

Peter H. Michael's

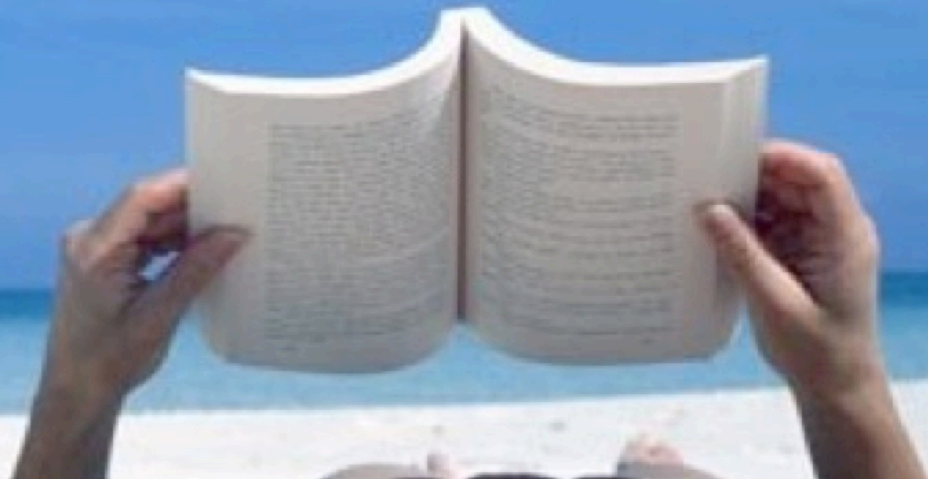
RUNNING ON EMPTY

Along an Epic 12,000-Mile Road Trip

America Has Its Say on Economic Inequality

Winner of two national book prizes

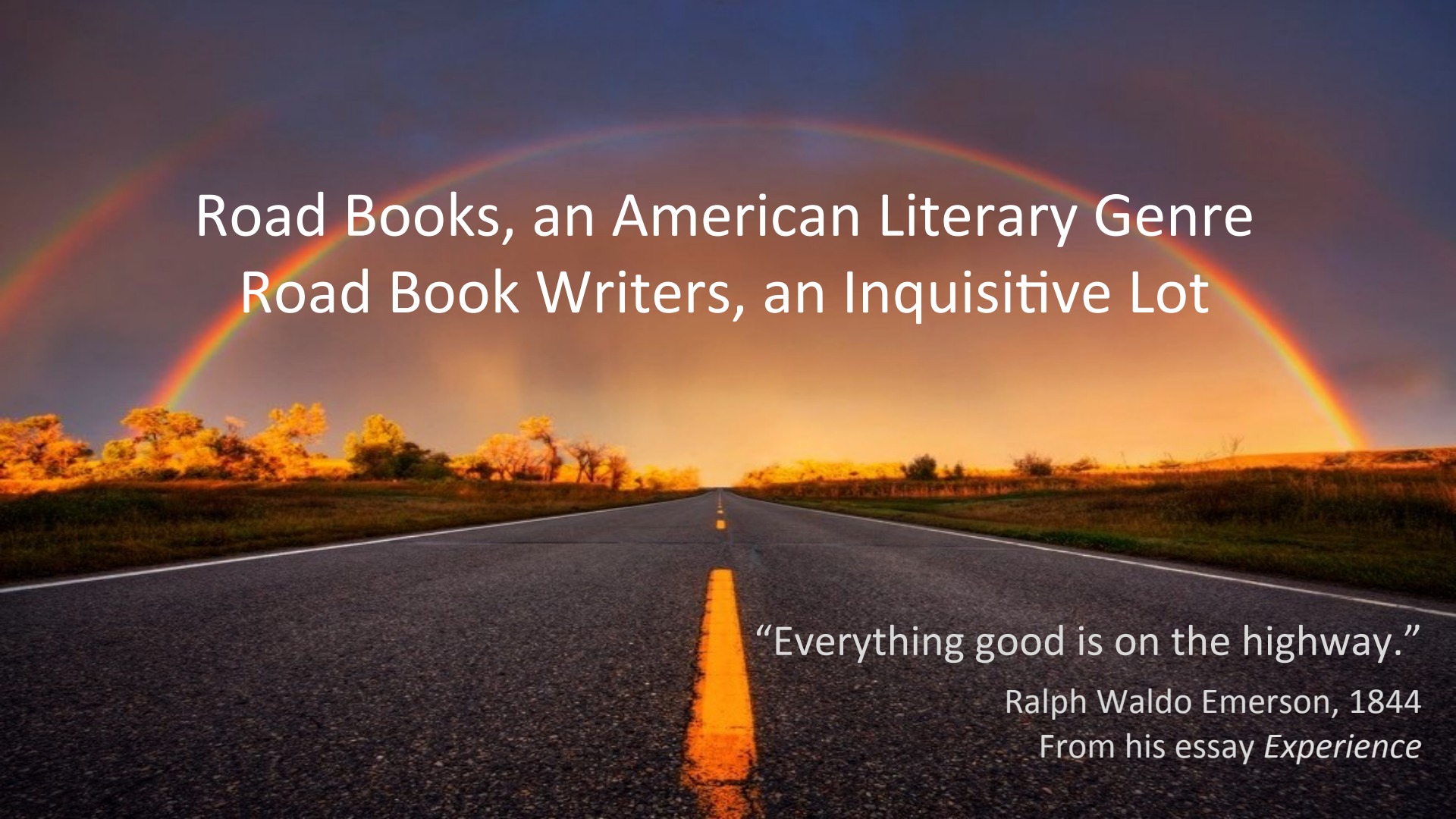
"From the mold of
Steinbeck's *Travels With Charley*,
Least Heat-Moon's *Blue Highways*
and Kerouac's *On The Road*"



Four American Innovations Led to Road Books

- Genetic Wanderlust
 - A National Road System
 - The Automobile
 - National Parks





Road Books, an American Literary Genre

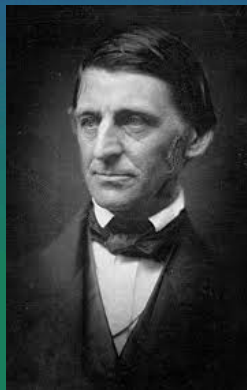
Road Book Writers, an Inquisitive Lot

“Everything good is on the highway.”

