

SCAN



DON'T WRITE OFF THE NEXT GENERATION

In *Millennials Rising: The Next Generation*, Neil Howe and William Strauss predict the generation of young Americans due to start hitting college campuses soon will have little patience for the politics of baby boomer faculty members, and will rebel against university policies they see as promoting racial, sexual, and ideological separatism.

The authors suggest the "Millennial Generation," beginning with this year's college freshmen, is "team-oriented, optimistic, and...poised for greatness on a global scale." Just as students at the end of the 1960s were starkly different from their mild-mannered counterparts in that decade's early years, so students raised today amid coarseness and cynicism may just rebel themselves into decency, self-restraint, and public-spiritedness.

If that sounds unlikely, consider data showing that homicide, violent crime, abortion, and teen pregnancy are plummeting at some of the fastest rates ever recorded, while teen suicide is falling for the first time in decades. (See the *TAE* issues on "Generation X," January/February 1998, and "Is America Turning a

Corner?" January/February 1999.)

Baby boomers and those immediately following them were interested in personal liberation, says author Howe, and that's what Millennials "are rebelling against." "It was like reality hit... and people realized society was on a downward spiral," freshman Alexandra Kagan explained to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Asked "What is the major cause of the problems in this country?" today's teens cite "selfishness" first of all.

Five or six years ago, college kids "were real angry," one college administrator told the *Chronicle*. "There was an overwhelming sense of entitlement. It was always, 'I pay your salary, and you should do what I say. Screw your rules.'" Such attitudes are "slowly starting to change." When students screw up, they're "more likely to take responsibility for their actions," and when tragedy strikes them, they "tend to be more resilient" and seem, "on the whole, happier."

Howe and Strauss foresee some chance that Millennials, who love rules and trust institutions, "could be led astray by a demagogue, or use technology in Orwellian ways." But in today's cultural climate, we'll happily risk those trade-offs.

A 1 PERCENT PICTURE

In the last election, the "wealthiest 1 percent" of Americans were frequently invoked in sinister tones. But they were hardly ever described. Are they partying Kennedy kids, chauffeured oil barons, retired rock stars?

Hardly. For 1998 (the latest year data is available), the top 1 percent:

- paid about 35 percent of all personal income taxes, up from 29 percent in 1993 (the entire bottom 50 percent of taxpayers paid a mere 4 percent of income tax receipts),
 - had adjusted gross incomes beginning not in the millions but at \$269,496.
- Another survey of the top 1 percent (focusing especially on technology workers) found:
- nine out of ten did *not* inherit their wealth,
 - they've been working 29 years on average, and still work 56 hours a week,
 - 83 percent volunteer time for charities, and on average give away 8 percent of their income.

Sorry, Al, they don't scare us.

DID SOMEONE SAY DIALOGUE?

From the newsletter published by iconoclastic black commentator Larry Elder:

Harvard's African-American Studies department chairman, Henry Louis Gates, once complained that because of white racism, "when I walk into a room, people still see my blackness, more than my Gates-ness, or my literaryness."

Then there's Karen Russell, the Harvard Law grad and daughter of former basketball great Bill Russell. "I am angry.... How am I supposed to react to well-meaning, good liberal white people

HOME ON THE RANGE

Nevada house builder Ignatius Piazza has put up a new 177-home development near Pahrump, Nevada, with some highly unusual amenities: 13 shooting ranges and 400 yards of shooting trenches. Oh yes, and free gun cleaning for every resident.

Piazza has named the community Front Sight (much more interesting, we think, than the usual monikers—The Oaks at Tricking Brook, etc.).

"Wouldn't it be nice to live in the safest town in America?" Piazza asked a crowd at a recent rally. "We won't have any crime at Front Sight, not with everyone trained in firearms, and most everyone owning them."

who say things like... 'You're one of my good friends, and I never think of you as black.' Implicit in such a remark is 'I think of you as white' or perhaps just 'I don't think of your race at all.'"

See, Gates is angry because people see black. And Russell is angry because they don't. Don't try to understand; it's a "black thing."

HEIGHTS OF FOLLY

A Pennsylvania farmer hit the jackpot for \$300,000 after he put his ladder on top of a pile of frozen horse manure, reports *The Cato Review of Business & Government*. When the manure thawed, the ladder slipped, and the man sued. The target of the lawsuit? Not the Weather Channel. And not the horse (no deep pockets there). Instead, the farmer and his lawyers bamboozled a jury into finding the ladder manufacturer guilty because it failed to warn him his accident could occur.

