

The current monolithic organization of education hamstrings a trial-and-error search for better alternatives. Faced with stagnation and failure of the present magnitude, the answer is not another round of incremental change within the old framework. Most such reforms — whether progressive or conservative — disappoint because after the novelty wears off, the overall level of student motivation declines to previous levels. Instead, a new framework must be designed that encourages initiative and innovation, empowers students, increases their involvement and satisfaction, and rewards productivity gains.

If we've come to understand anything about learning, it's that people's interests and cognitive styles vary enormously. As learners and teachers both find responsible and creative roles in its governance, education will rapidly evolve individualized pathways that will carry millions of apathetic students, and many of their frustrated teachers, out of Nobodyland.

When rank reflects excellence, coercion is not needed. People who are seeking their own fulfillment do so with an energy and commitment that dwarfs any that could be commandeered, whether in the state, the family, the workplace, or the school.

There is no magic "fix" for the ills of education. So long as students must surrender a piece of their dignity to the current system, many will continue to withhold a significant part of themselves from the process of learning. Societies that uproot rankism in their schools will lead the world in the twenty-first century, as those that curtailed it in government led in the twentieth.

A Better Game than War: Ciphers to Citizens

So long as anti-militarists propose no...moral equivalent of war...they fail to realize the full inwardness of the situation.

— William James, American philosopher and psychologist (1842–1910)

Thus far, we have focused on rank abuse as it occurs between individuals and within institutions. Rankism also arises — often with serious consequences — between groups. For example, a corporate monopoly may use its financial clout to put a company that poses a competitive

threat out of business. Antitrust legislation was designed to prevent this abuse of power. Of course, the judgment as to whether a given company is violating the law or whether it is simply engaging in fair competition in the pursuit of high rank and its just rewards is often arguable and may have to be settled in the courts.

Of even greater consequence than corporate battles are those between nation states. When one of them pulls rank on another, demanding subservience or surrender, the result is either capitulation or war.

History is replete with examples of groups attempting to wrest recognition from one another. Wars of aggression are usually an assertion of primacy tied to tribal or national identity. In their quest for recognition on the world stage, some nations have won glory. Often, however, it proved to be a passing glory, even a prelude to catastrophe.

A humiliated people may heed the call of a demagogic leader in order to avenge and redeem itself by establishing a new, attractive identity at the expense of its neighbors. One Nazi SS officer, reminiscing about German military victories in the early years of World War II, remarked: "It was with unrivaled pride that we saw the world. We were somebody." As it turned out, just a few years later, the "thousand-year Reich" lay in ashes.

War can also be undertaken to slough off a stagnant identity in a kind of tacit collective suicide. Laurens Van der Post, who spent World War II in a Japanese prison, wrote of his captors, "The war was...an instinctive search for renewal by destroying a past they could not escape except through the disaster of utter collective defeat."

Whatever its genesis, war between sovereign states has grave repercussions for statesmen and citizens alike. During World War I, the French Prime Minister Clemenceau said, "War is much too serious a matter to be entrusted to the military." In this famous pronouncement, he was in fact laying his own claim to ultimate authority over war policy. He was attempting to limit the role of ranking officers in military decisions. Subordination of military to civilian authority is a landmark in the struggle to circumscribe the scope of rank.

During the Cold War, the Bomb made nobodies of everybody. As a consequence, questions of war and peace became everybody's business,

not just that of the politicians. Foreign affairs became too important to be left to professional diplomats, and another Clemenceau-like shifting of responsibility was called for. We nobodies had to get into the game, welcome or not. The commoners of the world — business people, travelers, tourists, students — had to go out and create, through personal relationships with their overseas counterparts, a post-Cold War context and climate that would persuade government officials on both sides that arms limitation was feasible and prudent.

