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Saul Bellow was probably right when he said in The Adventures of Augie March that "The big investigation today is to see how bad a guy can be, not how good he can be." He was right. Everywhere today people are saying, "Things are so bad they could hardly get worse. We're living in a God-forsaken period of human history."

Violence -- Spiritual and physical violence -- sweeps through the main arteries and into every recess of our being like a plague -- an epidemic of bacterial madness.

Governments have never been more remote from the people: opaque, resistant, self-glorifying.

Churches have never been more irrelevant.

Education has never been more impersonal.

Bureaucrats -- bureaucrats like me -- we've never been more pompous.

Business, profits and making money -- it's never been so uninspiring, so boring, so lifeless.

So, one answer is this: -- "The world's in a mess. We're scheduled for incineration." As Susan Sontag indicated in her new book, we're all carrying around our own "death kit."

Nilhilism, absurdity, anarchy, these are the signs of our times.

Yet the very words "things are bad" automatically separate the speaker -- the onlooker -- from the world at which he looks. When a man says "things are bad" he has almost stopped looking. He sees so much that's repulsive, he can hardly bear to keep his eyes open. And the worst part of the badness, he sees, is himself -- the cop-out, the quitter, the fugitive.

Yet even in these times -- our times -- unprecedented bursts -- explosions of empathy -- have occurred.

Only three years ago, I was on a trip around the world for the Peace Corps. I was in Jerusalem. I was there for three days. Yet I saw a sight which had not taken place in Jerusalem since the death of Jesus Christ. I computed it. There's been about 817,355 days since Christ died. We could have lived during any of those days. But it was only in our times, these times -- these wretched, bad times -- that finally a Pope from Rome returned to the Holy Land on a pilgrimage of love and penance. And he met the Patriarch of Constantinople there. I saw them embrace each other. They weren't as far from me as this gentleman in the front row.

Those two men -- they were symbols of ancient enmity and discord... they were embracing each other! The two of them -- representing institutions that hadn't even spoken a word to each other for 487 years.

Wasn't it only in our times that the Archbishop of Canterbury in England finally spoke to the Pope?

Wasn't it in these bad times, our bad times, that the leaders of the Jewish people made their first trip to the Vatican and were greeted by Pope John the XXIII whose words of welcome came out of the Jewish Bible when he said to them, stretching out his arms, "I am Joseph -- your brother."

Yes, in religion, Christianity has changed more in the last ten years than in the last 1,000. Priests and Nuns not only practice a theology of heaven these days -- but a theology of the street. Look at Father Groppi in Milwaukee.

And that street has brought the Marxists together with the Christians, again, for the first time in history, to a meeting place -- a coffee house in Prague, Czechoslovakia, behind the Iron Curtain. For the third year in a row, leading Marxists theoreticians have met there, and in Geneva, with leading Christian philosophers. And the surprising thing is that many of them have found they have more in common than in conflict. They have learned that they both seek the fulfillment -- the enlargement of man. And they have agreed that whatever devalues man must be eliminated -- spiritually and materially.

Thirty years ago -- it's a long time to all of you but it's gotten to be a short time to me -- thirty years ago, who in the western world placed any high value on Japanese architecture? Very few. Who

practiced Zen Buddhism? Very few. Who studied African music or folk art? Who collected African masks? There was only one museum in America that had African masks. Who cared about Indian sitar music? Who gave their lives to the movement for inter-racial justice? Who sacrificed their lives on a Navajo reservation or with the Eskimos? Or for the Peruvian poor people in the Alte Plano or for the poor people at home?

Actually, there were only a handful of zealots doing these things. My generation in college was too busy swallowing goldfish.

No other time than yours has seen so many turn-about, so many enemies embracing each other, old arguments being thrown away.

You know that song Sonny and Cher sing. I can't sing it, don't worry. But it goes something like this:

"We have a great big ole society  
that won't make room for folks like you an' me.  
But I've got some real bad news for them, my fr'en,  
they're on the outside looking in.  
We got a great thing goin'..."

The challenge is to keep it going. The music we just heard here couldn't have been played thirty years ago, even at Berkeley. It's a music that comes out from people -- from inside of them. It isn't music they learned out of a book and then play the way somebody else wrote. It's something that they're speaking. It's a communication.

So we see progress. And we see lots of failure. I see mostly the failure. Most of the time I feel as if I were living in the emergency ward of a big hospital because in my office all I see is the mess. How do the poor look at America? Those words, "Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." They just laugh. They say where is this life? "We don't see it, we don't taste it, we don't live it. Where is this liberty? We can't even live where we want." Instead of a guarantee of life, the poor get a guarantee of death. A slow death -- a nibbling away of life.

