



The Bill of Obligations

The Ten Habits of Good Citizens

Richard Haass

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What is the point?

In our divided and ever-more-mean-spirited time, we need to know and practice the habits of good citizenship. The very future of our democracy may depend on this.

WHY IS THIS BOOK WORTH OUR TIME? – WHY THIS BOOK MATTERS!

#1 – This book provides a good refresher on the obligations of citizenship.

#2 – This book is a call to civility; something greatly needed in our country.

#3 – This book is a warning that if we do not heed these lessons, our democracy might not last.

QUOTES AND EXCERPTS FROM THE BOOK – THE “BEST OF” RANDY’S HIGHLIGHTED PASSAGES:

1. America’s internal divisions had reached a qualitatively different and dangerous level. pg. xii
2. As two leading political scientists wrote in a classic study, “The development of a stable and effective democratic government depends upon more than the structures of government and politics: it depends upon the orientations that people have to the political process—upon the political culture.” pg. xiv
3. A democracy that concerns itself only with protecting and advancing individual rights will find itself in jeopardy, as rights will come into conflict with one another. When they inevitably do, it is essential that there is a path for citizens to compromise or a willingness to coexist peacefully and work with those with whom they disagree. Beyond rights, obligations are the other cornerstone of a successful democracy—obligations between individual citizens as well as between citizens and their government. Obligations—akin to what Danielle Allen calls “habits of citizenship”—are things that should happen but that the law cannot require. pg. xiv



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4. Implicit in all this is the conviction that American democracy is most decidedly worth keeping. pg. xv
5. Our nation is also an engine of innovation, creating unprecedented wealth for hundreds of millions of people and increasing average life expectancy by decades for its citizens. pg. xv
6. There is an enormous gap between the words of the Declaration of Independence—“that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”—and reality, including but not limited to the treatment of Native Americans and the institution of slavery and the status of women. ...This country has failed to adequately deal with discrimination based on race, gender, religion, or country of origin. pg. xvi
7. Violence on a large scale, be it by ordinary criminals or those with a political agenda, the latter meeting the definition of terrorism, has become all too imaginable. pg. xvii
8. And although an overwhelming majority of Americans oppose it, attempted secession from the union by one or more states cannot be dismissed out of hand. pg. xvii
9. A United States that is divided and defined by politics will be in no condition to set an example that others will want to emulate. pg. xvii
10. President Jimmy Carter’s inaugural address: “Our nation can be strong abroad only if it is strong at home. And we know that the best way to enhance freedom in other lands is to demonstrate here that our democratic system is worthy of emulation.” pg. xvii
11. In order to deter would-be foes and provide security to friends and allies, Americans must be able to come together across partisan divides. pg. xviii
12. As I argued in a book published nearly a decade ago, foreign policy begins at home. pg. xviii
13. After January 6, Chinese television was filled with images of the violence and disarray at the Capitol. This is instructive. ...Those who purport to be tough on China are being anything but if they weaken democracy here in the United States. pg. xviii
14. There is also the danger (pointed out by the founders of America’s political system) that direct or self-rule could easily degenerate into a tyranny of the majority at the expense of minorities. pg. 3
15. It was one thing for there to be agreement that the Articles were inadequate, quite something else for the delegates to agree on what should take their place. pg. 5
16. **Hovering in the background was the issue of slavery; and there was already a question of whether the federal government would limit slavery in territories or states seeking to join the union. Indeed, James Madison concluded that the greatest divide was not between states with large and small populations but between North and South. pg. 6**
17. This idea of checks and balances was central to the pro-Constitution arguments of James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay, the three authors of The Federalist Papers, arguably the most important and influential documents relating to American democracy other than the Constitution. pg. 6

