

Ronald Reagan and the Conservative Resurgence



In the 1970s, Americans felt something that most of them had not experienced for a long time: economic fear. After two decades of steady expansion and rising incomes, the U.S. economy faltered badly. The combined effect of the Vietnam War and steady government spending on new social programs (guns and butter, economists fretted) sent the country into a recession. President Nixon took the U.S. dollar off the gold standard—devaluating the currency—and in 1973 the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) sharply reduced supplies of oil, forcing a steep increase in the price. Cheap gas was history. Under President Jimmy Carter, conditions worsened. Inflation and interest rates rose to record highs, and the plague of unemployment affected millions. Economic woes, along with the still-fresh loss of the Vietnam War, caused many Americans to wonder if the nation had begun to decline irrevocably. Carter articulated this crisis of confidence, but it didn't make anyone feel better to have the problem spelled out.

Ronald Reagan had played a hero on horseback in many a Hollywood film, and he promised that America would stand tall again. Reagan had no use for hand-wringing. As president, he brought to Washington the easy confidence of a movie star, and simply proclaimed that America was the greatest country on earth, entitled and needed to lead the Free World. Conservatives gloried in the moment. At last they had a president who could win the support of the country without compromising with liberals. Reagan promised to fight the Cold War against the "evil empire" to the finish, release the economy from intervention by government, lower taxes, and restore traditional family values. In office, Reagan presided over a wave of deregulation that dismantled structures that had been in place for decades and announced his sympathy for free enterprise by siding against unions. He also increased military budgets dramatically to restore confidence in American leadership and fight the Cold War. However, contrary to what most conservatives had expected, he did little to reduce government spending. Reagan cut back on welfare, but he refused to touch the most expensive entitlement programs, such as Social Security and Medicare. Because Reagan pursued his spending programs while cutting taxes, especially for the wealthy, the government budget deficit soared. The United States borrowed money from foreign lenders to make ends meet. By 1985,

for the first time since 1914, America was a debtor nation. Supporters and critics alike called it the "Reagan Revolution," but they differed sharply on whether or not the changes were for the better.

As is always true in history, many of the problems and challenges that Reagan faced were beyond the control of any politician. For example, new technologies permitted a level of global integration never before possible. The "dot.com" revolution had its beginnings in the Reagan years, when the explosion in personal computers, networking, and satellite transmissions exposed Americans to an exhilarating and frightening world of economic interdependence. With a smaller and smaller government safety net, it seemed that individuals could fly higher and fall farther than before. In 1992 Arkansas governor Bill Clinton campaigned successfully against incumbent President George Bush (former vice president to Reagan) on a platform of fiscal prudence, economic reinvestment, reductions in defense, and job training for the poor. At the same time, Clinton supported welfare reform and positioned himself as a "New Democrat," neither liberal nor conservative as typically defined. The country entered a period of economic boom, and by the end of the century the U.S. government actually had an enormous budget surplus. The Reagan Revolution had shifted the nation to the right, but where it would go from there—and how it would maintain its position relative to other nations—was a matter for the future.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

What was the Reagan Revolution, if there really was such a thing? Did the president restore faith in America, as he intended, or did he split the nation between rich and poor? How did social values change during the Reagan era?

DOCUMENTS

The documents in this chapter look at the Reagan era from a variety of perspectives. In Document 1, President Jimmy Carter describes the disillusionment of Americans on the eve of the 1980 election. Apparently Americans did not trust Carter (who was soundly defeated by Reagan) to restore their confidence. Document 2 is President Ronald Reagan's second inaugural address, in which he cites renewed public faith in America as one accomplishment of his administration. Document 3 reveals Reagan's militant, implacable hostility toward the Soviet Union. In an address to a convention of evangelical Christians, he calls Communist Russia an evil empire. Document 4 outlines the goals of social conservatives who heartily supported Ronald Reagan and hoped that he would diminish the government's role in private life. Document 5 similarly expresses the sentiment of social conservatives who, like the president, opposed the Equal Rights Amendment, a proposed constitutional amendment that would guarantee women equal rights under the law. In this selection, Reverend Jerry Falwell articulates his hostility to feminism. As the founder of the Moral Majority, a political network of "born again" Christians, Falwell helped to lead the successful campaign against the constitutional amendment, which expired in 1982 when it failed to achieve ratification by the necessary three-fourths of the states. Document 6 reveals the economic woes that continued to plague the nation, some of which may have been worsened by Reagan's

policies. The graphs given in this document show that the Reagan program did mean greater hardship for some Americans. Income inequality rose and real earnings fell through the mid-1980s. Document 7 illuminates some of the external causes of economic instability: new technologies and the global economy. In Document 8, Secretary of Labor Ann McLaughlin criticizes unions for resisting these trends. McLaughlin advocates deregulation of the workplace, alleging that union protectionism prevents people in the high-tech age from what is now called "laptop commuting." Document 9, however, reveals the darker side of deregulation and "home work"—a new kind of sweatshop employment for the poor, especially women and immigrants. In the last selection (Document 10), a journalist predicts that in the 1992 election, Americans will vote their purses. As a sign at Clinton's campaign headquarters instructed staff and volunteers: "It's the economy, stupid."

1. President Jimmy Carter Laments the Crisis of Confidence, 1979

It's clear that the true problems of our Nation are much deeper—deeper than gasoline lines or energy shortages, deeper even than inflation or recession. And I realize more than ever that as President I need your help. So, I decided to reach out and listen to the voices of America.

I invited to Camp David people from almost every segment of our society—business and labor, teachers and preachers, Governors, mayors, and private citizens. And then I left Camp David to listen to other Americans, men and women like you. . . .

These 10 days confirmed my belief in the decency and the strength and the wisdom of the American people, but it also bore out some of my long-standing concerns about our Nation's underlying problems.

I know, of course, being President, that government actions and legislation can be very important. That's why I've worked hard to put my campaign promises into law—and I have to admit, with just mixed success. But after listening to the American people I have been reminded again that all the legislation in the world can't fix what's wrong with America. So, I want to speak to you first tonight about a subject even more serious than energy or inflation. I want to talk to you right now about a fundamental threat to American democracy.

I do not mean our political and civil liberties. They will endure. And I do not refer to the outward strength of America, a nation that is at peace tonight everywhere in the world, with unmatched economic power and military might.

