures depicted asian characters as short, small, incompetant, and with exaggerated accents.

Hispanic Racism

The United States purchased most of the southwestern states and California in various purchases from Spain and later Mexico with the exception of the annexation of Texas (a sovereign nation). Descends of spanish settlers and native tribes lived in the region and these people were often pushed out by white settlers, especially once a firm border was established between the United States and Mexico at the Rio Grande river. The border is one of the longest in the world stretching from California in the west and the Gulf of Mexico in the east. This heritage has not stopped racism toward the people native to these areas.

Hispanic/Latinx people have been discriminated against, particularly in the southwest. Even now, the illegal immigration debate has caused the worst racial attitudes toward people with a diversity of backgrounds from Central and South America to be laid bare in public view. In the media, hispanic diaspora people have also fought against stereotyping and exotic caricatures. Film and television have often portrayed them as lazy and constantly taking a "siesta."

Hispanic people have also had to fight for rights as farm workers. Led by Cesar Chavez in the early 1970s, he helped create the first farm workers unions. In California and elsewhere, hispanic people were often the only ones willing to take on the back breaking farm labor. They have also been on the front lines of the debate on illegal immigration. President Trump has trafficked in the idea that immigration from this part of the world leads to crime (which is not backed up by data) or disease and that these people are taking jobs from good Americans and pressing down wages. There is a perception that all immigrants are bad people and criminals who, rather than merely arriving in the United States looking for a better life like so many people before them, are actively coming to the United States to destroy the country. These statements are not new either. Irish and Italian immigrants also suffered from the same perceptions and negative statements from public officials, especially in the 1890s during the 2nd great wave of immigrantion.

In the recent past, Hispanic people have been discriminated against for jobs and employment and through housing and redlining policies as well. Like many immigrants, they come here speaking another language and the sheer amount of them has added spanish as the 2nd most spoken language in the United States. The increase of hispanic immigrantion since the crackdown following the Vietnam war has changed American in significant ways. Spanish language media bloomed in the 1980s to cater to these audiences. However, the popularity of hispanic diaspora celebrities and hispanic foods has not reduced the racism that has been targeted to this community, a racism which is evident in almost any debate about illegal immigration.

Native American Racism

Native Peoples, on whose land the United States sits, have also suffered terrible genocide and terrible portrayal in cinema and television. Most people are popularly aware of the "Trail of Tears" where the Cherokee and others were forcibly removed from their lands and moved farther west to make room for White-European settlers. Despite the Cherokee setting themselves up as a European style nation with a written language in the Latin alphabet (with a few extra letters), a newspaper, and a legislative body, for most of the 19th Century, Native Peoples in the United States were viewed as a nuisance in the way of Manifest Destiny to stretch the United States from the Atlantic to the Pacific. There is a long tradition of moving Native Peoples to reservations with poor land making basic agriculture difficult. Many tribes were nomadic or semi-nomadic. Forcing them to live at a fixed location was a terrible way to completely destroy a people and an entire way of life. Even the reservations system was often not an insurance policy. If a white settler desired a piece of land, native tribes were simply removed, resulting in a long line of broken treaties between the United States and the Native Peoples. Despite the political implications of these policies, there are also culture implications of the terrible racism toward the native populations already in place in North America.

In many movies, including the iconic *Stagecoach* (1938), Native Americans are referred to as "savages." Native communities had to endure decades of residential schools that did their best to completely erase their language, stories, and culture. There is currently a movement to investigate an epidemic of missing Native American women. Native American people suffer higher rates of suicide and poverty than most other groups. This is in spite of Native groups having sovereignty over their reservations (with their own courts, police, and elections). Although there is terrible flaws in the system, billions of dollars have been poured into the community. One might think that with those types of resources that Native groups would be highly successful and yet the high rates of poverty and suicide continue to exist.

Native American groups have had to suffer with racism deeply embedded in culture through athletics as well. Team names like the Washington Redskins, Cleveland Indians, or the Chicago Blackhawks reveal a quiet accepted racism and cultural appropriation of native peoples. The racism against Native groups came into sharp focus again in 2018 with the Covington High School scandal where a protest of white students was interrupted by a Native group with the predictably incendiary results. Although the media didn't portray the situation as fairly as reality, one thing was clear: the image of an elderly Native American man speaking against a smug white student, who showed no empathy toward the man. Pile on the fact that they were there to protest abortion in the nation's capital and a political storm resulted.

The Native American movement rose up in the 1970s in the wake of the Civil Rights movement and alongside the Farm Workers' Movement. Native Americans often suffered degradation of voting rights and other abuses. Their interaction with the Federal government is intrinsically bureaucratic.

Native groups must work with the Bureau of Indian Affairs to handle the relationship between the sovereign tribes and the United States. This relationship has not often been fair to tribes. Native representation Congress has been sparse throughout the 20th century.

Native Americans have also been poorly portrayed to children. Songs like *10 Little Indians* and the culturally appropriative nature of children's toys toward Native culture, with tomahawks and head dresses, were the first ways in which 2 generations of children were exposed to Native cultures. National Museum of the American Indian curator, Cécile R. Ganteaume, pointed out in the *National Museum of the American Indian* magazine in 2017, "American Indian imagery has been used by the Federal government to distinguish the United States from other nations and to define the nation for its citizens, by U.S. armed forces to express military might, by American corporations to signify integrity, and by designers . . . to add luster and cachet to commercial products."

The same ideas of inferiority have affected most non-white groups in this country. People who are not white have had to endure the "white" culture, standards of beauty, and perception as the standard and everything that isn't Anglo-Saxon is being viewed as something else, something exotic, and something to be fetishized.

Jewish Anti-Semitism

Jewish immigrants pre-date the founding of America or even the founding of some British colonies in the New World. When New York was Dutch and called New Amsterdam, Jewish immigrants had already immigrated to America. When the British took over New Amsterdam and changed the name, the British inherited these immigrants.

Jewish immigrants continued to flow into the country from Europe throughout the 19th Century. In contrast to the restrictive laws of the United Kingdom and France, the United States, due to the Constitutional assurance of freedom of religion, was often free from restrictive laws making America an attractive place to immigrate. Most Jewish immigrants had valuable skills to help build the country. Jewish people frequently went into the professions like lawyers and doctors. Yiddish language newspapers opened and Jewish people did their best to assimilate to American culture and customs. Jewish immigrants were often highly skilled and took jobs in textile manufacturing and other industrial factories. These immigrants also started businesses and often were quite successful well into the 20th Century and today.

Although American and Soviet troops would go on to liberate camps like Auschwitz and Buchenwald at the close of World War II, the American record is not perfect when it comes to the Holocaust. In 1939, President Roosevelt turned back the SS St. Louis because the ship was carrying 939 German Jews seeking asylum in America from Germany's new policies and anti-semitism. Initially, FDR planned to allow the ship to dock despite recent restrictive immigration laws passed in 1924. However, FDR was pressured by anti-semitic elements within his own party to stop the ship from docking. FDR denied the ship entrance to the United States. The ship had to return to Europe and everyone on board eventually became victims of the Holocaust.

The Jewish experience of racism in America has been different and yet is still profound. Most Jewish immigrants have done very well in America. Jewish society groups often held fundraisers and opened hospitals (like National Jewish in Denver) and did other important social work throughout the 19th and 20th Centuries, as well as today. They opened businesses and gained a fair amount of wealth. This did not mean that they were accepted in social circles, especially social circles of the elite. Until very recently, many private social clubs and even golf courses of the rich and powerful excluded Jews. It was such a common policy among these types of clubs that it even reached popular culture through television shows like *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and *The Golden Girls*. Although not as overt, discrimination based on simply being Jewish was quiet and commonplace, especially in elite circles where peers were expected to be Protestant or Catholic but most certainly, not Jewish. This subtle racism also plays in many historical tropes about Jewish people.

Historically, Jews have been used as a convenient scapegoat for economic problems. Hitler was not the first person to consider blaming Jews for the economic problems of a nation. Both Lenin and Stalin, through pogroms, attempted to eliminate Jewish people from their countries, branding them as bourgeoisie that had to be eliminated. In America, white supremacist groups have blamed the Jewish people for controlling banking and the media. Many journalists, attempting to interview leaders of these groups will receive hate-filled responses stating that they refuse to talk with people from the media because it is owned by Jews. Jewish people have also been quite successful in entertainment as well. Many prominent Hollywood stars, directors, and producers are Jewish. Jews have had a large impact on making America what it is today; however, that has not shielded them from anti-semitic attacks.

Jewish people still suffer from those old tropes that they "control the government" or "control the country in secret through banking cartels." Due to the outsize influence on Hollywood and entertainment, Jews have also been accused of using entertainment as a means of propaganda. Synagogue attacks still continue. In 2018 and 2019, two separate synagogues have been attacked. Some synagogues even charge their members a fee to contribute to the cost of private security so that Jewish people can attend their regular services in peace with less fear of another deadly attack.

The US and Israel

The questions around American support of Israel are on-going. Although it seems like the United States and Israel are quite close, that's only been the case for about 50 years. Military aid to Israel didn't begin until 1961 and the relationship has grown and changed with different administrations. Congresswoman Ilhan Omar's recent comments regarding the financial power of the Jewish lobby, through AIPAC (American-Israeli Political Action Committee), have once again raised the discussion of American backing of Israel with military equipment and intelligence, especially given their behavior toward Palestinians and their control of the Gaza Strip and their occupation and settling of the West Bank. Questioning the United States backing of Israel is somewhat a political "third-rail" not only because Israel is one of the few democracies in the Middle East but also because groups that often criticize Israel are also anti-semitic. For evangelicals,

a main voting bloc of the GOP, there is a deeply held religious reason to always back Israel. This has made backing Israel through money and weapons a prime issue for GOP candidates. Anti-semitism lives on in 21st Century America making Jews a unique case. Jewish people have enjoyed some white privilege due to being the right skin color and yet, despite this, their privilege often ends at the point of being safe in a place of worship or within very elite circles where, despite their wealth and contributions, they are still not welcomed.

Slavery and the African-American Experience

The first African slaves arrived in North America in 1526 and the first slaves landed in Virginia in 1619. All the major European sailing powers were involved in the slave trade at some point to support the cash agriculture that was developing in their New World possessions. Slaves were used for agriculture, especially cash crops like tobacco, rice, sugar cane, and indigo. The trans-Atlantic Slave trade grew rapidly after 1619 with approximately 6-7 million people brought over before the abolition of the trans-atlantic slave trade. African slaves were imported from West Africa and despite the popular idea of white men searching the forests for people to enslave, slave traders frequently bought slaves from other slave traders that were engaged in the business throughout Africa. Conditions on board a slave ship were abysmal. The "cargo" was stacked like cordwood on large racks with straw. No bathroom facilities were provided leaving the slaves to urinate and defecate where they were. Rates of disease and death were high. Despite the terrible conditions, the slave trade was highly profitable for the British Empire and later for American traders. By the beginning of the Civil War, slaves were a large part of American wealth. Slaves were taxed, insured, and notarized like any other property.

The conditions of slaves on the plantation varied throughout the New World but the conditions that African slaves had to endure were far worse than ancient slaves or medieval serfs. Very little was provided for their care. Slave owners provided only enough clothing and food to keep the slaves alive and working. Housing was sometimes provided, other times, slaves had to provide their own housing and build it themselves from logs or left-over lumber. Slaves were often given a few pieces of coarse underwear a year. Their food consisted of cornmeal and fatty meats. Some slave owners allowed them to grow their own gardens to supplement their diet. Slaves were not allowed to engage in any sort of wage labor and were dependent entirely on their masters for their own survival. Slave conditions depended entirely on the owners and their management style. Conditions varied due to this decentralization of power. Slaves had little legal recourse. They were property and generally considered to be inferior and less evolved than their masters. This led to a dependency that reinforced the power structure of master over slave and white over black. The treatment was inherently paternalistic. African slaves were considered to simply be inferior and this attitude persisted into Reconstruction and even to today. 18th and 19th century writers used the debunked theory of phrenology to show that the skull shape of Africans showed they were less evolved than Europeans. A variety of literature was produced on both sides of the Atlantic to "prove" that Africans were inferior to Europeans despite evidence throughout the African continent to prove otherwise.

Urban slaves were rare but they enjoyed better conditions than rural slaves. Urban slaves were often employed in the trades or hired out for private projects, like building railroads. Slaves worked from sun up to sun down, on a 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. schedule. Punishment for infractions against the master were often swift and severe. Beatings were commonplace and slaves could even be sent to jail. Slaves were not allowed to learn to read or write and learning such a thing could subject the slaves to severe punishment or even death.

In keeping with the idea of slaves as property, slaves were bought and sold, often at auction with no regard to where they were from or their family. Mothers and Fathers could be separated from their children and married couples were separated as well. Slaves had no right whatsoever and marriages were not legally recognized. If a plantation had too many slaves and too little work, children could be sold off like excess cattle. Many slaves went looking for their families in the days right after the Civil War. Slaves that had been sold would beg their new owners to buy their entire family so as not to split up.

Slaves had little bodily autonomy, especially for women. The story of Sally Hemmings has been brought into the popular consciousness. Thomas Jefferson had a relationship with the women that bore his children, the descendants of whom are still alive today. This kind of relationship was likely more common than we think. However, much of this has been erased by the sands of time.

Although slavery was commonplace, the importation of new slaves was a contentious issue on both sides of the Atlantic. The importation of slaves was banned constitutionally in the United States after 1808. The United Kingdom banned it in 1807. In contrast to the United States, slavery on English soil was not supported by law; however, it did allow it to thrive in the British colonies until Britain banned the practice in 1833. The question of slavery and its morality was present at the Constitutional Convention in 1787 and extended well into the 19th Century. The United States began divided on this issue with such things as the 3/5 compromise, which allowed slaves to be counted for representation in the South with each slave counting for three-fifths of a person. The Three-fifths Compromise was added to the Constitution despite the fact slaves were not allowed to vote for the men who represented them as three-fifths of a voter. Not only did the Constitution not outlaw slavery, it tacitly allowed it by mentioning it as little as possible to placate southern delegates who did not want their way of life and their economic power undermined.

Cash crops became a big business for the United States. A full quarter of white southerners owned slaves and cotton soon represented 59% of exports by the beginning of the Civil War. Much of the cotton for export was sent to Great Britain to power the Industrial Revolution textile mills that now dotted the landscape in the midlands and north of England.

Underground Railroad

Although laws had been passed to stop slaves from escaping, making a big business of their capture, many slaves did attempt to escape with the help of freed slaves and white abolitionists. These people used a secret network of people to help slaves escape the plantation and escape to the North (non-slave holding states) and also to Canada where they would be out of the reach of the slave catchers. Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman became quite famous conductors on the Underground Railroad. Select older homes from Indiana and Ohio to Maryland and New York used basements and secret passage ways to shuttle escaping slaves away from the slave catchers and to safety. These homes and the passage ways can be still seen today. These bold abolitionists helped slaves escape far enough north to escape professional bounty hunters. Northern states tried to make bounty hunting of slaves illegal but the Supreme Court struck down those laws, especially in the controversial Dredd Scott decision. The legend of this railroad spread quickly and by the 1840s, the term Underground Railroad had become common parlance. Those who did not agree with slavery and wanted to end the institution would form the beginning of the Abolitionist movement.

Abolition

The Abolitionist movement began to gain steam in 1831 and by 1833, the American Anti-Slavery Society was born. A religious fervor of revivalism had spread throughout the United States. The movement was called the Second Great Awakening. These converted revivalists were committed to ending the sin of slavery. The movement was not popular at first. Violence often broke out leading to the death of Elijah Lovejoy, a popular abolitionist editor of a popular newspaper. Mail bags were burned that contained abolitionist literature.

Petitions against slavery were banned in Congress. By the 1850s, the Abolitionist movement had taken a back seat to great questions around the spread of slavery to the West. This spawned the "Free Soil" movement, which held that newly created states should be free and not have slavery. The Compromise of 1820, creating what was called the "Mason-Dixon" line, allowed slavery to continue in states south of the line and for states created north of the line to be free. Even this came to a head in 1845 with the Kansas-Nebraska Act. The territories were created to make Nebraska free and Kansas slave-holding. However, this entire plan fell apart due to the Civil War. Tensions were inflamed again with the Dredd Scott decision where the Supreme Court held that slaves were not citizens, had no rights, and could not petition the court for any rights. By 1857, it was clear the United States was headed for war. One of the earliest conflicts regarding slavery was the raid on Harper's Ferry to free slaves in Virginia (now West Virginia) by John Brown. The raid failed spectacularly resulting in his hanging for treason, but this further inflamed tensions.

Abolitionists did end up supporting the Republican party as the Democrats and Whigs (what was left of that party that died out by 1865) split. Abolitionists supported Abraham Lincoln in the election of 1860 delivering him the White House. The 1860 election had slavery firmly in its debate which also interplayed with a discussion of Federalism and States' Rights.

It is important to note that at this time, the Republican party was strictly anti-slavery while the Democrats were pro-slavery and very much into the supremacy of white people over black people. Most African-Americans would vote Republican in the days after the war. African-Americans supported the Republican party because of its history with Abolition and the beginnings of the modern Civil Rights movement.

This racial dichotomy within the American political landscape would be the political trend until 1928. The flood of the Mississippi River in that year and a slow response by the Coolidge Administration and the Hoover administration would result in a change in how many African-Americans voted in the 1932 election. The inherent racism within the Democrat party would persist well into modern times, until the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

The 1860 Republican party platform was steeped in anti-slavery and "free soil" principles. By 1861, the Civil War had broken out. Abraham Lincoln decided to issue the Emancipation Proclaimation on January 1, 1863 declaring slavery illegal in the United States and freeing all slaves within the United States. However, it took quiet legislation, by some states like Maryland and Rhode Island, to finally eliminate all slavery. By April 9, 1865, the bloody conflict, that killed 640,000 people, was over and the nation had to get about the business of stitching itself back together as well as handling 2.5 million new African-American citizens. This effort was called Reconstruction.

Reconstruction

By many historical accounts, Reconstruction was a terrible failure. The Civil War had plunged the national government into debt, despite the variety of taxes Congress had passed to wage the war. The expenses continued into Reconstruction, as destroyed railroads and other infrastructure destroyed by the war were replaced. However, the dust of battle was still settling when many men, like Thaddeus Stevens, thought that the time to enfranchise African-Americans into the American story was now present and saw Reconstruction as an opportunity for a "second founding" that would erase the mistakes of the past and make all citizens, regardless of race or previous condition of servitude, equal in the country and under the law. However, while Reconstruction was an opportunity, it ended up being a wasted one. Reconstruction started as a progressive movement. However, by 1877, much of the promises were never delivered.

The central question of Reconstruction was simple; how could 2 million uneducated slaves become productive citizens. Racist attitudes of the day largely determined that no, they certainly could not. Progressive abolitionists resisted this notion and much of the political tension around the time centered on that question. Many people at the time viewed Andrew Johnson as someone who was trying to keep the unruly, unkempt, and inferior blacks from ruling the nation. Efforts were made to keep the formerly enslaved from voting or holding office. Much of the racial policy of America in the decades afterwards would center around this tension.

There were basically 3 problems during Reconstruction:

1. How to reunite the country
2. Who should set these policies (Congress or the President)
3. What to do with the former slaves

The first problem continued to be contentious until the end of Reconstruction when federal troops finally returned to their barracks and weren't actively patrolling southern communities. Instead of bringing the country back together, most Northerners, tired of the racial politics, simply gave up the fight for any sort of equality for blacks in the South. Although voting rights had been extended in the years during the active occupation, once federal troops returned to their barracks, voting rights were rescinded. Black congressmen (and one Senator) elected in 1866 and later were voted out by 1878-1880. The second problem, who should control Reconstruction, ultimately resulted in the impeachment of Johnson. The effort failed in the Senate. Congress did its best to maintain its power over the process but there were constant and infamous debates between Congress and President Johnson. The third problem was solved with what is commonly called "the Reconstruction Amendments."

The Reconstruction Amendments

The 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the Constitution were passed by Congress and ratified by the states in order to do the major work of extending civil liberties in the years after the Civil War during Reconstruction. These amendments enshrined equal protection under the law (14th), universal male suffrage (15th), and abolishing slavery (13th), except as a prison sentence, into the Constitution. It is on these amendments much of our modern civil liberty cases rest. These amendments were meant to supercede whatever laws the Southern states might pass to disenfranchise former slaves. These amendments began the legal framework to include former slaves into society. Lax enforcement in the South meant that it would be 100 years before the descendants of the enslaved would begin to truly enjoy these rights. However, one of the things that was not abolished at the time was the Poll Tax.

Southern states used the poll tax as a way to keep the electorate small and to essentially disenfranchise black voters. Although the fees for voting seemed small, ranging from $1-$2, the cost at the time made it so only those wealthy enough to have disposable income could vote. Other states had onerous record keeping requirements, which disenfranchised sharecropping farmers, who moved often from farm to farm. Literacy tests were also common and were made intentionally difficult to trick black voters into failing the tests. White voters were often given a different test or slipped the answers. Literacy tests and poll taxes would not be made unconstitutional until 1964.

The Klan

The first Klu Klux Klan was crushed in 1872; however, between 1866 and 1872, they operated a reign of terror throughout the South. It started as a Tennessee social club, that soon took to horseback, wrecking terror on former slaves throughout the South. Pleas for help from newly formed black communities fell on deaf ears in the North. The KKK or the Klan used esoteric symbols on long white robes and even adorned their

horses with these symbols and covered their horses in long black robes. Their reign of terror was illustrated in the incredibly racist silent film, *Birth of a Nation* (1915). Their focus was on putting the fear of the white man into a race of people they considered to be inferior. They primarily focused on political assassinations during their period of operation. Although this iteration of the Klan was not long lived, it would lay the ground-work for a revival of the organization in the 1920s, one that still exists today.

Failed Opportunities

Ultimately, Reconstruction failed. Most of the racist, confederate leaders, with a few exceptions, ended up back in power. The result of Reconstruction was the firm entrenchment of white power in the South. President Andrew Johnson, who succeeded President Lincoln after his untimely assassination in 1865, pardoned white southerners, except a few wealthy plantation owners and a few select leaders. However, even those leaders were granted pardons, eventually. Johnson is remembered as one of the worst presidents in U.S. history. He was the worst person to be in charge of the critical work of reuniting the country and creating opportunity for its new citizens. John Wilkes Booth, much like other assassins like Gavrilo Princep, changed history with a single bullet.

As a result of these tensions, Democrat legislatures swept across the South and quickly stopped any chance for the newly freed slaves to become a part of society. The cultural attitude was to replicate slavery as best as they could without it being slavery. Jim Crow Laws were passed to keep black people as far from public life as humanly possible and to maintain the idea that black people were fundamentally different from white people. Blacks were restricted from the professions and had no money to buy land. Many slaves ended up right back where they had started. This lack of help for new slaves began a 150 year cycle of poverty that persists to this day. If a national program of education had been instituted and if more had been done to really bring former slaves into society, things could have been much different. However, that was simply not the case. What to do with the formerly enslaved was a question that was never solved to the satisfaction of anyone, other than former slave owners. Former slaves asked for "40 acres and a mule" but that never happened. The North resisted redistributing land from former slave owners to former slaves and this left most slaves unable to provide for themselves, and back on the plantation for paltry wages or engaged in sharecropping. Sharecropping was a simple but exploitative business arrangement. The contract was simple; the farmer was given use of the land as long as they shared the crops with the landowner. Sharecropping persisted well into the 20th Century. Former Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, is the daughter of sharecroppers. My own Father grew up the son of a sharecropper in central Alabama and in 1947, they were able to buy their land and start their own business growing vegetables, among other things.

While Reconstruction may have been an opportunity for a "second founding." The promise of the period was never realized. Northern, non-slave holding states achieved the abolitionist goal of freeing the slaves but were never able to follow through on helping former slaves create a future for themselves and their children. Fatigue set in and due to the nature of Andrew Johnson and others, there was no political will to really force the South to accept the new reality. Instead, the South created institutional, legalized racism through Jim Crow laws.

Jim Crow

Jim Crow, as a phrase, is an interesting piece of history. The name became synonymous with Negro. Jim Crow was a catch-all term to describe black people. The name was based on an 1832 routine by Thomas D. Rice, in blackface, that became a standard stand-in for any actual black representation. Jim Crow laws swept across the South after Reconstruction. Louisiana was the first by mandating separate rail cars. School segregation was next. Many former slaves had already set up their own separate schools due to a lack of admission into local white schools at the time and soon the separation was codified in law. The phrase "separate but equal" became the legal standard for separate black facilities, including schools, public transportation, restaurants, movie theaters, bath rooms, hotels, drinking fountains, and entrances to buildings. Many buildings were entirely off limits to black people. The idea that black people should be kept separate from white people was the next incarnation of the idea of slavery: black people were less than white people and should not live as white people live and certainly should not live near them or interact with them.

This was not just a southern phenomena either. These rules extended out west as well. Western cities, like Denver, had only one hotel where black people were welcomed. When Hattie McDaniels was nominated by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for Best Supporting Actress in *Gone with the Wind*, she was kept out of sight at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles until they learned she had won. They let her onstage to accept her award for her part in *Gone With the Wind* and promptly hustled her out of the building, award in hand.

Jim Crow policies controlled every aspect of life for black people throughout the country. Although codified in law in the South, the idea that black people did not belong in certain public spaces would become a part of the American cultural fabric. The right to simply exist was a right often denied to people based on skin color and African-Americans were often specifically targeted. These policies kept the descendants of slaves restricted from many opportunities in employment, housing and simple enjoyment of life. Even in professional sports, the idea that Jackie Robinson could play baseball as well as someone who was white was, at one time, an innovative idea. The idea that black people were smart, capable, and excellent humans was a concept that had to be fought for over and over again in a variety of fields. The idea that someone of color could do anything is a uniquely modern idea. The progress towards this was a road paved with hard work and sealed in blood.

Rosa Parks made national headlines when she refused to move to the back of the bus to accommodate a white rider; an offense for which she was arrested. By the late 1950s, there were a variety of leaders agitating for an improvement in civil rights for black people. Martin Luther King Jr. made a name for himself agitating for improved conditions in church throughout the South starting in Alabama and spreading through Georgia and Mississippi. Malcom X, considered more radical, made a statement by changing his name to acknowledge the loss of heritage as a result of the slave trade. He refused the last name of the people who had owned his ancestors. Before his untimely assassination, he was advocating for a far more violent revolution than Martin Luther King. King preached peaceful resistance and a change to the economic system. Malcolm was more radical and more open to violence to achieve their shared goals. Both encouraged the early tactics of the Civil Rights movement by demonstrating and performing direct actions that flew in the face of the established rules.

The early Civil Rights leaders rode through the South on buses protesting segregation and rode in integrated buses that they had rented. They sat at segregated lunch counters and cafeterias. Those who broke those rules were often accosted with food being dumped on them. The police were often called. Protesters suffered bites from police dogs and were injured as the nozzles of firehouses were turned on the protesters.

Breaking the back of segregation was important work and could be deadly. James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner were killed in June 1964 by a local Mississippi lynch mob for registering black people to vote. They were part of an organization doing this sort of work and are listed as martyrs at the Southern Poverty Law Center. Their deaths and the resulting federal investigation was memorialized in the film, *Mississippi Burning*.

Segregation eventually was abolished but it came at the cost of blood and lives. Many of those who fought this racism, like Representative John Lewis (D-GA), are still alive and their lives tell the story of how the United States finally put these laws behind us. However, it's important to remember that these laws touched real lives.

My paternal grandmother worked at the University of Alabama as a maid; a university she could not send her children to until 1965. There were many spaces where the only way a black person could appear was as a servant for white patrons. Movie theaters had separate balconies, if they allowed black patrons at all. Lunch counters, restaurants, and a variety of public spaces were simply off limits to certain people based on the color of their skin. It was against these sort of regulations, that the early Civil Rights movements sought to change. The proposal was simple. How could everyone be equal citizens if they were not treated equally in public spaces with equal access to schools and businesses? While most people thought of this problem as primarily a problem with the South, that was not the case. Segregationist policies had spread to the entire country. African-Americans were often subject to the American policy of "separate but equal."