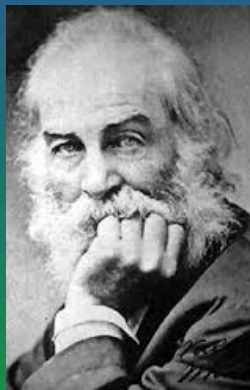
Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1844
From his essay *Experience*



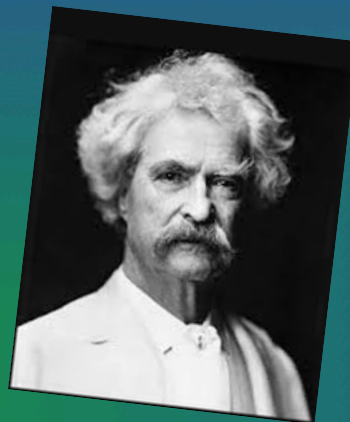
Trollope



Emerson



Whitman



Twain

1800s



Ike



Emily Post



Paul Theroux

1900s



PENGUIN
BOOKS

ON THE ROAD

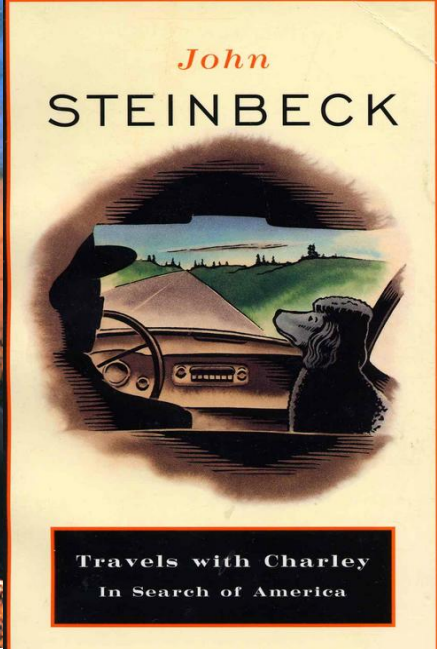
JACK KEROUAC



Neal Cassady, Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (1959) and a 1950s Hudson

The All-time Best-selling Road Book

"So in America when the sun goes down I sit watching the long, long skies and sense all that raw land that rolls in one unbelievable huge bulge over to the West Coast, and all that road going, all the people dreaming in the immensity of it."



John Steinbeck, Charley, *Travels with Charley in Search of America* (1962) and Rocinante Steinbeck won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the Nobel Prize in Literature.

“We find after years of struggle that we do not take a trip; a trip takes us.”



William Least Heat-Moon, *Blue Highways: A Journey Into America* (1982) and Ghost Dancing

“When travelling, you are what you are right there and then. No yesterdays on the road.”



The World's First RV, the 1913 Earl Trailer



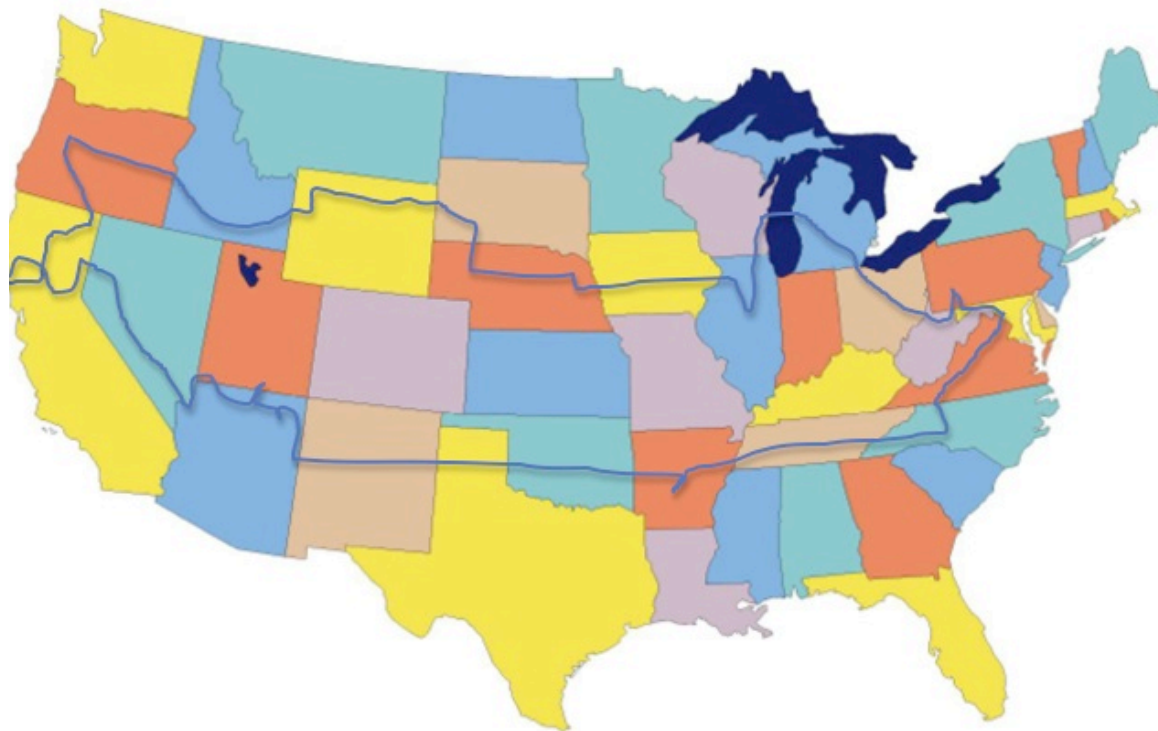
Wally Byum and the First Airstream Trailer, 1932
Still in business, the all-time top-selling brand

