

# Vaclav Havel

## Quotes

*Hero, Men, People, Thinking, Lying, Responsibility, Heart, Rights, World,  
Country, Important, Hope, Ideas, Inspirational, Civilization, Law, Mean,  
President, Soul, Understanding*

It is not enough to stare up the steps, we must step up the stairs.

~Vaclav Havel

Follow the man who seeks the truth; run from the man who has found it.

~Vaclav Havel

Modern man must descend the spiral of his own absurdity to the lowest point; only then can he look beyond it. It is obviously impossible to get around it, jump over it, or simply avoid it.

~Vaclav Havel

Nothing is more powerful than individuals acting out of their own conscience.

~Vaclav Havel

Work for something because it is good, not just because it stands a chance to succeed.

~Vaclav Havel

Without commonly shared and widely entrenched moral values and obligations, neither the law, nor democratic government, nor even the market economy will function properly.

~Vaclav Havel

Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.

~Vaclav Havel

This is a confusing and uncertain period, when a thousand wise words can go completely unnoticed, and one thoughtless word can provoke an utterly nonsensical furor.

~Vaclav Havel

We must not be afraid of dreaming the seemingly impossible if we want the seemingly impossible to become a reality.

~Vaclav Havel

There are times when we must sink to the bottom of our misery to understand truth, just as we must descend to the bottom of a well to see the stars in broad daylight.

~Vaclav Havel

Lying can never save us from another lie.

~Vaclav Havel

Truth and love will overcome lies and hatred.

~Vaclav Havel

We live in the postmodern world, where everything is possible and almost nothing is certain.

~Vaclav Havel

Just as the constant increase of entropy is the basic law of the universe, so it is the basic law of life to be ever more highly structured and to struggle against entropy.

~Vaclav Havel

The tragedy of modern man is not that he knows less and less about the meaning of his own life, but that it bothers him less and less.

~Vaclav Havel

Education is the ability to perceive the hidden connections between phenomena.

~Vaclav Havel

The salvation of the world lies in the human heart.

~Vaclav Havel

The salvation of this human world lies nowhere else than in the human heart, in the human power to reflect, in human meekness and human responsibility.

~Vaclav Havel

Those that say that individuals are not capable of changing anything are only looking for excuses.

~Vaclav Havel

I really do inhabit a system in which words are capable of shaking the entire structure of government, where words can prove mightier than 10 military divisions.

~Vaclav Havel

Human rights, human freedoms... and human dignity have their deepest roots somewhere outside the perceptible world... while the state is a human creation, human beings are the creation of God.

~Vaclav Havel

If we are to change our world view, images have to change. The artist now has a very important job to do. He's not a little peripheral figure entertaining rich people, he's really needed.

~Vaclav Havel

Keep the company of those who seek the truth- run from those who have found it

~Vaclav Havel

Hope is a feeling that life and work have meaning. You either have it or you don't, regardless of the state of the world that surrounds you.

~Vaclav Havel

Ownership is not a vice, not something to be ashamed of, but rather a commitment, and an instrument by which the general good can be

served.

~Vaclav Havel

Hope is the deep orientation of the human soul that can be held at the darkest times.

~Vaclav Havel

I am not an optimist, because I am not sure that everything ends well. Nor am I a pessimist, because I am not sure that everything ends badly. I just carry hope in my heart.

~Vaclav Havel

Sometimes I wonder if suicides aren't in fact sad guardians of the meaning of life.

~Vaclav Havel

The Declaration of Independence states that the Creator gave man the right to liberty. It seems man can realize that liberty only if he does not forget the One who endowed him with it.

~Vaclav Havel

Without a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness a more humane society will not emerge.

~Vaclav Havel

Frank Zappa was one of the gods of the Czech underground, I thought of him as a friend. Whenever I feel like escaping from the world of the Presidency, I think of him.

~Vaclav Havel

All human suffering concerns each human being.

~Vaclav Havel

As soon as man began considering himself the source of the highest

meaning in the world and the measure of everything, the world began to lose its human dimension, and man began to lose control of it.

