

civil. Those who for selfish and private purposes stir up national antagonisms and expose the world to the ruin of war.

Will the House Committee on Un-American Activities interfere with the activities of these? Will Mr. Truman's disloyalty proclamation reach these? Will the current campaigns for Americanism convert these? If past experience is any guide, they will not. What they will do, if they are successful, is to silence criticism, stamp out dissent—or drive it underground. But if our democracy is to flourish it must have criticism, if our government is to function it must have dissent. Only totalitarian governments insist upon conformity and they—as we know—do so at their peril. Without criticism abuses will go unrebuked; without dissent our dynamic system will become static.

### Questions

1. What does Commager mean when he writes that the new definition of loyalty is "conformity"?
2. Why does he claim that the new patriotism makes "a mockery of the Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights"?

## CHAPTER 24

# An Affluent Society, 1953–1960

### 158. Richard M. Nixon, "What Freedom Means to Us" (1959)

*Source: Vital Speeches of the Day (September 1, 1959), pp. 677–79.*

In 1958, during a "thaw" in the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union agreed to exchange national exhibitions in order to allow citizens of each "superpower" to become acquainted with life in the other. The American National Exhibition opened in Moscow in 1959. It was a showcase of consumer goods and leisure equipment, complete with stereo sets, a movie theater, home appliances, and twenty-two different cars. But the exhibit's message was the equating of freedom and consumerism.

Vice-President Richard Nixon opened the exhibition with an address that emphasized the "extraordinarily high standard of living" in the United States, with its 56 million cars and 50 million television sets. The Moscow exhibition became the site of a classic Cold War confrontation over the meaning of freedom—the "kitchen debate" between Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev. Twice during the first day, Nixon and the Soviet leader engaged in unscripted debate about the merits of capitalism and communism. Overall, Nixon's speech and the ensuing debate reflected the triumph during the 1950s of a conception of freedom centered on economic abundance and consumer choice within the context of traditional family life.

I AM HONORED on behalf of President Eisenhower to open this American Exhibition in Moscow. Mrs. Nixon and I were among the many thousands of Americans who were privileged to visit the splendid Soviet Exhibition in New York, and we want to take this opportunity to congratulate the people of the U.S.S.R. for the great achievements and progress so magnificently portrayed by your Exhibition.

We, in turn, hope that many thousands of Soviet citizens will take advantage of this opportunity to learn about life in the United States by visiting our Exhibition.

Of course, we both realize that no exhibition can portray a complete picture of all aspects of life in great nations like the U.S.S.R. and the United States.

Among the questions which some might raise with regard to our Exhibition are these: To what extent does this Exhibition accurately present life in the United States as it really is? Can only the wealthy people afford the things exhibited here? What about the inequality, the injustice, the other weaknesses which are supposed to be inevitable in a Capitalist society?

As Mr. Khrushchev often says: "You can't leave a word out of a song." Consequently, in the limited time I have, I would like to try to answer some of these questions so that you may get an accurate picture of what America is really like.

Let me start with some of the things in this Exhibit. You will see a house, a car, a television set—each the newest and most modern of its type we can produce. But can only the rich in the United States afford such things? If this were the case we would have to include in our definition of rich the millions of America's wage earners.

Let us take, for example, our 16 million factory workers. The average weekly wage of a factory worker in America is \$90.54. With this income he can buy and afford to own a house, a television set, and a car in the price range of those you will see in this Exhibit. What is more, the great majority of American wage earners have done exactly that.

Putting it another way, there are 44 million families in the United States. Twenty-five million of these families live in houses or apartments that have as much or more floor space than the one you see in this Exhibit. Thirty-one million families own their own homes and the land on which they are built. America's 44 million families own a total of 56 million cars, 50 million television sets and 143 million radio sets. And they buy an average of 9 dresses and suits and 14 pairs of shoes per family per year.

Why do I cite these figures? Not because they indicate that the American people have more automobiles, TV sets, or houses than the people of the U.S.S.R.

In fairness we must recognize that our country industrialized sooner than the Soviet Union. And Americans are happy to note that Mr. Khrushchev has set a goal for the Soviet economy of catching up in the production of consumer goods.

We welcome this kind of competition because when we engage in it, no one loses—everyone wins as the living standards of people throughout the world are raised to higher levels. It also should be pointed out that while we may be ahead of you as far as these items are concerned, you are ahead of us in other fields—for example, in the size of the rockets you have developed for the exploration of outer space.

But what these statistics do dramatically demonstrate is this: That the United States, the world's largest capitalist country, has from the standpoint of distribution of wealth come closest to the ideal of prosperity for all in a classless society.

As our revered Abraham Lincoln said "... We do not propose any war upon capital; we do wish to allow the humblest man an equal chance to get rich with everybody else."