The threat is nearly invisible in ordinary ways. It is a crisis of confidence. It is a crisis that strikes at the very heart and soul and spirit of our national will. We can see this crisis in the growing doubt about the meaning of our own lives and in the loss of a unity of purpose for our Nation.

The erosion of our confidence in the future is threatening to destroy the social and the political fabric of America. . . .

The symptoms of this crisis of the American spirit are all around us. For the first time in the history of our country a majority of our people believe that the next

Jimmy Carter, "Address to the Nation," *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, July 20, 1979, pp. 1235–1241.

5 years will be worse than the past 5 years. Two-thirds of our people do not even vote. The productivity of American workers is actually dropping, and the willingness of Americans to save for the future has fallen below that of all other people in the Western world.

As you know, there is a growing disrespect for government and for churches and for schools, the news media, and other institutions. This is not a message of happiness or reassurance, but it is the truth and it is a warning.

These changes did not happen overnight. They've come upon us gradually over the last generation, years that were filled with shocks and tragedy.

We were sure that ours was a nation of the ballot, not the bullet, until the murders of John Kennedy and Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. We were taught that our armies were always invincible and our causes were always just, only to suffer the agony of Vietnam. We respected the Presidency as a place of honor until the shock of Watergate.

We remember when the phrase "sound as a dollar" was an expression of absolute dependability, until 10 years of inflation began to shrink our dollar and our savings. We believed that our Nation's resources were limitless until 1973 when we had to face a growing dependence on foreign oil.

These wounds are still very deep. They have never been healed. . . .

What you see too often in Washington and elsewhere around the country is a system of government that seems incapable of action. You see a Congress twisted and pulled in every direction by hundreds of well-financed and powerful special interests.

You see every extreme position defended to the last vote, almost to the last breath by one unyielding group or another. You often see a balanced and a fair approach that demands sacrifice, a little sacrifice from everyone, abandoned like an orphan without support and without friends.

Often you see paralysis and stagnation and drift. You don't like it, and neither do I. What can we do?

First of all, we must face the truth, and then we can change our course. We simply must have faith in each other, faith in our ability to govern ourselves, and faith in the future of this Nation. Restoring that faith and that confidence to America is now the most important task we face. It is a true challenge of this generation of Americans.

2. President Ronald Reagan Sees a Stronger America, 1985

There are no words adequate to express my thanks for the great honor that you've bestowed on me. I'll do my utmost to be deserving of your trust.

This is, as Senator Mathias told us, the 50th time we the people have celebrated this historic occasion. When the first President—George Washington—placed his hand upon the Bible, he stood less than a single day's journey by horseback from

Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1985 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988), vol. 1, pp. 55–58.

raw, untamed wilderness. There were 4 million Americans in a union of 13 States. Today, we are 60 times as many in a union of 50 States. We've lighted the world with our inventions, gone to the aid of mankind wherever in the world there was a cry for help, journeyed to the Moon and safely returned.

So much has changed. And yet, we stand together as we did two centuries ago. When I took this oath 4 years ago, I did so in a time of economic stress. Voices were raised saying that we had to look to our past for the greatness and glory. But we, the present-day Americans, are not given to looking backward. In this blessed land, there is always a better tomorrow.

Four years ago, I spoke to you of a new beginning, and we have accomplished that. But in another sense, our new beginning is a continuation of that beginning created two centuries ago, when, for the first time in history, government, the people said, was not our master, it is our servant; its only power that which we the people allow it to have.

That system has never failed us. But, for a time, we failed the system. We asked things of government that government was not equipped to give. We yielded authority to the national government that properly belonged to States or to local governments or to the people themselves. We allowed taxes and inflation to rob us of our earnings and savings and watched the great industrial machine that had made us the most productive people on Earth slow down and the number of unemployed increase.

By 1980 we knew it was time to renew our faith; to strive with all our strength toward the ultimate in individual freedom, consistent with an orderly society. . . .

At the heart of our efforts is one idea vindicated by 25 straight months of economic growth: Freedom and incentives unleash the drive and entrepreneurial genius that are a core of human progress. We have begun to increase the rewards for work, savings, and investment, reduce the increase in the cost and size of government and its interference in people's lives. . . .

The time has come for a new American emancipation—a great national drive to tear down economic barriers and liberate the spirit of enterprise in the most distressed areas of our country. My friends, together we can do this, and do it we must, so help me God.

From new freedom will spring new opportunities for growth; a more productive, fulfilled, and united people; and a stronger America—an America that will lead the technological revolution and also open its mind and heart and soul to the treasures of literature, music, and poetry and the values of faith, courage, and love.

A dynamic economy, with more citizens working and paying taxes, will be our strongest tool to bring down budget deficits. But an almost unbroken 50 years of deficit spending has finally brought us to a time of reckoning. . . .

We must act now to protect future generations from government's desire to spend its citizens' money and tax them into servitude, when the bills come due. Let us make it unconstitutional for the Federal Government to spend more than the Federal Government takes in. . . .

History is a ribbon, always unfurling; history is a journey. And as we continue our journey, we think of those who traveled before us. . . .

A general falls to his knees in the hard snow of Valley Forge; a lonely President paces the darkened halls and ponders his struggle to preserve the union; the men of

the Alamo call out encouragement to each other; a settler pushes west and sings a song, and the song echoes out forever and fills the unknowing air.

It is the American sound. It is hopeful, big-hearted, idealistic, daring, decent, and fair. That's our heritage, that's our song. We sing it still. For all our problems, our differences, we are together as of old. We raise our voices to the God who is the Author of this most tender music. And may He continue to hold us close as we fill the world with our sound—in unity, affection, and love. One people under God, dedicated to the dream of freedom that He has placed in the human heart, called upon now to pass that dream on to a waiting and a hopeful world. God bless you, and may God bless America.

3. Reagan Calls for a Fight Against Sin, Evil, and Communism, 1983

The other day in the East Room of the White House at a meeting there, someone asked me whether I was aware of all the people out there who were praying for the President. And I had to say, "Yes, I am. I've felt it. I believe in intercessory prayer." But I couldn't help but say to that questioner after he'd asked the question that—or at least say to them that if sometimes when he was praying he got a busy signal, it was just me in there ahead of him. I think I understand how Abraham Lincoln felt when he said, "I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go." . . .

There are a great many God-fearing, dedicated, noble men and women in public life, present company included. And, yes, we need your help to keep us ever mindful of the ideas and the principles that brought us into the public arena in the first place. The basis of those ideals and principles is a commitment to freedom and personal liberty that, itself, is grounded in the much deeper realization that freedom prospers only where the blessings of God are avidly sought and humbly accepted. . . .

