

## Letters from Grandpa # 134

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will focus on Thomas Sowell. I assume you are familiar with him, but his writings are so relevant to your future that I want to make sure.

Sowell was born June 30, 1930 in Gastonia, North Carolina. His father died shortly before he was born, and his mother, a housemaid, already had four children. A great-aunt and her two grown daughters adopted Sowell and raised him. When he was nine, his family moved from Charlotte, North Carolina to Harlem, New York City. He qualified for Stuyvesant High School, a prestigious academic high school in New York City; he was the first in his family to study beyond the sixth grade. However, he was forced to drop out at age 17 because of financial difficulties and problems in his home.

He was drafted into the military in 1951 during the Korean War and became a Marine Corps photographer. After being discharged he went to college. He graduated from Harvard with a Bachelor's degree in 1958, earned his master's from Columbia University in 1959, and his Doctorate in Economics from the University of Chicago in 1968. Since that time he has served on the faculties of several universities, written over 30 books, and become a syndicated columnist. He recently retired at the age of 86.

His intellect, honesty and integrity set a good example for everyone. Here are some quotes illustrative of his willingness to not be politically correct.

On Academia and "Intellectuals":

"If you have always believed that everyone should play by the same rules and be judged by the same standards, that would have gotten you labeled a radical 60 years ago, a liberal 30 years ago and a racist today."

"The next time some academics tell you how important diversity is, ask how many Republicans there are in their sociology department."

"The most fundamental fact about the ideas of the political left is that they do not work. Therefore we should not be surprised to find the left concentrated in institutions where ideas do not have to work in order to survive."

"Socialism in general has a record of failure so blatant that only an intellectual could ignore or evade it."

"Virtually no idea is too ridiculous to be accepted, even by very intelligent and highly educated people, if it provides a way for them to feel special and important. Some confuse that feeling with idealism."

"In an age of artificial intelligence, too many of our schools and colleges are producing artificial stupidity."

"Don't you get tired of seeing so many 'non-conformists' with the same non-conformist

look?”

“It’s amazing how much panic one honest man can spread among a multitude of hypocrites.”

“People who have time on their hands will inevitably waste the time of people who have work to do.”

#### On Government and Politics:

“When you want to help people, you tell them the truth. When you want to help yourself, you tell them what they want to hear.”

“The first lesson of economics is scarcity: There is never enough of anything to satisfy all those who want it. The first lesson of politics is to disregard the first lesson of economics.”

“Socialism is a wonderful idea. It is only as a reality that it has been disastrous. Among people of every race, color, and creed, all around the world, socialism has led to hunger in countries that used to have surplus food to export.... Nevertheless, for many of those who deal primarily in ideas, socialism remains an attractive idea — in fact, seductive. Its every failure is explained away as due to the inadequacies of particular leaders.”

“What is history but the story of how politicians have squandered the blood and treasure of the human race?”

“If politicians stopped meddling with things they don’t understand, there would be a more drastic reduction in the size of government than anyone in either party advocates.”

Many on the political left are so entranced by the beauty of their vision that they cannot see the ugly reality they are creating in the real world.”

#### On Economics and Wealth Redistribution:

“Helping those who have been struck by unforeseeable misfortunes is fundamentally different from making dependency a way of life.”

“I have never understood why it is ‘greed’ to want to keep the money you have earned but not greed to want to take somebody else’s money.”

“If you have been voting for politicians who promise to give you goodies at someone else’s expense, then you have no right to complain when they take your money and give it to someone else, including themselves.”

“Unfortunately, the real minimum wage is always zero, regardless of the laws, and that is the wage that many workers receive in the wake of the creation or escalation of a government-mandated minimum wage, because they lose their jobs or fail to find jobs when they enter the labor force. Making it illegal to pay less than a given amount does not make a worker’s productivity worth that amount—and, if it is not, that worker is unlikely to be employed.”

Sowell believed the Clintons were crooked, but felt they would have done less damage to the country than Obama has done. The following quote by C. S. Lewis was one of his favorites. *“Of all tyrannies, a tyranny sincerely exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive. It would be better to live under robber barons than under omnipotent moral busybodies. The robber baron’s cruelty may sometimes sleep, his cupidity may at some point be satiated; but those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end for they do so with the approval of their*

*own conscience. “*

Thanks for indulging me.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce