

Tired of Being Stepped On?

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One of the challenges today is to exist in a world in which you have no real control over your destiny. Our options are limited depending on demographics of ethnicity, gender, and wealth (or lack of). In conjunction with “the System” as it stands, we also must contend with cultural trends that negate our independence and interest in freedom from the ruling class.

In certain sectors of society, generations have survived on welfare. This being a trend in the particular family or community, it takes an individual in that particular family or community to think “outside of the box” and break from that trend. The next greater challenge for that individual is to set a new trend.

Using the analogy of welfare, our society’s parallel is the trend in which masses of people rely on the Government-not for public aid, but for interpretation of facts (the media), interpretation of reality (academics), policy making, decision making, and the settlement of disputes. If we can reason as a people that it is wrong to live off of or rely on the Government for food, clothes, and shelter, then we should also be able to reason that it is equally self-destructive, lazy, and wrong to rely on the government for this kind of social welfare.

The youth are faced with the tedious task of breaking the trend and setting a new trend. Just look at how the hip-hop community came under attack for its self-initiated “stop snitching” campaign: first, the fact that this was a self-determined initiative by the community meant conflict with the norm because the community is expected to leave the policy making to the aristocrats. If we are going to do the jobs of the CIA, FBI, and local police, then why are we paying them? If we are expected to volunteer, then they should exist as a volunteer agency. A community servant works as a service to the community; a mercenary is a hired gun paid generously to enforce the “rule” of the ruling class.

Secondly, the particular determination that snitching should end conflicts with the cultural structure in which Americans exist. We are expected to provide whatever information we know about each other to the Government, spy on each other, eavesdrop, and settle all of our disputes through mediation of the Government’s officials. Suing each other and calling the police on each other to settle disputes leads to the outright destruction of our community and our respect for each others’ existence as neighbors. It has deteriorated our social skills and ability to deal with each other. If we can’t respect or earn the respect of our fellows, then we have a problem that the law simply can’t solve. Each community has its own unique problems which only it can solve.

Prison is not the answer. Self-respect and respect for others has never been instilled by the penal system; in fact, the penal system breeds predators-if you are not one going in, chances are you’ll be one coming out. And calling the police only adds to the already disproportionate number of citizens incarcerated or murdered by officers.

In addition to the “stop snitching” campaign, another move that communities have made towards breaking the social welfare trend is the remarkable efforts to clean up after the explosion of the 9th ward levee during Hurricane Katrina. People are continuing to be a part of the clean-up effort, though unfortunately, their individual efforts alone are not enough.

As volunteers, community organizations, and residents scramble to put their lives back together in the shadows, the Government and corporate America have been focusing on restoring the “more important” parts of New

Orleans such as the French Quarter and Garden District. According to a report in *The Daily Reveille* of Louisiana State University, \$185 million was spent on restoring the New Orleans Superdome alone (\$116 million came from FEMA), \$60 million went to restoring the Morial Convention Center, and \$37 million into a new parking garage for luxury cruise boats. All this extravagance going on while many displaced citizens can't return home.

Why should we carry on with this trend of relying on the Government when we are only left at the bottom of their shoe like bubble gum? If you are tired of being stepped on, then become a trend setter. The power is in the people.

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