



Them

Why We Hate Each Other – And How to Heal

By: Ben Sasse

Book Description (from Amazon)

Publication Date: Oct. 16, 2018

*** AN INSTANT NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER ***

From the New York Times bestselling author of *The Vanishing American Adult*, an intimate and urgent assessment of the existential crisis facing our nation.

Something is wrong. We all know it.

American life expectancy is declining for a third straight year. Birth rates are dropping. Nearly half of us think the other political party isn't just wrong; they're evil. We're the richest country in history, but we've never been more pessimistic.

What's causing the despair?

In *Them*, bestselling author and U.S. senator Ben Sasse argues that, contrary to conventional wisdom, our crisis isn't really about politics. It's that we're so lonely we can't see straight—and it bubbles out as anger.

Local communities are collapsing. Across the nation, little leagues are disappearing, Rotary clubs are dwindling, and in all likelihood, we don't know the neighbor two doors down. Work isn't what we'd hoped: less certainty, few lifelong coworkers, shallow purpose. Stable families and enduring friendships—life's fundamental pillars—are in statistical freefall.

As traditional tribes of place evaporate, we rally against common enemies so we can feel part of a team. No institutions command widespread public trust, enabling foreign intelligence agencies to use technology to pick the scabs on our toxic divisions. We're in danger of half of us believing different facts than the other half, and the digital revolution throws gas on the fire.

There's a path forward—but reversing our decline requires something radical: a rediscovery of real places and human-to-human relationships. Even as technology nudges us to become *rootless*, Sasse shows how only a recovery of *rootedness* can heal our lonely souls.

America wants you to be happy, but more urgently, America needs you to love your neighbor and connect with your community. Fixing what's wrong with the country depends on it.

Strengthening your competitive advantage through people development, team training, and coaching

www.thegoblegroup.com

My Synopsis:

Ben Sasse appears to be a true statesman who is focused on how to make America better for us all. Sharing simple ideas that require individuals to take back control of our lives that too many have ceded to the talking heads of politics. But, we as individuals have to be willing to take those steps, and that is the crux of what Ben shares.

Them

Why We Hate Each Other – And How to Heal

- p. 1 **More Politics Can't Fix This**
- p. 4 The revolution that has given tens of millions of Americans the opportunity to live like historic royalty has also outpaced our ability to figure out what community, friendships, and relationships should look like in the modern world.
- p. 8 The assumption now isn't just that folks are incompetent but that they are evil.
- p. 9 ...we're facing problems that feel too big for us, so we're lashing out at each other, often over less important matters.
- p. 11 ...the net result is simple: Most Americans just don't have community cohesion like we used to.
- p.13 Right now partisan tribalism is statistically higher than at any point since the Civil War.
- p. 14 If we really want to be happy, we must plant roots and tend them.
- p. 15 What's wrong with America, then, starts with one uncomfortable word. Loneliness.
- p. 17 **Part I: Collapsing Tribes**
- p. 19 **Our Loneliness Epidemic**
- p. 21 Isolation turned something dangerous into something deadly.
- p. 21 Their deaths have gone unremembered because their lives went unnoticed.
- p. 23 Loneliness is killing us.
- p. 23 Positive social relationships are second only to genetics in predicting health and longevity in humans. (study)
- p. 23 ...Loneliness drives obesity, not vice versa, as previously thought.
- p. 26 The natural, healthy stimulus of community is vanishing, and the damaging health effects of persistent loneliness are being compounded...
- p. 28 We're hyperconnected, and we're disconnected.
- p. 29 "Our kids" used to indicate a sense of neighborhood responsibility, in which parents kept an eye out for all the kids on the block, not just their own.
- p. 29 ...as social capital has vanished, certain groups have suffered disproportionately and are at risk of being thrown into multigenerational cycles of poverty and underachievement.
- p. 31 ...things are going relatively well for the top one-third – but heading into disastrous territory for everyone else.
- p. 32 ...the difference between rich and poor is no longer determined by wages or property as much as education – and then by social network.
- p. 34 It's better to race for a moment than watch for a lifetime.
- p. 35 ...mistakes that are insignificant for the well-networked individual can be disastrous for the young man or woman lacking any margin for miscalculation.

