Wise Guy: Collected Essays

110-page illustrated book produced in Adobe InDesign from 18 essays originally published online. Responsibilities included document structure, typography, image placement, captions, Table of Contents, pagination, proofreading, generating print-ready PDF, and producing three hard-cover bound copies.

Table of Contents

Introduction iii

How Much Is Enough? 1

26 January 2017: How much is enough for a society that values dignity and sufficiency for all?

Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City 5

14 February 2017: Matthew Desmond explores the devastating impact of eviction on poor families in America.

The Disappearance of God: A Divine Mystery 11

22 March 2017: Richard Elliot Friedman examines the fading presence of God in scripture and its implications.

42. 15

3 April 2017: Jackie Robinson's legacy as the first Black MLB player symbolizes courage and social change.

Creation: A Process Continuing 23

24 April 2017: The universe's vast history invites reflection on our place within the ongoing creative process.

Jeanie's Hope 27

24 July 2017: This heartfelt poem celebrates Jeanie Hofmeister's unwavering faith in the Chicago Cubs, culminating in their 2016 World Series victory.

Innocence Lost: From Babes to Bloodshed 31

14 August 2017: Examines the origins of morality, the impact of societal influences on violence and prejudice, and the urgent need for compassion & understanding.

Uncovering Enigmas of the Universe 37

2 October 2017: Explores the interconnectedness of matter, consciousness, and the universe.

Baseball and the World Series: Context and Contests 43

17 October 2017: Chronicles the rich history of baseball and the World Series, highlighting key events, players, and cultural significance throughout the decades.

Current Status of Global Warming and Climate Change. 53

20 November 2017: Outlines the historical context, recent findings, and challenges related to global warming & climate change.

Table of Contents, continued

Daniel Ellsberg's Doomsday Papers 59

29 January 2018: Explores the dangers of nuclear weapons and the urgent need for global denuclearization to prevent catastrophic consequences.

Labyrinth of Enigmas: The JFK Assassination. 65

20 March 2018: Delves into the complexities and controversies surrounding the JFK assassination and investigation, and the enduring mysteries that persist.

A Difficult Learning Curve: Starbucks in Context 75

11 May 2018: Discusses the arrest of two black men at a Philadelphia Starbucks, highlighting ongoing racial discrimination and the importance of social justice efforts.

American Fighter Pilot: A Tribute to a Veteran and Gentleman 79

12 July 2018: Honors Warren Webster, a WWII pilot, who flew 50 missions and lived a remarkable life until age 103. Showcases his enduring spirit and positive impact on the world.

The Persistence of White Power Movements in America 83

7 February 2019: Kathleen Belew's Bring the War Home *highlights the enduring threat of white power movements in America and their influence on contemporary politics.*

In the Midst of the Sixth Extinction. 87

10 July 2019: Discusses the IPBES report on biodiversity loss and Elizabeth Kolbert's The Sixth Extinction*, highlighting the urgent need to address human-induced environmental changes.*

A Life in the Neighborhood 91

9 December 2019: The life and impact of Fred Rogers, highlighting his genuine kindness and the enduring lessons from Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*.*

Big Brother IS Watching You: Edward Snowden and Government Surveillance. . . . 99

25 March 2020: Examines Edward Snowden's revelations about NSA surveillance, highlighting his role as a whistleblower and the implications for privacy rights in the digital age.

How Much Is Enough?



Most thinking humans for a long time have known an effective societal problem-solving process: (1) identify needs, (2) identify ways these can be met, (3) apply analysis, prioritizing, and strategic planning to deliver solutions, (4) coordinate necessary labor, equipment, and distribution operations to address the problems, and (5) continue follow-up procedures to work out any bugs and improve each part of the overall system.

Hardly anyone could argue that, if there are problems to be dealt with, such an approach is not only feasible, but doable, especially given the brainpower, expertise, and available resources we can nowadays bring to the fore. In this "information age" comprehensive, sophisticated, and detailed computer programs can easily be designed to do initial run-throughs (virtual formats and revisions) to streamline the process. Such *applied intelligence* can not only be done over short periods of time, but pave the way for efficiency in various subsequent applications.

We, at different levels of society, are already doing much of this—but evidently on a *limited* basis. Surely such actions are not extensive enough or there would not continue to be such pervasive problems as poverty, hunger, malnutrition, insufficient housing and shelter, barriers to adequate healthcare, preventable illnesses, continuous unemployment and accelerating underemployment—just for starters of a long list of inadequacies in a society that likes to think of itself as the best our world has to offer!

