

Final Program, Our Times
April 6, 2013

Good morning friends and welcome to Our Times with Craig Barnes and I am Craig Barnes.

Friends, this will be my final program for Our Times and I want to leave with a consideration of where we are as Americans and the work that we are about, those of us who care for democracy and human dignity.

First, however, I would like to say a word of thanks. Since making the announcement last week that I would be stepping down from this role as a radio host, I have received a great many notes and messages from people saying that they are sorry to see the program end. I want to thank you all, all of you have been so kind, and all of you who have listened to these conversations during the course of these last three and a half years. Your constant encouragement has kept me running on many a late Thursday afternoon when Friday's recording time was approaching and I was still without an interview, or I had still not finished a book, or I had not even started on an introduction. Thinking of your support and that this kind of show is a public service kept me going, in part because when I was growing up in the wheat fields of eastern Colorado, my father used to say, "Craig, one day public service would be good." But then he would say, "But not today; today keep shoveling." We used to have to hitch up the old trailer and shovel sand into it from out of a big dry irrigation canal. My father would then mix the sand with cement to build foundations for our barn. Shoveling sand came before mixing the concrete, before building the barn. So my father would say, "keep shoveling" and he meant any life has to start with shoulder heavy work and then lead to a solid foundation, and maybe if you are lucky, you will end up with a good looking barn. When that's done, when all that's done, you can start raising chickens, selling eggs and doing the world some good.

And so I always thought of doing a program like this, talking

with the most interesting people in the world, built on the foundation of a full life, would somehow be good, and I am grateful to those of you who thought so, too. Thank you. And thank you to all the wonderful staff here at KSFR who have supported me throughout with kindness and generosity beyond any earning of it. They have tried to take a raw storyteller and turn him into a radio host. If the success has been in any way limited, it has not been their fault.

I am not leaving because of any lack of support at the station. They have been wonderful. I am leaving because quite simply, I could not keep up with the demands of such a program on a weekly basis. I could not do the scanning for subjects, contacting potentials, scheduling, often re-scheduling, reading their books, preparing questions and finally preparing my own introductions without stress, sometimes significant stress. Stress at my age is not the best of things. My wife, Mikaela and I have therefore talked over this decision for many months, and finally I have said, this is a burden I have to lay down. Not without huge regret; but still I have to lay it down.

Today therefore is my last chance to present a few rough conclusions that might be drawn from an overview of some of the authors who have spoken on this program. Pulling a little from here and there we can get an overview of our mythological history, our love for money and gold, and our current struggle between democracy and plutocracy which is serious indeed. I'll spend some time on the great inequities of power in our current situation. But these inequities are rooted in a false view of the species as forever in combat and I think we should have a quick look at some encouraging research about humans as collaborators or cooperators. The new research flies in the face of the patriarchal story, or in modern times the desperately negative Ayn Rand story. I just want to add to all of this some stories of my own about humans as we observe them on the street and what I find quite lovely. Then, finally, let's close with some hope for how people of good will can proceed and can succeed to regain a foothold and a new mythology for the cause of human dignity.

Let's start off with a note about leadership and madness.

When the children and teachers were killed in Newtown, Connecticut last December we had a young intern from Texas living with us here in Santa Fe. As we discussed his view of good and evil it became clear that in this young Texan's mind guns were necessary to protect the population not only from each other but also from their evil government. We might need a handgun, he said, to protect against the CIA when it came knocking on the door in the middle of the night. He therefore opposed strict gun regulations or their all-together elimination. I do not think he had ever seriously contemplated the power of nonviolence, or of goodness. It would be quite naïve, he would argue, and here many Americans would agree, to rely upon goodness as either a defense or an offense. Of what avail was goodness for the now-dead principal of Sandy Hook elementary school?

In the 19th century early pacifist reformers like Henry David Thoreau, or Walt Whitman, were almost by definition considered to be delusional. Later, in the 1890s, most of the world thought Mohandas Gandhi naïve and perhaps a little mad to consider that he could undermine the British Empire with no violent tool, and no other equipment except his character, traits which became symbols of compassion and integrity. Most Americans probably also thought that Martin Luther King, Jr. was naïve when he set about to undermine the structure of American racism having no tools but character: values of compassion and love.

The truth may be that *all* great leadership is one part practical and a greater part delusional. More than this, it is the delusional part that in the end galvanizes the world. After they are dead we might call Gandhi and King "visionaries" but we only call them that when the work has been accomplished. At first, when a new imagination of progress hits the streets or the books, for the most part we are apt to dismiss new ideas, or the possibility of change, as delusional. This may be

parallel to the phenomenon that is described by Brene Brown in her book *Daring Greatly*, when she says that we have a hard time living with good news, or joy. We don't want to be disappointed, so we protect against joy by saying that it can't last, or it is flawed, or it is not the whole story. Brene Brown therefore says it takes courage, or maybe it is a certain madness, to act as if the world could be wonderful. It takes a certain madness to believe that we can change the world for the better. That's OK. It's a madness that serves us well.

Cynics will tell us that it takes some blindness to move on in spite of overwhelmingly bad news, in spite of the odds, in spite of the realities of the flaws in our nature, the aggression in every human. It takes a certain delusion in the face of reality to act as if the world could be wonderful.

But the leadership delusion is not just blind faith or sitting upon a chair that is not there. We cannot save ourselves by merely ignoring the reality that plutocracy in the United States has a strangle hold on American democracy. We have to frankly absorb the realities of the financial, pharmaceutical, weapons manufacturing, and oil and gas empires that dominate our political life. These empires are symbolized in the common jargon by reference to Charles and David Koch whose influence upon American government is overwhelming.