18. The animating idea was to limit any concentration of power. pg. 6
19. As is the case with the Ten Commandments, the first ten amendments to the Constitution are a mixture of the negative and the positive, what is not to be done and what is called for. pg. 9
- 20. It guarantees both freedom of religion and freedom from religion. pg. 9**
21. The first ten amendments did nothing to counteract the so-called three-fifths compromise... pg. 10
- 22. Put differently, the Bill of Rights made progress in protecting individuals against the federal government but not the states. pg. 11**
23. Only with the adoption of several additional amendments to the Constitution (above all, the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments) in the aftermath of the Civil War were slavery and involuntary servitude banned and citizenship, with its rights and privileges, extended; as Michael Sandel has written, "The Civil War resolved what the Constitution had not, and established the supremacy of the national government over the states." ...underscoring that "no State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." pg. 11
- 24. A rights-based approach to citizenship is pervasive and is common to those on the political left and right alike; what distinguishes them is which rights they emphasize and support and which they oppose. ...Abortion, just to choose one example, is an issue in which those who oppose the practice talk about defending the rights of the unborn, while those who support it emphasize the right of the mother to choose. ...Today there are pitched battles over state laws that in one way or another place obstacles on the ease of voting. pg. 13**
- 25. Another recurring debate in this country concerns what the government owes every citizen beyond basic safety. It is akin to what Franklin Delano Roosevelt called "freedom from want." ...At issue is what ought to constitute the minimum safety net for every citizen. pg. 13**
26. As Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer pointed out, "Many of our cases, the most difficult cases, are not about right versus wrong. They are about right versus right." pg. 15
- 27. There are intense debates over whether free speech is sacrosanct or if it requires limits when it includes assertions that are untrue and could cause damage to the safety of others or the fabric of democracy. pg. 15**
28. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis once described "sunlight" as "the best of disinfectants" in a democracy; openness and transparency are better than anything else at rooting out corruption and the improper use of power. pg. 15
29. All of us should be worried about the future of the United States. Too many people fall back on the comfortable view that the American people have encountered difficult challenges in the past and have always come through. pg. 17

30. Winston Churchill, arguably the figure of greatest historic consequence in the previous century, is said to have remarked that “You can always count on Americans to do the right thing—after they’ve tried everything else.” pg. 17

31. We—Americans—are not as exceptional as we like to think. The United States, the world’s oldest democracy, is not immune to democratic backsliding, a trend worldwide over the past two decades. pg. 19

32. George Washington warned about the dangers of what he called “faction” in his farewell address. ...The authors of The Federalist Papers similarly worried about how factions could threaten the functioning or even fabric of the country. Their definition of faction—“ a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community”—is as relevant today as when it was originally written. pg. 20

33. What I have in mind here is our increasingly partisan, dysfunctional politics. pg. 20

34. Congressional leadership could not even agree to establish a bipartisan commission (along the lines of the commission formed to investigate the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks) to investigate the events of January 6, 2021. pg. 21

35. January 6 involved not just violence by a few but by hundreds, violence supported or at least tolerated by the leadership and many elected representatives of the Republican Party in an effort to stop the counting and certification of electoral votes. pg. 21

36. Secession and civil war temporarily ruptured and nearly destroyed the United States of America. In the end, the country survived, although more than 600,000 Americans—a number roughly equivalent to between six and seven million as a percentage of today’s population—did not. pg. 23

37. Doubts have long existed. None other than John Adams wrote that “Democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes exhausts and murders itself. There never was a Democracy yet, that did not commit suicide.” Or, as Abraham Lincoln said, “If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher.” pg. 23

38. The most worrisome and relevant historical pattern for American democracy, though, is that of democracies that decayed from within, sowing the seeds of their own demise. ...This was the fate of Weimar Germany in the 1930s at the hands of Adolf Hitler. pg. 24

39. As Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt observed in How Democracies Die, “Since the end of the Cold War, most democratic breakdowns have been caused not by generals and soldiers but by elected governments themselves.” pg. 24

40. It is increasingly hard to speak of a shared American experience, outlook, values, or priorities. Instead, the country is sharply divided. pg. 25

41. Little is either inevitable or permanent; as former president Bill Clinton recently noted, “Freedom and democracy and the rule of law are not permanently enshrined just because we’ve survived two-hundred-plus years now.” pg. 25