At my local hardware store last week, I saw some of the fallout from these manure-type episodes when I picked up a new ladder, the regular wooden type. In addition to a "Danger: Not a step" sticker that warned me not to sit or stand on the flimsy little platform that's intended for the paint, and another sticker on the fifth step that warned "Do not stand at or above this level," the ladder's more far-reaching "Caution" sticker listed no fewer than 21 other ways I could fall into a pile of unfrozen manure or, out here where it's illegal to have a horse, plunge headlong onto my living room rug.

First, there's a warning that might have prevented the entire manure misfortune: "If used on slippery surfaces, be careful." In addition, there are eight other paternalistic warnings that just might keep the next farmer out of the soup: (1) Wear slip-resistant shoes, (2) Set all four feet on firm level surfaces, (3) Keep body centered between side rails, (4) Use extreme caution when getting off or on, (5) Check that all feet are firmly supported, (6) Never walk, bounce, or move ladder while on it, (7) Always face ladder and maintain a firm grip, and (8) Do not overreach. You may lose your balance and/or tip ladder. For good measure, the manufacturer also suggests calling over your wife or one of

PLEASE WRITE

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the kids: When possible, have someone hold the ladder.

Additional proper care warnings say I should "Tighten nuts" and "Never paint a wood ladder" and promptly "Destroy the ladder if it is exposed to excessive heat." Another warning says it's not too smart to do things like cleaning the gutters during a typhoon: "Windy conditions require extra caution." (A guy in Chicago sued the rope company, the ladder maker, and the flag manufacturer after he was hoisted 12 feet into the air while trying to raise Old Glory during a wind storm.)

There's a special warning, too, for those of us who paint on hillsides and stick red bricks under one leg: "Never place anything under or attach anything to ladder to gain height or to adjust to uneven surfaces." And a warning about wives who burst through the door to show us what they've just bought: "Do not use ladder in front of unlocked doors." And a caution for those of us who like

doing things in pairs: "Ladder is designed to support the weight of one person." And a warning for those of us who spend more time on a barstool than on a treadmill: "Never use ladder if you are not in good physical condition."

Finally, there's a large sticker on both sides of the ladder saying we better wise up about all the other

stickers: "Failure to read and follow instructions on this ladder may result in injuries or death."

The price of this mindset that rewards people for their own missteps by emptying other people's wallets? Measured in higher consumer prices, an estimated \$3,500 per year for the average family.

But there's the deeper corrosion of a loss of individual responsibility. In addition to demonstrating our growing bondage to fractious lawyers, warning labels like these suggest we're increasingly becoming an infantilized citizenry.

—Ralph Reiland is a TAE contributing writer.

YES, COMRADE!

Following are excerpts from a list of "Class Ground Rules" given by an American University sociology professor to her students. They are adapted from rules being promulgated nationally by Tennessee women's studies instructor Lynn Weber Cannon. The introduction explains that "all students must commit themselves to the final set of group rules," which are used to guide all class discussions.

- We will assume that all of us (regardless of racial identity, sex, class, cultural background) have been influenced by the racism of our culture.
- Acknowledge that oppression (i.e., racism, sexism, classism, ageism) exists.
- Acknowledge that one of the mechanisms of oppression is that we are all taught misinformation about gender, race, and class. This is true for both dominant



and subordinate group members.

• We cannot be blamed for the misinformation we have learned, but we will be held responsible for repeating misinformation after we have learned otherwise.

ANOTHER MEDIA MURDER OF THE TRUTH

It was a shocking allegation, sure to come up in the presidential debates. On the very day of the first debate, the *Los Angeles Times* published two front-page stories about hundreds of criminals obtaining concealed-handgun permits in Texas and committing violent crimes. With subheads like "Many Licensees Were Obviously Unfit" and "Most Problems Occur After Permits Issued," Governor Bush had clearly created a program that endangered Texans' lives. And he had been negligent: The problems appear never to have been fixed. No wonder Vice President Al Gore tried to squeeze this news story into the second debate as he claimed "too many criminals are getting guns."

The terrifying story, however, is full of untruths and omissions.