Strengthening your competitive advantage through people development, team training, and coaching

www.thegoblegroup.com

- p. 37 ...kids raised without stable families and without that crucial source of social capital are often crippled by even modest impediments.
- p. 37 We need to get more comfortable admitting the truth that there are, today, effectively two different Americas...
- p. 37 We don't need to agree on every complex moral issue to begin a discussion.
- p. 38 The education gap is producing a pregnancy gap of nearly a decade, compared to a gap of just two years half a century ago. There is no need to have a grand moral debate here before simply recognizing the difference that this decade is making in the lines of children.
- p. 43 Not only do Americans no longer know their neighbors, but in many cases they simply don't know many people who aren't like them.
- p. 43 ...there's a massive quantity of data to support America's well-documented, growing worries that who gets ahead in America now has less to do with how hard you work than simply with who you know.
- p. 44 Social scientists have identified four primary drivers of human happiness:
1. Do you have family you love, and who love you?
 2. Do you have friends you trust and confide in?
 3. Do you have work that matters – callings that benefit your neighbors?
 4. Do you have a worldview that can make sense of suffering and death?
- p. 47 **Strangers at Work**
- p. 51 The disruption in communities all across the country when the number one job (driver) begins to evaporate could be calamitous.
- p. 52 ...large-scale manufacturing is never going to be the cornerstone of America work again.
- p. 55 We're all prone to misjudge the size of a problem, for a variety of reasons: maybe it's politically polarizing, or maybe it affects us personally.
- p. 57 ...half of all jobs in the global economy could be automated not just by speculative technologies but rather simply by the broad dissemination of already existing technologies.
- p. 59 Emotional intelligence, communication skills, and creative problem solving will be increasingly demanded.
- p. 60 ...genuine wisdom will require not just acknowledging the disruption of our ways of making a living, but also of our ways of thinking about ourselves, our identities, and our places in the world.
- p. 61 ...what most workers are feeling is uncertainty. And uncertainty is scary.
- p. 62 ...technological and economic changes seem to be coming faster and faster, and our roots seem shallower and shallower.
- p. 62 There's genuine tragedy in how we've cut ourselves off from being needed – and the consequent loneliness runs deep.
- p. 64 What we discover, when we put our skills and talents to use in work, is that our occupation links us to other people and gives us an identity and a sense of meaning.
- p. 65 We're made to connect to others, we're created to solve problems, and we can achieve these ends in part through our occupations, our work.
- p. 67 As jobs last a shorter time, and become less connected to tangible communities, we can hardly be surprised that people are feeling more detached and rootless.
- p. 69 Community is collapsing in America because the rooted are vanishing; the stuck have too many crises in their lives to think about much else; and the mobile are too schizophrenic to busy themselves with the care and feeding of their flesh-and-blood communities.

Strengthening your competitive advantage through people development, team training, and coaching

www.thegoblegroup.com

- p. 71 The slums didn't give a handout of poverty; they helped to entrench it.
- p. 71 What sustains people, really, is sharing a common cause, a common purpose – a sense of being in it together.
- p. 72 We're meant to be *for* things and people, but absent that, most of us will choose to be against things and people, together, rather than to be alone.
- p. 73 **Part II: Anti-Tribes**
- p. 75 **The Comforts of Politainment**
- p. 76 The challenge today isn't catching the news; it's figuring out whatever *is* news.
- p. 76 From the moment we wake up, we're plugged in.
- p. 78 It turns out that television is not very good at giving us the news we need, but it's exceptionally good at selling a kind of cut-rate comfort.
- p. 79 ...we've erased the distinction between "news" and opinion; and we're losing the habits that could help us make calm, considered decisions.
- p. 80 As news has become faster...we've become overwhelmed by titillating information from every neighborhood at once, and more susceptible to spectacular claims.
- p. 80 Politainment inevitably distorts our political foes like a gigantic funhouse mirror.
- p. 81 Many of our television hosts are modern day carnival barkers.
- p. 82 ...confirmation bias and motivated reasoning have become the organizing principle of our media consumption and our political discourse.
- p. 82 ...people filter out most information that conflicts with their presuppositions or desired conclusions.
- p. 83 ...academic research is confirming what most of us see every day: people work hard to confirm their biases, not to challenge them.
- p. 85 ...we usually yearn for internal coherence far more strongly than we yearn for external correspondence with reality.
- p. 87 This journalistic bubble inevitably creates distance between reporters and their audience.
- p. 88 ...all of us need the insights and perspective that rigorous, thoughtful reporting produces.
- p. 92 When you consistently do not see your perspective mirrored in the national media, you're likely to think that media is hopelessly out of touch.
- p. 93 ...Trump didn't make this country immoral, he just took advantage of the fact that it already was.
- p. 99 ...there is also far too little soul-searching by national political reporters about why the caricature of the "liberal elite" rings so true to so many of their fellow citizens.
- p. 100 ...hyperbole like this desensitizes viewers to what is really important and makes thoughtful political discussion more unlikely.
- p. 102 ...we have a country of increasingly disconnected people sitting around watching news that riles them up.
- p. 103 Our isolation has deprived us of healthy local tribes with whom we share values and goals and ways of life that uplift us, and so we fall into "anti-tribes" defined by what we're against rather than what we're for.
- p. 105 **The Polarization Business Model**
- p. 108 ...having foes has real psychic value. Enemies help give life cohesion.
- p. 110 The politainment industry...is constantly honing its abilities to measure consumer preferences and figuring out ways to tailor content to match the target audience.
- p. 111 In our digital age, provocative social media is the only profitable social media.
- p. 118 Technology gave rise to the television cartel – and then technology broke it up.

