

New America we need to take bold reformist steps into the future now, not only in education but in business, and in politics, otherwise our great experiment will flounder. Our founding fathers foresaw that from time to time pursuit of our democratic ideals would bring forth great changes that would in turn call for audacity and mettle. We are at such a point in our history.

"The tree of liberty," Jefferson once wrote, "must be refreshed from time to time... "to which he added" a little revolution now and then is a good thing, as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical."

Thank you.

## *Inventing a New America*



by  
*Modesto A. Maidique*  
*President*

*Florida International University*

## ***Inventing a New America***

The twentieth century has been a century of change punctuated by a score of momentous events: Two world wars, the atomic bomb, the October revolution in Russia and, more recently, the crumbling of the Berlin Wall.

But alongside with these headline grabbing developments some quiet, yet basic changes have occurred in our nation during this century which, in the long run, will alter the nature of our republic in a fundamental way, creating both new opportunities as well as new challenges.

For almost a century and half our thinking about America has been nurtured by the thought and the writings of our nation's great French biographer, Alexis de Tocqueville, the author of the famed Democracy in America. And indeed, during the century that followed the publication of de Tocqueville's great work, no other author's pages were filled with more accurate commentary and perceptive insights.

The second half of the 20th century has changed all that. A century and half ago de Tocqueville wrote, "Almost all the inhabitants of the territory of the Union are the descendants of a common stock; they speak the same language, they worship God in the same manner and they are affected by the same physical causes." Does this sound like the America we live in today?

One hundred and fifty years after de Tocqueville we live in an America of diversity that is the culmination of what de Tocqueville said was our nation's true greatness: its laws, its values and its customs. The America of 1990 is the logical result of putting into practice the words of the founding fathers that all men are created equal, their belief in unfettered freedom to create the new, and to trade through free markets.

These broad principles have ultimately led to five overall trends that have shaped the New America:

1. The liberation of women (probably the most important development of the 20th century).
2. The enfranchisement of blacks and other minorities.
3. A dramatic shift in immigration patterns, from predominantly European, to Asian and Latin American.

4. The integration of the American economy into the global economy.
5. The information technology revolution.

Each of these changes is consistent with fundamental American principles. Each on its own right is formidable. All occurred largely during the last half century. Together they have posed challenges to our educational, business and government sectors that we have not yet learned to cope with. Therein lies the challenge to our America, the New America. Lets take women first, for in no other dimension has American society changed more dramatically in the 20th century.

### **I. Women**

In the early years of the 20th century women worked at home and did not have the right to vote. It wasn't until shortly after World War I that "universal" suffrage included both sexes. Now there are almost ten million more eligible women voters than men. And, yes, a larger percentage of women register, and vote, than men.

As recently as 1940, few women worked outside the home and three out of five of those that did were single, widowed or divorced. By 1988 the situation had changed radically. The number of working women had quadrupled to 54M. Working women now account for 45% of the labor force. And the marital ratio has been inverted: now three of five working women are married.

Meanwhile, the percentage of men in the labor force was declining. In 1955, 85% of adult men were in the labor force. By 1987, this percentage had dropped to 76%. By the end of the century, demographers project that this percentage will continue to decline to about 70% while the percentage of working women will continue to rise from the current 60% to about the same percentage as men.

Shortly after the turn of the century, women will outnumber men both at the voting booth as well as the workplace. The New America will be a nation with a government elected by women and factories and businesses staffed by women. But I cannot assure that this will be the kinder and gentler America that George Bush has been referring to!

## II. Afro-Americans

The incorporation of Blacks into the American mainstream has been just as dramatic, although the absolute numbers are smaller. From an ethical point of view, however, the changes have been just as important.

In theory, the XVth Amendment to the Constitution gave Black Americans the right to vote, but it took almost another century for Congress, prodded by the Civil Rights Movement, to outlaw other barriers, such as the poll tax. The Voting Rights Act, and related legislation, swelled the ranks of Black voters. In the southern states, registration of Afro-Americans rose exponentially, from 150,000 in 1940 to almost 6M in 1990; a 40 times increase in the last half century.