Maxi and Mini

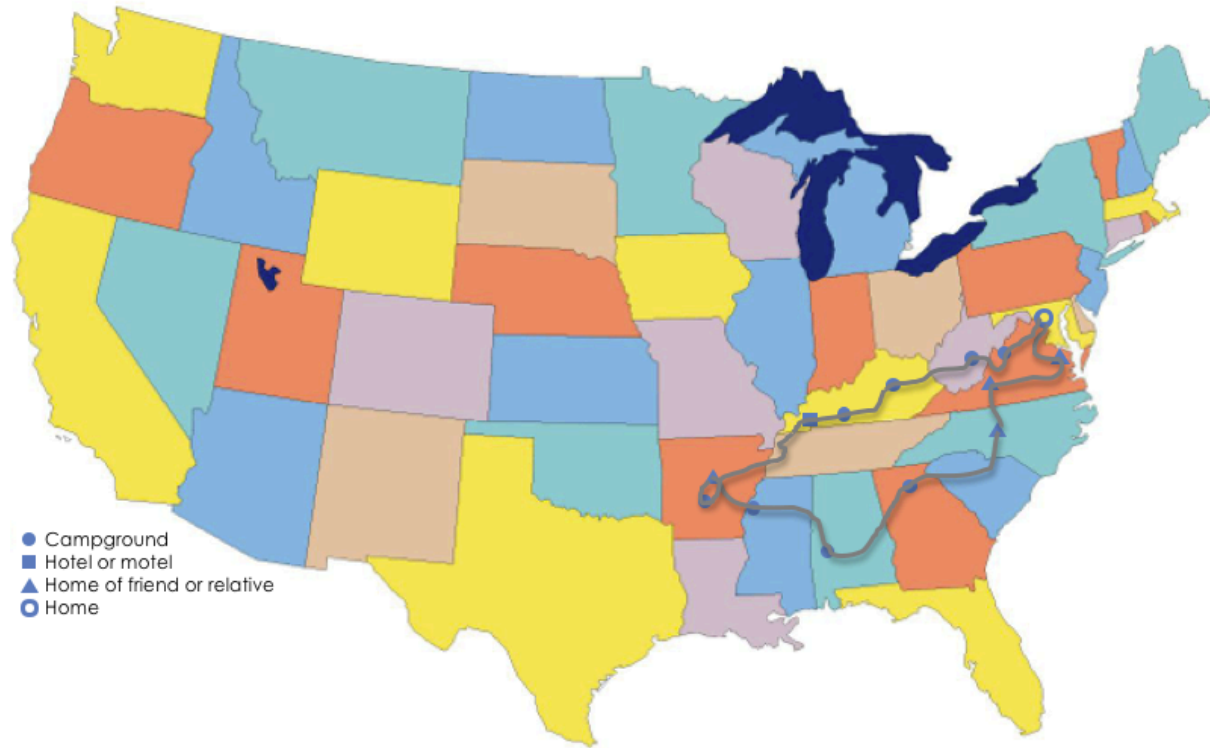


Our Ride, “Van Gogh,” a Roadtrek 21-footer





Running on Empty's First Loop: Around An Enamoring Continent



The Second Loop: Cooling Springs to Hot Springs and Back

Running on Empty

2015 eLit Gold Medal Prize in Political and Economic Affairs

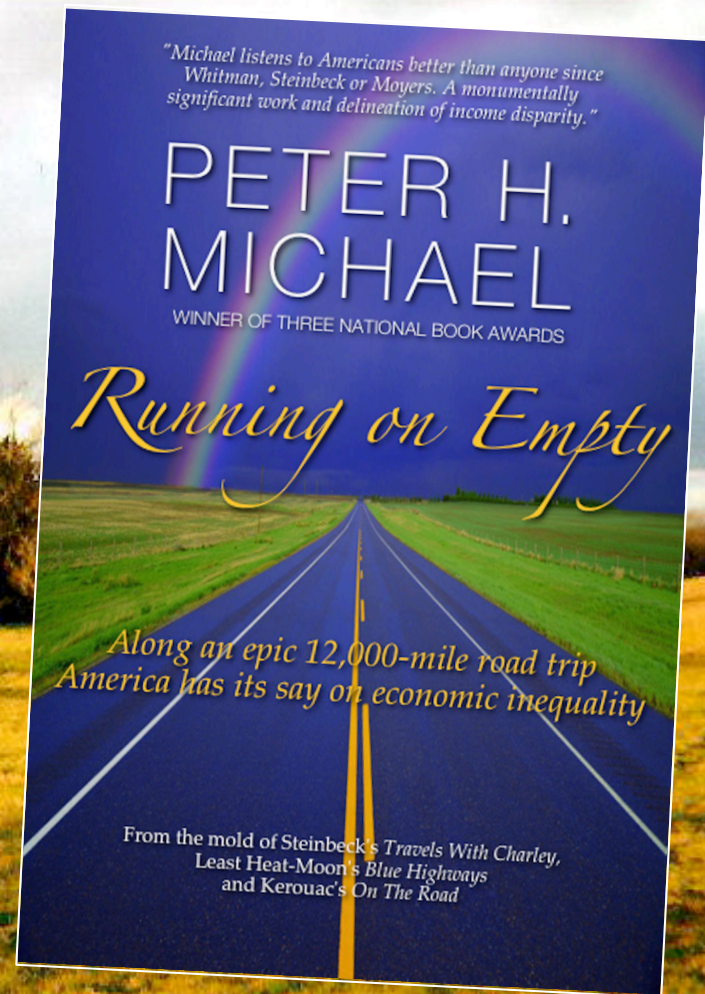
2015 eLit Bronze Medal Prize in Travel Essays

"Thank you for your most well-done Running on Empty and for demonstrating so well the pains and perils of economic disparity. Your book does a signal service in bringing out that crucial issue to the attention of everyone."

William Least Heat-Moon

"Michael listens to Americans better than anyone since Whitman, Steinbeck or Moyers. A monumentally significant work and delineation of income disparity."