42. Democracy asks a great deal of its citizens and leaders alike. From the former it requires informed participation. From the latter it asks for good faith and restraint, and a willingness to put the collective interest before politics, party, or personal gain. pg. 26
43. ...apart from the ten amendments that constitute the Bill of Rights, there have been only seventeen amendments to the Constitution since its adoption and none for the past thirty years. pg. 26
44. The American system was designed for a population of just over three million, approximately 1 percent of the current total of more than 330 million. pg. 27
- 45. If anything, the American political process has grown more sclerotic and more resistant to making things happen. ...There are literally tens of thousands of participants motivated by special interests of one sort or another, be they person, party, policy, or profit; by contrast, there are few such actors that can be said to be motivated by the national interest. pg. 27**
- 46. Americans increasingly feel disillusioned with and alienated from their government and their country. ...There is a perception, reinforced by reality, that the political system is unresponsive to addressing many of the country's most pressing ills, including the poor and uneven quality of public education, infrastructure, climate change, debt, the opioid crisis, policing, and a dysfunctional healthcare system. pg. 30**
47. Intense minorities often overwhelm more restrained majorities in the political marketplace. pg. 32
48. Television, the dominant media of the era, tended to bring the country together, as it was a source of shared experience. pg. 32
49. What traditional newspapers have in common is that they have fact-checkers and editors, and they make an effort –admittedly not always successful–to separate the political biases of the paper from the news coverage. pg. 45
50. Facts are assertions that can be demonstrated to be so, measured, and proved. Misstatements are assertions that can be shown to be false or inaccurate. pg. 45
51. For example: It is a fact that the national debt of the United States is approximately \$31 trillion. To say anything else is a misstatement. But to argue that a debt of this scale is something that is dangerous and ought to be reduced, or is something that can safely be maintained, is a matter of analysis. pg. 46
52. That the temperature of the atmosphere has increased 1.1 degrees centigrade (approximately two degrees Fahrenheit) since the onset of the industrial age is a fact. pg. 46
53. I have a rule of thumb when it comes to assessments: if you have to cook the books to make your argument, if you have to avoid inconvenient truths or manufacture others, it may be time to reconsider your position. pg. 49
54. Even a short list of other aspects of the democratic process might include encouraging fellow citizens to register and vote and educating them on the issues, working for a party or candidate, assisting the local board of elections in administering the voting process and the counting of votes, and contributing money to the candidate, party, or cause of your choice. pg. 57

55. What is more, you need not be famous or powerful to make a difference. As former Secretary of Defense James Mattis pointed out, “The impact of participation trickles up. Rosa Parks didn’t start out by taking on all of Jim Crow; she started out by taking a seat on a local bus.” pg. 57

56. Ronald Reagan put it best in his farewell address delivered in 1989: “All great change in America begins at the dinner table. So, tomorrow night in the kitchen I hope the talking begins. . . . That would be a very American thing to do.” pg. 58

57. It is never enough in public life to do the right thing, as important as that is. It is just as important to explain and educate as to why it was the right thing to do. pg. 71

58. Legitimate journalists—as opposed to political activists masquerading as journalists—ought to be treated with respect. pg. 101

59. The goal, the commitment for us all, ought to be to hand off a country to our children and grandchildren that is in better shape than what we received from our parents and grandparents. pg. 160

60. James Madison once said that “a bad cause seldom fails to betray itself.” pg. 161

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THE MOST IMPORTANT QUOTES – (THE “THESIS” QUOTES).

Dedication: *To those Americans who put country and Constitution before personal gain or party and stood up for our democracy when it was most in danger.*

The most urgent and significant threat to American security and stability stems not from abroad but from within, from political divisions that for only the second time in U.S. history have raised questions about the future of American democracy and even the United States itself. ...Similarly, a country at war with itself cannot set an example that people elsewhere will want to emulate. If democracy fails here, democracy will be endangered everywhere. (R.M., note: cf. Martin Luther King Jr., The Letter from Birmingham Jail).

In short, what led to this book is not my political preferences. I am motivated by what keeps me up at night: our democracy is imperiled, and its demise would be an incalculable loss to this country’s citizens and to the world.

Without a culture of obligation coexisting alongside a commitment to rights, American democracy could well come undone. We need nothing less than a “Bill of Obligations” to guide how we teach, understand, and conduct our politics.

The purpose of this book is not to defend the past. It is to help build our common future, to remind readers why democracy should be cherished and suggest what could be done to preserve it. What fills these pages is a mixture of reflection and advocacy, written out of aspiration.

The argument here is that observance of the law and, to be more precise, the letter of the law is necessary but insufficient for this or any democracy to endure much less much less thrive. Observance of norms is required as well.

The central argument of this book is that American democracy will endure only if obligations join rights at the core of a widely shared understanding of citizenship. By definition, obligations are behaviors that should happen but are not required as a matter of law.