~Vaclav Havel

Ideology is a specious way of relating to the world. It offers human beings the illusion of an identity, of dignity, and of morality while making it easier for them to part with them.

~Vaclav Havel

People thought they could explain and conquer nature-yet the outcome is that they destroyed it and disinherited themselves from it.

~Vaclav Havel

I do think Russian foreign policy is very savvy. There's a need for great caution because the Russians are able to discreetly blackmail countries.

~Vaclav Havel

Technological measures are important, but equally important is... a consciousness of the commonality of all living beings and an emphasis on shared responsibility.

~Vaclav Havel

There can be no doubt that distrust of words is less harmful than unwarranted trust in them.

~Vaclav Havel

The hope of the world lies in the rehabilitation of the living human being, not just the body but also the soul.

~Vaclav Havel

The deeper the experience of an absence of meaning - in other words, of absurdity - the more energetically meaning is sought.

~Vaclav Havel

If the world is to change for the better it must start with a change in human consciousness, in the very humanness of modern man.

~Vaclav Havel

Courage means going against majority opinion in the name of the truth.

~Vaclav Havel

Every concession gives rise to further concessions, we cannot back down, because behind us there is only an abyss, we must keep our promises and demand that they be kept.

~Vaclav Havel

The only lost cause is one we give up on before we enter the struggle.

~Vaclav Havel

Even a purely moral act that has no hope of any immediate and visible political effect can gradually and indirectly, over time, gain in political significance.

~Vaclav Havel

It lies in human nature that where you experience your first laughs, you also remember the age kindly.

~Vaclav Havel

Modern science kills God and takes his place on the vacant throne. Science is the sole legitimate arbiter of all relevant truth.

~Vaclav Havel

But if I were to say who influenced me most, then I'd say Franz Kafka. And his works were always anchored in the Central European region.

~Vaclav Havel

When a truth is not given complete freedom, freedom is not complete.

~Vaclav Havel

I am in favor of [actions] that have authenticity, roots, originality, verve, balance, taste, communicativeness, challenge, relevance to their time-in short, things that make sense.

~Vaclav Havel

Anyone who takes himself too seriously always runs the risk of looking ridiculous; anyone who can consistently laugh at himself does not.

~Vaclav Havel

You can't spend your whole life criticizing something and then, when you have the chance to do it better, refuse to go near it.

~Vaclav Havel

Drama assumes an order. If only so that it might have - by disrupting that order - a way of surprising.

~Vaclav Havel

It was never the people who complained of the universality of human rights, nor did the people consider human rights as a Western or Northern imposition. It was often their leaders who did so.

~Vaclav Havel

Ultimately, power only really listens to power, and if government is to be improved, we must be able to threaten its existence, not merely its reputation.

~Vaclav Havel

There is only one thing I will not concede: that it might be meaningless to strive in a good cause.

~Vaclav Havel

A genuinely fundamental and hopeful improvement in "systems" cannot happen without a significant shift in human consciousness.

~Vaclav Havel

Hope is not a feeling. It is not the belief that things will turn out well, but the conviction that what you are doing makes sense, no matter how things turn out.

~Vaclav Havel

Hope is not a feeling of certainty that everything ends well. Hope is just a feeling that life and work have a meaning.

~Vaclav Havel

We fell morally ill because we became used to saying something different from what we thought.

~Vaclav Havel

I cannot imagine that I could strive for something if I did not carry hope in me.

~Vaclav Havel

I think theatre should always be somewhat suspect.

~Vaclav Havel

Whether all is really lost or not depends entirely on whether or not I am lost.

~Vaclav Havel

If one were required to increase the dramatic seriousness of his face in relation to the seriousness of the problems he had to confront, he would quickly petrify and become his own statue.

~Vaclav Havel

I have read somewhere that in a totalitarian system martyrdom does better than thought.

~Vaclav Havel

The attempt to devote oneself to literature alone is a most deceptive

thing, and ... often, paradoxically, it is literature that suffers for it.

~Vaclav Havel

None of us know all the potentialities that slumber in the spirit of the population, or all the ways in which that population can surprise us when there is the right interplay of events.