As the nuclear arms race intensified, thousands of ordinary people on both sides of the Iron Curtain became involved in this endeavor. Gaining the name “citizen diplomacy,” it marked the beginnings of a global citizenry wherein nobodies stopped ceding responsibility for world affairs to a *de facto* transnational oligarchy and instead took it upon themselves. In the spirit of Clemenceau’s remark, their credo was, “War is much too serious to be entrusted to statesmen.”

Unaffiliated, globally disenfranchised citizens now have a powerful new organizing tool in the Internet, but in the dark days of the Cold War, you pretty much had to go there in person if you wanted to interact with individuals of the Soviet Union. In 1968, I made such a visit to Moscow and Leningrad, and like all visitors in those days, was shepherded around by an Intourist guide. Her answers to my questions were not reassuring. For example, to one about how mental illness was treated in Soviet society, she replied, “There is no mental illness under communism. Mental illness is a by-product of capitalism.” Yet everyone knew at the time that dissenters were incarcerated in psychiatric hospitals.

After many such experiences in which the realities of myself and my hosts seemed to differ so radically, the words of the Russian writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn came to mind: “If decade after decade the truth cannot be told, ... one’s fellow countrymen become harder to understand than Martians.” Indeed, the question that stuck in my mind after this trip was, “Are the Russians Martians?”

During the Cold War, I traveled frequently to the Soviet Union, twice taking the Trans-Siberian railway across the country with my family, and the “Martian question” continued to haunt me. It took more than a decade for me to answer it to my satisfaction.

Stereotyping others is incompatible with according them equal dignity. Stereotypes are the enemy of respect and recognition. When Cold War citizen diplomats from both sides of the Iron Curtain got to know each other as individuals, the mutual stereotyping that helped sustain the conflict began to crumble.

In retrospect, I see this kind of citizen diplomacy as a kind of performance art, in which our personal presence gave testimony to the fact that the lives of real people were at stake. Taking my wife and one-year-old to a talk I gave at the Institute for the Study of the USA and Canada did more to convey this to my Soviet hosts than anything I said in my speech.

Performance art and political activism are actually close cousins. Rosa Parks, in the role of civil rights activist, triggered a bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama; the dramatic impact of her protest stirred the civil rights movement nationwide. A few years later Tommie Smith and John Carlos, by raising their gloved fists in the black power salute on the victory stand at the Mexico City Olympics, signaled the end of black obeisance to the world. To some, their gesture was outrageous insubordination — to others, an echo of the “Don’t Tread On Me” emblazoned on the first official American flag in 1775. In the same spirit, one of the most enduring images of the twentieth century was the anonymous man in a white shirt with shopping bags facing down a tank in Tiananmen Square in Beijing in 1989. Such dramatic actions against the abuse of rank leave indelible marks on our collective psyche, and play a crucial part in precipitating and consolidating psycho-tectonic shifts.

Performance art makes the invisible visible. Invisible, you’re a nobody; visible, you can stand for a cause that others will join. Visibility is the first step toward mutual recognition and equality of dignity. These assuage the recognition disorder that, left untreated, poses the threat of violence, even war.

Citizen diplomacy is oversimplified if it’s seen only as a quest for peace. To those who live with injustice, peace means a continuation of their suffering. Rather than make peace a goal in itself, citizen diplomats in the U.S. and their counterparts in Europe and the USSR aimed to make war unattractive and unnecessary. They offered another way to get

what warmongers have always promised — recognition, respect, and dignity. You can't put war out of business with peace alone; after a while, that will prove boring and the war party will regain its hold. But you *can* displace war by offering people a "better game." That game is the activist one of mutual recognition.

It turns out that what people need and want is not to dominate others, but to be recognized by them. Recognition is not in finite supply; it's unlimited. The getting-to-know-you game is not a zero-sum game — that is, one in which your loss equals my gain, and vice versa. Rather it's what is known in mathematics as a non-zero-sum game — one in which *both* players can end up better off than they began. Recognizing another person or another nation does not reduce the recognition they give you. The end of the Cold War brought recognition to both sides. Recognizing the Russians did not diminish Americans.