SOME OF THE KEY CONTENT AND IDEAS FROM THE BOOK

- **About Richard Haass**

- **Dr. Richard Haass** is president of the nonpartisan Council on Foreign Relations. An experienced diplomat and policymaker, he served in the Pentagon, State Department, and White House under four presidents, Democrat and Republican alike. A recipient of the Presidential Citizens Medal, the State Department's Distinguished Honor Award, and the Tipperary International Peace Award, he is the author or editor of fifteen other books, including the bestselling **The World: A Brief Introduction, A World in Disarray, and Foreign Policy Begins at Home**.
- I am not particularly partisan. I have worked for one Democratic senator, one Democratic president, and three Republican presidents. ...For most of my adult life I was a registered Republican, although in the summer of 2020 I reluctantly concluded I was no longer comfortable in that party and changed to no party affiliation.
- As I write this, I serve as the president of the Council on Foreign Relations.

- **Our country was founded on "republicanism"**

- The response to such concerns with direct democracy was and is republicanism—not in the sense of the party by that name, but rather representative governments exercising authority in the name of the people and held accountable to them.

- **The need for "Obligations"**

- I am speaking here of obligations, of what citizens owe one another and the country.
- Obligations are different from requirements.
- Max Arz: "It is not enough to talk about human rights without emphasizing human duties. . . . Rights without duties lead to lawlessness, even as duties without rights can lead to slavery and to the abasement of individuality."

- **One note of alarm (one of many):**

- The peaceful transition of power, its essence captured in the traditional limousine ride down Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House to Capitol Hill in which the soon-to-be former and the soon-to-be president share the back seat, is one of the hallmarks of American democracy.
- There have been more than forty transitions from one president to another, all without a hitch.
- The fact that as of this writing a significant percentage of the population refuses to accept the results of the November 2020 election, and a meaningful number of those with leadership roles in the Republican Party are encouraging them not to, is evidence that something is seriously amiss.

- **The Ten Obligations:**

- **OBLIGATION I: Be Informed**

- The belief that an informed citizenry is essential to the survival of American democracy is as old as the republic itself.
- Barack Obama, made a similar point, arguing that "This democracy doesn't work if we don't have an informed citizenry."
- First things first. An informed citizen is someone who understands the fundamentals as to how the government and the economy and society operate, the principal challenges facing the country at home and abroad, and the contending options or policies for dealing with those challenges. ...Ideally, this individual would also know something of the country's history and how it came to be what it is today, as it is impossible to understand the present without an appreciation of the past.
- The obvious reason, then, for citizens to be informed is to be able to wisely cast their votes.

- **And an uninformed citizenry is much more vulnerable to being misled by falsehoods and unfounded conspiracy theories or manipulated by politicians who are pursuing their personal interests.**
- The basics can still be gleaned from a reading of the country's founding documents and a handful of books. ...What comes to mind are the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and The Federalist Papers, along with the best biographies and speeches of major presidents as well as some respected histories and commentaries, such as Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*.
- What comes to mind here is a famous statement attributed to Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the former Harvard professor, adviser to President Richard Nixon, and senator from New York, who noted that "everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not to his own facts."
- Or as then Fox News correspondent Chris Wallace put it, "Truth is non-negotiable. There's no spin to truth. Truth is truth."
- Meaningful debate, much less the development of sound policy, is impossible if it is not rooted in facts.
- **When it comes to our obligation to be informed, those in the position to influence the views of others have a special responsibility to get their facts right and to distinguish carefully among facts, assessments, predictions, and recommendations. This applies to teachers at every level, to those who give sermons in places of worship, to journalists and those in every type of media, and above all to those in government, be they elected or appointed, who possess not just influence but power.**
- **OBLIGATION II: Get Involved**
 - **Vote! - Recruit others to vote!**
 - The most basic measure of democratic involvement is voting. ...For comparison, one recent survey of thirty-five democracies with successful economies showed the United States ranked thirtieth when it came to the percentage of the voting-age population that actually voted.
- **OBLIGATION III: Stay Open to Compromise**
 - John F. Kennedy, however, made the case for compromise: "Compromise need not mean cowardice. Indeed it is frequently the compromisers and conciliators who are faced with the severest tests of political courage as they oppose the extremist views of their constituents."
 - If, however, compromise was once as American as apple pie, it is no longer. This is a serious problem.
 - Henry Clay: "All legislation, all government, all society is founded upon the principle of mutual concession."
 - "All legislation, all government, all society is founded upon the principle of mutual concession."
 - **As Ronald Reagan noted in his autobiography, "If you got 75 or 80 percent of what you were asking for, I say, you take it and fight for the rest later, and that's what I told these radical conservatives who never got used to it." Reagan also reflected, "They wanted all or nothing and they wanted it all at once."**
 - Compromise inevitably involves risk. There will always be those who opt for purity over progress. They will insist that any compromise is a sellout. The flaw in such thinking is that what from their perspective is necessary is not achievable. As the adage goes, half a loaf is better than none.
 - When is it right to compromise—and when to stand firm? A basic rule of thumb is to hold fast on matters of fundamental principle; Mahatma Gandhi, the advocate of nonviolence who led India's movement for independence from Great Britain, is reported to have said that "all compromise is based on give and take, but there can be no give and take on fundamentals. Any compromise on mere fundamentals is a surrender. For it is all give and no take."
- **OBLIGATION IV: Remain Civil**
 - Civility is closely aligned with manners. With respect. With courtesy...
 - John Kennedy: "Civility is not a sign of weakness."
 - What civility does is make it possible for differences to be reduced or even bridged—and even if not, civility allows for dialogue and relationships to continue on other issues where agreement might not be out of the question.
 - Tone matters. Volume rarely improves the quality of an argument.