So let's go there now. Let's begin today assessing the depth of the plutocracy problem.

The Kochs have an oil and gas combine estimated to be worth as much as \$80 billion and they set out years ago to spend a fair portion of that wealth to erode the elements of democracy that impede the accumulation of more wealth. They did so cleverly. They began by developing and then supporting the Heritage and Cato foundations, conservative think tanks that could flood the world with a propaganda line providing thinly disguised intellectual flesh on the bones of Ayn Rand's narrative of individual freedom and dangerous government.

The Kochs are emblematic of how industrial and financial empires have come to intrude upon and overwhelm legislatures and our national government.

Ayn Rand's writings provided some of the first cover for those guys. Rand celebrated the sociopath and spoke with disgust about the illusion, as she thought, of community. Inspired by the value of Rand's thinking as conservative propaganda, the Kochs then helped fund the American Legislative Exchange Council, an organization to convene state legislators from all over the country to wine and dine them in fabulous locations. It costs an industry member up to \$40,000 to join ALEC meetings at the highest level and if \$40,000 is the cost of influence, that too, is a symbol of what plutocracy looks like. At Palm Springs or Sun Valley, or maybe it was the Hamptons off the east coast, always places very fine, industry members of ALEC have invited (and flattered) legislators from rural New Mexico, rural Tennessee, rural Oklahoma, who were presented for their consideration a packet of pre-drafted bills, as they said, to preserve American freedoms. These would be bills first detailed by corporate lawyers in the great offices of the 1%, bills that would roll back unions, or pensions for state employees, or gun control or protections for the forests, the rivers and the skies. Thus the billionaire Kochs and their Chamber of Commerce partners have become influential participants in the legislative process in state after state, drafting legislation to cut back unions, defund pensions, defund education, deregulate guns, and take away local control of water and air. They do it under propaganda for Ayn Rand's version of freedom. All over the country ALEC has more than 2,000 member legislators and in multiple states all over the union, Wisconsin and Michigan, Indiana come to mind, the American Legislative exchange council has gained control of legislative agendas. And that is what plutocracy looks like. Forty thousand dollars to become a player at the state level is what plutocracy looks like.

Further, as we reach out to understand the strangle hold of plutocracy, we cannot ignore the reality of the American

financial industry in which our five major banks are said to possess assets greater than 50% of the GDP of this country. We cannot ignore that local banks are shrinking and global banks are moving away from lending that is the backbone of capitalism. Who has not noticed all the local banks that have disappeared from Santa Fe in the last 20 years to be replaced by the global giants? Where once there was Norwest or the Bank of Santa Fe or Sunwest, today there is Wells Fargo and Bank of America or JP Morgan Chase and all these banks absorb local debt and send it to Wall Street to play the algorithms of the global financial casino. In the new plutocracy the great global banks are moving to financial investment empires that replace basic capitalism with gambling, speculating in products that represent mysterious algorithms of chance rather than real wealth and kill honest business rather than to expand it.

And how is this a plutocracy, a government run by the very, very wealthy? How is this not just the natural and benign expansion of successful American capitalism? How is this dangerous for human dignity and even for human survival?

This is how: According to the Center for Responsive Politics, the financial industry alone, (the banks,) spent \$3.2 billion on 12,000 lobbyists to influence the congress in 2012. Who among us, who among all the listeners to public radio combined, could ever provide 12,000 lobbyists to rally congress to the public interest? And if none of us has the means, and no one does, of course, how is it that we can argue that congress is immune to the banks, or not under the control of the banks? And if congress is under the control of the banks, it is not under control of the people. And if Congress is not under control of the people it is not a democracy. And if it is not a democracy who will look out for the least among us, the sick, or the elderly, the young or even just the average, the ordinary, or the common problems of a normal family? No normal family can compete in this game.

Consider next the effect on popular participation, the chilling

effect on small donors, when they realize that six billion dollars was spent in our presidential election last year. How does my \$25 dollar contribution, or even my \$100 contribution compete with that? Yes, with the internet and Facebook the president raised some millions from small donors; but where does the remaining \$3 billion come from? It does not come from people who believe in more taxes on the wealthy, that's for sure. It comes from people who have a great amount of excess money to spend on politics, or to spend in the game of powers.

As we look out, even further, to understand the reach of plutocracy, we cannot ignore the reality that six giant companies now dominate the US *media* landscape, providing most of our television programs, films, videos and DVDs, radio shows, CDs, books and other leisure-time products. Think of the scope of this: it is not just *TV* that is controlled by Disney or Fox or General Electric; it is films, video, DVDs, radio and even books that have fallen into the control of the same mega media empires. These are empires upon which most Americans depend for news, ideas, understanding of climate change, cancer risks, poverty, inequality and from which most Americans set their agendas for personal action. The six biggest of these giants are Disney (ABC), AOL-Time Warner (CNN), Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation (Fox TV), Viacom (CBS), General Electric (NBC), and Bertelsmann. Bertelsmann is a German firm that controls the publication of one out of ten adult trade books in the world.

The top six of these media combines have more annual revenues than the next 20 media firms combined. By itself, AOL-Time Warner is valued at \$350 billion.