The 67 million American wage earners are not the downtrodden masses depicted by the critics of capitalism in the latter part of the Nineteenth and early part of the Twentieth Centuries. They hold their heads high as they proudly enjoy the highest standard of living of any people in the world's history.

The caricature of capitalism as a predatory, monopolist dominated society, is as hopelessly out of date, as far as the United States is concerned, as a wooden plow.

This does not mean that we have solved all of our problems. Many of you have heard about the problem of unemployment in the United States. What is not so well known is that the average period that these unemployed were out of work even during our recent recession was less than three months. And during that period the unemployed had an average income from unemployment insurance funds of \$131.49 per month. The day has passed in the United States when the unemployed were left to shift for themselves.

The same can be said for the aged, the sick, and others who are unable to earn enough to provide an adequate standard of living. An expanded program of Social Security combined with other government and private programs provides aid and assistance for those who are unable to care for themselves. For example, the average retired couple on Social Security in the United States receives an income of \$116 per month apart from the additional amounts they receive from private pensions and savings accounts.

What about the strikes which take place in our economy, the latest example of which is the steel strike which is going on? The answer is that here we have a firsthand example of how a free economy works. The workers right to join with other workers in a union and to bargain collectively with management is recognized and protected by law. No man or woman in the United States can be forced to work for wages he considers to be inadequate or under conditions he believes are unsatisfactory.

Another problem which causes us concern is that of racial discrimination in our country. We are making great progress in solving this problem but we shall never be satisfied until we make the American ideal of equality of opportunity a reality for every citizen regardless of his race, creed or color.

We have other problems in our society but we are confident that for us our system of government provides the best means for solv-

ing them. But the primary reason we believe this is not because we have an economy which builds more than 1 million houses, produces 6 million cars and 6 million television sets per year.

Material progress is important but the very heart of the American ideal is that "man does not live by bread alone." To us, progress without freedom to use a common expression is like "potatoes without fat."

Let me give you some examples of what freedom means to us.

President Eisenhower is one of the most popular men ever to hold that high office in our country. Yet never an hour or a day goes by in which criticism of him and his policies cannot be read in our newspapers, heard on our radio and television, or in the Halls of Congress.

And he would not have it any other way. The fact that our people can and do say anything they want about a government official, the fact that in our elections, as this voting machine in our exhibit illustrates, every voter has a free choice between those who hold public office and those who oppose them makes ours a true peoples' government.

We trust the people. We constantly submit big decisions to the people. Our history convinces us that over the years the people have been right much more often than they have been wrong.

As an indication of the extent of this freedom and of our faith in our own system, forty hours of radio broadcasts from the Soviet Union can be heard without jamming in the United States each day, and over a million and a half copies of Soviet publications are purchased in our country each year.

Let us turn now to freedom of religion. Under our Constitution no church or religion can be supported by the State. An American can either worship in the church of his choice or choose to go to no church at all if he wishes. Acting with this complete freedom of choice, 103 million of our citizens are members of 308 of American churches.

We also cherish the freedom to travel, both within our country and outside the United States. Within our country we live and travel

where we please without travel permits, internal passports or police registration. We also travel freely abroad. For example, 11 million Americans will travel to other countries during this year, including 10,000 to the Soviet Union. We look forward to the day when millions of Soviet citizens will travel to ours and other countries in this way.

Time will not permit me to tell you of all of the features of American life, but in summary I think these conclusions can objectively be stated.

The great majority of Americans like our system of government. Much as we like it, however, we would not impose it on anyone else. We believe that people everywhere should have a right to choose the form of government they want.

## Questions

1. Why do you think Nixon begins his speech by discussing the American standard of living rather than other manifestations of freedom?
2. What other elements of freedom does Nixon refer to in the speech?

### 159. Clark Kerr, *Industrialism and Industrial Man* (1960)

*Source: Clark Kerr et al.: Excerpt from "Industrialism and Industrial Man." Reprinted by permission of the publisher from Industrialism and Industrial Man: The Problems of Labor and Management in Economic Growth by Clark Kerr, John T. Dunlop, Frederick H. Harbison, and Charles A. Myers, pp. 40, 42, 44, 294, 295-96, Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, Copyright © 1960 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College. Copyright © renewed 1988 by Clark Kerr.*

The end of World War II was followed by a period of economic expansion, low unemployment, and rising living standards. Between 1946 and 1960,

the gross national product more than doubled and ordinary citizens' incomes rose dramatically. In every measurable way—diet, housing, wages, education, recreation—most Americans lived better than their parents and grandparents. In this affluent society, consumerism increasingly replaced economic independence and democratic participation as central definitions of American freedom. A study of modern industrial society published in 1960 by Clark Kerr, the president of the University of California, Berkeley, and three other scholars, reflected the era's outlook. Freedom, they acknowledged, may well have been reduced "in the work place," but society offered a far greater range of "goods and services." Leisure activities, not work or politics, would henceforth be "the happy hunting ground for the independent spirit." And the role of intellectuals was not, as in the past, to criticize society, but to help stabilize it by promoting a "consensus" of ideas and values.

