

Saving the American Left: The Case for a New Progressive Creed

by *Bernard Chazelle*

The American left is in the throes of an existential crisis. Some say it's a failure of nerve, others a loss of belief. It is the latter. Neoliberalism has sucked the oxygen out of the left by deflating the political sphere to the economic one. The left must articulate a new creed around three principles: empowerment (the economic is ancillary to the political); social justice (the disadvantaged have an unconditional claim upon the collectivity); and decency (the state may not humiliate anyone). To make its case, the left must redefine that most exalted form of self-interest, patriotism, as pride in a society that grants all of its members the means to belong.

First, the mythology:

- Democrats burst with Big Ideas. Unfortunately, ballots and Big Ideas don't mix and the timing is never quite right. But you watch. Once the Congress is theirs, once the White House curtains have been picked, the Dems will get crackin' on 'em Big Ideas—or on the reelection campaign, whichever comes first.
- Big Ideas being what they are, big, squeezing them into words can be a challenge. Luckily, with academia's brightest bulbs lighting up the pup tent, liberals can articulate better than anyone why it is they can't articulate anything. So they'll pen earnest treatises on the need to call taxes “membership fees” and trial lawyers “public protection attorneys.” Like it or not, this has proven quite effective, and Howard Dean, for one, likes to credit Lakoff's framing theories for his victorious run for the White House.
- Who cares if the Clintonistas and their merry band of DLC hangers-on spoiled the broth with their third-way brand of workfare centrism and smiley-face imperialism? Across the blogosphere, a nascent grassroots movement is afoot, blowing the winds of change against the Repub-lite sellout show. It's coming. This time, it's really coming!

Like all myths, these wishful fantasies contain a grain of truth: Democrats are diffident,

tactical, and quick to concede the terms of the debate. The netroots channel genuine passion about liberal causes and the blogs are buzzing. There is palpable excitement out there on the left. A pity there is no there there. America has lefties but no left.

The verdict is brutal. By virtually any measure, the United States is the least progressive nation in the developed world.⁽¹⁾ It trails most of Western Europe in poverty rates, life expectancy, health care, child care, infant mortality, maternity leaves, paid vacations, public infrastructure, incarceration rates, and environmental laws. The wealth gap in the US has not been so wide since 1929. The Wal-Mart founders' family owns as much as the bottom 120 million Americans combined.⁽²⁾ Contrary to received opinion, there is now less social mobility in the US than in Canada, France, Germany, and most Scandinavian countries.^(3,4) The European Union attracts more foreign students than the US, including twice as many from China. Its consensus-driven polity, studies indicate, has replaced the American version as the societal model to which the developing world aspires.⁽⁵⁾

And yet could America be a right-wing nation of closet lefties? A Zogby poll reveals overwhelming support for rehabilitation over incarceration for young offenders. In an NES survey, those who want “government to provide many more services even if it means an increase in spending” outnumber backers of spending cuts by 2 to 1. A Pew study cites the same ratio of people who consider corporate profits excessive. It also finds that a majority of Americans believe “government should help the needy even if it means greater debt.”⁽⁶⁾

Democratic leaders, bless their souls, believe no such nonsense. They'll warn you incessantly that any public policy leaning a nano-angstrom to the left is a suicide pact. They'll brush off any talk of raising the top marginal tax rate of 35% to anything approaching the 70% of the Nixon years.⁽⁷⁾ Yes, the *progressive* Bill Clinton expanded the Earned Income Tax Credit and signed the Family and Medical Leave Act. He also increased extreme poverty despite high economic growth.⁽⁸⁾ He extended the death penalty to non-homicides and oversaw the largest increase in incarceration rates in the 20th century (double what it was under Reagan).^(9,10) He exacerbated inequalities, gave up on Kyoto, and, by his own Labor secretary's account, presided over “one of the most pro-business administrations in American history.”^(2,11) His signature social policy, welfare reform, dismantled one of the pillars of the New Deal: the federal cash assistance program for 9 million poor children (AFDC).⁽¹²⁾

By contrast, the *conservative* Richard Nixon established the Environmental Protection Agency, extended the Clean Air Act, introduced the Supplemental Security Income program (to assist the elderly and the disabled), launched the Minority Business Development Agency, signed the Occupational Safety and Health Act, and implemented the first federally-mandated affirmative action program.⁽¹³⁾ Nixon was a “Southern strategist” and a right-wing crook: he was also to the left of Bill Clinton.