A baby born today to poor parents in the United States has twice the risk of dying before he's one year old, as compared to the child

of a rich family. He has four times the chance of dying before he's 35 as a rich kid. The incidence of tuberculosis among the poor in Alaska is ten times what it is for the rich. The poor everywhere -- in or out of a ghetto -- suffer more mental disease, more mental retardation, more death from pneumonia, scarlet fever, tuberculosis, diseases which for the well-to-do have almost ceased to exist in the United States.

And the rest of us, the well-to-do, we face death also. Not a physical death but a spiritual death. The kind of spiritual death described in the poem:

"Where have all the flowers gone? Long time passing.  
Where have all the flowers gone? Long time ago.  
Where have all the flowers gone?  
The girls have picked them, every one.  
Oh, when will you ever learn?  
Oh, when will you ever learn?"

Thus, we see the worst of all possibilities in front of us. The poor with their physical death and the rich with their spiritual death. And few among either understanding the grammar of flowers.

But we must begin learning some time. And so far as I'm concerned, the surest way is to start asking questions. The kind most of us are asking right now -- either in silence, or in shouts, or with guns.

Does America inspire or squelch the best hopes of humanity today?

Can we regain the spiritual leadership we exercised when all the world looked to us for our ideals and followed us, not because we forced them to, but because they wanted to?

Has America created the greatest variety of life the world has ever seen -- only to forget the sacredness of life itself?

No honest man can pretend to have final answers to those questions. Often the shock of reality is too much for us. Yet, maybe that's what we need. The shock treatment -- like psychiatry. And if that's what we need, we're lucky. We're lucky because we're getting the shocks every day. The daily shock of Vietnam on television. We announce the

body count with the same precision we announce the Dow Jones averages. Up 200 casualties this week, industrials down \$.25. 300 Communists killed, utilities up \$.80.

We have the nightly shock on television -- seeing the tough guys gun down the bad guys. Our children watch this violence and the Nielsen ratings prove that we all love it. Over 3-million serious crimes were committed in our country last year. A murder -- a murder -- every hour! So with this pattern of life, why do we get disturbed when Rap Brown says, "Violence is as American as cherry pie?"

We're shocked every day in our personal lives. We feel loney and loveless, even a little bit insane for trying to be human. As T. S. Eliot said, "In a world of fugitives, the person who runs in the opposite direction will appear as a madman."

Is there a way -- a way out? Four weeks ago, I asked the author of that magnificent new novel, The Confessions of Nat Turner, what he thought after having lived through Turner's revolution fictionally for five years. He said to me, "It may sound even trite or corny to you, but the only power that will work is love."

We aren't used to hearing that word love. Especially when love is mentioned as a power. In the corridors of world power, many things are more potent than love -- money is power, consensus is power, votes equal power, military force is power, the Eastern Establishment is power. Some even say that Ronald Reagan, plus suburbia, plus white backlash, plus advertising agencies, plus TV is power.

Yet within a world of riots, and murders and napalm and "burn, baby, burn," some men and women are turning to love...not to Hugh Hefner, -- but to love which teaches and practices self-sacrifice, self-effacement, self-respect.

The early Christians formed themselves into communities of love. And in the acts of the Apostles we read the sentence, "Lo! The Christians. How they love one another." St. Francis advised us to love the birds and the flowers and the sun and the water -- everything that lived. Tolstoy wrote, "Man does not live by care for himself, but by love for others."

Today Tolstoy or St. Francis, or Ghandi, or Tolkien, or Martin Luther King all would agree that the essence of love can be simply expressed this way: "To put yourself into the skin of another man, to be weakened by his burdens, and heartened by his joys" -- into the skin of a black man, into the skin of a Jew, into the skin of a junkie, into the skin of a leper, into the skin of a convict. That was the idea of the Peace Corps. That's the idea of VISTA.

I'll never forget in Malaysia, about fifty miles from Kuala Lumpur, going through a local hospital where we had two or three Peace Corps nurses, and one of them was working in the leper ward. Like many of you, perhaps, I'd never seen a leper, but I'd read all those horrible stories. So when this girl said to me, "Mr. Shriver, you've got to come see my ward," I didn't want to see her ward. But how could I say no if that girl was in there? So I went in and she had the patients all sitting up in bed dressed in those blue things that they wear and their hands were stumps, and they had these sores all over their faces. And she went down the beds patting them, introducing them to me. And they'd hand that stump out to me. I'll never forget when I grabbed that first one and shook it. It felt to me just like a hot poker. I was scared. I shouldn't have been, but I was.

That girl was working in that leprasorium not because I told her to or anybody else told her to. She worked there for love.

I was up in Alaska over the 4th of July visiting VISTA Volunteers -- the town of Nome. There isn't a paved street in Nome. Most of the houses in Nome are ramshackle, falling down places. But even Nome has a slum that is worse than the rest of Nome... where some natives from an island out in the Bering Sea called the King Island, about 500 of them, live in the most abject poverty -- physically -- that I've seen anywhere in the world, including Africa, Latin America, India or anywhere else. And down in the middle of this area was living one VISTA Volunteer. He had a house that wasn't as big the area occupied by the quintet, He had one little stove in it. He had a wooden bed, one window. The shack was made out of corrugated tin backed up with wallboard or paper. And he lived there at 40 degrees below zero, day in and day out, day in and day out, day in and day out--until you said to yourself, why? What's he trying to prove? About himself, why? What's he trying to prove? About himself or us or what?