During the Civil Rights movement, one of the way the message of civil rights for everyone was spread was through music. By the 1960s, black musicians excelled in the medium despite the limited opportunities for broad release. Artists like Nina Simone, James Brown, Miles Davis, and Sam Cooke all wrote and performed songs like "Mississippi Goddamn" "A Change is Gonna Come" and "Say it Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud." This music and these stories would become vital anthems for the struggle for Civil Rights. Music has a power to tell a story and express an experience that even the best MLK speech cannot evoke. Music makes it personal. As Malcolm Gladwell put it, "it's specific to a people, a time, and a place." This also corresponded to a change in popular music overall.

By the 1960s, black music has already been spreading throughout the South. However, it had not yet become mainstream. Delta blues was the basis for modern rock and roll. The 1960s changed all that. With titular groups like The Supremes, Martha and the Vandellas, The 4 Tops, and The Temptations, black music was moving out of black owned radio stations and into the mainstream American consciousness. Although the Supremes never enjoyed the cult success of the Beatles, at the time, they were just as marketable and often even more so than the iconic British band. They performed multiple #1 hits and bridged genres from doo wop, to early disco.

Black art was not limited to music, writers like James Baldwin published important books that exposed the black experience for the first time. He told the black american experience from his own NYC perspective and you can feel the struggle, depression, and cognitive dissonance in every word. Before this period, it was nearly impossible for black writers to have their words read by a mainstream audience. The opening of publishing and art to diverse voices is still on-going but the trail was blazed by some powerful voices and told powerful stories.

American racism played out in the media. Opportunities for black singers, musicians, and others were limited. Black actors were rare in films and they often only played roles as servants, like Hattie McDaniels. Many black singers only appeared on black radio stations. Many mainstream radio stations would not play their music. Segregation became more visible on a national scale with the advent of television.

When television arrived, segregation came with it, as well. Black actors and actresses were often separated until the late 1960s when people like Bill Cosby broke through with *I Spy*. Star Trek broke ground with a diverse cast of white actors, an asian actor (George Takei), and a black actress (Nichelle Nichols). Even Asian and Native American actors were limited to being the help or one-dimensional roles. However, even as more and more black people appeared on television and even with other actors, small things could still cause a national scandal.

Vanity Fair recalls the story of Petula Clark touching the arm of Harry Belafonte during a duet on her special, "Petula." The move was so controversial Doyle Lott, President of the Plymouth Division of Chrysler that sponsored the show, left the building. The story of his behavior hit the media and at the outset it seemed like he was uncomfortable with that much personal contact between the black singer and Petula Clark, a white woman. Public outrage ensued putting Plymouth in the cross hairs

because of the media coverage. The controversy grew to such a degree that Doyle Lott was later fired from his job due to the controversy around his seemingly racist behavior and Plymouth quickly walked back his actions publicly. Media was not the only place where segregation had to be eliminated. The fight began in America's public schools.

Brown vs. Board of Education

Education remains fairly segregated to this day, despite 40 years of policy trying to fight it. Education segregation was legally binding until 1954 when the Brown family sued the Topeka Kansas Board of Education in 1952 for the right to send their daughters to the white school in their neighborhood rather than the black school farther away. The case wound its way to the Supreme Court and in 1954, legal school segregation was struck down as unconstitutional. This set off a national firestorm. Southern states resisted desegregation immediately and some, like the State of Arkansas, flatly refused to deal with desegregation. The situation became so dire that President Eisenhower sent troops to desegregate the schools. Little Rock High School burst onto the national scene as the first black students gingerly stepped foot into the all-white school, under protection. White students resisted outside creating some of the most iconic photography of the changes America moved through in its efforts to become a multi-ethic democracy.

However, despite efforts to integrate schools, the plan did not go well. Although some black students did end up integrating with white schools, education remained stubbornly segregated. Black teachers, rather than being integrated into white schools, were simply fired. White parents did not want their children taught by black people. Rather than contend with integrated schools, many white parents moved to the suburbs where the neighborhoods were mostly white, ensuring that their children would not have to integrate. This contributed to the phenomena of White Flight, which left the urban core of cities empty of people and lacking in the tax base to support essential services including education. As people left cities, property values plummeted leaving buildings empty, businesses bereft of customers, and city government scrambling to fill the gaps. New York City famously declared bankruptcy in the late 1970s due to this very sort of change. Other parents formed new school districts that only included white neighborhoods. To solve this problem, bussing was proposed. bussing was a policy where black students would be bussed, often an hour or longer to schools without diverse student populations. Cities, like Chicago, Detroit, and Los Angeles, all employed this strategy. The idea was to give black students access to improved schools and improved teaching. However, this action never provided the promised results and by the early 1980s, the policy was largely abandoned. To this day, schools are still fairly segregated. Even now, white parents continue to redraw school district lines to create intentionally less diverse schools.

The Second KKK

William J. Simmons, a native of Atlanta, saw the silent film, *Birth of a Nation* (1915) and saw for himself a chance to recreate a fraternal organization in the same tradition of the KKK. He lit a familiar burning cross to announce that the Klu Klux Klan of Reconstruction was back in business. By 1925, when the group marched on Washington, D.C., the organization mustered a million men to march on the capital. The KKK

held social gatherings, festivals, and other activities. They wrapped up their hate in the veneer of small town values. The KKK held charity drives for orphans and opened Protestant-only hospitals. They donated Bibles and American flags to schools. Many hospitals at the time were Catholic owned and funded and they viewed these efforts as a way to counteract that influence.

That cross would go on to be a warning to black people. If a black person moved into the wrong area and found one on their lawn, it was a warning to flee. If, somehow, a black person had run afoul of the strict social hierarchy of the South, it was a precursor to the violence to come. This version of the KKK saw this sort of behavior as necessary for good patriotism and a defense of white, Christian values. In popular cinema, members of the KKK are often depicted as poor, southern whites cavorting in pickup trucks. However, the KKK counted police, sheriffs, and other middle class people among their number. Although the original KKK had been mostly in the South, this new Klan had members throughout the nation, even in places like Colorado and Ohio. The KKK became an organization through which powerful connections and networking were possible. The group backed political candidates at all levels including senators from Indiana and Colorado.

The new Klan's platform might sound familiar to some of the modern debates that rage in this country. The new Klan demonized the rise of Catholic and Jewish control in the American life and stood firmly against the latest influx of Eastern European immigrants, which they branded as communists. The demonization of black people was expected but they also added Asian and Latinx people among them. They also created what can be described as the first culture war. They stood against teaching evolution in schools (which would lead to the famous debate between Williams Jennings Bryan and Clarence Darrow), alcohol (prohibition had just been ratified in 1920), and birth control (the diaphragm had recently been invented in 1922). This "true Americanism" platform immediately led to violence. Floggings, beatings, murders, and assaults were reported by KKK members throughout the country. Immigrants, black people, and women sitting with men in cars were all attacked. Doctors who performed abortions were tarred and feathered. Although most people did not condone the violence, the actions were viewed as upholding morally conservative values and the simple idea that the white race ought to reign supreme. As violent as they were, the main focus was to celebrate the people who were Protestant, native-born, and above all else: white.

The second Klan reached a peak in 1925 and retreated somewhat thereafter. The 1960s would be another halcyon time for the group followed by a steep drop off in membership. Federal intervention in the South to enforce the Civil Rights Act, school integration, and the ultimate repeal of segregation left the group fighting a losing battle. However, the Klan is still active today, although in far smaller numbers. The internet has allowed their ideas and ideology to thrive and find homes for hate on popular white supremacist websites and social media pages. Although most digital white supremacists are not Klan members, the ideology has spread and resulted in real-world consequences, like the Charlottesville March in 2017. Since 2016, the open racism against immigrants and minorities has gotten louder and much of that allowance has stemmed with the tacit endorsements that have come from the White House. Both their Klan and their ideology of hate lives on.

Red Lining

After World War II, the federal government had a housing problem. Millions of men were coming back from the war and almost no housing had been built during the war due to rationing. All of these men would be needing housing for their new families. Some city planners presumed that people would continue to live in cities, as they had done before the war, and others saw the empty land around cities as a land for opportunity.

While cities planned large housing projects to inexpensively house people, others, like William Levitt, saw an opportunity for people to own their own home on inexpensive land that was near the jobs in the cities. In 1947, he began selling homes in his newly created town of Levittown, New York. The houses sold quickly and he expanded. This model would begin to dominate the landscape and start to form the familiar American suburb. Construction was on an on-site assembly line basis. Teams of specialized workers would go to each home site and perform their task and move onto the next home site.

To fuel the suburban expansion, the federal government offered generous housing loans that began the (Federal Housing Assistance) FHA program. The federal government created maps of different cities defining the neighborhoods by colors. Green neighborhoods where the residents were almost all white were the best places to offer loans and were given generous terms. Italians, hispanics and jewish neighborhoods were demarcated with African-American neighborhoods being the least desirable and colored red. FHA loans were not available in red neighborhoods. Federally backed loans were not available to black borrowers leaving them to the very limited private market. This resulted in many black borrowers unable to move to the suburbs and those that did often found many neighborhoods were not open to them. Realtors would refuse to show homes to many black borrowers or would use race-coded language in advertising.

In those neighborhoods where black home owners were welcome, a system of contract housing was setup wherein the person selling the house would sell the house to the person on-time. A contract sale was fairly simple. A seller would create a contract where the purchase price was split over a set number of regularly monthly payments. It was similar to a mortgage but instead of borrowing money from the bank, the seller essentially held the note. The buyer was responsible for the upkeep of the building and the taxes over the life of the contract. Contract selling isn't inherently bad. However, these contracts were often unfair and if the family missed a payment or had any other problems, they would be evicted with little notice and lose all of their equity. There was little recourse to stop this.

This policy still affects American cities today. Major American cities like New York, Los Angeles, Denver, Chicago, Seattle, Houston, Charleston, Jacksonville, Pittsburgh, or any city with a major NFL franchise, except St. Louis, bears the scars of redlining policies still persisting, 40 years after federal law made them obsolete. By and large, people still live in the same neighborhoods where they were forced to congregate in the 1950s. Despite this policy being long abandoned, thanks to equal housing protections, the country remains fairly segregated. Much of this segregation has to do with income

but it also has to do with people sealing themselves off in sub-divisions and communities to keep them intentionally one race.

The economic consequences of this has also been dire. For the generations of people born after World War II, owning a home and earning the long-term equity from the precipitous rise in house values, was a big pathway to long-term wealth. For middle class people, their biggest asset is their home. For African-American households, this chance to build wealth over the past 50 years was not an opportunity given to many of these households. This has resulted in racial wealth inequality that only now is being addressed.

Affirmative Action

Years of Jim Crow laws that not only controlled the behavior of black people and other races, depending on their location, left an unbalanced country where the white group had been able to take advantage of opportunities in employment and education that were restricted to everyone else. This was an imbalance that needed to change. The chief policy used to begin the process of rebalance these opportunities was called Affirmative Action.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 created Title VII, which created the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEPC), which set forth discrimination rules about federal contractors, education institutions receiving federal dollars, and other institutions receiving federal dollars. The EEOC also sets rules through the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and other laws meant to reduce the discrimination of people based on race, color, religion, and national origin. States and even municipalities have other rules that extend those rights to other groups.

The basic premise is that in employment and educational advancement, race, color, religion, and national origin should have no effect on the decision to accept someone to a college, university, or job. The EEOC requires education institutions to set up metrics for Affirmative Action and remedy any cases of discrimination. Many private organizations have also created metrics for this as well. If discrimination is found, people do have legal recourse, if it can be proven. Affirmative Action, as such, is the effort by many to remedy past discrimination by giving marginalized groups special consideration in employment and education to promote people who would have not been selected in an earlier time. Affirmative Action has a long history of controversy because there are people who believe that the only reason many people of color are in certain places or in certain institutions is because of their race to the detriment of white people.

The purpose of Affirmative Action is to reduce the many barriers communities of color face in any sort of advancement and to be liberal with opportunities. Affirmative Action has a great deal of myth around the policy. The chief of which is that white people are purposefully disadvantaged by the process. Affirmative Action does not disadvantage whites and studies of these policies have shown that white enrollment does not decrease due to Affirmative Action.

Inside Higher Ed cited an NPR survey that found that 55% of white Americans believe that there is discrimination of white people today and that 11% believe that they have been discriminated against themselves while applying to or at college. California and Michigan have eliminated race as a factor in admissions and white people did not lose any slots in the universities; in fact, Asian enrollment increased and black enrollment fell. When Gallup polled people asking if they were in favor of Affirmative Action policies, only 51% of non-Hispanic whites were in favor compared to 76% for blacks and 69% for Hispanics.

Affirmative Action is deeply rooted in the history of discrimination. Affirmative Action seeks to begin the undoing of that past. That is why it remains an important part of decisions regarding employment and education. Society must acknowledge the shared history. We have to be honest about who we are and what we've done. The reality is that the United States has been built on the back of the poor and many of these poor people have been people of color.

Black Lives Matter and Police Violence

The history of African-Americans and police extends well before the slavery period. Before 1965, posses of men were regularly hired to work as slave catchers to capture runaway slaves. Police enforcement toward black people has remained harsh. Police were on the front line of enforcing Jim Crow laws and black people lived in constant fear of police interaction in public spaces. Sitting and standing near businesses could earn citations for black people that often would not have been given out to white people. Class is also an element of these policies, as well. The poorer someone is, the less desirable they are in a public space.

In recent days, there have been well-publicized social media scandals of white, usually middle class or above, white people calling 911 on black people simply for being somewhere the caller thinks they ought not to be, including churches, pools, and elsewhere. The real indictment on society is that this is not simply overbearing policing but it is backed up by decades of legislation on the subject. Although the laws are supposed to apply to everyone, like many laws in this country, simply being white, wealthy, or both means that many laws simply do not apply to you. For black people, the fear of police and what they might do or how they might harm you is rooted in centuries of police violence. The common police motto to "serve and protect" often does not apply to black people or poor people. The minority and the poor are demonized, arrested, and cited while those with the privilege of wealth or skin color are given a pass. This extends into how the prison system works and even how education works with the school-to-prison pipeline.

Black Lives Matter

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement is the latest large-scale movement to highlight the police brutality tactics that are in use by police forces around the country. BLM protests have nationalized the idea that when it comes to interactions with the police, black people are at a disadvantage and have a much higher chance of being killed

during the encounter than white suspects, even during a simple traffic stop. The media has done a good job of covering some of the most recent incidents of this behavior.

Sandra Bland died in jail after being pulled over for not using her turn signal. During a traffic stop, the police officer offer unnecessarily removed her from her car and arrested her for something that normally would be handled with a simple citation. The circumstances of her death in jail are still being investigated. A similar story played out with Philando Castile, who was shot during a traffic stop. It was visceral as his girlfriend, at the time, live streamed the traffic stop. He was shot reaching for his wallet. The police officer thought he had a gun. One of the most surprising but sad things about many of these stories is how many bullets are often fired. In many cases, like Philando Castile, it is not 1 or 2 bullets, it's multiple shots. In some cases, the officers empty their weapons into the victim with 7-9 bullets being fired. If there are multiple officers involved, the number can range far higher. The argument from the police that they are using force to apprehend a suspect would stand better if they used that force more judiciously rather than simply emptying a magazine into a victim.

A classic and well publicized case of police brutality took place in New York City. Eric Garner was killed for selling loose cigarettes in New York City and was practically choked to death by a team of officers right on the sidewalk. What he was doing was obviously a crime but no one should have died for that crime. His last words were, "I can't breathe." Protesters put those final words on t-shirts. The police did not view him as human and the footage is gut-wrenching. There are dozens of more stories similar to these.

These killings have sparked protests of the poor treatment of black citizens in this country. The protests have been active since 2014 causing many people to post "Black Lives Matter" signs on their cars and homes to support the movement. Clashes with police have caused the police to arrest people simply for protesting or standing in the street complaining that the black community has been unfairly targeted by the police and that those clashes frequently end in violence. Like most people, the police are supposed to be subject to the same laws as everyone else. However, given the lack of indictments and convictions for police officers who often shoot unarmed people, it appears that the police do not have to subscribe to the same laws. The worst part is that the police are protected by law from being held accountable for their actions.

There are two Supreme Court decisions set forth regarding the standards for this; Tennessee vs. Garner and Graham vs. Connor. These cases hold that if the police are defending an innocent party, fear for their lives, or are trying to stop someone from leaving a violent felony, then they are authorized to use deadly force. If any reasonable person says that the police officer was fearing for his life, then the violence is technically authorized. This has led police officers to simply say, " I feared for my life," as a defense. Often, police officers are free to return to the streets after an incidence of violence. In 2016, 1,092 people were killed by the police. The majority were white with blacks and Hispanics making up the remaining 48%, together. Black and Hispanic victims tend to be younger.

However, this is far higher than the average of other nations. Iceland has had one

police initiated killing in the past 71 years. In England and Wales, there have been 55 police shootings in the past 24 years. The population of England and Wales is 59 million people compared to 325 million in the United States. However, if those ratios stay the same, police in England and Wales, if the population of those countries was the same as the United States, would have only killed about 275 people. Canada averages around 25 police shootings a year in a population of about 30 million people. Germany, with 80 million people, is somewhat higher with 15 shootings between 2010 and 2011. None of these countries even begin to come close to the United States in the number of police shootings. The facts are clear: the police are out of control in the United States. However, this is somewhat deliberate. The police have come to resemble a military force more than anything else in the United States in the last 20 years.

Police Militarization

The average time to train to be a police officer in this country stands at around 22 weeks. The actual training time varies by municipality. Most cities don't require anything more than a high school diploma, although some cities will require an associate's degree or comparable college credits. A viral CNN story tells a sad tale: in many places it takes longer to become a barber or hair stylist than it takes to become a police officer. More training has been a key policy that policy makers have mentioned to reduce police violence; however, more training doesn't address one of the chief problems with modern police: they are more like military troops than before.

One of the big differences between police forces of the past and modern police forces is the professionalization of the police force and the militarization of the police force. This is observable in the world. Modern police forces are armed with automatic weapons and Special Weapons and Tactics Teams or SWAT and are now common when performing a no-knock raid. Police will often arrive to a protest in riot gear. They will have helmets with shields for their eyes and medieval like plastic shields for their bodies, which are also used to push the crowds back like a Roman Legion.

The War on Drugs has also contributed to the increase in the militarization of police. Drug dealers and networks are well-armed and often well financed. When the police began to crackdown on drugs in the mid 1970s and enforced the ever tighter regulations on drugs ranging from marijuana to cocaine and amphetamines, those who trafficked in drugs were willing and able to shoot back at police. The Federal government poured money and resources into the War on Drugs. Local police were often on the front line of enforcing these laws and arrest drug dealers. Not only did the police increase their violence but the myths around also instilled fear into the police. People on exotic substances like PCP were considered "uncontrollable." Police began to keep more powerful weapons in their patrol cars. SWAT teams would raid drug houses like a military operation. Over the past 40 years the United States has spent $1 trillion on the War on Drugs with little to show for it other than an increase in mass incarceration and a paranoid, over-equipped police force.

This weaponization of police has been promoted by the narrative that the police "are under attack" and need the necessary tools to "fight the war on police." These false narratives have pushed police departments to buy or take increasingly militaristic

equipment. In 1991 the federal government created the program 1033, which allowed them to receive, often for free, old military equipment that is no longer needed. The maintenance costs can strain local budgets, so to keep the equipment, departments often feel the need to use the equipment to justify its existence. Cities with deeper pockets can afford vehicles built specifically for them that resemble armored personnel carriers. This has led the police to increasingly resemble military troops rather than peace officers or peace officers.

Race Riots

The war on police narrative has a long history but it's recent incarnation begins in the 1960s as the nation was making a variety of social changes. Americans took to the streets to protest the Vietnam war and to support Civil Rights. In a variety of cases, the police were ill-equipped to deal with violent protesters. This was particularly true during race riots.

The 1960s were a busy time for race relations in this country and the many social changes brought on a variety of violence. The 16th Street Church was bombed in 1963 killing 4, including 3 girls on their way to Sunday School. In Los Angeles, the Watts Riots of 1965 broke out as a result of the arrest of Marquette Frye for reckless driving. The officer arrested him because he was driving drunk. The confrontation started after his brother, who was also in the car, walked to their home and brought their mother back. After that, the situation is unclear. Someone shoved the woman and she jumped the police officer. Crowds gathered and the resulting riot lasted for 6 days. The bulk of the race riots that broke out in the 1960s stretched up and down the eastern seaboard, from Georgia to New York City. New Jersey had 3 riots taking place in the state in August of 1964 and riots would continue to break out until at least 1971.

However, in 1985, a row house in Philadelphia, populated by members of the activist group MOVE. MOVE does not standing for anything other than the idea that to make change you have to "move." The members all adopted the last name "Africa" to their names. MOVE had moved into a row house in Philadelphia. They had a contentious relationship with the city already stemming from a 1978 shootout that had killed one officer. MOVE had fortified the location with a bunker and supplies. Neighbors complained about the noise from their obscene political messages and the trash scattered around the property. Several of the members had warrants and the police obtained a warrant to arrest the offenders. They were classified as a terrorist organization by the city and were charged with making terrorist threats, illegal possession of firearms, and contempt of court. The neighbors were cleared out for 24 hours during the siege. On May 13, 1985, the police arrived in force with 500 officers to execute the warrant. When shooting broke out, the police bombed the building setting off a cache of fuel that burned down the entire block. Eleven people in the house, including children and the leader John Africa, were killed. Members reported police shooting at those trying to flee.

The race riots of the 1960s left police departments reeling. The lack of preparedness for civil unrest and the violence in the community changed policing in the United States forever. The race riots and violent Vietnam protests motivated police departments to

militarize. They traded their 38 police specials for Glocks; 1911 pistols and shotguns. Today, the police have ready access to automatic weapons as well. This militarization became evident by the next time a major race riot broke out, in 1992.

Rodney King and Latasha Harlins

Violence in regards race relations broke out again in 1992 when two cases burst the boil of racism in Los Angeles. The first was the case of Latasha Harlins. Latasha Harlins was on her way to school and stopped for breakfast at a Korean-owned grocery store in L.A. Korean immigrants owned most shops in South Central L.A. and elsewhere. She was with a friend. She had her backpack with her and when she picked out her orange juice and other items and made her way to the counter, with money in hand, the shopkeeper, Soon Ja Du, believed she has stolen something and had put it in her backpack. Ms. Du demanded to inspect the backpack, grabbing it at one point. Latasha would not let her have the bag and Ms. Du retrieved her shot gun and fired, killing Latasha Harlins. Du was fined $500 and sentenced to five years of probation and 400 hours of community service with no jail time. Latasha Harlins was killed just under 2 weeks after the brutal beating of Rodney King.

Rodney King was driving his white Hyundai Excel in L.A. when he was pulled over during a regular traffic stop. In the iconic video, he is seen leaving his car and then being brutally attacked by officers of the LAPD using batons. According to their testimony at trial, they thought he was on PCP or another drug and feared for their lives. His face and body were badly bruised.

Controversially, when the officers were tried for assault resulting in bodily injury, the case was moved out of LA county and moved to Simi Valley, a mostly white suburb of Los Angeles. The jury had no black people (the jury was mostly white with one hispanic and one asian juror) and the officers were acquitted on all counts except one for which a mistrial was declared. The resulting lack of a conviction and the wanton murder of Latasha Harlins sparked riots that left most of Los Angeles burning for 3 days.

The crisis was so severe, the State of California declared an emergency in the middle of the night and called in the National Guard. A curfew was instituted as the city continued to burn. The riots sparked from the intersection of Florence and Normadie and spread through South Central to encompass most of the area. Hundreds of fires burnt down businesses, homes, and bearded palms. The police barricaded themselves in the old Parker Center in downtown L.A. The police formed a line outside but when the protest grew in fervor the police eventually moved inside. Protesters tore down a guard shack and a few attempted to set the building on fire. Gangs set aside differences for a moment in time to protest the terrible injustice. Mayor Bradley, L.A.'s first black mayor who had landed the 1984 Olympics, bemoaned the violence and injustice.

Much like the 1965 riots, leaders stood in churches begging for calm. Radio DJs held open call-ins to let people vent their frustration as the ability of white police officers to use the system to set them free from any responsibility for the abuse and for a Korean shop owner to not be held responsible for what should have been a sentence for murder. Those calls for calm went unheard. The violence, as a result of the Rodney

King verdict, lasted for 5 days until the City of Los Angeles was put under a dawn to dusk curfew and the National Guard was roaming the streets, weapons out, to finally end the violence. Nine hundred fires burned in L.A.; everywhere from South Central to Hollywood. Businesses were destroyed and people were displaced and were sleeping in shelters. The violence finally ended and L.A. was left to pick up the pieces. Daryl Gates, the police at the time, eventually resigned over the incident and the LAPD was left to continue policing while working to rehabilitate its image within the community.

The Violence Never Stopped

Over the past 5 years, police violence against black Americans has drawn international headlines. The violence has been remarkable. Online videos have allowed everyone to see people like Philando Castile shot in his car or Eric Garner choked to death on the sidewalk. This stands in contrast to mass shooters like Dylan Roof who killed 9 people at a prayer meeting in a church in Charleston, South Carolina and lived to tell the tale. Instead of merely being shot, they bought him fast food after his arrest because they thought he might be hungry. Age is little factor in the brutality of police shootings. The narrative around them remains the same, as well. The police have the same narrative, "we feared for our lives" and "we thought he had a gun."

In March 2019, a protest regarding the decision not to charge police for killing Stephon Clark, who had fled police at the San Francisco City Hall, caused a stir when a young black gentlemen jumped on to a table to protest the decision. Police were present and activists used a new tactic to deploy white privilege in real time. Instead of standing with the black protestor, they stood in front of him. In a video posted to Twitter by KRON, a local TV station, police seemed to be ready to use batons and other detainment methods; however, once a white gentlemen and a white (possibly also Asian) woman stepped in front of him, the police seemed to calm down and use other means to de-escalate the situation. Comment was made at the time that the presence of white bodies seemed to radically change the police's response to this protestor.

As for Mr. Clark, the police were investigating a claim that he had been breaking windows. Body camera footage and helicopter footage was available He was shot in the back between 7-8 times with 20 total rounds being discharged. The police were found to have been fearing for their lives and believed that he had a gun. The police paranoia is a very real thing. However, the numbers don't back up the narrative. In 2017, only 44 officers were killed by gun fire. There are around 1 million police officers in the country. By the numbers, the police have a distinct upper hand. However, any conversation with a police officer usually results in the same language being used. There is a fear that results in an us versus them attitude. Police officers are under strain at all times. They spend their working lives seeing humanity at its worse. They confront dangerous situations on a daily basis. Any confrontation can result in a variety of outcomes.

This has resulted in an authoritarian attitude from the police. Travis Yates wrote in *Law Officer Magazine* in 2016 to "Follow the commands of a police officer or risk dying." Is that really the American society that is free? Is that true liberty? Troops in war zones to take this attitude. Their rules of engagement does not allow the wanton shooting

of civilians. That is considered a war crime. Do Americans want police officers with military-style weapons roaming the streets ready to shoot at the slightest provocation or inability for anyone to follow their strict commands. Isn't that what would be expected from a police state? How is this police behavior allowed in a free country?

The same pattern repeats over and over again. The officer fears for his or her life and another killing is simply allowed. For the police and indeed the greater society, it is simply the cost of doing business. One cannot simply assume that all police are racist, especially in our modern era. However, it is clear from the numbers that police crackdowns and increasing the levels of policing are not a strict solution to crime and that when these crackdowns occur, it is poor people and people of color (with plenty of crossover between those groups) that is causing more of those people to be killed and more violence in those communities. This has not made the country safer; instead, it has allowed the police to use violence whenever and however they choose. The violence and seemingly racist policies do not stop with interactions with police in the regular world. There are more of the same problems with the prison population and the American trend of mass incarceration.

