

# Ralph Ellison Quotes

*Men, Art, Writing, Life, Trying, World, Identity, Reality, Real, Light, Inspirational,  
Being Yourself, Dream, Giving, People, Music, Woven, Mind, Individual,  
Commitment*

It takes a deep commitment to change and an even deeper commitment to grow.

~Ralph Ellison

Please, a definition: A hibernation is a covert preparation for a more overt action.

~Ralph Ellison

Life is to be lived, not controlled, and humanity is won by continuing to play in face of certain defeat.

~Ralph Ellison

Education is all a matter of building bridges.

~Ralph Ellison

Power doesn't have to show off. Power is confident, self-assuring, self-starting and self-stopping, self-warming and self-justifying. When you have it, you know it.

~Ralph Ellison

America is woven of many strands. I would recognise them and let it so remain. Our fate is to become one, and yet many. This is not prophecy, but description.

~Ralph Ellison

When I discover who I am, I'll be free.

~Ralph Ellison

I am not ashamed of my grandparents for having been slaves. I am only ashamed of myself for having at one time being ashamed.

~Ralph Ellison

What and how much had I lost by trying to do only what was expected of me instead of what I myself had wished to do?

~Ralph Ellison

God is love, I said, but art's the possibility of forms, and shadows are the source of identity.

~Ralph Ellison

There are few things in the world as dangerous as sleepwalkers.

~Ralph Ellison

Power, for the writer...lies in his ability to reveal if only a little bit more about the complexity of humanity.

~Ralph Ellison

Without involvement, there is no commitment. Mark it down, asterisk it, circle it, underline it." Stephen Covey "It takes a deep commitment to change and an even deeper commitment to grow.

~Ralph Ellison

I do not know if all cops are poets, but I know that all cops carry guns with triggers.

~Ralph Ellison

That ... is how the world moves: Not like an arrow, but a boomerang.

~Ralph Ellison

I am an invisible man. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids - and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me.

~Ralph Ellison

The blues is an art of ambiguity, an assertion of the irrepressibly human over all circumstances, whether created by others or by one's own human failing.

~Ralph Ellison

I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me.

~Ralph Ellison

Had the price of looking been blindness, I would have looked.

~Ralph Ellison

Everywhere I've turned somebody has wanted to sacrifice me for my own goodâ€”only /they/ were the ones who benefited. And now we start on the old sacrificial merry-go-round. At what point do we stop?

~Ralph Ellison

Man's hope can paint a purple picture, can transform a soaring vulture into a noble eagle or moaning dove.

~Ralph Ellison

The antidote to hubris, to overweening pride, is irony, that capacity to discover and systematize ideas.

~Ralph Ellison

Good fiction is made of that which is real, and reality is difficult to come by.

~Ralph Ellison

The world is a possibility if only you'll discover it.

~Ralph Ellison

I was looking for myself and asking everyone except myself questions which I, and only I, could answer.

~Ralph Ellison

I am nobody but myself.

~Ralph Ellison

The end is in the beginning and lies far ahead.

~Ralph Ellison

To hell with being ashamed of what you liked.

~Ralph Ellison

And while the ice was melting to form a flood in which I threatened to drown I awoke one afternoon to find that my first northern winter had set.

~Ralph Ellison

In order to travel far you have to be detached.

~Ralph Ellison

Perhaps to lose a sense of where you are implies the danger of losing a sense of who you are.

~Ralph Ellison

The act of writing requires a constant plunging back into the shadow of the past where time hovers ghostlike.

~Ralph Ellison

Injustice wears ever the same harsh face wherever it shows itself.

~Ralph Ellison

I remember that I'm invisible and walk softly so as not awake the sleeping ones. Sometimes it is best not to awaken them; there are few things in the world as dangerous as sleepwalkers.

~Ralph Ellison

Eclecticism is the word. Like a jazz musician who creates his own style out of the styles around him, I play by ear.

~Ralph Ellison

I'm not a separatist. The imagination is integrative. That's how you

make the new -- by putting something else with what you've got. And I'm unashamedly an American integrationist.