I think the items that we've discussed here today [abortion and school prayer] must be a key part of the nation's political agenda. For the first time the Congress is openly and seriously debating and dealing with the prayer and abortion issues—and that's enormous progress right there. I repeat: America is in the midst of a spiritual awakening and a moral renewal. . . .

Now, obviously, much of this new political and social consensus I've talked about is based on a positive view of American history, one that takes pride in our country's accomplishments and record. But we must never forget that no government schemes are going to perfect man. We know that living in this world means dealing with what philosophers would call the phenomenology of evil or, as theologians would put it, the doctrine of sin.

There is sin and evil in the world, and we're enjoined by Scripture and the Lord Jesus to oppose it with all our might. Our nation, too, has a legacy of evil with which

Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1983 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984), vol. 1, pp. 359–364.

it must deal. The glory of this land has been its capacity for transcending the moral evils of our past. For example, the long struggle of minority citizens for equal rights, once a source of disunity and civil war, is now a point of pride for all Americans. We must never go back. There is no room for racism, anti-Semitism, or other forms of ethnic and racial hatred in this country. . . .

And this brings me to my final point today. During my first press conference as President, in answer to a direct question, I pointed out that, as good Marxist-Leninists, the Soviet leaders have openly and publicly declared that the only morality they recognize is that which will further their cause, which is world revolution. I think I should point out I was only quoting Lenin, their guiding spirit, who said in 1920 that they repudiate all morality that proceeds from supernatural ideas—that's their name for religion—or ideas that are outside class conceptions. Morality is entirely subordinate to the interests of class war. And everything is moral that is necessary for the annihilation of the old, exploiting social order and for uniting the proletariat. . . .

Yes, let us pray for the salvation of all of those who live in that totalitarian darkness—pray they will discover the joy of knowing God. But until they do, let us be aware that while they preach the supremacy of the state, declare its omnipotence over individual man, and predict its eventual domination of all peoples on the Earth, they are the focus of evil in the modern world. . . .

Because [communist leaders] sometimes speak in soothing tones of brotherhood and peace, because, like other dictators before them, they're always making "their final territorial demand," some would have us accept them at their word and accommodate ourselves to their aggressive impulses. But if history teaches anything, it teaches that simple-minded appeasement or wishful thinking about our adversaries is folly. It means the betrayal of our past, the squandering of our freedom.

So, I urge you to speak out against those who would place the United States in a position of military and moral inferiority. . . . In your discussions of the nuclear freeze proposals, I urge you to beware the temptation of pride—the temptation of blithely declaring yourselves above it all and label both sides equally at fault, to ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an evil empire, to simply call the arms race a giant misunderstanding and thereby remove yourself from the struggle between right and wrong and good and evil. . . .

While America's military strength is important, let me add here that I've always maintained that the struggle now going on for the world will never be decided by bombs or rockets, by armies or military might. The real crisis we face today is a spiritual one; at root, it is a test of moral will and faith. . . .

I believe we shall rise to the challenge. I believe that communism is another sad, bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages even now are being written. I believe this because the source of our strength in the quest for human freedom is not material, but spiritual. And because it knows no limitation, it must terrify and ultimately triumph over those who would enslave their fellow man. For in the words of Isaiah: "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increased strength. . . . But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary. . . ."

Yes, change your world. One of our Founding Fathers, Thomas Paine, said, "We have it within our power to begin the world over again." We can do it, doing together what no one church could do by itself.

God bless you, and thank you very much.

4. *National Review* Explains Social Conservatism, 1988

By now everyone knows that pro-family conservatives are a powerful political force. . . . What follows are the presumptions of the moral traditionalists.

The family is the fundamental institution of society; in the traditional society, it was your main source of comfort and strength. When you were a child, your father geared his life to providing shelter for your mother and you. As you grew, your family imparted the skills of survival, and gave you your religion and your politics. In your old age, someone with a blood connection would offer you a bed and a seat by the fire.

Today, these functions have atrophied. Your existence needn't cause your father to change his lifestyle, and in many circles it changes your mother's as little as she can possibly arrange. It is no reason for your father to stay with your mother; in the modern myth, she may even be more "fulfilled" without him around. If they do stay together, they play an increasingly small role in your upbringing: the public-education system, backed by the courts, positively puts obstacles in the path of parents wishing to exercise control over what their children read and study, while government-sponsored clinics are permitted to dispense contraceptives and perform abortions on teenagers without their parents' even being told. In your old age, Medicare will pay the costs of your medical treatment if you are put into an institution, but not if your relatives care for you at home. It's likely that your children and their spouses will all have careers anyhow, which means they can hire someone to look after you but can't spend time with you themselves.

In one area after another, functions once performed by the family are now provided by the government or government-style agencies and institutions. The goal of the pro-family movement is not to destroy these institutions but to restore to the family its proper functions, and to restore to the institutions an understanding of the proper proportion of their role. . . .

It all comes down to values. Traditional values work because they are the guidelines most consistent with human nature for producing happiness and achievement. Children who are not trained to traditional values are deprived of the best opportunity to understand their own nature and achieve that happiness. Children who *are* trained to these values are nonetheless free, upon maturity, to reject them: that is why, contrary to what the relativists insist, instilling them is not oppressive. But if these values

"What Social Conservatives Really Want" by Connaught C. Marshner, from *National Review*, September 2, 1988, pp. 38-41. Copyright © 1988 by *National Review, Inc.*, 150 East 35th Street, New York, NY 10016. Reprinted by permission.

are at least transmitted to all members of society, the possibility for a fundamental consensus on behavior exists.

Ronald Reagan got elected and reelected in large part because enough people agreed that the policies of the welfare state had failed, and enough wanted to hear more about traditional values. The public wanted government to shrink its role in their lives. That basic impulse has been developed for eight years now. In the meantime, we still have a welfare state that shows no signs of curing a single social ill, let alone withering away—it is, of course, intrinsically incapable of doing either. . . . This system perpetuates itself and the problems it pretends to solve; and yet we cannot follow the vision on which Ronald Reagan was elected until the way society organizes its approach to problems is changed—until people are again in charge of their own affairs, and those of their local community.

