

Broomin' the Negro: Corporate Capitalism and the Millennium

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ABSTRACT Those with power create ways to control those without power, whether to destroy, degrade, or milk them for profits. Corporate capitalism has created (or been created by) a power-elite with tremendous abilities to control people around the world. At the Millennium, those without power are facing a dismal future, a future in which overpopulation, pollution, and severe problems are overtaking any hopeful prospects. Social action, such as that exemplified by the Civil Rights movement, may or may not redress the situation.

The good old boys, red-necked from the scorching sun and their steady diet of beer and moon pies, as well as the red clay soil of Eastern Carolina, took to the back roads every Friday and Saturday night in the mid 1960's. Peeling along back roads in their old battered pick up trucks, rifles or shot guns slung or mounted along the back window, they often carried a long handled broom, just for sport, to dangle out the rider's window.

The unsuspecting Negro, unable to afford a vehicle, walked along side these back country roads, to visit with a neighbour, to head towards the "company" or local store, or to go to an old fishing hole. They walked, the men, women, elderly and children, on little dinky dirt paths through the roadside weeds and grass, right close to the edge of these back country roads.

"Whap," the sound would echo, and the good old boys would chortle with glee, "need to pull back on that broom, old buddy, you just touch those boys, you don't knock them over. We don't want the man down from Raleigh, now let's go look for another boy to get your aim proper." Off they would drive, taking turns, drinking endless cans of beer, tires squealing, mud guarding their faded license plates from observation. By night's end, they would tally up their scores for each category, "properly teched," "whapped" or for a few, missed altogether. During the following week, they would compare

notes and scores with neighbours, relatives, and anyone who would listen.

The Blacks, ever so slowly, took these experiences as additional incentives to build pride in Black culture, and transform the South into the environment of the Civil Rights movement (<http://www.afroxwordz.com/CivilProd.htm>) Levy, 1998). Yet in retrospect from the perspective of the late 1990's, these rednecks cared a lot more for their targets than do the corporate old boy networks now running much of the world. In fact, these new comers to power don't even bother to count their hapless victims, instead, they count their wealth, in hundreds of millions, even billions, even hundreds of billions, even in trillions, of dollars.

And wealth there is, with *Forbes* (1999), *Fortune*, *Investor*, and dozens of other magazines reporting or guessing annually on the holdings of the more successful. But the concern is not the top end or the bottom end of the hierarchical corporate ladders, rather it is the attitudes, the definition of the world, the self justification and secret guilt, the long-term effects on the masses and the future of all of us (Mander, 1991).

ATTITUDES

Each of us is born pretty even with every other, into an initially fairly neutral world where we quickly learn a script, simply put, winning, neutral, or losing. Once imprinted, this attitude is encouraged through early childhood experiences, then expanded by schooling, family activities, and work. No one is required to adopt a given script, and indeed, some variation is inherent in the growth process. The major influences are well known, and are easily available from observation, common sense or for the more pedantic, research.

The wrong side of the tracks has infinite variation, the product is an attitude of loser. The losers learn quickly to succumb, to yield to the

winners, and rather than fight or flight, they simply give up. They may or may not blame, some seek reasons for their failure, but it does not really matter for no one listens, no one cares. Other losers are usually too busy losing to do more than commiserate. Some assist by assuring that those who are losing are kicked further downhill. Their frustration is so great that they cannot conceive of uniting. They could do nothing about the state of the world anyway.

For a few, an in-between status can occur. The neutrals present a paradox of sorts, for they may not be engaged in the win-lose struggle, or if engaged, they might be just plain struggling and end up somewhere in the middle. For those "not engaged," the ones who opt out, they fail to play the game, and yet they too get taken, again and again. They have assets, for in a sense they are like milk cows, being milked daily, destined for "the works" at the end of their trail, but they live reasonably well along the way. They lack control over their destiny, they are managed to serve the purposes of the entrepreneurs, the winners.

Those "engaged" in the middle however, neither so clever as to succeed, nor so abject as to lose, live lives of high anxiety, fluctuating between great dreams and equally brutal realities. They play the gambling games of life, replicating their dreams in daily behaviours, but few succeed. They are on a treadmill, where time wreaks a rough toll, exacting a heavy price. Eventually they are more likely than not to decline in the ongoing battle. They remind one of the peasants facing the annual floods, treading water that is slowly rising, expending all their energy to deal with an ever increasing hostile environment. They might remark about their lives, "Life is a bitch . . . until you die."