This essay is not an anti-America rant. It is an openly challenging question as to how and why we, *as Americans*, can *on an ongoing basis* not seem to be overly bothered that our society and the people who run it are *perpetuating if not exacerbating* evident flaws and failures permeating America's way of doing (or *not doing*) things.

Just for a moment, pause and genuinely ask yourself whether you believe that essentially no matter who you are, where you are, whatever racial, ethnic, or religious group you identify with, we *all* share the same (or very similar) basic needs and dreams.

It is a reality that from a worldwide perspective fully 40 percent of people subsist on $2-or-less a day! Over the past decade this disturbing statistic has been documented and reaffirmed by the United Nations and other independent study groups. Would you say that, in comparison, Americans have it good? Yet, just look at how, in general or specifics, we complain and moan about how tough and stressful and unfair life is for us as Americans. Are we that unaware and self-centered? Perhaps worse, are we purposefully ignorant of many injustices and sufferings that so many others live with every day?

What makes the current state of the United States and the world particularly disgraceful is that, whether we are willing to openly admit it or not, we *know we can do better!* And, given the prolific advancements in knowledge, communications, technologies and means of

applying these, we indeed *are* able to create a just, compassionate world that can functionally meet almost every human need while maintaining dignity and sufficiency for all.

Let's just take the last 30 years and recognize some of the changes that have become commonplace, yet are big-time contributors to the structural degeneration of our country.

- Widening gaps between the elite 1/10 of 1 percent, top few percent, "haves" and "have nots"
- Gross disproportionalities in uses of money, property, power and influence
- Frequent abuses and arrogant actions by the powerful, almost with free rein
- Exorbitant (if not obscene) salaries and benefits for CEOs and corporate upper management
- Steadily declining workers' pay and benefits
- An exponential increase in food pantries, serving millions
- Political parties and influence groups/lobbyists controlling much of the national economy
- A massively crumbling, disintegrating national infrastructure, long in need of restoration
- Military expenditures consuming around half of our national budget
- Out of control increases of medical and pharmaceutical consumer costs
- Often unpenalized massive-scale abuses by Wall Street/stock market/hedge funds
- Domestic and global corporate welfare and tax loopholes
- Elected officials beholden to most of the above rather than the people they represent

Note that all these deal with money or access to/control of natural and structural resources, and what I will call "institutionalized rigged systems." In the "big picture" should not *we all* be asking of elected officials and business leaders How Much Is Enough? And, up close and personal, how about asking of ourselves, families, friends, and communities how are we—through our lifestyles as consumers and participants in our American systems—perpetuating these problems?

Just from the perspective of the last 30 years, even a cursory look at the above problem list shows how average citizens ("us people") have gradually passively consented to and accepted such cumulative changes. Our basis as a society of representative democracy, majority rule, opportunity for all, and protection of the less fortunate is in great distress. It seems our ways of thinking and approaches to problems have largely failed us to this point. Is it fair to say that to a great and increasing extent our government, civic, and business leaders favor those with money and power at the expense of the general populace?

When I was a kid (60 years ago) we used to play "If I were King for a day." Each of us would offer an action that we wished would come true. In our immaturity often these were unrealistic, but at least it got us thinking about what it would take to make the world a better place for all. In this context, here are some bold proposals. If you think they are naive or unrealistic, please assess your reasoning as to why. Keep in mind the extensive potential of the internet and other mass means of communicating ideas, all of which combined can reach a vast audience. If anything *should* "go viral" in a constructive and near-universal sense of being beneficial, it should be ideas and proposals to help shape a better world, don't you think? Hopefully somewhere out there are some people who know how to "spread the word" to millions. As a starter suggestion, why not launch a "King/Queen for the day" movement, share it widely, and direct it toward those in positions to help make needed

changes happen?

Following are some kernel concepts for consideration (in no particular order). Modifications of their validity and application are welcome. These ideas all involve issues of "How much is enough?"

As a starting point, let's address those fortunate folks who *undeniably* have *far more* than enough for a comfortable, if not luxurious, standard of living. We all know who they are: billionaires, millionaires, celebrities, major athletes—really, *anyone* who's pulling in near or more than, say, $200,000 a year. The wealth and recognition these folks get comes directly or indirectly from having "made it" through opportunities America has provided to them. *Now* is the time for them to give back into a system that gifted them with their opportunities.

Big business has gained more and more benefits from America's structure; now is the time for them to contribute back into the system that gave them such opportunities to build wealth.

Taxation codes that allow, especially, corporations to evade paying their fair share (or, incredibly, pay *nothing!*) must stop; now is the time for Big Business to contribute to this country's needs commensurate with their opportunities within a capitalistic system generous to their success.

Eliminate hedge fund operations; these are essentially "legalized guarantees" to open-ended profits. If they have a right to exist, but people whose needs for food, shelter, and a living wage are *not* being met, what does this say about our nation's institutionalized values?

Mobilize a national workforce of able-bodied people (along the lines of those operating effectively during the Great Depression of the 1930s) to address infrastructure, environmental, and public needs. Perhaps some of these could be done by current military personnel, who are well trained and increasingly available for constructive endeavors.

Apply lottery systems to raise funds for national, regional, and even local programs and operations. But, cut back the big payoffs (let winners pick a program and have it named after them); everybody wins in such an arrangement.

Instead of the US stock market, securities, and investments systems employing so many people at six-figure salaries, establish a core arrangement run through comprehensive computer operations that can not only do the work of thousands at far less costs, but do it more efficiently. Why do we have the current institutionalized *daily* "money games" pitting "winners" versus "losers" when a more civilized arrangement could make everyone winners: companies, investors, brokers, citizenry and the country as a *whole*?

In tough times, the US has used arrangements of surcharges and user fees to raise needed monies. How many segments of our society could (and should?) be contributing to the general welfare of this country to help address a host of needs?

Many routine opportunities to raise needed monies exist. How about things like small fees attached to the purchase of tickets to sporting events, concerts, theaters? Or attached to the purchases of excessively large houses, low mpg vehicles, private planes, and so forth? Or an automatic small tax on expensively priced dinners at luxury restaurants, or on luxury spa visits, luxury vacations, etc.? Accumulatively such fees would be substantial, and those with the deep pockets who would be contributing would not be hurting.

These are just a few ideas. What modifications or additions do you have?

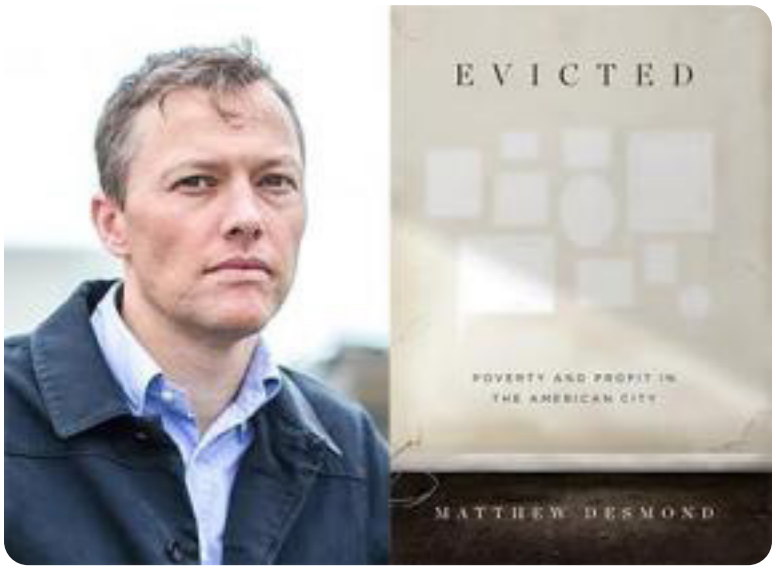
Keep in mind that the intention is not at all to impose any penalties on the wealthy, but to recognize that America's elite, rich, and wealthy strata are surely capable of more than comfortably living on a little bit less, and that most of these folks are already well aware of this. One would hope that their hearts are big enough to be compassionate and contributory

to genuine needs, circumstances mutually affecting us, and human concerns larger than their spheres of *having more than enough!*

We live in an age when unless we all start cooperating for the common good, a sad future lies in wait for us. An evident but so far unlearned lesson is that each and every life on planet Earth is worthy of recognition and dignity. In a society that has largely established one's value according to money and material possessions at the expense of inherent human worthiness of a basic sufficiency in life, we must arrive at answers for How Much Is Enough and how are we going to proceed from here? The time *is* now. What do *you* think?

Bob Bates
26 January 2017

Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City



Sociologist Matthew Desmond's widely acclaimed book *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* (2016), a study of the city of Milwaukee, pounds at a reader's emotions until they become raw. Daily struggles and their grinding effects on America's poor who are forced to rent housing in contexts of landlord neglect of substandard structures will likely make you both nauseated and enraged that such extensive injustices can exist in our supposedly enlightened culture.