- It can be extraordinarily difficult to remain civil in the face of pronounced incivility, in particular when someone verbally attacks you. My advice in such circumstances is to respond calmly—doing so tends to make the other person look even worse and turns off others who might otherwise be attracted to their stance.
 - John Maynard Keynes, who when challenged on just this, is said to have quipped, “When the facts change, I change my mind. What do you do, sir?” ...**Changing one’s mind can be a sign of strength and wisdom.**
- **OBLIGATION V: Reject Violence**
 - What makes a democracy different from authoritarian systems is that democracy offers peaceful channels for individuals and groups to pursue their political and economic policy aims.
 - Democracy by definition will have disappeared.
 - The term “civil disobedience” can be traced back to Henry David Thoreau, a mid-nineteenth century New England thinker who refused to pay taxes as a protest against slavery and the war with Mexico.
 - Martin Luther King Jr. was trained as a minister and became one of the leaders of the American Civil Rights Movement. He too espoused nonviolence and opted instead for marches, rallies, speeches, boycotts, and acts of defiance, for example taking a seat in the front of a bus when Black people were required to sit in the rear...
 - Acceptance of the legitimacy of the state and its monopoly on the use of force is predicated on its willingness to exercise restraint, to use force lawfully, and to hold anyone who is an officer of the state accountable.
- **OBLIGATION VI: Value Norms**
 - Norms, though, are something else—and something more. Norms are the unwritten traditions, rules, customs, conventions, codes of conduct, and practices that reduce friction and brittleness in a society.
 - Authority seen as illegitimate will not have its decisions accepted and implemented...
 - **Gore, and Nixon, graciously conceded for the good of the country; Trump has not. - “Nixon, 1960: “It’d tear the country to pieces. You can’t do that.”**
 - **Respect legitimate journalism:** As Thomas Jefferson famously put it, “Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter.”
 - **Tell the truth!** -- Except in rare instances when testifying under oath before Congress or a jury, there is no legal requirement for public officials—or the rest of us for that matter—to tell the truth. Yet confidence and faith in government depends on doing so...
- **OBLIGATION VII: Promote the Common Good**
 - There is another reason for caring about others. Doing so reflects our self-interest and is for our own sake. ...Martin Luther King Jr. made such an argument in his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”: “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly.”
 - Teddy Roosevelt, in his inaugural address more than a century ago, posited that “our relations with the other powers of the world are important, but still more important are our relations among ourselves.”
 - John Stuart Mill: In his 1859 treatise *On Liberty*, Mill articulated what has become known as the Harm Principle, which argues that individuals should be free to do what they want, even if it causes harm to themselves, but not if it causes harm to others.
 - **The Harvard legal philosopher Zechariah Chafee quoted an anonymous judge when he wrote in 1919 that “your right to swing your arms ends where the other man’s nose begins.”**
 - Motivating the government to require seat belts and helmets is the belief that ensuring intelligent behavior sometimes justifies such intervention, to quite literally save people from themselves. ...(Seat belts, by the way, save some fifteen thousand lives a year and have saved an estimated four hundred thousand lives over the past fifty years.)
 - Let me introduce one other theme into this discussion of the obligation to commit to the common or public good. It is the importance of fairness, to ensure that the opportunity to realize the American dream, to get ahead, is available to all.