Of hundreds of thousands of gun permit holders in Texas, only 71, not the 400 claimed, had disqualifying criminal backgrounds. These mistakenly issued permits occurred when the program was first instituted in 1996, and most of them arose because of delays in fingerprint checks by the FBI. More importantly, these 71 permits were revoked, and none of these persons committed a crime while he had the permit. The Texas Department of Public

DEMOCRAT'S LAMENT

Richard Lamm, the Democratic governor of Colorado from 1975-87, wrote sadly just weeks before the election:

"The teachers' unions and the trial lawyers have taken over the Democratic Party and prevent much-needed reform from occurring. We are fast becoming a party of rich lawyers and poor teachers."

Safety says it told the *Los Angeles Times* reporters before the story was published that they were improperly including more cases than they should, but not only did the reporters not fix the problem, their story doesn't even acknowledge that others might disagree with their numbers.

The *Times* told a few sensational stories of permit holders who committed crimes, but never bothered to mention the fundamental reality that permit holders are extremely law-abiding. By any measure, rates of crime among permit holders are quite low: Adult Texans with gun permits are only one-eighth as likely to be arrested as those without permits, and only one-sixteenth as likely to be convicted of a crime. (Asked by *TAE* about these stark numbers, *Times* reporter William Rempel shrugged them off: "Could be.")

Most of the few violations committed by permit holders are minor offenses. As the *National Journal* has observed, permit holders "turn out to be...safer even than off-duty cops."

The *Times* also repeats Al Gore's emotional charge that Bush signed a law allowing people to carry concealed handguns in churches. This claim is utterly false. It has never been legal to carry concealed handguns in Texas churches.

The most important public policy question on concealed-carry laws is whether

they save or cost lives on net. Yet this crucial issue was entirely ignored by the *Times*. If the paper had really cared about people's safety, it would have reported that *not a single* national academic study shows an increase in violent crime stemming from concealed handgun laws. Instead, there is overwhelming evidence that laws like the one Bush fought for have made life safer in every one of the nearly 30 states that have passed them.

Though it was ignored by the *Times*, the record in Texas is unambiguous: During the first two years the law was in effect, Texas's murder rate fell by 25 percent—much faster than the 16 percent average decline for states without right-to-carry laws. A similar comparison shows that Texas's rape rate fell twice as fast. All of which explains why, to the *Times*' puzzlement, over 60 percent of Texans support the law.

—John Lott Jr. is a senior research scholar at the Yale Law School and author of *More Guns, Less Crime*.

THE PARTY OF FEAR

Facing the tightest national election since 1960, Democrats rolled out the race card hoping to boost black turnout.

Asked about racial profiling at the vice presidential debate, Senator Joseph Lieberman replied that a black presidential advisor was "surrounded by police for no other cause than anyone can determine than the color of his skin." In fact, on September 6, cops stopped White House aide Bob Nash and his wife in their blue Infiniti 43 minutes after a black Infiniti was reported carjacked nearby. Authorities sought a vehicle with temporary license plates—as Nash's had. "The only thing that was ever profiled in this incident was the car," Montgomery County, Maryland police captain William O'Toole told the Associated Press. Nine days later, Lieberman ignored these details.

In a senatorial debate against New York Republican Rick Lazio, Hillary Clinton said she would oppose Supreme Court nominees "who would vote to overturn *Brown v. Board of Education*." Huh? Mrs. Clinton surely understands that this 1954 school desegregation decision is accepted by Americans from Jesse Jackson to Jesse Helms. This civil rights landmark will be



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overturned the day the Empire State Building capsizes. So her remark seemed designed to fabricate racial jitters.

Meanwhile, amid high oil prices and missing nuclear secrets, the Energy Department decided on October 9 that it could best use its resources by launching an internal racial-profiling probe. The same day, Democratic Party chairman Joe Andrew announced plans to have Lieberman exploit the truck-dragging death of James Byrd, a black man murdered by white racists in 1998. Andrew told reporters, "we're going back to Jasper, Texas, and talk about hate crimes."

Back in the 1998 elections, Democrats likewise amplified their racial rhetoric. "When you don't vote, you allow another cross to burn," warned one commercial on black radio stations in Missouri.

Today's ugly racial appeals are part of a wider ruthlessness among Democratic campaigners. Last July, Gore-Lieberman campaign manager Donna Brazile nicknamed her Nashville headquarters "the slaughterhouse," saying her staff "may look like gentle people. But they are killers."

When Democrats attack the GOP with meat axes, Republicans usually defend themselves with oyster forks. The Republican National Committee did deploy some new weapons this fall, however, namely four radio spots aimed at urban black voters. The ads promoted tax cuts, entrepreneurship, school choice, and pension reform.

