

**Some Good News (edited)**  
**By**  
**Daniel E. White April 27, 2026**

Hans Rosling, co-founder of the Gapminder Foundation and a “global TED talk phenomenon, published *Factfulness* in 2018 in collaboration with Ola Rosling and Anna Rosling Ronnlund. A New York Times bestseller, the gist of the book is captured in its subtitle: “*Ten Reasons We’re Wrong about the World—and Why Things are Better than You Think.*”

President Obama described *Factfulness* as “a hopeful book about the potential for human progress when we work oK of facts rather than our inherent biases.” The book is filled with charts and graphs and data that make the case that our collective world view is too often more negative than the facts suggest it should be.

Read the book for an uplift.

I recently finished another book that raised my spirits. *The Soul of America* by Jon Meacham, published in 2017, doesn’t have charts or graphs or even much numerical data. His subtitle is “*The Battle for our Better Angels,*” using a phrase of Lincoln’s.

In his conclusion, Meacham wrote:

“As a matter of observable fact, the U.S., through its sporadic adherence to its finest aspirations, is the most durable experiment in pluralistic republicanism the world has ever known.”

“In the main, the America of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is, for all of its shortcomings, freer and more accepting than it has ever been. If that weren’t the case, right-wing populist attacks on immigrants and the widening mainstream wouldn’t be so ferocious. A tragic element of history is that every advance must contend with forces of reaction.”

Meacham described the book as a “portrait of hours [in American history] in which the politics of fear were prevalent—a reminder that periods of public dispiritedness are not new and a reassurance that they are survivable...Imperfection is the rule, not the exception.”

I bought the book because of the word “soul.” Other authors have written about the American experiment or dream or creed. Meacham wrote that, “soul is the vital center, the core, the heart, the essence of life... a central, self-evident truth.” He continued, “No country is perfect. But progress is possible.”

An historian, Meacham used examples starting with 18<sup>th</sup> century America, when the framers of the Constitution and authors of the Declaration of Independence laid out their vision for the nation and expressed themselves in aspirations like “all men are created equal, endowed by their Creator with inalienable rights—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” which they understood to be a synonym for virtue.

Continuing with examples from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, Meacham argued that the adherence of the United States to “its finest aspirations” has waxed and waned. The outcome of the Civil War, for example, did not solve the racial strife that the enslavement of people of color represented. Instead, legal impediments to “all men are created equal” took more than 100 years to begin to undo and is still a work in progress.

The massive immigration of Italians, Irish, Germans, Asians and others comprising the formation of our “melting pot” beginning at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a challenge to leaders like Teddy Roosevelt and a stimulus for “the Progressive era,” were clear antecedents to such disruptions as the Red Scare of the early 1920s and the new Ku Klux Klan. The impulse to roll up the welcome mat has not abated though the nationalities of the people to be excluded has changed. Still, the US is obviously a nation of immigrants.

FDR faced what Meacham described as a “crisis of the old order” embodied in the Great Depression and addressed in New Deal programs. The New Deal was much about trying to restore the economy to where prosperity was achievable by the masses. The “old order” did not include an activist federal government; as a result, a changed economy was inevitable. But political leaders with more radical ideas like Huey Long had significant numbers of believers.

Meacham credited President Johnson as the most important political leader in the history of civil rights. But many of us can recall the civil dislocations across the country that put up resistance to “all men are created equal.” Meacham’s “forces of reaction” seldom go away.

We are in a crisis of the old order now. But maybe such crises are a part of the deal. A “new order” prevails for a time until it becomes stale—the old order—and crumbles. Then come times of uncertainty as a new order takes form. “Things fall apart. The center cannot hold,” wrote the poet.

This country’s heart, its core, has always been striving to meet its declared aspirations for all of its citizens. That is the essence of the United States of America that has sustained it through action and reaction across time.

Rosling addressed our heads to persuade us that things are better than we think. Meacham addressed our hearts to inspire us to tap into the soul of America and embrace the founders’ aspirations written 250 years ago.

Aren’t these some bits of good news?

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