

[America] A Nation of Morons

by Stephen Lendman via stele - sjlendman blog *Friday, Apr 27 2012, 7:42am*

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international / social/political / other press

(Oz will go same way if trad values and free edu not restored)

Jefferson called an educated citizenry "a vital requisite for our survival as a free people." Madison warned that "A popular Government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy, or both."



Sarah Palin

In 1748, Montesquieu said "The tyranny of a principle in an oligarchy is not so dangerous to the public welfare as the apathy of a citizen in a democracy."

In a June 1950 commencement speech, Boston University President Daniel Marsh said, "If the (television) craze continues....we are destined to have a nation of morons."

Well before television arrived, journalist Walter Lippmann called the public "the bewildered herd." In policy matters, their function is to be "spectators," not "participants."

"The common interests elude public opinion entirely," he said, and that's the way it should be.

America's privileged class alone should manage them. Only they need proper education and training. Treat others like mushrooms - well-watered and in the dark. In other words, distracted by bread and circuses. More on that below.

In his book, "Amusing Ourselves to Death," Neil Postman said "Americans are the most entertained and least informed people in the world." Most know little or nothing about what matters most.

Public ignorance isn't universal, but a significant majority's affected. Henry Ford once said:

"It is well that the people of the nation do not understand our banking and monetary system, for if they did, I believe there would be a revolution before tomorrow morning."

It's also true for out-of-control imperialism, war and peace overall, political corruption, corporate power, illusory democracy, elections little more than theater, police state lawlessness, an

unprecedented wealth disparity, shocking poverty, unemployment, hunger and homelessness levels, and numerous other issues in the world's richest country.

Widespread public ignorance keeps these and other abuses out of public consciousness and concern enough to demand political Washington address them responsibly.

Instead, officials serve wealth and power alone. As a result, popular needs go begging, especially under mandated austerity to pay bankers and wage imperial wars.

A nation of morons literally lets America get away with murder, erode human and civil rights, and leave millions uninformed, on their own, out of luck.

Public Education in America

Diogenes called education "the foundation of every state." Father of American education Horace Mann called "(t)he common school....the greatest discovery ever made by man." He meant public, not private, ones to educate all students responsibly.

Today, US public education's targeted for privatization. At issue is commodifying it as another profit center. Bottom line priorities only will matter. As a result, in cities across the country, schools are closed, teachers fired, and students left out in the cold.

Moreover, those in inner city public schools aren't taught. Why bother when high-pay skilled jobs move abroad, and they're left to scramble for low pay, no benefit, unskilled part-time or temp ones at home.

Half a century after the Supreme Court's landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, Jonathan Kozol called segregation worse, not better, in his book titled, "The Shame of the Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America."

At the same time, Harvard civil rights researchers commemorated Brown's 50th anniversary saying, "At the beginning of the twenty-first century, American public schools are now 12 years into the process of continuous resegregation."

Desegregation from the 1950s through late 1980s "has receded to levels not seen in three decades." Martin Luther King's dream became a nightmare with respect to education, civil liberties, and inability of growing numbers of underprivileged Americans to get by because help keeps shrinking when they most need it.

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education published a report titled, "A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform." It found academic performance poor at nearly all levels. It warned that America's educational system was "being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity."

Today, it's a national disaster by design. So-called education reform's a fraud. It masks privatization schemes, a society of growing haves and have nots, and no desire to educate masses for low pay, low skill jobs if they can find one.

Critics warn of dire consequences to no avail. Several books discussed it. They include Jared Diamond's "Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed," Cullen Murphy's "Are We Rome: The Fall of an Empire and the Fate of America," and Adrian Goldsworthy's "How Rome Fell."

They explain the decline and fall of powerful states, and apply what's highlighted to failing education in America. Combined with out-of-control greed, imperialism, corruption, duplicity, and lawlessness, it's a prescription for failure.

In his book titled, "Just How Stupid Are We? Facing the Truth about the American Voter," Rick Shenkman discussed profound public ignorance. He asked, "How much ignorance can a country stand," and said one day we'll find out, perhaps to our dismay.