A vibrant democracy requires a vibrant public debate. With six corporate boards now controlling what the largest part of what the American public now sees on TV and what is shown in the movies, what is read in our books and magazines, the opportunity for dissenting opinions shrinks. And when dissent shrinks too far, democracy is reduced to a game of symbols

and charades, and debate, or a true contest of ideas, is impossible. Think of how, during the last presidential campaign neither candidate raised or urged that we address the issue of climate change, or gun control, or declining labor unions or free trade. All the major issues of our times, including some really significant issues like dismantling nuclear weapons or raising the standards of living of the poor and the security of pensions held by the elderly were ignored. Instead we had fatuous talk about how to cut benefits for the “takers” and strengthen the balance sheets of the wealthiest. This pablum was in part caused by that concentration of media boards of directors who are more apt to treat news as entertainment, a profit center, rather than as a public service, and all that, in turn, is a characteristic of our plutocracy.

While all this was going on over the last 40 years, American family income has been steadily declining. Housing debt, credit card debt, student debt, small business debt became a mechanism for sucking out the monies of families all over the country to the largest institutions that do not have debt: the banks. Think of that. The banks don't have debt, except to each other. Everyone of the rest of us, including the federal government, owes debt to the banks. Debt is the biggest money making machine in America and the banks control it all. And the inexorable function of interest, the subtle and insidious device of interest, is to concentrate wealth into the hands of those who collect the debt, or that is, the banks.

It may be a consequence of this phenomenon that while all the rest of our population has grown poorer, the top 400 Americans have wealth equal to one third of all the rest. Think of that. It is not just a number. The reality is that now, in our plutocracy, only 400 families have wealth equal to that of one third of the all the rest of us combined. How fair is that?

What do they spend it on? What can they possibly spend it on?

This is what: They spend vast amounts of money on their

security, and for people of this unseemly great wealth the only real insecurity can come from an active government, from the people rising. The wealthiest one thousandth of one percent therefore spend all they need to do in elections and in lobbying to keep Americans from using government to level the playing field. They spend all they need to do to generate papers that denounce Social Security and Medicare and Medicaid, and all they need to do to denounce the idea that government can be of assistance. Using the actor Ronald Reagan to champion the phrase that the most dangerous words in the English language were, quote, “I am here from the government and I am here to help,” conservative politicians have gradually and inexorably turned Americans against the very hand that has had the potential to rescue them.

In a plutocracy, the government surely *is* the problem for the 1%. The government taxes them and regulates them and they do not need government to send their kids to college; they already can afford college; and the government does not need to pay for their health care; they already can afford health care; and the government does not need to pay for their retirement; they already can pay for their retirement and that of their children and that of their grandchildren. But the government *could*—and for them this is the danger—break up the banks, and pursue anti-trust, and enforce environmental regulations and levy taxes on income and capital gains and erect trade barriers against the import of goods produced by slave labor in China.

Mitt Romney said to his \$50,000-a-plate donors in that famous “47%” tape during the campaign that he had been to China to look at one of his factories and that he saw that the working women were sleeping 12 to a room, one stacked on top of the other. He spoke of how hard working and cheerful these girls all were. And when he saw the high fences around the outside of the plant that kept the workers from escaping he said, “Wow. What a fence.” And his handlers said, “Yes, these jobs are so popular that we have to erect the fences to keep job seekers out.” And Mitt Romney believed his Chinese

handlers and approved and passed the story on to his supporters knowing that they too would approve.

Those donors who attended that evening were with Romney when he spoke of the 47% takers and when he told them that they were the “makers,” and they would have certainly approved a Romney government’s continued assault on the middle class because they do not need what the middle class needs. What they need is security *from* government and that is what the plutocracy works for every day. As a result the middle class and the poor pay a third of all federal revenues into the treasury while corporations pay less than 15%. As a result the wealthy, like Romney and Warren Buffett pay around 15% in federal income taxes while secretaries and laborers pay up to 35%.

The doctrine of individual freedom now dominates the thinking of a Supreme Court that has been persuaded that the 18th century right to carry a single shot flintlock musket now translates into the right to carry an assault weapon carrying fifty rounds, or that a corporation that at the time of the Revolution could be formed to build a single bridge can now be allowed to participate in our elections with unlimited sums of money.

As a result, in the plutocracy, which is where we start in our analysis, great corporations like Exxon, and GE and Bank of America pay no taxes at all.

According to Vermont’s US Senator Bernie Sanders:

1) Exxon Mobil made \$19 billion in profits in 2009. Then Exxon not only paid no federal income taxes, it actually received a \$156 million rebate from the IRS.

2) Bank of America, according to Sanders, received a \$1.9 billion tax refund from the IRS last year, although it made \$4.4 billion in profits and earlier had even received a bailout from the Federal Reserve and the Treasury Department of nearly \$1 trillion.

Another example:

3) Over the past five years, while General Electric made \$26 billion in profits, it received a \$4.1 billion refund from the IRS. Ouch.

Thus the firms on top of the plutocracy pay no income tax and receive tax refunds while the rest of America bears the burden of social security, infrastructure and health care.

It is therefore no surprise that the rising share of increased incomes in the first decade of this century went to the top 0.1 percent, *the richest one thousandth* of Americans.

That is what a campaign against government can do, and that is what the funding of the Tea Party revolt against taxes by these same wealthiest donors can do. That, too, is what plutocracy looks like: rallying the poor against their own interests. Giving them slogans to fight against the middle class, and giving the middle class slogans to fight against the poor, keeping them divided rather than allowing them to join forces because these would be forces that might campaign against the plutocracy.

