

Paper 1

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Ishmael, Affluenza, The End of America

In Ishmael, Quinn uses precise and informational rhetoric to drive home the point that the world was one way at one time in harmony, and somewhere along the way, an almost “subculture” broke off and formed the basis for the Taker culture. They walked along this path of righteousness for some time, and it is now time for them to realize their mistakes. The destiny of man is to learn and understand that everything and everyone has a choice to either die trying to go against the gods, or to allow all creatures to have a chance at survival. Man must realize that we are **not** the controller and possessor of all, and that we are not able nor were we created to rule the world.

I will start out by trying to explain the difference between the Taker and the Leaver cultures. The Leavers are those that live in harmony with the land. They are the ones who were the hunter/gatherers and who continued to live that way even after the agricultural revolution. They do not assume that they know all, and they live in the hands of the gods.. The Taker culture is just the opposite. They believe that they are on this earth to rule the world and all creatures in the world. They were at the center of the Fertile Crescent’s agricultural movement, and they continue to be those that are expanding technology and using all of the world’s resources until there is nothing left. There are few Leaver cultures left in the world, but they do exist. Most of the world has become of the Taker culture. This means that eventually, because there are so many in the Taker culture, we will “kill” ourselves off, or end up destroying ourselves.

Like I said, the Taker culture ultimately believes that they were created to rule the world and all other creatures that came into being, and that they are the superior entity in the scheme of things. The Leaver culture has continued to live their lives the way that

they were living before this separation of lifestyles and cultures occurred, and are in far less jeopardy of “extinction”, of a sort, than the Taker culture is. The Leavers take what they need and leave the rest alone. They don’t expand for the sake of expanding, as the Taker culture does.

Ishmael starts out by telling the narrator (Daniel, for the sake of conversation) about his life before he came to be sitting in Room 105, where he “teaches” others about the destiny of the world. He understands the world of cages, as he started out most of his memorable life a captive in a zoo. He understands the feeling of knowing that you are being contained, and tries to get Daniel to understand that people of the Taker culture are caged even though they might not realize it. Ishmael makes it a point to remind Daniel that isn’t a physical cage that keeps them restricted, but more of a cultural cage than anything. We are not all in our own cages, however, we are all in the same cage, being told the same story about why we are the way we are. We have all grown up hearing certain things about culture, and about how we came to be the way that we are, and we have accepted this story without consequence. If our elders are telling it to us, than it must be right, because why would they want to lie to us? Why would they want to keep us from being all that we can be? This is the question that Daniel asks “himself” in his epistemology paper that he writes in college. “What are we being lied to about?” Well, not in those exact words, but ultimately that was the gist of the story.

What are we being lied to about? This is the exact point that Ishmael was hoping that Daniel would make in their time together. Daniel is curious and open to a new and different suggestion of the way of life. Our culture is who is lying to us. We may think

that things are one way, when in actuality they are a completely different way. People are so used to doing things one way that they forget or don't realize that there is another way of doing things, or multiple ways of doing things. They don't take the time to figure out for themselves what they should be doing, but instead follow in the steps of our past Taker societies. On page 36, Quinn states that, "Those who refuse to take a place do not get fed." This is a very bold statement and basically, he is saying that those who do not conform to the rest of society, and adapt to the culture that is already in place, don't and won't have a place in this world in the future. This is the story that the people of the Taker society are enacting.

Quinn says that there is an explaining story, a story that tells us how we came to be the way that we are. We are enacting this story, much unbeknownst to us. By enacting this story, I mean that we are living it; we are making it come true each and everyday, but we have the power to change that story, and stop listening to "Mother Culture" tell us the same story over and over again. Many people don't think of our culture as having such a story, because we don't typically refer to it in that manner. The story that we are enacting, however, is based on this tale both directly and indirectly. Daniel starts out by telling the story of creation as it is explained in science textbooks, in order to find the beginning of the creation story. From this he gathers that the world was made for man. Now, he doesn't actually believe this, but this is what "Mother Culture" has been telling him all along. He then attempts to pull the second part of the story from the time leading up to the agriculture movement in the Fertile Crescent. From this he derives that "The world was made for man, and man was made to conquer and rule the world." Finally,

Daniel attempts, with Ishmael's help, to connect the third and final piece of Mother Culture's lie. He comes to the conclusion that "under human rule [the world] was meant to become a paradise", but, humans are fundamentally flawed, and so therefore must their paradise be as well(83).