Angola Prison and Mass Incarceration

As it stands, the United States imprisons 2.2 million people, about 25% of the world's total population of prisoners. This number of prisoners is greater than Russia and China, who have political prisoners. In 1972, that population stood at merely 200,000 prisoners. Much of this culture of mass incarceration stems from the War on Drugs and various "tough on crime" initiatives sparked by various local officials. This attitude that the authorities should be "tough on crime" led to an increase in lifetime sentences for drug possession or distribution. Mandatory minimums tied judges' hands further on how they could sentence criminals. Only in recent years have states begun to quietly repeal these regulations and some prisoners have been able to have their sentences commuted and be released on parole. However, the culture of mass incarceration has had an adverse impact on poverty-stricken communities and communities of color. While African-Americans only represent 13% of the American population, representation of African-Americans in federal prison stands at 37.6% according to the Bureau of Prisons. When state prisoners are accounted for, the percentage only drops to 33% with white and Hispanic populations at 30% and 23%, respectively. For the 440 people out of every 100,000 people in prison, the bulk of those prisoners are black. Based on percentage of population, we would anticipate the numbers of minorities in prison to be drastically less and for white prisoners, as they represent 64% of the general population to be much higher. However, that is not the case. Crime since 1991 has been on a steady decline. Violent crime has decreased as well. Most state prisoners are serving time for non-violent offenses.

So what does the states and the federal government do with 2.2 million people that they are responsible for? They certainly don't just sit around and watch TV all day. That is the conditions of some prisons, it's very much based on the level of security involved. Some people are in minimum security prisons and even have work release where they must return to the prison after work. However, in medium and high security prisons, prisoners are often put to work right within the prison's walls. Nowhere is this

more evident and more racially charged than at the famous Angola Prison in Louisiana. Angola Prison is a very interesting sight when video or pictures are posted.

The prison is also a plantation. There is active agriculture including cotton production at the facility. All prisoners who are in reasonably good health work at some job in the prison. In many of the released videos, prison guards on horseback can be seen watching over black prisoners working in the field like it's 1860 and the Civil War never happened. The 13th Amendment abolished slavery except in cases of imprisonment and this has allowed a system of prison labor to grow within the United States. Prison labor includes everything from fighting fires in California to retreading tires and making clothing. Prisoners also can be leased out to businesses who need extra labor. Prisoners, if they are paid at all, only earn an average wage of $2 per hour. When Texas proposed to start paying prisoners a fair wage, the measure was slated to cost $1.2 Billion. The measure was not passed.

For most other countries, prison labor is simply banned. For many European nations, prison is a place to rehabilitate criminals as best they can to re-enter society as soon as possible. However, in the United States, prisoners are not hardly treated with regard to their welfare. Prisons are cramped and often overcrowded. Sexual assault and other kinds of assault can occur, even from the guards.

Prisoners leaving the corrections system face a changed world and limited opportunity for employment and housing. One former convict confessed to me that the only reason he was able to find a job was because one guard gave him $400 to get clothes, some food, and some basic hygiene supplies. Even the basics of human decency are a luxury within the prison system. This can lead to a high recidivism rate where people who leave prison return to a life of crime to survive and then are re-arrested and sent back to prison. This cycle of crime has devastated the black community due to the high rate or incarceration. The most heartbreaking stories are those who were arrested and imprisoned for a small crime and who might have had jobs and a life. For those people, they re-enter society with diminished job prospects and often then become criminals to survive. The prison system as it stands creates more criminals than it rehabilitates.

Economics and the Destruction of Black Wealth

One of the principle projects for newly freed slaves, after the end of slavery, was to survive and then make money, create wealth, and live prosperous lives. However, the newly freed slaves were often at odds with the racist society around them to achieve these goals. While many former slaves ended up as sharecroppers or lowly paid laborers, many were able to go to school, run for Congress and Senate, own land, and begin to create wealth. The fear of violence was pervasive. Even after the first KKK was crushed by federal troops, black families still had to endure violence against them and their property. This often resulted in outright theft and even death, simply for owning land and building a life for themselves. Once federal troops left and racist leaders were back in charge in the South, the violence ensued. By the 1880s, incidences of violence had somewhat calmed down. Advancement among black people continued through college and many black businesses were quite successful. Madam C.J. Walker was the first black millionaire via her line of beauty products. She was a prominent activist and

died a wealthy woman in 1919. Black troops, though segregated, fought in World War I. However, the new century did not stop the violence against black people that had started during Reconstruction. In *The Case for Reparations*, Ta Nehisi Coates recounts the destruction wrought when black people organized in towns and cities and created wealth and opportunity for themselves, "The demobilization of soldiers after the war, which put white and black veterans into competition for scarce jobs, produced the Red Summer of 1919: a succession of racist pogroms against dozens of cities ranging from Longview, Texas to Chicago to Washington, D.C. Organized white violence against blacks continued into the 1920s — in 1921 a white mob leveled Tulsa's "Black Wall Street," and in 1923, another one razed the black town of Rosewood, Florida — and virtually no one was punished."

The Case for Reparations also cited this sad study, "Patrick Sharkey, a sociologist at New York University, studied children born from 1955 through 1970 and found that 4 percent of whites and 62 percent of blacks across America had been raised in poor neighborhoods. A generation later, the same study showed, virtually nothing had changed. Whereas whites born into affluent neighborhoods tended to remain in affluent neighborhoods, blacks tended to fall out of them." People of color have not ascended to the higher echelons of society at the same rate as white people. The Pew Research Center estimates that white households are worth roughly 20 times as much as black households, and that whereas only 15 percent of whites have zero or negative wealth, more than a third of blacks do. Effectively, the black family in America is working without a safety net. When financial calamity strikes — a medical emergency, divorce, job loss — the fall is precipitous.

In some cases, black people were held back due to theft. In 2001, the Associated Press did an 18 month investigation into claims of stolen land. Theft isn't new. At the beginning of *The Case for Reparations* by Ta Nehisi Coates in *The Atlantic*, he begins his case with the many losses of a man from the North Lawndale neighborhood of Chicago. The cavalier attitude that white people had toward the property of black people, like the man's horse which he describes "as the first of my losses," was a common policy in the south. However, when it comes to land, the loss is generational wealth that has held back 13% of the population.

The *LA Times* describes the problem this way: "The AP – in an investigation that included interviews with more than 1,000 people and the examination of tens of thousands of public records – documented 107 land-takings in 13 Southern and border states. In those cases alone, 406 black landowners lost more than 24,000 acres of farm and timber land plus 85 smaller properties, including stores and city lots. Today, virtually all of this property, valued at tens of millions of dollars, is owned by whites or corporations. Properties taken from blacks were often small – a 40-acre farm, a general store, and a modest house. But the losses were devastating to families struggling to overcome the legacy of slavery. In the agrarian South, land ownership was the ladder to respect and prosperity – the means to build economic security and pass wealth on to the next generation."

The story goes on to cite several stories, one from 1908 when David Walker and his family were driven off their land by men in white hoods who had told David to come

out for a whipping. His oldest son was killed in the resulting fire that was set to their home and they were driven from their land, which was folded into the land of a white neighbor. To this day, the land is owned by the neighbor's daughter. The farm was only 2.5 acres. The land was undeveloped at the time of the story.

In 1942, the Espy family was offered $8,000 by the federal government for their land to build an airfield. An all white jury awarded them $13,000. When the war was over, the Navy gifted the land to the City of Vero Beach, despite the Espy's plea to repurchase the land that was used as a fruit grove. The City of Vero Beach used the air strip as a municipal airport and the rest of the land was turned into the Spring Training Facility for the Los Angeles Dodgers. That land was worth 6.19 million dollars in 2001 and certainly worth more now in the intervening years.

Reverend Isaac Simmons was killed in Amite County Mississippi in 1942 for consulting a lawyer when the county claimed they were going to sell his land for non-payment of taxes. The records are not in great shape but the AP investigation showed that indeed his taxes had been paid at the time. That did not stop local men from accosting the family and shooting the good Reverend in the back of the head according to newspaper reports from the period.

In another Mississippi case, property records for Jasper County Mississippi were destroyed by a fire in 1932. The fire was an arson case leaving the area with almost no property records. In 1938, significant tracts of land were claimed by the Masonite paper company. Due to the lack of records, the court awarded the company the land; millions of dollars in timber and oil have been earned from the land. The land is now owned by International Paper, who bought Masonite in 1988. The families who were kicked off their land, being unable to prove their ownership, never saw a dime of the profits.

Bryan Logan, a writer, was doing some research on this family. He discovered land in Virginia that had been willed to his ancestors from their plantation owner in 1855. The land had never been turned over to his family and stayed within the family of the plantation owner. He discovered that in 1955 became the Willow Oaks Country Club. The land is incredibly valuable and any wealth that would have resulted from its ownership was lost to his family.

In 1964, the State of Alabama sued a family who had been working on a 40 acre farm since 1874 contending that the land belonged to the state. According to the LA Times story, "Circuit Judge Emmett F. Hildreth urged the state to drop its suit, declaring it would result in "a severe injustice." The suit went forward and the family was removed from the land. The story did not indicate any compensation. They essentially lost everything of almost 100 years work.

Through land theft and red lining policies, black people have consistently and repeatedly been denied the chance for their share of the American dream. The 20th Century was an opportunity for everyone to build a tremendous amount of wealth that would radically change lives for a generation. However, this was an opportunity denied to whole segments of the population and it has had an adverse affect on the generations of black people in this country. Today in 2019, black people still have higher rates of poverty than any other group, except for Native Americans. Black homeownership is

the lowest of all groups. Household wealth stands at an average of just $2,000 and that counts every basketball player, football player, media star, musician, and Oprah Winfrey. One of the biggest crimes of racism has been the economic degradation of the descendants of those slaves who left the plantation.

The White Experience of Race

One of the presumptions that many white people have is that a conversation about race does not affect them. This is far from true. Racism affects everyone in America. It is so built into the fabric of this nation that almost everyone is being affected by it or advantaged from it. No conversation about racism is complete without talking about the white experience of race and why racism is hard to talk about, even among well-meaning liberal people who should be able to easily have a conversation about race. The white perspective on race is an important one and the only way to advance and change the conversation is to actively engage white people in that conversation and break down how race has affected them. Racism is a result of America's insidious class structure, mythical concepts about America, and a lack of focus on this area.

Why White People Are So Uncomfortable Talking About Race

One of the luxuries that white people enjoy in modern American society is never being an "other." People of color, learn, from a very young age, that they are different. This can be from skin color, cultural differences, and standards of beauty. They then walk through life always being "an other" or someone different and often being treated differently, even in governmental institutions. Imagine what the current trend of police shootings is doing to a generation of young people of color when it comes to their interactions with the police. These cultural attitudes shape people, especially at a young age. These are the kinds of challenges that white children simply do not face.

To that, there is also a cultural sense of belonging that people of color never really get to enjoy. While not always the case, white people can go most anywhere and do most anything and never have to feel "out of place" unless it is due to class, which is another conversation entirely. For many white people, if there are no people of color around, then there must be no racial conversation or race matter at play. This also plays into the idea that white people are "people" and anyone who is not white is simply something else, something different, and therefore "an other."

Ignorance

Race is not something that most white people are forced to address in most areas of their life. Most neighborhoods are still fairly segregated, often by income that is a result of discrimination in employment and a lack of generational movement of wealth. This is not merely conjecture it is born out by the numbers. A black person making $100,000 most likely lives in a neighborhood with people making just $30,000. This is not the case for white people. Most people are also generally unaware of what fears black people may face in their interactions with police, institutions, or through education. In

Brightmag, a corporate HR diversity trainer, Robin DiAngelo faced extreme pushback from white employees who did not want to be trained about working in a diverse workplace and complained about "reverse racism." They were not interested is learning about the racial fabric of this country or how to navigate it. Consider the conversation that I relayed at the beginning of this essay.

Lack of Language

Most white people talk about race in terms of their interactions with it. Conversations usually start with admissions of having a black friend or growing up in a diverse school or having racially progressive parents. It seems like race, for white people, is a dangerous minefield where one wrong word can mark one as a racist and erases the idea that the speaker is a good, moral person. However, this ties into ignorance. There are many positive contributions to the conversation about race from white people. The NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) was founded by white people in conjunction with black people. White people have done good research and education on this matter. The conversation about race does not exclude white voices. Those voices need to be included; that is how change is possible.

Fear and Fragility

Much of the fear and resulting fragility around the white conversation around race has much to do with the simple idea that many white people do not want to admit that they have unwittingly benefited from an institutional bias toward them from a cultural bias toward them and through a country that was created for their benefit and to the disadvantage of other people.

Race breaks down the very American myth that people came here from Europe and worked hard and had success. To admit that much of the American wealth and success has been built on the land of native peoples, the labor of black, yellow, and brown people, and the subjugation of the same completely destroys the myth that it was through ingenuity and hard work alone that created that success. It is a tough but necessary pill to swallow.

White Supremacy

White Supremacy is a simple belief that "white" people, basically anyone with northern European heritage, is superior to people with Hispanic, black, asian, or Jewish heritage. Although not all white supremacy groups denigrate Jewish people, many do. Many groups harken back to the imagery and racial attitudes toward other races that were common in 1930s Germany. Swastikas are common. The modern KKK still uses robes and hoods and other clothing and symbology deeply rooted in their history stretching from Reconstruction.

Modern groups are focused on creating a "white ethno-state" within the United States or as part of a new nation, separate from the current United States. Leaders like Alex Linder often flat out state that black people and people of other groups either need to go back to where they came from or at least move to other parts of the country

so that the white people can separate themselves into a country all their own where they can continue to be the dominant race and not be forced to address issues of racial inequality.

One of the new items on the white agenda is around immigration and this attitude does have some broad based support. The idea that immigrants, which come from all over the world but mostly from Latin American nations, are taking over the country and displacing white people is a common refrain. In the post 9-11 world, there is also a great deal of anger toward muslims, which tend to be black and arab. That community suffers double because not only do they suffer from America's racial discrimination based on skin color but also they suffer due to their religion.

There is a strong belief that diversity and multiculturalism is a danger to the United States and a danger to the white race. White Supremacy groups have been active in some form in the United States since Reconstruction and although they make the news now, these groups have been responsible for violent exchanges, including the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995.

People with these attitudes are active today. In 2018 and 2019, there have been two mass shootings at Jewish synagogues. In Louisiana, 3 black churches have been burnt down in 2019 alone. There will most likely have been even more incidences of violence by the time the reader reaches this work; that is the modern reality. White Supremacy is not merely a political ideology, it is also a violent movement. The clash in Charlottesville proved that again when a young man drove his car into a crowd of people killing one woman. Other protesters were injured in the protest by the police and in other public violence.

Separation by color of skin is ingrained in our society in all sorts of subtle ways. Recently, I read an online story about a gaming store employee who was launching the popular Pokemon game "White and Black." The store was so crowded, the employee announced, "We're going to separate the White and Black lines." Without complaint and almost instantaneously, the crowd separated into lines by skin color. The employee, very embarrassed, clarified the situation and continued the sales of the game. Although the comment was not meant to be racist and they had a thoughtless moment about what exactly they were saying, the fact that the crowd simply separated themselves belies the ingrained knowledge in our society of who we are by racial group.

For black people, any public interaction is an inherently racial experience. White people do not suffer any such "racial stress" (as beautifully put by Robin DiAngelo in her *Brightmag* interview) or any such otherness because they are the dominant group. When white is normal, race seems to be something that white people don't have to deal with on a daily basis. However, even for white people, the underlying presumptions of racism affects them as well. If racism is a lack of humanity, white people have been able to enjoy a humanity denied to other groups.

The White Trash Problem

Nancy Isenberg published a massive book aptly titled, *White Trash: The 400 Year Untold Story of Class in America*. I picked the book up right away and reading through it reveals much, not only about the attitudes of class but how the idea of certain people being simply inferior affected the colonization of the New World. In the early days of America, many of the colonists were not people looking for a new life. The aristocracy of Great Britain looked at their American colonies as a cheap and easy way to get rid of certain people they no longer wanted in Great Britain. Much in the same way they used Press Gangs to fill Royal Navy ships with drunkards and other undesirables, Great Britain emptied prisons or used indentured servitude as a way to empty prisons or as a way to sentence people to pay back a debt. Indenture was a form of economic slavery. The contract was simple, the indentured servant had to work for whoever owned the indenture for how many years the indenture lasted, based on the debt owed. If the task was of a high value, the indenture could be as short as 2 years. However, as a punishment, the indenture could be extended. Also, if the servant caused any loss of financial value to the owner, the indenture could also be extended.

Many of the colonists emptied from prisons were brought to America this way to pay off the cost of their passage. Already impoverished, they were required to work for free until the debt was paid and then, having no access to land, had to find a way to make a living thereafter.

Many of the new colonists were restricted from buying land in the early days of the colonies. Georgia, as a colony, was often used as a prison colony before independence. This system created a permanent underclass of people that existed well into independence. This system was based in the idea that some people were simply "waste people" that provided no real value to society or real productivity and were only valuable if they could be put to productive work, preferably for their betters. This had also had religious and philosophical backing at the time.

Nothing was valuable unless it was productivity in some way and produced something of value. North Carolina was viewed as the first white trash colony, a place for "blockheads" and others. The state lacked a major port and unlike its southern sister colony, did not have a real planter class. Isenberg gives us an analysis of how the British class system was brought right over to the United States. Wealth was in land and the white trash population was simply left out. Puritans in New England had little regard for their use of servants and slaves. How you were born is what you were and there was little social mobility. This extended well into the Civil War period. When Virginia voted to succeed from the Union, what is now West Virginia, populated by poor whites who were little interested in dying for the rights of wealthy planters and their right to own slaves, voted to separate from Virginia and were granted admission to the Union in 1863.

The fact that poor whites were the tip of the spear for racism was a simple human reaction. Ta Nehisi Coates in his blog post for *The Atlantic*, "A Species of Labor We Do Not Want" analyzes the very real fact that poor whites were used a "buffer class" between the enslaved black and the upper class, landowning whites. The logic, no

matter how perverse, follows this: as long as someone is beneath you, it makes you feel better about yourself, it gives you a focus to put your hate for the upper class. Many whites aspired to owning slaves. That represented wealth. Even if a workshop owner could afford a slave, that meant he now owned some wealth.

This problem extends well toward the modern period. Isenberg points out that people like Loretta Lynn, Dolly Parton, and even Bill Clinton, epitomize the red-neck and the idea that these people understand that there are those who look down upon them and don't regard them for very much. Instead of plantation owners, the modern red-neck stands opposed to tech entrepreneurs and cultural elites in coastal cities who "don't get them" and tell them that they are wrong for have racist, sexist, or homophobic opinions. These people do not wish to exist in a culture where they are viewed as "wrong" or are being told that what they think is "wrong." One internet comment I read summarized it perfectly. The article was discussing the controversial North Carolina transgendered bathroom bill allowing transgendered persons to use the bathroom of the gender they identify. One young man simply said, "I don't have a problem with transgendered people, I just don't want to be told what to think about it." He was from Tennessee.

This language was deeply routed in the 2016 election. People stood on television in their "Make America Great Again" clothing proudly saying "He speaks like us." "He says the things that we wish we could say." "He gets us." "He understands what it's like out here." The fact that people from diverse coastal cities are out of touch is not a new thing. States between New York and Los Angeles have been called "flyover states" for 40 years now. Because those are the states you have to fly over to get to the next coast and the statement "not places you want to stop in" is simply implied.

In all the changes that have occurred, many of these places have been left behind. That is part of the cultural fabric as well. Plantation owners wouldn't stoop to do something for "idlers" and other people that weren't deemed worthy in the early days of the colonies. Now, in the zeal to shut down coal mines and create trade agreements that moved jobs overseas for cheaper labor, these people have been left behind again. Instead of being angry at the corporations, which I have always considered the new aristocracy, and others who have shut down plants and closed mines, it's simply easier to blame immigrants and other people of color for the woes that have gutted those flyover states.

White Racial Consciousness and Identity Politics

Identity politics have come under fire for being too extreme and too focused on how everyone is different. This certainly has fueled what is now being branded as the "Intellectual Dark Web" (IDW), a group of thinkers like Jordan Peterson, David Rubin, and Ben Shapiro who push back against identity politics and centering politics around the issues of race or even sexual orientation. Peterson argues that the "regressive left" doesn't merely want equality of opportunity but equality of outcome, which he says is basically impossible. For those that find identity politics tedious, like the IDW thinkers, the constant complaint about discrimination within society and the cultural backlash against ideas, language, and iconography seems childish and limiting. Much of this

thought has to do with these thinkers not wanting to address the very real problems we have in our society and their racial implications.

To talk about poverty without talking about race is not a fair conversation. Even something like infant mortality affects black women more than women of almost every other group. For the IDW, the racial focus becomes a flash point. These flash points start around the "free speech" debate and "de-platforming." How this begins is when a university or institution invites a controversial speaker, like Jordan Peterson or Bill Maher. Students and others who find their thoughts or statements "problematic" will then protest that speaker being invited. These protests often grow large and loud enough that often a speaker will be uninvited. In the social media world, a controversial person like Alex Jones or Milo Yiannopoulos might be put off a platform altogether. It is in this debate is where identify politics, particularly racial politics, become a virulent clash of minds between those would rather not talk about the subjugation of minority groups and those who are advocating for policy changes to undo the mistakes of the past.

For the IDW, this "attack" on them for stating things that aren't popular seems like oppression of speech. The cultural limits of free speech does not extend to the negative reaction they may receive. Anyone has a right to express their views. However, those who do not agree also have a right to make their voice heard. If platforms and others decide to respond due to the outcry then that is their individual choice. One might think that the IDW would certainly celebrate individual choices regarding who they do and do not want to associate with but somehow those individual choices become an attack on free speech. It is amazing to think that free speech is being discussed around identity politics, but that is where the discussion in society is right now.

Much of this has to do with something not often considered in the past: the real feelings of people of color and other marginalized groups. How they experience speakers and types of speech is an emotional luxury normally only afforded to white people. Now the culture has changed and the feelings of many different people are now being considered. For people like Peterson or Sam Harris or other IDW thinkers, this seems like an attack. The reality is that for most of this nation's history, the only opinion that mattered was the dominant white race's opinion. Now, other voices are being heard and as they bringing their grievances to the table through identity politics, those opinions that do not align with the racially diverse cultural view may no longer be welcome.

White Racial Consciousness

One of the biggest things to come out of the 2016 election is the rise of what has been called White Racial Consciousness. This was a narrative that was being talked about right after the election but has fallen out of coverage. It is shameful that through all the polling and incessant data about this election, this idea never got the coverage and the legs that it really needed. I'm not sure why because it is the biggest thing to happen to American elections since the hanging chad.

Big data has made the demographics behind elections far more obvious than old fashioned polling. Using modern technology, we can have a conversation about who white men and white women are voting for as well as every other race. Using other data, we can begin to deduce why they are voting that way as well. The media spent most of the 2016 election trying to discover what the story of the election was from different perspectives. However, the story of white racial consciousness was not discussed beyond a few commentators on the night of the election. That story has been lost ever since.

Bernie and Hillary: The Real Debate

The primary debates between Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton were interesting because while the Republicans were running around trying to understand how politics really work, the real debate about the course of our society was happening between Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders. Bernie represented the fulfillment of the New Age that the 1960s asked us to consider and Hillary Clinton represented the kind of conscious capitalism that had become popular during her husband's term in office. She has been a true vanguard of the middle way between socialism and capitalism. That is really where the discussion happened. The debates between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton lacked substance, as did the entire campaign.

However, the debate for the heart of this country had already happened and while Bernie didn't get the nomination, he won the soul of the Democratic party and he won the debate of where this country is going. People are hurting and they want help. But what did Hillary offer besides a watered down version of what Bernie was saying? Did she run with the program in stride? She didn't and that is partly why Donald Trump is in the White House. That being said, she could have used Bernie as a pathway to reach out to people who feel like America has left them behind (the basket of deplorables) for an assortment of minorities, which she jokingly called her basket of adorables.

Donald Trump and White People Left Behind

Those that have been left behind by the way the country has changed, at least this time around, flocked to popular businessman, Donald Trump. The Donald Trump brand, before the election, was one of the most valuable brands on the market. The very word spoke luxury, high-end, and success. Trump and success were practically synonymous. He was a celebrity, he was outrageous. He enlarged the brand on TV as he decided who would or would not be successful on "The Apprentice." But his greatest achievement, by far, was his ability to understand the sentiment of the nation. In the last 8 years we've seen LGBTQ representation increase, we've seen festering racial wounds broken open and there has been massive social change happening in this country. The world of my early adulthood is nearly unrecognizable compared to the world we live in now. For many people, this has been a massive improvement. For others, like many Trump voters, they feel left behind. The rest of the country has moved on and they are left in shrinking towns, with shrinking jobs, and almost no help. The Great Recession was a sock in the jaw from which many Americans have never recovered.

The media missed the biggest story of all, in all this progress, white people had felt attacked and undermined. When you hear Trump supporters say, "we have a guy on our

side" they are really saying, "We have someone who is white." This will affect elections, both presidential and otherwise for the next 50 years. White voters have discovered that if they want their voices heard in an increasingly multicultural America, it is not simply money that is required, it is getting all whites together and voting in the same direction. Racial voting consciousness is not a new concept. One of the biggest parts of the Civil Rights movement, after the end of segregation, was the recently-gutted Voting Rights Act. Even before the Voting Rights Act, how black people voted mattered in elections. After the Farm Workers movement, led by Cesar Chavez, Hispanic voting began to matter in elections as well. The voting habits of white people have been tracked by white people tended to not vote in a group. White voters ranged from very liberal in California to conservative in Texas. But 2016 was different. People that usually would have voted Democrat voted for a GOP candidate that they did not like. Why? Racial consciousness.

The Real Appeal of Donald Trump

Donald Trump made immigration a story in this past election. It is very disconcerting, as a worker, when you are working at your factory, doing a good job, and then find out that you're getting laid off and your factory is being shut down and production is being moved elsewhere. People are asking questions, they are asking, "Where is my help? Who is here for me? Who is working for me?" As minorities finally started to enjoy some of the promises of America, white people felt like they had been left behind in favor of giving handouts to minorities. All it took to galvanize that anger was one person who could see that anger and give it a place to express itself in full display. Donald Trump read the room and figured out that if he could harness that anger, he could win the White House. Make America Great Again is a pass-phrase for many things but primarily it is a pass-phrase for making sure that white people are not left behind in the new economy, such as it is. Despite the fact that Trump offered no real plans or policies to solve any problems that these people had, he was able to harness an emerging white racial consciousness and use that to gather just enough votes in just enough places to back his way into the White House.

White racial consciousness is primarily economic but it is also cultural and those cultural problems run deep. Much of the cultural change in the last decade or so has been at a rapid pace. Much like the people who founded the second KKK, people are nervous about the cultural changes they see around them. The economic problem is easier to solve than the cultural problem. The answer is not tax reform, the answer is not healthcare, and the answer is not planned parenthood funding either. The answer is programs for re-education, the answer is investment, and the answer is an economy that works for everyone. This requires regulation and this requires spreading out the tax burden. In this election, the media lost track of the story. The world of 2017 and the world of 2008 have very little in common from a practical perspective. No one wants to talk about environmental regulations and climate change reforms when they cannot survive and support their families.

Most Americans don't want a hand out either. They want the chance to have the dignity of a job. However, the economy and the country have changed. The jobs aren't in the small towns that most Americans live in. The jobs are in the big cities and

they don't look like the way a job used to look and they require skills training and familiarity with technology. They often require networking and a variety of skills. This is practically a foreign language for people who have lived in a world where, armed with a high school diploma, they could be in the middle class.