Those who pursue extreme wealth are not consciously venal or cheap. They have freedom's doctrine to shore up their self assurance. A last tool of the plutocracy, therefore,—and we're going to stop all this dismal talk soon—has been the funding of the think tanks that have taken doctrines like that of Ayn Rand to glorify freedom and disparage government, to provide the scripture to make it all seem right if the poor sleep under the bridges.

In the end what we see in America today is that the forces of unbelievable wealth have established essential control over our elections, over our lobbying in the congress and in the state legislatures, over the presidency and even the courts.

All three branches of government have been overwhelmed by the influences of big money. All three institutions of government now aided by a cheerleading media are separated

out and away from the people and all three institutions of government and the media have been force fed doctrines of freedom and the evil of government, of the benefits of austerity for the middle class and the poor, and of the dangers of the indolence if you are middle class or poor.

Those who have concentrated the wealth unto themselves have done so by manipulating the democratic process to reach an anti-democratic result. They have a vast program that today continues all over the country with well identified themes: disparagement of women, glorification of war, demonization of unions, distrust of public employees, the dangers of the debt incurred for social safety nets such as pensions and social security, the irresponsibility of Medicaid and Medicare, the benefits of privatized charter schools, the success of outsourcing and free trade, and the denial of climate change. This combination is a formula for disaster for democracy and of course the danger is even far greater than that. The danger runs to the chances for the survival of life on this planet. The drum beat of propaganda has nevertheless so far succeeded and has resulted in the decline of the middle class the ongoing depredation of the planet, a drum beat vilification of community, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the exaltation of greed.

In sum, this experience of the last 50 years is enough to allow us to see the emergence of an oligarchic empire with unlimited financial power, intellectual influence, political power and staying power that cannot be matched by any single citizens' group on the planet.

It is time to take a short break. You are listening to the last broadcast of Our Times with Craig Barnes and I will be back after this break.

BREAK

We have been talking about the bad news; the gradual erosion of democracy as it has been being replaced by the powerful

influence of unbelievable wealth concentrated in the hands of one thousandth of one percent. OK, OK, we got that.

So where is the good news? I think there is good news from history and from recent research about the genetic nature of the species. And I think there is good news from the stories of life we see around us. We have had enough bad news for one morning.

Let's change the subject by looking at a major piece of good news. A good argument can be made that throughout the world violence is declining. Believe it or not. Let's talk about that. There is evidence, too, of the emergence of a new mythology to replace patriarchal mythology that has gotten us into this mess. Plutocracy is having a hay day with us now, but history is not on their side.

First let's look at the history of war and violence. Both war and violence are declining. It may not seem like it but compared to centuries past, compared to the hunter gatherers, of the Romans, or the medieval Chinese the numbers we kill violently today are way down. Not only that, the numbers who we torture are down. The numbers of women we burn are way down. The numbers of slaves are way down. The numbers of murders are down. Yes, that's right, in the last 30 years even the numbers of murders are down.

What is going on? Is it a modern thing? Or is it a real change in cultural practice. I think it is the latter. I think a very strong case can be made for the fact that we no longer tolerate the violence we once did, no longer glorify, exalt and sing songs about heroes in war as we have through most of recorded human history, that we no longer gather in enthusiastic stadia to witness Christians thrown to the lions and no longer gather round the public square to cheer a hanging. Not only has culture changed to make most of these practices culturally unacceptable, it has changed to such a degree that we would be repelled by most of them and most of them today are criminal. Once they were all common practice;

today they are offenses against the state, and therefore against the whole of the public. You or I will not see a crucifixion in our life times. We will not go to the square for a hanging; we will not buy and sell slaves as if they were property. Rejoice in that.

According to professor Steven Pinker of Harvard, 10,000 years ago when humans were still hunter-gatherers, we each had about a 67% chance of dying violently, either clubbed by a neighbor or eaten by a lion, bitten by a snake, or killed in a clan war. Two thirds of all the people who lived then died most unhappily. We are apt to think that life is dangerous today. It would not be safe, if you are white, to walk at night in Harlem, New York, and it would not be wise to walk at night in Hollywood hills if you are black. It is not safe to live in a nuclear world. Not safe to go toe to toe with North Korea, or face the Taliban in Afghanistan. Clearly these are unsafe times.

But is there a 67% chance that we will die in one of these wars, each one of us? Or die on any street in any city in the world? No place on the planet is so dangerous today that 67% of its inhabitants die violently.

We have just been through Easter week calling to mind the most famous crucifixion of all times. A good man was nailed to the cross to suffer until he died of hunger, thirst and pain. From this came a religion that celebrates the life, not of a Caesar, or a warrior, Hercules, but of a victim. That's interesting. Here began a celebration, not of the conqueror but of the dissenter, the outsider, the illegitimate one. Two thousand years ago moral dissent was such a novel change in consciousness that those who followed, those who celebrated this dissenter were also themselves thrown to the lions and thousands of Romans cheered as dissenters were eaten alive.

What is the percent chance that any man or woman among us will be either crucified or thrown to the lions for our dissent? It is not great. In Moscow last year, five girls sang on TV and

mocked President Putin and now three of them are in work camps in Siberia. In Iran, North Korea or China, it is not wise to mock your leaders if you care for your life. All that is true. But what is the percent chance that hundreds of thousands of Muscovites, Iranians, North Koreans, or Chinese, or that two thirds of the population in any country, will die by being thrown to the lions, even under these tyrannical governments?