Ishmael next attempts to teach Daniel the unspoken laws that govern society and culture as it is today. The law that governs aerodynamics is the example that Ishmael uses to help Daniel understand that there is certain knowledge about the world around us. Daniel believes that there is no certain knowledge about how people should live, and he argues that the laws of aerodynamics can't be broken because they are absolute. Ishmael counters, pointing out that you can push a plane off of a cliff and it will stay in the air for a while, but will eventually come crashing down. He compares this to our culture, in that we can survive for a short amount of time as we break the laws that govern society, but eventually, we will crash and burn.

There are other laws that help to keep the Leaver culture in tact, and these laws are laws that the Taker culture has violated throughout the years. The first of these laws that Ishmael teaches him is the law of limited competition. It takes Daniel five days to figure this law out on his own, and even still he needs Ishmael to help him work through it. Imagine if we were all on the quest for this law; it would take us an extremely long time to come up with it because 1) we do not normally seek out things that we do not know exist, and 2) we wouldn't have anyone to aide us in our quest for the correct answer to the question "What laws govern society?". In effect, we exempt ourselves from the laws that govern creation. We feel that we are **above** these laws, and therefore see fit to

completely ignore the fact that they *do* apply to us. The conclusion that they come to about this law, is that any creature that exempts itself from the “rules of competition” in effect end up “destroying the community in order to support its own expansion”. Daniel was sure that there was no certain knowledge about how to live, but he soon discovers that indeed there is a piece of certain knowledge about how to live, and that piece of certain knowledge is this law that I’ve just stated.

The beginning of the end started with Adam and Eve. Our entire culture is based on the decisions that these two people made in the Garden of Eden. It takes Daniel a long time to come to the conclusion that Genesis is actually **our** explaining story, **our** creation myth, and it takes him quite a bit longer to realize that each decision made by Eve and later Adam had a consequence on us even today. The Takers adopted this story as their own because they thought that it embodied and represented the ruling culture that they were meant to be. In all actuality, it marked the beginning of the demise of mankind. According to Genesis, Adam’s (man’s) quest was for the tree of life, which was told to him. He was not, however, informed of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (or the knowledge of who shall live and who shall die), and did not know the power that it possessed. The gods understood that Adam might think that he knew everything once he ate of the tree, and that he might think that he had gained the knowledge of the gods, when he really hadn’t. They knew that this might be a dangerous time in Adam’s life, and he could potentially destroy himself in the process of deciding who would live and who would die. This, they could not allow, for the destiny of man had to be fulfilled.

Daniel begins to learn the importance of the agricultural revolution and the impact that it has had on society and culture over the years. He begins to really learn the difference between the Taker and Leaver cultures and apply it to the events that are occurring to this day in the world. He begins to see that the more the population grows, the more food is needed to accommodate them. This accommodation leads to a still larger increase in population because there is excess food. In nature, if there isn't enough food, people go hungry until there is enough food for those that are still living. The strongest survive, and the weakest die off. This is the natural way of life. In human culture, we expand and expand our agriculture and our cultivated land in order to accommodate the growing population. In doing so, we in effect cause our population to continue to grow. We never let natural selection take its course and regulate the world's population. We instead feel that we know better than the gods, and we are the ones who will have to fix things if we ever want them to be right again. In doing so, we actually mess with and mess up the ecosystem and the natural way of life even more than we would have if we would have just let things happen naturally.

