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Hip-Hop Leadership, the Cool Rich Kids
Movement, a Hitchhiker's Guide to Community
Organzing, and Why Philanthropy is the Greatest
Art Form of the 21st Century!**

William Upski Wimsatt

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No More Prisons On Urban Life, Homeschooling, Hip-hop Leadership, The Cool Rich Kids Movement, Community Organizing and Why Philanthropy is the Greatest Artform of the 21st Century. William Upski Wimsatt In this follow-up to the underground best-seller "Bomb the Suburbs, William Upski Wimsatt "The Hitch-hiker's Guide expands its focus out of culture and into politics. Hybridization is favored over ideology, with an emphasis on democracy and community-empowerment through a new theory of development. A truly original document from the paradigm-flipping master of modern praxis.

No More Prisons: Urban Life, Home-Schooling, Hip-Hop Leadership, the Cool Rich Kids Movement, a Hitchhiker's Guide to Community Organizing, and Why Philanthropy is the Greatest Art Form of the 21st Century! Details

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From Reader Review No More Prisons: Urban Life, Home-Schooling, Hip-Hop Leadership, the Cool Rich Kids Movement, a Hitchhiker's Guide to Community Organizing, and Why Philanthropy is the Greatest Art Form of the 21st Century! for online ebook

Melanie says

See "self-education movement."

"I had big plans and the things I needed most there were no classes for. Hello? There are no...friendship classes. No classes on how to navigate a bureaucracy, build an organization, raise money, create a database, buy a house, love a child, spot a scam, talk someone out of suicide, or figure out what was important to me. Not knowing how to do these things is what mess people up in life, not whether they know Algebra or can analyze literature.

"What if the way some of us learn best is the opposite of the way we were taught to learn in school? And what if the things you most want to do in life aren't considered a career? There's no career called walking around the street helping homeless people. You have to get a job at a social service agency where you'll have to spend most of your time faxing, filling out forms and applying for grants. That's a crime. That's the indirect, bureaucratic, unsatisfying, ineffective, busy work way of living taught to us in school. Self-education, in contrast, is direct, pertinent, powerful, and fun. I wanted a self-education that freed up my imagination to see how things could be changed." -- Upsi Wimsatt, "The University of Planet Earth," from No More Prisons.

Jakers says

Very motivating.

Klelly says

Somewhat about prisons as concrete walls and buildings being part of the prison industrial complex, somewhat about the idea of prison and freedom in a larger societal sense. he talks about rich kids and philanthropy for a large portion. the author brags but he tries to check himself and speak from his individual experience. nice to read someone who checks back, and reflects on what he used to think, what he learned from his "bomb the suburbs" era, and how he is refining his goals. this book could be good fuel for someone with access to a lot of money. he has a lot to say and says it with a lot of energy, very direct and breaks things down in a comprehensible way.

Julian says

A great political book filled with ideas and perspectives that are rarely given voice. Though it lacked the pure

driven energy and idealism of his previous book (which was written when he was considerably younger), it was balanced by being more... well, balanced, with the wisdom and perspective of being a bit older.

Kimmy says

This is one of those books that if I had read it in high school it would have blown my mind. It's idealistic to the extreme, a bit naive in places, but full of good ideas and passion. I particularly loved the section on homeschooling and self-education. There were a couple examples of really outstanding kids who had broken from the public school mold and pursued their passions beyond anyone's wildest expectations. I also liked the focus on black and lower income families in this section as I think homeschooling is often viewed as something that's just for white religious extremists instead of a way for parents of all backgrounds to participate in their child's education and take it into their own hands. At a time when so many of our public schools are failing it was inspiring to realize that there may be another option available to people.

Tyler says

Amazing. Could not put it down. I read it while walking down the sidewalk. I am going to order more copies to give to my friends, because the author does such noble things with his money. I feel inspired, and I feel like even though I'm done reading it, it is an excellent reference for radical, progressive resources that interest me.

Wealththeow says

This book is better as a reminder than as a wake-up call. Wimsatt didn't write a coherent, cohesive argument so much as an anecdotally charged, energetic ramble. That critique mentioned, Wimsatt is clearly a righteous person who implements the most useful forms of self-help and groundswell/grassroots activism and community involvement.

Not even half of Americans have ever been punched in the face, apparently. Crazy!

Belasonic says

Upski Upski Upski - yes, he does it well in this book. NMP is a real, honest attempt at identifying the schisms in this current societal vision that he's been seeing all along. The prison industrial complex in our government budget and in our minds and in our education systems are all called out and overhauled in this DIY manual to multi-dimensional liberation. I admire the lucidity, responsibility, and progression of Wimsatt's own thoughts in a constructive manner [from his first book to this one (and beyond)].