It took a decade — one during which I lost my somebody status and experienced being a nobody — for me to connect the dots. They led from the humiliations I witnessed and experienced as a child in the classroom, to the identity-based movements of the sixties, to the realization that in the Cold War nuclear standoff, until we took diplomacy into our own hands, we the people were not citizens — we were ciphers. When the pieces of the puzzle finally came together, they took the form of a face, an arrogant condescending face — the face of rankism.

The late twentieth century is likely to appear in retrospect as the point at which the pursuit of national aggrandizement by violent means lost its sanction. While this reversal in attitude has not yet seen the end of war, in the aftermath of the Cold War the onus of justification is now on would-be aggressors. With every passing decade, war between nations becomes a less defensible option.

One word of caution is in order. It is in the nature of contests for rank and recognition that either side can unilaterally choose to ignore the rules, and may be tempted to do so if it thinks it can get away with it. This means we need always be ready to meet such opponents — whether a nation threatening war, a group threatening terrorism, or an individual threatening crime — in a cruder form of contest. At the same time, we should welcome potential adversaries wanting to engage in more evolved, less violent forms of competition.

With the passage of enough time, reversion to brute force will become less likely, but never impossible. To keep this option from being too tempting, a superior power willing and able to dominate rule-breakers must be kept in readiness and in sight — as police are used to discourage crime, and armed forces to deter attack.

The best way to prevent violence, however, is to make the new game attractive, fair, and open to all players. The more this is done, the more demagogic appeals for primitive aggression will fall on deaf ears, and the more relapses into crime, terrorism, and war will diminish, perhaps to the vanishing point.

People give up power voluntarily only to grasp greater power. People abandon a familiar game only to take up a better one. With the advent of weapons of mass destruction, the anvil of war has become less and less available for forging national identities. The game of international recognition that is taking shape in the post-Cold War era is indeed a better game than war. Recognition remains a primary motivation, but the recognition sought is mutual, among peers, not the obeisance paid by the vanquished to a victor. Compared to this new game, the old one looks like a bloodthirsty pirate tale; compared to dialogues now developing, the propaganda of the past sounds like the braggadocio of adolescents. As the English poet William Cowper (1731–1800) wrote:

*But war's a game, which,
Were their subjects wise,
Kings would not play at.*

National Security in the Twenty-First Century

In the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks, sympathizers filled the streets in third world cities. Their demonstrations are reminiscent of civil rights protests in America in the 1960s.

Then, African-Americans were on the march. Campuses seethed, violence mounted, cities were torched. At first, agitators were depicted as malcontents and hooligans; their leaders were characterized as madmen and evildoers. But as millions of Americans watched on

television, it soon became clear that in addition to the vast majority of black Americans, a growing number of whites sympathized with their cause.

Confronted with a grave threat to national unity, Americans realized that the problem lay not with the demonstrators, but rather with the racism that fueled their outrage. What the vast majority of African-Americans wanted was not, as some charged, to substitute black rule for white. Neither was it to set up their own separate state. They simply wanted to end second-class citizenship and to have a fair chance at the American dream.

Within a decade, a number of fundamental policy changes had been made. The administration of law and order was integrated; job discrimination was outlawed; segregation of public facilities was ended; the number of minority students in higher education was increased tenfold, thus providing entrée to the professions. Discrimination in housing became illegal; voting rights were guaranteed. Attitudinal changes accompanied the political. By the 1970s, it had become an impediment to career advancement to be known as a racist.

In the end, a half-dozen major changes sufficed to pry open doors that had long been closed to African-Americans. Once Americans opted for inclusion, the protests subsided. Demagogues of both the left and the right — black radicals and white extremists — lost their audience and their influence. Two generations later, racism, which long enjoyed the support of the silent majority, is in disrepute.

The terrorists who target America do not lack for sympathizers. That they live in Jakarta, Karachi, Damascus, and Cairo provides small comfort in a world shrunk by technology and ease of travel.