The Takers thought that they knew everything about how to live. This stemmed from the knowledge that Adam thought that he had gained in the Garden of Eden. They despised the way that the Leavers lived, because they thought that their way of life was "wrong" and the Taker way of life was "right". This is where they messed up a second time. They didn't actually know what was right, and because they thought that they did, they tried to force their values onto other cultures. First, they tried to persuade the Leavers that their way of living was better. Finally, when the Leavers insisted that they

wanted to keep living the way that they were already living, they tried to force the Leavers to adopt their way of life, and when the Leavers refused, they started to conquer them. They started to take over their territory. This is how the agricultural revolution began to spread. After a while (a few thousand years or so), the Takers couldn't imagine any way of life other than the way that they were living. They couldn't understand that there was something pure and natural and good about the way that the Leavers were living their lives. They began to detest their way of life, and vowed that they could never go back to the way of living. Though we haven't quite realized it, Daniel comes to the conclusion in the book that he has always had some type of fear of primitive life. He always thought that it was hard and harsh, but now that he is thinking about it in a different light, he realizes that maybe it wasn't so bad after all. The Takers didn't realize that they were meant to live in the hands of the gods because they had thought of their way as the right way all along. The Leavers, however, knew that living in the hands of the gods and letting the gods decide their fate was the only way to live. It was the only way to live so that they could live in peace and harmony with the earth.

The conclusion that Daniel and Ishmael come to together is that people have to be inspired. They have to be inspired by a new way of life. They have to have a genuine desire to change, and they have to be able to see that this change will affect their lives in a good way. They cannot only be scolded, but have to be encouraged as well. They have to think about the world and themselves "in a new way". This is truly the way to prolong our future. Become inspired. Do something. Tell someone.

If Quinn is correct in his conclusion, than I think that the world is in great peril. I would love to have faith in the world, and those who live in it, but I honestly cannot. I have read Affluenza and I have read The End of America and I don't think that people are ready yet. Maybe in a few years they will be ready to accept what is clearly in front of them and has been building up for years, but at this point in time, they are not ready. We are in the middle of a "regime" change, a shift in power, and people will take awhile to get used to this new power. The more people that we tell now, however, the more people will know when the time comes, and the more people they can tell. I let my mother borrow Ishmael to read when I finished a while ago, and she was enthralled. She had never thought of the world the way that the book made her really think things through. I think that people really **are** willing to learn, but they don't know **how** to learn. We must teach people the things that Ishmael taught to Daniel (maybe not in quite so many words). We must pass on Ishmael's message to our friends and family, and hope that they pass it on to their friends and families.

According to Affluenza, the affluenza disease is "a painful, contagious, socially-transmitted condition of overload, debt, anxiety, and waste resulting from the dogged pursuit of more" (2). Basically, it is America's obsession with the purchasing and obtaining of more and better goods. It is the ever-present thought that the more you have, the more people will respect and admire you. The definition and diagnosis of this disease can be seen and felt permeating the layers of wealth in our country. The already wealthy are always trying to show that they are as well off as they are, and the poorest of the poor are constantly trying to climb the rungs of the ladder of wealth. The gap between the rich

and the poor keeps widening, and if we continue at the rate we are going, all that is left will be a void.

In Affluenza, the authors talk about the many symptoms that our society and culture are suffering from. These include: shopping fever, a rash of bankruptcies, swollen expectations, chronic congestion, the stress of excess, family convulsions, dilated pupils, community chills, an ache for meaning, social scars, resource exhaustion, industrial diarrhea, the addictive virus, and dissatisfaction guaranteed. Each and every person is afflicted with this disease; no poor or rich man being exempt. The poor are “conditioned to want the good life but are given very little possibility of attaining it” according to the book (xviii). I agree with this assertion that the authors make. I think that we tell the poor that the more they have, the more they will be respected, and yet we make it virtually impossible for them to get anywhere. Many can’t get decent jobs because they’re stuck in a so-called “rut” that they can’t find their way out of, which leaves them flailing even more profusely for something to grab onto in order to pull themselves out. If we honestly wanted to help the poor, so much emphasis wouldn’t be placed on “things” or possessions, but rather on actions.