5. Baptist Minister Jerry Falwell Condemns Feminism and the Equal Rights Amendment, 1980

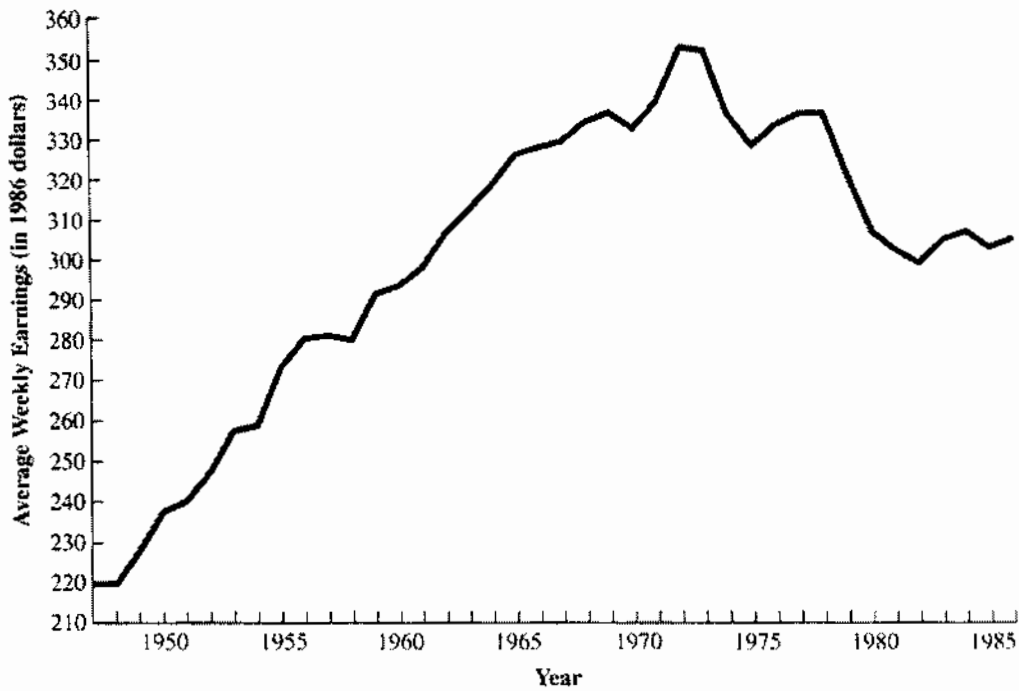
I believe that at the foundation of the women's liberation movement there is a minority core of women who were once bored with life, whose real problems are spiritual problems. Many women have never accepted their God-given roles. They live in disobedience to God's laws and have promoted their godless philosophy throughout our society. God Almighty created men and women biologically different and with differing needs and roles. He made men and women to complement each other and to love each other. Not all the women involved in the feminist movement are radicals. Some are misinformed, and some are lonely women who like being housewives and helpmeets and mothers, but whose husbands spend little time at home and who take no interest in their wives and children. Sometimes the full load of rearing a family becomes a great burden to a woman who is not supported by a man. Women who work should be respected and accorded dignity and equal rewards for equal work. But this is not what the present feminist movement and equal rights movement are all about. . . .

The Equal Rights Amendment strikes at the foundation of our entire social structure. If passed, this amendment would accomplish exactly the opposite of its outward claims. By mandating an absolute equality under the law, it will actually take away many of the special rights women now enjoy. ERA is not merely a political issue, but a moral issue as well. A definite violation of holy Scripture, ERA defies the mandate that "the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church" (Ep. 5:23). In 1 Peter 3:7 we read that husbands are to give their wives honor as unto the weaker vessel, that they are both heirs together of the grace of life. Because a woman is weaker does not mean that she is less important.

Excerpt from *Listen America*, 150–151, by Jerry Falwell. Copyright © 1980 by Jerry Falwell. Used by permission of Doubleday, a division of Bantam, Doubleday, Dell Publishing Group, Inc.

6. Facts and Figures: Graphs on Earnings, Inequality, and Imports, 1986

Real Average Weekly Earnings, 1947-1986 (in 1986 dollars)



Source: Council of Economic Advisers, *Economic Report of the President, 1987* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1987).

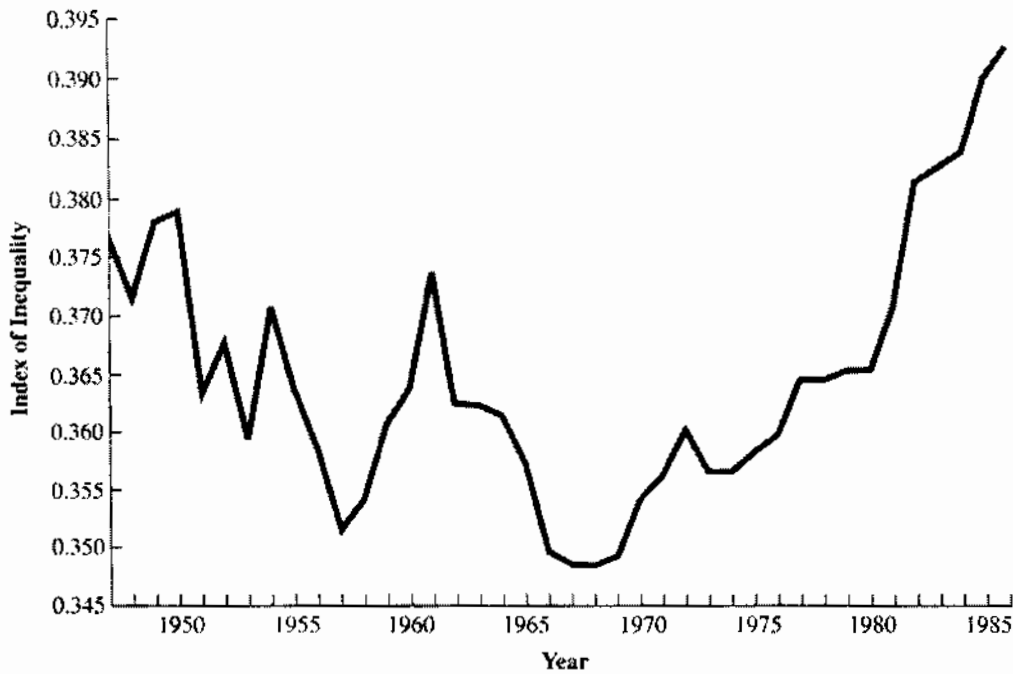
The Import Surge into the United States

	TOTAL IMPORTS AS A PERCENTAGE OF GNP	IMPORTED MERCHANDISE AS A PERCENTAGE OF GNP ORIGINATING IN THE U.S. MANUFACTURING SECTOR
1929	5.7	—
1939	3.7	—
1949	3.8	9.5
1959	4.7	10.8
1969	5.7	13.9
1979	10.9	37.8
1986	11.4	44.7

Sources: Council of Economic Advisers, *Economic Report of the President, 1986* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1986); Council of Economic Advisers, "Economic Indicators" (September 1986); and U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, *Survey of Current Business* 67, no. 4 (April 1987).