- **OBLIGATION VIII: Respect Government Service**

- What began as opposition to strong government and big government has morphed into outright hostility of government and rejection of its legitimacy and authority.
- Government provides for our physical security against criminals, terrorists, and foreign militaries; designs and carries out our foreign policy; builds the roads, airports, bridges, rails, and tunnels that make up the country's infrastructure; makes sure the water we drink, food we eat, and air we breathe is safe; sets aside resources for retirees, children, the disabled, and the unemployed; operates public schools and hospitals and sets standards for private institutions; licenses those with a large impact on their fellow citizens, including doctors, lawyers, teachers, and engineers; makes sure the currency is valued and accepted; protects individuals and groups against discrimination; (and much, much more...)
- Some 9 million Americans work in or for the federal government, including 1.4 million active-duty military...

- **OBLIGATION IX: Support the Teaching of Civics**

- (The annual re-telling of the Passover Story, as example) - *The lesson is clear: No people should assume their history, their heritage, and what is central to it, is widely known among them.*
- **Collective identity, along with an appreciation and understanding of what lies behind it, is a matter of teaching, not biology.**
- *The United States is particularly vulnerable to this failure to educate its citizens as to their heritage, as this is a country grounded not on a single religion or race or ethnicity...*
- *The notion that a person's fate is not determined by circumstances of birth over which he or she had no control is radical, as is the idea that government derives its legitimacy from those it governs.*
- *The problem is that most students get through their college years with no exposure to civics, as studying it is not essential to graduate and can be easily avoided...*
- *The president of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore could hardly be clearer about the result: "Our curricula have abdicated responsibility for teaching the habits of democracy."*
- *Teachers should emphasize the behaviors that democracy requires that parallel the obligations that constitute this book, i.e., the need for civility, the importance of compromise, the centrality of facts and where to find them.*

- **OBLIGATION X: Put Country First**

- **As he did so often, Abraham Lincoln said it best: "We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best hope of earth."**
- *What is required for this to happen more than anything else is an abundance of character, what in earlier times was known as virtue.*
- **George W. Bush, made a similar point. "The public interest depends on private character, on integrity and tolerance toward others and the rule of conscience in our own lives. Self-government relies, in the end, on the governing of the self."**
- *It is noteworthy that the concept of thinking institutionally was associated with a school named for John F. Kennedy, as the idea of doing the right thing even at personal cost formed the core of his book Profiles in Courage.*
- **To put it bluntly, political leaders disinclined to put country and American democracy before party or self will be persuaded to change their ways and do what is in the best interest of American democracy only if voters and funders reward those who act in a manner consistent with democracy and penalize those who do not.**

- **Some observations:**

- People in Congress (from opposite sides of the aisle) do not interact with each other like they used to - partly, because they are not together physically as often as in the past.
- Without the military draft, we have not had as much interaction across all groups of our people - we've been "sorted" (**The Big Sort**).
- **Read more of...the founding documents; the key speeches (of each president)...**

- **The book:**

- PREFACE
- PART ONE *The Crisis of Our Rights-Based Democracy* -- Part One of this book begins with a discussion of how rights came to occupy so central a place in American democracy and goes on to examine the mounting evidence that this rights-based democracy is failing.
- *Rights and Their Limits*
- *Democratic Deterioration*
- PART TWO *The Bill of Obligations* -- Part Two of the book sets out ten obligations that, if adopted by a preponderance of citizens, would go a long way toward fixing American democracy.
- OBLIGATION I: *Be Informed*
- OBLIGATION II: *Get Involved*
- OBLIGATION III: *Stay Open to Compromise*
- OBLIGATION IV: *Remain Civil*
- OBLIGATION V: *Reject Violence*
- OBLIGATION VI: *Value Norms*
- OBLIGATION VII: *Promote the Common Good*
- OBLIGATION VIII: *Respect Government Service*
- OBLIGATION IX: *Support the Teaching of Civics*
- OBLIGATION X: *Put Country First*
- *Conclusion*

SOME LESSONS AND TAKEAWAYS

- #1 - Learn more by reading more.
- #2 - Learn from genuinely legitimate and credible sources.
- #3 - Learn more from the classic sources. Read and re-read the foundational documents, which set forth our foundational principles.
- #4 - Embrace the need to compromise; learn to pursue, and accept, compromise; the way forward requires it.
- #5 - Be civil in all of your interactions. -- Remain civil!**
- #6 - Practice good will towards all.