Even among the younger generation, the pathway seemed pretty simple. This has progressively been destroyed during the past 30 years and it took The Great Recession to really hit people. It was the type of change that people saw on the news and thought it would never happen to them. Until it happened in their town. Until they were scraping by at Wal-Mart at $11 an hour trying to figure out how to pay the bills. Where was the help for them? Where was the program? Where was the money?

The cultural problem is going to take decades to solve, in the meantime, we have to acknowledge and learn to handle the rise of the white racial consciousness. White people are no longer "just people" they are now a powerful voting block and that is the real story of the 2016 election. The Democrats, as they often do, missed the boat.

A Better Idea Than the Democrats

It's easy to help minorities when you have a job and can provide for your life. But let's face it, survival makes people feel threatened. In the past 8 years, threats have come from all sides. In the last 8 years, all sorts of things have changed. Our society has had to question fundamental things like race, gender, gender identity, and sexuality. Groups ranging from trans individuals to indigenous people have seen their visibility skyrocket. Where was the help for the white guy/girl? Where was the ideas for them, who was working for them? Where Hillary saw a basket of deplorables; Donald Trump saw a verdant opportunity.

In this election, white people finally figured out that if you want a voice and you want yours, you have to mobilize and fight for it. Unfortunately, Hillary had been tied too closely to the perception of Obama's presidency. Not only did anyone over 40 have an opinion about her, damaging enough, but she didn't offer anything to the disenfranchised white voters who were looking for someone to speak directly to them and their problems and offer help.

Donald Trump didn't need the electoral college and he didn't need a well-run campaign. All he needed to do was stand on a stage and offer and hand up to people who hadn't had help in decades. And that's exactly what he did. It's not that Trump voters are racist, I'm sure some of them are, but most of them are not. However, they have figured out that mobilized groups of people get things done in this country. Many voters figured that If black people and Hispanics can do it, so could they. And that is the story that the media missed. There were many factors but the one that will affect elections for the next 50 years is the mobilizing of the white vote as a voting block.

Race and Racism in 2019

To say that America is a racist nation would be an oversimplification of a difficult problem. The goal of the modern race conversation should not just look to the past. Most people are not racist in an overt way. Most people agree that fringe groups are just that, fringe groups with extremist views. The conversation about race in this day and time should address the problems that we have and address the fact that they are fundamentally racial. Whether it's police brutality or mass incarceration or our many economic problems, the reality is that minorities are affected by these problems at a greater level than white people. This has a 150 year history, but the problems are right out in front. To have a conversation about race does not mean comparing white people to slave holders or to an old-fashioned idea of racism that included segregated lunch counters and buses. Racism now is subtle and institutional. It's almost without notice. The only way to solve racism and create a truly multi-ethnic democracy is to address the ways in which institutions and systems perpetuate racism. In any country, when a group is suffering from activities authorized by the government that is causing them harm, that is a cause for reform. We should not sit back and refuse to talk about the problem. That does not help us begin the work of fulfilling the promises of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

It has been a long fight to create a modern American society. To complete this work, new policies must attack the last vestiges of the underpinning values that some people are not as valuable as others and that some people deserve to suffer just because of the color of their skin or where they came from. Society must resist the temptation to prioritize one group over another just to make certain people feel better about a certain policy or a cultural value. America is already changing. America's schools are no longer majority white. By 2040, which is only 21 years away, America will no longer be a white majority nation. For this country to continue in its present state is simply unsustainable. America must be a nation that works for everyone, no matter their background. This will take time, it will take change, some of those conversations may be hard to have but just as those brave people were willing to force the desegregation of buses and lunch counters, it is just as important to create solutions in housing, employment, and to reform how the government polices its citizens. This is the racial challenge of America today. It is important not to rest on the laurels of Barack Obama's presidency or the many achievements that people of color have made throughout the nation. It is important to continue the work of making all the changes needed to form a truly, more perfect union.

Part 4: The Age of Information

Teachers and Chalkboards: What is Wrong with American Education
Notable Events, Entertainment, Weather, and Sports

Teachers and Chalkboards: What Is Really Wrong with American Education

Introduction

I'm probably the least qualified to write about American public education. I have never been an American public school student. I have never darkened the door of an American public school as a student and most of my formal education experience took place early in elementary in the private school setting and then as a college student thrown into a public college.

Education is one of the most hotly debated policy questions at any given moment in this country. The debate is not always national either. It is often taking place at a local level at school boards and Parent Teacher Association meetings. Every time the state moves to change curriculum again or make some changes as to how education is conducted, the eternal debate about education begins again in this country.

This is an area, of all areas, that I feel this country should be able to get right. The US boasts world- class research institutions that have shaped our modern world. We have taken waves of immigrants and others and through our education system and created a nation of incredibly innovative, creative, and dynamic people. In the United States, this is done without the selective tracking of the European model. Students go into schools and find their way through the system for their own success. Despite the lack of support, many still survive and even thrive in this sink or swim system.

However, the system has a few flaws and I've observed the outcomes of our system as I've talked to people. What I have noticed is that for some students, a great teacher can make all the difference; however, for many students, no matter how good the teaching, they still manage to fall through the cracks. These are people who, due to their own circumstances, aren't able to easily transition into adulthood in a productive way. For most of this nation's history, that wasn't really a problem. The wealthy had their options and everyone simply went to work. Education through adolescence was not common until the early 20th Century.

After World War II, once you completed high school, if you did, you could simply get a factory job and learn on the job. The need for a post-secondary education was not prominent. Students could have a lousy education and still do very well in life. Now, if a student has a poor education, it can be an economic and emotional death sentence. The jobs available for high school graduates are fewer and fewer and the pay is notoriously low.

As with most things in America, the problem is uniquely economic. These problems even hit those who go to college. The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities found that 46 states spent an average of 18% less per student on public higher education in the 2015-16 school year than they did before the recession of 2008.

The Great Recession has torn open the problems within the education system but 10 years on, little has been done to solve these problems and the debate about how to "fix America's schools" is not a new one. My hope is that, as an impartial observer, I can help frame our education debate in such a way that we can understand it first in contact, but also understand the reality of the problems we face in education and how to make the education system work for all.

When approaching this topic there were a few obvious questions. What is the job of education? Why is education important? How do we fix American education that seems to be failing and riddled with scandal?

The Problem

Education is a gnarled root of problems. When anyone approaches education you see a variety of different problems and ideas about fixing it. Funding is the biggest topic discussed in the research. In America, most schools are funded through property taxes, the better the neighborhood, the more funding schools get. The reverse of that is also true, poor areas, with lower taxes tend to have worse schools and worse outcomes.

Teachers and teacher unions are also a hot topic of discussion. The biggest organizations that affect education as a solid group are teachers' unions. When teachers' unions come out against changes, the evolution of education can come to a halt. Indeed, from the beginning of the education system, teachers have been a contentious subject.

The United States expects much from its schools and this has been the case for decades. Parents and communities expect schools to turn unruly children into functional adults. In the post-Recession economy, this has taken the manifestation of asking schools to teach students "real skills." There are memes on Facebook asking why people had to take Algebra 2 but never a class on how to buy car insurance or how to do your taxes. Popular entrepreneurs attack the education system as being a place that suppresses creative ideas, forces people into things they don't care about, and turns people into drones for corporations.

Others, including employers, complain that schools don't give them functional employees and that businesses should be able to dictate what schools teach so that they can access a better workforce. Employers use this excuse to import H1-B workers or ship jobs overseas. This continues despite our low labor participation rate.

Then there is the problem of accountability. How do we measure student success? How do we measure teachers? How do we create results that "look good?" The pile on continues with the ancillary problems like graduation rates, college success rates, and serving all students, especially those with special needs or from minority backgrounds.

We expect schools to handle all of these things perfectly well. We expect schools to turn out good citizens, good workers, and socially adjusted people. Schools are social laboratories. Children learn important social lessons in school with their peers.

One of the most interesting reports about education, the Coleman Report, said that not only does the students' home and neighborhood affect them far more than school, but he started from a personal standpoint. He realized that the school did not care about boys like him. He felt that the focus on athletics and the social exultation of jocks, cheerleaders, and the "popular crowd" made him disinterested in learning.

That also leads to the problem of race and class. Although Brown v Board of Education in 1954 forced the integration of schools throughout the country, schools remained fairly segregated. Despite bussing policies, where students were moved around the area to force more diverse schools, parents still tended to live in neighborhoods where people looked and thought like them and that meant the neighborhood schools also reflected that reality. Rather than deal with bussing, white parents fled to whiter school districts. This means that most students are likely to go to schools where the student body, at least the majority of it, comes from the same background as they do.

The drive to make schools more diverse has been largely for naught. People self-segregate and parents avoided districts where bussing took place. The Supreme Court was fine with this system because it was de Facto not de Jure, which is simply legal terminology for being "of fact" and not "of law." As long as schools weren't legislated to be segregated, the courts gave those districts and those parents a pass.

The main problem with education is that schools are on the forefront of all of society's problems. From income inequality to race relations, the best and worst of these problems ends up in our schools. Schools are supposed to be melting pots that help everyone conform to American society. During the great waves of immigration, schools were tasked to take the children of these immigrants and turn them into Americans that express the Anglo-saxon, protestant values on which this country has been based.

From driving a car to cooking skills and employment, the education system is responsible for many more things than education. In Chicago and other poor districts, if students don't go to school, they often will not get breakfast or lunch. Schools are more social service centers than anything else. For children from abusive homes, the abuse will often be reported by a school official or teacher.

The problems with education are intrinsically social problems. When it comes to teaching, American schools perform fairly well on a state-by-state level. Some states, like Massachusetts, even perform up to European standards on global exams.

One of the hurdles to solving education, I noticed, is the constant focus on the cost to society. We want to be successful and to do well with our education. Most everyone wants to feel like they have value and that they have worth. What about being happy? What about school-life balance? What about the hours of homework? In order to fix education, we have to fix much bigger problems. The problem with education isn't the actual teaching, it is our society.

School Funding

The majority of school funding is raised at the local level usually through property taxes. Counties then distribute property taxes to various taxation districts once it is collected. Although the focus on funding happens at a federal level, the federal government only spent $69.4 billion dollars in FY 2017. That's about $138.8 million per state.The federal government also funds higher education through the Pell Grant Program and through federally backed student loans. There is some direct funding for colleges and universities as well as state funding. This ends up being a patchwork of funding models for a national problem.

For K-12, this means that it's up to local authorities to find ways to increase spending and means that poorer areas usually have less funded schools and worse schools, as a result. If there is one thing about the American model that is broken, it is the funding model. However, more federal control has been repudiated in the courts. In McInnis v. Shapiro, Federal courts found that the court could not decide what students needed, that was a job for local school boards and educators who could better tell what students needed as long as the education was racially integrated. American education has a tradition of local control that extends back to its earliest days. However, this has led to varied outcomes based on the zip code of the student. How much a state or school district can fund education determines how successful student may or may not be in school and ultimately throughout their lives. There are 13,506 school districts and 178 state dependent school systems in the United States. Each district has its own funding model, its own policies, and its own right to control curricula. This also means that there are 13,734 possible outcomes for education. What kind of education a student might receive is simply luck of residence.

The federal government has some leverage. Using these federal dollars, the federal government can set requirements for schools in order to receive those dollars. There are some high profile examples of this like Title IX requirements and integration of schools. However, when it comes to common curriculum standards, like Common Core, those programs had to be passed state by state. Some states who passed Common Core as a new curriculum standard have left it, like Indiana.

The local funding model is inherently unfair and needs to be changed. This also extends to local control over curriculum. Different states allow different things to be taught like Kansas allowing the Christian creation myth to be taught in schools alongside evolution. To get better outcomes and better funding for schools with much less waste, then the funding model must be repaired and minimum standards must be set.

In the Beginning There Was a One Room Schoolhouse

Public education, the way we know it now, is a uniquely modern phenomena. The system we use now is primarily Prussian. The system of classrooms and bells and moving students around to different teachers all came about in the 19th Century. However, that was a progressive accomplishment of its day. Before that, education was only available to a few. In the United States, the first schools were set up in the 16th Century and wouldn't become widely adopted until the 19th Century. By the 20th century, public schooling was common and with the end of child labor schooling became compulsory throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s. By WWII, most children attended school from age 5-18. Rural areas tended to be the last to adopt these compulsory schooling policies. Education of nearly everyone is a hallmark of modern living.

18th Century

Education in this country, outside of New England, was spotty at best. Schools were organized by parents who would hire a teacher or tutors for their children. Consequently, education was something only available to the middle and upper classes. Sometimes, communities would organize a school and hire a teacher to come in and teach their children. However, many communities objected to using public funds for education and some communities resisted the move to publicly funded education. Massachusetts was the first state to mandate education at the state level. As a result, literacy rates were low. Often, even voting was something that required a test or even a poll tax (later made unconstitutional) to exercise the right to participate in democracy. This meant that poor communities were simply excluded from society for not being able to afford education.

19th Century

One major innovation of the 19th Century education was uniquely feminist. Catherine Beecher and Horace Mann, through their shared love of education and a desire to improve the growing nation through education, created some of the first teacher training schools. Catherine Beecher promoted education as a pathway to make America better and improve the overall morality of the country. These early educators believed that an educated populace would be a moral populace.

Most importantly, she created schools meant to educate women to become teachers. She helped make it acceptable for middle-class women to become teachers and her teachers went out West to where the country was expanding to teach children how to read, write, and do basic math. This allowed women to access education beyond basic reading, writing and math themselves. Before this, women, if they studied at all, only learned what could be described as an 8th grade education. Women were shut out of studying serious subjects alongside men. In the middle of the century, due to feminist activists like Beecher, some colleges started to experiment with co-education allowing women to study alongside men. Soon women would be able to study serious subjects like chemistry, physics, and other hard sciences.

For children, the school year was shorter with about 100 days of instruction. Schools would open for certain times of the year and children would attend. Attendance was not compulsory in most states, Massachusetts being an exception to that rule. United States education was local, grounded in self-rule, and locally controlled.

Education was usually taught with "readers." These small books would be an amalgamation of subjects in linear order through the book. Each section would have a passage to be learned and some exercises to cement the concepts. Students would study to learn a variety of topics, especially reading and writing. The popular McGuffy Reader sold 122 million copies. Although many schools used these popular readers, there were several others that did not and schools were free to choose whatever curriculum they wanted to use. This is still the case at the state level throughout the United States.

By the end of the 19th Century, education was becoming more common for more people. This was also tied to the industrialization of the country and people moving from farms to cities. The increase in wages allowed people to send their children to school. Education was primarily vocational for the working class. Children would learn basic skills that would serve them well in the community. It was presumed that most working-class children would not go to college, despite the rise of land-grant colleges that Congress instituted in the middle of the century. These schools also became an important institution for the assimilation of new immigrants to the country. This period also saw the rise of catholic schools as most public schools, such as they were, tended to be protestant and teach protestant values. Catholic schools got their start in New York City and expanded throughout the country. Catholic colleges like Notre Dame were also founded so that children of catholic immigrants could enjoy education more inline with their religious values. However, universal education was still a few decades away.

20th Century

The 20th Century brought more changes. Schools became less local and were organized into large school districts. Education through high school became compulsory after World War II and curriculum was set by state standards. Schools were organized into fairly large districts and there was central control by school boards and school superintendents. This stood in opposition to very local control that dominated the earlier part of the century. Progressive reformers saw better organization as a way to

put the experts in charge of education rather than letting local officials hire whomever they wanted for education, including people in the town who were not teachers, not certified in teaching and may have only had a regular college education. This started the separation of teaching and education as a profession, something to be studied and learned in a formal capacity rather than by ad-hoc training in schools. President Kennedy poured money into education, especially after the launch of Sputnik. For many people, this was a sign that America was falling behind in the space race and that the Soviets were out running Americans. Money poured into schools to raise up a generation that would outpace their Soviet counterparts. The quality of education remained high and education was not a significant policy area for most governments until the latter portion of the century.

A Nation at Risk

In 1983, President Reagan's Commission on Excellence in Education produced an influential report called *A Nation At Risk*. This report, while often maligned for not being circumspect in it's view of education, still has parts that are true, 35 years later. The year 1983 was a difficult time for the country. The economy had taken a nosedive globally. Factories were closing, people were unemployed, and then this education report came out announcing that unless changes were made, the economic difficulties would continue well into the future. The report is still prescient today. It complained that students were not prepared for the jobs of tomorrow. By 1983, it was clear that computers were on the way and would be taking a larger role in the economy. The report looked at SAT test scores and reported that they were going down. The report did not mention the fact that college had gotten much more common and the reason the average was going down was because more people from diverse backgrounds were taking the test. Despite the dubious nature it's findings, it catapulted education into the national conversation and reinforced the broken school narrative. However, the upside was that education had become a national political issue from the White House to local elections.

21st Century

The 21st century has seen the controversy of education continue in the 20 brief years since 2000. 2 pieces of legislation have dominated the discussion on education in the 21st century as well as a recognition of the failures of the American education system, especially for children from poor backgrounds. The 21st century has seen the popularity of the charter school see progress as well as a host of online education options enter into the conversation about education.

No Child Left Behind

No Child Left Behind was the result of the rewrite of a 1965 law, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The ESSA was the first national education law and funding program and would later lead to the creation of the Department of Education. George W. Bush decided to rewrite the law to take a more tough guy approach. The standards were stark. Schools that received Title I Federal dollars were graded on student performance every year. Schools that did not make the "Adequate Yearly Progress" standard had to be fixed or closed.

The goal was ambitious. NCLB sought to get all students to their age appropriate reading and math grade level by 2014. This meant that all 5th graders throughout the nation should be reading at the 5th grade level. It held all schools and all students to one standard on one timeline. It did not matter where the students were or how much they improved, the point was that if they were not meeting the set standard then they were failing and the school was eligible for sanctions.

Schools had 6 years to fix the problem before they were closed or reopened as a Charter. The law was viewed as a sledgehammer of sorts. NCLB was also incredibly data driven and test based. If some of the students were not doing well, then the whole school was considered underperforming. This might seem like a good idea at first. If the school could not serve its lowest performing students, then shouldn't that be a problem worth addressing?

It is a problem worth addressing. However, the schools least able to solve the problem, were swamped by the increasing pressure. After 2 years of underperformance, schools had to offer the students a right to move to a different school, leaving the school with the same problems as before with no better solutions, or ways to solve the actual problems of that school. As the sanctions built up, ultimately, restructuring was the final blow. Principals and other administration would be fired or moved to make a big change at the school. According to an NPR article, the "lobotomy" worked. A change in leadership brought a sea of changes to the school and teachers were often much happier with the result. Experts couldn't understand why it worked but it did.

NCLB was also a bit of a blow to local control because the federal government was using the power of the purse to reach directly into schools and cause change without the consent of the local school boards or even state regulators. If they wanted to continue to receive federal dollars, then changes had to be made. The idea behind the law was a good one, no child should be left behind, but trying to wed all students to one standard, as set in Washington, D.C., seemed to cause more problems than it helped.

In a 2018 video from What School Should Be, they asked teachers at the National Teachers' Hall of Fame Induction what word came to mind with the effects of NCLB. Those words included, "frustration," "emptiness," "misinformation," "interesting concept," and "disappointing." One teacher from Wyoming shook his head and said, "It took the soul right out of teaching." The teachers would go on to say that it was not fair or accurate to reduce every student to a number or how they performed on a test on a certain day at a certain time. Another teacher from Ohio said, "we don't treat children as people anymore, they are just point averages."

NCLB ushered in an era of high stakes testing. It was the performance on state-wide tests that would determine the accountability measurements of how well a school was doing. High stakes state testing has become such a problem that one teacher, Joshua Kratz, in an Akron University TED Talk reported anxiety of 3rd graders over these tests. According to his observations, even kindergarteners are having anxiety over these tests. To do well on the test means, to the children, that their pathway is set for them.

They feel if you do well on the tests then you can go to college and be successful, to do poorly on the test means many other pathways are cut off to them.

As Kratz points out, standardized tests do very little to give you a full picture of a student. This is repeated over and over again. Some students will always do well on standardized tests. However, a test is not going to measure the student as a person. It is not going to tell you how well the student is doing even if they are "underperforming." It does not grade students on character or personal advancement. It does not grade them on where they are successful, which could be in areas that we could never measure on a test.

The NCLB was not successful in its goal to get all children up to proficiency in reading and math by 2014. Even as states picked their own tests and standards, the constant accountability and restructuring did not achieve this goal. Even the break out of data to decide how children in different groups did little to solve the real problems facing the school in question. Although the law provided a chance for students to move schools, many did not. Although free tutoring was to be available for underperforming schools, there were problems with that as well. One of the biggest problems was money. Congress never allocated the funding necessary to make this law happen. Even the requirement that teachers be "highly qualified" by getting degrees in the field they teach and getting a state certification fell short as the teachers were not distributed as evenly as the law required.

This is the chief failure of NCLB and it was these failures that led to the act being replaced by two different pieces of legislation, the Every Student Succeeds Act and the Race to the Top.

Race to the Top

In 2015, President Obama signed two pieces of legislation to replace NCLB: Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the Race to the Top. ESSA was a reauthorization of the ESEA Act from 1965 and Race to the Top was a grant program to let states compete for new federal dollars to help them meet standards. States had to compete for 4.35 billion dollars in grants. Most states applied with the exceptions of Alaska (who complained it was too urban focused for their state), North Dakota, Vermont, and Texas. Although those states did not apply for these dollars, they did often adopt policies to comply with the standards. The lucky states to receive these grant dollars were Colorado, Hawaii, Illinois, Pennsylvania, New York, Georgia, Florida, Arizona, Delaware, North Carolina, Tennessee, Maryland, the District of Columbia, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Kentucky, New Jersey, Ohio, and Louisiana. By 2014, 80% of the states had adopted Race to the Top Policies.

Race to the Top had many ambitious goals which included:

- Individual student progress assessment
- Teacher/student matches
- Evaluations of teachers and principals for effectiveness
- Plans to turn around low performing schools
- Adoption of high quality standards
- Reformation of teacher removal plans
- Increase the number of STEM teachers
- No caps on charter schools (highly performing)
- STEM courses
- Funding for charter schools
- Support for non-charter autonomous schools

Race to the Top was no more successful than the NCLB and only doubled down on the high-stakes testing model that was already in place. It forced states to adopt massive changes to their education systems and it put states in competition for a small amount of federal dollars that would not be renewed. It was an ambitious set of goals that was also somewhat tied to the state-by-state adoption of Common Core standards.

Both of these laws created a certain vision for education and have been at the heart of the debate between local control and federal standards. Even within school systems that tension can be explosive. In the late 1960s, New York and Newark, New Jersey were both gripped with a major strike from the United Federation of Teachers, the largest teachers' union at the time. Under that system, schools were controlled by large school districts and school boards who made the major decisions. In a completely failed experiment, they tried significant local control at the behest of minority parents who wanted to radically change education. No only did this put teacher's unions against the civil rights movement (both were allied at one time) but it ended up being no better for the students. Even when it comes to who should be in charge of the schools, the results still seem to be lackluster.

What both the NCLB and Race to the Top failed to do was to actually do what it takes to improve the lives of students and treat them as people. Students can end up spending weeks working on getting ready for a test and some students will take 20 tests a year. However, according to former Assistant Education Secretary Diane Ravitch in a powerful op-ed in the *New York Times* in 2016, standardized testing merely informs educators about the students' income level. Researches have known for some time that testing reveals socio-economic background and little else. Ravitch reinforces this point. Wealthy students do well on tests, poorer students just don't. Why continue to insist on a measurement that is so deeply flawed? It's easy. It makes for a good headline: "Test Scores Are Up!" It makes for good headlines and good speeches for politicians seeking re-election. However, it gives a very incomplete picture of the students and when teachers and others talk about these high stakes tests, they repeat that over and over again. Even more commentators complain that we are merely raising

a generation of kids who can take tests really well but are not creative or are afraid to learn because they might do very badly. Ravitch offers a conclusion that is simple but difficult to implement: give students great teachers in well-maintained buildings with an opportunity to learn and to do well.

Becoming American Through Educational Opportunity

It was important that education be non-sectarian and that common republican values be taught. This was important as the integrated catholic immigrants from Europe. One of the things that we ask for schools to do is to create new Americans. For immigrant children, school is their first chance to learn about their new country. In school, they learn English and American government and begin the process of integrating into existing American society. They learn American values and history. If America is a melting pot, then schools are the burner beneath the cultural fondue.

The US offers education to all children no matter where they come from. This system is used to create a better society and to be inclusive. American society isn't always as inclusive as it could be but education is one of the few ways that America offers everyone a little part of the American Dream.

Education is a democratizer. When people can read, write, and have an education, they are able to engage in society in a very different way than if they didn ot have access to education. Education theoretically allows anyone to do anything. Education is aspirational and creates opportunity for people. The challenge for American education is how this can be true for more and more people.

Integration, Segregation, and Education

School segregation was codified into law in 1896 with the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision that established the policy of "separate but equal." The idea was that states could segregate schools by race as long as the facilities were equal. However, the facilities were often not equal and were simply substandard. However, despite this problem, black children were able to go to black schools and receive an education from black teachers. However, at the dawn of the Civil Rights Movement, this all changed, especially the part about black teachers.

Malcolm Gladwell, in his insightful podcast series, *Revisionist History*, spent an hour talking about another side of integration following *Brown v. Board of Education* and that is what happened to all the African-American teachers that seemingly disappeared from classrooms following the landmark decision. The episode delves into the issue in-depth with interviews with those still alive who survived the fallout of the decision. Eighty percent (80%) of America's teachers are white. Black teachers are rare. In the days after the federal government forced the states to integrate schools "with all reasonable expediency," white parents did not want black teachers in charge of their children. School districts, rather than finding places for black teachers, instead simply fired all their black teachers. This led to black students going through two major changes: learning

alongside white peers and losing their best advocates for their education: teachers that looked like them. The loss of black teachers in the classroom is one of the downsides of integration. Even some black parents at the time resisted integration. They believed in the schools that had been created to cater to their children and that were run by people like them that they trusted. Parents were now also in situations where they were integrating with schools they were unfamiliar with and dealing with teachers and administrators who were not always embracing them or their children.

Integration of schools ended up causing many schools and school districts to be more segregated than before, only this time it was voluntary. White parents moved their children, avoided districts that bussed, and left schools and school districts in a state of voluntary segregation that exists to this day and policy makers are attempting to undo.

Why American Education Falls Behind – The Broken System Narrative

Most people assume the education system is broken. When I started this essay, I started from the same perspective. I wanted to know why education is such a divisive issue and why our education system is broken and how we might go about fixing it. However, this narrative might not be so fair to the education system.

Both in the past and now, we rely on our education system to do several things:

- Academics
- Vocational training
- College prep
- Helping students become functioning adults
- Teaching students from diverse backgrounds, including students for whom English is not their first or second language

Most other countries don't lean on their education system for things like physical education or health class. Most other systems also don't lean on their schools for arts and humanities. The American education system is trying to be all things to all people. By the very nature of that premise, it's not going to do that job very well. American education is attempting to be like a crossover SUV, part truck, part car, and part off-road vehicle. Like its automotive comparison, the American education system has become a grotesque system that doesn't do any of those tasks very well. Although overgrown, overburdened, and underfunded, it does, like its crossover SUV cousin, at least runs and drives and accomplishes the task of getting from point A to point B.

When we measure the American education system purely on test scores, we leave out all the other things that schools do for children and young people. Sports are an important part of education and we use schools as the training ground for future, professional athletes. This is uniquely American. The top high school players go to college where a select few go on to play professionally and an even more select group

gets to play professionally for some years. Most NCAA players do not go on to play professionally and yet sports take up valuable space, teaching time, and resources that could otherwise be spent elsewhere. The American education isn't so much broken, much more like poorly measured. The narrative, that the education system is broken, does serve certain interests and it also serves political narratives.