Bennett Harrison and Barry Bluestone, *The Great U-Turn: Corporate Restructuring and the Polarizing of America* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

Family Income Inequality, 1947-1986 (GINI Index)



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, "Money Income of Households, Families, and Persons in the United States: 1984" (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1986) and unpublished tabulations provided by the U.S. Census Bureau.

7. A Unionist Blasts the Export of Jobs, 1987

For the past 15 years, we have been occupied with the very real problem of jobs leaving this country. In most cases, these are jobs like the making of a wrench, or making apparel, steel, autos. We have tried to deal with this problem through legislation as well as in collective bargaining. However, with the advent of new technology, such as satellite communication and computers, it is easier than ever for employers to move new technology and capital across borders.

One example of this is American Airlines, which historically used keypunch operators earning between \$8 and \$10 an hour to process the previous day's used tickets and handle the billing and record-keeping. This is now done in Barbados for \$2 an hour!

Each day an American Airlines aircraft flies to Barbados and deposits the tickets which are keypunched at one-fourth or one-fifth the U.S. wage level, and then transmitted back to the United States via satellite in finished form.

Trammel Crow Company, the nation's largest real estate company, has established a series of data bases in the People's Republic of China. They train university students in the English language, not in reading and writing, but in the recognition of

Speech in possession of Eileen Boris. This document can be found in Eileen Boris and Nelson Lichtenstein, *Major Problems in the History of American Workers* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1991), pp. 646-647.

letters so they can keypunch them into the data base. Then, upon graduation, they are hired at a wage of a dollar a day!

When questioned, Trammel Crow said that it did not go to China for the dollar a day wage, but that the Chinese workers are more efficient because they cannot read and understand the English language, so they don't become engrossed in what they are punching.

Pier 1 Imports became the first American company to store its inventory records in China. Several hospitals followed, and now American hospitals are storing medical records in China.

The scope of this is endless.

Anyone who has a business where record-keeping is a vital part can store data anywhere in the globe through satellite transmission and a relatively simple computer with a printer. And it can retrieve it at will. . . .

What makes all of this technology frightening as well as exciting is that it was supposed to create a new type of service job that was going to somehow supplement, if not totally offset, the blue collar jobs that have been lost.

But the lesson it teaches us is that notwithstanding our particular occupations or job titles, that job, if not now, in the very near future, is going to be totally done in another country where wages are cheaper.

Therefore, it is important that we face these problems today and take charge of our own destiny, because no one else is going to do it.

8. The Secretary of Labor Applauds Deregulation of Home Work, 1988

One axiom of public life is that great battles are often fought over small issues: case in point, industrial home work.

In November, the Department of Labor lifted a 45-year-old ban on industrial home work in five industries—jewelry, buttons and buckles, embroideries, handkerchiefs and gloves and mittens.

The prohibitions had had some ridiculous consequences. It was illegal, for example, to make women's underwear at home, but boxer shorts you could have sewn to your heart's content.

Nevertheless, given the history of this issue, we expected that the end of the ban would generate controversy and perhaps legal obstructions (courtesy of organized labor), and we were right. Attacks from a number of sources began immediately. . . . In truth, the issue of industrial home work has relatively little to do with whether a mother with young children can supplement her family's income by making knitted hats or belt buckles at home. It has everything to do with whether millions in the work force, using new technology such as personal computers and fax machines, will be able to do so. It is the latter that organized labor opposes—it wants to prevent business technology from leaving the traditional work place. As early as 1983, the

Excerpt from "The Small Issue, The Big Picture," by Ann McLaughlin, *The Washington Post*, Dec. 31, 1988. Copyright © 1988 by *The Washington Post*. Reprinted with permission.

Service Employees International Union, which represents 780,000 clerical and health workers, forbade its members to work at home. . . .

Suppose, as organized labor claims, industrial home work does have the potential for worker exploitation. The fact is, the Department of Labor is serious about enforcing laws that prevent abuse.

The unions' approach to preventing labor abuse is to prevent labor. They are willing to see workers go idle, including older workers and those in economically depressed areas.

By contrast, our approach is to build an enforcement mechanism, and then allow people to work. If providing job opportunities for America's workers isn't the mission of the Department of Labor, I don't know what is.

So there it is. A small issue with some big symbols attached. As the rhetoric heats up in January, remember what the real debate is about—freedom of choice.

9. Immigrants Do "Home Work" in Modern Sweatshops, 1988

A building that looks like it never saw better days is home to a cramped belt factory on Eighth Avenue.

Here, in the heart of Manhattan's Garment District, are about 20 workers—packed into a windowless room with only one door, partially blocked by stacks of boxes.

Welcome to the sweatshop of the 1980s.

Cats dart across the factory, ignoring the incessant whir of high-speed sewing machines and the clatter of presses stamping holes in the belts. The machines and their operators compete for space.

There is not much room for error. An errant bump or nudge could mean a lost finger or arm.

Against the wall is a broken clock with dusty time cards. But that doesn't matter. Chances are, the employees are being paid "off the books" anyway, at salaries below the minimum wage.

Joe Halik wants to change all that.

"We're looking for victims of opportunity," he said.

Halik is one of the supervisors of the state Labor Department's Apparel Industry Task Force, whose job it is to crack down on the undesirables in the garment industry.

The state Labor Department estimates there are an estimated 4,000 such shops in the metropolitan area, employing about 50,000 workers. The European immigrants who toiled in these shops at the turn of the century have been replaced by poor women and illegal aliens, most of them Hispanic and Chinese.

"They're bypassing California and coming straight here," Halik said.