Literary critic Ronald Primeau



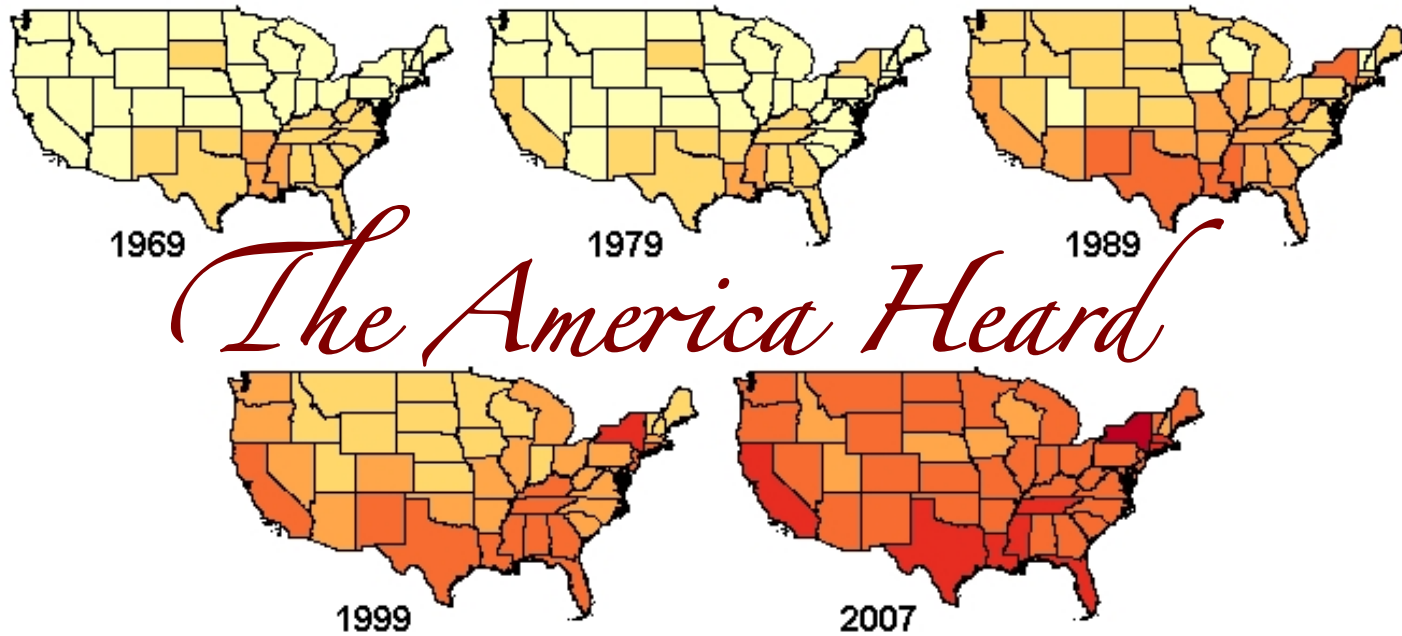
The America Seen, The America Heard

Beautiful Places, Wonderful People



But Worsening Economic Disparity



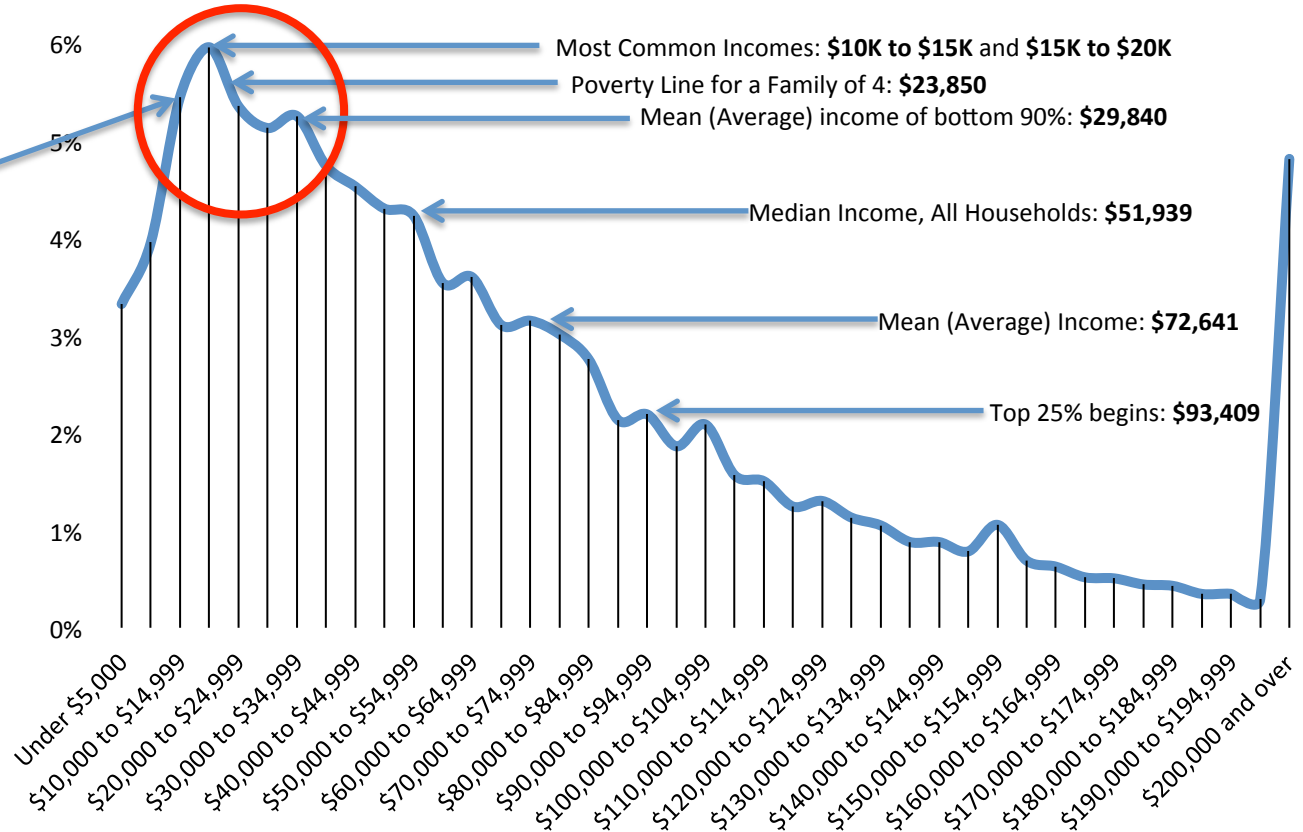


Around the Nation, Stories of Runaway Economic Inequality

More Now In Poverty Than In Any Other Income

**For income inequality,
poverty is the new norm.**

The 2015 federal minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour which is **\$14,790** per year with no days off for 52 40-hour work weeks.



