Say Hello to
your very own book of
Quotes

QuotationsBook

Quotes bookmarked by Hannah Carman on QuotationsBook.com

There is nothing the matter with Americans except their ideals. The real American is all right; it is the ideal American who is all wrong.

- Chesterton, Gilbert K.

We must stop talking about the American dream and start listening to the dreams of the Americans.

- Askew, Ruben

Perhaps I am still very much of an American. That is to say, na?ve, optimistic, gullible. In the eyes of a European, what am I but an American to the core, an American who exposes his Americanism like a sore. Like it or not, I am a product of this land of plenty, a believer in superabundance, a believer in miracles.

- Miller, Henry

The keynote of American civilization is a sort of warm-hearted vulgarity. The Americans have none of the irony of the English, none of their cool poise, none of their manner. But they do have friendliness. Where an Englishman would give you his card, an American would very likely give you his shirt.

- Chandler, Raymond

The reason American cars don't sell anymore is that they have forgotten how to design the American Dream. What does it matter if you buy a car today or six months from now, because cars are not beautiful. That's why the American auto industry is in trouble: no design, no desire.

- Lagerfeld, Karl

One can not be an American by going about saying that one is an American. It is necessary to feel America, like America, love America and then work.

- O'Keeffe, Georgia

The white American man makes the white American woman maybe not superfluous but just a little kind of decoration. Not really important to turning around the wheels of the state. Well the black American woman has never been able to feel that way. No black American man at any time in our history in the United States has been able to feel that he didn't need that black woman right against him, shoulder to shoulder -- in that cotton field, on the auction block, in the ghetto, wherever.

- Angelou, Maya

As American productivity, once the exuberant engine of national wealth, has dipped to an embarrassingly uncompetitive low, Americans have shaken their heads: the country's old work ethic is dead.

- Morrow, Lance

The American ideal of sexuality appears to be rooted in the American ideal of masculinity.

This idea has created cowboys and Indians, good guys and bad guys, punks and studs, tough guys and softies, butch and faggot, black and white. It is an ideal so paralytically infantile that it is virtually forbidden -- as an unpatriotic act -- that the American boy evolve into the complexity of manhood.

- Baldwin, James

The experience of the gangster as an experience of art is universal to Americans. There is almost nothing we understand better or react to more readily or with quicker intelligence. In ways that we do not easily or willingly define, the gangster speaks for us, expressing that part of the American psyche which rejects the qualities and the demands of modern life, which rejects Americanism itself.

- Warshow, Robert

You cannot become thorough Americans if you think of yourselves in groups. America does not consist of groups. A man who thinks of himself as belonging to a particular national group in America has not yet become an American.

- Wilson, Woodrow T.

To be an American (unlike being English or French or whatever) is precisely to imagine a destiny rather than to inherit one; since we have always been, insofar as we are Americans at all, inhabitants of myth rather than history.

- Fiedler, Leslie

Americans want action for their money. They are fascinated by its self-reproducing

qualities if it's put to work. Gold-hoarding goes against the American grain; it fits in better with European pessimism than with America's traditional optimism.

- Nelson, Paula

This American system of ours. call it Americanism, call it capitalism, call it what you like, gives to each and every one of us a great opportunity if we only seize it with both hands and make the most of it.

- Capone, Al

It is, I think, an indisputable fact that Americans are, as Americans, the most self-conscious people in the world, and the most addicted to the belief that the other nations of the earth are in a conspiracy to under value them.

- James, Henry

The further jazz moves away from the stark blue continuum and the collective realities of Afro-American and American life, the more it moves into academic concert-hall lifelessness, which can be replicated by any middle class showing off its music lessons.

- Jones, Imamu Amiri Baraka

The gap between ideals and actualities, between dreams and achievements, the gap that can spur strong men to increased exertions, but can break the spirit of others -- this gap is the most conspicuous, continuous land mark in American history. It is conspicuous and continuous not because Americans achieve little, but because they dream grandly. The gap is a standing reproach to Americans; but it marks them off as a special and singularly

admirable community among the world's peoples.

- Will, George F.

Americans have mastered the art of being prosperous though broke.

- Franklin, Billy Boy

The American ideal is youth --handsome, empty youth.

- Miller, Henry

If we Americans are to survive it will have to be because we choose and elect and defend to be first of all Americans; to present to the world one homogeneous and unbroken front, whether of white Americans or black ones or purple or blue or green. If we in America have reached that point in our desperate culture when we must murder children, no matter for what reason or what color, we don't deserve to survive, and probably won t.

- Faulkner, William

The hall-mark of American humor is its pose of illiteracy.

- Knox, Ronald

Americans have been conditioned to respect newness, whatever it cost them.

- Updike, John

Inequality is as dear to the American heart as liberty itself.