The 20 investigators on the task force are looking for violations of laws governing the minimum wage, industrial homework and child labor. They also check

Excerpt from Heidi Hartmann in Lourdes Benerla and Catherine R. Stimpson, eds., *Women, Households, and the Economy*, 1987, pp. 33-36, 41-49, 54-59, with some abridgements, no footnotes. Reprinted by permission of Rutgers University Press.

whether a business is paying for unemployment and disability insurance, as well as making contributions to the workers' compensation fund.

The task force has been able to keep better tabs and more vigorously enforce those laws since January, when makers of women's and children's wear had to register with the state to prove those payments are being made.

During two days spent with task force investigators in Manhattan, Rockland, and Westchester, it became clear that registration has been slow to catch on in an industry leery of outsiders. Perhaps with good reason.

"What they're doing is perpetuating the system to keep everyone low," said another task force supervisor, Charles DeSiervo, who estimated that 70 percent of the apparel makers are not registered.

Eight task force members start their work on a recent day on Eighth Avenue, watching other people go to work.

A slight Hispanic woman walks toward a building on 38th Street carrying a large shopping bag. She soon has company. Two investigators have trailed her to the top floor of a building housing dozens of clothing firms.

They hit paydirt when they arrive at a business and discover that the bag contains hundreds of pieces of lace that will go on gowns and dresses. By all appearances, it is a violation of rules governing doing industrial work at home.

The practice is banned because it usually means the employee is not getting overtime for work done after a full day in the factory. Payment is usually by the piece and is invariably done "under the table."

DeSiervo believes that curbing home work is one of the keys to cleaning up the industry.

"Home work was rampant; it was all through the streets," DeSiervo said. "They're starting to notice us. What it takes is strict enforcement."

While investigator San Bargas quizzes, in Spanish, the woman with the shopping bag, the surprised owner of the shop insists it is the first time this has ever happened. Halik looks mildly amused.

"It's always the first time," he said.

10. Bill Clinton's 1992 Campaign: "It's the Economy, Stupid"

At the Clinton campaign headquarters in Little Rock, Arkansas, a simple slogan is taped to the wall for staff members to ponder. In large letters, it reads: "The Economy, Stupid." That is what will win their man the election. All else is mere distraction.

In poll after poll, interview after interview, the message is confirmed. A recent New York Times survey showed 77 per cent of voters disapproving of George Bush's handling of the economy, with only 17 per cent giving him the benefit of

Excerpt from David Osborne, "The US Presidential Elections: American Voters Give Priority to Their Purses," first published in *The Independent* (London), October 5, 1992. Reprinted by permission.

the doubt. And every poll shows that issues such as Bill Clinton's avoidance of the Vietnam draft or the Republican emphasis on family values matter little to voters besides their purses.

For Governor Clinton, President Bush's economic record offers a veritable pick 'n' mix of campaign attack lines. As he takes to the stump every day, he recites an unemployment rate that is more than 2 per cent higher than when Mr Bush took office, an economic growth record worse than any during a presidential term since the Second World War and income figures showing most working Americans worse off than they were four years ago. . . .

. . . Meanwhile, retail sales struggle, new house sales fell 6.1 per cent in August and all measures of consumer and business confidence continue to be depressed.

In his favour, the President can point to an inflation rate that has been squeezed down to around 3 per cent and interest rates lower than they have been for 30 years. But both, though welcome, are functions largely of the weakness of the economy and the efforts being made to revive it.

Joseph Duncan, president of the National Association of Business Economists, said last week: "Basically, the recovery is about four quarters away—and we've been saying that for four years."

Critics say Mr Bush could have avoided his economic hole had he not depended so completely for salvation on the Federal Reserve and low interest rates.

. . . He is also haunted by his acquiescence in 1990 to tax increases that betrayed his 1988, read-my-lips pledge.

The President's only option, then, was to divert attention away from his record to the future. On 10 September, belatedly perhaps, he presented a coherent economic programme, "Agenda for American Renewal." It contains little surprising, but is an expression of his faith in keeping taxation and government spending low as the best path to recovery, with additional incentives such as capital gains tax credits. . . .

. . . Governor Clinton is offering a \$200 [billion] investment programme over five years to generate new employment with government projects such as road and bridge building coupled with increased job training. He says he will pay for it with tax increases on the top 2 per cent of American earners and increased taxes for foreign companies. That, with greater cuts in defence spending than Mr Bush is contemplating, will also leave enough to cut the federal deficit in half by 1996.

. . . Republicans are attempting to imply that Mr Clinton will only be able to finance his investment programme by extending tax increases to middle-income Americans—exactly the people to whom the Governor has promised some kind of tax alleviation. Mr Bush, meanwhile, is promising again, "never, ever" to allow another tax increase. . . .

So far, Mr Clinton's promise of some renewed government intervention—after 12 years of "hands-off" Republican stewardship—to kick life back into the economy is what the voters seem most keen to hear. Above all, it would represent a change and hope of something better. . . .

When asked who is most likely to bring back the good times, most Americans today are answering Bill Clinton—by 52 per cent to 36 per cent in a recent Gallup Poll. That is what may, and probably will, win him the White House.

31-4 Wealth and Poverty (1981)

George Gilder

In *Wealth and Poverty*, a book that strongly influenced the Reagan administration, conservative theorist George Gilder argued that it was the immoral and irresponsible behavior of the poor themselves rather than any structural defects in the economy that perpetuated poverty in the United States.

Source: From George Gilder, *Wealth and Poverty* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 68-71. Copyright © 1981 by George Gilder. Reprinted by permission of Georges Borchardt, Inc., on behalf of the author.

The only dependable route from poverty is always work, family, and faith. The first principle is that in order to move up, the poor must not only work, they must work harder than the classes above them. Every previous generation of the lower class has made such efforts. But the current poor, white even more than black, are refusing to work hard. Irwin Garfinkel and Robert Haveman, authors of the ingenious and sophisticated study of what they call *Earnings Capacity Utilization Rates*, have calculated the degree to which various income groups use their opportunities—how hard they work outside the home. This study shows that, for several understandable reasons, the current poor work substantially less, for fewer hours and weeks a year, and earn less in proportion to their age, education, and other credentials (even after correcting the figures for unemployment, disability, and presumed discrimination) than either their predecessors in American cities or those now above them on the income scale. (The study was made at the federally funded Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin and used data from the census and the Michigan longitudinal survey.) The findings lend important confirmation to the growing body of evidence that work effort is the crucial unmeasured variable in American productivity and income distribution, and that current welfare and other subsidy programs substantially reduce work. The poor choose leisure not because of moral weakness, but because they are paid to do so.