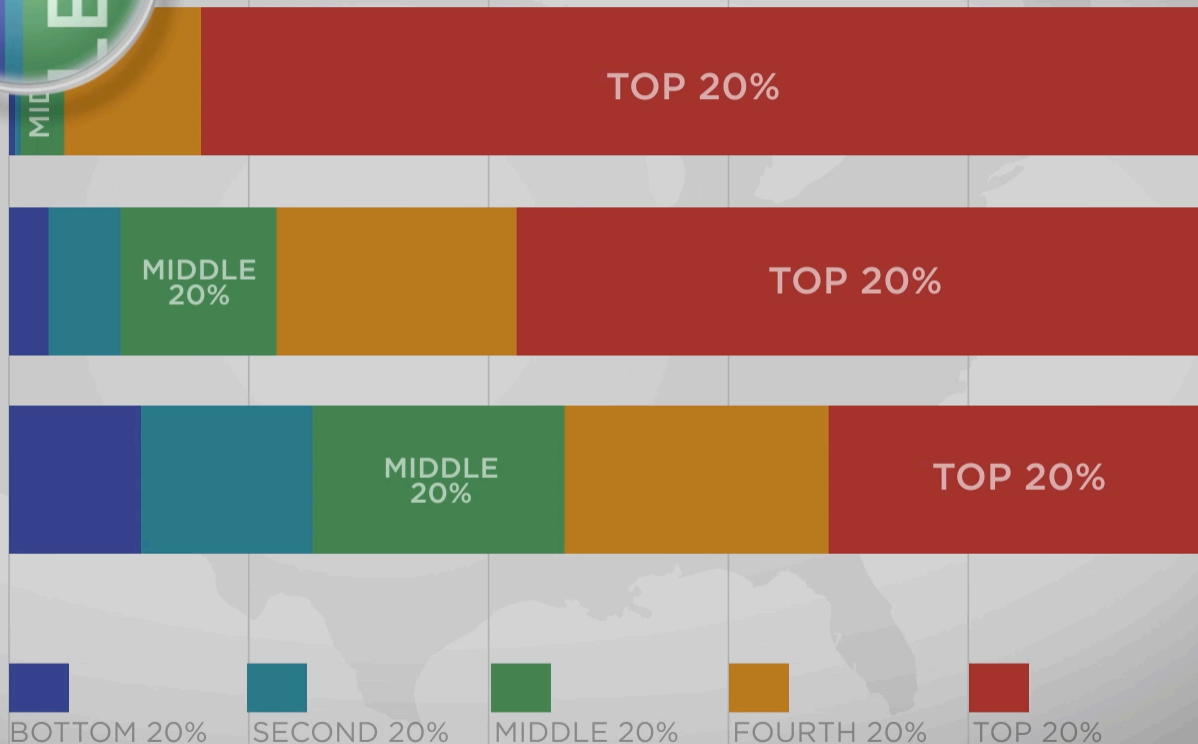
WEALTH INEQUALITY IN AMERICA

That Was Income Inequality
But Wealth Inequality Is Even More Skewed

ACTUAL
Distribution of
Wealth in the U.S.

What Americans
THINK
The Distribution Is

Distribution
92% Choose as
IDEAL

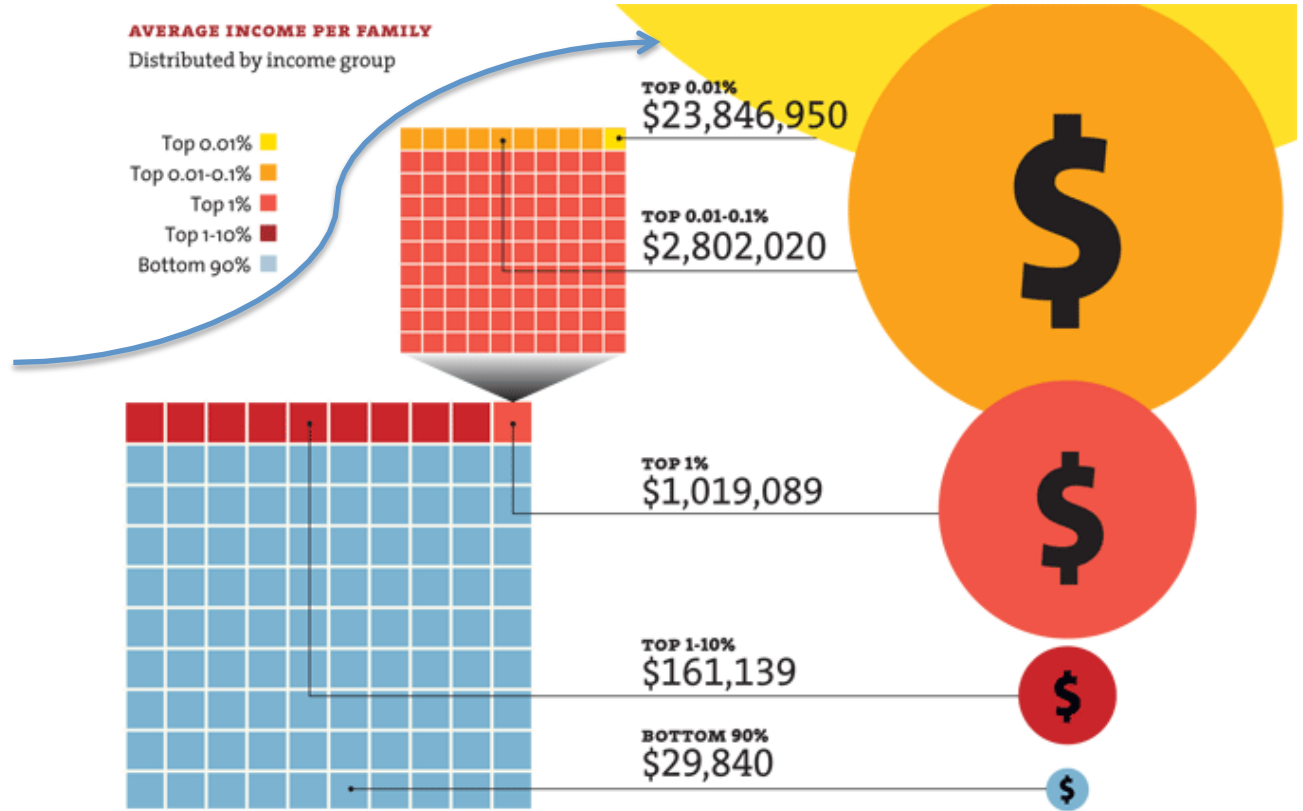


Source: Dan Ariely, Duke University & Michael Norton, Harvard Business School

Plutocrats

“One-percenters” aren’t the problem.

The real problem is the 12,000 households at the **top hundredth of that one percent**, the super-rich.



