

# [PDF] The Real America: Messages From The Heart And Heartland

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## Books Details:

Title: The Real America: Messages fr  
Author: Glenn Beck  
Released: 2003-09-30  
Language:  
Pages: 256  
ISBN: 0743486331  
ISBN13: 978-0743486330  
ASIN: 0743486331

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## Description:

**About the Author Glenn Beck** is the host and star of *The Glenn Beck Program*, a daily radio talk show based out of Philadelphia, and syndicated on more than 130 stations across the U.S. and Canada. His agenda ranges from political issues and current affairs to personal revelations.

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## Chapter 1: The Real Americans and the Real America

In my faith we have temples, and they are kept spotless and clean. The only place more sacred than the temple is your own home, and your home is to be kept just as clean and in order. Now, I don't mean, "Get out the vacuum, kids!" clean. I mean the kind of clean that keeps something sacred.

In the Real America, the most sacred place on earth is your home, and your home is a refuge. It's a shelter. In the Real America your home is the center of your universe and the center of your home is the dinner table, the most important piece of furniture you have. It doesn't have to be fancy -- it just has to be comfortable, so that everybody likes to be in that room and around that table.

In the Real America we will all be very busy -- just as we are now -- but we'll also be busy doing other people's work, not just our own. We'll be busy helping people -- and that doesn't have to mean strangers. That also means we'll help our kids, we'll spend time listening to them, talking to them -- just being with them.

In the Real America, we count on the members of our extended family. Our families provide us with an endless supply of hope, love and joy. It doesn't necessarily always happen now, but in the Real America, our greatest support will come from the family and our extended families.

In the Real America, I will be able to change. I will know I can conquer my past and be the person I want to be. We can become better people, and our families will continue to give us support.

In today's America you can do this, but many of us no longer believe it's possible. Ten years ago I was a bitter, hopeless alcoholic who hated people. In a few short years filled with difficulty, but mainly joy, I changed. I am happy now, hopeful, sober, and I only dislike people for really valid reasons. This book is not a self-help book, but by the end of it you will, once again, believe that you can change the world, your business, your family and yourself.

I have found there are four steps to change:

- 1. You must want it.
- 2. You must believe it.
- 3. You must live it.
- 4. You will become it.

If you read on from here you already want it. Over the coming pages we will focus on the second point. Not only will you believe in the Real America, you will believe that we deserve it and that we can achieve it.

The United States is still a capitalist society, but capitalism in the Real America will be an enlightened way to wealth. Sure, some people will always try to make a buck by squeezing the little people, but in the Real America, I'll be able to make more money -- I'll be able to make more of a profit -- by treating employees with dignity and giving them access to non-governmental health care and paying them what they deserve. In the Real America, the employee will be a partner and we'll all enrich one another.

In the Real America our current plastic politicians will be replaced by the more genuine, lifelike and human robots in Disney's Hall of Presidents. Actually, partisan politics is a tough topic to tackle, but we will, starting with chapter 4 -- Everything You Need to Know About Partisan Politics.

Basically, Real Politics in this better America will be based on principle not policy: Real Ethics, Real Values, Real Integrity. As Real Americans, we will not expect to agree with everything a certain politician says, but we will be able to demand that politicians always say what they mean and mean what they say. The Real American Politician will look us in the eyes and say, "Look, Jack, you may completely disagree with me on this one issue, but here are these eight other issues on which we *do* agree. And more important, we agree on principles. And that's just the way it is. If you can vote for me, great. If not, I understand 'cause I don't need this job badly enough to lie to you or myself."

Martin Luther King's dream will come true in the Real America: a colorblind society -- but without political correctness. Unfortunately, King's dream has been perverted and twisted by so many, white and black alike, that it is barely recognizable today. In the Real America, we will know that white men aren't racist; one *man* can be racist. Black men aren't lazy; one *man* can be lazy and racism is not an American problem, it's a *human* problem.

The Real America is the America we all saw on the evening of September 11 and in the days and weeks that followed, but without violence, without sorrow, without mourning. It is an America where the question "How *are* you?" is sincerely asked, and the answer is heard with real concern.

The Real America is a place in our hearts. It's authentic. It's a place we remember. And it's a place we can live in today.

But there are forces keeping us from being the Real Americans and living in the Real America: Now, I'm not one of those people pointing a finger at Hollywood or blaming political correctness or pointing the finger at television or blaming music, because it's not just that.