A program to lift by transfers and preferences the income of less diligent groups is politically divisive—and very unlikely—because it incurs the bitter resistance of the real working class. In addition, such an effort breaks the psychological link between effort and reward, which is crucial to long-run upward mobility. Because effective work consists not in merely fulfilling the requirements of labor contracts, but in “putting out” with alertness and emotional commitment, workers have to understand and feel deeply that what they are given depends on what they give—that they must supply work in order to demand goods. Parents and schools must inculcate this idea in their children both by instruction and example. Nothing is more deadly to achievement than the belief that effort will not be rewarded, that the world is a bleak and discriminatory place in which only the predatory and the specially preferred can get ahead. Such a view in the home discourages the work effort in school that shapes earnings capacity afterward. As with so many aspects of human performance, work effort begins in family experiences, and its sources can be best explored through an examination of family structure.

Indeed, after work the second principle of upward mobility is the maintenance of monogamous marriage and family. Adjusting for discrimination against women and for child-care responsibilities, the Wisconsin study indicates that married men work between two and one-third and four times harder than married women, and more than twice as

hard as female family heads. The work effort of married men increases with their age, credentials, education, job experience, and birth of children, while the work effort of married women steadily declines. Most important in judging the impact of marriage, husbands work 50 percent harder than bachelors of comparable age, education, and skills.

The effect of marriage, thus, is to increase the work effort of men by about half. Since men have higher earnings capacity to begin with, and since the female capacity-utilization figures would be even lower without an adjustment for discrimination, it is manifest that the maintenance of families is the key factor in reducing poverty.

Once a family is headed by a woman, it is almost impossible for it to greatly raise its income even if the woman is highly educated and trained and she hires day-care or domestic help. Her family responsibilities and distractions tend to prevent her from the kind of all-out commitment that is necessary for the full use of earning power. Few women with children make earning money the top priority in their lives.

A married man, on the other hand, is spurred by the claims of family to channel his otherwise disruptive male aggressions into his performance as a provider for a wife and children. These sexual differences alone, which manifest themselves in all societies known to anthropology, dictate that the first priority of any serious program against poverty is to strengthen the male role in poor families.

These narrow measures of work effort touch on just part of the manifold interplay between family and poverty. Edward Banfield's *The Unheavenly City* defines the lower class largely by its lack of an orientation to the future. Living from day to day and from hand to mouth, lower class individuals are unable to plan or save or keep a job. Banfield gives the impression that short-time horizons are a deep-seated psychological defect afflicting hundreds of thousands of the poor.

There is no question that Banfield puts his finger on a crucial problem of the poor and that he develops and documents his theme in an unrivaled classic of disciplined social science. But he fails to show how millions of men, equally present oriented, equally buffeted by impulse and blind to the future, have managed to become far-seeing members of the middle classes. He also fails to explain how millions of apparently future-oriented men can become dissolute followers of the sensuous moment, neglecting their jobs, dissipating their income and wealth, pursuing a horizon no longer than the most time-bound of the poor.

What Banfield is in fact describing in his lower-class category is largely the temperament of single, divorced, and separated men. The key to lower-class life in contemporary America is that unrelated individuals, as the census calls

them, are so numerous and conspicuous that they set the tone for the entire community. Their congregation in ghettos, moreover, magnifies greatly their impact on the black poor, male and female (though, as Banfield rightly observes, this style of instant gratification is chiefly a male trait).

The short-sighted outlook of poverty stems largely from the breakdown of family responsibilities among fathers. The lives of the poor, all too often, are governed by the rhythms of tension and release that characterize the sexual experience of young single men. Because female sexuality, as it evolved over the millennia, is psychologically rooted in the bearing and nurturing of children, women have long horizons within their very bodies, glimpses of eternity within their wombs. Civilized society is dependent upon the submission of the short-term sexuality of young men to the extended maternal horizons of women. This is what happens in monogamous marriage; the man disciplines his sexuality and extends it into the future through the womb of a woman. The woman gives him access to his children, otherwise forever denied him; and he gives her the product of his labor, otherwise dissipated on temporary pleasures. The woman gives him a unique link to the future and a vision of it; he gives her faithfulness and a commitment to a lifetime of hard work. If work effort is the first principle of overcoming poverty, marriage is the prime source of upwardly mobile work.

It is love that changes the short horizons of youth and poverty into the long horizons of marriage and career. When marriages fail, the man often returns to the more primitive rhythms of singleness. On the average, his income drops by one-third and he shows a far higher propensity for drink, drugs, and crime. But when marriages in general hold firm and men in general love and support their children, Banfield's lower-class style changes into middle-class futurity.

The key to the intractable poverty of the hardcore American poor is the dominance of single and separated men in poor communities. Black "unrelated individuals" are not much more likely to be in poverty than white ones. The problem is neither race nor matriarchy in any meaningful sense. It is familial anarchy among the concentrated poor of the inner city, in which flamboyant and impulsive youths rather than responsible men provide the themes of aspiration. The result is that male sexual rhythms tend to prevail, and boys are brought up without authoritative fathers in the home to instill in them the values of responsible paternity: the discipline and love of children and the dependable performance of the provider role. "If she wants me, she'll pay," one young stud assured me in prison, and perhaps, in the welfare culture, she can and will. Thus the pattern is extended into future generations.

Questions

1. What does Gilder see as the major causes of poverty? What is his solution to poverty?

2. What is Gilder's analysis of the roles of women and men? What are the implications of this analysis?
3. Would Gilder's argument have appealed to President Reagan? Why or why not?

31-5 Rachel and Her Children (1988)

Jonathan Kozol

Social critic Jonathan Kozol described the world of the "welfare hotel" in his 1988 study *Rachel and Her Children*. Such institutions were the only shelter available for many homeless families in New York City in the 1980s.

Source: Jonathan Kozol, excerpt from *Rachel and Her Children*, 51–55. Copyright © 1988 by Jonathan Kozol. Used by permission of Crown Publishers, a division of Random House, Inc.

There are families in this building whose existence, difficult though it may be, still represents an island of serenity and peace. Annie Harrington's family has a kind of pained serenity. Gwen and her children live with the peace of resignation. I think of these families like refugees who, in the midst of war, cling to each other and establish a small zone of safety. Most people here do not have resources to create a zone of safety. Terrorized already on arrival, they are quickly caught up in a vortex of accelerating threats and are tossed about like bits of wood and broken furniture and shattered houses in an Arkansas tornado. Chaos and disorder alternate with lethargy and nearly absolute bewilderment in face of regulations they cannot observe or do not understand.

