



The State of the American Mind: 16 Leading Critics on the New Anti-Intellectualism

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In 1987, Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* was published; a wildly popular book that drew attention to the shift in American culture away from the tenants that made America—and Americans—unique. Bloom focused on a breakdown in the American curriculum, but many sensed that the issue affected more than education. The very essence of what it meant to be an American was disappearing.

That was over twenty years ago. Since then, the United States has experienced unprecedented wealth, more youth enrolling in higher education than ever before, and technology advancements far beyond what many in the 1980s dreamed possible. And yet, the state of the American mind seems to have deteriorated further. Benjamin Franklin's "self-made man" has become a man dependent on the state. Independence has turned into self-absorption. Liberty has been curtailed in the defense of multiculturalism.

In order to fully grasp the underpinnings of this shift away from the self-reliant, well-informed American, editors Mark Bauerlein and Adam Bellow have brought together a group of cultural and educational experts to discuss the root causes of the decline of the American mind. The writers of these fifteen original essays include E. D. Hirsch, Nicholas Eberstadt, and Dennis Prager, as well as Daniel Dreisbach, Gerald Graff, Richard Arum, Robert Whitaker, David T. Z. Mindich, Maggie Jackson, Jean Twenge, Jonathan Kay, Ilya Somin, Steve Wasserman, Greg Lukianoff, and R. R. Reno. Their essays are compiled into three main categories:

- *States of Mind: Indicators of Intellectual and Cognitive Decline*

These essays broach specific mental deficiencies among the population, including lagging cultural IQ, low Biblical literacy, poor writing skills, and over-medication.

- *Personal and Cognitive Habits/Interests*

These essays turn to specific mental behaviors and interests, including avoidance of the news, short attention spans, narcissism, and conspiracy obsessions.

- *National Consequences*

These essays examine broader trends affecting populations and institutions, including rates of entitlement claims, voting habits, and a low-performing higher education system.

The State of the American Mind is both an assessment of our current state as well as a warning, foretelling what we may yet become. For anyone interested in the intellectual fate of America, *The State of the American Mind* offers an accessible and critical look at life in America and how our collective mind is faring.

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