This time the cause of popular unrest is not racial injustice. Nor, despite the fact that the marchers are primarily Muslims, is it religion. Ironically, America stands for religious tolerance, while the protesters and their leaders champion religious conformity.

Differences notwithstanding, there is one unmistakable parallel between the demonstrations of the sixties and those around the world today: the majority of the participants are disenfranchised and dispossessed. They resent the lack of opportunity to make something of themselves, and hold America responsible for their predicament.

Whether we are at fault for disillusionment in the third world is arguable. What is not in dispute is that the lives of millions of young people in these regions are going to waste. Protesters are trying to tell us this in the only way they can. If their desperation does not elicit our sympathy, it should at least alert us to danger, because for the young, the step from desperation to desperado is a short one.

America has long been regarded everywhere as a land of opportunity. With the end of the Cold War, it also became the one and only superpower. As third world youth feel their lives slipping away, it's understandable that they hold accountable the nation they see as all-powerful, and that their initial admiration turns quickly to disappointment and then hate.

To help the dispossessed achieve meaningful lives, we have to find a way to do internationally what we did domestically in the 1960s. Facing increasingly violent civil rights protests, we identified and eliminated racial barriers to opportunity and participation. As despair lifted, militancy subsided. Opportunity worked then, and it will work again. Opportunity is all that ever works.

Second only to the need for food and shelter, people crave a chance to contribute, and to gain recognition for their contributions. As part of a commitment to realizing this goal universally, why not subject our foreign policies to a simple test: do they further equal opportunity both at home *and abroad*? Nothing would serve our long-range interests more than helping the citizens of developing nations throw off futility and despair. Nothing less will end the appeal of demagogues who preach violence, often for their own purposes. We can only stop the threat of terrorism by lifting the gloom which predisposes people to support it.

Barriers to equal opportunity take the form of rankism. Put the other way around, a recipe for creating opportunity worldwide is to identify and eliminate abuses of rank. This will not be easy, but it is possible. For us to regain a sense of security, it is now also necessary.

When a few can terrorize a superpower, a good offense is no longer an adequate defense. It becomes equally important to avoid giving offense. This does not mean ingratiating ourselves with others or condoning violence; but it does mean scrupulously respecting their

dignity and adopting policies that promote opportunity for them as well as ourselves.

As mounting civil disobedience in the sixties brought home the political and social costs of racism, so does terrorism now announce the cost of rankism. Nothing can justify the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Terrorism is an arrogation of power so horrific that, to justify their deeds, perpetrators feel they must represent themselves as doing God's work. Closer examination usually reveals that the leaders of terrorist movements harbor personal political ambitions in their countries of origin. Faced with such deceit and hubris, we have no choice but to do what we can to identify and incapacitate known offenders, in hopes of preventing future attacks. It was likewise necessary to pursue the arsonists who put the torch to Detroit and Los Angeles in the sixties.

But law enforcement and counterintelligence constitute only half a policy — the defensive half. While actively pursuing terrorists, Western governments must also become pro-active by working to alleviate the futility and suffering of life in the world's poorest nations.

No people has ever been willing to compromise its dignity, except as a temporizing tactic. Dignity is sacrosanct, and when it is abrogated, there is a heavy price to pay. As we have seen, indignity in the family stunts personal growth; in the schools, it sabotages learning; on the job, it taxes productivity. Likewise, in international relations, indignity threatens peace and undercuts development and global prosperity.

While a specific act of terror has many complex causes, there can be little doubt that international rankism is one of the factors that creates a political climate hospitable to those who commit it. Modern technology, which creates weapons of mass destruction and places them within the reach of many, now makes the price of international rankism prohibitive.

How to Win Respect and Safeguard Dignity

This section explores what individuals can do to win respect and safeguard their dignity without insulting that of others. Rather than generalize, I am going to let seven individuals describe their encounters