

Hard Work and Determination

I just skimmed an article in The Guardian by Suzanne Moore that lamented the economic inequalities faced by the young adult generation in England. It claims that "...'leaving home', finding the one job for life, the one partner for ever, getting married, having a baby, buying a home, these remain the sum of desires, however unrealistic they may be."

Unrealistic?

I don't know about England, 'cause I don't live there. But Ms. Moore claims the problems exist in the US as well, and I do know about that. So assuming Ms. Moore is correct about the congruence between the worlds on either side of the big pond, then I can speak to this from my experience here in the States.

The economic problem is much less capitalism than it is entitlement. The social problem is not that the goals are unrealistic, but that the expectations are.

When young people talk about "buying a home," they seem to be thinking about 2 story, 2 garage, perfect lawn suburbia, right out of college. When they talk about "the one partner for ever [sic]", they mean a high IQ, sexy until death, perfect roommate, never changing, Barbie or Ken. When they think about "getting married" they imagine a Princess Diana wedding and a honeymoon in the tropics that doesn't ever end. "Having a baby," means, to them, when they have just the right amount of money and spare time, producing the perfect, flawless child of their preferred biological sex that will generate in them warm feelings of parental ecstasy, and when they look for that "one job for life," they mean the job that will pay them more than their work is worth on the first day of work while ensuring them a lifetime of pride and fulfillment.

That's what these young people expect. That is unrealistic.

The truth is, and always has been, that “buying a home” means purchasing a modest house that is not beyond ones means, often a one-story brick ranch with no garage (and maybe a single car carport) and a lawn that looks more a patchwork quilt than a meadow, and most often, after having rented for years after college. The truth is that “one partner for ever [sic]” means sticking with the same person no matter how rough it gets or how imperfect he/she turns out to be when the honeymoon glow dissipates. The truth is that “getting married” means a wedding where it might rain and a reception where people serve themselves and a honeymoon in Myrtle Beach rather than Hawaii (unless the couple happens to live in Hawaii, then it means a honeymoon in Hawaii rather than Myrtle Beach), and “until death do us part” even when one partner takes on new interests, gets fat, suffers brain damage, or turns out to have a hot temper or gets depressed daily over newspaper headlines. The truth is “having a baby” means getting whatever the genes toss up when the sperm hits the egg, along with any genetic abnormalities that happen to occur, and it means choosing to make time and sacrifice luxuries in order to have the money so that the time is right now, and it means as much parental frustration and exasperation as it does parental ecstasy, and realizing that both are equally precious. The truth is, that “one job for life,” means finding a place of employment where one can get paid a fair wage for the work one does in a job that is sometimes or even often unpleasant, and sticking with it while doing ones best for life, and starting with a low salary that hard work and dedication over years turns into a good salary rather than always chasing the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

Ms. Moore asks this question:

“For all these things are interconnected, and in an age of student debt, a labour market that is keeping wages low, insane rents and clear evidence that having a baby does not produce huge happiness, or even relationship glue for many

couples, why are these things the measure of adult life?"

To which I answer, because the measure of adult life is not what one gets, but what one gives. It isn't about wealth, mansions, self-gratification, and personal happiness: it's about responsibility.

And that is something the world truly possesses in short supply.

Naked

Last night I had a dream I was visiting a very crowded hospital and walking the halls completely naked. The only people I had to avoid were those in my family. It was a great dream!