- p. 120 As “community” moves from family and friends to people who exist only as usernames, it becomes a lot easier to lose your hold on reality.
- p. 124 In exchange for mild accusations and exaggerations, they (media personalities) get rich and famous – and we, their viewers and listeners, get a shallower, angrier, less workable America.
- p. 125 ... (Trump) did not create our politainment problem...He’s just exploited them better than anyone else has.
- p. 126 Media outlets need to keep the clicks coming, and Trump is always looking for attention. They attack one another relentlessly, but they’re not really enemies; they’re a perfect match in the new attention economy.
- p. 127 It might be the case that marketing swallows the journalistic enterprise whole.
- p. 128 More technology makes the world smaller, but that doesn’t mean that when we’re pressed together, we’ll hug.
- p. 128 Moral dilemmas can’t be resolved by a computer.
- p. 129 We are going through a civilization-warping crisis of public trust.
- p. 129 We might know a lot, but we aren’t necessarily becoming wiser.
- p. 130 What is wrong with us is exacerbated by technology, but it did not originate with technology.
- p. 131 **Part III: Our to Do List**
- p. 133 **Become Americans Again**
- p. 134 The American idea is a commitment to the universal dignity of persons everywhere.
- p. 136 America is an idea until we let it devolve into something less.
- p. 137 ...we’ve come to a point where widespread ignorance of who we are and what we believe threatens our future.
- p. 137 ...our wisest statesmen have warned that America’s greatest risk has never been attack from abroad but rot from within.
- p. 138 Freedom is never more than one generation from extinction. – Ronald Reagan
- p. 142 Our founders built democratic government as a new alternative to monarchy, but they also intentionally built an anti-majoritarian government because the worst form of democracy – mob rule – is always a danger against which we must be on guard.
- p. 144 Power is for a purpose, and that purpose is not to elevate those who wield it.
- p. 145 ...the abandonment of shared principles would be the most likely way America would come apart.
- p. 147 Personal humility in our political culture flows from the awareness of *both* our neighbor’s capacity for good, and our own capacity for error.
- p. 148 No one’s mind can be changed with a billy club.
- p. 150 In America, we are all minorities. And so we should all be nervous about any temporary majority and the power it seeks.
- p. 150 People will inevitably battle; the challenge is how to successfully channel these conflicts into words rather than swords.
- p. 152 Free speech and the ability to tolerate offense are the hallmarks of a free and open society.
– Erika Christakis
- p. 158 ...we’re increasingly beholden to an us vs. them paradigm. We need to see that there’s a better way.
- p. 158 Cultures are changed for the better only when individuals are persuaded and transformed, not beaten into silence.
- p. 161 Reverend King knew that the path to success could not be zero-sum – our side wins and your side loses.
- p. 161 In those days the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the moves of society. – MLK