Our society came to be this way through a succession of events beginning after the Great Depression. As the book says, houses have progressively gotten larger and larger each decade, primarily starting in the 1940s, presumably because we need more room to put our “stuff” in. What happened in the mid-century to make people decide that they needed and/or wanted more things to fill their lives with? This is a question that I have asked myself since I started reading Affluenza. While I still cannot come up with an

answer that satisfies the question, I think that it can partially be explained by values and work-ethic. My great-great grandmother has been saving her entire life. The only thing she ever spends anything on, really, is the annual Christmas Party that she hosts at a local banquet hall for her children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great grandchildren. It is a tradition that we have held dear for many years now, and for as long as I can remember she has been paying for each and every person to attend. She is 92 years old, and she still works 20 hours a week, without fail.

People don't realize what is going on in their own society because they aren't taking the time to think about, and to look around. They're too busy, or too obsessed, trying to obtain more and more. Affluenza mentions the book The Time Bind, which I happen to have read for a sociology class I took last semester. In it, it talks about how each new generation is working more and more, and spending less time with their kids. People feel like they **need** to work 60-70 hours each week just to keep up with everyone else. I think that this "need" stems from exactly what Affluenza is talking about. I think that this "need" comes from people's desire to want more "stuff". If we have more things, we think that we are better off, and we think that we have "made it". This is the general thought that I think the book is trying to point out to us.

In Ishmael, Quinn talks about takers and leavers and how they have each affected today's society in their own way. Much of the world is filled with takers, America making up the majority of them, and these takers keep using up our natural resources. The more that we consume, which is the epidemic described in Affluenza, the more our natural resources are depleted and we begin to shrink away as a society. On page 93 in

Affluenza, the authors talk about the “real cost” of a computer: 140 pounds of solid and hazardous waste, 7,000 gallons of wastewater, and about one-fourth of its “lifetime energy consumption”. People don’t realize that this is what is being thrown out each and every time that they purchase a new computer. Even if people did know, I honestly don’t think that they would bother to think twice. We want what we want, and that is all there is to it. Like Quinn talks about, it’s not that we don’t know; it’s just that we don’t care. The theory for society is that humans were put on this earth to rule everything, and that is exactly what we are going to do. We are going to take over all resources that are available, and eventually there will be nothing left. In my opinion, we aren’t living as we should be, as evidenced by my behemoth of a computer (a PowerMac G5 tower with a 20” LCD screen). I was always proud of my computer because it was so powerful and fantastic, and it let me do whatever graphic editing and designing that I wanted, but after reading that part in Affluenza, I’m not so sure about how proud I am to have this computer now.

There are consequences to this disease, and they can be found in all aspects of life. Our time at home is significantly reduced because we have to spend more time at work, trying to make money so that we can buy more things. We feel that the more we have, the happier we will be, when I think that in actuality, the more time we spend with our families, the happier we will be. Isn’t that why people start families in the first place, anyways? Don’t people start families because they want to love and care for each other and children? What happens when they have to hire someone else to love and care for their children because they’re too busy working to pay off the debt that they have from

the mortgage of the overpriced house that they bought to accommodate a larger family? They're too busy earning the money to see their children grow up, that is what happens. They spend too much time shopping, and not enough time at home playing with their kids. On page 14 of Affluenza, the authors state that Americans now "spend six hours a week shopping and only forty minutes playing with [their] kids".

In relation to affluenza, nothing will change as long as the people who are most affected by and who most benefit from the difference in income between the richest and the poorest of people are in power and calling the shots. They have to put aside their greed and need for money, and see the bigger picture. Shorter workweeks would benefit everyone, giving them time to relax. People wouldn't be sick as much, and we would maybe be able to afford universal healthcare because of it. With people not getting sick as often, less people would be taking advantage of the doctor's office and the hospital visits that many people who are sick require. Also, if politicians didn't have to spend so much on elections (\$100 million in 2000 for a NJ Senate race), then things would be better (231). If politicians were given equal media time in order to present their views, and weren't allowed to have those stupid little commercials that they have either promoting themselves or smashing their other candidates, than they wouldn't need to spend as much money on the election process as they are.