This dramatic rise in registered voters had major consequences. During the same 50 year span, the number of black elected officials rose from a total of 33, nationwide, to well over 6,000 in 1990, including the governor of Virginia. Up to the 1960's, there wasn't a single Black mayor in America; by the late 1980's, there were nearly 300 Black mayors, including the mayor of New York.

In 1941, there was one Black U.S. Congressman. In 1985, the Black Congressional caucus had 20 members. A similar, and predictable, explosion occurred in judicial appointments. Whereas in 1940 there was one black federal judge by 1990 that number had increased one hundred fold. During this period the number of black delegates to the Democratic National Convention increased 63 fold from 11 in 1940 to 697 in 1984.

As in the case of women, the speed with which those changes occurred are no less remarkable than the actual numbers involved. All of this, however, is not to say that the glass is now full, for Black Americans, or even that it is being filled at their same dazzling rates. Indeed, if we required any reminder of the great disparities which still exist, we need look no further than income differences between black families and white families.

In the 1960's black families earned about 57% of what white families earned; in the 80's the difference remained as great. My objective here, however, is simply to point out another major revolution in the works, destined to changing forever the American political and social landscape.

30M Afro-Americans have become an integral part of American political life, especially in urban settings. But the revolution didn't stop there. The Voting

Rights Act and other Civil Rights legislation had opened the door wide for other minorities as well: Hispanics, Asian Americans and American Indians. While, nationwide, Hispanics lag Afro-Americans in their political participation, if Greater Miami is any guide to what will happen, it won't be long before the nation's 20M Hispanics will be full partners in shaping the future of the American democracy.

If you add 30M Afro-Americans and 20M Hispanics to over 120M women and correct for double counting, you wind up with a total of 150M relatively recently enfranchised Americans. Out of a population of 240M!

## III. Immigrants

This trend towards diversity has been reinforced during the last 25 years by a dramatic shift in immigration patterns. During the early part of the 20th century, immigration was voluminous, reaching up to 40% of population growth in the first decade of the century. But it was also relatively homogeneous.

Four out of five immigrants were European with the Germans, British and Italians topping the list. During the Great Depression, immigration slowed down to a halt, but immigration as a percentage of population began to rise rapidly in the postwar era, reaching 30% of population growth in the 80's. Except, now the places of origin had changed radically, with four out of five immigrants hailing from Latin America and Asia. Mexico, the Philippines and China now top the list.

During the 1980-1987 period, over 3M Latin Americans and Asians emigrated to the United States. During the same period, less than one half million Europeans settled in the country.

These new arrivals further emphasized the diversity of the New America, and simultaneously attested to the growing interdependence of the world of nations. But it wasn't only people that moved rapidly across boundaries in the late 20th century, goods and services did also.

## IV. The Global Economy

For much of its history, the U.S. behaved like a world nation, self sufficient in virtually all goods, and engaged in only limited international trade. At the height of the Civil Rights Movement in 1965, the U.S. imported only \$25B, roughly equally divided between raw materials and manufactured products. In 1987, after two oil shocks and the rise of Europe and Japan, U.S. imports

had increased twenty fold to \$565B.

To put this in perspective, the U.S. now imports the equivalent of the GNP of Britain, that is, one Britain, while it exports about one Canada, or \$424B. You might have noticed from these numbers that we currently import a lot more than we export, about \$150B worth. Following our country analogy, that's somewhat more than one Sweden.

## V. The Information Revolution

The fifth and final trend that I would like to explore with you today is the technological revolution that has functioned as an invisible hand shaping much of what has happened in the 20th century, especially its later half. Before World War II, only half a century ago, there were no commercial televisions or computers (not to mention personal computers), no modems, no satellites, no xerox copiers, no VCR's, no cable T.V., no microchips, no microwave ovens and no fax machines.

Phones, an old appliance, doubled in number over the past twenty years to handle the demands placed on them by other devices such as the fax machine, a curiosity in the 70's that now is becoming as ubiquitous as the xerox machine. Today, 6M fax machines interconnect nations and continents, and their numbers are exploding geometrically.

All of these devices are bringing the world together in ways that we could have hardly anticipated. Culture now travels faster than ever throughout the New America and throughout the world. When a solitary man confronts three army tanks in Tiananmen Square, or Rumanian security forces massacre crowds of citizens, or Noriega's security men flog a vice-presidential candidate, the echo is heard instantly and worldwide through satellite transmission and 24 hour cable TV.