A sampling of Desmond's 24 chapter titles covering his Milwaukee experience include: "This Is America," "Nobody Wants the North Side," "Can't Win for Losing," "Rat Hole," "The Sick," " A Nuisance," "Ashes on Snow," and "The 'Hood is Good." Each chapter reveals circumstances and happenings of daily existence within conditions of poverty. From May 2008 to December 2009, Desmond writes, "I was a full-time field worker" carrying digital recorder, notepad, and camera, conducting "more than one hundred interviews with people not featured in this book, including 30 landlords … court officers, social workers, building inspectors, property managers, and other people who lived in the trailer park or inner city." Upon compiling his findings, prior to readying for publication, he utilized dozens of project staff and an array of other resources to carry out extensive fact-checking so as to verify the credibility and accuracy of the wider context of events and dialogue connected to what he personally witnessed and experienced.

Desmond spent six months living in a trailer park and another fourteen months living in the inner city. Of this he writes, "There is nothing special about Milwaukee when it comes to eviction. The numbers are similar in Kansas City, Cleveland, Chicago, and other cities. In 2013, 1 in 8 poor renting families nationwide were unable to pay all their rent. … This book is set in Milwaukee, but it tells an American story."

"Fewer and fewer families can afford a roof over their head. This is among the most urgent and pressing issues facing America today, and acknowledging the breadth and depth of the problem changes the way we look at poverty. For decades, we've focused mainly on jobs, public assistance, parenting, and mass incarceration. … We have failed to fully appreciate how deeply housing is implicated in the creation of poverty. Not everyone living in a distressed neighborhood is associated with gang members, parole officers, employers, social workers, or pastors. But nearly all of them have a landlord."

"Families have had their incomes stagnate, or even fall, while their housing costs have

soared. Today, the majority of poor renting families in America spend over half their income on housing, and at least one in four dedicated over 70% to paying the rent and keeping the lights on." This leaves precious little to cover necessities of food and clothing, to say nothing of recreation and other enjoyments of life, and permits no room for health concerns or unanticipated emergencies.

A half-century ago Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote, "Every condition exists simply because someone profits by its existence … economic exploitation is crystallized in the slum" where money is placed above the well-being of people. Desmond, in examining housing available to the poor, writes, "Exploitation within the housing market relies on government support. It is the government that legitimizes and defends landlords' right to charge as much as they want; that subsidizes the construction of high-end apartments, bidding up rents and leaving the poor with fewer options; that pays landlords when a family cannot, through one time or ongoing housing assistance; that forcibly removes a family at landlords' request by dispatching armed law enforcement officers; and that records and publicizes eviction as a service to debt collection agencies." He further admonishes, "Regardless of how landlords came to own property—sweat, intelligence or ingenuity for some; inheritance, luck or fraud for others—rising rents mean more money for landlords and less for tenants." Bottom line: "Their fates are bound [in complex relationships of inequities] and their interests opposed. … If the profits of urban landlords were modest, that would be one thing. But often they are not. The annual income of the landlord of perhaps the worst trailer park in the 4th poorest city [Milwaukee] in America is 30 times that of his tenants working full time for minimum wage, and 55 times the annual income of his tenants receiving welfare or SSI [Supplemental Security Income]. These are two freedoms at odds with each other: the freedom to profit from rents and the freedom to live in a safe and affordable home."

Desmond steps back to take a perspective focusing on some basic American premises at the very roots of the establishing of this nation. "The United States was founded on the noble idea that people have 'certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.' Each of these three unalienable rights—so essential to the American character that the founders saw them as God-given—requires a stable home."

eviction1"Life and home are so intertwined that it is almost impossible to think about one without the other. The home … protects and nurtures. The ideal of liberty has always incorporated not only religious and civil freedoms but also the right to flourish: to make a living however one chooses, to learn and develop new skills. A stable home allows us to strive for self-reliance and personal expression, to seek gainful employment and enjoy individual freedoms."

"The purpose of happiness undeniably includes the pursuit of material well-being: minimally being able to secure basic necessities. It can be overwhelming to consider how much happiness has been lost, how many capabilities snuffed out, by the swell of poverty in this land and our collective decision not to provide all our citizens with a stable and decent place to live."

"We have affirmed provision in old age, twelve years of education, and a basic nutrition to be the right of every citizen because we have recognized that human dignity depends on the fulfillment of these fundamental needs. And it is hard to argue that housing is not a fundamental need. Decent, affordable housing should be a basic right for everybody in this country. The reason is simple: without stable shelter, everything else falls apart."