THE INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY is necessarily characterized by a substantial range and scale of activities by the government. In a society of advanced technology there are, by virtue of this technology, a larger number of activities for government; for instance, the need for roads and highways, the provision for airports, the regulation of traffic, radio and television, a result of modern means of communication. Urban development has the same consequences. Technology also creates a more complex problem for a military establishment, extending in many directions the activities of government. The more integrated character of the world increases the activities significant to international relations and hence typically the scope of government activities. The scale of some scientific applications and the capital needs of new technologies tend to increase the scope of public agencies. As income rises, the demand of consumers may be for services largely provided by governments, such as education, parks, roads and health services.

The industrial society and individual freedom, however, are not necessarily to be regarded as antagonists. A high degree of discipline in the work place imposed by a web of rules and a large range

of governmental activities is fully consistent with a larger freedom for the individual in greater leisure, a greater range of choice in occupations and place of residence, a greater range of alternatives in goods and services on which to use income, and a very wide range of subgroups or associations in which to choose participation. It is a mistake to regard the industrial society as antithetical to individual freedom by citing ways in which the scope of public and private governments has increased without also noting ways in which the industrial society expands individual freedom.

• • •

The industrial society, as any established society, develops a distinctive consensus which relates individuals and groups to each other and provides a common body of ideas, beliefs, and value judgments integrated into a whole. There must be a consensus to permit the industrial society to function. Various forms of the industrial society may create some distinctive features of an ideology, but all industrialized societies have some common values. In the pure industrial society science and technical knowledge have high values, and those engaged in advancing science and in applying it to industrial processes have high prestige and receive high rewards in the society. The pure industrial society eliminates taboos against technical change, and it places high values on being "modern," "up-to-date," and in "progress" for their own sake.

• • •

The function of making explicit a consensus and of combining discrete beliefs and convictions into a reasonably consistent body of ideas is the task of intellectuals in every society. Industrial society does not uniquely create intellectuals; they exist in all societies in some degree. There are probably more intellectuals, at least potentially, in the industrial society on account of the higher levels of general education, higher income levels, and greater leisure. There are also new patrons to the intellectuals as compared to pre-industrial society. A diversity of markets for intellectuals—the university, enterprise, labor organization, voluntary association,

government, and self-employment—tends to displace the old aristocratic patrons. The function of formulating and restating the major values, premises, and consensus of a society from time to time, of sweeping away the old and adopting the new or reconciling the industrial processes with the old order, plays a significant role in industrialization. The intellectuals accordingly are an influential group in the process of the creation and molding of the new industrial society.

• • •

The individual will be in a mixed situation far removed either from that of the independent farmer organizing most aspects of his own life or from that of the Chinese in the commune under total surveillance. In his working life he will be subject to great conformity imposed not only by the enterprise manager but also by the state and by his own occupational association. For most people, any true scope for the independent spirit on the job will be missing. However, the skilled worker, while under rules, does get some control over his job, some chance to organize it as he sees fit, some possession of it. Within the narrow limits of this kind of "job control," the worker will have some freedom. But the productive process tends to regiment. People must perform as expected or it breaks down. This is now and will be increasingly accepted as an immutable fact. The state, the manager, the occupational association are all disciplinary agents. But discipline is often achieved by a measure of persuasion and incentive. The worker will be semi-independent with some choice among jobs, some control of the job, and some scope for the effects of morale; but he will also be confined by labor organizations, pensions, and seniority rules, and all sorts of rules governing the conduct of the job.

Outside his working life the individual may have more freedom under pluralistic industrialism than in most earlier forms of society. Politically he can be given some influence. Society has achieved consensus and it is perhaps less necessary for Big Brother to exercise political control. Nor in this Brave New World need genetic and

chemical means be employed to avoid revolt. There will not be any revolt, anyway, except little bureaucratic revolts that can be handled piecemeal. An educated population will want political choice and can be given it. There will also be reasonable choice in the controlled labor market, subject to the confining limits of the occupation, and in the controlled product market.

The great new freedom may come in the leisure of individuals. Higher standards of living, more leisure, more education make this not only possible but almost inevitable. This will be the happy hunting ground for the independent spirit. Along with the bureaucratic conservatism of economic and political life may well go a New Bohemianism in the other aspects of life and partly as a reaction to the confining nature of the productive side of society. There may well come a new search for individuality and a new meaning to liberty. The economic system may be highly ordered and the political system barren ideologically; but the social and recreational and cultural aspects of life diverse and changing.