It is reported that Mao Tse Tung killed—mostly by starvation—as many as 40 million during the Great Cultural Revolution, a number almost beyond comprehension. Nothing can gainsay the horror of such inhumanity. Still, as a proportion of the Chinese population, the numbers do not rise to the levels of deaths by violence in China 1500 years ago. The worst slaughters as a proportion of national population were in China in the 8th 13th and 17th centuries when altogether more than 100 million were killed and in the worst of these civil wars in the 8th century nearly half the population was wiped out. Mao was awful, but he did not come close to wiping out fifty percent of his population.

As a percent of the total population of the planet more of us are getting along than ever before. OK, yeah, that's the truth. Twenty million Russians alone were killed in World War II. Compare that number to four thousand Americans who were killed in Iraq, and less than that who have been killed in Afghanistan. Wars between the combatants of World War II have become nonsensical because Japanese cars are made in Tennessee and American computers are made in Japan, Korea trades with China, and China with Europe, and Europe with the US, and as a result national wars are no longer a practical extension of national policy. As Pinker puts it in his book *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, "If you're trading favors or surpluses with someone, your trading partner suddenly becomes more valuable to you alive than dead."

Pinker goes on: "In absolute numbers, annual battle deaths have fallen by more than 90 percent, from around a half million per year in the late 1940s to around thirty thousand a

year in the early 2000s. So believe it or not, from a global, historical, and quantitative perspective, the dream of the 1960s folk songs has come true: the world has (almost) put an end to war.”

A few thousand dissidents and pacifists protested against the involvement of the United States in World War I. By contrast, on February 5, 2003, fifteen *million* people in great cities from Tokyo to Tehran, to Paris, to Berlin, to London to New York, protested the obvious intention of George W. Bush and Dick Cheney to invade Iraq. The world had never seen an outpouring like that to protest a war *before* it even happened. And that was not just a protest against war. It was a protest against lying and pretext for war; it was a protest against pretext to seize oil, against a president about to invade a country with which his own country was at peace, against a president about to roll back the law of nations. The global consciousness of the enormity of what was about to happen was new and on that February day evidenced in unprecedented numbers. The protest was not enough to stop the crime. It was not enough to overcome the power of the plutocracy which ruled the country even then, but without that uprising, without the global disgust about that war, we would have even less consciousness and less will to challenge any war today.

Add to this global consciousness the effect of nuclear weapons which have also, in their own way, made national wars obsolete. For Iran to attack Israel or North Korea to attack the US with nuclear weapons would in each case be an act of national suicide. War as suicide may work for a few madmen, but even madmen have their limits. It is admissible evidence that for all their bluster, paranoia, and insularity, none in a long line of Soviet dictators including Stalin, Krushchev, Bulganin, Andropov, and Gorbachev attacked the United States. Mad as Stalin was, he was not that mad. And gradually one by one those who followed were less mad. They did not commit suicide for their whole nation. Nor will Akhmadinejad. Nor will Kim Jong-Un because they are

bluffers and they are playing chess. They are not bouncing-off-the-walls insane; they are deliberate about their moves, one step at a time. Such deliberation is not madness but calculation, in each case a weaker nation puffing out its chest, posturing like a peacock, to keep their perceived competitors at bay.

War as an instrument of national policy or as a means to eliminate an opposing empire, or to establish a dominant trading zone, is obsolete. It cannot work in this multilateral, interlocking-corporate-encircled world.

Pinker sums it up this way: “Each component of the war-friendly mindset—nationalism, territorial ambition, an international culture of honor, popular acceptance of war, and indifference to its human costs—went out of fashion in developed countries in the second half of the 20th century.”

That’s the Harvard research scholar, Steven Pinker.

All over the world, therefore, as I said before, we do fewer crucifixions, less burning of women at the stake, less torture on the rack, less hanging, drawing and quartering, less of the slave trade, less piracy on the high seas, less murder as a proportion of our population, less lynching, less country gang war like Billy the Kid in Lincoln County, New Mexico, and less war between national states, than at any time in human history.

It may be the case that precisely to the extent that we are more conscious of war, more horrified by it, as we are more and more today, to that degree more we are apt to turn out by the millions to protest against it. And as a result of this rising consciousness we think that war is worse than ever. Our very awareness of how bad it is, is good. And that awareness is having a positive effect: we are doing, as a species, less of it.

BREAK

One explanation for these changes in our uses of violence is that over a 10,000-year history our expectations and our empathies have evolved. They have evolved at least partially as a result of our emigration to cities and into commercial trade which in turn has resulted in greater exposure to strangers than at any time in the past, greater communication across religious and cultural lines than at any time in the past, and greater exchange and need for reliability in trade, commercially, between people of all kinds. We have had, at first in the last six hundred years and then with increasing rapidity in the last 100 years, to deal with men and women outside the clan, outside the village, outside the religion, including unknown and unloved people. Trade up and down the rivers of Europe and around the coasts of Africa, made us get used to people, whoever they were, if they could pay the price for cloth or pottery, or a horse, no matter what the buyer's religion or skin color. More than any other thing the expansion of ocean ships, the increased reliability of roads, the search for new markets would, in the first five hundred years after the Crusades, cause people to mingle beyond their villages and outside the control of their warlords.

Trade with strangers requires a degree of tolerance and resilience to surprise, a degree of observation into the way the stranger conducts his or her life and what his or her needs will be. As a result, too, not only has tolerance increased but so has the law developed. Standards of contract and fairness have evolved and these too have had a civilizing effect. That is one factor that has brought about a reduction in violence.