- p. 162 Deep, enduring change does not come through legislation or elections. Meaningful change comes as lots and lots of individual minds are persuaded and hearts are changed.
- p. 162 Talking begins with recognizing our blind spots.
- p. 165 America is the idea of freedom and justice that we all embrace and pursue in common.
- p. 166 Day by day, what you choose, what you think, and what you do is who you become. – Heraclitus
- p. 167 **Set Tech Limits**
- p. 168 We're on the cusp of enormous challenges not just to our powers of control, but to our entire idea of what it means to be *human*.
- p. 171 Technology is going to keep substituting for labor, and it is going to deliver both higher quality and lower cost results.
- p. 174 We're going to have a hard time resisting the allure of next generation machines.
- p. 174 Digital connections and the social robot may offer the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship. – Sherry Turkle
- p. 175 Recognize that overindulgence turns us into slaves.
- p. 177 What happens if I start to saturate my life with technology that I wear – or technology inside my body?
- p. 178 We should level with each other about the rafts of emerging data that suggest that we're losing something important as we become more attached to our screens. We're more anxious, more distracted, more depressed, and more downright exhausted...We insulate ourselves behind filtered Instagram photos. And all the time we become *lonelier*, parched for genuine community.
- p. 178 We've become addicted to distraction.
- p. 178 The ties we form through the Internet are not, in the end, the ties that bind. They are merely the ties that preoccupy. – Sherry Turkle
- p. 182 Phones are social prophylactics, protecting us from the unwanted negative effects of face to face interaction.
- p. 187 Social media accounts are exercises in selection bias...
- p. 192 (Cal Newport)...argues that the vast majority of us, the vast majority of the time, are pretending we are using them (social media) as tools when we're really using them as distractions.
- p. 193 Anything that can cause us to hand over our time inevitably shapes who we are.
- p. 195 Everyone is busy – but when our phones are on, we feel even busier than we're required to be.
- p. 203 **Buy a Cemetery Plot**
- p. 207 The repotting hypothesis: mobility, like frequent repotting of plants, tends to disrupt root systems, and it takes time for an uprooted individual to put down new roots. – Robert Putnam
- p. 208 In the real world, the only real community is where you are.
- p. 210 New research is showing that – surprisingly – having too many options actually diminishes happiness, instead of promoting it.
- p. 213 When we look for reasons to avoid investing our time or energy or resources in a particular place or at a particular moment, what we're really doing is trying to dodge the call that it might make on us.
- p. 214 Most of us don't really invest in our communities or our relationships, because we're always anticipating what's around the corner.
- p. 215 Contentment is a condition of the soul, and it does not come with getting what you want, but in giving thanks to God for what you have been given.
- p. 217 ...I like the idea of investing in a future that isn't guaranteed.

p. 219 **Be a Smarter Nomad**

p. 220 Old ways of thinking haven't caught up to new realities.

p. 224 Our new technologies are enabling us to live wider but shallower – with more at our fingertips, but with less enduring meaning.

p. 228 The key is the transition from one fixed, traditional sense of “ownership” – because it's simply not necessary.

p. 231 Many of our ways of thinking are predicated on the ways we've always done things.

p. 233 We need to begin now to build the arrangements – and the habits – adequate to a mobile world.

p. 234 Knowing we have people to turn to who will challenge us and who will keep us honest helps each of us live more purposefully where we are.

p. 235 At the heart of America (Tocqueville) observed, was a twofold spirit: of self-sufficiency and of neighborliness.

p. 236 We are in a period of unprecedented upheaval. Community is collapsing, anxiety is building, and we're distracting ourselves with artificial political hatreds. That can't endure – and if it does, America won't.

p. 236 You'll never start building community until you start building community.

p. 238 A fanatic is one who can't change his mind and won't change the subject. – Winston Churchill

p. 239 **We Need More Tribes**

p. 241 America would be a healthier and happier place if we all agreed to set aside those superficial differences more of the time, and instead struggled together for three critical cultural inches.

p. 241 **The First Inch: Reject Anti-Identities**

p. 243 ...debating policy and demonizing your debate partner are fundamentally different things.

p. 243 We should stop holding the candidates on “our side” to lower standards than we expect from our opponents.

p. 243 We need to recover the essential distinction between fact-based reporting and opinion commentary.

p. 244 **The Second Inch: Put Politics in Its Proper Place**

p. 245 Politics is about the use of power – how it is acquired and who wields it...Civics is about *who we are* as a people.

p. 245 If we collapse civics and politics together...then we ensure that politics squeezes out community.

p. 248 Civil discord has always been the gravest threat to America's serenity.

p. 250 **The Third Inch: Live Local**

p. 250 We should stop hoping that our opponents in this or that cultural dispute will vanish – rather, we should interact more, in the places where we can meet as something more than partisans in battle.

p. 253 A republic can't survive if it's filled with fanatics.

p. 253 ...it's not legislation we're lacking; it's the tight bonds that give our lives meaning, happiness, and hope. It's the habits of heart and mind that make us neighbors and friends.