However, historically, American institutions as applied to marginalized people, including the poor, have fallen far short of delivering on the stated unalienable rights supposedly at

the root of the nation's entire populace. In general throughout worldwide history as well as in America, Desmond writes, "the ghetto had always been more of a product of social design than desire. It was never a by-product of the modern city, a sad accident of industrialization and urbanization, something no one benefited from nor intended. The ghetto had always been a main feature of landed capital, a prime money-maker for those who saw ripe opportunity in land scarcity, housing dilapidation, and racial segregation." Predominantly the property owners and landlords "had a segregated and captive tenant base and had nothing to gain by improving their run-down houses." Desmond cites study after study documenting America's housing record for the poor being replete with examples from city upon city in which landlords could manipulate legal frameworks to their advantage, setting in motion an ongoing system with institutionalized injustices and hardships.

Desmond witnessed and experienced daily occurrences of this. During his six months in a Milwaukee trailer park in 2008, most notable was the Catch-22 situation renters found themselves in. Trailer park owners/landlords can simply give ownership of each trailer to an incoming tenant or family. They then become, as owners, responsible for all maintenance, repairs, and other mandatory code-costs. The landlord receives their total rent payment as a "lot space" rental fee, ensuring an up-front, clear profit. Renters know or soon learn that the only benefit of owning the trailer they live in is psychological.



During his year in Milwaukee's inner city, Desmond observed landlord manipulations to be much more harsh and oppressive. He was accepted as an unofficial "apprentice" by a landlord and her "enforcer" husband, so traveled with them regularly from property to property. This landlord quickly learned that inner city foreclosed or undesirable properties could be picked up for as little as five to ten thousand dollars and routinely for less than $20,000 and then, with minimal or no expensive repairs, rented "as is" almost immediately thereby yielding quick and prolonged profits. Within a 7-8 year span, between 2002 and 2009, this landlord went from a former 4th-grade teacher's salary to a net worth of $2 million. Indeed, for landlords operating in this manner, "The 'Hood is Good!"

Beyond overpriced rents for unattractive and marginally-livable housing, always looming for poor renters is the threat of imminent eviction. For landlords this ensures a quick tenant turnover and usually uninterrupted rent cash flow. For poor occupants contending with an ongoing struggle to come up with full rent money month after month, it is life-altering to find in their mailbox a depersonalized but keenly directed, personal letter stating: **CURRENT OCCUPANT:** *You are hereby notified that the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office has a court order requiring your immediate removal from the premises.* ***Failure to vacate***



immediately will be cause for the Sheriff to remove your belongings from the premises.

Desmond states, "These days, there are sheriff squads whose full time job is to carry out eviction and foreclosure orders. There are moving companies specializing in evictions, their crews working all day, every weekday. There are hundreds of data-mining companies that sell landlords tenant screening reports listing past evictions and court filings. These days, housing courts swell, forcing commissioners to settle cases in hallways or makeshift offices crammed with old desks and broken file cabinets—and most tenants don't even show up." When they do, it is the landlords who have lawyers in court representing them and protecting their interests, but rarely do tenants facing eviction have legal advice or representation. Desmond continues, "Low-income families have grown used to the rumble of moving trucks, the early-morning knocks at the door, the belongings lining the curb." Landlords can initiate the eviction process with a 28-day "No Cause" filing, usually resulting in automatic—and always traumatic—eviction. Upon arrival of designated court date, evictions can be as immediate as 24 hours to five days—all this needing no cause other than failure to pay full rent for a particular month.

All this was eye-opening to Desmond, even though he had for years participated in or headed up studies of the dynamics of being poor. As he states it, "I went looking for studies [with answers to his many questions], but I found none—and no readily available data—that adequately addressed my questions. … I wondered how we in the research community could have overlooked something so fundamental to poverty in America: the dynamics of the private housing market [where] the vast majority of poor people lived, playing such an imposing and vital role in the lives of families … consuming most of their income; aggravating their poverty and deprivation; resulting in their eviction, insecurity, and homelessness; dictating where they lived and whom they lived with; and powerfully influencing the character and stability of their neighborhoods. And we hardly knew anything about it."

Consequently, Desmond initiated the Milwaukee Area Renters Study (MARS) from 2009 to 2011, conducted through extensive data collection coordinated by the University of Wisconsin Survey Center. One of the most shocking statistics to emerge was that "1 in 8 Milwaukee renters experienced at least one forced move—formal or informal eviction, landlord foreclosure, or building condemnation —in the two years prior to being surveyed." Half were off-the-record "informal evictions." Starkly, the "presence of children in the household almost tripled the tenants' odds of receiving an eviction" notice.

On this last point Desmond found that for "every eviction executed through the judicial system, there are two others executed beyond the purview of the court, without any form of

due process. This means that estimates that do not account for informal evictions downplay the crisis in our cities." A significant factor in these skewed ratios is that "families struggling to make ends meet in the low-income housing market are simply too poor or too vulnerable to assert their obvious rights" under the law. Desmond emphasizes that "the limitations of human capacity in the teeth of scarcity and suffering … the sheer emotional and cognitive burden that accompanies severe deprivation."

Collective data, Desmond concludes, "provide a new portrait of the powerful ways the private housing sector is shaping the lives of poor American families and their communities. … Problems endemic to poverty—residential instability, severe deprivation, concentrated neighborhood disadvantage, health disparities, even joblessness—stem from the lack of affordable housing in our cities." Pertinent to this, Desmond's observations while with a family that went through three evictions in the course of his fieldwork, cite, "Poverty could pile on; living it often meant steering through gnarled thickets of interconnected misfortunes and trying not to go crazy. There were moments of calm, but life on balance was facing one crisis after another."

In all these ways, "Evictions unravel the fabric of a community, helping to ensure that neighbors remain strangers and that their collective capacity to combat crime and promote civic engagement remains untapped. … Eviction does not simply drop poor families into a dark valley, a trying yet relatively brief detour on life's journey. It fundamentally redirects their way, casting them onto a different, and much more difficult, path. Eviction is a *cause*, not just a condition, of poverty."

In stressing the devastating effects of eviction, resulting in unstable homes and neighborhoods, affecting ultimately the course of American society as a whole, Desmond writes at length about the psychosocial realities of "home," especially on families. Desmond's personal observations from living with families in the midst of poverty show, "Along with instability, eviction also causes loss. Families lose not only their home, school, and neighborhood but also their possessions: furniture, clothes, books. It takes a good amount of money and time to establish a home. Eviction can erase all that . . . Eviction can cause workers to lose their jobs. …. If housing instability leads to employment instability, it is because the stress and consuming nature of being forced from your home wreak havoc on people's work performances. … And so, people who have the greatest need for housing assistance—the rent-burdened and evicted—are systematically denied it."

All of this, "the loss of your possessions, home, job, and access to government aid helps explain why eviction has such a pronounced effect on what social scientists call 'material hardship,' a measure of the texture of scarcity … whether families experience hunger or sickness because food or medicine is financially out of reach or go without heat, electricity, or a phone because they can't afford those things. … Eviction families continue to have higher levels of material hardship at least two years after the event."

Studies of personal and group dynamics show that among those oppressed it is not enough just to perceive systemic injustice, but for effective functioning to occur it requires "identifying with the oppressed and counting yourself among them," which the poor tend not to approach, mainly because of "their focus on smaller, more tangible problems" of basic survival needs. Additionally, "when people begin to view their neighborhood as brimming with deprivation and vice, they lose confidence in their political capacity" to contribute constructively.

Desmond observed the effects of concentrated poverty both on families and neighborhoods to be strongly connected to "the toll eviction takes on a person's spirit.

The violence of displacement can drive people to depression and, in extreme cases, even suicide." Psychiatrists have identified eviction as a "significant precursor of suicide . . . eviction must be considered a traumatic rejection, a denial of one's most basic human needs, and an exquisitely shameful experience." Statistics support this.

Perhaps Desmond's most effective appeal for readers to grasp the enormity of the complex torn fabric of poverty and its consequences in America, he eloquently writes in realities we all can hold dear. "Civic life too begins at home, allowing us to plant roots and take ownership over our community, participate in local politics, and reach out to neighbors in a spirit of solidarity and generosity. … It is only after we begin to see a street as *our* street, a public park as *our* park, a school as *our* school, that we can become engaged citizens, dedicating our time and resources for worthwhile causes. … Working on behalf of the common good is the engine of democracy, vital to our communities, cities, states, and ultimately, the nation … with its foundation the home. America is supposed to be a place where you can better yourself, your family, and your community. But this is only possible if you have a stable home."