The winners, like pigs at a trough, take as much as they can get, and soon learn to ignore the losers. They take from the few neutrals and fight for dominance with the other winners. The competition is fierce. The spoils are immense. Their concerns are ownership of land, equities, bonds, jewels, gold and other resources, and money, money, money - in all its many forms (http://www.stw.org/html/shifting_fortunes_report.html, <http://www.michaelparenti.org/Superrich.html>).

DEFINITION OF THE WORLD

The four types of human being have remarkably different attitudes, each of which reveals entirely different definitions of the world. Winners see opportunity and pleasures to be gained, due to them after their own hard work, their cunning, their skills, and their personal and professional responsibility. They create their own definitions of the world, focusing on self, initiative, and important things needing to be done. They will do almost anything to get to the top, justifying themselves and their actions in the face of any criticism.

The losers use many excuses to describe their experience of economic and social problems, and they freely describe their encounters with constant streams of troubles. They accept their lot, sooner or later, and accommodate to poverty, degradation, or depression. They are often depressed, depressing to be around, and incapable of extricating themselves from their situation.

The engaged people in the middle are competitors, varying between successful or not, but they themselves fail to have luck. Perhaps they don't devote all their energy, or maybe they lack sufficient energy, or . . . it just doesn't work out. They try, they define the world as a place in which it is right to try, but somehow, fates don't allow the winning part to accrue to them. They accept their losses, their failures. Their personal power is somehow less than that held by the winners.

Those in the middle who are "not engaged" are more likely to have an expanded view of the world, to be aware of the games played by others, to be able but unwilling to constrict their world view to the simple capitalistic game. They see themselves as forced to participate in what they see as a meaningless game. They don't win, they don't lose, yet they still in the end, do get milked in the process. They try hard to hold on to their liberal, expanded points of view, their activities and ways. They rationalize, survive but in the end, go along with the playing of the game of life.

SELF JUSTIFICATION

The winners claim they themselves are entirely responsible for their success, their egos are fully in control. They hog their success, taking credit, forming old boy networks with those

who are like-minded, they compete successfully, they create and buy or sell businesses and corporations, and they engage in entrepreneurial activity, these so called leaders. They include the new right, developers and promoters, the neo-nazi's, the big business types, and the successful entrepreneurs. Authors and proponents of WTO, GATT, NAFTA, MAI, and other alphabet groups designed to control the financial world, they justify themselves by claiming the spoils are for the taking. They feel that they have done what they have done at great personal risk, at great cost to themselves, and because of their superior intelligence, education, gift of gab or god knows what else, they have made it into success. And, they decry others, as those who won't and don't and can't, as lazy and inefficient.

Do these winners feel guilt? Perhaps at some level they do, for they certainly perfect their pattern - their "Christian charity," their "community support," their sacrifices and giving to others, albeit so hypocritically set forth. But at other levels, they feel no guilt whatsoever, like this recent "me" generation that epitomizes the corporate capitalist mentality. Their words reek of excuses: "It is not 'our' responsibility, after all, we are a private company run for profit." "The dollar is our bottom line," they say, so frequently one knows they must at some deeper level, feel some twinges, some pain. Perhaps they realize that age, disability or chance may suddenly remove them from their perch, down to the great equalizer of death, or even worse from their perspective, disability.

Losers are free of self and ego, their justification is not based on guilt, but more likely ambition, failed ambition. The middle levels are too busy or too "expanded" and too busy being milked to justify anything but their wistful failure to get to the top too, or to be left alone to enjoy their hard earned sense of humanity.