Johnny Can't Read

The education system has been under attack almost since its inception. There's always something wrong with education. Rudolph Fleisch borrowed the lyric of the popular Don Henley song in the 1980s to explain why America's schools were somehow failing its children. This broken system narrative has spawned several organizations, think-tanks, and groups invested in intervening in education. Education has been the darling cause of First Ladies and has been the primary focus of people like Bill Gates. The narrative is so baked into education that people hardly question it. Of course, education is broken, they maintain, and they have charts and data to prove their point.

There are many arguments for what's wrong with education. The Right will accuse schools of being indoctrination centers. Others will complain that our schools are built to make factory workers instead of the workers we need for a modern knowledge economy. This causes people to look at how teachers can personalize learning or include technology more or get rid of the traditional classroom where teachers stand in front of the room and children sit at desks.

American education has quite a large task before it. It has to make people, citizens and educated people who are ready for the workforce. Schools do not merely engage in dumping facts into the heads of children and sending them home. We depend on schools to be the primary training ground for life. American schools feature things like physical education, sports, music, art, and other activities that are missing from the other country's systems.

Why Do Teens Get Disinterested in Learning in High School?

In the *Democratic Dilemma of American Education*, the books highlight sociologist, James S. Coleman, who blamed social currency as the reason high school, as it stands, kills learning for many children. His 1961 report, stemmed from his own experience, held that high school had killed learning for him personally because he realized that the only people that the school valued were the first-string varsity football players. He also attacked segregation. He argued that if the interests of whites were not included, they would undercut segregation. He was right, whites fled school districts that bussed students in favor of those that did not. His problem with the education had nothing to do with books, teachers, salaries, or buildings. It was purely the investment of social currency. In 1986, he issued a follow-up report comparing public and private schools and found that schools with a more communal atmosphere, that reduced cliques, created great academic achievement. When students felt that they were valued, no matter what they did, they improved academically.

Another reason many teens get disinterested in high school has to do with socio-economic pressures. Teens in poorer backgrounds are often called upon to care for younger siblings while parents work. Teenage students may also be called upon to enter the workforce to help pay for expenses at home. Teenage immigrant students are more likely to drop out than their native born peers for this reason. This leaves teens tired and exhausted despite needing nine to eleven hours of sleep. This also leaves them less time to study or complete homework assignments leaving them with poorer outcomes.

Those that look overseas for answers point to Japan and South Korea where the students clean the school instead of janitorial staff. Schools are an important place to learn how to socialize with one's peers but that could also have an adverse effect, at least according to Coleman. Many people, but especially young men, do very well in K-8 but when high school arrives, it can quickly suck the passion for learning out of even the most ardent student. Cleaning the school and creating a better chance to build and spend social currency does not account for the very real socio-economic problems that teens face as well.

High school students face a variety of pressures and for many, it may not seem like high school is not really worth the trouble. It is very difficult to plan for the future and take a long-term view when there are very present survival problems that students face. Also, the current model of high-stakes testing and the pressure to do well on tests in order to go to college can also cause students to simply give up on school. Even if they keep attending, they have already checked-out of the system. Despite all the problems, the United States boasts an 80% graduation rate. This graduation rate is impressive for a nation that educates 50 million students in 100,000 schools with only 3 million teachers, who are chronically underpaid.

The socio-economic problems in the United States have also created a situation where many students never have a real chance to make it in society. These unfortunate students are sucked into an insidious system aptly called the school-to-prison pipeline.

School to Prison Pipeline

The 1990s were a crazy time. Crime rates had been climbing through the 1970s and 1980s and the news media had spent hours splashing these crimes across television screens. Popular shows, like COPS and other true-crime shows, revealed the underbelly of crime and poverty in America. The country seemed unsafe and people demanded answers. The 1994 landmark crime bill or the "Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act" created the framework for minimum sentencing laws, authorized boot camps for minors, required mandatory drug testing for those on probation and parole for federal offenses, and a host of other requirements that adversely affected poor and minority communities. This "tough on crime" attitude also extended into the school system through zero-tolerance policies toward discipline in the classroom.

The situation seems dire. According to Vox, schools with large minority populations have more officers at their school, 97% of which have guns and handcuffs. Arrest rates for black students are far higher despite the rates of white and black children being

sent to the principal's office being similar. According to the ACLU, students missed a collective 11 million days of school in 2015-2016 due to suspensions and expulsions. That adds up to 66 million hours of lost instruction. Students that have been suspended or expelled graduate at lower rates and their chances of having further interactions with law enforcement increase.

Because this system starts at school, these children often end up committing other small crimes and end up in the prison system. Because finishing school or gaining employment is difficult with a record, these children often cycle in an out of the prison system for years into adulthood. Student loans are restricted from those with criminal histories meaning that these students who are often poor, have little chance for a future. Increasing police at schools has turned small behavior infractions into criminal offenses that begin this pipeline. Suspensions and expulsions don't seem to work. Some schools are moving to a restorative justice model where a panel of students, guided by teachers, decide what the offender should do, within the school community to redeem their poor behavior. This system is being praised for keeping students within their school community and not piling on legal problems to young students.

In the research collected around this issue, the lack of good data stood out. Although the United States Department of Education requires reporting for suspensions, expulsions, arrests, and serious crimes, many districts reported false numbers or didn't report at all. Because of issues around interviewing and photographing children, many researchers and journalists are blocked from doing any sort of independent reporting in these areas leaving school districts to do the research themselves. The problem could be far worse than current data shows.

Getting Workers Ready for the Workforce

Especially since the financial crisis, one of the criticisms of education, for both K-12 and higher education, is that they do not produce people that the companies need for the workforce.

Higher education has been criticized for this problem. In online discussions and elsewhere, you will see people regularly making fun of "Gender Studies" degrees. Before that, it was "underwater basket weaving." This view comes from a place that any sort of education, especially expensive college education, should come with a profitable career afterwards. This is a basic return on investment. If you are going to spend $50-60 thousand on a college degree, then you should be able to quickly and easily make that money back. Employers complain that employees lack basic skills or are simply incompetent. However, this is a problem that isn't limited to schools. There is no way for schools to fully prepare students for working in any business.

However, the picture is far more nuanced than that. There has been a tension between job skills and academic education since the late 19th Century. Academic education focused on real-world skills. Immigrant parents in New York City pushed back and

demanded academic instruction and that has defined education in this country since. This means that students leave K-12 with a broad education that can empower them to take various other education opportunities and jobs. A 23 year college graduate is going to be armed with knowledge, study skills, and critical thinking skills. They aren't going to have the same working experience as a 33 or 43 year old employee who has been in the workforce. Businesses must take these new graduates and build them into the employees that they need.

Education is a long game. It takes years to realize the societal gains from education. Generally speaking, an educated populace makes for a better populace. The earning potential takes decades to realize, as well. However, thanks to the advances in the Progressive Era (1890-1945), Americans, after World War II, were able to flood into high schools and colleges, attain an education, and then take jobs in the workforce that paid well.

Higher Education and Jobs

University was never meant to be a vocational training environment. Liberal arts education, which dominates American education, is meant to create a student with a broad exposure to a variety of subjects and to create a whole person who has had the chance to study a variety of things. In the past, armed with this kind of education, regardless of major, they would then enter the workforce as an entry level employee who would be trained in a specific field within an industry or field. They would then move up the ranks armed with this knowledge. Even for those who chose not to go to college, there were opportunities to be trained and to learn new skills at their existing jobs.

However, the economy has changed. Employers now expect students to come to them with all the skills that they want "out of the box." To see this in action, search entry level professional employment listings. There are plenty of instances where there are a variety of requirements for positions meant to be entry level. Employers ask for experience that would be impossible to have at a young age. The burden of job training has been moved from the employer onto the employee. This is the result of an economic environment where companies are looking for any place than can shift costs. Training employees is a long-game and is expensive. This is especially troubling for companies when employees take those experiences and leave for other opportunities. To reduce this cost, the employee now has to invest in those training costs, if they can. Asking a 22 year old graduate to have 5 years experience is no way to advertise an entry level position. By its very nature, that requirement isn't entry-level. Instead of taking responsibility for training, many thought leaders have blamed the education system for not supplying them with workers that already have all the knowledge skills and experience that they are looking for to bring into their firms.

However, employers are not serving themselves well with this policy. When companies train workers, it works out very well for them. Ford Motor Co. supplies an excellent

example. When they chose to move engine production to Mexico, one of the problems they had was the lack of skilled workers in their new location. Ford decided to train local workers to make engines for their cars. Within 5 years, they produced quality engines that were on-par with the quality of engines that had been previously made in the United States. That investment paid off for Ford and it also paid off for the employees who were able to take those valuable skills to other industries. Now, that engine plant is the only engine plant in North America for Ford and they provide all the engines for the Ford North American operations. The example from Ford gives us insight as to how the education system can and should work. For modern job seekers, it's not schools, it's the economy. When companies train workers, they succeed better. When they invest in their worker's skills, they do really well and it benefits both the worker and the company.

Who Teaches the Teachers

One of the biggest parts of education has to do with teachers. There has always been a certain nervous attitude toward teachers. After all, parents are placing an incredible amount of trust in the hands of essentially strangers to teach their children and spend 7+ hours a day with them.

In the United States, teacher's education was not formalized until the late 19th Century. Normal schools and teacher schools were opened to train teachers in the latest teaching methods. This began the formalization of American education. As these newly educated teachers went to classrooms armed with Bachelor degrees, it was viewed that more educated teachers would be able to do an even better job of educating children. Before teaching colleges, usually teachers had only completed some sort of formal education and often took a test for proficiency. They merely had to be satisfactory for the local school board or the local parents who were hiring a teacher. Formal education increased teacher quality and education improved right alongside that.

Usually teachers are the first to be criticized in education. Credentials, training, and constant improvement are required of modern teachers. Continuing education is a big part of the life of a modern teacher and there are usually pay increases to compensate for the hours spent and the additional credentials achieved. To ensure quality, the education of teachers has been formalized within the university system. Teachers can achieve credentials in teaching and then are eligible for either the national PRAXIS exam or a state level teaching exam in order to teach.

However, this does not tend to attract the brightest and best to the profession. This is primarily due to low pay and difficult classroom situations. However, if you are a professional looking to teach in the K-12 system, there are barriers to entry. The K-12 school system doesn't attract the best and most qualified teachers to the profession. Most teachers have education degrees rather than degrees in subject areas. Professionals who wants to teach in K-12 schools, must endure 2 more years of preparation before entering a classroom.

When it comes to criticizing teachers, it is hard to make broad sweeping statements. There are approximately 3.2 million teachers that teach around 16 students per teacher. There are great teachers, beloved teachers, and there are people who may have no business teaching children at all. One thing is clear, teachers have to overcome several problems in order to teach well. This can include non-responsive administration and difficult parents. In this way, Teachers are sandwiched between an increasingly overbearing administration and parents who care only for results. Of all the complaints that teachers make, overbearing administration ranks high. One teacher interviewed for this essay stated that she would rather deal with more paperwork if that meant less administration.

How to Attract Better Teachers

Attracting better teachers involves several solutions, not the least of which is private sector levels of pay, a good retirement plan, and finding ways to get professionals to be involved in K-12 without onerous requirements. This requires some fundamental changes with how we value teachers, education, and how we think about teachers. Rather than considering them a one size fix to every problem a student has, teachers need support from school counselors and nurses who can help students be ready for learning. When students are ready for learning, this will make the job so much easier and perhaps even enjoyable. Teachers are the backbone for education and currently there is a shortage. Why would someone go into a profession where pay and continued employment is tied to the performance of students, a variable they cannot control. A teacher can do their best teaching job but if the student faces educational challenges, teachers cannot always bridge those gaps and deliver exciting content at the same time. In short, it is time to let teachers teach.

The Teacher Wars

There have been various methods and efforts to improve teaching in the classroom. However, in recent memory, test scores have been the most popular method. The throughput of the logic seems rather clear: if the students are doing well, then they were taught by effective teachers. If the student's test scores are not doing well, it doesn't say anything about the student, it says much more about the teacher and their effectiveness. However, there are other methods like regular teacher observation and student evaluations.

In the Teacher Wars, Dana Goldstein visits one of these such schools where observations are a regular occurrence and teachers are constantly given feedback on every observable metric from classroom management to the time spent talking about a certain subject. Shanghai, China uses teaching methods like less time alone for teachers (they have more help) and observation to improve student performance. The community is also deeply involved in the school as well.

Teacher's Unions

There is probably no more contentious an issue with education than teacher's unions. Teacher's unions organized beginning in 1870. Like many labor unions, there are two sides. The side in favor of unions focuses on collective bargaining and the advocacy within state capitals and school boards that control education standards and funding. On the opposing side, those against teacher's unions talk about how they are a bureaucratic nightmare that allows terrible teachers to continue teaching and that they prevent any sort of school reform by using their political power to block reforms. In states where teachers are unionized, the school district signs a collective bargaining contract with the teachers that sets out the rules for how many hours teachers work, vacation, breaks, pay, and other matters.

Performance-based Pay

One of the biggest reforms in education that teacher's unions have fought against is performance-based pay. The idea is straight from the private sector, teachers should be paid based on their performance. Unfortunately for teachers, it has little to do with their performance and more to do with their student's performance. The idea is that if the students are doing well, then the teacher must be doing a good job. However, the Coleman Report and other reviews reveals a different picture. There are many factors that go into student's performance of which the actual person doing the teaching is only a part. Students that must take care of siblings instead of doing homework, come from poverty or other difficult home environments, or have income/housing/food insecurity and often cannot perform well in the classroom. Under a performance based system, teachers get punished through their own economic security because of these problems that they are not responsible for and cannot solve.

Working Hours

Teachers are often criticized for not working enough. One article from *City Journal* complained that teachers showed up a few minutes before the students and left near the dismissal time instead of staying after school and before classes. The article complained that many teachers take the contractually obligated classroom hours like gospel and just don't put in the extra effort. Imagine that, criticizing a professional for only working the hours that they are required.

This is emblematic of the requirements that we put on teachers. Society expects them to go above and beyond every single day and sacrifice their own lives for the collective well being of the nation's children while keeping them chronically underpaid, despite being in unions. Asking teachers to pay for their own supplies, provide their own support, and work extra long hours, essentially for free, is simply unfair and it's not a way to have an effective education system or attract the best people to the field.

Harriet Beecher Stowe, one of the biggest advocates for modern education we know it, stated it quite simply, "education will never reach its highest end till the care of the physical, social, and moral interests shall take precedence to mere intellectual development and acquirements." While teachers play a part in the overall discussion on education, especially when it comes to things like curriculum and the method of instruction, they are only a part. Putting all the blame on them simply isn't fair to the reality of what it is like to live as a child in this country where social services for many children do not nearly meet demand, if they exist at all.

If there is anything a teacher's unions defend, it's the right for teachers to teach and not live in fear of being constantly fired. Teachers are people too, with financial goals, families, and all the things that everyone else has; it's just that their job has a unique place in our society because they are responsible for creating the next generation of citizens. In decades past, teachers taught children how to bathe and brush their teeth when these things were not common. It's part of the reason health class is included in most schools, that is the legacy of teachers needing to give students support that they weren't getting at home.

The legacy of schools being places where students become people is still ongoing and the burden to do that falls onto the teachers. How do we measure this good work? Why should teacher's pay be based on their student's performance when there are other factors at play. In this way, unions try to stop this from happening. It creates unnecessary churn in the system and leaves teachers with low job satisfaction. To make a private sector comparison, it would be like if we measured the performance of a team by how another team performed their job. If you have a marketing team and their performance is only measured by how the IT department performs, that isn't very fair. Performance-based pay only works when the person doing the work gets the rewards from their hard work or suffers as a result of the lack of hard work. However, to make teachers economically dependent on the performance of students with unique issues and problems simply isn't fair to teachers and ultimately is a disservice to the students.

This has even led to very well publicized cheating scandals. Two stand out: the cheating scandal in the Washington, D.C. school district under Michelle Rhee who pioneered bonuses for performing schools and in Atlanta where teachers changed test scores so that their students would perform better. These conditions were created when the success of professional teachers were tied to how the students performed. High stakes testing sounds nice but the reality is that education is a human business and that means that solving education involves solving very human problems. Would we rather have teachers focusing on raising all students or focus on making sure they create the numbers the politicians want to see?

It is a well-known story from different people that teachers are notoriously hard to fire. Tenured teachers are nearly impossible to fire, as are tenured professors. One average it takes 2-5 years to fire a teacher. There is a process for this that usually involves evaluations and documentation of what is wrong with their teaching process. Then, administration is supposed to work to correct these problems before finally deciding if the teacher should be let go. As anyone who hasn't worked knows there are many factors to why one can get fired. Many of those are personal or political.

Those who want to make it easier to fire teachers claim that teacher turnover isn't a bad thing but actually can be a good thing because it will attract people who will go into teaching for money rather than the legendary job security that teaching offers. This would work if teaching was a well paid professional, it isn't. Average teacher pay starts at $27,000 and the average tops out at $62,000 for long-term teachers with credentials. Teachers aren't paid well, especially early career teachers. Part of the compensation is a higher amount of job security and a more secure retirement.

The argument that longevity creates lazy teachers who just teach the same thing over and over again and gives the same tests over and over again, as Megan Mcardle gave in her 2011 article for *The Atlantic*, may have some importance, but that surely should be evaluated on an individual level and not as a one set idea. There may be some truth there, but to say that we need to make it easier to get rid of all teachers just to make it easier to get rid of a few is not a fair policy and erodes the teaching profession. E.D. Kain said in a blog post on teacher firings that without the necessary protections, like pensions, job security, tenure, and unions, you're left with "a difficult job with no job security, mediocre benefits, and relatively low pay." Teacher pay is often so low in some areas that teachers take 2nd jobs, even during the school year to make ends meet. The time off in the summer is often only 4-6 weeks that can be dominated by continuing education, school year preparation, and required in-service days.

There is also no easy process to translate teaching skills to other professions. In the private sector, you can get fired and most likely get a job somewhere else where you can try again. In teaching, this will most likely require a move because a teacher would be shut out of an entire school district. There is also no guarantee that he or she would be able to find a job with comparable pay in the private sector. Why would teachers invest in a profession with limited opportunity (there are only so many schools) when they can get fired on a whim of an overzealous administrator? This is especially true when teaching credentials don't translate well into other professions.

School Choice

Tying dollars to the student seems like a great idea. Students can take their education dollars and go elsewhere. Does that undermine the overall idea that education should be universal and quality? Does that undermine neighborhood schools?

Market reforms have some appeal for school reformers. Schools often get compared to the auto industry. The United States auto industry kept losing market shares due to their lower quality vehicles. The comparison seems easy, but education isn't a consumer product. Although many school voucher proponents would consider education a commodity, the school choice movement has pushed primarily for school vouchers so that the dollars the state spends on a student are tied to the student to spend and use as they please. However, this market reform can leave many students behind. Charter schools have been used as the private sector solution to failing public schools. These schools are tuition free and funded by the state directly or through vouchers. However, they have problems of their own and surpass the problems seen in the regular public school. Dollars leaving the public school system can be seen as a direct attack on public schools, especially for poor students who are already under pressure and have higher rates of students dropping out. In a society where most states have a right to education codified in law or in state constitutions, will school choice leave students that can't take advantage of these privatization be left behind?

Charter Schools

One of the biggest innovations with education has been the Charter Schools. These schools are government funded but do not have to comply with the ordinary regulations that regular public schools must abide by. On the one hand, this has allowed charter schools to innovate education and has also allowed online schools to flourish as well; however, they are not a panacea. They tend to be less diverse, offer less activities (sports, arts) and the teaching staff can be cycled regularly because they are on contract only. Charter schools are located wherever the organization running them locates them, which means that students often must have transportation to the school.

The biggest criticism of charter schools, which are powered by school choice vouchers in most states, is that the dollars leaving the public education system leave the public education system in worse shape. Less money means fewer resources and fewer resources means even worse education for the students left behind. Charter schools also tend to not be very diverse. Poor, minority parents often cannot afford or have the time to transport their students themselves to the charter schools. Those parents rely on the familiar yellow school buses to take their kids to school. This leaves charter schools, while tuition free, to be primarily utilized by parents able to afford transportation to school. This means these schools tend to be less reflective of their neighborhoods where they located.

The Swedish model also has a different approach. Swedish schools are uniform throughout the country. Parents in Sweden don't have to pick schools, they simply send their children to the neighborhood school. Charter schools or private schools are illegal in Sweden. This means that children go to school with all sorts of children from all sorts of backgrounds. In Michael Moore's film, *Where Should We Invade Next?* he implies that this makes children much more sympathetic to people from all backgrounds. Even if the rich kid may be in charge of a major company one day, he will have been exposed to the people that work for him or her.

Charter schools are also riddled with scandal. At the outset, privatization and school choice seem like a good idea. Why should all parents be forced to send their kids to only one school because of where they live? However, it seems like a losing deal. Network for Public Education, a public school advocacy organization, publishes a list of charter school scandals. In 2018, these ranged from theft, to excessive pay for executives, to a sex scandal involving students. Public schools certainly are not immune to the latter complaint but due to oversight and government regulations, theft and excessive pay are one of the few problems that public schools don't suffer from. Scanning through the local newspaper reported stories, school boards and even some states have had to step in and close many charter schools for underperforming, lying, discrimination, embezzlement, and teacher turnover. And this is all going on while private corporations are getting funded by the taxpayer of the states and school districts where these schools set up shop. What's even worse is that these scandals often leave students scrambling to find a new school in the middle of the year. One story in Arizona, the school closed just 2 months into the school year. Students were forced to change schools.

If privatization is supposed to solve all the ills of the public school system, the early signals seem to indicate that running a private school, even funded with taxpayer dollars, is no easy thing. On the surface it might seem like "school choice" is a good idea but the reality is far more difficult. The lack of oversight, regulation, and approval of the elected school board is not present and it seems as if charter schools cannot meet the same requirements as public schools.

There is also the simple principle of public education. Public education is one of the hallmarks of our modern age. The US has a system where any child can go to a school and be educated. It improves the success of the child in question and improves our democracy. Charter schools seem to stand in the way of that basic principle. If a nation wide school choice program, as advocated by Education Secretary Betsy Devos were implemented, those who could afford to take their dollars elsewhere would do so and those who couldn't would be simply left behind. The result would be the worst kind of class segregation this country has seen since Jim Crow. Although the education system requires reform, it is clear that charter schools, at least as they are currently administered, are not the answer.

American Education is Trying to be Everything to Everyone

American education takes a one-size-fits all approach to education. Everyone takes similar classes and has to fulfill a broad set of requirements. This includes math, reading, writing, science, and often community service. Requirements for health and the arts are also common in some schools.

Students come from a diversity of backgrounds and learning needs. Instead of separating out students based on their needs, we have attempted to put them all into the same class, taught by the same teachers. This is especially difficult for special needs students. While the teacher is bringing those children along, others can be bored and lose interest. At the same time, those who excel in those classes may also feel the pinch as they cannot move ahead as fast as they would like to move. This puts the burden on students to manage their own education when they are at an age where that can be difficult. America has burdened its teachers and school system to attempt to do many things and be everything to all students. Most systems cannot do that well.

Another area where teachers are burdened with students whose first language is not English. These children are usually the parents of immigrants (both legal and illegal) and can also cause difficulty in the classroom leaving teachers frustrated and the students left behind.

The education system can be different things to different students but that requires us breaking down the one-size-fits-all approach and begin to tailor education to the needs of the student. This may mean separating out the children whose language skills are not ready for the regular classroom and giving the special needs students the help they need in a setting that actually helps them learn and grow.

One of the criticisms of international school systems is that these school systems do just that. When you enter the classrooms in South Korea or Sweden, you will not often find special needs students. They are educated in classrooms separate from regular students and don't take the same tests. Both of these countries do not have large immigrant populations and children who are immigrants must have basic language skills before going into the classroom. That is one of the reasons their test scores are higher. Their student populations are far different than the American student body. Both of these countries also boast strong social safety nets that are more robust than the American model. Socio-economic factors are less prescient in these systems. This is one of the reasons America cannot keep up with those vaunted international tests.

Why Does America Score So Low on International Tests.

Reading about education, you'll hear about two types of international tests that come up: TIMSS and PISA. These are tests administered around the world to test how students are doing. The United States, as a whole, scores in the middle. Some states score higher on their own. Politicians spend a lot of time focusing on why the wealthiest and most powerful nation on earth can't seem to get education right. The reason is simple and yet complex. We educate everyone. We include students that have special needs, no matter how extreme. The US includes students whose English is not their first language. We include students who may have different learning disabilities. The students are all taught together in one classroom and we have them all take the same test. The US doesn't track out students in high school as other countries do. While other countries are testing their very best, we are testing the entire population of 50 million school children in this country. In other countries, students not planning on going to college, don't take these tests (depending on when the test is given). They are put on vocational tracks or schools. Only those who academically succeed take these tests and they score better as a result.

American Culture Toward Education

One does not need to look any farther than school funding to see how Americans do or do not value education. By keeping funding local and often prioritizing things that don't necessarily help classroom instruction, it demonstrates that many people would rather have a new football stadium than quality education and this gets worse in higher education.

James Coleman made an insightful observation that many high school students will recognize. He attended school in the 1940s and 1950s and in 1966 created the Coleman report where he analyzed education and he illustrated the problems with American education. However, he did not take the usual tack of talking about teachers, teacher's unions, or funding. Instead, he talked about culture. He argued that the cultural attitude toward education is broken. As a student, he figured out that the only people that mattered to teachers and administrators were the varsity string football players and cheerleaders. The same people Coleman complained about are also idolized in the media. In many shows, the popular kids are idolized while everyone else looks on and develops an inferiority complex. Also, American society doesn't value education in the same way other countries do. High school sports make the local news. The math champions, much less often. Even in politics, ignorance and "common values" are more valued than expertise in a field.

Each student needs to feel like someone cares about them and their education. This is doubly so in places where parents, through whatever reason are not available to lavish that kind of attention on their children. That was the other insightful thing about the Coleman report. His main conclusion was that family and neighborhood

matter much more than how much money or resources that are put into schools. When poverty abounds in neighborhoods, it deeply affects children. Learning can only take place when basic needs are provided. When those basic needs are not adequately taken care of, education will suffer. Some children aren't going to have sufficient time to do homework or even stay in school. When a society elevates sports and other visible achievements over the value of education, kids will quickly figure out that in order to get attention and accolades, they will do that which society values most. To fix education, then American society and what it values must change.

This is especially so in minority communities. When athletes, entertainers, and celebrities are making the money, getting out of terrible situations, and appearing on TV, that reflects societal values. Many children are going to try for that sort of attention and this often starts in high school. Much less is made of highly successful scientists like Mae C. Jemison (the first black woman in space) or Katherine Johnson (the woman behind the orbital calculations that allowed the United States to land on the moon) or even someone like Ronald McNair (died in the Challenger disaster). Those people don't appear on TV, they don't wear expensive clothes, and they certainly don't get contracts for hundreds of millions of dollars. They do not get a Nike sponsorship and they won't be seen on TV.

Education is about human development. Education helps everyone to stand on the shoulders of giants and create new and exciting breakthroughs that can and should improve our lives. Education allows the creation of great works of literature or film, but it also is what makes society function. The problem is that these achievements aren't as valued nearly as much as the more visible achievements of people in sports and entertainment. Even during the research for this book, I checked the names of the scientists above and Google suggested that I was looking for singers, rappers, or athletes before scientists. That merely reflects what people search for on Google but it's a sad proxy for what people value in society.

One of the reasons other nations perform better is that they value education. In South Korea, educators are considered "nation builders." Their teachers are supported and well-paid. Education is not a waste of money, it is an investment in the future. It builds the nation. In America, we just don't value education the same way. Students are not stupid. They can sense this and for those with weak or non-existent support structures, they simply drop out.

Why Students Drop Out

Students from a poor background are 2.4 times more likely to dropout of high school than students from wealthier backgrounds. According to America's Promise, students cite boredom as the second reason they drop out right behind failing too many classes.