• • •

Utopia never arrives, but men may well settle for the benefits of a greater scope for freedom in their personal lives at the cost of considerable conformity in their working lives.

• • •

### Questions

1. How much scope for individual freedom seems to exist in Kerr's description of "industrial society"?
2. What role does democratic politics seem to play in this vision of society?

### 160. The Southern Manifesto (1956)

Source: Congressional Record, 84th Congress, 2nd Session, pp. 4459-60.

The Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, outlawing racial segregation in public schools, inspired widespread hopes that racial equality was finally on the horizon. It also inspired a campaign of "massive resistance" in the white South. Drawn up early in 1956 and signed by 101 southern members of the Senate and House of Representatives, the Southern Manifesto repudiated the Supreme Court decision and offered support to the campaign of resistance then gaining force throughout the South. It drew on long-standing ideas of local autonomy as the basis of individual liberty and claimed that segregation was an old southern tradition favored by both whites and blacks. The Manifesto was a prelude to a decade of sometimes violent struggles as black southerners sought to claim equal rights in American society.

THE UNWARRANTED DECISION of the Supreme Court in the public school cases is now bearing the fruit always produced when men substitute naked power for established law.

The Founding Fathers gave us a Constitution of checks and balances because they realized the inescapable lesson of history that no man or group of men can be safely entrusted with unlimited power.... We regard the decisions of the Supreme Court in the school cases as a clear abuse of judicial power. It climaxes a trend in the Federal Judiciary undertaking to legislate, in derogation [violation] of the authority of Congress, and to encroach upon the reserved rights of the States and the people.

The original Constitution does not mention education. Neither does the 14th Amendment nor any other amendment. The debates preceding the submission of the 14th Amendment clearly show that there was no intent that it should affect the system of education maintained by the States.

In the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 the Supreme Court expressly declared that under the 14th Amendment no person was denied any of his rights if the States provided separate but equal facilities. This decision . . . restated time and again, became a part of the life of the people of many of the States and confirmed their habits, traditions, and way of life. It is founded on elemental humanity and commonsense, for parents should not be deprived by Government of the right to direct the lives and education of their own children.

Though there has been no constitutional amendment or act of Congress changing this established legal principle almost a century old, the Supreme Court of the United States, with no legal basis for such action, undertook to exercise their naked judicial power and substituted their personal political and social ideas for the established law of the land.

This unwarranted exercise of power by the Court, contrary to the Constitution, is creating chaos and confusion in the States principally affected. It is destroying the amicable relations between the white and Negro races that have been created through 90 years of patient effort by the good people of both races. It has planted hatred and suspicion where there has been heretofore friendship and understanding.

With the gravest concern for the explosive and dangerous condition created by this decision and inflamed by outside meddlers: . . . we commend the motives of those States which have declared the intention to resist forced integration by any lawful means.

We appeal to the States and people who are not directly affected by these decisions to consider the constitutional principles involved against the time when they too, on issues vital to them may be the victims of judicial encroachment.

We pledge ourselves to use all lawful means to bring about a reversal of this decision which is contrary to the Constitution and to prevent the use of force in its implementation.

### Questions:

1. Why does the Southern Manifesto claim that the Supreme Court decision is a threat to constitutional government?
2. Do you think that black southerners would agree with the statement that "amicable relations" had existed between the races for the past ninety years and that the Supreme Court decision threatened to undermine them?

---

### 161. Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (1962)

*Source: Milton Friedman: from Capitalism and Freedom, pp. 1-4. Copyright © 1962 The University of Chicago Press. Reprinted by permission of The University of Chicago Press.*

During the 1950s and early 1960s, conservative ideas seemed to have been marginalized in American politics. Nonetheless, two groups emerged in these years who, while largely ignored at the time, laid the intellectual foundations for the conservative movement's later rebirth. The "new conservatives" feared that the United States was suffering from moral decay and called for a return to traditional values grounded in the Christian tradition and in timeless notions of good and evil. If men and women did not choose to lead virtuous lives, the government must force them to do so.

A quite different group of conservative thinkers were "libertarians," to whom freedom meant individual autonomy, limited government, and unregulated capitalism. This view found powerful support in the writings of the young economist Milton Friedman. In *Capitalism and Freedom*, he identified the free market as the necessary foundation for individual liberty. He called for turning over to the private sector virtually all government functions and the repeal of minimum wage laws, the graduated income tax, and the Social Security system. Friedman extended the idea of unrestricted free choice into virtually every realm of life. Government, he insisted, should seek to regulate neither the economy nor individual conduct.

