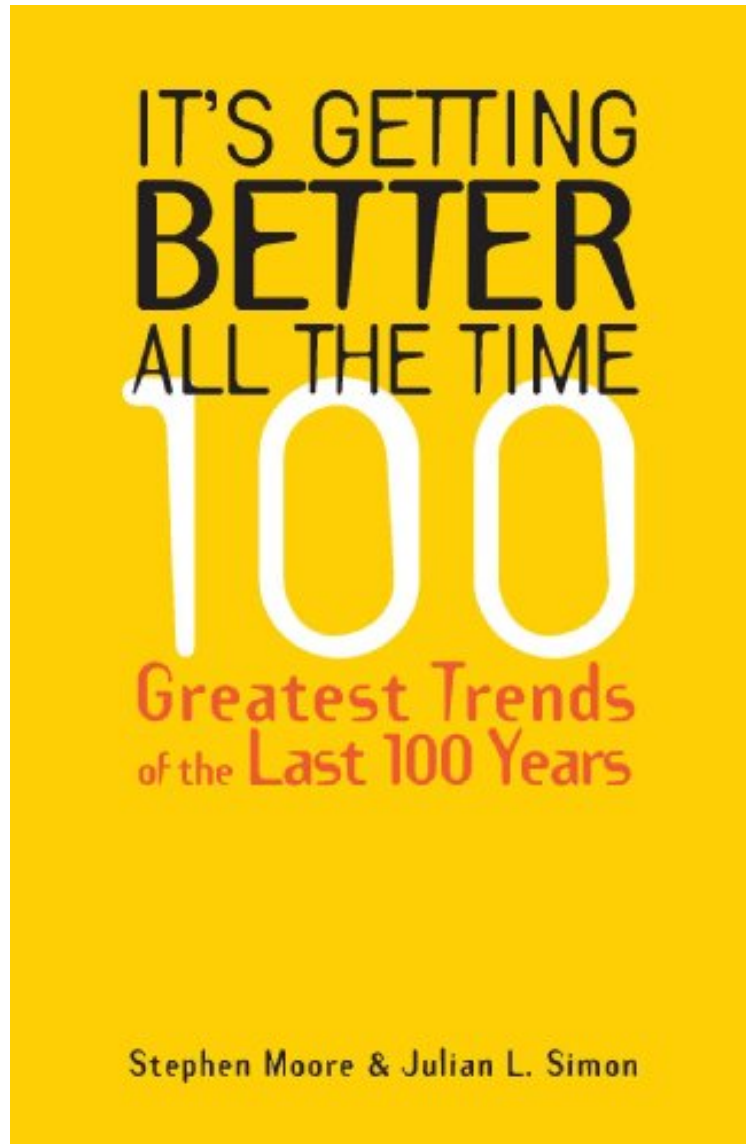


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It's Getting Better All the Time: 100 Greatest Trends of the Last 100 years

Stephen Moore

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Stephen Moore : It's Getting Better All the Time: 100 Greatest Trends of the Last 100 years before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised It's Getting Better All the Time: 100 Greatest Trends of the Last 100 years:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Book Explains Why the Good Old Days Are NowBy Jay LehrAs a well-informed reader of Environment Climate News, you likely exhibit considerable skepticism toward the drumbeat

of fear-mongering anti-capitalists who believe the world is in a death spiral that can be stopped only by increasing the size of government programs and reducing human freedoms. However, you may find it difficult to contradict the fear-mongers if you lack the hard data to dispute their pessimistic views. As regular Environment Climate News readers know, my normal book reviews read more like "Cliff Notes" for students, because I recognize only a small percentage of you will actually buy the books I review. Not this time. I will only surf across this compendium of positive human progress. You must buy the book, absorb it carefully, and present its contents continually to those who don't recognize they live in the golden days of our nation.

Golden Age The central premise of *It's Getting Better All the Time*, published in 2001 by the Cato Institute, is that there has been more improvement in the human condition in the past 100 years than in all of the previous centuries combined. That is a difficult premise to accept for those who hear and read the daily news of school shootings, homelessness, AIDS, global warming, declining student test scores, and a widening gap between rich and poor. Yet over the course of the twentieth century, by nearly every measure of the human condition, life has improved dramatically. Be it health, wealth, nutrition, education, speed of transportation and communications, leisure time, the proliferation of computers and the Internet, or gains for women, minorities, and children--these all demonstrate an amazing improvement of the human condition. While much of the rest of the world lags behind the United States, the same trends are nevertheless evident nearly everywhere. And of even greater importance is the fact that freedom is expanding across the globe and tyranny is on the defensive wherever it exists.