Two women whom I meet in the same evening after Christmas, Wanda and Terry, frighten me by their entire inability to fathom or to govern what is going on inside and all around them.

Terry is pregnant, in her ninth month. She's afraid that, when she gives birth, she may not be able to bring home her baby from the hospital because she is not legally residing here.

Wanda, curled up like a newborn in a room no larger than a closet, is three months pregnant, planning an abortion.

Would doctors say these women are emotionally unwell? They might have no choice. Were these women sick before they came here? I don't see how we could possibly find out. What startles me is not that they have difficulty coping but that neither yet has given up entirely.

Terry: twenty-eight years old. She has three kids. She graduated from a school in Flushing and has worked for eight years as a lab assistant. Burnt out of her home, she stayed for two years with her sister's family: three adults, eight children, crowded into four unheated rooms. Evicted by her sister when the pressure on her sister's husband and their kids began to damage their own marriage, she had to take her children to the EAU at Church Street in Manhattan. Refusing to accept a placement at a barracks shelter, she's

been sleeping here illegally for several nights in a small room rented to her cousin.

When we meet, she's in the corridor outside the crisis center, crying and perspiring heavily. She sits on a broken chair to talk to me. She's not on Medicaid and has been removed from AFDC. "My card's being reprocessed," she explains, although this explanation explains nothing. She's not on WIC. "I've got to file an application." Her back is aching. She is due to have her child any day.

This is the reason for her panic: "If I can't be placed before the baby's born, the hospital won't let me take the baby. They don't let you take a newborn if you haven't got a home." As we will see, this is not always so, but the possibility of this occurrence is quite real. Where are her kids? "They're here. I've got them hidden in the room."

She takes me to her cousin Wanda's room. I measure it: nine feet by twelve, a little smaller than the room in which I store my files on the homeless. Wanda's been here fifteen months, has four kids, no hot plate, and no food in the refrigerator. She's had no food stamps and no restaurant allowance for two months. I ask her why. (You ask these questions even though you know the answer will be vague, confused, because so many of these women have no possible idea of why they do or don't receive the benefits they do or don't deserve.) She's curled up in a tattered slip and a torn sweater on a mattress with no sheet. Her case was closed, she says. Faintly, I hear something about "an application." Her words are hard to understand. I ask her whether she was here for Christmas. The very few words she speaks come out in small reluctant phrases: "Where else would I go?" She says her children got some presents from the fire department. There's a painting of Jesus and Mary on the wall above the bed. "My mother gave it to me."

A week later I stop by to visit. She's in the same position: drowsy and withdrawn. I ask her if she celebrated New Year's Eve. "Stayed by my lonesome" is all that I understand. She rouses herself enough to ask me if I have a cigarette. In the

vacuum of emotion I ask if she ever gets to do something for fun. "Go to a movie . . ." But when I ask the last time she's been to a movie she says: "1984." What was the movie? "*Dawn of the Living Dead*."

When she says she's pregnant and is planning an abortion I don't care to ask her why, but she sits up halfway, props herself against a pillow, looks at Terry, shrugs, and mumbles this: "What you want to bring another baby into this place for? There ain't nothin' waitin' for them here but dirty rooms and dyin'."

Her children, scattered like wilted weeds around her on the floor, don't talk or play or move around or interrupt. Outside in the corridor I ask her cousin if the kids are sick. Terry says: "They're okay. They just didn't have no food to eat today." So I ask: "Did you?" She shakes her head. I go down to Herald Square, buy french fries and chicken at a fast-food store, milk and cookies at a delicatessen, and return. The minute I walk in Wanda sits up, clearheaded and alert. Her kids wake from their stupor. Fifteen minutes later, every bit of chicken, all the french fries, cookies, milk have been consumed. There is a rush of energy and talking in the room. The kids are pestering the adults, as they ought to.

"I have a problem," Wanda says. "My blood sugar goes down. It is called [pronounced very precisely] hypoglycemia."

I meet Terry one year later by sheer chance outside Grand Central Station. She's in a food line for the sandwiches distributed by a charitable group at 10:00 P.M. Her kids are with her. She's holding a baby in her arms. She tells me she's in another hotel near the Martinique. "Don't have no refrigerators there . . ."

I lose her in the crowd of people waiting for a meal.

In the subway station under Herald Square a woman who has seen me coming from the Martinique follows me and stops me by the stairs. Her hair is disheveled. Words spill

from her mouth. She says that she was thrown out of the Martinique. Her children were sick with diarrhea. Someone "reported" her, for what I do not ask. After the Martinique she says that she was in a place I've never heard of called the Brooklyn Arms. Her youngest child, one year old, became much sicker there. City workers finally persuaded her to give up all three kids to foster care. She's living now in a crowded women's shelter where, she says, there are twelve women in a room. She shrieks this information at me on the platform not far from the shrieking trains.

"There's no soap, no hygiene. You go to the desk and ask for toilet paper. You get a single sheet. If you need another sheet you go back down and ask them for some more. I sleep on an army cot. The bathroom's flooded."

Is she telling me the truth? Is she on drugs? Is she unwell? Why did she elect to tell me this? Why do the words come out so fast? I feel unkind to cut her off, but I am frightened by her desperation. I leave her there, pouring out her words into the night.

The nurse in the Martinique says this: "A mother gave birth last week to a baby that weighed just over a pound. She was in her seventh month. Her children rubbed her belly while she cried. I called an ambulance."

The nurse is kind, compassionate, and overwhelmed. "People are fractured by this system. I'm responsible for 500 families, here and in another building. Custody cases. Pregnant women. Newborn children. I can get them into WIC. I'm snowed . . ." She's on the telephone, buried in papers, talking with women, hearing their questions, trying to come up with answers. There are others like her in the crisis center who create a tiny zone of safety in the larger zone of fear. But twenty-five hardworking nurses like this woman would be scarcely equal to the miseries that flood across her desk out of this factory of pain and tears.

Questions

1. How does Kozol challenge the belief that a "safety net" is in place to protect the welfare of the neediest?
2. Why does Kozol, an opponent of current governmental social welfare policies, focus on the experiences of families?
3. Why do the families depicted in Kozol's account seem incapable of improving their lot in life?