---

IN A MUCH quoted passage in his inaugural address, President Kennedy said, "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country." It is a striking sign of the temper of our times that the controversy about this passage centered on its origin and not on its content. Neither half of the statement expresses a relation between the citizen and his government that is worthy of the ideals of free men in a free society. The paternalistic "what your country can do for you" implies that government is the patron, the citizen the ward, a view that is at odds with the free man's belief in his own responsibility for his own destiny. The organismic, "what you can do for your country" implies that government is the master or the deity, the citizen, the servant or the votary. To the free man, the country is the collection of individuals who compose it, not something over and above them. He is proud of a common heritage and loyal to common traditions. But he regards government as a means, an instrumentality, neither a grantor of favors and gifts, nor a master or god to be blindly worshipped and served. He recognizes no national goal except as it is the consensus of the goals that the citizens severally serve. He recognizes no national purpose except as it is the consensus of the purposes for which the citizens severally strive.

The free man will ask neither what his country can do for him nor what he can do for his country. He will ask rather "What can I and my compatriots do through government" to help us discharge our individual responsibilities, to achieve our several goals and purposes, and above all, to protect our freedom? And he will accompany this question with another: How can we keep the government we create from becoming a Frankenstein that will destroy the very freedom we establish it to protect? Freedom is a rare and delicate plant. Our minds tell us, and history confirms, that the great threat to freedom is the concentration of power. Government is necessary to preserve our freedom, it is an instrument through which we can exercise our freedom; yet by concentrating power in political hands, it is also a threat to freedom. Even though the men who wield this

power initially be of good will and even though they be not corrupted by the power they exercise, the power will both attract and form men of a different stamp.

How can we benefit from the promise of government while avoiding the threat to freedom? Two broad principles embodied in our Constitution give an answer that has preserved our freedom so far, though they have been violated repeatedly in practice while proclaimed as precept.

First, the scope of government must be limited. Its major function must be to protect our freedom both from the enemies outside our gates and from our fellow-citizens: to preserve law and order, to enforce private contracts, to foster competitive markets. Beyond this major function, government may enable us at times to accomplish jointly what we would find it more difficult or expensive to accomplish severally. However, any such use of government is fraught with danger. We should not and cannot avoid using government in this way. But there should be a clear and large balance of advantages before we do. By relying primarily on voluntary co-operation and private enterprise, in both economic and other activities, we can insure that the private sector is a check on the powers of the governmental sector and an effective protection of freedom of speech, of religion, and of thought.

The second broad principle is that government power must be dispersed. If government is to exercise power, better in the county than in the state, better in the state than in Washington. If I do not like what my local community does, be it in sewage disposal, or zoning, or schools, I can move to another local community, and though few may take this step, the mere possibility acts as a check. If I do not like what my state does, I can move to another. If I do not like what Washington imposes, I have few alternatives in this world of jealous nations.

The very difficulty of avoiding the enactments of the federal government is of course the great attraction of centralization to many of its proponents. It will enable them more effectively, they believe, to



legislate programs that—as they see it—are in the interest of the public, whether it be the transfer of income from the rich to the poor or from private to governmental purposes. They are in a sense right. But this coin has two sides. The power to do good is also the power to do harm; those who control the power today may not tomorrow; and, more important, what one man regards as good, another may regard as harm. The great tragedy of the drive to centralization, as of the drive to extend the scope of government in general, is that it is mostly led by men of good will who will be the first to rue its consequences.

### Questions

1. What does Friedman mean when he refers to the United States as a “collection of individuals”?
2. How would you describe Friedman’s understanding of freedom?

### 162. C. Wright Mills on “Cheerful Robots” (1959)

*Source: C. Wright Mills: from The Sociological Imagination, pp. 174–75. Copyright © 1959, 2000 by Oxford University Press, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Oxford University Press, Inc.*

With both major parties embracing the Cold War and social criticism stigmatized as “un-American,” political debate in the 1950s took place within extremely narrow limits. Nonetheless, some dissenting voices could be heard. Writers criticized the monotony of modern work, the emptiness of suburban life, and the powerlessness of the individual in a world controlled by giant bureaucracies. More radical in pointing to the problem of unequal power in American society, the sociologist C. Wright Mills challenged the self-satisfied vision of democratic pluralism that dominated mainstream social science in the 1950s. Mills wrote of a “power elite”—an interlocking directorate of corporate leaders, politicians, and military men whose control of government and society had made political

democracy obsolete. Such criticism helped to set the state for the revolts of the 1960s. In the 1950s, however, it failed to dent widespread complacency about the American way of life.