"The persistence and brutality of American poverty can be disheartening, leaving us cynical about solutions. But … a good home can serve as the sturdiest of footholds. When people have a [stable] place to live, they become better parents, workers, and citizens . . . Residential stability begets a kind of psychological stability, which allows people to invest in their home and social relationships. It begets school stability, which increases the chances that children will excel and graduate. And it begets community stability, which encourages neighbors to form strong bonds and take care of the block."

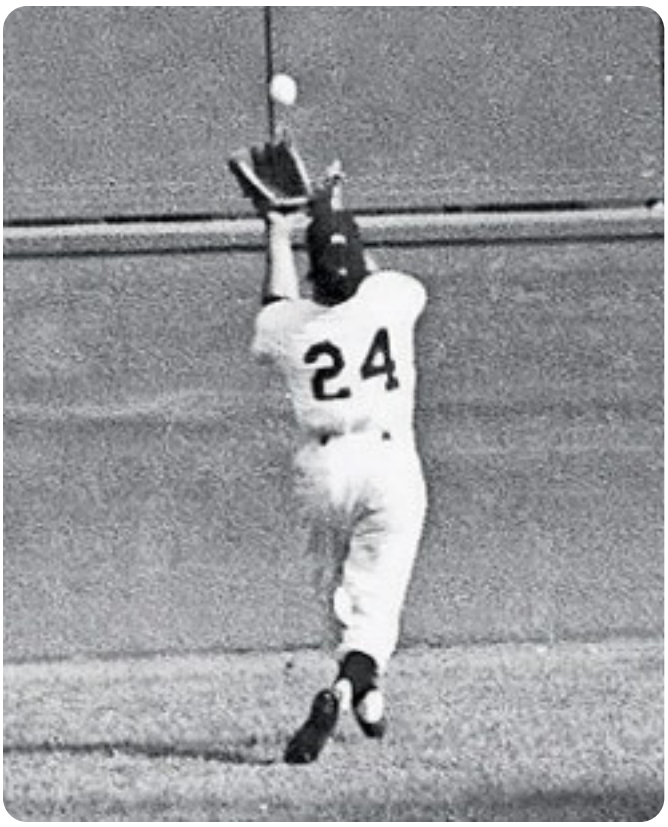
In summary, "The home is the center of life … the wellspring of personhood. It is where our identity takes root and blossoms, where as children we imagine, play, and question, and as adolescents we retreat and try. As we grow older, we hope to settle into a place to raise a family or pursue work. When we try to understand ourselves, we often begin by considering the kind of home in which we were raised. … The home remains the primary basis of life."

In his epilogue, Desmond assesses the profound impacts of poverty and housing crises: "Eviction affects the old and the young, the sick and the able-bodied. But for poor women of color and their children, it has become ordinary. … Most evicted households in Milwaukee have children living in them, and across the country many evicted children end up homeless. The substandard housing and unsafe neighborhoods to which many evicted families must relocate can degrade a child's health, ability to learn, and sense of worth. … Our cities have become unaffordable to our poorest families, and this problem is leaving a deep and jagged scar on the next generation."

Within a crisis of such vast and complex proportions, there are no easy solutions. Desmond advocates variations of a national voucher system as offering a timely attainable approach. He states bluntly, "If poverty persists in America, it is not for lack of resources." And he closes his book with these words:

"Whatever our way out of this mess, one thing is certain. This degree of inequality, this withdrawal of opportunity, this cold denial of basic needs, this endorsement of pointless suffering—by no American value is this situation justified. No moral code or ethical principles, no piece of scripture or holy teaching, can be summoned to defend what we have allowed our country to become."

Bob Bates
14 February 2017



Willie Mays

made a breathtaking running catch deep in the left field corner, then whirled and threw to second base for a double play, killing a budding Yankee rally; and young lefty Johnny Podres's artfully threw two complete game wins, including a shutout to clinch it.

The very next year, in game five at Yankee Stadium, a feat perhaps never to be duplicated blazed across the headlines: *Larsen Throws Perfect Game!*—as the Yankees' Don Larsen pitched the only no hit, no run, no baserunners game ever in World Series history.

And, who then alive-and-breathing in 1957 Wisconsin does not still hold dear to heart their beloved Milwaukee Braves beating the hated Yankees on crafty Lew Burdette's three complete game wins, including two shutouts, and Henry Aaron's 3 home runs, 7 RBI, and .393 Series BA! But the Bronx Bombers would gain revenge over the Braves in '58, rebounding from a 3-games-to-1 deficit to win thanks to the dominant pitching of Big Bob Turley.