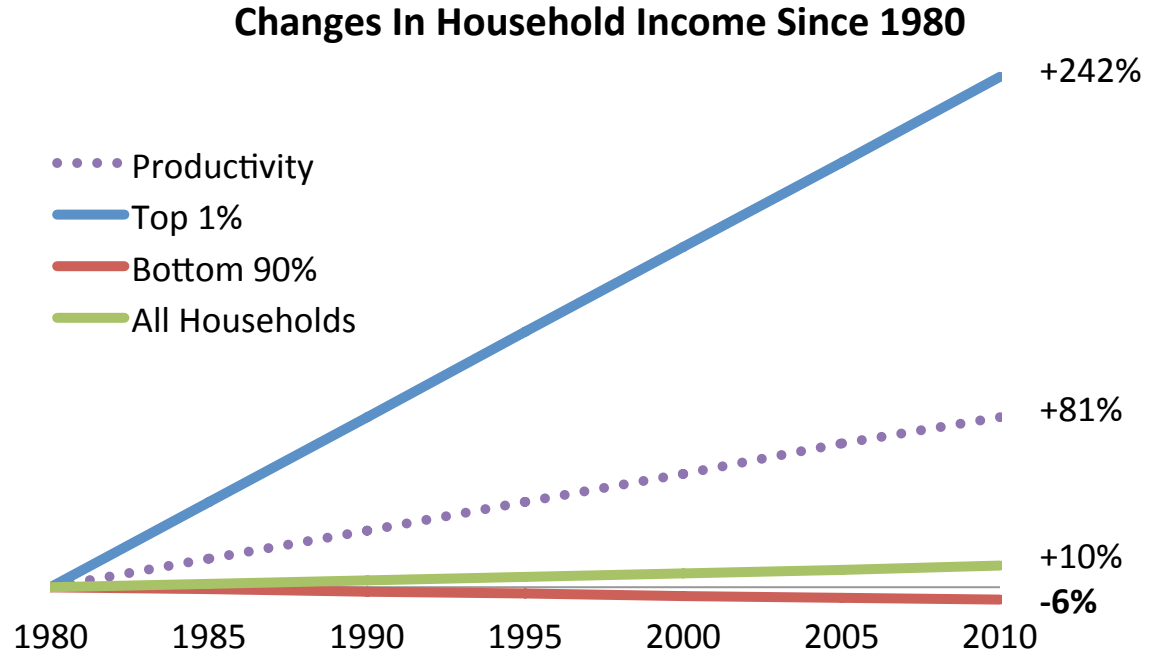
2010 data. Includes capital gains. Source: Emmanuel Saez, University of California-Berkeley

The Middle Class Became Cut Off From the National Productivity It Created

Source: Senate Joint Committee on Taxation

How It Happened: First, The Super-Rich

Since 1983, nearly all new national wealth from increased productivity went to the top. Resulting economic inequality flattened middle-class incomes and grew the proportion of Americans in poverty.



“Campaign Contributions” Got Corporations Lower Tax Rates and Loopholes

Source: Senate Joint Committee on Taxation

How It Happened: Then the Large Corporations

Corporations bear an ever-smaller share of federal taxes.

For example, General Electric

2008-13 profits: \$34.0 billion

Taxes paid: \$0

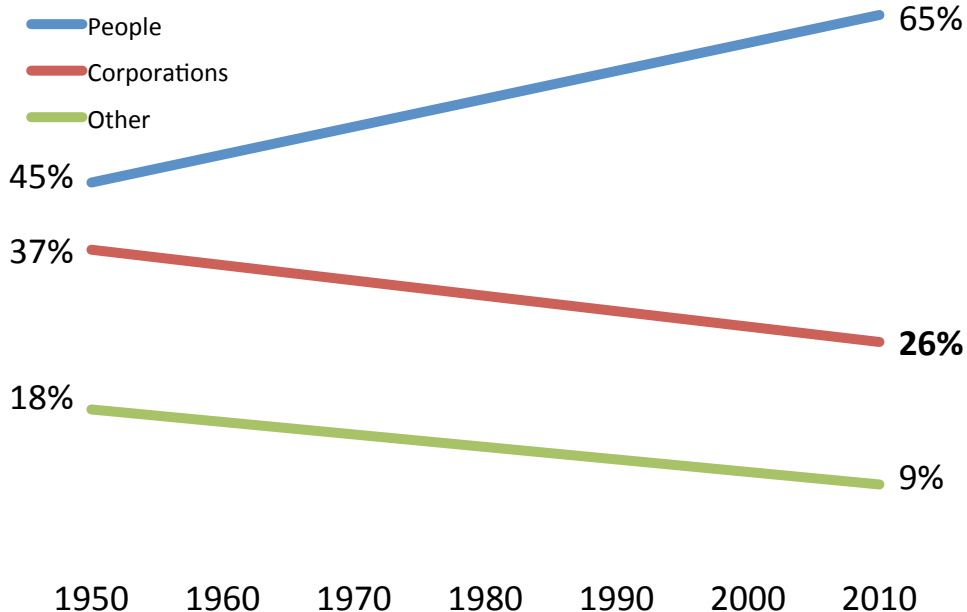
Refunds: \$2.9 billion

So Where Does the Federal Budget Deficit Come From?

\$455 billion: 2015 federal deficit

\$455 billion: Corporate tax avoided in 2014 by offshore tax shelters

Shares of Federal Tax Revenues



Ben & Jerry Get It

- Since 1982 middle-class incomes fell 6% as Fortune 500 CEO incomes rose over 600%.
- What the typical American earns in a year, a Fortune 500 CEO makes in 6 hours. The pay ratio is 354 to 1, an all-time high.
- The four Wal-Mart heirs' \$145 billion could purchase everything owned by 128 million Americans, nearly half the country.
- The Koch brothers' \$78 billion could buy every home in Atlanta.
- How much of this wealth came from you?
On the average, \$4,150 a year.



"There's only so much Chunky Monkey one rich guy can eat.

For Ben & Jerry's to succeed, we need more than one ice cream-buying rich guy.

Raise the minimum wage and everyone can have a scoop."

Ben Cohen, cofounder of Ben & Jerry's ice cream

How Did All of This Happen?

The Root Cause: Big Money in Politics

- “Campaign contributions” in the US are bribes elsewhere.
- Members of Congress now depend heavily on “campaign contributions” to afford re-election.
- Since the 1980s, large corporations and the 12,000 super-rich have purchased much privilege legislation and loopholes.



- **Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer:** *“Where enough money calls the tune, the general public will not be heard.”*
- **Martin Gilens (Princeton) & Benjamin Page (Northwestern):** *“It’s beyond alarming. Preferences of the average American now have near-zero impact upon public policy.”*
- **Political scientist Stein Ringen (Oxford):** *“If lights go out in the model democracies, they won’t stay on elsewhere.”*



How did *these* happen?