- Howells, William Dean

Our attitude toward our own culture has recently been characterized by two qualities, braggadocio and petulance. Braggadocio -- empty boasting of American power, American virtue, American know-how -- has dominated our foreign relations now for some decades. Here at home -- within the family, so to speak -- our attitude to our culture expresses a superficially different spirit, the spirit of petulance. Never before, perhaps, has a culture been so fragmented into groups, each full of its own virtue, each annoyed and irritated at the others.

- Boorstin, Daniel J.

The quality of American life is an insult to the possibilities of human growth... the pollution of American space, with gadgetry and cars and TV and box architecture, brutalizes the senses, making gray neurotics of most of us, and perverse spiritual athletes and strident self-transcenders of the best of us.

- Sontag, Susan

Americans don't spend billions for entertainment. They spend it in search of entertainment.

- Unknown, Source

Income tax has made more liars out of the American people than golf.

- Rogers, Will

The American ideal, after all, is that everyone should be as much alike as possible.

- Baldwin, James

The business of America is business and the chief ideal of the American people is idealism.

- Coolidge, Calvin

To me Americanism means an imperative duty to be nobler than the rest of the world.

- London, Meyer

Americans are benevolently ignorant about Canada, while Canadians are malevolently well informed about the United States.

- Brebner, J. Bartlett

Movies are one of the bad habits that corrupted our century. Of their many sins, I offer as the worst their effect on the intellectual side of the nation. It is chiefly from that viewpoint I write of them -- as an eruption of trash that has lamed the American mind and retarded Americans from becoming a cultured people.

- Hecht, Ben

The strongest argument for the un-materialistic character of American life is the fact that we tolerate conditions that are, from a negative point of view, intolerable. What the foreigner finds most objectionable in American life is its lack of basic comfort. No nation with any sense of material well-being would endure the food we eat, the cramped

apartments we live in, the noise, the traffic, the crowded subways and buses. American life, in large cities, is a perpetual assault on the senses and the nerves; it is out of asceticism, out of unworldliness, precisely, that we bear it.

- Mccarthy, Mary

In every American there is an air of incorrigible innocence, which seems to conceal a diabolical cunning.

- Housman, A. E.

American dreams are strongest in the hearts of those who have seen America only in their dreams.

- Iyer, Pico

Americans are apt to be unduly interested in discovering what average opinion believes average opinion to be...

- Keynes, John Maynard

It is from the blues that all that may be called American music derives it most distinctive characteristics.

- Johnson, James Weldon

No country has suffered so much from the ruins of war while being at peace as the American.

- Dahlberg, Edward

Americans worship creativity the way they worship physical beauty -- as a way of enjoying elitism without guilt: God did it.

- King, Florence

Most Americans are born drunk, and really require a little wine or beer to sober them. They have a sort of permanent intoxication from within, a sort of invisible champagne. Americans do not need to drink to inspire them to do anything, though they do sometimes, I think, need a little for the deeper and more delicate purpose of teaching them how to do nothing.

- Chesterton, Gilbert K.

It's fairly obvious that American education is a cultural flop. Americans are not a well-educated people culturally, and their vocational education often has to be learned all over again after they leave school and college. On the other hand, they have open quick minds and if their education has little sharp positive value, it has not the stultifying effects of a more rigid training.

- Chandler, Raymond

It seems to be a law in American life that whatever enriches us anywhere except in the wallet inevitably becomes uneconomic.

- Baker, Russell (Wayne)

The common faults of American language are an ambition of effect, a want of simplicity,

and a turgid abuse of terms.

- Cooper, James F.

Americans are like a rich father who wishes he knew how to give his son the hardships that made him rich.

- Frost, Robert

The American white man (not to speak of the Indian, the Negro, the Mexican) hasn't a ghost of a chance. If he has any talent he's doomed to have it crushed one way or another. The American way is to seduce a man by bribery and make a prostitute of him. Or else to ignore him, starve him into submission and make a hack of him.

- Miller, Henry

It is the American vice, the democratic disease which expresses its tyranny by reducing everything unique to the level of the herd.

- Miller, Henry

Clutter is the disease of American writing. We are a society strangling in unnecessary words, circular constructions, pompous frills and meaningless jargon.

- Zinsser, William

True music must repeat the thought and inspirations of the people and the time. My people are Americans and my time is today.

- Gershwin, George

The history of American politics is littered with bodies of people who took so pure a position that they had no clout at all.

- Bradlee, Ben C.

If American politics does not look to you like a joke, a tragic dance; if you have enough blindness left in you, on any plea, on any excuse, to vote for the Democratic Party or the Republican Party (for at present machine and party are one), or for any candidate who does not stand for a new era, -- then you yourself pass into the slide of the magic-lantern; you are an exhibit, a quaint product, a curiosity of the American soil. You are part of the problem.