Being a student is no easy thing, especially in the American system where we send students to school for 7-8 hours a day and then pile on hours of homework afterwards. This means that many students can be working on their education for 10-15 hours a day. That doesn't include other responsibilities they may be required to take on. Research has now shown that childhood brains work better on more sleep and that teens stay up as a result of physiology, completely out of step with how the school day is structured.

When we look at other schools, like schools in Sweden, the starting age is higher, they usually start school at age 7. They spend less time in school and homework is virtually non-existent. The curricula is not focused on tests but rather focused on the interests of the students. In Michael Moore's film "Where Do We invade Next?," he visited Swedish schools and saw students making guitars, playing outside, and in an interview with teachers, they said flat out, America should drop standardized tests. Would we see less kids dropping out of school due to failing classes and boredom if we adopted this sort of school format? At this point, it's worth a try. There are also significant economic factors. For poorer students, they may want to better their own situation or better the situation of their family. Dropping out and getting a job sometimes seem like a better choice than continuing to suffer adverse economic circumstances. These are not problems we can solve by simply putting more money into schools and teachers. These are societal problems that must be solved by fixing the greater societal system.

Reforming American Education

America's schools can't make up for a dysfunctional economy and socio-economic disadvantages. Children arrive at school dependent on where they came from at home. If their home doesn't have parents who are educated or have many books for them to read and explore, then they arrive at school much less prepared than students from a wealthier background. By high school, if children have other home problems, like needing to work or taking care of younger siblings, can lead to less time to invest in academics.

Education is meant to be this great leveling force where students can go to school, get an education, and achieve better than their parents. As immigrants arrived in the 19th Century, one of the biggest things they wanted was to send their children to school where they could achieve in academics. With this new education, they could advance in their new country rather than be shunted to vocational programs where they would end up as poor as their parents. German immigrants in 1895 protested the New York City schools who tried to force their children to go into vocational training rather than academic programming. They had higher designs on the future of their children. This attitude, that education should be aspirational, has continued to be an important part of American education.

There have been some major movements in reforming American education. Throughout the history of American education, there have been various attempts to do

it better or make sweeping changes in the promise of saving students. School vouchers, charter schools, and even the advent of state education boards in the early 20th Century have all made grand promises about education. However, one more recent performer has stood out for her sweeping reforms of one of the largest and troubled education systems in the United States.

Michelle Rhee became a national figure during her 3 year tenure as Chancellor of the D.C. public schools. D.C. public schools are some of the worst in the nation. The D.C. system is diverse with a high concentration of minority students. The D.C. schools also tend to serve underprivileged communities. In her tenure, she pioneered teacher evaluations based on test scores and she fired ineffective teachers and staff. She cleaned out principals and changed the central office. During her tenure, she boasted tremendous test scores and dramatic increases powered by bonuses to schools and faculty who created the changes. A frontline investigation found that there may have been irregularities with the answers on the city-wide standardized test. There was evidence that teachers were changing answers for students to win bonuses for themselves and save their jobs. Despite the problems, her teacher evaluation method of incentivizing teachers to get their students to perform on tests was hailed as the future of education. Indeed, her testing-based, performance oriented reforms have become the norm in American schools.

At the time, she was hailed as an important reformer and someone who could change how Americans are educated in the most difficult circumstances. Her reforms did not go over well with teachers and the teacher's union worked hard to oust her political patron and elected someone who would save their jobs. By 2010, she was out as Chancellor and founded a national organization, Students First, from which she retired in 2014. Trump briefly considered her for education secretary until she pulled her name from the running.

One of the major ways education is affected is the economic background of the student. In *The Democratic Dilemma of American Education*, there was little mentioned about poverty and class. This stands in contrast to the journalistic focus on class and other research that tests for the income of the parents. One of the secrets of the American education system is that rich kids do well and poor kids just don't and there are few theories and few policies that are ready to address this problem.

To really fix American education it's going to take money but that money probably has nothing to do with textbooks, computers, or teachers. Those things do need more funding but it has to do with society. Giving all children access to breakfast and lunch (progressive policy ideas) is a great place to start. But working on issues like universal healthcare and increases in wages and job security also factor in to the equation. When students come from stable homes where their needs are taken care of, they will perform better in school.

Education has many players, teachers through unions, the public, parents, and students. Because the government has taken on the responsibility and provides funding, education discussions frequently end up in the halls of state legislatures, which is subject to the political winds of the time. Education seems to have been a victim of our political system. Courts have been resistant to guarantee a federal constitutional right to education although states may have that right.

When it comes to education, the education system can't save everyone. In *One Nation Under Taught*, the numbers aren't encouraging. The book focuses on education and education policy and how American students can and should be advancing in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields. The book even proposes that through STEM-based education reforms, America could add 1 million new people into STEM fields which would have a broad based economic effect. The book focuses on the education system's lack of focus on the STEM fields which will define the 21st century. Adding 1 million new people into the labor force with STEM degrees won't solve the broader economic problem.

STEM has its own gaps anyway and it does not begin to address the large-scale economic headwinds we face through automation and economic changes of being involved in a truly global economy. To help students be competitive, schools must prepare them to compete on a truly global scale. Trying to force all students into STEM won't merely leave students behind, it's not quite what the American economy really needs and it doesn't address the real needs of students. The reality is that many students are ill-suited for fields in STEM. Although more could be done to encourage STEM education, America still needs all sorts of workers in a variety of fields.

Empowering Teachers

How can we put power in the teacher's hands? By giving schools a little bit of democracy. Teachers could elect principals and school board members from among themselves. Schools could also become more democratic by giving power to students. In the many TED talks I watched in preparation for this essay, a talk from Massachusetts stood out. These democratic schools have less structure and less rules. The students vote on teachers, classes, and determine their own pathway through their education based on their interests. Those schools look a lot more like the Swedish schools mentioned earlier. These students aren't bored and finding ways to drop out. These students are engaged.

Education needs to respond to the needs of everyone and that means better preparation in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) and it also means that students need real preparation in critical thinking and are able to talk to a variety of people and solve problems.

How to Get Better Teachers

Hiring of new teachers can be at the behest of the board but the hiring committees should include teachers and parents. Each teacher could prepare a packet for the hiring committee and then the committee can consider each candidate in turn. All the teachers should be up for review every 5 years to review their performance across a variety of metrics, including parent and student happiness, test scores, improvement of students, technology used, methods used, long-term student success rates, and reviews.

However, all this teacher oversight must go both ways. Teachers should write a short report on their school every year to the board, what's going right and what's going wrong. Those should be turned into action items for the new year. These should be publically available. This would make education more responsive to more people and cater to what the teachers and parents are looking for from education.

The biggest factor in hiring and retaining is fairly straightforward: pay the teachers more. Make sure that their compensation is on-par with the private sector. Attract the professionals and others who might be looking for a change in the middle of their career. Continue the advancements made from Race to the Top with innovative ways for people to get a teaching credential. For example, professionals with degrees could begin in the school by assisting and observing as part of their classwork to become a teacher. Programs like Teach for America show that teacher preparation can't be a fast process (they try to do it in 8 weeks) but it is a skill that takes development.

The Federal Role in Education

The federal government should create minimum standards of education much as states governments do. The fact that religion concepts are openly taught as fact in school is a crime against secular education and against the advancement of science in schools. The federal government should enforce and fund minimum school building standards that include libraries, science labs, media labs, and basic school supplies for every child. Every child should be issued a simple laptop for online schooling lessons.

The poverty gap also needs repair as well. The federal government, as some nations in Europe do, should give each child, no strings attached, $500 per month as a school allowance. The parents would receive the money until high school and then after that it would go directly to the child in question. That would amount to $225 billion per school year. That might seem like a large number. To compare, that's nearly ¼ of the defense budget. That program would be as large a program as Social Security or Medicare. The federal government should also ensure that healthy, good food is available to all students during the school day. Having counseling and mental health services available could be another important way to serve students better, especially in troubled areas. If schools are going to serve a social service center, then they should be funded as such.

Schools Have Changed

America is a changing country. By the middle of the 21st Century, if not sooner, we will be a majority-minority country and this is already reflected in our schools where white students represent just 49% of students (2017 number). That's down from 80% in 1968. Teachers and administrators are facing schools with a diverse student population and all the needs that those students may require. Despite overcrowded schools, the average class size is down in primary schools from 26-21 since 1987. Modern schools tend to focus on math and science and more special needs. However, this is going to leave some students behind. Try as teachers might, not all students are going to excel in math and science. Some students will express their talent in a variety of other areas. Schools should focus on programs that can actually create success for them, too. There are too many people living their lives thinking that they can't do certain things because they did poor in school. Their true talent was simply not identified and fostered. Schools need to do what is necessary for students to succeed at an individual level. This includes students who are learning English and students who wish to become doctors and high level scientists. Policy makers, teachers, and administrators need to work with the schools and the students they have, not the students and schools that they wish they had. By not forcing everyone into the same box, American education can create success for all students and truly not leave any child behind.

How to Fix Schools

There are some great methods from other nations that we can take and implement in American schools. We can begin by reintroducing the arts and physical education. Due to the burden of standardized testing, anything not measured on a test, like arts and physical education, has been eliminated in many schools. That does not encourage well-rounded human beings or great participants in democracy. Blending together STEM and the Arts creates what some people call a STEAM curriculum that includes important teaching and instruction in the arts and humanities.

We can and should expose students to complex concepts earlier and give them a chance to guide their own learning from a menu of subjects. Students can work with their parents to decide their path based on their interests. This also includes breaking up the structured grades system and allowing students of different ages and abilities to mix in one environment together. Providing facilities for students to work alone or in groups would make education more flexible and attentive to the needs of the student.

However, this is no excuse not to have high standards and for students to work hard on their education. However, it should and could be driven by the parents and the interests of the student. Instead of measuring everything with a test, schools should focus more on the individual achievement of each student. This would ensure that students will stay all the way through and each state should have a plan to reduce drop out rates to zero.

Another way to reduce dropout rates is to rethink highschool entirely. Rather than expecting all students to do well in heavy academic subjects, schools need to provide a variety of high school options that may or may not include STEM or STEAM. A student may be a brilliant caretaker, they should be able to explore that option through a shorter high school career. In Denmark, a high school student can take a 2 year vocational track or a longer 3 year academic track. Students should feel free to choose either. By doing this, we can allow students to graduate earlier with job skills for them to enter the market right away. By allowing some students to enter the work force earlier and with a diploma, we can solve some of the reasons why students drop out, like boredom and the need to make money. It would even pay to work with America's robust community college system to create pathways for students to take those classes to give them the credentials that they need to succeed in life, not just take a test really well. This would be a chance to really invest in professions, trades, and real skills for real jobs. That way anyone who leaves high school will either be ready for an academic pathway in college or have skills to have a career in the real work.

Another major reform, to bolster this new high school system, would be to have high school entrance and exit exams. Based on these tests, each student can use that information to pick the best path for them. These tests should not just be multiple choices on a scantron sheet. It should include student statements about whatever future plans they might have thought about or even just potential interests. A personal interview with each student and their parents would also be powerful. Each student would then enter their high school career with a clearer idea of their path and where they want to improve or what interest they might want to pursue.

Common Core was a great first step to having a common minimum standard for education in this country. Although it has been criticized for being too focused on testing and the content has been pilloried online, the federal government can and should institute minimum standards of education that all states must abide by. The federal government also needs to ensure that buildings and teachers meet minimum standards as well. Congress can decide what those minimums should be, but any student in any state or community should be able to go to their school with confidence that there is national oversight over their education and that their education will be of a basic quality no matter where they come from or how rich or poor their background.

Ultimately, children are a product of society and what that society values. If the community values education and works to create chances for success, then students will have better opportunities and education will improve. It is really up to policy makers and society at large to break apart broken funding models, broken testing methods, and other problems and treat students as people who are valuable and important. When students feel like people care about them and what they are doing is valuable, that creates a container for success that can reach even the poorest student.

Higher Education

The United States sports one of the best post-secondary systems in the world. The United States achieved this educational feat because of a government program. In 1862, Congress passed the Morrill Land-Grant Acts. These laws directed states to create one state college for agricultural and mechanical arts in each state. Congress declared that the 16th section of each township be used for a state school. The US has a tremendous legacy of public education because of this. Many Eastern states already had universities and colleges. Out of those institutions spawned some of the best research and teaching institutions in the world. This has also led to the best technology and advances in science to happen within the United States. The American university system has powered the 21st century the world over. This system is also attractive to parents and students from around the world. Parents the world over send their children to be educated in American universities and with good reason. The quality of teaching is high and the opportunities available to students from top schools rival almost no other schools and are on par with the most prestigious schools in Europe. The US has a history of education for the common good. This has done amazing things for the US from medical advances to defense and the space program. Regardless of the quality available, the cost of American higher education is in sharp focus as the most educated generation in American history struggles with student loan debt, mostly occurred due to the rising cost of higher education.

United States higher education doesn't have the structural problems that K-12 has because it's primarily funded through tuition. In the recent past, states funded higher education and some states, like California, made their state universities free to students. However, the higher education system has a funding problem. Tuition is a good way to fund these institutions however, the students bearing the cost has led many students to take out loans to fund their education and that has burdened a generation with tens of thousands of dollars in debt at the time of their lives when they are least able to pay it, especially given the present economic conditions.

Because schools are now funded through tuition and the colleges must take on ever greater responsibility for their funding, tuition rates have skyrocketed over the past 30 years. Quality education only matters if you can access it. For all the money entering into the college system, those tasked with building the best and brightest of tomorrow aren't even paid well anymore.

Professors Are Almost Slave Wage Labor

While the price of higher education has increased, the salaries of professors have not increased. The amount of adjuncts have increased over the past 10 years and their pay, because they are adjuncts on contract, is notoriously low. Tenure track jobs are at an all time low. Many adjuncts will stay on contract for years instead of enjoying the job security and pay of professors from years past. Professors are pressured to teach, counsel students, and research. The pressure to publish, especially at a research

university is ever-present. One of the things that the higher education system shares with the K-12 system is the desire for education to translate to real work and real jobs, as well as, evaluation and accountability. The pressure is now on professors to not only publish researched but also to make their lectures interesting for students and keep them engaged as well. Professors must meet students where they are and help them to succeed, often in complex subjects. Much of the burdens that K-12 teachers face is now reaching professors as well.

Education is an investment and it is a long term one. Many of the economic investments in higher education don't pay off for several years as graduates start and achieve within their career fields. This has created a desire to move higher education away from liberal education that seeks to create well rounded people and more toward vocational programs that create better and more efficient workers. The debate between creating democratically active citizens and good workers has reached higher education. However, the discussion isn't quite the same as it's K-12 counterpart.

The Sports Problem

One of my criticisms of higher education stems from the focus on sports programs. According to the NCAA, 2.9 billion dollars are provided to Division 1 and 2 athletes. The NCAA promotes the fact that their students are student athletes and the academic achievement that their students achieve while playing the sport that they want to play. However, the true crime of the collegiate sports system is the amount of money spent on athletes worth the investment, especially when it comes at a cost to academic programs. Billion of dollars are expended yearly on sports atheltic programs. This represents a transfter of wealth away from research, professor salaries and scholarships for others who do not participate in sports.

For many states, the college football coach or basketball coach is the highest paid state employee, exceeding the salaries of many governors and other high-level state officials. Is this a wise investment for our education system that is desperate for more money for professors, capital projects, and scholarships for those that can't throw a ball or run quickly.

Instead of spending money on ever-larger football stadiums or ever-more expensive athletic programs, colleges need to return to their chief job: educating students to create educated, well-rounded, and competant professionals, citizens, and leaders of tomorrow. Sports can be an important part of this puzzle. It should not be the end goal. For many colleges, they are not known for their academics or the scientific discoveries that they produce. They are known for producing the professional athletes of tomorrow. Is this the best we can expect from the world's best university system?

Reforming Higher Education

The criticism of higher education is markedly different than the problems with K-12 education. Many of these problems stem from the fact that college students are essentially adults, free to make their own decisions about their lives. College students are still young and still need plenty of support to be successful within a university system that is often "sink or swim."

A few of these proposed problems include:

- High dropout rates
- Cost
- Lack of real on-the-job skills
- Lack of privatization
- Accreditation

America has one of the best university systems in the world. It functions fairly well; however, much like it's K-12 companion, dropout rates are rather higher. When I attended the University of Northern Colorado, I sat in on a panel that announced our freshmen drop out rate: 50%. That was in 2008. Most of the freshmen were lost between the first and second semester. Which means that freshmen would arrive on our campus and take classes for a few months and then simply drop out. UNCO was a 2nd tier school in a state with two big research institutions that often pulled the best students in before our smaller school had a chance to attract them. That said, solving the high dropout rate was a high priority for administration.

Over the past 20 years or so, the push for many students has been to go to college. One of the goals for Race to the Top was to provide education to get kids ready for college. College preparation came into sharp focus in the *Nation At Risk* report in 1983. Much of the focus on education was getting students ready for the jobs of tomorrow and that usually meant some form of post-secondary education. However, as we've seen since the Great Recession, that push may have been a mistake. This push created a generation of people armed with a Bachelor's degree (or higher) but for whom underemployment has been a story for decades. While some people would blame that on too many people getting "meaningless degrees in the humanities," anecdotal reports show that even lawyers and business administration majors are having trouble as well.

Some of the most popular reforms include reducing costs or making college entirely free. Others have promoted the idea of 3 year Bachelor degrees and an increased focus on private colleges. However, the focus on private colleges deserves attention. In the aftermath of the of the Great Recession, private colleges were in sharp focus due to a variety of scandals, including lying about graduation and employment rates of graduates. Many people had paid thousands of dollars, by student loans, to get these

degrees that turned out to be useless. Many of the school's reputations were so bad that employers saw that particular education credential and simply threw out resume believing that the graduate must not be competent with that nature of instruction. Large chains, like Corinthian Colleges, ended up being sued and closed their doors. Some borrowers are eligible for loan forgiveness due to the lies. Much like charter schools, privatization has had mixed results.

However, the cost factor is a significant criticism. College tuition in the 1960s and 1970s was notoriously cheap. Some states, like California, offered free university education. Since the 1980s, college tuition has skyrocketed. Just since the Great Recession, tuition at 4 year public colleges has risen $2,670 and $7,390 at private schools. The farther back you go, the worse the picture gets . What has caused this crisis of cost. Two factors are at play. One, the availability of student loans and high caps for federally backed lending for the purpose. Another factor is the erosion of state funding for higher education. Even just since the Great Recession, there is still a $9 billion dollar shortfall, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Historically, the picture gets even worse. Part of the responsibility of the increased cost of tuition has to do with decisions made in state capitals throughout the nation. Universities have since shifted the burden of large institutions onto students. Universities are also competing for students. This has driven schools to increase their facilities and their opportunities, especially in popular fields where the potential for high earning graduates exist. This has a tremendous cost and it often comes with partnerships with business or at the expense of less glamorous programs.

However, most young adults go to college in order to get a leg up in the job market. Many jobs, especially in our information driven world, require degrees. While many of those jobs most likely don't require those skills, that is the reality chasing job seekers. There is also the carrot of the $1 million in extra earnings that most college graduates earn in their lifetime. However,there are many barriers to college success and any of them are familiar to the reader. Many college students cannot hold down a job and keep up with the ever-demanding class work. This means that many students have extreme food insecurity and some stories have surfaced of students living in their cars because that is their only affordable housing option. This makes college completion, especially for working class students, difficult.

Since the Great Recession, many people have complained that graduates don't have "workforce ready job skills." While this criticism is valid, college was never designed to provide job-ready-skills. It was designed to deliver critical thinking and intelligent workers to companies who then would train them. However, as companies have raised the standards for entry-level jobs and reduced employee investment, employers complain they can't find the people that they need. The people are there, they simply need the right kind of training. When companies train their workers, it pays off for them and society as a whole. Employers need to return to a model where they train and promote from within, rather than simply looking for someone who already has all the skills that they might require. However, this may need some subsidization from

the government in order to make this a reality. There is also another way to solve this problem and that is some sort of post-college skills training for specific jobs in partnership with businesses who would be ready to hire these newly skilled workers. To make this fair, they would need to extend this to all graduates from all majors, just not the majors that they like.

Accreditation has been described as some sort of evil cartel that restricts new entrants into the college market. Accreditation started as a consumer protection measure to expose diploma mills and other dishonest educational institutions. Accreditation agencies are often staffed by the same regional institutions they accredit. This is an area where competition could be increased. The accreditation system is valuable for protecting students from diploma mills; however, this is an area where government could again do some great good by providing oversight and restricting who can sit on the boards of those agencies. A federal accreditation system may eliminate this problem altogether.

Solving the dropout problem and the resulting untenable debt that goes with it requires some of the similar solutions for K-12 education. College students need similar support as they did when they were in the K-12 system. This means extending social programs for students and providing resources to make sure that all students have access to food and shelter during their studies. This can be accomplished by expanding grant programs and possibly creating a new grant program for the lowest income students. Universities also need to pay closer attention to students who are on the edge of dropping out. Resources, via counseling and advice, should be extended for those who are failing classes, withdrawing from classes, or simply aren't having any success in their college career.

None of these reforms should come at the cost of losing the humanities and liberal education as we have known it. Since the Great Recession, the humanities have come under fire as simply useless. That is far from the case. The last thing higher education needs is to create programs where students only take classes that they are interested in to the detriment of other subjects. The whole purpose of a college education is to get a broad based sense of knowledge and I fear that in all our discussions around college and post-secondary education, the humanities will be lost in the shuffle.

Fewer People Going to College

The best way to reform higher education is to change who goes. Many students don't need to go to college. Our push for college has reduced the meaning of a Bachelors to practically nothing. Most people would be better served by pursuing other forms of study. This is where job training through the community college system could be a game changer for many young adults. Then, they could pick up great classes with great skills that translate into better jobs for the future. It is long past time to take stock of who is going to college and if that truly is the best option for them. This is another area where the European system has an advantage.

Online Education Is Not the Answer

The internet has changed many parts of our lives and education is one area where technology proponents have great hope. Rather than sit through boring lectures from a professor, these innovators envision people learning skills that they need from MOOCs (massive open online courses) from experts all around the world from the comfort of anywhere. However, this does not take into account the wonderful opportunities that universities provide for the communities where they are and the massive amount of jobs that these schools provide to skilled and unskilled workers alike. Universities are repositories of knowledge and research. They are not merely places for people to learn skills for jobs. This attitude that education is only for economic benefit is worrying because it defies the basic idea of education; it makes for better people in the long run.

Despite all the criticisms, the college system works incredibly well, as with many institutions in America, it just needs a few tweaks to make it work better for everyone. Obviously returning the funding levels of the pre-Reagan era would reduce the costs for working parents and reduce the debt load. Proposals like Senator Bernie Sanders' idea for free college have begun a national conversation about the value of education. Education is a pathway to a better society and if we want that society, then we must value education at all levels and put our prodigious wealth and resources toward that end. America is a nation at risk, a nation at risk of losing its edge because the cost barrier is too high and students from poorer backgrounds cannot afford college or afford to live while they are studying. Education is the pathway to a better America but for that pathway to work, it needs to be available to everyone who chooses to puruse it and it needs to be high quality. If we support students, then we support the nation.

To Solve Schools you Have to Solve America

In the research for this essay, one fact stood out: schools are deeply affected by other public policy problems.

These include:

- Schools are on the front-lines of America's social problems
- Racism
- Classism
- Income inequality
- Taxation
- What it means to be an American

Because schools have a tradition of being the primary force in creating the melting pot, every social problem that we have ends up affecting education and schools are tasked with dealing with those problems. This even extends to college where students face budding adulthood. Colleges are having to learn how to deal with students who may not have health insurance, have mental health issues, or students with children who are still trying to achieve their education.

As much as governments continue to "fund education," we also need to fund students. America needs to provide social resources for them so that they can learn in a positive environment and help them overcome barriers to education. Students bring all the problems of their lives to the classroom. This puts America's schools on the frontlines of our social problems. Integrating schools doesn't matter if society is fundamentally racist. America cannot have equal access to education if we do not have equally funded education. High test scores cannot happen for students without solving food insecurity and poverty. Policies like universal childcare and leveling out income inequality through a basic income or other social services are the only way to make it easy for students to come to class: ready to learn.

Fully funding schools makes sure that buildings are kept up and textbooks are up to date with the latest information. Although corporations might make a splash with the latest school they have chosen to help with new tech or other help, this does not replace the simple act of making sure every school throughout the country has the same resources and meets the minimum standards. This does not replace the ability for schools to make sure that children have food, clothing, and school supplies. Charity cannot always provide for these things. If education is important, then it is up to society to create the right conditions for success.

Without supporting teachers and students, we aren't addressing the real problems that are wrong with our education system. It is a small miracle that any child is able to achieve in American schools considering the system that they are asked to learn within. America has 3.2 million people educating 50 million children with a variety of needs, problems, and issues. They are not supported the way they need to be and they lack the necessary resources to make a truly great education possible.

However, another part of that is directly addressing the problems that we have as a society. For students to thrive, we need to create a society that is inclusive of all and that addresses our lackluster social safety net. By addressing these problems we can truly get to the root of what is wrong with public education. Education isn't broken, the society it exists in is broken. To fix one problem, we must address many other problems. Some of them are difficult and some of them are hard but through intelligent public policy, wise legislation, and bipartisanship, society can improve and better schools will be a result. Education is not a basic problem. It is incredibly complicated. Research for this essay revealed that from the first Google search. Education is a by-product, not the solution. When society is going well, education will improve at the same time.

Notable Events, Entertainment, Weather, and Sports

No discussion about the world around us would be complete without discussing media and media coverage at the outset and some of the problems that we have in media. If our goal is to understand the world around us then no discussion is complete without a discussion of media. The media, particularly social media, touches almost every area of our lives. Media is the lens through which we experience the world. Let's face the facts, most people are too busy to be consciously aware of everything going on in the world around them. The media is a way to condense the events of the world into an easily digestible format that allows us to know what is going on in our communities and around the world. An open and free media usually leads to a well informed populace and that is an important part of democracy. When the media functions well, people can critically engage with their government. However, as you might have noticed, that relationship has become complicated in recent years.

A Quick History of Media

Before the printing press, distributing any sort of information was not an easy task. Everything had to be transcribed by hand or by woodblock. Information was limited and tightly controlled. Most people could not read unless they were wealthy or a part of the clergy. However, even the wealthy often only had what would be called an 8th grade education. However, with the advent of the movable type printing press, information became much more available. This coincided with an increased emphasis on education, which lead to higher rates of literacy. The movable type printing press also allowed some of the first newspapers to be published. Germany led the way in this regard. John Carolus published the first newspaper, *Relation aller Fürnemmen und gedenckwürdigen Historien* (Account of All Distinguished and Commemorable News) in 1605. From that point onward, newspapers began to pop up around Europe as the printing technology spread. Pamphlets and other small avenues of news were influential in the days leading up to the American Revolution. *Common Sense* by Thomas Paine was the most famous of these and actively advocated for independence from Britain. After the revolution, the founders took to the newspapers again through *The Federalist Papers* to argue for a new federal republic and how the republic should be formed and how it should work to ensure that the new freedom that had just been fought for would be secure for future generations. The State of the Union was not a public speech, but often simply written

and published to Congress on a yearly basis. The speech would be read by most people in newspapers. Unless, you lived near Washington, D.C., most people in 19th Century America read presidential speeches and other important speeches made on the floor of the U.S. Congress. By the Civil War, the modern newspaper was coming into its own. The *New York Times* had begun publication in 1850 and the beginnings of what looks close to modern news began to form. Newspapers often published a morning and evening edition to cover the entire day. Newspapers in urban areas delivered their papers to the homes of people. Rural people could buy newspapers in towns near them and later receive them by mail. Reporters would work "beats" or areas of interest and report the findings. Reporters for northern newspapers were so good at their jobs that Abraham Lincoln begged them not to report on Union troop movements during the Civil War because Confederate generals were using them as a way to keep up on Union troops. This contentious relationship with the media and the military would continue well into the modern age.