I think that even if Americans worked shorter workweeks, purchased fewer "things", drove more fuel-efficient cars, drove less, took fewer long-distance vacations, and really just consumed less in general, the economy would do fine. While it might be a little bit rough at first, the economy would eventually equalize itself, because that is the way that

it was designed. Prices would be lowered, people would be able to live comfortably, and things would be much better. We would have less waste, less spending, less time at work, less stress, and best of all, more time to spend with our families and friends.

With a slight adjustment to income, spending habits, and workweeks, people would be able to spend more time raising their own children. They would be able to go to their baseball or basketball games, to their ballet recitals or concerts. Parents would be able to be parents. They would also have more time to socialize with neighbors, as they would be able to be home more on the weekends, and earlier during the week. They would be able to spend time with their friends. Basically, they would be able to live their lives in the way that they wanted to originally live their life.

American businesses have been creating and creating and marketing and marketing for years now. Each year there is something new and better than there was last year. A lot of it has to do with technology, and how it is becoming more advanced each and every year. Many American businesses market to children, if they're trying to sell children's toys. Not only do they market to children incessantly, but they also market to adults. It may not seem like it, but in my marketing class we discussed how the marketing strategies of many companies are to advertise to the children and the parents, so that when the children ask for a particular item, the parents know what it is and can buy it for them with no problems. This has become such a prevalent thing in society today, that I don't think that people really realize it anymore. Marketing plays a major role in affluenza, and will continue to play a huge role. Marketing has been around for as long as

anyone can really remember, and I don't think that it will ever cease to exist. Without marketing, we wouldn't know that half of the products are out there that are out there.

I think that affluenza isn't necessarily needed for a healthy economy, but I do think that spending is required. People can't just buy only what they need, because otherwise we wouldn't have any advancement in technology. Some over spending is required, I think, but too much and it's not good. A healthy economy is based on steady purchasing, spending, and invention. Without spending, the economy would sink and things would not be very good in America. I think that having a healthy economy and a sick society/culture is completely possible. There's a lot of talk recently about the economy not doing so well, but the economy always bounces back. People are still spending, and they are still purchasing items that they may or may not really need. I think that recessions are necessary to remind people of what they can live without, and what they absolutely need to have to survive. Without recessions, I think that people would never be shocked back into realizing that they don't need to have as much stuff as they are buying.

In Ishmael, Quinn talks about the Taker culture. Takers are spenders, almost by definition. They are an expanding culture, always inventing something new and always taking over new parts of land that they didn't own before. The Taker culture is reliant on the creation of wealth and their expansion. Just as the agriculturists took over the land of the hunter/gatherers in the beginning of the separation of Takers and Leavers, Takers are still "conquering" and taking over land and space that did not belong to them. This expansion has caused the increase in purchasing from people in this society. We are of the Taker culture; there is no denying that. We are obsessed with wealth and "stuff" and

we will stop at nothing to have everything that we feel that we “need”. We are infected with affluenza, and it’s about time that we all get a cold dose of reality.

When the Founding Fathers drafted the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights, they wanted to make sure that this new country would always be free of the tyranny that the Crown afflicted on them. They wanted to make sure that they could no longer be ruled and controlled by the Crown. They wanted to create a form of government that would give the power to the people, and allow them to decide on the fate of their nation. They were trying to ensure that people had the same basic rights, and different people were not subject to different rules. Mostly, the Founding Fathers wanted to make sure that America would stay a “free nation” for the rest of its time. This is why they wrote the system of checks and balances into these documents. They wanted to make sure that one single person did not have unlimited and unchecked power.

In The End of America by Naomi Wolf, she discusses the end of the rights that the Founding Fathers created for us. Peace activists, journalists, left-wing politicians and supporters, writers, members of certain religions and anyone else who speaks out against or criticizes the current administration have slowly seen their rights disintegrate. People are being held for years on end without so much as a visit by counsel or even contact with other people. By the standards of today, if the government ever found out what we talked about in Social, Legal, and Political Environment of Business, Professor King as well as all of us students could be subject to the loss of our rights. We could be seen as critical of the administration and therefore detained at say, Guantánamo Bay, for example. It seems

that there is no limit to the ends that they will go to, in order to silence those who do not conform to what the administration feels our society should be like.