~Vaclav Havel

Without free, self-respecting, and autonomous citizens there can be no free and independent nations.

~Vaclav Havel

True enough, the country is calm. Calm as a morgue or a grave, would you not say?

~Vaclav Havel

The only salvation of the world today... is the rapid dissemination of the basic values of the West, that is, the ideas of democracy, human rights, the civil society, and the free market.

~Vaclav Havel

If I have accomplished anything good, then it's mainly because I've been driven by the need to know whether I can accomplish things I'm not sure I have the capacity for.

~Vaclav Havel

Communism was overthrown by life, by thought, by dignity.

~Vaclav Havel

It's not hard to stand behind one's successes. But to accept responsibility for one's failures... that is deviously hard!

~Vaclav Havel

Sober perseverance is more effective than enthusiastic emotions,

which are all too capable of being transferred, with little difficulty, to something different each day.

~Vaclav Havel

There is only one Art, whose sole criterion is the power, the authenticity, the revelatory insight, the courage and suggestiveness with which it seeks its truth.

~Vaclav Havel

English is the 'language of liberty' for nations emerging from years of cultural oppression.

~Vaclav Havel

Truth is not merely what we are thinking, but also why, to whom and under what circumstances we say it.

~Vaclav Havel

If a single writer in a country is in chains, then there are some links of that chain that binds us all.

~Vaclav Havel

The real test of a man is not when he plays the role that he wants for himself but when he plays the role destiny has for him.

~Vaclav Havel

It is not enough to invent new machines, new regulations, or new institutions. We must understand differently and more perfectly the true purpose of our existence on this earth.

~Vaclav Havel

President Murabak has been a U.S. ally for decades. He was a guarantor of some degree of peace in the Middle East and has kept a good relationship with the Western world.

~Vaclav Havel

Barack Obama is president of a superpower and I'm a citizen of a small state.

~Vaclav Havel

The award is destined for scientists who do not fear to touch on some of the darkest aspects of being without betraying what they have achieved. On the contrary, they head in this direction.

~Vaclav Havel

What's certain is that a totalitarian enclave like Cuba's can't continue to exist, so change will definitely come there, eventually.

~Vaclav Havel

I think its important for one to take a certain distance from oneself.

~Vaclav Havel

Responsibility is something higher than my family, my country, my firm, my success. Responsibility to the order of Being, where, and only where, they will be properly judged.

~Vaclav Havel

If you want to see your plays performed the way you wrote them, become President.

~Vaclav Havel

There's a dilemma over how to balance concrete economic interests with critical opinions on the state of human rights. It's the human rights that suffer, and that's a great price to pay.

~Vaclav Havel

To serve grand ideas with a major work is not bad, nor is it all there's to art.

~Vaclav Havel

Evil must be confronted in its womb, and, if it can't be done otherwise, then it has to be dealt with by the use of force.

~Vaclav Havel

I have preserved my identity, put its credibility to the test and defended my dignity. What good this will bring the world I don't know. But for me it is good.

~Vaclav Havel

I personally think President [Hosni] Mubarak, who's done a lot for Egypt, should acknowledge that his time has come and step down right away.

~Vaclav Havel

People, your Government has returned to you!

~Vaclav Havel

This is the moment when something once more begins visibly to happen, something truly new and unique... something truly historical, in the sense that history again demands to be heard.

~Vaclav Havel

In my opinion, theater shouldn't give advice to citizens.

~Vaclav Havel

The cliché organizes life; it expropriates people's identity; it becomes ruler, defense lawyer, judge, and the law.

~Vaclav Havel

Time and time again I have been persuaded that a huge potential of goodwill is slumbering within our society. It's just that it's incoherent, suppressed, confused, crippled and perplexed.

~Vaclav Havel

There's always something suspect about an intellectual on the winning side.

~Vaclav Havel

The truth is not simply what you think it is; it is also the circumstances in which it is said, and to whom, why, and how it is said.

~Vaclav Havel

By perceiving ourselves as part of the river, we take responsibility for the river as a whole.

~Vaclav Havel

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