

Features

Why American Democracy Has Failed

Dr. Manning Marable "Along the Color Line" October, 1989

Last month, the House of Representatives approved a reduction in the capital gains tax rate, giving President Bush a major legislative victory over Congressional Democrats. The bill would lower the top capital gains tax rate to 19.6 percent, from 33 percent. It would apply to all income from sales of stocks, real estate, and bonds. In effect, the wealthiest Americans, those earning over \$200,000 annually, will receive 60 percent of the total tax benefits, about \$25,000 per taxpayer. Americans earning above \$100,000 would receive 80 percent of the benefits. This bill, an undisguised version of welfare for the rich, was praised by Bush's Treasury Secretary Nicholas F. Brady, for "strengthening America's economy, creating new jobs and giving American's small businesses and entrepreneurs a fair chance to compete internationally." Even during the high tide of Reaganism, it would be hard to imagine a more naked, aggressive and vicious assault against working class, middle income and poor people.

Although the status of the capital gains tax bill remains in doubt, the fact remains that one-third of the Congressional Democrats abandoned their leadership. The vote reveals that a solid Congressional majority still exists which blindly follows the economic dogma characteristic of Reaganism. The rationale that cutting taxes to the wealthy will provide jobs to the poor is only a crude scheme for expanding poverty. The philosophy behind this vote is that the government has no obligation to any significant segment of society except the economic ruling class.

When working people witness this unvarnished grab for profits, the questions arise: "What are the real values which form the policies of America's political system?" Let us reflect upon the actual uses and abuses of power within the current political process. But to do so, we must take the perspective not of the privileged elites whose pockets will sag from this tax cut, but from the increasingly marginalized sectors of the middle and working classes.

American democracy has failed because it is motivated by the notion of the zero-sum game, that there are winners and losers only. The rule of human fairness, a desire to create equitable conditions between groups and individuals, is transcended by individual gain at the expense of the common good.

American democracy has failed because of its institutionalized tendency to ignore the long-term sufferings of millions of American people, the homeless, the poor, people of color and working people. When the powerful and the privileged make demands, both parties listen and respond. Where is the political party which represents the material interests of the majority of us, the women and men who work everyday, who makes the goods and provide the services? When Latinos and African-Americans call for prompt action against racism, poverty and inferior education, Bush is blind and the vast majority of Congress is deaf.

American democracy has failed because the political system and the power elite of this country would rather have the omnipresent threat of nuclear war rather than make

earnest efforts to build upon the peace initiatives of the Soviet Union. Days ago, Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger declared "for all its risks and uncertainties, the cold war was characterized by a remarkably stable and predictable set of relations among the great powers." In short, why does the Bush administration despise Gorbachev, and why is it nostalgic for the Cold War? Gorbachev has the political courage to transcend the military stalemate and nuclear terror of four decades, but Bush has no comparable vision. His advisers recognize that to close the door on the Cold War would mean an inevitable reduction in the billions allocated to the Pentagon. It would deny the powerful a crucial tool which has been used to structure national policies in favor of private profits and against human needs.

Our challenge is to create a new definition of democracy, a majoritarian agenda of jobs, peace and justice. What's at stake is the future of democracy itself.

Dr. Manning Marable is Professor of Political Science at the University of Colorado. "Along the Color Line" appears in over 150 newspapers.

Eights Ways To Cope With Stress

BY VERNIKA S. JONES

STRESS!!!! What is it? How do we deal with it? What causes it? Does stress cause anxiety or does anxiety cause stress? The answers to these questions can be quite complicated. There are two components involved with stress. The first is that stress is a life event or a situation, and the second is the individual's response to the stress. There are different reactions to stress. Physiological reactions to stress deals mainly with the human body. For example, the heart beats faster because of the excitement of a date or sometimes the stomach "knots up" or a "feeling a lump in the pit of the stomach." All of us have experienced these types of reactions at one time or another. Behavior reactions to stress is when a person reacts differently than what he would have at any other time.

Stress can be caused by a variety of sad events such as: death, divorce, jail term, marriage, fired from work, retirement, weight gain, and having too many things to do. But there are ways to cope with these stressful situations that we experience daily. Listed below are eight ways of coping with stressful activities.



(1) Pay special attention to your personal health and fitness: When you are under stress your body tends to be weakened. Watching your diet can reduce your stress. When you exercise, you release the tension that is faced during a regular day.

(2) Learn how to recognize your own accomplishments: You must learn to recognize these accomplishments and give yourself praise for them. This is known as "patting yourself on the back."

(3) Learn how to take one thing at a time: Learn to put things in perspective. Don't put off things that need to be done right away. When you wait to the last minute to do something, you are adding stress into your daily life.

(4) Learn to take things less seriously: When a situation or event comes into your life, learn how to think things out so you do not build up tension. When faced with a stressful event, try to keep your mind at ease.

(5) Talk things over with other people: Some people keep things to themselves and keep the tension they have tensed up inside of them. To release these tension, learn

how to talk to other people about these problems. Talking with others can make a tense situation much lighter and easier to bear.

(6) Doing things for others: When you help others, it helps you take your mind off of your problem. It is a known fact that when you help others you can benefit from it.

(7) Controlling your stress by relaxation: To relax means to "loose" the tension that you are stressed out about. In order to know how to relax, you must be able to recognize tension that is in your own body.

(8) Learn how to meditate: When you learn how to meditate, you are dealing with the mind. Not only is there tension in the body, but there is tension in your mind that can cause you to think or make wrong decisions. To meditate, you must find a quiet place and seat yourself in a comfortable position, and focus your concentration on a relaxing image.

You should be able to recognize stressful situations and be able to handle them better.