- Chapman, John Jay

I think the greatest curse of American society has been the idea of an easy millennialism -- that some new drug, or the next election or the latest in social engineering will solve everything.

- Warren, Robert Penn

Not wishing to be disturbed over moral issues of the political economy, Americans cling to the notion that the government is a sort of automatic machine, regulated by the balancing of competing interests.

- Mills, C. Wright

The open frontier, the hardships of homesteading from scratch, the wealth of natural

resources, the whole vast challenge of a continent waiting to be exploited, combined to produce a prevailing materialism and an American drive bent as much, if not more, on money, property, and power than was true of the Old World from which we had fled.

- Tuchman, Barbara

Among the virtues and vices that make up the British character, we have one vice, at least, that Americans ought to view with sympathy. For they appear to be the only people who share it with us. I mean our worship of the antique. I do not refer to beauty or even historical association. I refer to age, to a quantity of years.

- Golding, William

America is the world's living myth. There's no sense of wrong when you kill an American or blame America for some local disaster. This is our function, to be character types, to embody recurring themes that people can use to comfort themselves, justify themselves and so on. We're here to accommodate. Whatever people need, we provide. A myth is a useful thing.

- Delillo, Don

The Americans never use the word peasant, because they have no idea of the class which that term denotes; the ignorance of more remote ages, the simplicity of rural life, and the rusticity of the villager have not been preserved among them; and they are alike unacquainted with the virtues, the vices, the coarse habits, and the simple graces of an early stage of civilization.

- Tocqueville, Alexis De

I have no hesitation in saying that although the American woman never leaves her domestic sphere and is in some respects very dependent within it, nowhere does she enjoy a higher station. And if anyone asks me what I think the chief cause of the extraordinary prosperity and growing power of this nation, I should answer that it is due to the superiority of their women.

- Tocqueville, Alexis De

Here, the churches seemed to shrink away into eroding corners. They seem to have ceased to be essential parts of American life. They no longer give life. It is the huge buildings of commerce and trade which now align the people to attention. These in their massive manner of steel and stone say, Come unto me all ye who labor, and we will give you work.

- O'Casey, Sean

The proclamation and repetition of first principles is a constant feature of life in our democracy. Active adherence to these principles, however, has always been considered un-American. We recipients of the boon of liberty have always been ready, when faced with discomfort, to discard any and all first principles of liberty, and, further, to indict those who do not freely join with us in happily arrogating those principles.

- Mamet, David

The principle feature of American liberalism is sanctimoniousness. By loudly denouncing all bad things -- war and hunger and date rape -- liberals testify to their own terrific

goodness. More important, they promote themselves to membership in a self-selecting elite of those who care deeply about such things. It's a kind of natural aristocracy, and the wonderful thing about this aristocracy is that you don't have to be brave, smart, strong or even lucky to join it, you just have to be liberal.

- O'Rourke, P. J.

America has been a land of dreams. A land where the aspirations of people from countries cluttered with rich, cumbersome, aristocratic, ideological pasts can reach for what once seemed unattainable. Here they have tried to make dreams come true. Yet now... we are threatened by a new and particularly American menace. It is not the menace of class war, of ideology, of poverty, of disease, of illiteracy, or demagoguery, or of tyranny, though these now plague most of the world. It is the menace of unreality.

- Boorstin, Daniel J.

Humor has been a fashioning instrument in America, cleaving its way through the national life, holding tenaciously to the spread elements of that life. Its mode has often been swift and coarse and ruthless, beyond art and beyond established civilization. It has engaged in warfare against the established heritage, against the bonds of pioneer existence. Its objective --the unconscious objective of a disunited people --has seemed to be that of creating fresh bonds, a new unity, the semblance of a society and the rounded completion of an American type.

- Rourke, Constance

The problem lay buried, unspoken for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the

middle of the twentieth century in the United States. Each suburban housewife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night, she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question: Is this all?

- Friedan, Betty

The aura of the theocratic death penalty for adultery still clings to America, even outside New England, and multiple divorce, which looks to the European like serial polygamy, is the moral solution to the problem of the itch. Love comes into it too, of course, but in Europe we tend to see marital love as an eternity which encompasses hate and also indifference: when we promise to love we really mean that we promise to honor a contract. Americans, seeming to take marriage with not enough seriousness, are really taking love and sex with too much.

- Burgess, Anthony

The white youth of today have begun to react to the fact that the American Way of Life is a fossil of history. What do they care if their old baldheaded and crew-cut elders don't dig their caveman mops? They couldn't care less about the old, stiff-assed honkies who don't like their new dances: Frog, Monkey, Jerk, Swim, Watusi. All they know is that it feels good to swing to way-out body-rhythms instead of dragging across the dance floor like zombies to the dead beat of mind-smothered Mickey Mouse music.