Suddenly, I realized, to me at any rate, that that kid was a witness, if he was nothing more. A witness to an interest in those distraught King Island fishermen. A witness which, if he didn't do any more, he brought me up there. As a result of my going there, a special committee's been set up in the government back in Washington. Already hundreds of thousands of dollars, programs, medicines, additional volunteers are going up to Alaska.

God knows it's very little. But that kid by sitting, witnessing for six months in that frigid slum probably did more for those people than any of the rest of us in the whole theatre here. That's what love is. Putting yourself into the skin of a poor person in Alaska or Malaysia, being weakened by his burden, heartened by his joys.

Of course, the trouble with the word love is that people use it for all the wrong things. Pat Hughes said, --

"The people over thirty years of age took a great word 'love' and turned it ugly. They used it for dogs and toothpaste and cigarettes and coffee and tennis and cars and lipstick, till love lost its meaning."

Then he went on to say,

"They have yet to contaminate 'service.' It's so contradictory to what they hold to be important. Service has no money in it. Service is so slavish. Service is so degrading. Service will never get you anywhere. Can service support a family? Can it buy a car? But service is the most noble of words," he said, "because it's meaning has not been destroyed."

Right now the only agency in the United States government with the word service in its title and with service as its only reward is Volunteers in Service to America. God knows we need thousands more like them. We've got a hundred of them working in mental institutions in West Virginia--the biggest single thing that ever happened in that State for the mentally sick. Trained at the Menningers' Clinic in Kansas.

Lots of people criticize VISTA. Some of the graduates of VISTA have formed a wonderful organization, I'm told, called the "Veterans of Domestic Wars."

But the migratory labor camps here in California, Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico need 1,000 VISTA volunteers right now. The retarded--institutions for the mentally retarded--have requests for 2,000 VISTA volunteers. The Indian reservations need 900. Not for make-work projects but for real things. Not things that we dreamed up but that the Indians have asked for.

Head Start needs help. In Richmond, Head Start needs all the volunteers it can get--and I don't mean Richmond, Virginia.

San Francisco needs Head Start volunteers. Mrs. Helen Howard at 507 Polk Street will sign anybody up in this audience tomorrow. San Rafael needs VISTA volunteers. It needs Head Start volunteers. There's a lady named Marian Kelley who wants you.

Our law program--that program which has just been denounced out here in California because it sued the Governor, --our law program needs volunteers.

It's a funny thing when the rich and powerful--all of us here-- sue each other it's great; but when some poor person sues us that's bad. The Legal Services program needs all the pre-law students, all the law students, and all the faculty, for that matter, working all over this State.

"Upward Bound" needs volunteers. At Mills College, at Berkeley--right here at Berkeley--you can call Al Berringer or better yet, stop by the community projects office in the lobby of Eshelman and see John Gage. It's a great thing that Berkeley has got two thousand undergraduates even now in tutorial programs nearby. But let me tell you, as great as your contribution has been already, it's just as weak and just as small as the contributions of all the rest of us. We haven't done enough--none of us.

In the Peace Corps, in the war against poverty, we've learned that the challenge before America today is not to become richer or bigger or stronger, but to become more human. To become more united humanly.

Early in our history, we sought political unity and we got it. Then we worked for geographical unity and we got it. Human unity is much harder to achieve. It's going to take all of the energies of everybody here. People who want to build people. We can build everything else--planes and highways and computers and buildings and spaceships. What we need are architects for humanity.

Instead of getting aroused by the unfed, which is what we should be aroused by, we get aroused by the unwashed. People worry less about the poor at Hunter's Point than they do about the hippies on Haight Street.

We worry more about violations of human convention than we do about violations of human dignity. We get upset about four letter words on sex, but we don't worry about four letter words on hate: - kill, riot, maim, hurt.

Our priorities are mixed up. We must, I say, change our priorities and move toward a world, move further in the direction of a world, symbolized by a story from the early days of the Peace Corps which summarizes for me, at any rate, everything we've been attempting to do in that program and in all these other programs. It's the story of the African mother and the child sitting on a rural road in up-country Ghana. And the child said to her mother, as a figure strode down the road, the dusty road, "Look, mother, there's a white man." And the mother looked up and said, "No, darling, that's a Peace Corps volunteer."

We're working for, and we need your help to achieve, a world where nobody says "Look, there's a white man," or "Look, there's a black man," or, "Look, there's a rich man," or "Look, there's a poor man," but only, "Look, there is a human being who needs my help." Thank You.