

Education and Family Revolution

By Barrington H. Brennen, MA, BCCP, NCP; June 2, 2011

While crime increases, the debate also continues about what is the reason for its surge in recent years. Many argue that the increase in crime is due to the failure in our education system. Still others disagree that it is the failure of the family. There are still others who assert that the failure of a society is really the failure of the church, the judicial system, and the police. Sometimes I wonder why there is so much time wasted debating who is at fault and not channeling that energy into honest self-discovery, effective change and implementation. Over the past decades, many consultants or professionals on crime prevention and reduction have given suggestions to solve the problem. Many national committees and councils have been formed where passionate speeches and debates have been made, but still very little has changed. Why is this? It is because we are afraid to change? It is because those in the position to change do not really feel the pain that often drives the need to change?

Perhaps the reason we are not changing might be more philosophical. It might be that we are holding on to traditions and beliefs of the past that have become maladaptive. Anthropologist and psychologist, Dr. Robert Edgerton, in his book "Sick Societies" states: "There are many reasons traditional beliefs and practices may become maladaptive. Some traditional practices that evolved early in human history must have been relatively inefficient solutions to environmental demands, but with rigorous competitions from other populations or other belief systems, such practices tend to persist." He goes on to state: "Besides, because humans do not always make rational adaptive decisions, some of their beliefs and practices may have been maladaptive from the beginning." Dr. Edgerton has studied many cultures of the world and the role of maladaptive behavior. He is suggesting that when there is no national review of systems of beliefs or traditions and their relevancy in the contemporary society, that society fades away or continues with maladaptive behavior that becomes self-destructive.

Have we reached the point of national self-destruction? No we haven't. But without the necessary national changes, it is my view that we will disappear from the map of civilized societies. After examining how societies around the world fail or succeed, Dr. Edgerton came to this conclusion: "From time to time over the course of human history, rigorous selective forces have compelled societies to change, and those that could not were absorbed by other populations or, sometimes, became extinct. But more often there has not been enough competition among societies to bring about major social cultural change. In the absence of strong competition, there is little motivation for change."

Our problem in The Bahamas is really unique. We have the competition that should stimulate us to effect change, but Bahamian nationalists have an insular view of culture and society. We look at competition as the enemy rather than a gift of opportunity. Instead of cherishing international integration, we despise new thought and people who, we perceive, threaten our cultural identity and economic security. We are like a stubborn child who would not listen to the warning cries to stop even when running across the street into the path of a car.

THE FAILURE

While many purport their views for the escalating crime, it is my thought that the fault fundamentally lies with our dysfunctional families and secondarily with the failure of our educational system. Let me first share a little about what I mean about the failure of our educational system. It is not necessarily the curriculum, the teachers and their style of teaching, the lack of textbooks, or the ill-equipped schools. In my view, it is more the failure to inculcate in each citizen that education is a natural, highly valued, and vital process of moral, intellectual and social development. It is also a failure to enforce that high school education is the bare minimum necessary to enter the workforce. In our tourist-driven society, it has become too easy for persons to get a job with very little comprehension skills and still make a fairly decent income. Language formation,

inductive and deductive reasoning, and critical thinking are sadly lacking. When education fails, crime abounds.

It is my view that the government should not allow anyone to work without having at least a high school certificate. No store license, driver's license, vendor's license should be given without a high school certificate. There should be a requirement for post-high school certification in a special field within five years of leaving high school. In other words, to renew the license there must be proof of personal upgrade. To get this started, the government can give five years grace for all who lack to upgrade themselves by studying for an adult after-school certificate.

We have a challenge because many parents do not truly value the need for education. There are far too many who cannot fill out an application form, hold a reasonable conversation with proper sentence formation. Very few people with whom they come in contact demand that they speak well, act responsibly, or perform with a higher level of efficiency. Far too often mediocrity is the by-word for our Bahamian way of living. It is just doing enough to get by. If they can fake it long enough with apparent success, then many reason they will never need to upgrade.

If we can change the mindset of parents today, we will save our nation and become a less violent society. Yes, we do need to revise our judicial system so career criminals can no longer roam our streets. But the real answer is a family revolution. Family revolution will only occur when parents parent so their children can also parent effectively. That is parents are to teach respect, obedience, and other moral values in such way that children will joyfully and intelligently transfer the same moral values and standards to their children. Family revolution is all about personal integrity. It occurs when parents' lifestyle and practices behind closed doors are the same in public. Our nation will be better when more families value education, personal cultural development, and moral sobriety.

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