

ANNOUNCEMENT

SENATOR BEN SASSE ON AMERICAN SOCIETY & CULTURE

NEW YORK, NY, May 8, 2017 – Senator Ben Sasse sat down with Bill Kristol to discuss the state of American society and culture. Elected in 2014, Ben Sasse is a U.S. Senator from Nebraska. In this *Conversation*, Sasse shares his thoughts on the state of American society and culture. Drawing on themes from his forthcoming book, *The Vanishing American Adult*, Sasse highlights an erosion of American civic life and a corresponding decline in work ethic. This is a must-see *Conversation* for anyone interested in American politics, society, and culture.

Below are excerpts from the *Conversation*:

[On the vanishing American adult] SASSE: The number one address for college graduates in America right now is moving back into their parents' basement. We have 18-24-year-old males, a large share of whom play video games for a majority of their waking hours. I don't want those guys marrying my daughters.... I don't think we're having a deliberate conversation about the fact that we are rich but collectively spoiled. This is not a rich person problem. This is a civilizational problem in which work is a not a part of our coming age experience.

[On the limits of institutionalized education] SASSE: I think it's highly dangerous to think that the main thing 14-18-year-olds should do is sit still and be in a classroom, inside, for the majority of their waking hours Monday through Friday. I think most people who come to be really interesting and curious and creative and dynamic—and by the way, it's not a choice between creativity and actual, objective knowledge—realize that when they're the questioner they're going to go and shake

the trees of the world and find a whole heck of a lot of fruit.... You want to open the doors to the library and have them fall in love and be curious enough that they want to pursue it with vigor and abandon, but you've got to have that creative spark.

I think we have false choices all over the place in the ways we think of institutionalized schooling.... One monopolized, institutional form of secondary education I don't think serves us very well. I think we should have more experiment. We should have more debate. We should have more choice. We should have more institutional pluralization.

[On cultivating self-reliance] SASSE: [A few] years ago, I was in Israel and we went out to [visit] a missile installation, Iron Dome. I envisioned that these strong 30-year-old men were going to come out of this installation. Actually, these two girls—16 or 17 years old—with long hair came out. My daughters are 15 and 13! This girl, this soldier, comes out and shakes my hand and tells me the story of the way the missile works and all the effective knockdowns that they had last year. It was really impressive.

[On the crisis of community and work ethic] SASSE: The [crisis in the transmission of a work ethic] is bubbling just below the surface. As we hollow out a lot of the mediating institutions—[which came about through] the transformation from [township] life [described by Tocqueville], to the urban ethnic neighborhood, to our kind of increasingly placeless suburbia—there are fewer institutions that people feel a connection to. And there's a national media screaming about politics as if the jokers that I work with are competent to help us figure out how to raise our kids by legislation. There are legislative implications, but the really big issues [in America] are about a republican, small r republican, culture of virtue. You can't have America continue if we aren't raising people who believe that mostly they, their local community, their friends, their neighbors, and their family are going to build the future.

Watch the *Conversation* here:

<http://conversationswithbillkristol.org/video/ben-sasse>

About *Conversations with Bill Kristol*. *Conversations with Bill Kristol* is an online interview program hosted by *Weekly Standard* editor Bill Kristol and produced by [The Foundation for Constitutional Government](#). A forum for substantive, thought-provoking dialogue on pressing issues in the news and American politics, *Conversations* segments feature informal discussions between Kristol and guests on a diverse array of issues of public concern—from the American presidency and the Middle East peace process to the ideas that have shaped Western civilization. Recent guests include syndicated columnist [Charles Krauthammer](#), former Vice President [Dick Cheney](#), former Speaker of the House [Newt Gingrich](#), business founder [Peter Thiel](#), best-selling author [Charles Murray](#), former commander in Iraq and Afghanistan [General David Petraeus](#), former U.S. Army Vice Chief of Staff [General Jack Keane](#), and Harvard professor [Harvey Mansfield](#). New conversations are released bi-weekly.

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