Media underwent another major upheaval with the arrival of mass broadcasting. Chicago sported the nation's first radio station in 1925 and soon news would be available to many people instantly. Many thought that the radio would kill newspapers but that turned out not to be the case. Another addition to the world of media that pre-dated radio by about 20 years was the magazine. Magazines often featured more pictures than newspapers and were published on a weekly or monthly basis. Some of these original publications continue to live on like the *Saturday Evening Post* (it was usually received by mail on Saturdays), *Harper's Bazaar*, *Vogue* (one of the first magazines and is 128 years old), and *Esquire*. Magazines became popular for their features of longer form journalism, poetry, short stories, humor, and their many pictures. Women especially took to reading and discussing magazines.

These publications were usually independently owned. Newspapers sported many famous owners like Horace Greeley and William Randolph Hearst. Katherine Graham, the imperious owner of the *Washington Post* during the Watergate investigation, was recently profiled in the motion picture, *The Post*.

Media underwent another transformation with the arrival of television. Although the technology behind television had been invented in the 1935, World War II delayed it's adoption in America until the early 1950s. This is an area where Britain led the world with the first television news broadcasts from the BBC being available before the war although televisions were in limited use at the time. The big radio networks adopted television technology and began regular broadcasts of television programs and news beginning in 1948-1950. The effect of bringing picture and sound into the living rooms of everyday people was profound and that would greatly affect the course of politics throughout the 20th Century.

Until the smartphone, no single technology had really brought the events of the world into our space like the television. Television influenced the 1960 presidential election and Queen Elizabeth II was the first monarch in history to have her coronation memorialized forever by the cameras of the BBC. Television brought the Vietnam War in to the living rooms of Americans with the lottery draft system and the taped footage of the war in almost-real time. Television was the medium that brought Americans the

news that Nixon had been part of the Watergate conspiracy to win the 1972 election and that they had been lied to about the war in Vietnam. TV footage of Civil Rights protests and speeches galvanized public support for the cause.

Television, radio, and magazines all played an important part of creating the modern media diet. A new product, service, or new star wasn't anything until they appeared on these mass mediums. Music got popular on the radio. New stars became international sensations on TV and through magazines. The media could make or break presidents, wars, and expose scandal. The media, in its position as the "fourth estate," had real power in shaping public perception. The military had to contend with the power of the media, too. Democracy changed when the media exposed things. That was all soon to change. It took time, it took effort by certain people but soon the independent media would be changing into something very different.

Consolidation of Media

One of the things about the news is that the news is not always the most profitable business. Newspapers had more than a few families in major cities quite wealthy, but owning and running a newspaper was an expensive endeavour. There were huge overhead costs. Radio and TV were even more expensive. Reporters were expensive as well and the entire business model was based on advertising. The more people reading, listening, or watching directly lead to how much a company could earn. TV and radio had the advantage of music and programs to augment their business. Newspapers enjoyed no such alternative profit centers. By the 1970s, the daily newspaper was becoming a costly and difficult business to sustain, especially with rising wages from unionized newspaper reporters and the increasing costs of producing a daily newspaper. Media was about to undergo a huge change.

TV networks were often owned by the familiar players from radio: NBC, CBS, and ABC. However, at this time, they were independent companies operating on their own terms with news and programming. News divisions tended not to make much money due to lower ratings than scripted shows, game shows, or sports. However, these companies began to struggle financially and the opportunity to turn TV into a bigger cash-generating opportunity than it already was became obvious to many. Capitalism and the news were about to collide in a big way.

There are plenty of voices who have complained about the capitalist nature of the media. NPR was created to balance the corporate autocracy of media that became prevalent in the 1970s as the modern media conglomerates that we love to hate began to come together. Newspapers began to be bought up and become part of ever larger conglomerates like the McClatchy Company and Gannett that together own most of the local daily newspapers in the United States.

To look at the nearly 2,000 TV channels available might seem like TV is a massive market but the reality is that most of television is owned by about 4 companies. News in particular is concentrated in a comparatively few corporate hands. ABC is owned by

Disney, which now also owns the non-news parts of Fox. NBC is owned by Comcast Universal. This means even a liberal bastion like MSNBC is also owned by a large media conglomerate. Fox News is independent now having been formerly owned by News Corporation, which was founded by Rupert Murdoch and Roger Ailes. CBS remains an independent apart of the CBS Corporation. CNN, which practically invented cable news as we know it today, was once owned by TBS or the Turner Broadcasting System, which is now owned by AT&T. Most of the news consumed via television is owned by AT&T, Disney, Comcast-Universal, and CBS.

Before the advent of the internet, just a few companies controlled the bulk of the news. Although cable news did a great job of breaking news out of the hands of the big three networks, those cable networks are now owned by many of the same people. CNBC is known for its independent reporting of investor news and is the place where the investor-class goes to talk about investing. However, it's owned by NBC, which is owned by Comcast. Daily newspapers are no better. McClatchy and Gannett together own 129 daily newspapers, which is almost the entirety of the daily newspaper market in the United States. Only a few cities sport a truly independent newspaper.

It's hard to think that it was ever this way, but before the smartphone, TV news, particularly the evening news, ruled the news landscape. Popular news magazines like 60 minutes, Nightline, and Frontline turned small events into national news. While TV news might have been king, the new corporate environment was directly responsible for that. Corporate leaders wanted to create profits and that included the news divisions of major networks. This led to a phenomena within the industry referred to as, "if it bleeds it leads." The principle is simple, if it's horrific, shocking, or particularly tragic – anything to create a visceral response – that leads the broadcast. Why? Because people will watch it. When content creates an emotional response, our brains are naturally going to want to consume that content. TV producers figured this out and rather than picking stories that might be significant for the public or democracy, stories that could create an emotional response created more viewers, which meant higher advertising prices and thus, greater profits. Both sides of the political spectrum are guilty of this. MSNBC News will lead with something to scare left-leaning people and Fox News will in turn lead with something to scare right-leaning people. Before the internet, this system persisted as a way for networks to make millions of dollars and still be producing the news. Personalities on different networks and cable shows rose to far higher prominence. Before the corporatization of the news, being a news reader was an entry level job. Afterwards, being on a news show became a prime gig. The formula was simple and yet incredibly profitable. Find a scary news story, have someone trustworthy and popular read it, and then rake in the advertising dollars as people tuned in.

Doing Good Doesn't Always Pay the Bills

The kind of reporting that both groups I've talked about demand just do not make much money and it's no good way to get and keep corporate advertisers. In an increasingly shrunken and corporatized market, media, as we have it, needs to be able to make money. The pattern of media, especially in television, has been to lead with what sells rather than what is in the public's interest. This has coincided with an increase in

corporate, rather than independent ownership of almost all aspects of media.

This has become particularly evident within local news channels. More and more local affiliate stations are owned by fewer and fewer companies. Recently, a big news story had to do with the number of stations Sinclair Broadcasting now owns. Although they remain affiliated with the regular TV networks, Sinclair controls all other non-network programming, including the evening news. In a shocking corporate take over of the news, Sinclair has issued "must-reads," which are items that local stations are required to read on air during a broadcast. These items are not written or reviewed by any local news producer. They are simply printed off, put on the teleprompter, and read as they were written by the station owner. Because of FCC rules, the networks are not allowed to own many stations themselves. ABC, CBS, NBC, Telemundo, the CW, and Fox have very few owned-and-operated stations and the ones they do have are usually just the local stations for New York and Los Angeles.

This has allowed Sinclair to buy up at least one station in almost every other major market and create a situation where corporate propaganda becomes the news. Sinclair is known as a conservative leaning organization and the theory is that in their take over of local stations, they are using their ownership as a way to change the perspective of local news and create conditions where they can push their agenda nation-wide at the local level.

The desire to make money over doing what is necessary for the public good strikes again. Newspapers have struggled as well in this corporate environment. Many newspapers have seen their advertising revenues decimated by the internet. This has led to much less media oversight over many aspects of public life, including government. Most local stations and newspapers don't have "beats" anymore. The stories covered are often tracked and created by an ever-smaller staff. Newsrooms have been decimated with staff cuts to push up the corporate bottom line. Only the most salacious areas of town get any sort of attention, like crime or local government scandals. The focus is on creating conditions to get advertisers and money rules above all. The internet with its clickbait headlines and focus on creating what will generate a click, and therefore, eyeballs on ads has only added to this trend. Doing good in the current news business doesn't pay.

The Death of Journalism

Before the corporate takeovers, journalism had a far greater emphasis of informing the public about community goings-on. That was true journalism. To be a "journalist" is to relate what is happening in as neutral a way as possible. However, this kind of journalism has mostly disappeared. Getting a click or a view is far more important than simply reporting what is going on. Commentary, bias, and editorialization has bled into the news in such a way it is almost indistinguishable. This has led to polarization and has been pushed by the same.

For many people, the news is boring and irrelevant. It's not like a private person can solve many of the problems they might find on a news site. It makes for great Facebook comment anger but it really can't extend much beyond that. Most people just disengage.

What can I do? However, in the face of that real powerlessness, the media offers a cure: an emotional response. If you can get people, angry, scared, or concerned, then that will drive the kind of activity that generates revenue. It would be nice to blame people for this but the reality is that most people are busy and they have lives. The media is supposed to help them understand the world. That is the true value of journalism.

People gravitate toward that which affects their lives. Things they need for their children, their relationship, family, and home. That is the area in which they have control and can affect change. Another war in Africa is too far out of their control. We live in a society where we are doing more and more with and for ourselves. We are subjects acting in this world and more and more pressure is placed on the individual rather than the greater society. Many people don't see them as a functionary in greater society or even a member of society but simply a person trying to get through life. The news asks us to consider what kind of world we are living in and in our culture we don't think like that anymore. When "our" candidate is bashed, it's not coverage, it's a personal attack against what we believe in and how we think, not a reasonable discussion of policy or a discussion on what kind of country we want to live in. Many readers and viewers simply want to be told what to think about something. That is not journalism, that's popular control and often modern media has much more to do with telling people what to think rather than giving them something to think about.

Saving Journalism

Journalism will only continue to exist if a business model can be found to support it. Reducing the corporate control of media is crucial to creating this condition. As long as corporations control the news and work to milk it for every dollar they can squeeze out of it, nothing will change. That's not the only side of the problem. There is also the fact that the market has changed and most of the old media has not kept up with the changes.

There are only a few people who are going to really care about any cause or problem in the world. The media has realized this and chooses what various experts and editors they think is worthy and important. Thanks to the internet, that is bigger and wider than ever before. If we are going to save journalism and we're going to save the information that we've come to rely on and count on, then we'll have to find new and exciting ways of supporting that reporting.

Local media would do well to look at what local event publications are writing about and doing and seeing how they can move in that direction. Letting people know about news that really affects them is just as important as distance conflict. Covering the local fair and the variety of businesses is just as important as corruption at city hall. If local

media can do that in a fast and exciting way that gets the word out to people in a hurry, then not only will they be able to earn advertising dollars for that but they would also be able to engage more and more readers.

Many outlets have turned to video and podcasts as a way of interacting with their readers and local media is uniquely positioned to take on this trend and make the most of it. The technology is cheap and easy to understand. I agree with John Oliver that expecting journalists to be interactive and write and produce video is a lot to do but if journalists worked together as a team (like the old desk system) and find new ways of creating content and distributing that content, then these media brands would be far more successful than they currently are. Newspapers have writers and editors that they can brand and get people excited about. Slate, Vox, Medium, and every successful blogger proves that it can and does work. The city daily newspapers need to catch up and follow the lead of so many industry leaders and embrace the new technology rather than wishing people would just do something else. Technology has changed how news is gathered and reported and no technology has changed that more than social media.

The News and Social Media

In the days of TV news and newspapers, news didn't spread all that fast. Cable news and the 24 hour news cycle sped things up faster and the internet has put the news on permanent warp speed. Now that the internet and the smartphone has arrived, the world moves much faster than it used to move. It has also opened new opportunities for new kinds of news and new kinds of commentary to thrive.

The internet brought many changes but one of the biggest changes was a new channel to experience news. In the early days of YouTube, new independent news channels like The Young Turks burst onto the scene offering their own unique commentary on the news. Blogs thrived and new perspectives and voices spread like wildfire. Once traffic was built up, websites could have as much power as mainstream media sources. Social media changed everything because social media concentrated on people and got them used to consuming content on a third party platform rather than directly from the source. At first, this was somewhat welcomed, especially by independent media. In the early days of social media, a modest social following could have the reach of millions of people. However, the internet was soon to be concentrated in two very large hands: Facebook and Google.

Facebook and Google, together, control almost all of the internet advertising market. Other platforms offer advertising opportunities but none of them have the same market penetration as Google and Facebook. Google controls the internet in a way because they decide, using an extremely large and sophisticated algorithm, what gets displayed when you search for something. Facebook controls the internet through what they put on the Facebook news feed, which is customized to the user using another very large algorithm. Every experience on Google and Facebook is increasingly customized to the user based on your profile (Facebook) or search history (Google).

For the news, this means that the spread of "fake news" or more accurately, commentary and content created, to seem like someone is reporting news events. The digital world is a place where anyone with an internet connection can post anything that they like. This gets amplified through social media. What is even more insidious is that often times people read things online and then expect major mainstream media coverage. When the story doesn't pop-up, people then also take to social media to accuse the mainstream media of ignoring it.

When our passion-subject isn't getting 24/7 coverage on CNN with graphics and a commentary from Anderson Cooper, the mainstream media is "ignoring big news." For everyone else, the news is simply irrelevant. If it does not affect them as subjects in the conversation and the story of their life, it makes it practically non-existent. Often, people lament "what do we have to do to get people to care about what is going on?" My answer is fairly simple: You can't. People will either have a reaction to something or not and because the news has become so personalized and balkanized, the experience that you have of the world around you will be very different than the experience of anyone else you know. This has large political consequences and often violent consequences.

Pizzagate

The Pizzagate conspiracy held that powerful people like Hillary Clinton, John Podesta, and others were running a child trafficking ring out of the basement of the Comet Ping Pong Pizza Shop in Washington, D.C. Edgar Maddison Welch decided to march into the pizza shop and fired 3 shots with his AR-15 rifle damaging the building but killing no one. He had read about the conspiracy theory online and decided to "save the children" and saw himself as a hero. The building has no basement and there were no children. Child trafficking is a problem but it was not a problem at that restaurant. This was entirely a fabrication of online people writing about something that was patently untrue. There was no truth to any of it but it had become such a part of the discussion in certain corners of social media that this 28 year old man decided to take the law into his own hands. That is the deadly power of social media.

Radicalization

Another way in which social media has radically changed the news is the way in which social media allows people who are marginalized to be easily radicalized to extreme points of view. These groups will use otherwise innocuous news stories to whip like-minded people into a terrible frenzy. This is true both on the right and the left. Extreme leftist views can lead to just as toxic social media posts as some groups on the right. This has been particularly evident within the Feminist and LBGQT community on the left and within the Men's Rights/Pick Up Artist groups on the right. Much of the radicalization of white supremacy has spread online and taken white supremacy from a fringe group to nearly mainstream and gaining followers regularly. Online platforms allows nearly everyone to spout whatever views they like regardless of facts and often they can quickly generate a following simply by giving voice to what others are afraid to say out loud. Once that happens, people can be easily radicalized to very extreme points of view.

Flat Earthers, Anti-Vaxxers, and Others

It is hard to think that in our modern age, people would have to argue if the earth is really flat or if vaccines work. However, thanks to the spread of independent "news" sites that spread cherry-picked studies or other expertise with dubious origins, people make real life decisions about their children or their perspective on reality-based, unsubstantiated nonsense.

Anti-vaccination groups have become so popular by spreading this kind of mis-information that diseases, formerly, eradicated are making a comeback, despite the fact that vaccines have been used for 75 years and are very safe. However, thanks to bloggers, influencers, and social media, well-meaning but misguided parents are choosing to put their children's lives at risk. The current measles outbreak, thought to be unheard in the United States, is the direct result of millions of individual decisions regarding the safety of vaccines. There are enough people that have decided to believe Facebook and other online posts that they have quit vaccinating their children and have reduced herd immunity to such a level that now, many children are suffering from measles, a disease they would normally have been insulated from due to the pervasiveness of vaccines.

The rise of the flat-earth phenomena is mystifying. So-called experts will stand up and try to use complicated math theories and other reasoning to prove that the public has been deceived and that the earth is really flat. Both of these groups use various news stories to promote their equally crazy ideas and they both continue to warp reality through distortion.

The popularity of any of these conspiracy theories would have never happened without social media. Social media is incredibly powerful. It has the ability to spread information to millions of people very quickly. However, humans are actors in the real world and the seemingly innocuous things that are spread in social media can have very real consequences.

Perceptions

All of these groups simply view the news through their radical lens and constantly keep their members in anger about events using their radical lense to distort and obfuscate reality. This has lead to a world where, on the same topic, often 2 people from opposing sides can't speak because they cannot agree on a shared group of facts. YouTube is awash with videos promoting different ideas of what some people think is the news. There are channels promoting the end of the world on a daily basis and they all use the same metric of "truth" to show that they are reporting the "real news" or what the mainstream media won't touch. The perception of reality has simply broken down.

Protest Movements and Political Change

Political change in the United States has never been a particularly fast process. The old quote that has been attributed to an unknown Irishman but most often to Winston Churchill: "The Americans can always be trusted to do the right thing, once all other

possibilities have been exhausted." The success of protests and political change has always come at the behest of the media. Media coverage can energize a protest movement or let it wither on the vine. The Vietnam anti-war movement and even the Civil Rights movement grew due to favorable press in the media. This support changed the country in radical ways. There were many people who were not on board with those changes and that unhappiness with the changes resulting from the 1960s, was capitalized on. The first to take advantage of it was Richard Nixon through the Southern strategy and later by conservative media.

The change in media has changed the nature of protest and the nature of political change. The will of the people to protest for change and have their grievances redressed has begun to wane in the modern period. This is partly because the nature of media has changed and the country is essentially living in two different realities. For this, there are two familiar characters to thank: Roger Stone and Roger Ailes.

Fox News and Roger Ailes

Roger Ailes became a familiar national figure as apart of the #metoo movement, which sparked as a result of breakthrough reporting by Ronan Farrow in *The New Yorker*. He laid the sexual corruption in Hollywood bare and this sparked a movement of women finally revealing the sexual harassment that had been pervasive. Accusations within Fox News were not new, how had Roger Ailes managed to keep himself clear from any accusations until 2016. Although he died in 2017, the last year of his life resulted in him being surrounded by sexual scandals and having to resign from his signature network. That is what he will be remembered for; however, his legacy lives on in our political discourse in the form of Fox News.

The story of Fox News began in the last days of the Nixon administration. Despite their best attempts to stop the investigation into the break-in at the Watergate office building, the scandal had gotten out of control and Nixon was facing impeachment for breaching the DNC headquarters. Roger Ailes and Roger Stone realized that the Nixon Presidency was not lost in Washington. Nixon fired anyone who pursued the Watergate scandal too far. The Saturday Night massacre was evident of that. Watergate was lost in the media. Bob Woodward broke the story in late 1972, he was able to start to a series of events that would see Nixon out of office in just 2 short years. On November 16, 1974, Nixon released the 46 conversations that had been recorded in the White House, which exposed his involvement in the break-in. That release was the result of media pressure, which resulted in Congressional pressure. The media was dominated by the news. Watergate was lost in the media. The moment the public figured out that both Nixon and Agnew were crooks, their time in office came to a swift end.

This fact left people like Roger Stone and Roger Ailes with a problem and an obvious opportunity. The media of the day was not interested in defending the president or presenting an alternate point of view. The simple fact is that the media is supposed to keep elected officials accountable. Roger Stone and Roger Ailes saw media for what it would eventually become: a narrative machine. What if the media could be controlled? What if there was an alternative media that could counter the dominant narrative coming from the networks? What if there was a public PR arm for Republicans that

didn't have to exist within the much more liberal, east coast, elite newsrooms at ABC, CBS, and NBC? The nascent idea for what would become Fox News was born. In 1996, after years working at what would eventually become MSNBC, Roger Ailes got his wish and Fox News launched on October 7, 1996. The American media landscape would never be the same. However, Fox News was a late-comer to the new conservative voices in media. Just a few years before, new voices on an old media had already begun to redraw the political landscape.

Talk Radio

In the early 1970s, FM radio had come online. It was a higher frequency that traveled farther, not based on raw power like an AM frequency, but by its quality. FM was far clearer and served more people. Stations could be heard by more people. FM became popular for music right away and most of the major stations switched from AM to FM. By the early 1980s, it seemed like AM was going to die out. A popular article, "what to do with AM radio" was published. However, AM represented an opportunity for conservative voices. As a result of the transition, AM licenses became inexpensive and this allowed a variety of new stations to open their doors. Many of these stations, rather than focusing on music, decided to focus on talk shows and those talk shows frequently were conservative in nature. Those shows rose to popularity in just a few short years. Rush Limbaugh became nationally known for his popular show that became a beacon for the new conservative voice in American politics.

Using these mediums, conservative political agendas were able to be pumped into the country, not by co-opting the major media but by simply going around it. Those that wanted to promote the ideology of neoliberalism found a way to spread the ideas of individual liberty, low taxes, and small government 24/7. Under this seemingly benign guise, talk radio and Fox News were also able to fight back on the cultural wars that had broken out in the 1960s. Conservative talk radio was a haven for those with traditional values who felt like the country had simply gone out of control.

Frightened Citizens

Most people are too scared and insecure in their lives to hit the street for any real protest. Even Occupy Wall Street and it's global partner protests, as revolutionary as it was, lacked substance and messaging to clearly articulate an agenda. At least, that was how the media covered it. There was no central leader to interview or central person to examine for the purity of their ethics or their past. Occupy was not ready for TV other than it offered footage of vast people sitting in tents and in public parks with signs asking what was wrong with the economy.

It was the closest anyone had come to real power and just as it seemed like Occupy was ready to seize power, violence and anarchists were highlighted as part and parcel of the protest. They drove out good people, the business owners, and others who had started and supported the protest. Then, as winter set in, it withered on the vine. However, previous protests had an outsized effect on society. When people gathered

around a cause, things changed. It often took years to accomplish. The Vietnam War stretched from 1959 to 1973 and it took nearly 10 years of protest to stop it. The Civil Rights movement began in 1951 and the required legislation was not passed until 1964 and even then, more work was done well into the early 1970s to begin to get the rights that everyone now enjoys.

For those in powerful positions and others who resisted these social changes, one of the factors that allowed these protest movements to flourish was favorable media coverage. The world of 1975 was very different from the world just 20 years before. The 1960s had been exhausting with violence, protests, and race riots. The horrors of Vietnam were broadcast right into living rooms. When the anti-war protest began to gain steam in 1963-1965, the media was there to report on that as well and the increase in coverage played its part in the war, eventually becoming unpopular and ending due to popular demand. For the wealthy and powerful who did not want their agendas to be so affected by populism, the media became a real problem.

One of the lessons learned from the anti-war and civil war movements was that real and radical social change was possible. Years of protest undid a war and erased the social construct of Jim Crow. This was due, in no small part, to the fact that the mainstream media, ruled the media landscape firmly. It was not a fast process but it happened. The independent media and exposure of Watergate ended Nixon. People had power and the power to bring otherwise powerful people to account.

That's when that power got co-opted. And part of the co-opting of that power had to do with who controlled the media. When the media moved from independent control to corporate control, the profit motive trumped all other motives, like public service. This has left independent media to continue to do its best to talk about the things that the mainstream media dare not touch so as not to kill an advertising partnership or a revenue stream.

Cable news allowed more channels and more views outside of the big three networks to flourish and this was only amplified by the advent of the internet. However, much of the power of public perception remains in the hands of mainstream media. What the media does and does not cover can cause political change or not cause political change. What is different now is that there is more criticism of the media. Because the business model of the internet is not perfected, there is little original reporting coming from online independent sources. *Democracy Now* does some original reporting, *Breitbart* has some reporters as does *The Young Turks* and *The Huffington Post*. *Think Progress* and *Buzzfeed* also has some original reporting, but they do not have the resources of the cable news channels or the news networks or even the daily newspapers. Many of these organizers have suffered layoffs recently due to falling revenues as the result of Facebook and Google increasing their market share of advertising revenues.

This has all lead to a great polarization of media. Now, people read the media that confirms their biases rather than thinking about the facts of the situation or even looking at events through the lens of commonly shared societal values. The current media environment has balkanized points of view and has divided citizens based on

what each individual finds valuable to themselves. There are no shared facts or shared values. There are merely 350 million points of view that may or may not coincide with each other. This has created a Congress that is deadlocked and no real ability for any side to make true change in the country because no one is speaking the same language or working from the same set of facts. This does not have to be the case for everyone. The only way to break out of the current paradigm is to change how one views the news.

There are many ways to interact with the media. It's not an impregnable hellscape. Rather, one must consider it critically and find out how the media actually works and then how to adjust the understanding of the information through the lens of reporting, no matter the source.

Modern Media Myths Debunked

Myth #1: There is a grand media conspiracy

One of the most frequent questions I get asked is why does the mainstream media not cover more of the memes, blog posts, and other digital news ennui that frequently finds a quick audience on Facebook. Many of my alternative reading friends will post with vitriol in their words, "Why isn't the mainstream media covering this?"

The answer is simple: proof. Much of what populates alternative media sites is hearsay and conjecture. There is not a grand media conspiracy to protect people in power. There is a burden upon the mainstream media to report actual facts. Networks have standards and practices that control what can and cannot be reported on the air or on the page. Other media outlets do not operate with these kinds of restrictions and are free to say whatever they want to without such standards. There's nothing wrong with writing that on a personal blog or even a popular blog. The chance of a lawsuit is very slight. However, as Gawker has learned, if a media company is big enough, people who've been subject to the consequences of hearsay and conjecture will lawyer-up and sue the media outlet and win big judgments, if the case is good. Most media organizations, due to ethical and legal concerns, will not touch a story until there are real and verified sources making claims. If those claims can be verified: even better. While it might seem convenient that various institutions, companies and powerful people do get lambasted in the press, most media outlets cannot report on it until there is some sort of claim and that claim is verified.

Myth #2: The media isn't being "Fair"

Another complaint about news that is quite popular in this election is how "fair" the news is to differing candidates. Bernie Sanders' supporters were convinced that the mainstream media was not giving him a fair shake despite the fact that he was constantly mentioned in any conversation to do with the democratic candidates and that the person who was really sucking the air out of the newsroom was Donald J. Trump. Rather than rail against Hillary supporters and blame the media for not giving their candidate enough air-time, people should spend more time actually doing something for their candidate. Besides, what a Trump supporter might consider "fair" would be different than what a Sanders or Hillary supporter might consider "fair." Afterall, it's

not like an upstart candidate can't take the whole party by storm and turn the coverage in his or her direction. Barack Obama was good at it, so good, he stole the nomination right out from under Hillary Clinton in 2008.

Her supporters didn't complain about the media or blame a conspiracy. They campaigned for Obama. But this is a uniquely modern problem that has a far greater implication. The media is not here to validate people and their biases. The news is many things but it is not meant to confirm biases; it is not meant to give a version of the truth that makes sense to a certain audience with a certain idea about things. However, modern news is increasingly pressured to do just that and one of the biggest pressures of that is advertising dollars.

The news and good journalism should disturb and anger because that's when change starts. Many people talk about how the media is dividing us and how the media is working against this or that. The media is driven by a few factors among those are ratings, a reporting of reality, what affects society as a whole, and a flavor of culture. This is deeply affected by the people that work in newsrooms and by people in editorial. This is as true for the new media as it was for the old and where the frustration comes in is that people live in these information bubbles and so when something is said or happens that doesn't confirm what they already think, they act irrational as if someone is lying to them. Often, it is simply easier to blame the media than be self-reflective on what we bring as consumers to the news.

I am often frustrated by the complicity we have in media in some of the goings-on in our society. There is no shortage of problems to report on, corporations to go after, public ills to bring to light, and things to get people worried about. The media can be a tremendous force for good but it can also enable ignorance.