The really sad part about all of all of this is that most Americans don't even realize that any of it is happening. They read some headlines about how all of these journalists died over in Iraq because the U.S. "accidentally" bombed the exact location that they were staying at. They may hear little things about Guantánamo, such as the rumors that it's a "secret prison", but all of those rumors and ideas are quickly and effectively squashed by those in power because those are not the kinds of things that they want Americans to be thinking about. The day that Americans wake up and realize that we are no longer free, will be the day that America is officially declared a dictatorship. Now, I don't entirely agree with everything that Naomi says in her book, but I do find a lot of the points that she makes interesting. I know that a lot of her arguments are one-sided, and I accept that she writes the book this way in order to get her point across. Unfortunately, I think that America is so blinded by its idealistic society based on the democratic process that they will not realize what has hit them until they're knocked unconscious by the giant boulder that falls on them.

Wolf is so concerned about society and whether or not they accept and are informed about this "fascist shift" in America because she feels that if we as Americans do not act quickly, all of our liberties will soon be eradicated. We will soon be controlled by someone who thinks that he (or she) knows what is best for the country, and he/she alone can give it to us. This will surely be the end of our democracy, and our system of checks and balances. Wolf also brings to attention the "echoes" as she calls them of the past,

which are slowly becoming present in our society today. A couple of these “echoes” include: The USA PATRIOT Act letting the federal government force doctors to give up confidential medical records with no warrant (in Nazi Germany doctors were required to give previously private medical records to the state); President Bush allowing the mistreatment of prisoners at Guantánamo Bay because they aren’t “covered by the Geneva Conventions” (Nazi troops invading Russia were allowed to treat the enemy harshly because they weren’t covered under the Hague Conventions).

Wolf talks about the history of the governments of many different countries including Italy in the 1920s, Russia and Germany in the 1930s, East Germany in the 1950s, Czechoslovakia in the 1960s, Chile in 1973, and Communist China in the 1980s and 1990s. She says that Americans think that it couldn’t possibly happen to America; that we are completely and utterly resistant to a government of that sort. Wolf outlines ten steps to dictatorship in her introduction, and proceeds in the rest of her book, to elaborate on these ten steps. In going through each of these steps, you will begin to see how she came about her conclusions.

Starting out, we have Blackwater (a paramilitary force used by Bush to supplement the National Guard and Army troupes). Blackwater was dispatched in New Orleans, LA after Hurricane Katrina completely ruined the entire city. They were sent to keep order and help with cleanup. While down there, a couple of them supposedly opened fire on the general area where “black gangbangers” were suspected of shooting something/someone. Who knows what actually was going on, and what eventually came of this situation.

Back in March of 2007, nine U.S. Attorneys were fired for no reason in particular. Apparently, there were talks about “purging” all of the U.S. Attorneys and, possibly, replacing them with purely Republican attorneys. Nowhere in the book does it say this, but I am going to assume that each of the nine U.S. Attorneys who were fired were Democrats, or were Republicans who criticized and didn’t agree with the way that things were being run at the time. The same thing happened when, in 1933, Goebbels fired many of the civil service branch (mainly judges and state attorneys) based on the fact that they were not “loyal” enough.

Next, we have some dealings with the press. Recently, journalists who are overseas covering the War in Iraq have been getting captured, injured, or killed. Al Jazeera was targeted, in my opinion, because they spoke out and showed things that the Bush administration didn’t approve of. The U.S. military killed many journalists that day, in that building, and I believe that it was because they were journalists and they were expressing their right to free speech. Many journalists and writers who openly speak out, and express their distaste with what is happening here are blackmailed or forced to write statements refuting their previous convictions. Many are being placed on “the list” as Wolf describes, and it is being made impossible for them to speak freely about their opinions on the state of the world today. All lines of communication are in jeopardy, and soon people will have to sneak around like they’re making secret illegal deals in order to talk to a source, or to conduct interviews. The USA PATRIOT Act has increased surveillance and increased the government’s ability to “spy” on us citizens without our knowledge (or with it, but without our consent).