Meteors, Possible Bronster Attack

BY STEPHEN T. WARD

Halloween night presented a spectacular celestial show for students and nearby residents of FSU. At approximately 11:58 p.m., a meteor storm began with as many as 100 meteors spotted an hour, until the count tapered off to zero by dawn. It appeared at this time that meteors only landed in the campus park area.

According to Dr. Johnson, Astronomy Professor of FSU, "I think it's quite unusual for such a high number of meteors to land all in one confined area. It must have been one big meteor that had burst into fragments upon entering the atmosphere."

Within the first hour of the meteor storm, local television crews, radio announcers, new reporters, photographers, and residents arrived on the scene. Several ambulances were called on sight. The National Guard, who have been here for several days due to the request of Dr. Hackley because of a possible Bronster threat made over the radio several weeks, went into full alert.

Fire Chief Robert Handy said, "We had four firetrucks on location, but as far as I can tell, no fires have started. I've been out there personally looking around; the place looks like a war zone. Craters are everywhere. With the help of Dr. Johnson and other professors of science on campus, we wore anticontamination suits and collected a few examples of the rocks to be analyzed in the lab."

Dr. Johnson said, "We are studying the rocks this very moment. They seem to be made up of the same material of Halley's Comet. They do have a few things stranged about them. When you turn out the lights, they glow and wobble. One of my students swore they

heard a raspy, wet whisper coming from them. In a couple of days, we should know alot more."

When Dan Rather arrived on the scene with his camera crew, he asked Dr. Hackley, "Mr. Chancellor, do you feel the Bronsters had anything to do with this?"

"Well," responded Dr. Hackley, "according to statistics, I'd say there is a high probability. So far, we don't have any evidence of the Bronsters. However, since the radio message they sent a couple of weeks ago about requesting help for an attack on Halloween night, you can see why we are anxious."

"What are you doing about this concern?" asked Rather.

Dr. Hackley replied, "I will rather not say. But since this is national television, I'll go head. Right now, I'm proud to say I have four volunteers that are out in the woods, camping right in the middle of the craters, Dr. "Loveless", Mr. Williams, Mr. Carroway, and Mrs. Yvonne Robinson. Dennis McNair is out there too, but he didn't volunteer, he's charging for photographs. So, we'll just have to wait and see what happens."

That's all the information at this time. If any strange events happen in the next couple of days that might be caused by a Bronster, please report this to Broncos' Voice.

As of now, we leave our heroes, Dr. "Loveless", Mr. Williams, Mr. Carroway, and Mrs. Robinson out in the woods, surrounded by darkness, except for the glow coming out of the craters. All is silent, except for Mr. Carroway's snoring and the raspy, whispery sounds of the night.

Education, Racism, and Elitism

Dr. Manning Marable "Along the Color Line" October 1989

There is an inevitable connection between the socioeconomic and political status of African-Americans and other people of color and their access, position and mobility within all educational institutions. If opportunities for young people are limited within public schools or colleges, the size of the potential leadership in politics, labor, medicine, the law, and other key occupations is reduced. Knowledge is power, and the denial of educational opportunity is directly related to the perpetuation of exploitation of Blacks, Hispanics, and all working people.

Last month's education summit called by President Bush was silent on the racial and social class implications of government policies on public schooling. But the dramatic deterioration of education has occurred precisely in the innercities, in school districts which are overwhelmingly dominated by people of color. The Reagan-Bush administration has deliberately slashed funds for student loans, and the reduction of Black and Latino undergraduates across the country is directly attributable to the paucity of the student loan packages currently available.

Increasingly education is projected as a privilege for the rich, rather than a human right which benefits the common welfare of society. The cost of a private college education increased an average of 9 percent in the current 1989-1990 academic year. The cost of tuition, room and board, and related expenses at elite private schools is astronomical: \$19,310 at Yale University; \$19,164 at Stanford University; \$19,395 at Harvard University; \$18,284 at Duke University; and \$14,700 at Notre Dame. The best state-supported institutions are also beyond the reach of many middle income families, certainly African-American households, which currently average under \$19,000 total income per year. At the University of Texas at Austin, for example, the 1989-1990 tuition, room and board, and related costs comes to \$4,254. The University of California at Berkeley's costs total \$6,704 for this academic year.

Even more than economic factors is the prevasiveness of elitism and ethnic exclusivity within universities and academic institutions, which fosters a hostile environment for people of color. Despite the introduction of Afro-American Studies programs, ethnic

studies, non-western foreign languages and curriculum reforms which have inserted the cultures, histories and perspectives of nonwhite people into college classroom. Black and brown people are constantly marginalized at most institutions. The system of higher education is generally designed for nonwhites to fail.

The basic pattern of elitism and racism in colleges conforms to the dynamics of Third World colonialism. At nearly all white academic institutions, the power relationship between whites as a group and people of color is unequal. Authority is invested in the hands of a core of largely white male administrators, bureaucrats and influential senior faculty. The board of trustees or regents is dominated by white, conservative, affluent males. Despite the presence of academic courses on minorities, the vast majority of white students take few or no classes which explore the heritage or cultures of non-western peoples or domestic minorities. Outside the classroom, there are few structured opportunities for peoples of different cultures to interact. Most white students receive the elitist message that nonwhite students as a group

are unworthy of attending their institution, and that affirmative action policies have unfairly discriminated against whites. Most courses in the humanities and social sciences focus narrowly on topic or issues from the Western capitalist experience, and minimize the centrality and importance of nonwestern perspectives. Finally, the university or college divorces itself from the pressing concerns, problems and debates which relate to Blacks, Hispanics or even white working people. Given this structure and guiding philosophy, it shouldn't surprise us that many talented nonwhite students fail to achieve in such a hostile environment.

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