Rules for Media Consumption

The modern media is a lens. It is a way of looking at the world. The modern media is an amalgam of people who have made decisions about what is important and worthy and most importantly, what has evidence behind it. In our modern age, we are in need of gatekeepers more than ever before. However, it is important to remember that the media is only a perspective on things. To have a circumspect view, it is important to have a diverse media diet and understand what is being read or watched and what the bias or agenda alongside that content might be.

Rule #1: News Is a Narrative

This principle comes right on in the language. In journalism circles they refer to different events "stories" and the ever-present question on every journalists mind is "where is the story?" When reading or watching the news, look for the narrative. What is the story? Where is that story leading? What might the exposure of that story reveal? However, it is on the burden of the reader to figure out what the writer or commentator, especially in independent media, is bringing to the story. What is their agenda? How does that change the story?

Rule #2: Understand the Bias of the Story

Unless the news is coming from the raw *Associated Press* or *Reuters Feed*, which is mostly written by AI now, every news story is going to have some bias. There are helpful guides to understand how far right or left any given news source is on a spectrum. However, often the language can often reveal where the bias lies. The next time you read a news story, start looking for a bias. Do they support staple right positions or staple left positions?

Rule #3: Who Does the Story Affect?

One of the most revealing things about news is who is affected by the story. Is the story critical of government or supportive of a policy? Does a story reveal the true intentions behind a radical group or passively allow their bad behavior? How does the story jive with your own personal ethics? If a story is about a corporation, has any investigation been done into the true intent or the science behind the behavior? If a story doesn't do some simply due diligence about the event, then it is reasonable to suspect it, even if the publication might confirm personal political biases. This is also a chance to check sources. Who did they talk to? And who are they? If a story is leaving the reader with questions, it's time for further investigation.

Our Complicated World

The world is a complicated place. The public relies on the media to help them make sense of what is going on. That is the true value that the media has always had. To help the general public understand what is going on around them. However, the loss of faith in this institution is radically changing the world that we are living in. Now everyone consuming news must contend with people portraying opinion as truth and "facts" as a definitive truth requiring radical change.

The news business has changed. The media has changed and what we think of as media has changed. All media is not created equal. The diversity of views and of channels requires the public to be smarter about what they are watching than ever before. It is important to think critically about the world and to think critically about the media as well. The media is one constant narrative being shaped and formed by evidence and too often opinion. For someone not engaged in media, this is a confusing field. It can be hard to trust authority and it can be hard to trust institutions, especially given the thousands of blogs, YouTube channels, and other places that will happily play on a lack of trust in major media and institutions.

The modern world is very fast and the modern world is complicated. Nothing is simple and it probably never was, but that was the use media had. It turned the complicated into the simple and if there is anything that has been lost in the modern media environment is that simplicity and the true value of media: making the world a little bit less complicated.

Epilogue

If you feel like time is speeding up, you are not wrong. The world of today has much less in common than the world of the recent past, for those of us that have watched science fiction become real, it can be overwhelming to wrap one's head around things like the internet, mobile devices, and big data. We face so many problems that are unique to the 21st Century. Mankind has not crossed these thresholds before. Much like industrialization and specific ways the world changed because of mass production, changes and decisions made now will deeply affect generations to come.

These essays are my attempt to give some structure to our chaotic world. By covering these topics, the reader can gain some much needed context to a world that is smaller, faster, and hurtling out of control. There are some real problems in today's world. However, there are some solutions that can be explored. Complacency is not an option. We can't sit by and expect others to solve these problems and not be involved in the direction of our society.

Throughout this book I have done my best to present a variety of ideas and a way of thinking about the structure of our world. My hope is that this brings clarity of thought and logic to discussions that are too often emotionally based in our modern discussions.

Rather than just trying to scan the headlines and try to understand what is happening, I have tried to help you, the reader, walk away from this book with some greater intelligence about what is going on and to always remember: there is no problem we have that we cannot solve. We merely lack the political will to do so.

Empowered with this knowledge, you can read the daily onslaught of online journalism with ease knowing that you have context and background to know what is going on and why. That is the most important thing you can have in your mind. Armed with this knowledge you'll be better at detecting fake news and hopefully comforted in the fact that you can now see the issues we have in their context. An exciting headline is made to get clicks, not give you a full and complete picture of things. But now you have that picture and things that you read should feel less dire. The world seems like it's falling apart but it's not, that's just the narrative that gets clicks. I hope that this book has helped you see that.

Appendix A

A Note on sources and research

I have included in text hyperlinks where appropriate to do so. I have used a variety of media and government sources to conduct my research into this contentious issue. I traveled down rabbit holes, explored new things and in some limited cases conducted some independent research and observations on my topic. I have presented some light historical data to give context and where possible I have provided links for that in the Bibliography, at the end of the article, after the conclusions. As with all my work, I encourage people to read and educate themselves. I have worked not only to provide commentary and common-sense research but sufficient research data so that others can educate themselves. This is not academic work nor is it written in that spirit. This is commentary journalism and should be taken as such.

Capitalism and Democracy: How "We the People" Became "We the Corporation"

http://www.academia.edu/731434/The_New_Colonialism

http://www.pewtrusts.org/~/media/legacy/uploadedfiles/peg/publications/report/businessofbroilersreportthepewcharitabletrustspdf.pdf

https://www.farmaid.org/blog/farmer-heroes/life-under-contract-poultry-farming-in-arkansas/

http://commonstransition.org/mapping-the-emerging-post-capitalist-paradigm-and-its-main-thinkers/

http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2016/feb/17/automation-may-mean-a-post-work-society-but-we-shouldnt-be-afraid

https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/economics/essays/us-banking-system-origin-development-and-regulation

https://mises.org/blog/no-there%E2%80%99s-no-economic-case-minimum-wage

http://www.salon.com/2013/12/01/noam_chomsky_america_hates_its_poor_partner/?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=socialflow

http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jul/17/postcapitalism-end-of-capitalism-begun

http://www.salon.com/2015/12/12/robert_reich_the_sharing_economy_will_be_our_demise_partner/?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=socialflow

http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-02-03/goldman-sachs-says-it-may-be-forced-to-fundamentally-question-how-capitalism-is-working

http://www.theguardian.com/business/2012/jul/21/offshore-wealth-global-economy-tax-havens

http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/fourth-industrial-revolution-innnovation-by-larry-hatheway-2016-01

http://www.thenextsystem.org/markets-in-the-next-system/

http://www.vice.com/read/what-is-the-point-of-your-job-389?utm_source=vicefbus

http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/12/economy-fairness-

rules/421809/

http://www.salon.com/2015/12/22/americas_great_divide_how_the_u_s_transformed_into_a_dual_economy_and_what_can_be_done_to_reverse_it_partner/

http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/01/what-was-volkswagen-thinking/419127/

http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/03/201231912534085777 4.html

http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jul/17/postcapitalism-end-of-capitalism-begun

http://www.salon.com/2015/12/27/the_game_is_completely_rigged_the_1_percent_has_more_than_ever_and_the_system_is_too_broken_to_deal_with_it/

http://www.salon.com/2015/12/27/bill_moyers_the_plutocrats_are_winning_partner/

The Death of the White, Heteronormative, Christian Narrative

White Trash by Nancy Isenberg

How Did we Lose 10 million men?

https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/06/the-missing-men/488858/

https://qz.com/1414865/the-us-unemployment-rate-is-at-a-48-year-low-so-why-are-so-many-americans-still-out-of-work/

The Financial Crisis and the Destruction of Our World

The Big Short (Film and Book)
Too Big to Fail (Film and Book)

Notable Events, Entertainment, Weather, and Sports

Common knowledge facts on the history of media

A Guide to a More Sustainable Future

Content my own based on observations

Nations and Nationalism

Content my own based on common knowledge and my own observations

1977: The Rise of Discounters and Deregulation

https://medium.com/congressional-progressive-caucus/ceos-are-rewarded-for-keeping-their-employees-in-poverty-it-s-time-to-change-that-fa38ec0b697
http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2011/06/speedup-americans-working-harder-charts
http://theantimedia.org/walmart-forced-to-shut-down-269-stores-fire-16000-people-as-profits-plunge/
https://medium.com/@RepBarbaraLee/ceos-are-rewarded-for-keeping-their-employees-in-poverty-it-s-time-to-change-that-fa38ec0b697
http://www.infoplease.com/year/1977.html
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1970s#Economy
http://www.dollarsandsense.org/archives/2009/1109reuss.html
http://www.nytimes.com/1988/03/04/opinion/l-raising-minimum-wage-increases-employment-368288.html
http://www.eoionline.org/blog/x-marks-the-spot-where-inequality-took-root-dig-here/
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deregulation
http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/593
http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=38193
http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/01/white-working-class-poverty/424341/
http://prospect.org/article/40-year-slump
http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2013/08/21/between-2000-and-2012-american-wages-grewnot-at-all/
http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2013/02/14/this-graph-is-the-best-argument-for-raising-the-minimum-wage/

The Bees are Not Alright

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_diseases_of_the_honey_bee
http://qz.com/366880/one-in-10-bees-crucial-to-europes-ecosystem-are-threatened-with-extinction-and-its-only-getting-worse/
http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0076536
http://www.wired.com/2015/04/youre-worrying-wrong-bees/
https://qz.com/366880/one-in-10-bees-crucial-to-europes-ecosystem-are-threatened-with-extinction-and-its-only-getting-worse/
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/honeybee-population-backpacks_55df3135e4b0e7117ba90821?utm_hp_ref=green&ir=Green&section=green&ncid=fcbklnkushpmg00000044
http://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2015/11/popular-insecticides-turn-bumblebees-into-bumbling-pollinators/416319/
http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/23/us/research-suggests-pesticide-is-alluring-and-harmful-to-bees.html?smid=tw-nytimes&_r=0
http://www.iatp.org/blog/201508/pollinators-and-the-rigged-neonic-seed-market

http://www.sciencemag.org/content/347/6229/1255957.abstract
https://beecare.bayer.com/media-center/news/news-detail/a-new-way-of-protecting-bees-against-varroa-mites

Genetically Modified Foods: A Story in Deception

https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2008/05/monsanto200805
http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/science/2015/07/are_gmos_safe_yes_the_case_against_them_is_full_of_fraud_lies_and_errors.html
http://www.theguardian.com/business/2015/jan/07/monsanto-earnings-fall-corn-south-america-genetically-modified-food
http://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/why-the-climate-corporation-sold-itself-to-monsanto
http://www.filmsforaction.org/articles/argentina-the-country-that-monsanto-poisoned/
http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/science/2015/07/are_gmos_safe_yes_the_case_against_them_is_full_of_fraud_lies_and_errors.html
http://www.businessinsider.com/bill-nye-explains-his-stance-on-gmos-2015-7
http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2008/05/monsanto200805
https://www.organicconsumers.org/news/monsanto-hopes-rna-sprays-can-someday-deliver-drought-tolerance-and-other-traits-plants-demand
https://www.organicconsumers.org/categories/genetic-engineering
http://modernfarmer.com/2014/03/monsantos-good-bad-pr-problem/
http://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/why-the-climate-corporation-sold-itself-to-monsanto
http://www.economist.com/node/14904184
How will if affect "wild" varieties
http://qz.com/369495/scientists-have-engineered-the-food-that-could-save-a-starving-warming-planet/
http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/science-sushi/httpblogsscientificamericancomscience-sushi20110718mythbusting-101-organic-farming-conventional-agriculture/
The Seralini affair
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S%C3%A9ralini_affair
https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn22287-study-linking-gm-crops-and-cancer-questioned/
http://news.discovery.com/earth/plants/gm-corn-tumor-study-120920.htm
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/next/nature/fewer-pesticides-farming-with-gmos/
Better potatoes with fewer pesticides
http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/sustainag/news/articles/V5-CoxRadovich-org_pesticide.pdf

http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/10/the-amish-farmer-replacing-pesticides-with-nutrition/380825/
http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/aug/23/hawaii-birth-defects-pesticides-gmo
http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-10-1688_en.htm?locale=en
Good run down of how GMOs can help us and hurt us
http://learn.genetics.utah.edu/content/science/gmfoods/
The truth is somewhere in the middle: Nature:
http://www.nature.com/news/case-studies-a-hard-look-at-gm-crops-1.12907
26 countries ban GMOs:
http://www.thenation.com/blog/176863/twenty-six-countries-ban-gmos-why-wont-us#
Main studies showing tumors is rat was poorly done:http://kfolta.blogspot.be/2012/09/rats-tumors-and-critical-assessment-of.html
Changes in the GMO Conversation:http://blogs.discovermagazine.com/collideascape/2013/05/30/why-gmo-myths-are-so-appealing-and-powerful/#.VQUJ5RAbBU8
Q and A from the WHO: http://www.who.int/foodsafety/areas_work/food-technology/faq-genetically-modified-food/en/
Using Genetics to save the orange
http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/28/science/a-race-to-save-the-orange-by-altering-its-dna.html
David Kroll, the science is still out but should we be promoting GMO foods?
http://www.forbes.com/sites/davidkroll/2013/08/25/is-it-time-for-scientist-activism-against-gmo-fear-mongering/
National Sciences there are no GMO problems
http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=10977&page=R1
People have no idea what GMOs actually are:
http://www.rawstory.com/rs/2014/10/people-against-gmos-most-likely-have-no-idea-what-they-are/
Chief proponents of non-GMO:http://www.nongmoproject.org/about/history/
We're already eating them in huge amounts: http://www.webmd.com/food-recipes/truth-about-gmos?page=1
Organic foods backing Hawaii measure:http://www.kcet.org/news/ballotbrief/elections2012/propositions/prop-37-funding-genetically-engineered-food.html
http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/05/us/on-hawaii-a-lonely-quest-for-facts-about-gmos.html
Standing up for GMOs and Golden Corn:http://www.sciencemag.org/content/341/6152/1320.full
http://www.vox.com/2015/4/7/8360935/food-babe
http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/25/opinion/sunday/how-i-got-converted-to-gmo-food.html?_r=1
http://www.collective-evolution.com/2015/01/17/new-study-finds-a-very-strong-correlation-between-gmos-and-two-dozen-diseases/
https://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~lhom/organictext.html
http://www.collective-evolution.com/2015/01/17/new-study-finds-a-very-strong-correlation-between-gmos-and-two-dozen-diseases/

http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/04/25/roundup-health-study-idUSL2N0DC22F20130425
http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/25/opinion/sunday/how-i-got-converted-to-gmo-food.html?_r=3
http://organicconnectmag.com/project/mit-study-questions-monsantos-safety-claims-for-roundup/
https://gmoanswers.com/studies/iarc-classification-glyphosate?gclid=Cj0KEQjwl6GuBRD8x4G646HX7ZYBEiQADGnzujzXVcVVWyjo7mcLPjQOeAKAJhdTauxKgzbstY9diAIaAokD8P8HAQ
http://www.bigislandvideonews.com/2013/12/05/mayor-signs-gmo-bill-113-into-law/

Teachers and Chalkboards: What Is Really Wrong with American Education

https://www.cbpp.org/research/state-budget-and-tax/a-lost-decade-in-higher-education-funding
https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/24/opinion/sunday/the-common-core-costs-billions-and-hurts-students.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FNo%20Child%20Left%20Behind%20Act
https://www.forbes.com/sites/ccap/2016/12/20/mr-trump-12-ways-to-reform-higher-education/#5803f8c33a89
http://time.com/4474651/college-degree-reform/
https://www.case.org/Publications_and_Products/2015/May/June_2015/4_Reforms_That_Could_Remake_Higher_Education.html
https://vittana.org/12-pros-and-cons-of-charter-schools
https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2015/12/10/every-student-succeeds-act-vs-no-child-left-behind-whats-changed/77088780/
https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/no-child-left-behind-overview-definition-summary.html
https://www.educationnext.org/results-president-obama-race-to-the-top-reform/
https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/10/opinion/why-the-new-education-law-is-good-for-children-left-behind.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FNo%20Child%20Left%20Behind%20Act
https://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/us/2017/08/04/no-child-left-behind-is-dead-but-have-states-learned-from-it/
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BnC6IABJXOI
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOoA08tUO0A
https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2015/10/27/443110755/no-child-left-behind-what-worked-what-didnt
https://networkforpubliceducation.org/another-day-another-charter-scandal/
https://www.houstonpress.com/news/things-to-do-visit-the-re-opened-balmorhea-state-park-pool-11240205
https://wehavekids.com/education/Charter-Schools-vs-Public-Schools
https://www.businessinsider.com/most-common-reasons-students-drop-out-of-

high-school-2015-10
http://dropoutprevention.org/resources/statistics/quick-facts/why-students-drop-out/
http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/teacherbeat/2016/12/study_its_far_too_hard_to_fire.html
https://www.quora.com/Why-is-it-hard-to-fire-a-bad-teacher
https://www.publicschoolreview.com/blog/why-it-can-take-six-years-to-fire-an-inappropriate-or-ineffective-teacher
https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2011/03/why-fire-teachers/72163/
https://fee.org/articles/7-reasons-to-say-goodbye-to-teachers-unions/
https://www.forbes.com/sites/petergreene/2018/09/03/why-do-teachers-join-the-union/#31677507f67b
https://www.city-journal.org/html/how-teachers'-unions-handcuff-schools-12102.html
https://theintercept.com/2018/11/30/hakeem-jeffries-charter-schools/
http://prospect.org/article/myth-public-school-failure
https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2013-04-03/why-american-education-fails
https://medium.com/@meholstein/29-ways-american-schools-fail-students-b0cf3fc805ba
https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/secretary-devos-unveils-parents-guide-essa-flexibilities
https://thefederalist.com/2018/11/05/9-years-common-core-test-scores-indoctrination/
https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/spring-2013/the-schooltoprison-pipeline
https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/us-public-schools-are-not-failing-theyre-among_us_5894e819e4b061551b3dfe51
https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2017/02/01/decades-after-civil-rights-gains-black-teachers-rarity-public-schools/96721684/
https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2018/03/28/448156/7-great-education-policy-ideas-progressives-2018/
https://www.theedadvocate.org/10-reasons-the-u-s-education-system-is-failing/
http://www.aei.org/publication/whats-wrong-with-american-education-a-long-read-qa-with-eric-hanushek/
http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/education_futures/2015/08/10_reasons_the_us_education_system_is_failing.html
https://www.usnews.com/news/the-report/articles/2018-07-27/americas-schools-arent-working-for-americas-kids
https://thediplomat.com/2016/12/the-hidden-costs-of-asias-high-test-scores/
https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/23/business/economy/education-gap-between-rich-and-poor-is-growing-wider.html?_r=0
https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/04/business/economy/school-vs-society-in-americas-failing-students.html?_r=0
https://gadflyonthewallblog.com/2015/07/09/do-americans-throw-money-at-their-schools-a-fair-funding-primer/
https://education.good.is/features/wake-up-call-teacher-diversity
https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/06/everything-in-american-education-is-broken/488189/

https://www.aclu.org/issues/juvenile-justice/school-prison-pipeline/race-discipline-and-safety-us-public-schools
https://www.forbes.com/sites/startswithabang/2017/12/06/how-america-is-breaking-public-education/#3fe4f2597f18
https://www.cnn.com/2016/12/21/opinions/america-invest-again-in-education-levy/index.html
https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/04/business/economy/school-vs-society-in-americas-failing-students.html
https://www.angelaengel.com/videos/
https://www.cornerstone.edu/blogs/lifelong-learning-matters/post/five-issues-facing-higher-education-in-2018
https://www.huffingtonpost.com/glenn-c-altschuler/whats-really-wrong-with-h_b_9928380.html
https://www.forbes.com/sites/ryancraig/2017/01/20/the-top-10-higher-education-issues-we-all-agree-on/#64bbedd0fa87
https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2010/07/whats-wrong-with-the-american-university-system/60458/
https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2010/07/whats-wrong-with-the-american-university-system/60458/
https://ballotpedia.org/Education_policy_in_the_United_States
https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/26/us/politics/trump-education-policy-review.html
http://www.theedadvocate.org/3-issues-that-are-hurting-the-american-educational-system/
https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2018/03/28/448156/7-great-education-policy-ideas-progressives-2018/

Our Changing Planet: Climate Change, Global Warming, Global Cooling, Ice Ages…And Wacky Weather

http://www.theclimatemobilization.org/
https://sports.vice.com/en_us/video/the-lost-winter-vice-sports-climate-change-special
http://www3.epa.gov/climatechange/
https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/feb/15/europe-climate-change-goals-need-profound-lifestyle-changes-european-commission
http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/11/28/science/what-is-climate-change.html?_r=0
http://www.nature.com/news/climate-change-the-case-of-the-missing-heat-1.14525
http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/09/how-to-talk-about-climate-change-so-people-will-listen/375067/
https://www.theguardian.com/science/scienceofclimatechange
http://www.takepart.com/flashcards/what-is-climate-change
http://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/climate
http://www.climatechange.gc.ca/default.asp?lang=En&n=E18C8F2D-1
http://www.ipcc.ch/
http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/science/topics/globalwarming/index.html
http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2007/04/global-warming-who-los-

es-and-who-wins/305698/
http://www.slate.com/blogs/bad_astronomy/2011/10/21/new_independent_climate_study_confirms_global_warming_is_real.html
http://time.com/3921976/cuyahoga-fire/http://climate.nasa.gov/causes/
http://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2015/12/what-old-weather-reports-dont-reveal-about-climate-change/419850/
http://www.vox.com/2015/12/21/10629172/climate-change-target-zerohttp://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2015/12/iceland-storm-melt-north-pole-climate-change/422166/?utm_source=SFFB
http://www.aei.org/publication/shut-up-she-explained-my-request-for-climate-evidence/
https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg19926721-600-the-ice-age-that-never-was/
https://sports.vice.com/en_us/video/the-lost-winter-vice-sports-climate-change-special
https://www.theguardian.com/environment/true-north/2017/jul/17/neoliberalism-has-conned-us-into-fighting-climate-change-as-individuals?CMP=fb_gu
https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/climate-change-sea-level-rise-737012/
https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2018/10/un-climate-report-2040-coral-davenport-interview.html
https://www.asiasentinel.com/society/scientists-2040-doomsday/
https://www.gq.com/story/billionaires-climate-change
https://www.nature.com/articles/464141a
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/30/canada-glaciers-yukon-shrinking
https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/india-climate-change-uninhabitable/
https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-partisan/wp/2017/09/19/so-much-for-the-climate-change-hoax/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.b5a0fa460b31
https://www.skepticalscience.com/argument.php
https://www.investors.com/politics/global-warming-hoax-climate-change-facts/
https://www.nature.com/articles/468345a
https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/global-warming/global-warming-real/
https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2002/nov/02/weekend7.weekend2
https://uploads.disquscdn.com/images/260167385a4c3a0be14fd5a3fd6e7bd47c4bf3262c79e9959ce72aa8438c968c.jpg
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/30/canada-glaciers-yukon-shrinking
https://www.forbes.com/sites/jamestaylor/2015/02/09/top-10-global-warming-lies-that-may-shock-you/#78c9f52053a5
http://polluterwatch.com/blog/man-who-defrauded-epa-calls-epa-fraudulent-fox
https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/christopherbooker/6679082/Climate-change-this-is-the-worst-scientific-scandal-of-our-generation.html
https://wattsupwiththat.com/2011/02/13/a-conversation-with-an-infrared-radiation-expert/
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=500&v=tL7CMqf3RLc

https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/apr/26/were-doomed-mayer-hillman-on-the-climate-reality-no-one-else-will-dare-mention
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-JIuKjaY3r4
https://climate.nasa.gov/evidence/
http://theconversation.com/an-inconvenient-truth-about-an-inconvenient-truth-81799
https://www.climaterealityproject.org/blog/inconvenient-truth-then-and-now
https://www.desmogblog.com/jay-h-lehr
https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/nov/08/cars-choke-communities-pollution-diesel
http://www.global-warming-and-the-climate.com/greenhouse-warming-argument.html
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=500&v=tL7CMqf3RLc
https://www.bitchute.com/video/X2SLYupjXujh/
https://www.vox.com/energy-and-environment/2019/2/11/18220082/insects-extinction-bological-conservation
https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/nov/08/cars-choke-communities-pollution-diesel
https://www.desmogblog.com/jay-h-lehr
https://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/columnists/christopherbooker/6679082/Climate-change-this-is-the-worst-scientific-scandal-of-our-generation.html
https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2012/jul/18/police-hacked-climate-science-emails
https://climateaudit.org
https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/feb/10/plummeting-insect-numbers-threaten-collapse-of-nature
https://ourclimateourfuture.org/about-us/
https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/27/magazine/insect-apocalypse.html
https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970204452104577059830626002226
https://nypost.com/2012/11/02/dont-blame-sandy-on-global-warming/
http://climateguide.nl/2019/03/09/non-survivable-humid-heat-for-over-500-million-people/
http://hockeyschtick.blogspot.com/2010/08/why-greenhouse-gases-wont-heat-oceans.html
https://www.brookings.edu/bpea-articles/on-the-economics-of-a-carbon-tax-for-the-united-states/
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDK1aCqqZkQ
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UGqcweY1a3I

https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/05/poway-shooting-shows-anti-semitism-flourishing/588649/
https://www.pbs.org/jewishamericans/jewish_life/homeland.html
https://www.jacobinmag.com/2018/10/police-culture-violence-racism-blue-lives-matter
https://www.thenation.com/article/why-its-impossible-indict-cop/
https://www.npr.org/2016/12/29/507249260/how-the-perceived-war-on-cops-plays-into-politics-and-policing
https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/jun/09/the-counted-police-killings-us-vs-other-countries
https://truthout.org/articles/a-brief-history-of-the-war-on-cops-the-false-allegation-that-enables-police-violence/
https://www.aclu.org/issues/smart-justice/mass-incarceration/mass-incarceration-animated-series
https://www.vox.com/identities/2016/8/13/17938226/police-shootings-killings-law-legal-standard-garner-graham-connor
https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/long-painful-history-police-brutality-in-the-us-180964098/
https://www.texasobserver.org/penal-system-slavery-unpaid-labor-texas/
https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/04/30/shrinking-gap-between-number-of-blacks-and-whites-in-prison/
https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/12/second-klan/509468/
https://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/2005-05-11-philadelphia-bombing_x.htm
White Trash by Nancy Isenberg
https://brightthemag.com/white-fragility-why-are-white-people-so-bad-at-talking-about-race-robin-diangelo-white-privilege-dbd5b92ba210
https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/affirmative_action
https://www.kron4.com/news/california/protesters-storm-sacramento-city-council-in-aftermath-of-stephon-clark-decision/1829980083
https://egrollman.com/2018/09/30/talking-about-race/
http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/exhibits/reconstruction/introduction.html
https://www.theatlantic.com/notes/2016/06/a-species-of-labor-we-do-not-want/488744/
https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2018/05/im-not-black-im-kanye/559763/
https://fee.org/articles/the-economic-costs-of-the-civil-war/
https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/10/what-if-reconstruction-hadnt-failed/412219/
https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/10/americas-unfinished-second-founding/411079/
https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2018/04/harry-belafonte-petula-clark-1968-civil-rights-arm-touch-national-commotion
http://www.pmep.org/16.php
https://www.thirteen.org/wnet/slavery/experience/living/history.html
https://www.history.com/topics/abolotionist-movement/john-brown

https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/abolitionist-movement
https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/01/how-black-middle-class-kids-become-black-lower-class-adults/384613/
https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/
http://www.ncai.org/proudtobe
https://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/jimcrow/native/homepage.htm
https://www.chicagoreporter.com/inside-the-contract-buyers-leagues-fight-against-housing-discrimination/
https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2001-dec-02-mn-10514-story.html
https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2001-dec-02-mn-10514-story.html
https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2018/12/native-americans-recasting-views-indigenous-life/
https://www.hcn.org/issues/51.7/tribal-affairs-native-american-athletes-and-fans-face-ongoing-racism