- **Nearly 1 American child in 4 lives in poverty.**
- 1 American in 7 can't afford minimum nutrition.
- US is 1 of only 6 nations lacking paid maternity leave.
- US per capita income is now 10th, just below Hong Kong.
- 40% of US women are dying younger than their mothers did.
- Of the 35 industrialized nations, US is last in health coverage.
- CIA: US has fallen to 49th in infant mortality, 50th in life expectancy.



*The America Seen
A Continent of Surpassing Beauty*



Falling Water

The Frank Lloyd Wright
icon in deep woods near
McConnellsville, Pennsylvania



In the Midst of Lake Michigan

Aboard the *SS Badger*
car ferry built in 1953
and still running



All-American Charm

The Main Street of Wahoo,
Nebraska, gateway to the
hush of the far Great Plains

Wahoo: “Burning bush” in
Pawnee



The Grand Tetons

Not called grand for nothing



The Sublime Sacramento River

Pete lived in it for five years.



Sea Ranch, California **Along the Sonoma Coast**

A surreal destination resets
those who find it.



Desert Red Rock in Nevada's Valley of Fire

Two long-horn sheep in the
wild greeted us.



The Grandest Canyon

Four billion years deep



Virginia's New River

Quite a misnomer: actually
the world's second oldest



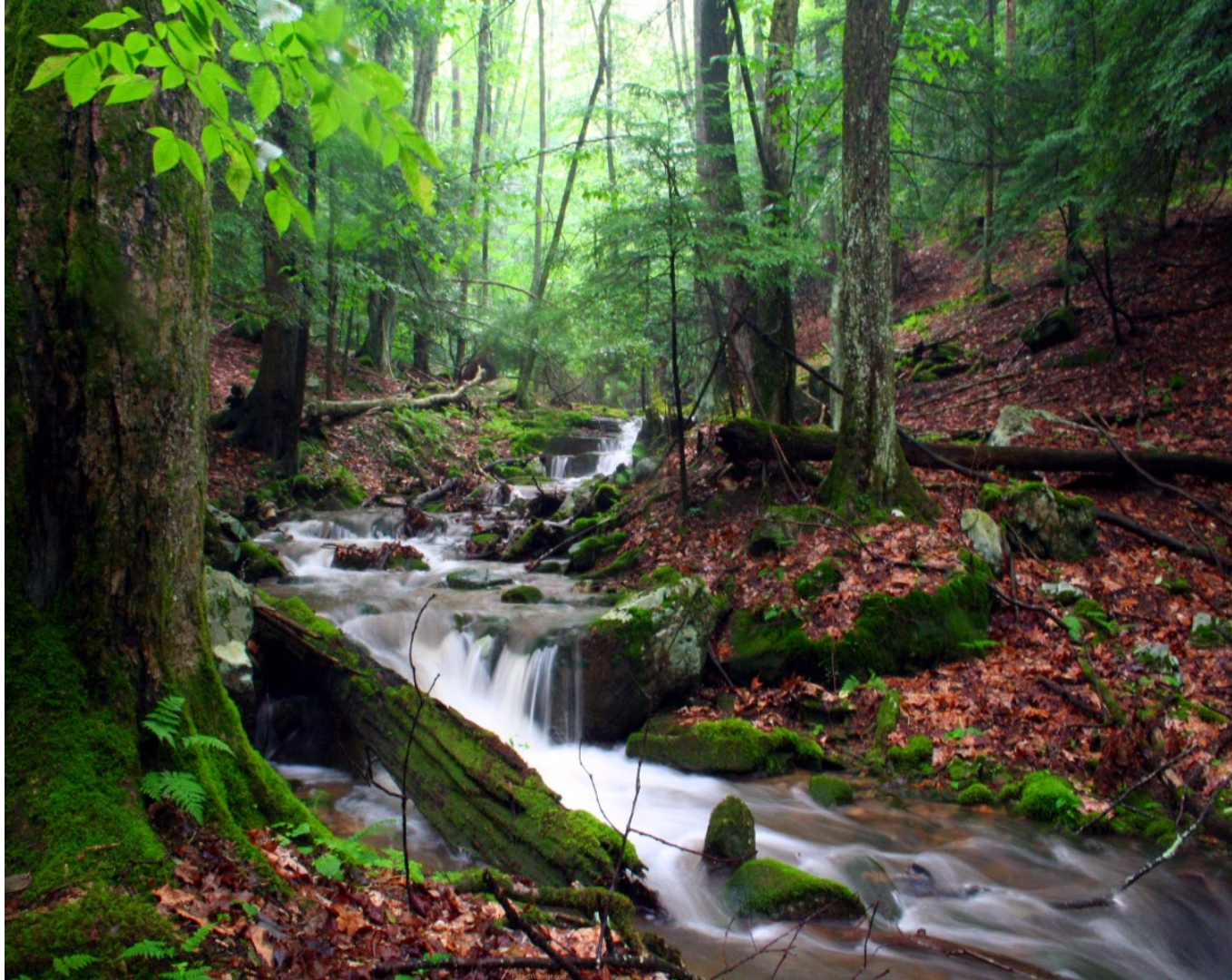
Muddy Waters Homes

The blues legend's cabin where he was born and lived through the Great Depression and his later home.



The Nicest Campsite

Tranquil Kanawha State Forest
in West Virginia



The Unexpected



A deserted prairie homestead on the depopulating Great Plains



Vicki in the Slammer

Galesburg, Illinois' old jail
now houses a prize-winning
Underground Railroad center.



Improbable Desert

The Nebraska Sandhills,
larger than nine states



Poorest Americans

Until 2013, four liquor stores in Whiteclay, Nebraska, next to the Rosebud Reservation sold 500 thousand cans of beer a year to Indians.



Stranded in the Largest Volcano

The Yellowstone caldera
averages 40 miles across



All Four Stars

Hogfatherz road-side stand
in backwoods Georgia,
a throwback to 1920s
and '30s road travel



Selma's Pettus Bridge

Site of Bloody Sunday
March 7, 1965



Selma's Pettus Bridge

March 7, 2015

Rep. John Lewis, a Freedom
March organizer in 1965,
leads two presidents,
Amelia Robinson and
thousands of others
across the bridge.



Morgan Freeman's Ground Zero Blues Club

Ultimate authentic funk
in Clarksdale, Mississippi,
the heart of blues country,
Morgan Freeman's home

In Faulkner's Study

Scribbled on the wall of his study, William Faulkner's outline of his *A Fable*, one of his two Pulitzer Prize winners. He also won the Nobel Prize for Literature and two National Book Awards.