The senior Democratic senator from New York, the “ultra-liberal” Chuck Schumer, recently killed efforts to raise the tax rate of hedge fund managers to that of his cleaning lady: a nice government handout to overpaid bankers that is worth, annually, half of the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children.^(14,15) “I am not a populist,” said Schumer.⁽¹⁶⁾ (Maybe just an opportunist.) During the 2008 presidential campaign, the New

York Times gently mocked John Edwards's unauthorized concern for the poor as “raw populism.”⁽¹⁷⁾ That word again. The other P-word, poverty, has acquired in the liberal mind the cosmic permanence of gravity. Much like in the Middle Ages, short of killing the poor, the thinking goes, one cannot kill poverty—even in the richest nation on earth. This capitulation to imaginary laws of economics marks the ascendancy of neoliberalism as the dominant dogma of the ruling class. This is a worldwide phenomenon but its origins are uniquely American. One may wonder: if it's worked against the interests of so many, how then did it happen?

Neoliberal Triumph

The success of neoliberalism is owed, like much else in American history, to race and inflation. The civil rights movement's heroic victories triggered a white backlash that, stirred up by the stagflation of the 70s, designated welfare as its whipping boy. While the left fell apart under the strain of its own failures and the pressure of the New Right, the Dems' axis of opportunism closed ranks with dyed-in-the-wool backslashers to excise the term “underclass” from the political discourse and replace it with the racial codeword “responsibility.” The collective benefit of pulling people out of poverty (more on this later) gave way to the moral hazard of unearned assistance to the poor. By this brilliant maneuver, the state was off the hook.

Thus shorn of social purpose, the sole objective of the economy was now to create the conditions for a bigger economy. This self-referential absurdity worked out well for some. At their prodding, politicians on both sides of the aisle wrapped the neoliberal agenda in cotton candy (“I feel your pain”) and sold it to the public as an inclusive doctrine (“rising tides lift all boats”). While the media peddled ad nauseam the seductive narrative that unfettered growth will cure all ills, the public intellectuals played their customary herding role as guardians of the norm. Lobby-driven campaign financing did the rest. Neoliberalism became the new dogma, the *pensée unique*.

The dogma tolerates social conflicts insofar as they remain orthogonal to the economic fault lines. Multiculturalism and identity politics are tolerable but class concerns are ruled out of order. Affirmative action and *Roe v. Wade* are fine but prenatal care and maternity leaves are “fiscally imprudent.” While globalized trade has benefited many countries, the ultra-rigid neoliberal policies pushed by the United States and the international institutions it controls have had nasty consequences: per-capita income for nearly half of the world's countries was lower in 2000 than it was a decade earlier.⁽¹⁸⁾ Yet even a reasoned critique of the current economic order is seldom allowed into the dominant discourse. It's not censorship; it's gatekeeping. And it works. The withering scorn heaped upon a fine “European” centrist like Kucinich is indicative of the intolerance for any deviation from the orthodoxy.

Marxism died for all the right reasons, but regrettably so did with it the only systematic attempt in the history of political philosophy to put the underdog at the heart of the

reflection. Sensing a vulnerability, opponents pounced with glee and festooned any leftish idea with the blood and tears of every Gulag victim. Soon sedated by the illusory success and soothing materialism of the Clinton years, progressives lost the means and the will to fight back.

The Great Sellout came at a price: electoral disaster. Yet, while busy mastering the fine art of the concession speech, Democrats swatted away all attempts at rebuilding a movement. To this day, their triangulating appetite for compromise remains voracious and they rarely flinch from flinching. Unless, that is, the cause is sensible but symbolic, like protesting the display of the Ten Commandments in a court of justice. Progressives need not prioritize because their moral world is flat. Why obsess over war and poverty when, instead, you can ventilate about courthouse furniture? Their creed, such as it is, is a recitation of platitudes: feel-good drivel about vibrant communities, boundless opportunities, growing prosperity, and other such controversial matters. They engage in vigorous policy debates but none of them is germane to the creed—would you expect a discussion of the Clear Skies bill to be informed by a belief in breathing?

Just as science should be falsifiable, ideologies should be disbelievable. A creed that can be rejected only by the enemies of motherhood and apple pie is useless because it denies one the means to make tough choices. But can such a thing ever be useful, let alone necessary?