The Dodgers had rudely packed up and deserted Brooklyn after the 1957 season for greener (read *cash*, and lots of it!) pastures in Los Angeles. The West Coast Dodgers filled the LA Coliseum in game five of the '59 Series with an all-time record crowd of 92,706, and brought the World Championship to the Pacific time zone for the first time. LA's star was relief pitcher Larry Sherry, who racked up 2 wins, 2 saves, and a superlative 0.71 ERA.



Don Larsen

Transitions Into and Changes Beyond the 1960s

For just shy of the entire first half of the 20th century, the only times fans could actually watch games in action was when they occupied seats in stadiums. Theater *Movietone* film clips offered brief visual snippets, but otherwise fans were reliant on newspaper coverage for game descriptions, details, and photos. In the 1920s radio broadcasts supplemented this, permitting fans to intently follow the action on the field play-by-play, drawing on fans' imaginations to create mental pictures. Finally, with post-war TV coverage, game action reached into living rooms across the nation.

Cuba, Conflicts, Concessions, and Conspiracies



Fidel Castro

At the same time Oswald was preparing for defection to the Soviet Union, the Western Hemisphere was heating up. At its core was Fidel Castro and his rebels, who overthrew Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista on January 1, 1959. By mid-year, the US government was wary of Soviet overtures to Premier Castro, and by late '59, when it became evident communism was gaining a foothold just 90 miles off Florida's shores, the administration of Dwight Eisenhower became very disturbed. Coordinated by strident anti-communist Vice President Richard Nixon in Eisenhower's absence because of health concerns, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, National Security Council, and Central Intelligence Agency drew up plans for the military invasion of Cuba and overthrow of the Castro government.


John F. Kennedy

A piece of this plan would be inherited by the incoming administration of John F. Kennedy when he took office in 1961: the Bay of Pigs invasion. Just three months into his administration, JFK gave the go-ahead, but balked on approving US air support to cover the Cuban exile invasion force. Without air cover the exile army was overwhelmed by the prepared Cuban military—Castro's intelligence network had become aware of what was to take place—and suffered a humiliating defeat. Ripples of outrage and anger directed at Kennedy came from multiple sources, some going so far as to portray the president as a traitor to the cause. The Joint Chiefs wanted, but did not get, an overt full assault by US armed forces. The CIA, which had supplied training, equipment, weapons and munitions, and boats to dozens of exile groups, was frustrated. The Cuban exile community centered in Miami was especially irate and emotionally anguished. And organized crime, aka the Mafia or the Mob, which had been forced out of Havana's casinos by Castro—thereby losing lucrative revenues from gambling, booze, prostitution, drugs, and gun-running— had a high stake in seeing Castro removed.

But Kennedy himself was angered, too, feeling he had unwisely given in to overzealous incompetents. He vowed to get revenge, and a main part of the means of vindication was

The Persistence of White Power Movements in America

The topic of Kathleen Belew's recent book, *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America* (Harvard University Press, 2018), addresses a disturbing thread of the American fabric. She begins her book with a succinct account of the long history of violence at the hands of colonists and American citizenry and government, mainly white initiated, from the 17th to mid-20th centuries. But the focus of her research is from the Vietnam War era to the present. Belew's central assertion is that domestic adjustments stemming from wartime effects have always featured actions precipitating turbulence.



Kathleen Belew

The catch-all term "white power" refers to the social movement that brought together members of the Ku Klux Klan, militias, white supremacists, neo-Nazis, varied proponents of white exclusionist theologies, and radical tax resisters since the 1970s. Though such groups differ in various specifics, they share overall common elements of ideology. Every one of these groups, through their forms of activism and advocacy of resistance or overt violent rhetoric and tactics, ultimately seeks dominant power. A sampling of group names exemplify this: White Patriot Party; Confederate Knights of the KKK; Aryan Republican Army; National Socialist Party of America; United Racist Front; Christian Identity; The Covenant, the Sword and the Arm of the Lord; and The World Church of the Creator.

Belew documents the emergence of an array of white power groups developing after the Vietnam War. Many veterans and disgruntled citizens felt betrayed by their government and sought ways to forcefully express their anger. Weaponry—often brought home from the war or stolen from military bases or depots—escalated actions beyond vigilantism to paramilitary organization, training, and practice. The common enemy was everywhere, seeming to be proliferating out of a government gone rogue in its favoritism of non-white, non-traditional people. This attracted a legion of Anti-Isms: anti-communism, anti-internationalism, anti-immigration, racism, anti-Semitism, anti-welfare, anti-gay and lesbian rights, anti-unions,