Our expectations have changed because of increased commerce and trade over the last 700 years, but most particularly, and most profoundly, I believe our expectations and hopes have changed because of the increasing participation of women. No change could have had greater impact, an impact that is still unfolding. Since, over the last 150 years, women in the West have come to own and manage their own property, independent of their husbands, and to run their own businesses and to enter into all the professions, all

the world is experiencing a transformation. No conversation, negotiation, bargain, or fight is the same when added to the mix are the intelligences and understandings of women who often seek out relationship more than conquest, companionship more than dominance, and regeneration more than destruction. Call me a sexist if you must, but I love the difference. Precious few are the wars in history led by women. I don't say it hasn't happened. I just say that it hasn't happened much.

The emancipation of women has most curiously also resulted in the emancipation of men. A man who must always be right, or must always be strong, or must always win the most money, or must always take charge, is a man in shackles. And that has been the condition of most men throughout history. Find me the man who today can say to his partner, "I don't know the answer to that." or "I am afraid," or "I am so sad," and we will find a man who has been liberated as a result of this last 150 years.

We have only just begun to witness what effects this emergence of emancipated women and men will have but there will be no turning back and there will be no way that in an age of email, face book, Google + and all the rest that women will be marginalized, separated and divided as they used to be when they were required by the patriarchs for three thousand years to remain sequestered in back rooms, submissive and obedient. When my mother was married in 1928 and contemplating the vows to love and obey, she said to the preacher, "Take out the 'and obey,' part." She was already, in 1928, speaking for a new revolution in consciousness from which neither she nor any of her sisters in spirit would ever retreat.

History has been on the side of the forces that lead to less violence, less torture, less war and a greater degree of trade and commerce between strangers. All this has caused an upheaval, in the last 700 years of expectations and values.

Now comes research in evolutionary biology to aid the case. Many may think that we are programmed to kill and seek vengeance and be self interested and that the world is truly a world that demands only survival of the fittest and that therefore there is no power that can upset plutocracy except the power of wealth and money. It would be easy to think like that. My young friend from Texas probably thought like that when he said that he wanted to keep his guns to ward of the CIA when it came for him in the middle of the night.

Let me finally, however, point out two sources of information that underscore the Pinker findings and the benign results of increased world communication. One area is genetics research and the other comes from my own simple observations of human nature in action.

Most of the explanation for evolution when I was growing up was that only the strongest horse wins the race, the strongest bull has the most calves and the strongest men rule the world. Pseudo Darwinists came along and added to this that the driver behind all this was that strong men simply wanted to pass along their genes. It was all about genes, they said. I knew that in the sixth grade I was strongly attracted to girls in my class but I never knew it was about genes. Still, that is what the survival of the fittest people said. Evolution was all about the single individual and how he or she could pass along his or her genes. That was called “individual selection,” or natural selection for an individual. And that was a complete explanation for species survival.

Ayn Rand agreed. She argued that the survival of the fittest meant survival of the fittest individual. She dismissed the idea of the fittest society. And Ayn Rand popularized the rationale that gives the plutocracy its moral claim today. The wealthiest are the fittest and the ones who *should* survive, for the benefit of the whole species. The biggest and toughest hedge fund bull produces the most calves. It will be good for us all that there will be more very, very wealthy. This is approximately what the Robber Barons must have thought.

Ayn Rand was living in a generation that produced two of the most horrific mass murderers in history, Hitler and Stalin. Her response was that we should all individually be as ruthless as the dictators and the best would survive.

But here is the new exciting part: Research of the last 30 years—led in part by distinguished professor Edward Wilson's *The Social Conquest of Earth*—is demonstrating that humans are a social species and that our willingness to sacrifice for the good of the whole, or for someone else, is part of our *genetic* makeup. The instinct for altruism is present in each of us. It cannot be erased. It can be trained out of us, it can be scared out of us, it can be buried in memory, but the genetic code cannot be erased and the human genetic makeup is just that way: we have altruism built in.

Plutocrats from Agamemnon to Caesar to the Medicis to Kaisers and Czars, to Wall Street overlords in the present, have all created mythologies to persuade the rest of the population that the only arbiter of choice is power, and that power comes from money. Humans with the most money are therefore naturally put in place to run the world. But Edward Wilson's research shows that humans are successful because they have social skills, can communicate, share intentions and get along. That is intuitively correct, and now there is research to back up the intuition. This is another reason why the world of politics and war may be changed the more women get into the center of it. They are often very good at social skills and communication. That's stereotyping of course, and I know a bunch of women who would take me on for that generalization. Still there is a kernel of truth in there. Almost every woman I know is better at social interaction than I am.

It seems to me, more seriously, that from Wilson's research we can conclude that Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and all the 3,000 years of patriarchal mythology that leads to everyone trying to be a hero, is wrong. You may remember that Achilles was a hero who went to Troy and killed everyone in his path;

that Agamemnon was a bit of a wimp and that Hercules was such a warrior that he would be immortal. The way to get ahead, said the Greeks, was to be a hero, like Achilles, not a wimp, like Agamemnon. Hercules was especially heroic and he went to heaven to live forever. But now comes the research that says that the Greeks were nuts, that we are programmed to be social and to look out for the group, sometimes even more than we look out for ourselves. It comes with the genetic code, says Wilson. The Greeks thought that the highest value was honor and death in pools of blood. It's a *primitive* idea. They got it wrong. They were in error. Unfortunately they told such good stories about it that the error has lived on in Western mythology for 3,000 years and has had disastrous effects.