Yes and yes. A creed serves two functions: to feed the soul and to guide hard decisions. Neoliberalism takes care of the decisions and the little that's left is fast food for the soul. To see why, consider the Revolutionary motto, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." A good measure of a left-wing belief system is how tightly it keeps the three threads together. Take away the last one and your creed is soulless; remove the first two and it is toothless. Fraternity (for lack of a less sexist term) arbitrates between liberty and equality: it speaks to the *why* and the *how*; they speak to the *what*. Neoliberalism gutted the motto and left progressives with the monumental task of turning ethics into policy without the normative mediation of a conceptual framework.

True, as a drive for free markets, globalization, deregulation, privatization, elimination of economic distortions, deunionization, and market-driven policymaking, neoliberalism is no more a theory of social justice than greed is a theory of property rights. It did not supplant the progressive creed so much as let it shrivel into a mere quest for decency—a noble pursuit to be sure, but one that is doomed without a set of principles to guide it. It's not enough to have your heart in the right place: your brain, and especially your will, must be there, too.

For what does it mean to seek a decent society if we won't say what we're willing to trade off for it? Let's take an example. Why should long prison sentences for violent offenders be shortened if, hypothetically, they could be shown to reduce crime? Excessive imprisonment and snatching old ladies' purses are *both* violations of common decency. Does one trump the other? Sentiment alone cannot answer that: only a higher set of beliefs can. Note that hard choices are nothing new. We tolerate obscene numbers of wife beatings and drunk-driving deaths just to make it legal to wash down our osso buco with Chianti. The Prohibition era made a different choice. Today's liberals assure us that such tradeoffs are passé. Surely one

can eliminate poverty *and* maximize economic growth. The evidence suggests one cannot. A good society requires tough choices. The cost of denial is a chronically *reactive* stance toward social ills: a preference for remediation over prevention, incarceration over job training, charity over antipoverty programs, etc.

Fukuyama got it all wrong. It's not the End of History we're witnessing. It's the End of the Political: the denial of human agency in the regulation of economic forces. Thomas L. Friedman calls it the Golden Straitjacket. He explains its benefits: "Once your country puts it on, its political choices get reduced to Pepsi or Coke."⁽¹⁹⁾ And if you try root beer, Somalia is next. Neoliberalism is just another word for nothing left to decide. The fall of the Berlin Wall buried Marxism but historical determinism lives on in Washington.

TINA, Thatcher shouted from the rooftops—There Is No Alternative. Let's test this claim. America is richer than Europe; yet, to quote Jared Diamond, "Western Europe's standard of living is higher by any reasonable criterion [...]"⁽²⁰⁾ France is slightly more productive than the United States and its *Human Development Index* is higher; yet its GDP per head is 25% smaller.^(21–23) Why? Because Americans *choose* to work longer hours. This was not always so: in 1970, the French worked 10% more than Americans; now they work 28% less.⁽²⁴⁾ Apparently, There Is An Alternative. Free markets have rules and constraints, but so does piano composition, and the range from Chopin to Monk is hardly suggestive of a straitjacket. Western Europe is living proof that mixed-economy welfare states can be prosperous. The point here is not which system is better: it is that both are possible. It's all a matter of choice. TINA is a sham.



A Progressive Creed

The perspective from the left is one of justice, not charity. Note how the direction is reversed. Charity is centrifugal: it proceeds from us toward the outer fringes of society. Justice is centripetal: it starts at the periphery and pulls back toward us. Society must care for the disadvantaged not because they are the Other but precisely because they are not. Charity is virtuous but ethically dodgy because of a double asymmetry: giving out of pity (or even compassion) humiliates the recipient, who cannot reciprocate, while enhancing the giver's self-esteem.⁽²⁵⁾ Donating old clothes to the Salvation Army proceeds on the assumption that a garment no longer good enough for me surely is good enough for somebody else. This is both right and repugnant. Welfare can be degrading, too. But, as Avishai Margalit has argued, entitled assistance is structurally less humiliating than benevolence.⁽²⁵⁾ In the spirit of his "decent society," no state institution may cause loss of self-respect. In that regard, one must single out the American penal system, with its exposed face in Abu Ghraib, as the most egregious violator of that obligation in this country—no serious progressive agenda can omit prison reform.

The right to freedom from destitution may not be made contingent on good conduct. In other words, social citizenship must be unconditional. The disgrace of Clinton's welfare reform was

to make it discretionary. As Tony Judt noted, it “return[ed] us to the spirit of England's New Poor Law of 1834,” by which assistance had to be earned.⁽²⁾ Responsibility is a civic virtue that society should promote (Wall Street being a good place to start) but never require, especially of its most vulnerable members.