FREEDOM IS NOT merely the chance to do as one pleases; neither is it merely the opportunity to choose between set alternatives. Freedom is, first of all, the chance to formulate the available choices, to argue over them—and then, the opportunity to choose. That is why freedom cannot exist without an enlarged role of human reason in human affairs. Within an individual’s biography and within a society’s history, the social task of reason is to formulate choices, to enlarge the scope of human decisions in the making of history. The future of human affairs is not merely some set of variables to be predicted. The future is what is to be decided—within the limits, to be sure, of historical possibility. But this possibility is not fixed; in our time the limits seem very broad indeed.

Beyond this, the problem of freedom is the problem of how decisions about the future of human affairs are to be made and who is to make them. Organizationally, it is the problem of a just machinery of decision. Morally, it is the problem of political responsibility. Intellectually, it is the problem of what are now the possible futures of human affairs. But the larger aspects of the problem of freedom today concern not only the nature of history and the structural chance for explicit decisions to make a difference in its course; they concern also the nature of man and the fact that the value of freedom cannot be based upon ‘man’s basic nature.’ The ultimate problem of freedom is the problem of the cheerful robot, and it arises in this form today because today it has become evident to us that *all* men do *not* naturally *want* to be free; that all men are not willing or not able, as the case may be, to exert themselves to acquire the reason that freedom requires.

Under what conditions do men come to *want* to be free and capable of acting freely? Under what conditions are they willing and able

to bear the burdens freedom does impose and to see these less as burdens than as gladly undertaken self-transformations? And on the negative side: Can men be made to want to become *cheerful robots*?

In our time, must we not face the possibility that the human mind as a social fact might be deteriorating in quality and cultural level, and yet not many would notice it because of the overwhelming accumulation of technological gadgets? Is not that one meaning of rationality without reason? Of human alienation? Of the absence of any free role for reason in human affairs? The accumulation of gadgets hides these meanings: Those who use these devices do not understand them; those who invent them do not understand much else. That is why we may *not*, without great ambiguity, use technological abundance as the index of human quality and cultural progress.

### Questions

1. How does Mills's definition of freedom differ from the idea of freedom as consumer choice?
2. What does Mills mean by "cheerful robots"?

---

### 163. Allen Ginsberg, "Howl" (1955)

*Source: Allen Ginsberg: "What sphinx of cement . . . / . . . American river!" (Moloch section, 34 l.) from "Howl," from Collected Poems 1947-1980 by Allen Ginsberg. Copyright © 1955 by Allen Ginsberg. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers.*

A different kind of criticism of mainstream culture arose from a group of artists and writers of the 1950s known as the Beats, centered in New York City and San Francisco, as well as college towns like Madison, Wisconsin, and Ann Arbor, Michigan. Rejecting the work ethic, the consumer culture

of the suburban middle class, and the militarization of American life by the Cold War, the Beats celebrated impulsive action, immediate pleasure (often enhanced by drugs), and sexual experimentation.

"I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked," wrote the Beat poet Alan Ginsberg in "Howl" (1955), a protest against materialism and conformism. Ginsberg wrote of American life through the image of Moloch, an idol in the Bible to whom parents sacrificed their children. In the poem, Moloch was a symbol of a militaristic, materialistic society that stifled spontaneity and human feeling. "Howl" became a kind of manifesto of the Beat Generation.

---

What sphinx of cement and aluminum bashed open their skulls and  
ate up their brains and imagination?  
Moloch! Solitude! Filth! Ugliness! Ashcans and unobtainable dollars!  
Children screaming under the stairways! Boys sobbing in armies!  
Old men weeping in the parks!  
Moloch! Moloch! Nightmare of Moloch! Moloch the loveless! Mental  
Moloch! Moloch the heavy judger of men!  
Moloch the incomprehensible prison! Moloch the crossbone soul-  
less jailhouse and Congress of sorrows! Moloch whose buildings  
are judgment! Moloch the vast stone of war! Moloch the stunned  
governments!  
Moloch whose mind is pure machinery! Moloch whose blood is run-  
ning money! Moloch whose fingers are ten armies! Moloch whose  
breast is a cannibal dynamo! Moloch whose ear is a smoking tomb!  
Moloch whose eyes are a thousand blind windows! Moloch whose  
skyscrapers stand in the long streets like endless Jehovahs!  
Moloch whose factories dream and croak in the fog! Moloch  
whose smokestacks and antennae crown the cities!  
Moloch whose love is endless oil and stone! Moloch whose soul is  
electricity and banks! Moloch whose poverty is the specter of  
genius! Moloch whose fate is a cloud of sexless hydrogen! Moloch  
whose name is the Mind!

Moloch who entered my soul early! Moloch in whom I am a consciousness without a body! Moloch who frightened me out of my natural ecstasy! Moloch whom I abandon! Wake up in Moloch! Light streaming out of the sky!

Moloch! Moloch! Robot apartments! invisible suburbs! skeleton treasuries! blind capitals! demonic industries! spectral nations! invincible mad houses! granite cocks! monstrous bombs!