But it *is* just that. It's *all* of that...and one thing more.

The most insidious force keeping us from being the Real Americans is ourselves.

### ***A Different Background Noise***

You see, most Real Americans don't even know that they are the Real Americans. They've been trapped in a box that other people built for them, and they think that box is real. They have no idea that it's all a delusion.

It's amazing. David Copperfield couldn't pull this off, and he hooked up with Claudia Schiffer.

So what's the trick? What's the sleight-of-hand?

Somehow, the background noise has changed on us.

Somehow most Americans have been convinced that we don't have the heart we do, that we don't have the power we do. As individuals or a group, this has happened subtly.

When we were kids, we had the *Leave It to Beaver* generation; we had *Gilligan's Island*. I remember watching that show later in life and thinking, "What a stupid show." But I continued to watch it and laugh with it. Mind you -- with it, not at it. I guess because it was pure.

I mean, there was absolutely nothing really offensive or even challenging about watching *Gilligan's Island*, except perhaps the class warfare between Lovey Howell and Mary Ann, and maybe the hat-slapping abuse on the part of the Skipper perpetrated on Gilligan.

But that was the world we lived in. That was our background noise: soft and silly. Sex was implied in a white, sequined gown, and violence came only in the shape of the Skipper's hat.

Then, when I was growing up in the 1970s, there was a show that almost didn't make it on television: *Three's Company*. Why? Because Jack Tripper lived with two women -- and there wasn't even anything going on! But still there were many who thought it was offensive. That's how quiet the background noise was back then. Even *Three's Company* seemed loud.

People will always say, "Look at television today! Look what's happening with television! This is an outrage! This is destroying the fabric of our country!"

No, it's not.

They can put *Three's Company* on, they can put *Friends* on, they can put anything on -- name the most offensive television show that comes to mind -- how about *The Sopranos* -- they could have put that on in our *Leave It to Beaver* world, and it wouldn't have destroyed the fabric of the Cleaver family. Because the Cleavers wouldn't have embraced it. In fact, they wouldn't have even tolerated it, and they certainly wouldn't have invited Tony Soprano into their home at 9:00 P.M. on a Sunday night.

Ward Cleaver is not going to go out to the Bada Bing Club to do blow off a hooker's belly just because he watched one TV show!

But what happened to us between *Leave It to Beaver* and *The Sopranos* is that more of the background noise changed.

In the *Leave It to Beaver* years, the background noises were things like Goodness, Common Decency and Courtesy. You can't even hear those noises any more.

Today the background noise is "Death with Video Games." It's "Rudeness." It's "No Patience." It's "Violent Television." It's "Sexuality Directly Being Marketed to Kids." It's your son laughing as he's shooting a cop in a video game. It's your daughter with a tank top that says *porn star*, hot pants that say *bootylicious* and, of course, underneath...the kiddie thong.

Oh, the noise. Listen to it. Look at the billboards. Look at the magazines. See what's on television.

And then look at what you allow in your own home -- your temple.

That's why we're having so much trouble. The background noises we allow in our homes keep our homes from being sacred places and keep them from being a shelter from the relentless storm of background noise.

And that's just one part of it. That's where it starts -- in the home.

It all starts with Gilligan.

### ***Political Correctness Hasn't Changed Our Hearts***

Then comes the classic Great Idea Gone Wrong: political correctness.

Now, as the dad of a child with cerebral palsy, I can tell you that no family is hit more to the core by handicap jokes than the family of a handicapped kid. So when ten or fifteen years ago somebody

said, "Hey, let's call them 'handy-capable' -- it'll make *them* feel better," I thought, "Well, okay, if saying that can make them *feel* better, I don't want to be mean. I don't want to hurt people. I want to live together and be kind and courteous...."

So I got on the bandwagon. "Yeah, you know, handy-capable is not such a bad idea...." I'm into empowering people.

But over time I realized: Handy-capable is as good an idea and as long lasting as Star Jones in a marshmallow boat.

Hey -- you're *not* capable, otherwise I wouldn't be building a *ramp* in front of every building in America.

You're not capable of walking up the *stairs* -- and that's okay.

So what happens is we start on this good path, with good intent, and we end up head first through the windshield picking the grill of a Mack truck out of our teeth. All political correctness has done is shut us all up. It hasn't changed anybody's mind. Instead it's taken every opinion we have, it's taken every joke that we have, and it's forced us to conceal them and hide them and bury them deeper.

