

A "Gimme" Nation

The Entitlement Mentality

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Not too long ago, Americans used to be justifiably proud of their self-sufficiency. Many of our great men in politics, religion, and industry were “self-made” men whose philosophy centered on the principle of lifting themselves up by their own bootstraps. Now, spiritually, that's not necessarily a good thing. But if you are a carnal person and you are trying to make your way in the world, that's something to be admired. They believed that they had to make their own way because no one would hand it to them on a silver platter. Advancement and wealth, as they saw it, were the result of hard work and real merit.

To them, taking a handout was the absolute last resort. Taking any sort of welfare or public assistance was shameful. The children were told never to speak of it, if they even knew about it. I'm not saying that right, but that was the kind of attitude they had. Most Americans wanted to be able to say at the end of the day—or at the end of their lives—that their achievements had been bought by the sweat of their brows, the application of their own smarts and ingenuity, and their ambition.

That can-do, self-sufficient attitude, while not totally extinguished, has almost flickered out in America. Instead, many call us a nation of whiners, a welfare state, or a people who think they are entitled. America has become a “gimme” nation: gimme free food, gimme free housing, gimme free transportation, gimme free Internet, gimme free education, gimme free healthcare, gimme a job, gimme, gimme, gimme!

Here is an example that should scare us all. Every year, Jack Chambless, a Professor of Economics at Valencia College in Florida, starts his class off by asking his students—mostly sophomores—to write a 10-minute essay on what the American dream looks like to them, and to include what they want the federal government to do to help them achieve that dream. He described this year's (2011's) results in an interview on Fox News:

About 10% of the students said they wanted the government to leave them alone, not tax them too much, and let them regulate their own lives. But over 80% of the students said that the American Dream to them meant a house and a job and plenty of money for retirement, and vacations and things like this. But when it came to the part about the federal government, 8 out of 10 students said they wanted free healthcare. They wanted the government to pay for their tuition. They want the government to pay for the down-payment on their house. They expect the government “to give them a job.” Many of them said they wanted the government to tax wealthier individuals so that they would have an opportunity to have a better life.

Certainly, this is one informal study at a small college—a small group of young people—but something must be taken from the fact that 80% of these 19-year old college students already had their hands out for whatever the government would give them, as well as wanting the government to take—that is, to steal—money from achievers to redistribute to them. Also, the 10% figure for those who desire to be self-sufficient is astounding—that only 10% wanted to do it themselves. The question we have to ask is: How can that 10% possibly carry the 80%?

If you want to know where the missing 10% went, they were ones that could not be put in either category. They kind of straddled the line. Also, I should mention that this assignment was given before the Occupy movement started, so they were not influenced by the Occupy-ers. This was something that was in their own heads.

When this subject comes up, many “experts” come to the defense of this attitude. Some emphasize that these entitled kids are “more creative” and “more engaged” than previous generations, meaning that they have the time to pursue their artistic notions, and they spend a lot of time on social media. So, therefore, they are “more creative” and “more engaged.”

Jean Twenge, who wrote *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and More Miserable Than Ever Before*, despite the negative title, thinks that, as individualists, they are “free-thinkers who are willing to break the status quo and pursue their dreams. Their confidence is what allows them to accomplish great things and can keep companies progressing.” In essence, she says all this is no big deal; they will grow out of it and use all their creative, engaging personalities to move the economy forward.

However, Thomas Sowell (who used to be an economics professor at Stanford; now he is a Fellow at the Hoover Foundation) feels it is a big problem. He was also interviewed on Fox News not too long ago. The Fox News interviewer asked him, “How do we get out of this entitlement mentality?” Dr. Sowell answers:

That’s going to be very tough. Because the whole media, the politics, the educational system promotes the idea that you are entitled to something. It just seems obvious. [People in] society [are] not entitled to anything. We can’t even get the food that we need without working for it. So when you say that somebody is entitled to it, you mean that somebody else has to pay for what you want. And unless that attitude is somehow turned around, you’re going to have a situation where people try to [get] more and more [entitlements], and those who have money will simply send their money somewhere else.

What he means is that, once this attitude takes hold, it tends to spiral downward until the economy craters. Those who have money and are able to will move or send their money where they can make more money—not in an economy that is going downhill; they will take their money and move it offshore, and soon, the tax base dries up, and *everybody* is a whole lot poorer, because soon the government does not have the money to pay the welfare, to pay they entitlements. This is how you bankrupt a nation.

I don't have time to show how this entitlement mentality destroys initiative, independence, inventiveness, resourcefulness, motivation, the fear of consequences, and the link between cause and effect. All of those go by the way once you start having this mentality of entitlement. It also promotes self-indulgence. You would think that if somebody is poor, he wouldn't indulge himself, but what is happening is that when these entitled people hit the skids, they feel that they deserve all these things, and they will indulge themselves when they have the opportunity. Jealousy also is promoted, as well as conceit, laziness, and self-centeredness. In a word, Jean Twenge was wrong. It has no upside, because all these things I just mentioned are sins: self-indulgence, jealousy, conceit, laziness, and self-centeredness. Once you start piling sin upon sin, there is no going back. There has to be a time of judgment. The piper must be paid.

There is a Proverb I would like to go to:

Proverbs 21:5 The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, but those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty.

"Hasty" here implies a get-rich-quick scheme, or trying to get something for nothing. Let's just plug that in:

The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, but those of everyone who wants to get rich quick or to get something for nothing, surely to poverty.

If we do not break this attitude of entitlement, our "gimme" nation will soon collapse on itself, and we think times are tough now?