The implications for our times are great. If we have been living the heroic fairy tale for 3,000 years that power is the source of all prosperity and money is the source of all power, we have, according to the new research, ignored our genetic code and probably our basic intuition that something in this formula is missing. Here is one idea about what is missing:

Before Homer, before 3,000 years ago, as I have written in my book *In Search for the Lost Feminine*, a vast culture existed that celebrated much more than money: these cultures celebrated the cycles of the seasons, the fertility of the soil and of women, the beauty of flowers, birds and trees and the wonder of reproduction.

Unfortunately, those values were intentionally exterminated, root and branch, by Homer and the patriarchal mythologists who followed. So when you and I went to school we did not read or study the values of fertility, mutuality, regeneration upon which survival might depend far more than money.

But of course the Greek mythologists and their successors could not exterminate the genetic code and the practical fact that we all experience, on a daily basis, that we are programmed to cooperate. Think of how many stop lights we

stop at every week. Think of how many meals we have made without the aid of a farmer, distributor, partner or friend. The answer to that, for 99 percent of us, would be none. Think of our tax returns this week. We are doing our share for community, not for ourselves alone. Think of our willingness to get up in the night to attend a crying child, or to write a letter to a long-lost friend. We are doing that for others and not for ourselves alone. Think of how our days would be been different if we were trying on Ayn Rand's idea, acting as if we were Hercules striding down the street with a club and a lion's skin, or if our favorite football player spent his days of the week bumping into people on the sidewalk. I once represented a woman whose car and life was destroyed by a professional hockey player who drove the streets at night as if he were still on the ice. He crashed into my client's car and that crash cost him \$300,000. The courts told him, on behalf of society, you cannot do that. We know better. The courts in that case enforced the common morality. The courts are one way of saying we get along together or we don't make it.

The idea that all life is about power, the Ayn Rand idea, and that money is power, is *anti-social*, but according to Wilson and a growing field of evolutionary biologists, we are destined, to the contrary, to be social.

If that is the program, and if the ancient but persistent mythology is contrary, where is the place to start to bring off a change?

As a beginning, let's change that very mythology. Let's change our foundational myth that there is more strength in the sword than in cooperation, or communication, and that there is more strength in gold than in compassion. Advertisers all over the radio waves these days are saying, "Buy gold!" Let us say, "Buy community. Buy integrity. Buy the search for the common good. Buy non violence," and when we buy these things we get back in line with our genetic programming that we have been persuaded all the way from Ulysses to John Galt to try to deny.

Let us not deny our true selves any longer. Let us not attempt to be girded warriors in defense of banks, or oligarchy, or plutocracy. Plutocracy divides. Oligarchy divides. Banks with their elaborate but mysterious machinery to suck up the people's money without returning capacity to the people, without lending, also divide. Credit card usury divides. Indentured students who will spend the rest of their lives paying off their loans are divided from hope and allegiance to an undemocratic system that exploits them but does not reward them. The money system and the power myth inherited from ancient times is running out of moral foundation and—because it divides rather than unites us—its ability to hold us together as one community is rapidly being diluted.

Ultimately this is important because societies are held together by moral cohesion. As the moral basis of Wall Street power erodes, as it has done in the last years since 2008, we are headed into a time of potentially greater chaos. It is in that fruitful time that movements like the women's movement, the civil rights movement, the ecological movement, the anti-war movement, have in the past gained a foothold.

As the oligarchy grows more and more top heavy—more and more of the wealth concentrated in fewer and fewer hands—it grows more and more unstable. The incomes of ordinary people that sustain all those debt payments to the five global banks are shrinking. At some point the giant sucking sound that is interest debt is going to suck to the bottom of the bucket, and that is when the great golden ball on the top of the pyramid collapses.

Then we will not simply re-write the code that applies to banks. Then we will not simply restore progressives to power. Far more importantly we will restore the values of fertility, regeneration, compassion and integrity to our mythology and to our highest aspirations. The dream of Ayn Rand and all those who have followed her to monopolize great wealth is not a dream that will feed children or educate scientists or

preserve the resources on the planet that gives us life. Today we know from the research of our best evolutionary biologists that the Wall Street dream is not even in accord with our genetic nature. We survive together as a species or we do not survive at all.

Finally, a note from personal experiences about why I believe we can have hope:

I choke up when I see a 20-second TV commercial that shows a handsome soldier coming home from Afghanistan striding up the sidewalk to sweep up into his arms his young son. The camera catches his wife rushing out the door to catch them all in her arms. Husband and wife, reunited, kiss passionately. It takes only twenty seconds and I am moved to be cheering for these complete strangers. It is not a calculation in my head. It is not rational. I hate war. But I am moved. Something in me beyond the mind is moved.

I am moved when I see a picture of a kitten snuggled into the warm chest of a furry dog, apparent enemies united. I am apt to weep when a robin smashes into my window and falls flapping to the ground, her life draining away. Perhaps some of you, my listeners, might feel the same, and our compassion clearly crosses species lines.

Compassion reaches beyond those of us who listen to public radio. Why does a flash mob that emerges in Grand Central Station to sing the Halleluiahs Chorus, cause hundreds of passersby to stop dead in their tracks? They live in the busiest city in our country, in hedge-fund central and why don't they rush on? No one tells them that song is as important as money. No one even tells them that the Chorus is coming. Still they hear angelic sound and yet they stop to listen. Clearly this impulse is bigger than you and me, or bigger than just the listeners to public radio. It is not just a few of us who are moved by beauty. If Edward Wilson says we are programmed to be social and to take care of one another, I say that we are programmed to respond emotionally to things

unsaid, and music unheard, that we call beautiful.