We no longer really *know* what our neighbors think anymore, we don't actually *know* what our co-workers believe -- because what they really believe is hidden.

This is a dangerous place in which to dwell. Remember, serial killers are always described by neighbors as "quiet."

Political correctness hasn't changed our hearts -- it's just changed our faces.

That's one of the biggest problems we have as Real Americans: What we have in our hearts, we don't share. We've been beaten into feigning bogus compassion by not noticing the difference between me and the guy who should be hanging from a tool belt because he's so handy *and* capable.

We've been convinced that life is all about the superficial stuff. We've been convinced because we see it in commercials, we see it on television, we see it from Hollywood, we see it from our co-workers, we even see it from our own family. It's all about money, power, greed...*stuff*. And we think the whole world is like that, because that's the image that we're given all the time.

And so when we're driving in our cars we sometimes think, "I wish I could live in a neighborhood that's quiet and flag-lined, where the neighbors are all next door to one another and they *care* about me and my family. And when somebody moves in, they bake a pie or a cake or a loaf of bread" -- like a neighbor did for me -- "a neighborhood where, on summer mornings, the air is filled with the sound of screen doors slamming shut as the kids run out to play and mothers' voices cry out, "Just be home for dinner."

But because we no longer speak our minds or hearts, we think that it is just *us* who miss the neighborhoods we grew up in. We never realize we too can bring bread over to the neighbors. We never realize that the neighbors are pining for that too.

I moved into my neighborhood, and this family across the street actually baked a loaf of bread and brought it to *my* family. I didn't know these people from Adam, but they wanted to live in the same kind of neighborhood that I want to live in. In today's cynical world it's tough to know whether to say thank you or test the bread for smallpox.

But the Real America has to start somewhere. Maybe it starts with a loaf of bread.

But when you're driving in your car and you hear someone on the radio saying, "Oh, well, this is what the neighborhood really *can* be like," you *think*, "Yeah, I'd *like* to live like that...."

But you don't say it. You never say it out loud, because you think it's just *you* -- that you're being silly, corny or out of touch -- because every image you're presented with shows the exact opposite of that.

Political correctness has made us superficial liars. But in the Real America there will be no need for PC because we will talk to one another and those who are handy may just not be capable and vice versa.

## **Commercialism**

Commercialism is another great obstacle standing in our way.

Believe me I know about commercialism. It's my job. If I couldn't get companies to put products on my show that we could sell, I wouldn't be doing my radio show. I'd be selling Hush Puppies and talking into a shoehorn -- or I'd be a homeless guy doing card tricks on a cardboard box for booze -- or God forbid it would ever get this bad: I'd be a trial lawyer.

And by the way, you just bought this book, so you know all too well that it's about selling people stuff. For us to do that -- for me to sell to you -- I have to either create a need or else capitalize on one.

For example, you listen to my program because you want this America that I'm talking about. It's a need. You want to believe it's true. And so when I say, "Go out and buy this book," if your need is great enough you will, because this book may help you fill that hole. We do that with all kinds of products from clothes with little Polo ponies to cars with German emblems on the hoods. But your appetite is never satisfied. These things are empty. Perhaps the \$25 you spend on this product will break that mold. Because what you'll find between these covers won't make you look cooler or arrive in style, but it may empower you to change.

Well, now, understand that every piece of media you see, everything that spills out of your television, your radio, the movies, your magazines -- everything is to get you to buy something. That's the only reason all that stuff exists. That is why in the chapter on business I will tell you that companies in the future can succeed beyond their wildest dreams by breaking that mold -- if they understand that we are on to them and that we're looking for real value in our lives. Those businesses that provide quality products with real value and understand the concept of strategic partnerships, will become the Wal-Marts and Microsofts of tomorrow.

But now people are working on you twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week to find your needs, capitalize on them and fill those holes with meaningless junk.

Even more frightening is the realization that our children -- now this is new -- from the time of birth, are being marketed to. And they're being told they're not cool unless they have these clothes or they listen to this group or they do these things. They're told they're not complete unless they "Obey their thirst," or "Just do it" or "Taste the freshness of...."

And children market to their parents. That's why Disney and fast-food chains market to children, because they know how hard it is for us to say no to our kids.

But going to see the mouse or having the labels read Armani still doesn't fill the gaping hole Madison Avenue has expanded.

And unless we can connect with what is real, our children will get lost. Our nation gets lost because that hunger will need to be fed again and again with materialism, sex, violence or drugs.