THE FUTURE

For how long does this capitalistic corporate competition, this division of humankind into winners and losers, go on? Given overpopulation, ozone depletion, pollution, HIV and AIDS, rising CO2 levels, soil erosion, and so on, not very much longer (Malthus, 1798, 1993; Catton, 1980;

McMichael, 1993; Cohen, 1995; Pimentel, Harman, Pacenza, Pecarsky, and Pimentel, 1994). But the story may not end as we have been taught, that is, the meek may not inherit the earth. A transformation may well occur in which the winners will realize they have sufficient strength to virtually eliminate the losers. After all, they are not needed (Wolfsberger, 1994). Euthanasia, abortion, self protection, self defence, let them eat cake, whatever the words used, the effects will be that a massive die off will occur, promoted and advanced and encouraged, or at least acquiesced to, by those who appear currently to be the winners. One only has to look at the recent past of troubled hot-spots around the globe: Cuba, Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Iraq, Kosovo, East Timor. The powerless die while the powers that be make a financial profit and gain in their vested holds on political, military, industrial, and business power.

The losers truly will have no chance. In fact, the homeless, the substance abusers, the people with disabilities from illness or car wrecks, the elderly, the children when there are too many, the minorities, the people of other countries, people with different languages, skin colours, or traditions, all these losers will be encouraged to "self" terminate. A mad rush to eliminate that concomitant of biodiversity, social diversity, has been underway for decades already. The dying off has been happening already, if you but open your eyes, you can see evidence in the mass media, the reports and statistics from around the world, and even in your own neighbourhood.

But those in between, the operatives, that is the middle group of people who are engaged, will gladly do the bidding of the elite, they are willing to go along with the program. It does not matter that they are milked, for they only hope that their pasture will stay green for a little longer. It won't, of course, but the illusion lasts at least for a little while longer. After all, they did not reside in one of the hot-spots, they did not have a disability, they are not malnourished or impoverished. One could and should add, yet.

Those with expanded awareness who see these games, those who refuse to play, what about them? They know . . . they are caught, aware, ensnared. If they could organize, their weight could tip the balance. What can and will they do?

This scenario and particularly those who have an awareness of the coming problems that will tear up their world, reminds me of a story. This story came from my grandfather, who shared with me one day when I was but a child, hushing me up so that I would never tell my parents or friends.

"Sergeant, have your men line up all the villagers, then you report to me," the officer demanded. The sergeant promptly organized the starving villagers, virtually all women, children, and severely disabled or very old men. He stood them along a brick wall in front of his platoon of soldiers. He then reported to the officer in charge.

"Sir, there are around 150 of them, lined up as requested. Every house has been searched and we have all of them."

The officer in charge along with several other officers regarded the sergeant impersonally and nodded at each other silently. The officer in charge then ordered, "When your men are ready, shoot these villagers. They have been harbouring the enemy. Some of them are the enemy!"

"Sir, what about infants and the children? They aren't enemy..." the Sergeant protested.

"Sergeant, if you don't do it, someone else will! And, you will be among them! Is that clear?" asserted the officer bluntly.

"Yes sir," the sergeant replied, "I will set up the firing squad so none of the enemy can escape. Then, I'll order the men to open fire." The sergeant promptly and efficiently ordered his men to assemble and quietly instructed them. They were well-disciplined troops, having been through plenty of basics, lots of live combat, and continuous active training by the sergeant. They soon marched in front of the frightened, uneasy villagers, with the sergeant taking a leading position in the centre of the group.

"When I say fire, I want every one of you to fire all your rounds, and then reload," he stated in his loud and clear voice, "but I want you to listen to and follow, precisely and carefully, my commands." The officers, to their immediate rear, listened to the sergeant, nodding approvingly and looking forward to the efficient disposal of the enemy.

The sergeant then began with the ominous command, "Ready?"

He then suddenly and loudly interjected, "About face!" Then he screamed out, "Aim!

Fire!" The guns spoke, the officers died, and my sergeant/grandfather found reason to flee from his native Russia in 1905, where he had been unhappily and probably illegally impressed from a small traditional and impoverished village into the Tsar's White Russian Army at an early age.

Until more people become willing to take a stand, they are guilty of holding the broom, or of going along with the leadership and directions of the officers. As the new technologies drive along, we remain busy creating new ways to slap people down, take away their rights, destroy their past traditions and remove their social values, end their meaningfulness. Rather than enable, empower, build, grow and or create hope, the losses accrue.

FINALE

Can you see the millennium coming? "Whap, whap, whap!" The disturbing sounds are increasing in number and volume, while you are deciding which side of the corporate capitalistic scene you choose for yourself.

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