Lately, PBS and NPR have slowly been becoming more and more conservative in their broadcasts. In 2004, Kenneth Tomlinson was “installed”, or rather “planted” as the chair of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. In his year “regime”, Tomlinson tried to supposedly balance out the weight of liberals and conservatives on the public broadcasting channel. While PBS does produce children’s shows, it also produces newscasts and hosts concerts. Since Tomlinson was planted in the public broadcasting spectrum, the news broadcasts have become seemingly “tamer” and more subdued than they previously had been.

Since 9/11, travel has been immensely restricted: from the items that we can bring on board with us to the amount of searching that we are required to go through. They have certainly made it harder for us all to travel. I know that it is supposed to be “in the best interest” of the American public to have all of these extra searches, but sometimes it gets a little ridiculous. Wolf talks about how she knows people who have been searched for HOURS – not just minutes, but hours. Can you imagine? You show up for your flight 2 hours early, thinking that you can grab some breakfast and it will give you some time to clear security, but the TSA has other plans for you. They take you, your carry-on luggage, and your regular luggage (which they got from when you checked in), and bring you to this tiny little room and start ransacking your stuff. Meanwhile, the clock is ticking and you’re getting closer and closer to the time that your flight leaves. The more you ask them about the time, the slower they go. They WANT you to miss your flight! This is my impression of the new security regulations. Sometimes, it’s a little ridiculous and you just have to say that enough is enough. In her book, Wolf also talks about journalists and

activists who have been “rerouted” to locations outside of the country and taken into captivity. It is absurd that we are letting the American government get away with this!

There are so many different examples and arguments that I could recount and analyze from her book, that there just isn't enough time or space for me to do it here! I think that all of Wolf's arguments, observations, and research points to the decline and the disintegration of American rights. I'm not sure that they are as severe as she is claiming that they are, because there are two sides to any story, but I definitely think that she has something here by telling people to become aware. People need to wake up and realize that it really isn't as great as the Bush administration has been telling us that it is the past 7 years. Things have gone to (**expletive**) and it's time that we fix them! If we don't take the time to “fight back”, so to speak, and take action as soon as we can, then we are in for a very dictated life. We have to take back the liberties that were entrusted to us by our Founding Fathers. We have to continue their hopes for this country; otherwise we will become just another Germany, or Communist China, or Russia or Chile. We will become just another country, spoken at and commanded by a dictator.

At first, when I had to think about relating all three of these books together (Ishmael, Affluenza, and The End of America) I thought to myself, “How am I going to do this? These books are so different, but I can tell that they're also very similar.” Then, I realized as I was rereading through everything that I have written, that they most certainly do come together. Why don't we notice the things that are happening with our political system today? It's because we're all too busy to stop and smell the roses, so to speak. We are so obsessed with making money, that all we do it work, work, and work some more.

We don't take the time to think about why journalists are being killed, or about why we are depleting our natural resources. We don't take the time to think about why our president is passing these ridiculous laws that give him so much power, because we don't care. We care more about our wealth than we do about the welfare of our nation. We care more for the "stuff" packed away in our garage than we do for saving the world from itself. We don't want to take the time to consider that there might be other options out there other than to live the way that we have been taught to live our entire lives. We don't want to mess with the system because messing with the system means change. We reject change, because it means that we will have to adapt. We don't like to adapt because it means that something could potentially go wrong and mess everything up. We have to snap out of this little daze that we're in, and look around us to see the big picture. We are eating up everything that we have left in the world, and quickly, and we are doing nothing about it. We are allowing ourselves to be dictated to, and essentially owned, and are doing nothing about it. We are working and spending ourselves into an early grave, and we don't know how to dig ourselves out. We need to pause and look around us, and think about the possible implications of our actions. We need to realize that it needs to end with us: all of it. My generation, our children, our grandchildren; we all need to work for change. Without change, we are a hopeless nation that will eventually kill itself.

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