Indeed, I impute much of what has happened in Eastern Europe and what is happening in Russia to the invisible, secular hand of information technology, a wave of progress that is leaving democracy and freedom in its wake.

## VI. Other Trends

Other forces such as urbanization, the recovery of Europe, the rise of Japan, a half a century of freedom from World War, the explosion of consumer credit, the pill, Vietnam and its aftermath, Watergate, the assassinations of Kennedy and King, and glasnost and perestroika, to mention only a few,

have also contributed, in addition to the five basic trends I've discussed today, to shape the New America.

Our New America is a more diverse America better connected to its people and better connected to the world through population, trade and information flows. This New America is perhaps quite different than that which the founding fathers envisioned, but it is true to their principles, the result of extrapolating into the 21st century the values laid down in the 18th century and truly implemented only during the last century of the republic.

## VII. The Resource Crisis

Pursuit of American values conjugated with technological progress has made us the richest, the freest and the most powerful nation on earth. On the aggregate, we are strong and healthy, but the most superficial examination of our New America reveals a score of chronic problems:

the drug epidemic, urban crime, widespread political corruption, loss of our competitive edge, the threat of a new European Common Market expanded to include Eastern Europe and Russia, the Japan led Pacific Rim challenge, the breakdown of the American family, and perhaps the most vexing of all, the decline of our K - 12 educational system.

All of these trends reflect in one way or another an ever-growing disparity between what we as a nation can afford to accomplish and what we need to accomplish.

Virtually every facet of our republic is currently suffering or will shortly suffer from a shortage of resources.

- medicare, providing health care for the aged faces a far worse problem than did the social security system before it was restored in 1983-- medicare will require an additional \$27B per year within a few years-- and we can't afford it.

- we need billions more for assistance to make our 25M citizens who are functionally illiterate more productive on the work-site-- and we can't afford it.

- we need resources to fight AIDS, cancer and other dreaded diseases--and we can't afford it.

☛ we need resources to discharge the Federal obligations incurred through the actions of certain institutions of the Savings and Loan industry - and its not clear we can afford it.

☛ we need resources for key industries in our nation calling for support to help make them competitive again, (for example the electronics and manufacturing sector) and although these industries could benefit from restructuring and other non-monetary modifications, addressing those needs which are in the national interest will require extensive investment -- and we're unsure if we can afford it.

☛ and we desperately need resources to fight the newest scourge of our planet: acid rain, ozone layer depletion and air and water pollution -- and we must afford it!

☛ and we need resources to help support the new democracies which are sprouting all over the world: In Poland, in Panama, in Nicaragua. They will fail if we let them down. And the world can't afford it.

☛ we need resources to address the myriad of problems and unmet needs confronting our nation; the list is long, the resources limited and more than ever before we need to sort those which we must afford from those whose resolution must unfortunately be delayed.

### **VIII. Education**

A broad analysis of what George Cabot Lodge has called "the American malaise" is beyond this presentation, but let us examine one factor that undergirds all the others that I have mentioned, education.

No nation, least of all one with claims to international leadership can be a world power without a world class educational system. Yet, every one of the trends I've discussed today relates to the challenges confronting our educational system.

First, many of the gifted women that once might have devoted their lives to education have now gone on to pursue careers now available in medicine, law, business and engineering. In Florida alone we will need about ten thousand new teachers each year throughout the ninety's. Our Florida universities will graduate about one third of that number so we will be competing nationally for a sizeable number each year, at a time when the number of those entering the profession is not projected to grow.

Quality education begins with the teacher. If we don't start with the best people, it is unlikely that any other projected reform will have any impact at all.

The next two trends I spoke of, related to the incorporation of Blacks into the American mainstream, and the shift in immigration patterns. Both of these phenomena relate directly to the challenges confronting our schools. Afro Americans are rightfully demanding attention with the problems they face as they prepare for the new workplace realities... And the schools are coping to deliver, but are not even close to a workable solution. The dropout rates soar for Blacks and for the new immigrants as well, coping as they are with the challengers of learning a whole new way of life.