MONDAY

- I 10:00 The French Regiment arrives, refuses to leave the house, is angry as always, is drunk, gets drunk, gets drunk, gets drunk, gets drunk, gets drunk.
- II The General commanding the division confers with the Regiment and the French Regiment, and finally agrees to have the whole Regiment moved. The French Regiment, with the French General, is in charge of the French Regiment.
- X 11:00 The French Regiment arrives, refuses to leave the house, is angry as always, is drunk, gets drunk, gets drunk, gets drunk, gets drunk, gets drunk.
- 12:00 The French Regiment arrives, refuses to leave the house, is angry as always, is drunk, gets drunk, gets drunk, gets drunk, gets drunk, gets drunk.
- 1:00 The French Regiment arrives, refuses to leave the house, is angry as always, is drunk, gets drunk, gets drunk, gets drunk, gets drunk, gets drunk.

TUESDAY

- I The people from the district where the Regiment was moved, arrive and see if the war is in fact, begin to gather at the French house.
- II 10:00 The French Regiment arrives, refuses to leave the house, is angry as always, is drunk, gets drunk, gets drunk, gets drunk, gets drunk, gets drunk.
- X 11:00 The French Regiment arrives, refuses to leave the house, is angry as always, is drunk, gets drunk, gets drunk, gets drunk, gets drunk, gets drunk.
- III 12:00 The French Regiment arrives, refuses to leave the house, is angry as always, is drunk, gets drunk, gets drunk, gets drunk, gets drunk, gets drunk.



320 Million Different Stories

John Thomas

Docent at William Faulkner's
Rowan Oak home in
Oxford, Mississippi



A University of Mississippi
architecture student and
decathlete headed for
graduate school



John & Shugie Barker



Fourth-generation lodge owners
high up in the Cascade Range
near Gold Lake, California



Among only a dwindling band of
Americans still operating rustic
lodges. Their Gold Lake Lodge
was founded in 1912.



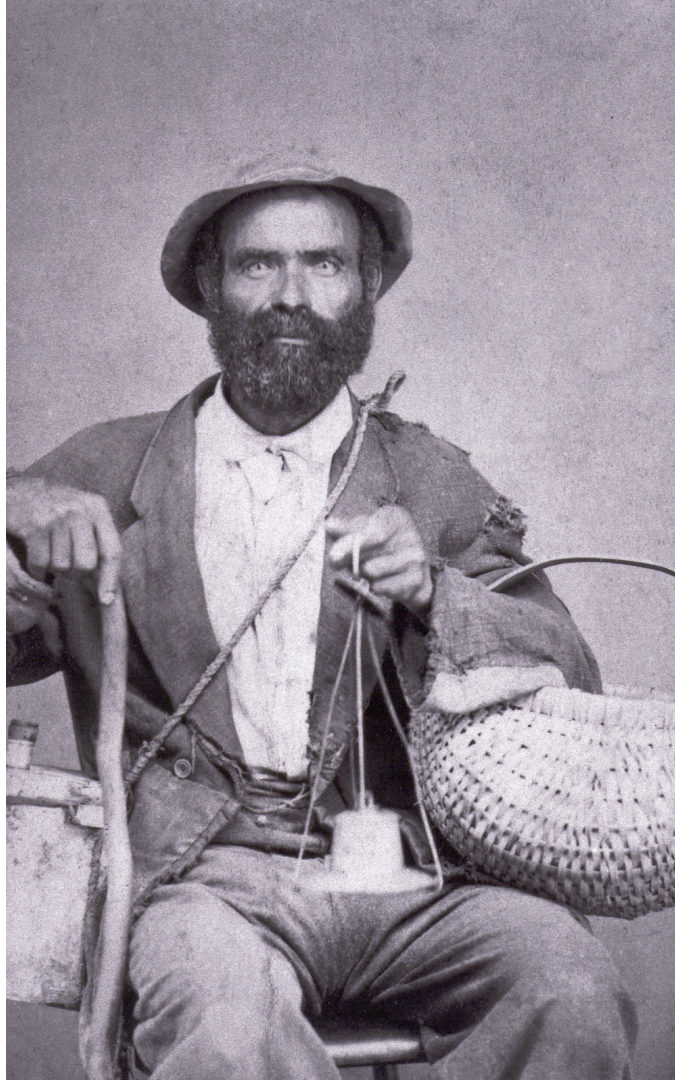
Materson and Jerry Bransford

Cave Guides
Mammoth Cave, Kentucky



Materson Bransford,
Jerry Bransford's great-great-
grandfather, was born enslaved,
first "owned" by his father, then
by his white half-brother.

Five generations of Bransfords
have worked as Guides
at Mammoth Cave.



Owen Muelder

Prize-winning historian
Galesburg, Illinois



Muelder won a national prize
for one of his books, another
for his Underground
Railroad work.



Brandon & Brian Eliason

Son and father in the new South



Widower Brian raised two sons,
says that mixed marriages are
“no big deal” in today’s South.

The South has come further
on race than any region.



Old Friends

Six small-business CEOs above
Long Lake in the High Sierra



The six have been backpacking
together in the Sierra, Cascades
and elsewhere for over 20 years.



Is America running on empty?



Off to the City from Tornado Alley in Kansas

A photograph of the Palouse Region, showing rolling green hills with a grain elevator in the distance. The hills are covered in lush green grass, and the grain elevator is a prominent white structure with a tall chimney. The text "What is best for Americans?" is overlaid in white at the top of the image.

What is best for Americans?

The Palouse Region of Washington and Idaho

A full-page background image showing a sunset in a desert landscape. The sky is filled with horizontal bands of orange and yellow clouds. The sun is a bright white-yellow circle on the horizon. In the foreground, the dark silhouettes of saguaro cacti are prominent. One large cactus is on the right, and another smaller one is in the center. Distant mountains are visible on the horizon.

What do you think is fair?

Saguaro Cactus in New Mexico



What should happen now?

"Michael listens to Americans better than anyone since Whitman, Steinbeck or Moyers. A monumentally significant work and delineation of income disparity."
Literary critic Ronald Primeau

PETER H.
MICHAEL

WINNER OF THREE NATIONAL BOOK AWARDS

Running on Empty

*Along an epic 12,000-mile road trip
America has its say on economic inequality*

*"From the mold of Steinbeck's *Travels With Charley*,
Least Heat-Moon's *Blue Highways* and
Kerouac's *On The Road*"*

Thank You

Rain God Mesa in Monument Valley
Navajo Nation, Arizona