George says

i wouldn't rate this the same way as bomb the suburbs. this book has a few more concrete concepts in it that

still stand to this day. some basic truisms (to me) about the problems with rising spending on prisons and the corresponding drop in funding for higher education; problems with privatizing prisons; the distinction between punishment and corrections; why graffiti isn't a bad idea, etc.

it's probably a bit rudimentary and polemic at this point, i.e. i don't think it would have the depth i'd need for substantive argument, though that in no way excludes the fact that the basic point(s) are worth nodding your head in agreement to. maybe this is more like a conversation you'd have with someone after having read the newspaper.

Stephen Conti says

Consumerism and privatization VS the educated graffiti kid

Chris Frederick says

Read it.

I can't do this book justice, but I won't let that stop me from sharing my thoughts. There's a lot of them.

Billy Wimsatt: Who is this guy?

He's a visionary who thinks big. He's a non-profit entrepreneur. He's a people person unafraid to talk to any stranger. He's a believer in leadership by young people.

He's also on Facebook and Youtube.

Which is weird, because he published No More Prisons in 1999, in his twenties. Now he's 36.

My copy of No More Prisons is heavily annotated and underlined; I was really moved by its message.

So what is it about?

Race relations between black and white people. Class, wealth and poverty. Hip-hop (which I'm still pretty completely ignorant about).

Homeschooling and self-education. Changing the world.

Want to hear some powerful ideas that spoke to me?

"The hardest part of self-education is that there are no external rewards or structures--you must accept the responsibility that you are the student, the principal, and the superintendent. If your self-education doesn't work out, there's no one else to blame."

"I looked at my friends who graduated college. Most of them are paying off debts now, riding the conveyor belt into graduate school, and selecting their mates from unnecessarily narrow pools. They are mid-life crises waiting to happen. Or maybe they won't even have mid-life crises. Maybe they'll just get stuck. Geniuses at following directions, they have little direction of their own."

How is this relevant to my life? I've decided to apply self-schooling strategies to my four years in college.

I'm going to ask lots of people, upperclassmen and faculty, who they consider the best professors. I'm going to pick the student groups I'll try to get involved in. I'm going to come to campus with a plan.

Side note: Wimsatt made me feel that it's okay to be a polymath. That's good, because I like being a polymath.

"It seems that homeschooling, hip-hop and prison study are three forms of self-education that have a lot to learn from each other. The problem with homeschooling is that it's too white, too sheltered and too boring. The problem with hip-hop is that it's too narrow-minded, too commercial and too superficial. The problem with prison study is that it's too late."

Here you see how Wimsatt consumes information and runs it through his personal filter: so that his study of homeschooling based on Grace Llewellyn's "Teenage Liberation Handbook" grows into a study of how to apply those ideas to improving education for low-income, minority, and incarcerated people.

"How do you quantify the social damage to a child who has to be chauffeured around for her entire childhood, who never learns to navigate her everyday world by herself? A 14-year-old girl who has never had to get home from the library by herself. The damage to millions of children over the last forty years, in essence, to their personal sovereignty."

(from an interview with James Howard Kunstler, speaking about the consequences of cars)

Growing up in a suburb, I wholeheartedly agree. I see my former self in those sentences.

"One of the biggest mistakes people make is to say, 'I struggled. My child won't have to struggle. My child won't want for anything.' Why would you do that to a child? Struggle is what made you what you are. My child ain't gonna get no special treatment. What do you think of that? Often parents hurt their children more trying to protect them."

(from a piece on John Payne, a Detroit millionaire who couldn't read)

There. You got a tiny, distorted sampling of the ideas in No More Prisons. Ready for more? Everything that follows is my personal take on Wimsatt's treatise.

I have decided that I am not Billy Wimsatt. I don't have to be exactly like him. He sells one way of living, he fights one fight: the progressive fight to break down real barriers of class, between working-class and upper-middle class people, and of race, that "make it difficult for us to know and love each other" and make our world narrow and uncomfortable. It's a good fight, and it's changed the way I go about daily life at least a little. But it's a national struggle, an American one. I'm international; I'm all about cultural exchange and loving people from other countries. No More Prisons was a wake up call to meet and really grow comfortable with people in my own country who are different from me.

Now what?

Where do I go from here?

I need to find my own cause to get impassioned about. I need to carve my own path, drawing on the experiences that have shaped my life: Alaska, languages, music, loneliness. My favorite writers speak out with a strong independent voice. Now it's time to find my own voice.

What am I passionate about? Which of my life experiences do I want to clarify through further study?