Numerous examples provide evidence.

University of Michigan studies categorize Americans as follows:

few know much about politics and world affairs;

around half know enough to answer elementary questions; and

all others know virtually nothing.

In the 1980s, less than a third knew Roe v. Wade was a 1970s Supreme Court abortion ruling. Only one-fourth understood senators serve six years. Only 20% knew America has 100 senators. Around 40% knew the nation has three branches of government, but few can explain what separation of powers entails.

Less than half knew America dropped the atom bomb on Japan. In response to a 2005 Gallup poll asking to name America's greatest president, only 14% choose Lincoln and 5% Washington.

Only a third know Congress alone can declare war, or that it can override a president's veto. Around half think the chief executive can suspend the Constitution.

In their book titled, "What Americans Know about Politics and Why It Matters," Michael Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter found only 5% could answer basic economics questions, 11% domestic issues ones, 14% foreign affairs topics, and 10% on geography. Only 25% answered most history questions right.

In 2003, the Strategic Task Force on Education Abroad said, "America's ignorance of the outside world" is so extreme, it threatens national security.

One survey showed nearly one-fourth of Americans able to name all five Simpson family members, compared to one in 1,000 correctly stating all five First Amendment freedoms.

They include free expression, a free press, freedom of religion, the right to assemble peaceably, and to petition government for redress of grievances, as well as the implied rights of association and belief.

Free expression in all forms is most important. Without it, all other rights are at risk.

In 2011, Newsweek magazine gave 1,000 Americans the US citizenship test. The results showed profound ignorance:

38% failed;

29% couldn't name the vice president;

73% knew little or nothing about the Cold War;

40% didn't know why America fought Germany, Japan and Italy in WW II;

63% didn't know the correct number of Supreme Court justices, let alone their names;

65% knew nothing about the Constitutional Convention;

70% didn't know the Constitution is the supreme law of the land;

23% didn't know Martin Luther King fought for civil rights;

40% couldn't explain the Bill of Rights; and

6% didn't know July 4 was Independence Day.

In total, 100 questions were asked. Simple ones included:

where's the White House located?

what's the US capitol?

where does Congress meet?

how many states are there in America?

who's the military commander-in-chief?

name America's two major political parties; and

-- similar questions most everyone should answer easily. Most can't.

Results showed appalling civic ignorance levels. Other tests on reading, math and computer skills are just as dismal. Americans are profoundly ignorant.

In May 2011, the Chicago Sun Times headlined, "Report: Over a third of students entering college need remedial help," saying:

"Nationally, in 2010, only 24 percent of ACT-tested high school graduates were deemed college ready in all four subjects tested - English, math, reading and science." In addition, most lack computer skills.

Columbia University's Community College Research Center found students finish high school unprepared. At the same time, around 80% needing remedial help graduated with GPAs above 3.0.

University of Illinois Professor Debra Bragg called it "a problem for all types of (public) high schools." They don't teach. They shove students through untaught and unprepared. It's why over a third drop out and never finish. In fact, in America's 50 largest cities, rates exceed 40%, and in some major ones approach 50%.

Problems begin in first grade. Columbia University senior research associate Dolores Perin said:

"Students aren't learning strong reading and writing skills and math, and the problems get worse and worse. As kids get older, it just gets harder and harder to do well in school," no matter what grades they're given to shove them out in preparation for the next crop behind them.

In contrast, Western Europeans and Asians score much higher on skills mattering most, as well as knowledge of international issues. Whatever deficiencies affect their schools, they way outperform America's.

Corporate controlled education reform assures worse ahead. For business, only profits matter. Marketplace solutions don't work, especially when they sacrifice vital needs for bottom line priorities and prevent children from fulfilling the American dream.

For growing numbers today, it's a nightmare getting worse.

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George W Bush

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Cleaves Alternative News. <http://cleaves.lingama.net/news/story-3184.html>