- Cleaver, Eldridge

Unlike any other business in the United States, sports must preserve an illusion of perfect

innocence. The mounting of this illusion defines the purpose and accounts for the immense wealth of American sports. It is the ceremony of innocence that the fans pay to see -- not the game or the match or the bout, but the ritual portrayal of a world in which time stops and all hope remains plausible, in which everybody present can recover the blameless expectations of a child, where the forces of light always triumph over the powers of darkness.

- Lapham, Lewis H.

American energy is the energy of violence, of free-floating resentment and anxiety unleashed by chronic cultural dislocations which must be, for the most part, ferociously sublimated. This energy has mainly been sublimated into crude materialism and acquisitiveness. Into hectic philanthropy. Into benighted moral crusades, the most spectacular of which was Prohibition. Into an awesome talent for uglifying countryside and cities. Into the loquacity and torment of a minority of gadflies: artists, prophets, muckrakers, cranks, and nuts. And into self-punishing neuroses. But the naked violence keeps breaking through, throwing everything into question.

- Sontag, Susan

The system -- the American one, at least -- is a vast and noble experiment. It has been polestar and exemplar for other nations. But from kindergarten until she graduates from college the girl is treated in it exactly like her brothers. She studies the same subjects, becomes proficient at the same sports. Oh, it is a magnificent lore she learns, education for the mind beyond anything Jane Austen or Saint Theresa or even Mrs. Pankhurst ever dreamed. It is truly Utopian. But Utopia was never meant to exist on this disheveled planet.

- Mcginley, Phyllis

What the vast majority of American children needs is to stop being pampered, stop being indulged, stop being chauffeured, stop being catered to. In the final analysis it is not what you do for your children but what you have taught them to do for themselves that will make them successful human beings.

- Landers, Ann

Whether lawyer, politician or executive, the American who knows what's good for his career seeks an institutional rather than an individual identity. He becomes the man from NBC or IBM. The institutional imprint furnishes him with pension, meaning, proofs of existence. A man without a company name is a man without a country.

- Lapham, Lewis H.

There is a constant in the average American imagination and taste, for which the past must be preserved and celebrated in full-scale authentic copy; a philosophy of immortality as duplication. It dominates the relation with the self, with the past, not infrequently with the present, always with History and, even, with the European tradition.

- Eco, Umberto

There is one expanding horror in American life. It is that our long odyssey toward liberty, democracy and freedom-for-all may be achieved in such a way that utopia remains forever closed, and we live in freedom and hell, debased of style, not individual from one another, void of courage, our fear rationalized away.

- Mailer, Norman

I wonder that we Americans love our country at all, it having no limits and no oneness; and when you try to make it a matter of the heart, everything falls away except one's native State; --neither can you seize hold of that, unless you tear it out of the Union, bleeding and quivering.

- Hawthorne, Nathaniel

Americans are willing to go to enormous trouble and expense defending their principles with arms, very little trouble and expense advocating them with words. Temperamentally we are ready to die for certain principles (or, in the case of overripe adults, send youngsters to die), but we show little inclination to advertise the reasons for dying.

- White, Elwyn Brooks

How can we hope to remain economically competitive in a world in which... 90% of Dutch high-school students take advanced math courses and 100% of teachers in Germany have double majors, while the best we can say about our pocket of excellence is that 75% of [American] students have learned to critique tactfully?

- Alexander, Barbara J.

Music is the fourth great material want, first food, then clothes, then shelter, then music.

- Bovee, Christian Nevell

God gave man the challenge of raw materials -- not the ease of finished things. He left the

pictures unpainted and the music unsung and the problems unsolved, that man might know the joys and glories of creation.

- Unknown, Source

There are those, I know, who will reply that the liberation of humanity, the freedom of man and mind, is nothing but a dream. They are right. It is. It is the American Dream.

- Macleish, Archibald

People are so busy dreaming the American Dream, fantasizing about what they could be or have a right to be, that they're all asleep at the switch. Consequently we are living in the Age of Human Error.

- King, Florence

We grew up founding our dreams on the infinite promise of American advertising. I still believe that one can learn to play the piano by mail and that mud will give you a perfect complexion.

- Fitzgerald, Zelda

The manner in which Americans consume music has a lot to do with leaving it on their coffee tables, or using it as wallpaper for their lifestyles, like the score of a movie --it's consumed that way without any regard for how and why it's made.

- Zappa, Frank

What is life? A frenzy. What is life? An illusion, a shadow, a fiction. And the greatest good

is trivial; for all life is a dream and all dreams are dreams.

- Calderon de la Barca, Pedro

If a little dreaming is dangerous, the cure for it is not to dream less but to dream more, to dream all the time.

- Proust, Marcel

All good music resembles something. Good music stirs by its mysterious resemblance to the objects and feelings which motivated it.

- Cocteau, Jean

QuotationsBook