They broke their backs lifting Moloch to Heaven! Pavements, trees, radios, tons! lifting the city to Heaven which exists and is everywhere about us!

Visions! omens! hallucinations! miracles! ecstasies! gone down the American river!

## Questions

1. What images convey Ginsberg's critique of 1950s American life?
2. What kind of alternative, if any, does Ginsberg offer to the materialism and conformism of American society?

## 164. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955)

*Source: Martin Luther King Jr. "Meeting at Holt Street Church," Reprinted by arrangement with The Heirs to the Estate of Martin Luther King Jr., c/o Writers house as agent for the proprietor, New York, NY. Copyright © 1963 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.; Copyright renewed 1991 Coretta Scott King.*

In December 1955, Rosa Parks, a veteran of local black politics who worked as a tailor's assistant in a Montgomery, Alabama, department store, refused to surrender her seat on a city bus to a white rider, as required by local law. Her arrest sparked a year-long bus boycott. Finally, the Supreme Court ruled segregation in public transportation unconstitutional.

The Montgomery bus boycott launched the movement for racial justice as a nonviolent crusade based in the black churches of the South. It marked the emergence of twenty-six-year-old Martin Luther King Jr., who had recently arrived in the city to become pastor of a Baptist church, as the movement's national symbol. On the night of the first protest meeting, King's speech electrified his audience: "We, the disinherited of this land, we who have been oppressed so long, are tired of going through the long night of captivity. And now we are reaching out for the daybreak of freedom and justice and equality."

MY FRIENDS, WE are certainly very happy to see each of you out this evening. We are here this evening for serious business. (*Audience: Yes*) We are here in a general sense because first and foremost we are American citizens (*That's right*) and we are determined to apply our citizenship to the fullness of its meaning. (*Yeah, That's right*) We are here also because of our love for democracy, (*Yes*) because of our deep-seated belief that democracy transformed from thin paper to thick action (*Yes*) is the greatest form of government on earth. (*That's right*).

But we are here in a specific sense, because of the bus situation in Montgomery. (*Yes*) We are here because we are to get the situation corrected. This situation is not at all new. The problem has existed over endless years. (*That's right*) For many years now Negroes in Montgomery and so many other areas have been inflicted with the paralysis of crippling fears (*Yes*) on buses in our community. (*That's right*) On so many occasions, Negroes have been intimidated and humiliated and impressed—oppressed—because of the sheer fact that they were Negroes. (*That's right*) I don't have time this evening to go into the history of these numerous cases. Many of them now are lost in the thick fog of oblivion, (*Yes*) but at least one stands before us now with glaring dimensions. (*Yes*)

Just the other day, just last Thursday to be exact, one of the finest citizens in Montgomery (*Amen*)—not one of the finest Negro citizens

(*That's right*) but one of the finest citizens in Montgomery—was taken from a bus (*Yes*) and carried to jail and arrested (*Yes*) because she refused to get up to give her seat to a white person.

• • •

Mrs. Rosa Parks is a fine person. (*Well, well said*) And since it had to happen I'm happy that it happened to a person like Mrs. Parks, for nobody can doubt the boundless outreach of her integrity! (*Sure enough*) Nobody can doubt the height of her character, (*Yes*) nobody can doubt the depth of her Christian commitment and devotion to the teachings of Jesus. (*All right*) And I'm happy since it had to happen, it happened to a person that nobody can call a disturbing factor in the community. (*All right*) Mrs. Parks is a fine Christian person, unassuming, and yet there is integrity and character there. And just because she refused to get up, she was arrested.

And you know, my friends, there comes a time when people get tired of being trampled over by the iron feet of oppression. [*Thundering applause*] There comes a time, my friends, when people get tired of being plunged across the abyss of humiliation where they experience the bleakness of nagging despair. (*Keep talking*) There comes a time when people get tired of being pushed out of the glittering sunlight of life's July, and left standing amid the piercing chill of an alpine November. (*That's right*) [*Applause*] There comes a time. (*Yes sir, Teach*) [*Applause continues*]

We are here, we are here this evening because we're tired now. (*Yes*) [*Applause*] And I want to say, that we are not here advocating violence. (*No*) We have never done that. (*Repeat that, Repeat that*) [*Applause*] I want it to be known throughout Montgomery and throughout this nation (*Well*) that we are Christian people. (*Yes*) [*Applause*] We believe in the Christian religion. We believe in the teachings of Jesus. (*Well*) The only weapon that we have in our hands this evening is the weapon of protest. (*Yes*) [*Applause*] That's all.