I, as a thirty-nine-year-old man, want the new car, whatever it is. Why?

Do you know why the Model T's were all black? Henry Ford wanted to create something everybody would buy *once*. They were all black and you'd buy it once and everybody would have the same thing, until somebody finally said, "Hey, Henry, we can make a lot more money if we start making different models and start souping them up each year. We can actually get people to say, "Well, I have the old one -- I'd rather have the new one!"

That's called creating the need. The cars originally were built to last a lifetime. Now they're built with plastic radiators to last four or five years, and it's time for a new one. That need exists, but it is not real.

The reason I hope people will read this book, is that they *know* -- something inside of them tells them that this is true, that this better America *exists* and it is not about consumption -- it's genuine.

Everything else in the world is telling you it doesn't exist, and the reason it's telling you that is that many of the hucksters have been beaten into cynics or they just want to make money off of you or both.

Cynicism and money have very little to do with the Real America.

## **TV News**

I wrestle with this one a lot, because TV news is very similar to what I do -- just with pictures. Even though I am not a journalist -- thank God -- I am a social commentator. I have to fill three hours every day, and until you try to fill three hours every day on a slow news day, you have no idea what a living nightmare it really is.

It's dental surgery -- Marathon Man kind of stuff.

You have to fill the air with something -- *anything*.

I have the blessing of being able to fill it -- at times -- with something of intrinsic value. When there's nothing happening, I can go one of two ways: I can talk about life stuff in a Jerry Seinfeld fashion and do some mindless comedy, or I can talk about life stuff in a philosophical sort of way. So I have the extremes of either pleasant nothing or real substance when TV news is covering just nothing, car chases and partisan politics.

TV news doesn't have my luxury. They have to tell you what's going on even when there's nothing going on. They have to continue to pound that nothing that's going on with "Here's why this nothing is *so important* to you!"

They have to have these overhyped and outrageous TV news commercials where they say things like, "Your children may be *dead* by seven tonight -- find out what you could have done to save them tonight at ten!"

It's ridiculous, but to get you to watch, they have to be passionate about everything they cover -- and that's impossible. I only have three hours to fill and that's hard enough. But we have three cable news networks going for twenty-four hours a day!

Do the math on that: That's just under seventy-five hours -- every day! That's why you see helicopters flying around taping idiots in Los Angeles just driving through their neighborhoods. It's almost to the point where I could expect to see: "Yeah...Chopper 7 here with breaking news. We are following a suspect now who has just come out of the Albertsons...wait a minute, it looks like the man has some sort of bag....Oh my gosh, Bill, there may be a bomb in that bag....Don't anyone panic, we'll keep watching him."

He went to the *grocery store*! There are *groceries* in the bag. But there's nothing else going on, so they all follow him around in a helicopter!

In our studios, we have ten television monitors to keep an eye on the news channels and it's like clockwork: You'll see one go to the story and then -- *bink! bink! bink!* -- the other three will go to it too. There will be a small Cessna in trouble and MSNBC will say, **TERROR IN THE SKY**, and Fox News will say, **LEOPARDY IN THE JETSTREAM** and CNN will say, **REPUBLICANS ABOUT TO KILL SMALL CHILDREN IN CESSNA**, and you'll think, "What's happened? Another hijacking?"

What's happened is that a small Cessna over Iowa lost one of its landing gears. **WILL THE PEOPLE ALL DIE?** They'll cover it for forty minutes until it lands and nothing happens. But they will show it and you will watch it because they know you *want* something to happen. You don't want them to die, but they're no longer real people. They have become a TV show.

That's the scary thing about reality television. TV news is the ultimate reality television. You're not watching this because the people in the plane are real people for whom you feel concern -- you don't even know who those people are. You're watching it because something *might* happen, those people *might* be killed. The people in the plane become contestants on the real *Survivor*, and we watch to see who will make it and who will not.

Real Americans don't root for people to die.

But TV news is feeding us something, and we're eating it.

So what am I saying? That the people who make TV news are as evil as the people who make Doritos. I want Doritos, but *please stop feeding me Doritos*. I have to beg my children to take away those Doritos or I'll eat the whole bag.

It's the same with TV news. You will sit there, and you will watch it, and you will consume the whole thing, and then nothing will have happened, and you'll say, "Why did they cover that? Why did I watch that? Look at how they hype that up!"