Woes of Yesteryear If you are not convinced the human condition is improving, the authors call your attention to a picture of life but a century ago. It was an era of tuberculosis, typhoid, sanitariums, child labor, horse manure, candles, Jim Crow laws, 12-hour work days, and premature death. One child in four perished before his or her 14th birthday. While 100 years ago parents lived in very real fear of their children dying, today, the authors point out, middle-income suburban parents live in fear of their child not making the soccer all-star team. A hundred years ago, industrial cities were enveloped in smoke, streets smelled of garbage, and the automobile was correctly hailed as a pro-environment invention that would lead to the reduction of the filth associated with horses. Cancer was not a primary cause of death then because most Americans were doomed by infectious diseases, not living long enough to develop degenerative cancers. Perhaps no fact in this book is more impressive than this: Most Americans who are considered poor today have access to a quality of housing, food, health care, consumer products, entertainment, communications, and transportation that even the superrich Vanderbilts, Carnegies, and Rockefellers did not enjoy in their day.

Numerous Advances Coauthors Julian Simon and Stephen Moore believe the three most important developments that made all this possible are electricity, modern drugs, and the microchip. The book chronicles the past 100 years through advances in 14 categories, offering charts and graphs to show every significant advance in these areas:

- Health:** Almost all the major killer diseases before 1900--tuberculosis, typhoid, smallpox, whooping cough, polio, and malaria--have been eradicated in the United States.
- Nutrition:** The price of food is now below 10 percent of family income. After spending thousands of years trying to satisfy man's caloric needs, we're now trying to eat less, for health reasons.
- Children:** Child labor has been eliminated in the developed world, and it is rare that children do not survive to adulthood.
- Incomes:** Real per-capita income in the United States has quadrupled in the past century.
- Poverty:** Poverty, by any measure, is declining rapidly in the United States.
- Work:** Before 1900 most work was physically demanding drudgery, low-paying, and monotonous. Such work is the exception today.
- Recreation and leisure:** Recreation, sports, dining out, and enjoying professional entertainment are central to American life today.
- Housing:** In 1900, less than one in five U.S. homes had running water, flushing toilets, a vacuum cleaner, and gas or electric heat.

Transportation, computers, education, environment, natural resources, and the status of women and minorities round out the book's evidence with similar dramatic advances.

Individualism vs. Statism The authors note America got rich earlier and to a greater extent than all other nations because nowhere else has the entrepreneurial spirit been nurtured as it has been here. Government assistance has had little to do with our progress, they observe. While we now have substantial prosperity and large government programs, the government has been a consequence of our economic growth rather than a cause of it. In fact, almost every great tragedy of the twentieth century has been a result of too much government, not too little. Nazism, socialism, communism, Marxism, and apartheid were all simply fancy names for statism, the unreasonable government control over the lives and liberties of citizens. Over 100 million people perished as a result of these tyrannical governments in the twentieth century. Reassuringly, the authors are as optimistic about the future as they are pleased with recent advances. They predict increases in wealth and health, declining prices for natural resources, improvements in agriculture, further reduction in disease, more abundant free markets--and the continuing embarrassment of doomsayers who routinely predict planetary catastrophe. It is a shame Simon, who died in February 1998 just a few days short of his 66th birthday, did not live longer to see more of his optimism come true.

-----Jay Lehr ([...]) is science director for The Heartland Institute.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. For a change a factual and inspiring book in a world of negativity

By J.A. Negative and disturbing news sells, but is it the truth? Frequently, news is positive when you look a long-term trends but positive news don't "sell newspapers". In a world filled with negative and disturbing news and events it's nice to come across uplifting and factual news. I hope that more Americans, overcome this morbid curiosity and start realizing that the world has lots of good news which is just not being reported due to fact that a lot

of news doesn't have enough "shock factor" or enough "guts and glory" or "entertaining enough".0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Poorly organized collection of extremely basic and vague US charts ...By Johnny KLIPoorly organized collection of extremely basic and vague US charts of how technology, education, and demographics have changed over time.

There has been more material progress in the United States in the 20th Century than in the entire world in all previous centuries combined.