The creed hinders the autonomy of economic forces by placing their regulation in the hands of the polity: liberty trumps efficacy. Surely this is the sort of “luxury” that rich societies can afford—fixating on economic growth is easier to justify in poor countries where the stakes are malaria vaccines rather than plasma screen TVs. Poverty in America has many causes: insufficient national wealth is not one of them.

I summarize below the main features of a progressive creed.⁽²⁶⁾ It must articulate a *purpose* (what world to wish for) and a *perspective* (how to look at the world):

- *The **purpose** is a society that, first, preserve equal liberties; second, attends preferentially to the needs of the disadvantaged. All citizens are granted an unconditional claim upon the collectivity to be accorded the minimum resources necessary for a life of dignity and a genuine sense of belonging. Freedom from humiliation is never to be made contingent on any norm of conduct (such as law abidance). Equality of opportunity is sought as the fairest means of redistributing access to fundamental liberties.*
- *The **perspective** affirms faith in the power of human agency to mediate between liberty and social justice. It posits the primacy of the political and the necessity of a wide public sphere. It favors public investments in shared goods (eg, health, education, infrastructure, and the environment). It asserts the regulatory function of the state and its role as ultimate guarantor of social provision. It regards economic growth as a means to an end and labor as an end in itself, not merely input into production. It views the concept of economic class as an indispensable measure of social stratification in policymaking. It is tolerant of economic distortions to the extent that they serve social justice or promote citizenship.*

A philosophical digression. The creed's preferential clause can apply either directly (eg, welfare) or indirectly (eg, public schools, medical research), and the conditions of the disadvantaged may be economic (poverty), social (discrimination), functional (handicaps), etc. In an echo of Rawls's “difference principle,” the clause posits that, second only to preserving equal liberties, society must mitigate the misfortunes of its least well-off members. A just society favors the disadvantaged because that would be our most likely preference, regardless of ideology, were we to join that society with no prior knowledge of our social status. In other words, behind a “veil of ignorance,” we would choose an allocation of resources that would make the worst possible outcome for us the least disadvantageous. Targeting the worst outcome and not, say, the best (as in playing the lottery) serves an obvious egalitarian purpose. Up to a point. The preferential clause is not inconsistent with the view that rising tides lift all boats. In fact, it may accommodate arbitrarily large inequalities as long as the poor do not get poorer. This may have the adverse effect of undermining social cohesion while increasing overall wealth. In that regard, equality of opportunity serves as a

necessary corrective—though social harmony is not its primary justification: fair access to liberties is.

A different take on the preferential clause holds that prioritizing according to need delivers the biggest bang for the public buck: one dollar spent on feeding a poor child has higher utility than one dollar spent on polishing the deck of a yacht. Progressive taxation can be similarly justified by the lower marginal costs of wealth acquisition for the rich. This utilitarian interpretation strips the clause of its preferentiality component and makes its application vastly more restrictive than a deontological approach does. Of course, one can do away with Kant, Mill, and Rawls altogether, and simply declare the creed fine because it *feels* fine. Nothing wrong with that. In fact, I intend to flesh out that very intuition below. End of philosophical digression.

A debate has been raging lately regarding the merits of the *common good* as the basis for a new liberal creed.⁽²⁷⁾ Not only is the notion central to any serious progressive perspective, but its rhetorical power is undeniable. It must be handled with care, however. First, left to its own devices, the common good is merely a regulative concept, like zoning, and not a goal in itself. Once bound to particulars, it can mean public infrastructure—a priority that should be high on any progressive agenda—but also wiretapping, torture, and the draft. Which war hasn't been fought for the “common good”? Second, there is nothing distinctively progressive about it: from Hoover to Reagan to GWB, it has long been a conservative mantra.

Third, the common good's attendant doctrine of civic republicanism often carries a heroic undertone of shared sacrifice and self-abnegation that is both a little quaint and a little weird. Progressives cannot claim that a 3-trillion dollar war in Iraq is no sacrifice but a war on poverty would be—hint: \$3,000,000,000,000 would go a long way toward rebuilding our inner cities. Sadly for hero worshippers, none of the objectives of a progressive creed requires heroism (tough choices, yes; sacrifice, no). One should also be careful not to allow the kindness of strangers to substitute for the obligations of the state. The thousands of volunteers who filled in for “Heckuva job Brownie” proved that American society is both generous *and* broken.