It's just like me eating the Doritos and afterward saying, "I shouldn't be eating those. Why did I eat those? Why did you *let* me eat those?"

TV news is just more empty calories, more background noise, something else that keeps us from being the Real Americans.

## **Hollywood**

Hollywood really needs to have a giant razor-wire fence built around it.



You know, we raised more than \$443,000 for the USO for the Rallies for America. My next fund-raising project will be to raise the money to fence Hollywood in, because it's a zoo. They are nothing but weird alien life forms, and some sort of monkey/man hybrids. And like I do at any zoo, I want to be able to visit and gawk at the animals, but we need to make sure none of them escape and roam free in our neighborhoods. They sit in their Malibu beach homes and they have no idea who the Real Americans are.

When Madonna came out with her song "American Life," she actually chastised America and said, "Americans have their priorities in the wrong place. They're all about money, fame, power and sex."

What??? *Madonna* is saying this to me?

I swear, I read that and I thought, somewhere between my bed and the door, there was a wormhole or a parallel-universe gate that I just slipped through, because this America doesn't make any sense when Madonna is pulling a William Bennett on me.

But again, I don't really blame Hollywood, because Hollywood is giving us what we're asking for. We're consuming gleefully what they're serving us.

The problem is: Which is reality? They're giving it to us because we're demanding it, but the Hollywood crowd believes that the world they create for us is the real world.

I'm on the opposite side. I believe that Hollywood shows us our darker side. The real world is the America of goodness, families, values and caring about our neighbors. Not just consuming more sex, violence, fortune and fame.

One of us is right: Either Hollywood knows that this is the Real America, this is the real world, or I'm right. Our core is either the values -- the principles, not the policies -- of America or it's what you see coming out of Hollywood. It's either "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" or it's sex, drugs and rock and roll.

I don't want to live in Hollywood, USA.

Take it all the way down to what some would say is an inane show, the *Gilligan's Island* of our day. Take it down to *Friends*.

Now I love *Friends*. But *Friends* is not real life.

There was a study done that found that average Americans who watch *Friends* actually believe that they have more friends than those who don't watch *Friends*.

They actually consider the people they watch on television to be their friends -- subconsciously.

*They're not your friends!*

They're actors! First clue: It's a fantasy. Who in New York can have the crummy jobs they have and live in apartments like that? And in real life Jennifer Aniston goes for Brad Pitt...not Joey and definitely not Ross -- because if Ross has a shot, you have a shot. And you *don't* have a shot.

Again it goes back to commercialism: NBC was considering doing an interactive television show where your TV set has a mouse. So, when you're watching *Friends* and you like a lamp, you just click on it. It'll give you the price, put it on your credit card and ship it to you! (Can you click on Jennifer Aniston?)

It's not about entertaining you -- it's about selling you stuff.

And it's certainly not about friendship.

That's one kind of lie that comes out of Hollywood, one that we gleefully consume.

The other includes that marriage doesn't matter, that family can be in any shape or form that you want, that the government of America is something that we should significantly distrust and that socialism ain't that bad an idea.

That message comes from the Barbra Streisands and Susan Sarandons of the world -- or of HollyWorld. I don't think that lie is as destructive as the other stuff, because nobody really relates to Susan Sarandon or Barbra Streisand. Most people see them for what they are: They're entertainers.

Hey, entertainers: Shut the pie hole and entertain us!

It's the subtle nature of the other stuff, because they present you this picture of this-is-how-life-is and you accept it, assuming that you're just different from everybody else or that there's something wrong with you.

Here's something that I learned early as a broadcaster, something that scared me. For years I did morning radio, and for a time I thought what I did could really be something quite insidious, because I had people in twilight sleep. I had people who would listen just after the alarm would go off.

I was talking directly to their subconscious.

So many times I would hear people say, "You are so funny. I heard you say something this morning but I can't remember what it was."

They were laughing in their sleep. "Ooohhh...", I used to think, "if I would just use my power for good as opposed to evil...."

And that's why when Susan Sarandon comes out and says that she disagrees with conservative values, it's totally fine with me. We are wide awake and her message is clear -- just as it is when you listen to Rush Limbaugh. He's not fooling anyone, nor is he trying to. He and Susan are calling it as they see it and are speaking clearly and in no uncertain terms.