And certainly, certainly, this is the glory of America, with all of its faults. (*Yeah*) This is the glory of our democracy. If we were incarcerated behind the iron curtains of a Communistic nation we

couldn't do this. If we were dropped in the dungeon of a totalitarian regime we couldn't do this. (*All right*) But the great glory of American democracy is the right to protest for right. (*That's right*) [*Applause*] My friends, don't let anybody make us feel that we to be compared in our actions with the Ku Klux Klan or with the White Citizens Council. [*Applause*] There will be no crosses burned at any bus stops in Montgomery. (*Well, that's right*) There will be no white persons pulled out of their homes and taken out on some distant road and lynched for not cooperating. [*Applause*] There will be nobody amid, among us who will stand up and defy the Constitution of this nation. [*Applause*] We only assemble here because of our desire to see right exist. [*Applause*] My friends, I want it to be known that we're going to work with grim and bold determination to gain justice on the buses in this city. [*Applause*]

And we are not wrong, we are not wrong in what we are doing. (*Well*) If we are wrong, the Supreme Court of this nation is wrong. (*Yes sir*) [*Applause*] If we are wrong, the Constitution of the United States is wrong. (*Yes*) [*Applause*] If we are wrong, God Almighty is wrong. (*That's right*) [*Applause*] If we are wrong, Jesus of Nazareth was merely a utopian dreamer that never came down to earth. (*Yes*) [*Applause*] If we are wrong, justice is a lie: (*Yes*) love has no meaning. [*Applause*] And we are determined here in Montgomery to work and fight until justice runs down like water (*Yes*) [*Applause*] and righteousness like a mighty stream. (*Keep talking*) [*Applause*]

We, the disinherited of this land, we who have been oppressed so long, are tired of going through the long night of captivity. And now we are reaching out for the daybreak of freedom and justice and equality. [*Applause*] May I say to you my friends, as I come to a close, and just giving some idea of why we are assembled here, that we must keep—and I want to stress this, in all of our doings, in all of our deliberations here this evening and all of the week and while—whatever we do, we must keep God in the forefront. (*Yeah*) Let us be Christian in all of our actions. (*That's right*) But I want to tell you this evening that it is not enough for us to talk about love, love is

one of the pivotal points of the Christian face, faith. There is another side called justice. And justice is really love in calculation. (*All right*) Justice is love correcting that which revolts against love. (*Well*)

The Almighty God himself is not . . . only, . . . the God just standing out saying through Hosea, "I love you, Israel." He's also the God that stands up before the nations and said: "Be still and know that I'm God, (*Yeah*) that if you don't obey me I will break the backbone of your power, (*Yeah*) and slap you out of the orbits of your international and national relationships." (*That's right*) Standing beside love is always justice (*Yeah*) and we are only using the tools of justice. Not only are we using the tools of persuasion but we've come to see that we've got to use the tools of coercion. Not only is this thing a process of education but it is also a process of legislation. [*Applause*]

As we stand and sit here this evening and as we prepare ourselves for what lies ahead, let us go out with a grim and bold determination that we are going to stick together. [*Applause*] We are going to work together. [*Applause*] Right here in Montgomery, when the history books are written in the future, (*Yes*) somebody will have to say, "There lived a race of people, (*Well*) a black people, (*Yes sir*) 'fleecy locks and black complexion,' (*Yes*) a people who had the moral courage to stand up for their rights. [*Applause*] And thereby they injected a new meaning into the veins of history and of civilization." And we're gonna do that. God grant that we will do it before it is too late. (*Oh yeah*) As we proceed with our program let us think of these things. (*Yes*) [*Applause*]

### Questions

1. What parts of King's speech received the most enthusiastic reception from his audience?
2. In what ways does King appeal for white support of the boycott?

## CHAPTER 25

# The Sixties, 1960–1968

### 165. James Baldwin on Student Radicals (1960)

*Source: James Baldwin: "They Can't Turn Back," Mademoiselle, August 1960, pp. 324–25, 351–60. Collected in The Price of the Ticket © 1985 by James Baldwin. Published by St. Martin's. Used by arrangement with the James Baldwin Estate.*

On February 1, 1960, four students from North Carolina A & T, a black college in Greensboro, entered the local Woolworth's department store. After making a few purchases, they sat down at the lunch counter, an area reserved for whites. Told that they could not be served, they remained in their seats until the store closed. More than any other event, the Greensboro sit-in launched the 1960s, a decade of political activism. For the first time in American history, students had become the cutting edge of social change.

In 1960, the writer James Baldwin visited Tallahassee, Florida, to report on student activism there. Baldwin ruminated on the underlying causes of black protests and marveled at the militancy and idealism of the younger generation. To Baldwin, the movement challenged all Americans to rethink whether "we really want to be free" and whether freedom applied to all Americans or only to part of the population.

---

HALEY GOES OFF to give his exam and I walk outside, waiting for my taxi and watching the students. Only a decade and a half divide