Fourth, there is the putative liberal sin that common-good evangelists seek to redress: the rise of interest-group politics. Granted, single-issue advocacy has long demonstrated a suspicious fondness for circular firing squads: what did those anti-frankenfood crusaders on stilts think they were doing at antiwar demos in 2003? Again, that unfailing inability to prioritize. It is, however, more than a little churlish to put the blame on minority politics when it is the other kind of “minorities,” ie, the insurers, trial lawyers, doctors, and gun owners, whose lobbies keep a stranglehold on Congress. The grievances of victimized groups have no need for legitimation on common-good grounds. It is not incumbent upon a rape victim to explain why assisting her is of benefit to society. Social justice is, *de jure*, universal but, *de facto*, minoritarian. It favors the invisible. The failure of the left is not that it countenanced interest-group pluralism: it's that it left it up to each group to explain why redressing their grievances serves the common good, when it was the left's *own* responsibility to do so. The argumentation rests on a rewriting of a conservative canon, *patriotic citizenship*. This may

explain the left's reluctance to make the case. So, while you watch me rush in where angels fear to tread, please keep an open mind.

Did You Say Patriotic?

What's missing from the progressive agenda is not the chameleon-like notion of the common good so much as the pursuit of collective mastery and the promotion of a shared sense of belonging. Abundance is the promised land of neoliberalism and shopping its highest purpose. To be a citizen is to be a consumer: "*Consumo ergo sum.*" Such cartoonish ontological moorings induce in many the despair of the void. America's vindictive penal system indeed suggests a nation riven by fear. For this, in my view, we have less bin Laden to blame than TINA and the materialistic vacuity that goes along with it. The first order of business is to allow the polity to regain control of its environment—moral, social, and physical. The progressive creed is, first and foremost, a quest for citizenship.

No citizenship, no social justice. It's hard enough to help the poor: go try and do it with a straitjacket on. But empowerment alone is not enough. I may well understand that my path to freedom lies through Town Hall and not Wal-Mart. But what's that got to do with justice? Perhaps that's why common-gooders ask us to clone ourselves into mini-Mother Teresas. Without prejudging the case about the goodness of our hearts, the weakness of a sainthood-based creed is simply too obvious to ignore. If everyone were a saint, we would not need a creed in the first place. The trick, therefore, is to create a society of saints none of whose members is one. That's where patriotism kicks in.

First, some clarification. "My country, right or wrong," said Carl Schurz, echoing Decatur. After that fateful utterance, the word patriot was destined to join the select company of pedophile and macaca in the stink bomb arsenal of language. So it is with my nose firmly held that I vocally question the patriotism of those who care more about winning Fallujah than losing New Orleans. The most humiliating national shaming in recent American history, Katrina, registers barely a blip in a presidential campaign: a portrait of the patriot as an ostrich? Americans can love their country or they can turn a blind eye to poverty and segregation: they cannot do both. Patriotic citizenship is the commitment to a society that grants all of its members the means to belong. It is an affirmation of solidarity. Its motivation is the virtuous, idealized pride in an *honorable society*. It is also a sublimated form of self-interest: violent crime and poverty are, indeed, correlated. Most of all, it is the awareness that shame taints pride and that, despite their tenuous relation, (b) trumps or demeans (a):

- (a) The US is the world's richest nation; (b) the US outranks only Mexico in child poverty among OECD countries.⁽²⁸⁾
- (a) America's GDP per capita is 11 times higher than Sri Lanka's; (b) life expectancy for African-American men is 3 years shorter than for males in Sri Lanka.^(29,30)
- (a) African-Americans have been the force behind this country's most influential

musical genres; (b) one third of all black men will go to prison at some point in their lives.⁽³¹⁾

- (a) The US scoops up more Nobel prizes in medicine than any nation on earth; (b) 18,000 Americans will die this year for lack of health insurance.⁽³²⁾

“To make us love our country,” Burke said, “our country ought to be lovely.” The alternative is to avert one's eyes from the unlovely. It can be done. Progressive policies are never the default option. Patriotic citizenship rests on the mobilizing power of shame. But does shame mobilize? Patriotism is a wonderful fertilizer of delusion. And delusion works. Reagan speechified his way into the White House with chants of: “We're the Greatest Nation on God's Green Earth!” Am I suggesting “We Suck!” as a progressive alternative? Not quite. Americans should glow with pride at the mention of *Citizen Kane*, the Village Vanguard, and the Grand Canyon. But so should they at the thought that their society is fundamentally decent. Which it is fundamentally not.