The true power hides in the shadows -- the subtle lies disguised as pure entertainment or news. Just as I was in morning drive, the writers of *Will and Grace* are talking to people who are mentally half asleep. People are tuning in for entertainment, but they are also getting a message -- maybe one they wouldn't necessarily purchase -- those messages are only processed through the subconscious. Therefore the viewer begins to tolerate, accept or embrace the moral values of those characters on the program. People love to yell about how dangerous talk radio is. How is that possible? You tune in, knowing exactly what you are getting. Someone with an opinion, spouting that opinion. After that, it's up to you to decide if he is right, wrong or mentally challenged. It's far more dangerous to be presenting a social agenda hidden behind a vehicle that is there just to entertain. The defenses are down, and there is no questioning.

We may be half asleep, but once we recognize the messages around us we can choose what background noise we hear.

**Global Scale**

Maybe one of the biggest things that stops us from living in the Real America is our global scale.

Fifty or a hundred years ago, your scale was your little home or your farm. I had an old farmhouse that I bought in Cheshire, Connecticut, which was built in the 1800s. I did the worst thing known to man -- I bought a house that a real estate agent described as "quaint."

If you're from New England, you know that "quaint" equals "nightmare."

So I bought this "quaint" (nightmarish) little house that needed a "little restoration" (read as: tear it down). Now, growing up in Seattle, where the oldest thing around was from 1920, I had no idea what a 150-year-old house meant, except that it was "picturesque" (read: run down).

It was a home that was built when Millard Fillmore was president. Yeah, *I'm* an idiot.

It all started with a closet: I just wanted a new closet, but once we took that one wall down, the ceiling started to sag, and within twenty-four hours we had to gut the entire house to the outer walls.

It was great. Ever see the movie *The Money Pit*?

But in the wall I found an old letter. When the people who built the house were doing the plastering, evidently they put old things in the walls -- newspapers, photos, clothing. I found a letter from a sister of the woman who lived in the house and she said, "I can't tell you how much I miss being at home. I miss the town, I miss seeing you so much, and I talked with my husband, and we're going to bring the kids out, maybe this Christmas. Oh, how I miss the sound of the sleighbells ringing through the trees and hills."

I thought, "She must be living on the other side of the country. Where could she have moved to?"

The return address on the letter was the next town over, maybe twenty minutes down the road -- by car. It's where I would go and get my groceries. It wasn't a long journey for me, but for her, it was the other side of the earth.

That's the way it used to be.

Now the other side of earth *is* the other side of earth -- and even that's close. When we can watch somebody in Tiananmen Square stand in front of a tank and defy it -- and we're with them, *live* -- or when we can see people on the other side of the planet tearing down a statue of a dictator -- and our brothers and sisters are there, helping them do it, *live* -- that's incredible.

That's no longer the other side of the planet. That's the other side of the street.

But seeing things like war and terrorism live has another effect on us. We see these problems that are on such a huge scale: You've got France and Russia, Germany, the United Nations, Osama bin Laden and George Bush all battling on this global scale while we're sitting there in our homes and easy chairs, eating those Doritos and drinking diet soda. We're watching these global events, and we think we're completely insignificant. We think we can't change anything, because this problem is just too big.

Everything is like that now.

It seems we don't matter anymore.

When the woman who wrote that letter would go in to have her sleigh fixed, she would go to someone who lived right down the street. He knew her and she knew him. They'd talk every day and if the guy didn't fix it right -- they lived in the same town, they knew each other -- they'd have the problem fixed or they'd have to settle it. Back then, this close sense of neighborhood was born out of necessity.

In the Real America, people will *choose* to care. You've heard of virtual reality. The Real America will exist with a "virtual proximity."

How many times have you sat all day waiting for the cable man to show up? And you know what? They don't have to show up. They don't *care* if they show up. They don't care if you complain. "Stand in line, we'll get somebody else to buy cable and show them our crap." You could burst into flames and they wouldn't put you out if they had a fire extinguisher in their hands.

And that goes from the cable man to the United Nations. It's all the same thing: You're being convinced that you don't matter anymore, that you can't make a difference.

But that's the big lie.

Take it from a recovering alcoholic and drug user, cocaine ain't the big lie. The big lie is that "You don't matter."

You *do* make a difference. Every single person makes a difference.

But you have to want it first and believe it second.

### ***Politics: Policy versus Principle***

Politics keep us from being the Real Americans in several ways. (Again, please read chapter 4, Everything You Need to Know About Partisan Politics.) It distracts us from seeing what the real issues are; politics is not the real world -- it's just politics.