And to make matters worse, this is happening at a time when the 4th trend, information revolution, is requiring that the achievement level of our graduates be higher than ever. A California study indicates that by the turn of the century about one third of all jobs in that state will be college level jobs.

By that time, three out of five college age Californians will be Hispanics, Asians or Afro-Americans. It wasn't enough to enfranchise our minorities and our immigrants. We have to educate them if the dream of the New America is to become a reality.

But perhaps the trend that is most irritating is the performance of our competitors in the global economy. By most academic measures, American children are outperformed, not only by our traditional global competitors such as Germany and Japan, but also by South Korean, Taiwanese and East European children.

The crisis in our educational system is real and its going to continue to worsen until we act decisively to do something about it. The most recent national assessment in reading and writing issued in January of 1990 concluded there has been no progress for White, non-Hispanic students in these areas over the past ten years. No progress!

Though for Blacks and Hispanics there was considerable progress, these groups are still significantly below their white counterparts. For example while close to half of white, non-Hispanic students were found to read at or above the "adept" level, only about one quarter of Blacks and one-quarter of Hispanics attained this level of competence.

Depending on whose statistics you believe anywhere from one-quarter to one-half of our students do not graduate from high school. Even many high school graduates are not competent. Miami-Dade Community College, our nation's largest two-year college reports that well over 50% of its entering students require remedial work. This is not a local problem.

The Chronicle of Higher Education reports that only 15% of college students complete their work in four years. Many start and never finish. We must work together to improve the educational system.

### IX. A Plan of Action

No wonder educational reformers are talking about the need for a revolution in education. Just what do we, as a nation, need to do?

First, we need to find the will and the resources to give every American child - black, hispanic, asian or white an equal headstart. The probability of academic success is determined very early in life. It's part of a child's psychic makeup. Success is attitude along with aptitude. Some steps are being made in this direction. Based on research demonstrating the effectiveness of early intervention, plans call for giving more students this opportunity.

Second, we need to restructure our schools, and alter bureaucracies that stifle them, and in so doing empower teachers, parents and principals to innovate. For this change to have an impact parents, teachers and business leaders, must work together at the local community level to help our schools become more responsive. When parents care schools responds. All concerned need to be prepared to work together at this level.

Third, we need to professionalize the teaching profession by giving teachers greater autonomy, elevating our expectations for them and compensating them accordingly. Teacher empowerment will work when we reward our faculty accordingly and hold them to high standards of performance.

Fourth, we need to set national standards for academic performance and hold students, teachers and principals strictly accountable. Accountability in education means that we must expect education personnel to deliver, rewarding those who do and helping those who don't. It means setting both input and output goals and doing some hard thinking about how to set fair standards.

Fifth, we need to work hard to ensure that a significant portion of the "Peace Dividend" is allocated to education. No other action could so dramatically alter our nation's future. This is not a situation where there is a choice -- there is none, other than the sure decline of our economic power. Unless and until we make the economic commitment necessary to upgrade our educational systems, everything else we do as a nation will be to no avail. It's that vital to our future as a nation.

Finally, I think its time we began to re-emphasize values in our schools, that we teach youngsters to love, respect and understand the democratic values that have made our nation great.

### X. Conclusion

If it sounds like I am calling for a revolution in the way we fund, structure, staff and design and conceptualize our schools, you're hearing me right. How else can our educational system cope with the multiple revolutions that have characterized the 20th century?

If it sounds like I'm calling for a strong national movement in education -- you're hearing me right. Just as those who hold our environment dear to their hearts have marshalled their forces and caused all of us to put ecology issues on the front burner, those of us involved in education, and that means everyone here today, in one way or another **MUST** find ways and means to make education and educational improvement the number one issue in our country. We're learning we can put out the fires in the rainforest with collective action; we can stop wars with collective action; we can empower forgotten minorities with collective action; we need the same spirit and drive to light the fires of educational change and improvement, and to keep those fires burning. The stakes are just as high.

Lester Thurow, Dean of the Sloan School of Management at MIT, puts it this way.

*"We all know that we should consume less and invest more in education, research and development, plants and equipment, and infrastructure. But we don't. We all know that the American financial system places a dangerous emphasis on short-term profits. But we don't change the system."*

Yet we must change the system. If we are to reach the promised land of the