

How Baby Boomers Created Today's Millennial Snowflakes

This column ends with the report of a college professor who should be severely reprimanded, at the very least, for a new grading policy he has announced. I'm telling you that here at the beginning of this column but I'm withholding the details to the end. His students should rise up as one and demand he reverse the policy he has announce. Their parents should demand it. The university where he works should be outraged. I'll tell you all about him but not now. At the end of this column I'll tell who he is what he is doing to his students.

The term "snowflake" has been frequently used to describe college-age Americans, so frequently that it has become hardly more than a pop cliché. It would have been laughable had it not been so sad to behold college students' need for special rooms where they could color and cuddle teddy bears just to live over the horror of seeing Hillary Clinton lose the presidency. Then came the demand for "safe spaces" where they wouldn't have to hear ideas or opinions different from theirs, ideas that would upset or, God forbid, challenge them to actually think.

How did this happen? I asked myself. Today's campus denizens are the not-so-distant descendants of the generation that lived through a depression, won World War II and rebuilt both America and Europe. How did they in only a couple of fast generations become such tender little blossoms?

My generation, the so-called Boomers, were certainly not afraid of alternative ideas. The Boomers marched in the streets for free speech, demanded that the most outrageous voices be heard and pressed the frontiers of propriety in every way imaginable. It seems that my generation had an insatiable appetite for voices that threatened everything we

had ever been taught. How did “shake me, break me, rattle my cage and ‘sock it to me’” so quickly turn into “I cannot bear to hear that, and if you say it, I will use violence to shut you up?” How did we get here from the sands of Iwo Jima and the free speech of the '70s?

I do not pretend to know all the reasons but one insight is becoming increasingly clear to me. It was not my generation's rebellion, liberalism and uber-tolerant adoration of free speech that bred the snowflakes of today. It was our unreasonable and unconscionable desire to protect them that robbed them of intellectual vigor and brought them to their current sad state of weakness.

All parents, caring ones at least, want their children to have it better than they did, to suffer less, succeed more and reach higher. The problem is that those goals for our children can sometimes be in conflict with each other. Reducing the strain of their struggle may seem compassionate but it may actually turn them into weaklings. I admit I am not a poultry expert, but I have heard it said that if a mother chicken helps a chick escape from the shell that it will die. In other words, the baby needs the struggle. The struggle is not the chick's enemy but a necessary part of its development and maturation.

Perhaps some so desperately wanted to shield their chicks that they deprived them of the necessary struggle.

It's not safe spaces today's students need. It's confrontation, struggle, hard times and tough challenges at which they occasionally fail. They do not need constant success. It will suck the marrow out of their bones. They need failures from which they must fight their way back. They need mountains, real ones—big, dangerous mountains they must climb. They do not need to win all the time. They need defeats—bitter, humbling defeats that will make them know they can live through such a setback and come back to gain hard-

fought victories. They need hardships, in the face of which they will learn endurance. They need to learn they are not good at everything, that they are not all champions in every sport. They need to learn to deal with life.

Stress and fatigue are parts of life. In every culture, in every tiny village and in the teeming population centers stress is part of life. Work is part of life. Whether it is carrying crushing loads up a gangplank at a construction site in India or slaving over a hot text book in a college dorm, work and long hours and stress are part of life. Every life. Stress-free living is not the goal. Victorious living is about learning, by God's grace, to cope, learning to deal with the struggle and the pain and the hard work and still live with joy and a sense of purpose.

So here's the story I promised you.

Dr. Richard Watson is a professor at the University of Georgia. According to a report on Fox News Insider, the good Dr. Watson has decided that the stress of their studies is so damaging to the snowflakes in his classes that he will allow them to simply name their own grade regardless of what they actually earned. Furthermore, all his tests will be open book and no student will have to actually take part in assigned group projects.

Here is the piece de resistance. Dr. Watson teaches business. Business! He is teaching his students that hard work, study and the stress of competition can be avoided, in fact, ought to be avoided. He is teaching them to be weak, and they should be outraged. They should demand harder tests, more rigorous projects, tougher grading policies and textbooks that challenge them as they have never been challenged. They should demand that their business classes give them no coloring books and teddy bears because business and life, for that matter, will give them none.

They should march on the dean's office waving copies of *The Wealth of Nations* and demand teachers who stress their little undergraduate lives.

I began as a student at the University of Maryland two weeks after I graduated from a small high school. There were 95 in my graduating class. That huge university, the thousands of students, the massive campus on the edge of the District of Columbia all combined to stress the living daylights out of me. The size of the classes was disorienting. There were 750 students in my freshman English class. More stress. I couldn't find things. I was lonely and suffering culture shock. More stress.

To top it all off, I failed my first test. Miserably. It was a course in Boolean Algebra that I remember with a shudder to this day. I had made straight A's in high school algebra and I had never failed a test in any subject. That F stressed me in no uncertain terms. I went to my father, who was an engineer, and asked if he would help me. He said, "No. You said you wanted to go to college. I didn't make you go. This was your decision. It's your responsibility." Stress.

I knew I could either learn it on my own or fail it on my own. I made A's on every test after that and earned a B in the course. I resented my father's callous refusal to help me. Then. Now I know better. He was doing me a favor.

Dr. Richard Watson, I'm calling you out. You are doing your students no favor at all. In fact, you are harming them. You don't have to be a professor at a huge state university to see that what you are doing is counterproductive. It's elementary, Watson. {eo}

Dr. Mark Rutland is president of both *Global Servants* () and the *National Institute of Christian Leadership* (). A renowned communicator and New York Times best-selling author, he has more than 30 years of experience in organizational leadership,

having served as a senior pastor and a university president.