Now I hear this from people whether they dislike George Bush or Bill Clinton -- it doesn't matter who the president is, and it doesn't matter what the party is. The person opposing that person, president or party will always say, "Look at what they've done! You can't trust them! They've done this thing or that thing. They're *horrible*!" And then somebody on the other side will come in and say, "Well, come on, what are you going to do about it? You can't change things -- they're *all* like that!"

Well, I'm here to say, "No, they're *not* all like that."

Not all Republicans are clean and dandy, and not all Democrats are scumbags. There are huge scumbags in Congress on both sides of the aisle, and there are good and decent people who really care about America who are Democrats and Republicans.

Partisan politics makes us cynical. It makes us buy into another Big Lie: *that we can't change anything*. The bad politicians need us to believe that. It empowers them.

How many of us would kill for a Lee Iacocca or a Jack Welch to be the president of the United States? Or for the president to approach Jack Welch and say, "Look, here's the six billion pages of the federal budget. Forget about political favors and cut this budget -- tell me only what we need and what we don't need. Don't talk politics -- just do the right thing for America."

I can guarantee you that we could cut it down. I can guarantee you that the right things would be done and we wouldn't be running a deficit.

I can guarantee you that James Carville wouldn't have a job.

But these things are , and not all Democrats are scumbags. There are huge scumbags in Congress on both sides of the aisle, and there are good and decent people who really care about America who are Democrats and Republicans.

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But these things are never done (and James Carville still *has* a job), because there are so few politicians with enough courage to say what they mean and mean what they say.

The Real Americans yearn for somebody...anybody...to stand up and tell the country, "Damn the consequences from the special interest groups, we're moving forward." Scratch that. There are plenty of people who will *say* that....Real Americans yearn for someone who will actually *do* it. (And they yearn for James Carville not to have a job).

James Carville and Mary Matalin engaged in the most bizarre marriage in the history of humanity. James is the alien talking head of the Democratic party, while Mary spends more time in bed with the GOP than she does with Carville.

It would take a lot for a couple to take the title of "most bizarre relationship" away from these two, but here are a few contenders.

1. Woody Allen and Soon-Yi
2. Anna Nicole Smith and the Old Dead Guy (He's way too good for her -- even now.)
3. Camryn Manheim and a salad
4. Britney Spears and Glenn Beck
5. Celine Dion and her grandfather
6. Apples and oranges

Thomas Jefferson and John Adams were having a problem once, and they were arguing about something. I don't know what -- maybe Adams said, "Hey TJ, you're a big, fat, redheaded freak," and then Jefferson said, "Oh yeah, well your cousin Sam is a sloppy drunk. And his beer sucks." Anyway, they were arguing about something and they needed to be brought back together again. They needed to come together for the good of the nation.

So Washington came to them and said, "Guys, stop. Listen to yourselves. You're being ridiculous."

Boy, would we kill for a Washington now to come to the Republicans and the Democrats and say, "Listen to yourselves!"

But that's what Washington did. He said, "Look, you guys have to come together and *not* think the worst of each other, because, really, you both agree on the essentials. You agree on the principles. You agree on life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. You agree on the presumption of innocence. You agree that our freedom comes from a divine creator. You just disagree on how much power there should be in the courts, how the Constitution should be interpreted and what the structure of the government should be. That's just *politics*. That's just *policy*. Unite on what brings us together -- *principle*."

I'm proud to say that I actually got to see hundreds of thousands of people do just that -- come together on principle at my Rallies for America. It was a grassroots effort to show support for our troops that attracted Real Americans in hometowns from coast to coast.

It started with a Dallas morning radio-show host, Darrell Ankarlo, whose son recently signed up for the marines. He asked his dad why there were only protests happening. In honor of his son, Darrell organized a rally to support the troops -- 3,500 people attended!

I told my callers who were upset that their views weren't being represented in the media about Darrell's rally. I told them to call their local radio station and ask them to organize an event to support the troops. I even promised to show up myself, if they could get it organized.

I wanted people to feel empowered to exercise their right of free speech, regardless of their views on the war itself. I wanted to bring as many people as possible together so our troops would truly know, without a doubt, that they have won the heart of America and that we are capable of setting politics aside and coming together on principle.

### ***Why I Wave the Flag***

People say that I am "jingoistic" -- which I actually had to look up. I'd like to thank *The New York Times* for calling me that, because *The New York Times* makes me smarter! They call me names I don't understand, and I have to look them up!

