

# FORUM

## Does money buy happiness?



**Nigel Alston**  
Motivational Moments

*"To make a man happy, fill his hands with work, his heart with affection, his mind with purpose, his memory with useful knowledge, his future with hope, and his stomach with food."*  
—Frederick E. Crane

He was happy, satisfied, content with what he had. His money was working for him in a bank, earning interest. He was married, with children and living the life. He had it all. Suddenly, however, what he had was not enough.

He — Ali Hafed — is a fictional character in the classic book "Acres of Diamonds," written by Russell Conwell. After learning about the value of diamonds and how much more he could have with a handful of the precious stones, he went to bed dissatisfied because he feared he was poor.

Does wealth produce happiness? For Ali Hafed, it did-

n't. The answer to that question and a similar one — "Does money buy happiness?" — provides for some interesting insights and conversation. The link between wealth and happiness was the subject of an article written by Wall Street Journal reporter Jon E. Hilsenrath.

You could argue that Ali Hafed was happy one minute and then dissatisfied the next because he associated more happiness with more money. According to economists at the American Economics Association's annual meeting and the article written by Hilsenrath, the answer isn't so simple.

Economists, according to the story, are trying to determine how financial assets — or the lack thereof — translate into real-world happiness. Many of the economists, Hilsenrath reports, "believe that money does buy happiness but the contentment fades as expectations rise or as the gains of others induce envy." It is all right for people to get ahead, just not ahead of you.

He also reports that people are on a so-called satisfaction treadmill.

He quotes Daniel Kahneman, a Princeton University professor, who said, "People find that their demands from life keep pace with their increases in income." In other words, the more we get, the more we want and when we don't get what we want, we are not happy campers.

Does money buy happiness? According to Hilsenrath, the answer to the happiness puzzle is complex and ambiguous.

Most (72 percent) who voted in The Wall Street Journal online poll (not a scientific one) agree that money makes life easier, but only goes so far.

About 11 percent believe the best things in life are free. That response didn't register with a friend who listened carefully as I read the multiple-choice response options and laughed at the last two — "works for me" and "only when I have more of it than my neighbors" — before agreeing with the majority.

"Money does not buy happiness," she said. "It is a temporary fix. If you are not happy internally, you can buy

all these external things and they are going to momentarily make you happy and then it will be something else." There is no joy on the happiness treadmill.

"Well, it works for me," a friend of hers said with attitude and laughing at the same time. Fifteen percent of the people who voted in the poll agree with her. Her advice to anyone who has a problem with his or her money: "Tell them to send it on over here and watch me smile."

The remaining 2 percent who voted — the envious group — are happy with money only when they have more of it than their neighbors. That's a sad state to be in, isn't it? How can one be happy looking over his or her shoulder, keeping up with the Joneses and running on a never-ending satisfaction treadmill? There is always someone with more.

If money were not an object, what would you do?

*Nigel Alston is a radio talk show host, columnist and motivational speaker. Visit his Web site at [www.motivational-moments.com](http://www.motivational-moments.com).*

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## Here we go again



**Armstrong Williams**  
Guest Columnist

Here we go again. Rev. Jesse Jackson and Rev. Al Sharpton are once again hard at work wagging their fingers.

This time their object of scorn is Lawrence H. Summers, Harvard University president and former Treasury secretary in the Clinton administration.

Apparently, Summers had the audacity — I mean, the sheer nerve — to request that Cornel West, Harvard professor and distinguished black American academic, focus on his duties as an instructor, as opposed to releasing music CDs and leading a presidential exploratory committee for Sharpton.

In other words, Summers requested that West make a priority of his students.

Jackson and Sharpton took immediate offense.

"Mr. Summers is infringing upon Mr. West's academic freedom," Jackson snarled.

Jackson thinks this is a bad thing. Apparently, he believes that academics ought to be beyond reproach and "free" to pursue whatever suits their fancy, regardless of how it affects their ability to teach their students.

Sharpton is singing a similar tune. "I feel aggrieved," Sharpton squawked, "if I can't have who I want to have work for me."

Apparently, it does not matter to Sharpton that West already has a full-time job as a professor. Apparently, Sharpton fancies himself the center of the universe and is therefore understandably "aggrieved" whenever someone else takes a different view.



The Rev. Al Sharpton doesn't always see eye to eye with the Rev. Jesse Jackson.

His response: sit back and snort racism.

Jackson and Sharpton have gone on to criticize Summers for not fully endorsing affirmative action at Harvard University. For obvious reasons, neither Jackson nor Sharpton mentioned that the Supreme Court has cited Harvard's admissions process as an ideal model. Nor, for that matter, did they acknowledge that Harvard University has long stressed racial diversity and is widely acknowledged to have the country's most prominent African-American studies department.

Instead, Jackson and Sharpton did what they always do: appeal to the lowest common denominator.

The jig goes something

like this: Sharpton and Jackson see some opening where they can exploit our racial sensitivity. Then they move in, threatening to replicate with mobs and bad press if their demands aren't met (often their demands include no small amount of financial gain for themselves). Bottom line: They make their living as racketeers, offering to inflame or quell racial tensions at a cost.

Not surprisingly, Jackson threatened that "Mr. Summers risks losing several key professors..." if their demands aren't met.

Early on in the Civil Rights Movement, this sort of racial racketeering was the only viable recourse black leaders had for pressuring

companies into hiring more blacks and pushing important equality issues into the mainstream.

Forty years later, these tactics serve little more purpose than to line the coffers of men like Jackson and Sharpton, while preventing the nation from moving beyond those initial first steps of the Civil Rights Movement.

Under the guise of civil rights activists, Sharpton and Jackson are pulling apart the premier African-American studies department in the country.

Congratulations, gentlemen. Once again, you've left your mark.

<http://armstrongwilliams.churchonline.com/>

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