Here in Santa Fe, who among us has not stopped in awe when a December sunset turned the snow-covered Sangres afire in a holy glow? We have stopped in wonder, even against the pull of our day's business, and this pull is something in our very natures.

There is something in us more than a reverence for money or power. It might be the improbable courage of the struggling young girl who, in a high school race in which she is determined to participate, swings forward on crutches with tears streaming down her face, last of all to reach the finish line. Improbable courage can move us, too, and we never really know why.

Sometimes it is simply human connection that moves us. Here's a story that I believe confirms Edward's Wilson's findings: I remember, about five years ago, listening to the story of a high school football team that gave their Downs Syndrome classmate his chance to play football. It was the last game in the boy's senior year. Every season for three years this boy had suited up, put on the pads, and then sat on the bench through every game. Every game he cheered his classmates out on the field but never once had he been in a game himself. Finally, when it was the last play in the last game of the season. The coach turned to the boy and said, "Son, get in there!" and the Downs Syndrome boy ran onto the field. "Hike! Hike!" yelled the quarterback who then handed the ball to the Downs kid who immediately started running the wrong way. The quarterback grabbed him: "This way, Joe! This way, Joe!" and then the kid who had all his life wanted to play football looked over his shoulder, turned, and the players on the other team began bumping into each other, helplessly unable to reach the boy with the ball, and all the great athletes stumbled and fell to the ground and the waters parted, and, with a smile to light up the heavens, the Downs boy raced all the way down the field to score a touchdown!

Everyone in the stands stood up and roared! The other kids who for the whole game had been bashing each other's heads, got up off the ground and hugged each other.

What is this in us that responds this way? I believe that it is in the genetic code and that as we adapt our language and mythology to focus on each other and our community as much as upon our individual, single survival, we will enjoy success and, unbelievably, more peace of mind.

If, as we turn out to the world again, it seems to you or it seems to me that the small efforts that we might make in New Mexico or in Santa Fe will have an improbable impact on these great questions of plutocracy and democracy, our skepticism could be well founded. But we might remember that the consciousness of individual rights upon which America is founded did not begin in the colonies in 1775 or 1776, but far more began with an English Bill of Rights in 1689, seventy-five years before our Revolution. And if we remember that even before *that* bill of rights, in 1689, the revolution of democratic consciousness had begun even a century before that. And it began not with laws but with a change in mythology.

The mythological revolution, the revolution of sentiments and moral opinions without which the American Revolution would never have happened, began with poets and playwrights way back in the 16th century. It was they, who in the 16th century almost a whole century before the statute for the English Bill of Rights, and two centuries before the American Revolution, who wrote the stories and sang the songs of *individual* women and men in opposition to kings. It was a poet who introduced to us women, like Viola in *Twelfth Night* or Portia in the *Merchant of Venice*, or Ophelia and even Lady Macbeth. It was a poet who mocked kingly power as in *Titus Andronicus*, *Henry VI* and *Richard III*. It was from that poetic and legal history growing through more than 200 years that we gained the consciousness that ultimately gave rise to the American Revolution. As Martin Luther King might say, the arc of history is slow but it bends, even so slowly, in the people's

direction.

We are once again about the work of changing not only the world of plutocracy but of changing the spirit of our times. We are therefore not at the end of the democracy times, or the human rights times; we are still at the beginning and we can give thanks to Ayn Rand and her plutocracy admirers today who have made clear the work that still must be done. It may be the work of centuries still. We are not at the very beginning and we are not at the very end. In the long course of human history we are catching our breath for round two, the round of the people, this time all the people, rich and poor, white, black, red or brown, of all the religions, old and new, and all of us together are writing the myths of the new age.

In the old days when as a youngster my father set me the job alongside the irrigation ditch of digging a fifty foot long asparagus patch, four feet wide, it was clear to me that no human could ever do that. He said, "Your mother has gotten a fine set of asparagus roots from the grocer and if we put them deep enough, and water them, they will last a long time." So I did as I was told and shoveled away day by day, and each day my father would come look at my trench and each evening he would say, "Good, good; carry on." That was his highest praise: "Carry on!" So I did that and of course one day the whole fifty feet of a four-foot wide trench was open for the planting. My mother dug in those asparagus plants and next spring they came up just fine. And the spring after that. And the spring after that. We had a lot of asparagus for many years. Then we all went away. But a few years ago, I was back at the old house. In the space alongside the old irrigation ditch had now grown some other flowering plants and trees. "Funny thing," said the new owner, "there is some wild asparagus coming up right over there next to the those weeds."

I cheered inside, for my mother's asparagus and my father's encouragement. It is hard, he might have said, to discourage a plant, or an idea, with good roots.

It is the nature of any planting, whether it is asparagus, a new idea, or our dreams, that we will run into inhospitable times but still we will hang on in the shade until we have a new chance. In our case the new idea, the ongoing dream, is of a new mythology, a new story of a democracy remade with an idea to nourishing the ground we depend upon, nourishing each other, nourishing cooperation and nonviolence and nourishing life more than gold.

As I leave this radio program, I say to all those friends who are, by the hundreds, and across the globe by the thousands, working the soil for dreams of a more just and compassionate future, "Good, good. History is on your side. Carry on."

This is Craig Barnes. Good morning, and good luck.