So now I've included "jingoistic" on my word calendar. It's my February word. My word calendar has only one word per month, because that's all I can handle. I'm not smart like *The New York Times*.

So when people say that I'm an ultranationalist or that I'm a flag waver, I say, "Yeah, I am." But not because I believe that America is the greatest thing that will ever be or that there is no greater nation on Earth. I just believe that there is no greater *potential* in a nation than there is in America. I believe that we are the greatest nation on Earth *today* -- warts, flaws and all. Name a country that doesn't have any warts.

But even that's not why I wave the flag. I wave the flag for the principles of our nation: that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights and that among those rights are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Our principles and our potential: *That's* why I wave the flag.

I wave the flag when I hear the stories of American GIs going into Germany after World War II. Our soldiers rolled into this devastated world with tanks, and they would reach in and hand kids a Hershey's chocolate bar. For these kids, those chocolate bars were their first taste of freedom.

I saw an interview with a woman who remembered that day, and when she spoke, she almost licked her lips, remembering that GI and the taste of chocolate. Now she associates the taste of chocolate with America and freedom.

We went into Japan and when we left, we didn't leave tanks and troops there -- we left a constitution. Not *our* Constitution, not *our* system of government -- something close to it, but not ours. And you know what? Coupled with the work ethic and the family values of the Japanese, the Japanese kicked our butts economically for a while! And I was one American who wasn't hacked off at the Japanese for doing it -- I was hacked off at *us* for not learning more from the Japanese!

When we take life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness and the idea that all men are created equal and give that to somebody else -- if that somebody else can take those things and create a better and more effective system of government and enable their citizens to be even more free...I vote for that. Show me a better system that enables people to reach more of their potential through liberty and I will show you a system I would vote for.

*That's* what America is. Not saying, "We are the best, so don't change anything." These concepts, these principles don't come from Americans, they come from God Himself. When you take those principles and build a better system, I'll wave the flag every time.

I remember standing in front of the statue of Abraham Lincoln years ago. Only later did I come to find out that it's not actual size. I looked at him sitting in his chair, and I cried. Now, what did I know of Lincoln? I knew that he freed the slaves, but I was an eighteen-year-old kid from Seattle who grew up disconnected from race riots or white-only water fountains. I didn't cry for Abraham Lincoln or the Civil War, or even the men who died fighting for either side.

I cried for what I can only describe as an unrequited love for an America that is always just out of our reach.

We *know* it's there. It's the passion for perfection, a perfection that we all keep striving for. Americans have never given up. *Never*. We have never said, "This America is good enough," and we never will.

That's the Real America. And I think you're reading this book because you believe that you can help bring it back.

And when I say "bring it back," I'm not sure it ever truly existed. But our reaching for it may have been more focused when we didn't have all the background noise we have now. Nowadays it's more difficult, but we can still reach it if we try.

The Real America is a physical presence that we'll actually achieve if we want it. The Real America is a place where if you're sick, I take care of you -- because I *want* to. In the Real America, I will work my brains out, because it's something I *want* to do. I will give freely, not because I'm forced to by the IRS, but I will give my money to others for the good of the whole and my soul.

When every, single member of the community, without exception, chooses for themselves, freely and totally, "that's how I want to live my life," things will dramatically change. That's what the Real America looked like on September 12, 2001: Everyone was looking around for "Who can I help?" "What can I do?" We were *looking* for ways to give away our money -- freely, not because we were forced to, but because we wanted to. I stood in line at a blood donation center with hundreds of people in St. Petersburg, Florida -- we all had been told there was no pressing need for blood, but we were *looking* for ways to help. And so we gave, freely. We needed the government to protect and defend us. We didn't need some bloated government program to help our neighbors.

That's the Real America. I'm not sure if we can get there tomorrow. But we Americans are extraordinarily powerful individuals. We can accomplish whatever we set our minds to. We can create massive and mighty miracles in our lifetimes. Everything comes from the power of the individual American: Liberty, justice, freedom -- our families come from that power; our communities do as well.

Someday we will truly understand that we *are* the Real Americans. And on that day, the whole world will change. And James Carville won't have a job but he'll still have a Republican for a wife.

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- Title: The Real America: Messages from the Heart and Heartland
  - Author: Glenn Beck
  - Released: 2003-09-30
  - Language:
  - Pages: 256
  - ISBN: 0743486331
  - ISBN13: 978-0743486330
  - ASIN: 0743486331
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