I will leave the matter of a progressive foreign policy for another day, for I believe it requires a different treatment that cannot be inferred from the creed discussed above. But here is a point of direct relevance. The most consequential misreading of the fall of the Berlin Wall was that America had become the world's sole superpower. The irony is that it's precisely when it ceased to be one. Suddenly freed from the need for US protection, our allies realized they could ignore Washington's orders with impunity, and they did just that in 2003. In that sense, Bush did not kill US hegemony: he only supplied the death certificate. As the reality of a multipolar world sinks in, America has a golden opportunity to shed its exceptionalism and become a normal, decent society. Oddly for a technological wonderland, some of its beliefs hark back to Dickens and Kipling: the emulation factor of the wealth gap; the cleansing power of force; the euphoric arrogance of its *mission civilisatrice* (less euphoric after Iraq); the fixation on absolute sovereignty. These are all 19th-century values. The winds of geopolitical change will work to America's advantage if they help steer its foreign policy into the path to modernity.

Economic insecurity, a weak public sector, lack of social protection, fear of immigrants—where did we see that before? In Europe in the first half of the last century. Neoliberals like to forget that the continent was as globalized on the eve of World War I as it is today. Which is odd, because their credo that trading nations don't fight one another was proven entirely correct—plus or minus a few dozen million deaths. No, I am not suggesting that America's anxieties forebode an authoritarian future. The failure of a progressive alternative is more likely to produce a society that is increasingly unequal, unjust, hollow, and paranoid.

Some will invoke the recession as an excuse to do nothing. They have it exactly backwards. Economic distress has a way of rousing people from their political torpor—what else got the New Deal going? Fine, but Washington is too divided to get anything done. Just the opposite. Nothing gets done because politicians are too united—in taking orders from their corporate paymasters. The status quo is so beneficial to lobbies that campaign funds are roughly proportional to the number of times a candidate promises to look but not touch.

Assuming a progressive project gets underway, what challenges lie ahead? We know where to find the problems—racism, poverty, health, child care, public schools, the penal system, infrastructure, the environment, campaign financing, etc. We know where to find the expertise—the world's best social scientists live in our midst. We know where to find the resources—highest GDP and all that. We know where to find the words for the prose of our policies and the poetry of our vision. In the public mind, however, the right is about winning and the left about not losing. A bit of a downer perhaps. The pessimism of the intellect, Gramsci said, must be balanced by the optimism of the will. The hard part of a progressive project will be to summon the moral courage to prioritize the task at hand and fuel the effort with an unshakable belief in the justness of the cause. For that, we need a creed.

- [1] I will be using the words liberal and progressive interchangeably to refer to the dominant group of people who attach these labels to themselves. I will blur the distinction between these words not because it is unimportant but because it is not relevant to this essay.
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- [3] [Economic Mobility: Is the American Dream Alive and Well?](#) by Isabel Sawhill and John E. Morton, Economic Mobility Project, The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2007.
- [4] [Do Poor Children Become Poor Adults? Lessons from a Cross Country Comparison of Generational Earnings Mobility](#) by Miles Corak, Institute for the Study of Labor, March 2006.
- [5] [Waving Goodbye to Hegemony](#) by Parag Khanna, *The New York Times Magazine*, January 27, 2008.
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- [21] [OECD Compendium of Productivity Indicators 2006](#) , page 32.
- [22] [List of Countries by Human Development Index](#) , Wikipedia.
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- [25] [The Decent Society](#) by Avishai Margalit, Harvard University Press, 1998.
- [26] I will omit mention of fundamental liberties that are widely shared among political philosophies (eg, freedom of conscience, speech, association, movement) and which I consider self-evident.
- [27] [Party in Search of a Notion](#) by Michael Tomasky, The American Prospect, April 18, 2006.
- [28] [Child Poverty in Rich Countries, 2005](#) , UNICEF, Report Card No.6, 2005.
- [29] [The World Factbook](#) , CIA, 2008.
- [30] [The Third World Health Status of Black American Males](#) by Sandra L. Gadson, June 1, 2006.

[31] [The Sentencing Project](#) , 2008.

[32] [Unstoppable Obama](#) by Barbara Ehrenreich, The Huffington Post, February 14, 2008.