Conservative politics and the regions where it dominates: the South, the Midwest, Alaska.

Rural communities (like Willow, AK) and the people who live in them.

International cultures, using anthropology as a lens to understand them.

Questioning and rethinking education.

It comes down to this. What will my contribution be to the world?

Inspiration is the real gift of No More Prisons. You'll ask yourself, "Do I want to live a boring life, or an amazing one?"

Want to hear a secret?

This is actually a book about reading. And this is actually a book review about the power of re-reading. My first time through, I missed how high the act of reading sits in Billy Wimsatt's priorities. He is a huge advocate for reading, and his published writing, particularly his first book "Bomb the Suburbs," attempted to get people who ordinarily didn't like to read to love it. It also didn't hit me how badly Wimsatt wanted to be a writer, an author of published books and magazine articles. He wrote for specialized progressive publications I'd never heard of, like the Baffler or In These Times. This time around, re-reading also meant I got a second chance to look up references that had gone over my head. I really got my money's worth out of the book because I read it twice.

But I hesitated to reread it. Why not learn something new, instead of reviewing what you already know? It was prisoners who brought me around, one prisoner in particular, who read a book he didn't understand multiple times. And wrote me a letter saying so: I read that letter while volunteering with Prisoner Express, a program providing books to prisoners and publishing a journal of their writing.

Now I believe in re-reading, selectively. You may understand the words, but you won't understand the meaning until you go out and experience it for yourself. That's how I feel about No More Prisons: I understand it better now that I've experienced a little more.

While we're on the subject of reading, three nagging questions bother me.

1. How can you be articulate without seeming pretentious? And how does that affect the way you write?
2. How do you balance pragmatism and intellectualism, when you're drawn to both?
How does that affect the way you study in college?
3. How do I find the next book that will change my life? What comes next after "Le Ton beau de Marot: In Praise of the Music of Language" and "No More Prisons"? Can I formulate what makes me love a book: that it is fiercely independent, presents unusual and extremely eclectic ideas, and written with a strong personal voice?

Let me know if you have answers.

Hey! Let me introduce myself. My name is Chris, and I'd like to share a final theme of No More Prisons: being an extrovert.

Wimsatt believes the more people you know, the better. He believes in talking to as many people as possible. It leads me to wonder, Is shyness an indication of a "socially underdeveloped" person? Or is being shy and introverted a legitimate way to be? Personally, I've decided introversion is socially impractical and limits your possibilities in life.

Partly because of reading this book, I want to share more. I want to share my ideas, my money, my skills, because that's paying it forward, and somehow you'll get repaid eventually.

That was the good news. The bad news got saved for the end. No More Prisons is pretty dang unscholarly. Sure, there are statistics now and then, but they tend to be dubious. Come to this book for huge inspiration and lots of new ideas.

Looking for your new favorite book?

Try No More Prisons.

You might like it.

Erhardt Graeff says

This is such an inspiring and reflective follow-up to Wimsatt's first book, Bomb the Suburbs. The casual tone of the writing makes it a fluid and fast read, but also one that literally speaks to the reader, challenging them to be part of a solution to the ills of society. The author is trying to practice what he preaches and everything about the book is designed to do that. He is forthcoming about why is writing the book and how his thinking has changed since the previous one. You are meant to take the reflection and journey yourself as the reader.

This is a coming of age book in many ways. Wimsatt documents his coming of age as an activist, detailing what he's learned and how he's done it. You are encouraged to do the same—not through the same set of experiences necessarily, but your own. This narrative weaves through five themes or areas of activism that he wants to promote and forward. The title refers to the first, which is organizing against the prison industry, and is strategically chosen to dovetail with an album of the same name and a larger movement he wants to see come about called "No More Prisons." It's also a metaphor for feeling trapped inside conventions and cycles of social injustice, and through practice and political organizing breaking those trends. He wants us to get involved with issues of Urban life versus Suburban life, Homeschooling/Self-education, Hip-Hop leadership, and Cool Rich Kids and effective philanthropy. We are meant to start organizations around any of these issues, and Wimsatt gives us a rough game plan of how to do it.

My favorite part of the book was his long critique of traditional philanthropy; he lists it's problems as well as it's potential and it sounds like he is straight-up describing The Awesome Foundation, which fills me with pride. Read this book and feel empowered.

Leilani says

not at all what the title suggests. disappointing

Linda says

3.5

John Becker says

upski used to write in chicago, where he grew up. now he's an organizer, activist and writer. best part about this book is the 'rules for graf writing.' no more prisons is even better; it's where he really breaks it down. this is a good place to start though.