In short, black voters were offered two clear options: hope from the Republicans, and, from the Democrats, fear itself.

—Deroy Murdock is a nationally syndicated columnist.

SAVE THE MALES

Perhaps men aren't a "privileged" group after all. At their latest annual meeting, college admissions directors held panels worrying over the declining presence of males on campus.

"I call this the issue that dare not speak its name," says Harry Dawe of Oberlin College. Men now make up less than 45 percent of U.S. college undergraduates, down from about 57 percent in 1970, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* notes. In 1997, the latest year for which statistics are available, 131,900 more women than men earned bachelor's degrees. What accounts for the fall-off? Discrimination? A "hostile environment"? Harassment? A lack of societal support? Institutional sexism?

Maybe the problem is just old-fashioned bias. Robert J. Massa, who handles enrollment at Dickinson College, suggests the preferences colleges have recently given women "have not been re-evaluated as the need for them may have evaporated. For example, aid to women at Dickinson has historically exceeded aid to men by 8 percent, even though men... score higher on the SAT" and are just as needy financially as their female peers.

One solution would be to once again let simple academic merit be the guide for college admission. But we won't be surprised if administrators instead dream up some new affirmative action program. Maybe something for students who are male but promise not to be masculine.

THE RIGHT TO SLEEP AROUND

The Contender's cinematic pardon of Bill Clinton's Oval Office infidelities performs so many painful back flips trying to prove its point that you'll feel like putting a heating pad on your own spine after watching it. The movie argues for the privacy rights of those in public office, but in doing so it completely dismisses such virtues as responsibility and character.

Hollywood's minions in the press have been dutifully praising Joan Allen for her performance as Democratic Senator Laine Hanson, who becomes the vice presiden-

tial designate after the death of the sitting Veep. As her confirmation hearings get underway, word leaks out about a sorority sex party Hanson supposedly took part in when she was a freshman in college. Soon the battle lines are drawn: Laine staunchly refuses to discuss her personal life because it's irrelevant to the political process, while Republican Congressman Shelly Runyon, played by Gary Oldman, brutally questions whether she's morally fit for high office.

There's no denying *The Contender* raises pertinent questions about a politician's right to privacy. The movie's one true moment occurs when the ex-wife of Laine's husband is subpoenaed by the confirmation committee. Forced to testify about an affair between Laine and her then-husband, which eventually broke up her marriage, the poor woman has to relive her embarrassment and pain on national TV. The innocent casualties that come with dragging private lives into the public light raise the question of how far we should go for certain information.

Unfortunately, *The Contender* offers no help with that decision because of its single-minded zealotry in defending Laine and her past. There's not a moment of subtlety in the entire film. In case we haven't figured out that Laine is supposed to be a martyr, for instance, writer-director Rod Lurie helpfully frames her in a shot standing amidst endless headstones in a military cemetery.

Even more egregious is Oldman's Shelly Runyon, a hissing villain who's described by his own wife as a "second-rate Joe McCarthy" and is treated by the movie like a sixth-rate one. There's even a throwaway line uttered by Runyon while he's playing basketball in a gym that hints the congressman may be racist.

Oldman and his manager Douglas Urbanski told *Premiere* that DreamWorks Pictures, the studio run by Steven Spielberg, David Geffen, and Jeffrey Katzenberg (all lavish contributors to Bill Clinton and the Democratic Party) forced editing cuts on Rod Lurie that twisted *The Contender* into a "piece of propaganda" worthy of the Nazis, especially since it was released just before the election. A DreamWorks spokesman demurs: "There's no indication to me whatsoever that Rod [Lurie]



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ever felt pressured," he told reporters. "The owners of this company have sympathies with the Democratic Party. Did those sympathies enter into the editorial process or the decision to buy the movie? Unequivocally, no." But even the liberal *Washington Post* disagrees, saying the movie "succumbs to heavy-handed politicizing."

The Contender, in short, is artless agit-prop. But with a surprise revelation near the end, the movie even fails to follow through on its own convictions. Up to that point, the filmmakers take the position that whatever Laine did in her past doesn't have a bearing on her present; then in a final conversation with the President (Jeff Bridges), we learn she actually had left the college party before the sordid stuff began. She chose not to disclose this fact before the committee because she sees it as

"nobody's business." *The Contender* thinks it's giving us a Senator Laine Hanson we can feel good about, but doing so is an intrinsic admission that moral responsibility does matter in a representative.