~Ralph Ellison

It took me a long time and much painful boomeranging of my expectations to achieve a realization everyone else appears to have been born with: That I am nobody but myself.

~Ralph Ellison

Who knows but that, on the lower frequencies, I speak for you?

~Ralph Ellison

We look too much to museums. The sun coming up in the morning is enough.

~Ralph Ellison

If the word has the potency to revive and make us free, it has also the power to bind, imprison and destroy.

~Ralph Ellison

If social protest is antithetical to art, what then shall we make of Goya, Dickens, and Twain?

~Ralph Ellison

Meaning grows in the mind, but the shape and form of the act remains.

~Ralph Ellison

I was never more hated than when I tried to be honest. Or when, even as just now I've tried to articulate exactly what I felt to be the truth. No one was satisfied

~Ralph Ellison

Some people are your relatives but others are your ancestors, and you choose the ones you want to have as ancestors. You create yourself

out of those values.

~Ralph Ellison

We don't all dig Shakespeare uniformly, or even 'Little Red Riding Hood.' The understanding of art depends finally upon one's willingness to extend one's humanity and one's knowledge of human life.

~Ralph Ellison

Words are your business, boy. Not just the word. Words are everything. The key to the rock, the answer to the question.

~Ralph Ellison

Life is as the sea, art a ship in which man conquers life's crushing formlessness, reducing it to a course, a series of swells, tides and wind currents inscribed on a chart.

~Ralph Ellison

Every serious novel is, beyond its immediate thematic preoccupations, a discussion of the craft, a conquest of the form, a conflict with its difficulties and a pursuit of its felicities and beauty.

~Ralph Ellison

It is sometimes advantageous to be unseen, although it is most often rather wearing on the nerves.

~Ralph Ellison

The thing to do is to exploit the meaning of the life you have.

~Ralph Ellison

And my problem was that I always tried to go in everyone's way but my own.

~Ralph Ellison

Without the possibility of action, all knowledge comes to one labeled

'file and forget.'

~Ralph Ellison

My hole is warm and full of light.

~Ralph Ellison

I suspect that all the agony that goes into writing is borne precisely because the writer longs for acceptance-but it must be acceptance on his own terms.

~Ralph Ellison

I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms.

~Ralph Ellison

America is woven of many strands. I would recognize them and let it so remain.

~Ralph Ellison

the world is just as concrete, ornery, vile, and sublimely wonderful as before, only now I better understand my relation to it and it to me.

~Ralph Ellison

Perhaps everyone loved someone; I didn't now, I couldn't give much thought to love; in order to travel far you had to be detached, and I had the long road back to the campus before me.

~Ralph Ellison

And I knew that it was better to live out one's absurdity than to die for that of others.

~Ralph Ellison

I feel the need to reaffirm all of it, the whole unhappy territory and all the things loved and unloveable in it, for it is all part of me.



~Ralph Ellison

The clock ticked with empty urgency, as though trying to catch up with the time. In the street a siren howled.

~Ralph Ellison

If only all the contradictory voices shouting in my head would calm down and sing a song in unison, whatever it was I wouldn't care as long as they sang without dissonance.

~Ralph Ellison

And the mind that has conceived a plan of living must never lose sight of the chaos against which that pattern was conceived. That goes for societies as well as for individuals.

~Ralph Ellison

In those days it was either live with music or die with noise, and we chose rather desperately to live.

~Ralph Ellison

Having tried to give pattern to the chaos which lives within the pattern of your certainties, I must come out, I must emerge.

~Ralph Ellison

I blundered into writing.

~Ralph Ellison

...and yet I am what they think I am.

~Ralph Ellison

When American life is most American it is apt to be most theatrical.

~Ralph Ellison

All novels are about certain minorities: the individual is a minority.

~Ralph Ellison

Commercial rock 'n' roll music is a brutalization of the stream of contemporary Negro church music an obscene looting of a cultural expression.

~Ralph Ellison

The truth is the light and the light is the truth.

~Ralph Ellison

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