

Passage 1: *In this article David Brooks writes about **In Search of Dignity***

- 1 When George Washington was a young man, he copied out a list of 110 “Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation”. Some of the rules in his list dealt with the niceties of going to a dinner party or meeting somebody on the street.
- 2 “Lean not upon anyone,” was one of the rules. “Read no letter, books or papers in company,” was another. “If anyone comes to speak to you while you are sitting, stand up,” was a third. 5
- 3 These rules, which Washington derived from a 16th-century guidebook, were not just etiquette tips. They were designed to improve inner morals by shaping the outward man. Washington took them very seriously. He worked hard to follow them. Throughout his life, he remained acutely conscious of his own rectitude. In so doing, he turned himself into a new kind of hero. As the historian Gordon Wood has written, “Washington became a great man 10 and was acclaimed as a classical hero because of the way he conducted himself during times of temptation. It was his moral character that set him apart from other men.”
- 4 Washington absorbed, and later came to personify what you might call the dignity code. The code was based on the same premise as the nation’s Constitution — that human beings are flawed by nature and live in constant peril of falling into disasters caused by their own passions. Artificial systems had to be created to balance and restrain these passions. The dignity code commanded its followers to endeavour to put national interests above personal interests. It commanded its followers to be reticent — to never degrade intimate emotions by parading them in public. 15
- 5 Today, Americans still lavishly admire people who are naturally dignified. But the dignity code 20 itself has been completely obliterated. The rules that guided Washington and generations of people after him are simply gone.
- 6 Mankind has always had a tension between desire and duty. As Ralph Waldo Emerson observed, “Moral qualities rule the world, but at short distances, the senses are despotic.” Still, major forces are corrupting our sense of dignity at an ever increasing pace. First, there is 25 capitalism. We are all encouraged to become managers of our own brand, to do self-promoting end zone dances to broadcast our own talents. Second, there is the cult of naturalism. We are all encouraged to discard artifice and repression and to instead liberate our own feelings. Third, there is the force of religious evangelism with its emphasis on the benefits of public confession. Fourth, there is radical egalitarianism and its hostility to refined, 30 controlled aristocratic manners.
- 7 The old dignity code has not survived modern life. The costs of its demise are there for all to see. Every week there are new scandals featuring people who simply do not know how to act. There was Mark Sanford, the Governor of South Carolina, who even when caught in an act of indecency with an Argentinean woman lacked a sense of reticence. He gave himself 35 generous self-exposure even in his moment of disgrace. Then there was the death of Michael Jackson and the discussion of his life. For everything that he was, Jackson ignored any pressure to live according to the rules and restraints of adulthood. Then there was Sarah Palin’s press conference. Here was a woman who aspires to a high public role but is unfamiliar with the traits of equipoise and constancy, which are the sources of authority and 40 trust.
- 8 Thankfully, there is President Obama. Whatever policy differences people may have with him, we can all agree that he exemplifies reticence, dispassion and the other traits associated with dignity. He may revitalise the concept of dignity for a new generation and embody a new set 45 of rules for self-mastery.

Passage 2: In this article Ziauddin Sardar writes about *Dignity in Language*

- 1 Politically correct language has fallen from favour; demonised and discredited. People who use it are seen to be pretentious, dishonest and even condescending. Where should we go next? Can we afford to ignore the return of derogatory language directed at black, Muslim, gay, disabled or elderly people, anyone deemed different? Is our pursuit of honesty, in many cases, perceived truth, marring our ability to use proper, dignified language? 5
- 2 It is no less disturbing that writers, important and dignified people with the mastery of using language in its most beautiful form have chosen to present it at its worst. Writer Alice Hoffman lambasted critic Roberta Silman for giving a lousy review on her latest novel *The Story Sisters*. Hoffman exposed Silman's email address and telephone number and incited her fans to "tell her what they think of snarky critics". Hoffman later apologised for "overreacting". Influential modern philosopher Alain De Botton had his share of bad reviews from New York Times reviewer Caleb Crain. De Botton wrote to Crain saying, "I hate you till the day I die and wish you nothing but ill will in every career move you make". This is a philosopher who is famous for writing about the consolations of philosophy. De Botton later made a public apology. 10
- 3 Language is more than our basic tool of communication; it shapes perceptions and so influences behaviour. Derogatory words make way for degrading treatment. Terms such as "cripples", "spastics", "thick" and "retarded" stigmatise disabled people as less human. A recent increase in attacks had its roots in such language. If "terrorism" is constantly linked to the "Muslim community", as though it is one monolithic entity, it is not surprising if 69% of Britons see all Muslims as terrorists and feel fear and loathing towards them. 15 20
- 4 We shape our language, but language also shapes us. Giving a currency to demeaning language can blind us to the fact that we have embraced demeaning perceptions about other people. The Equality and Human Rights Commission believes language should play an important part in our strategy to promote equality. It makes a contribution to social inclusion, fighting alienation, promoting good relations and democratic participation. 25
- 5 In the commission's discussion paper, *The Language of Equality*, I advocate ethically sensitive language. I see ethics in terms of four moral precepts: equality, dignity, respect and value. Everyone has an equal right to be described in a dignified and respectful way. However, equal treatment does not mean the same treatment; that is why equal value is a necessary component. Descriptions of individuals, groups and communities should enhance human dignity and value while respecting self-descriptions, cultural concerns and practices. 30
- 6 The objective is clear, but the task will be unending. Words and their meanings, particularly in relation to equality, do not remain static. A word seen as fair and inclusive yesterday can acquire unfair, biased or pejorative meanings today. In the past century, it was acceptable to refer to disabled people as "handicapped" or "invalids". Today, these terms reinforce stereotypes, making the person behind the disability invisible and denying their dignity and humanity. People and communities change constantly, producing new terminology and understanding of language along the way. Subtle changes in meaning can be exploited to oppress people and discriminate against groups and communities. 35
- 7 There is nothing old fashioned about politeness; it is sensibility for civility that makes a better future. 40