A few critics have placed *The Contender* alongside 1939's *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, in which James Stewart plays an idealistic young senator up against a corrupt political opponent. "This is no place for you," a cynical aide tells Stewart's senator upon his arrival in Washington, "you're halfway decent." In comparison, *The Contender* says that being halfway decent is more than enough. Welcome to inspirational political cinema at the end of the Clinton era, in which we celebrate not virtue but a politician's right to sleep around.

—TAE contributing writer **Josh Larsen** reviews films from Chicago.

BIRD'S EYE, continued from page 5

would be only a temporary increase of about 5,000 new immigrants per year. In reality, the result was an explosion to three or four *times* the earlier flow.

Especially in places like southern California, one of our biggest problems today is simply that the number of immigrants has climbed too high for assimilating institutions (like the L.A. schools, many of which are now effectively Mexican rather than American schools) to process them effectively. Students of immigration like Harvard's George Borjas note that our nation's earlier eras of heavy immigration "were followed by decades of rest, during which time the immigrant waves were assimilated and incorporated into the American mainstream." As economist Robert Samuelson has written, "America has a huge social and economic capacity to absorb newcomers, but that capacity is not unlimited."

Effectively absorbing immigrants so that both they and the nation are strengthened ought to be the goal of our immigration policy. But it must be noted that since our national crisis of confidence in the 1960s, America has not been very assertive about assimilating fresh arrivals. As noted in our lead story featuring John Fonte and Michael Barone, we've not done much over the last generation to make new Americans proficient in our language, our laws, or our institutions of citizenship. Instead of encouraging "Americanization," our liberal elites have fostered "multiculturalism," bilingualism, and a politics of ethnic grievance. The Ford Foundation, for instance, has funded Mexican activist groups (like MALDEF) rather than encouraging assimilated citizenship.

Defenders of healthy immigration to the U.S. (and we include ourselves in this group) need to bear in mind that there is a trade off between immigration policy and assimilation policy. If we uphold standards of citizenship and energetically acclimatize new arrivals, extensive immigration can be quite manageable. But if we fail at Americanization, then immigration flows as heavy as our current ones will create serious economic troubles, ugly social flashes, and political backlash.

Sensible controls on immigration and unapologetic measures to aid assimilation are thus necessary to a successful pluralistic America. We need reform in both areas right now.

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Does America Have An

Michael Barone says NO

Our Immigrants Always Melted Before

Heavy immigration has been the rule in American history, not the exception, and the minority groups of 2000 in many ways resemble the major immigrant groups of 1900: Blacks resemble Irish, Latinos resemble Italians, Asians resemble Jews. We are not in a wholly new place in history.

Consider the Irish. In the 1840s, the potato famine hit Ireland, and nearly 700,000 Irish came to America. One million arrived in the 1850s, 2.4 million more between 1860 and 1914.

The Irish were the first immigrants to throng to the cities, and the Catholic Church was the dominant institution for most of them. The “wild Irish” had high rates of crime and alcoholism—even while their love of hierarchy and affinity for the state also meant that many became cops. They also produced many entertainers and athletes, and continued for many years after the 1840s to be physically distinctive. Discrimination against them continued until well into this century.

Irish distinctiveness was greatest in politics. Up through 1960, the differences in voting behavior between Yankee Protestants and Irish Catholics in the Northeast were as stark as the

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differences between blacks and whites in Mississippi today.

Today the particularities of Irish-Americans are mostly past. In the 1950s, they surpassed U.S. average levels in income and education. Then in 1960 JFK became the first Irish-American President. Intermarriage with non-Irish became common, and with the advent of the birth control pill large Catholic families mostly disappeared. The Irish became woven into the fabric of American life. It took 120 years.

People of African descent have lived in America since the first slaves landed at Jamestown in 1619, but the great migration of blacks within America didn't come until the middle of the twentieth century. During 1940-65, about 5 million African Americans poured into cities above the Mason-Dixon line. They brought to the North a faith that only strong action by the federal government could overcome the discrimination they suffered.

Southern blacks had limited chances to own businesses, and in the North blacks showed little entrepreneurial drive. Even today, relatively few businesses in black areas are owned by blacks, and black incomes remain well below average. But blacks moved upward in political machines, labor unions, and the civil service. Blacks also became great athletes, musicians, and entertainers.

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