

# Egalitarianism: The New Torture Rack

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Imagine the following Academy Award ceremony. There are no awards for best picture or best actor. Instead, every picture gets a certificate and every actor receives a prize. That is not an awards ceremony, you say? So it isn't. But it is an egalitarian's dream--and an achiever's torment.

An egalitarian wants equality, not under the law, but in all practical consequences: equality of income, of praise and blame, of rewards and punishments. He derides, as "elitist" and individualistic, all rankings, evaluations, competitions. Said Richard Rodzinski, executive director of the Van Cliburn Piano Competition: "We must stamp out the concept of 'better.' It should always be understood that we're not saying number one is better than number two."

At the Iowa State Fair this year, the 4-H Club gave 3,500 competitors identical multicolored ribbons, in lieu of first-, second- and third-place ribbons. Why? Because it didn't want to single out any one entrant as more deserving than another.

That some people are exceptional--that some have more intelligence, are more beautiful or work harder than others--is a threat to egalitarians. Talent and ability create inequality. To rectify this supposed injustice, we are told to sacrifice the able to the unable. Egalitarianism demands the punishment and envy of anyone who is better than someone else at anything. We must tear down the competent and the strong--raze them to the level of the incompetent and the weak. We must worship a zero and sneer at a creator.

Feminists thus smear fashion models for being more beautiful than ordinary women. Liberal commentators chastise Americans for being proud that our Olympic athletes won more medals than did other athletes. Industrial giants, such as Bill Gates, are vilified for making "too much" money. And America's greatest companies are persecuted by the Justice Department's Antitrust Division for having better management, and thereby a larger market share, than does the competition.

The egalitarian's hatred of excellence has metastasized throughout the culture. In order to level everyone down to the lowest common denominator, egalitarians sacrifice the achiever. Nowhere is this more dramatic--and tragic--than in education.

In the past, educators nurtured students of high intelligence. Such students were showered with magnet schools, accelerated curricula, individual attention and academic merits. Now, though, the entire focus has shifted. Education today cripples the bright and inquisitive child by ignoring him--by not spending time and money developing his superior ability. In the name of not rewarding brains, the attention is now on students who are unable or unwilling to learn. For example, the state of New York spends one-quarter of its budget on slow learners.

To accommodate the slowest learners, the entire K-12 curriculum has been "dumbed down." And high schools on both coasts are dispensing with awards honoring top

seniors. They don't select "the most likely to succeed" or the "most talented." These schools no longer offer class rankings, nor do they select a class valedictorian. In today's age of achievement-hatred, it is okay to spend millions on playground psychopaths. But it is considered morally low to honor a bright student.

If you have ever wondered why the number of great artists, intellectuals and achievers has dwindled, you should blame egalitarianism.

And you should seek out a cure--a view of justice which tells you to evaluate and reward a man based on his talents. Yes it is true that some people are born with greater natural endowments. But it is also true that it requires choices, effort and thinking to develop endowments into talents. Michael Jordan was born with fabulous athletic potential. But it took years of excruciating effort to hone that potential into masterful skills. Thomas Edison was born with great native intelligence. But the knowledge required to create unprecedented inventions was the result of his heroic mental effort. Other inventors gave up when problems became intractable. But Edison developed the courage and pit-bull determination to persevere.

What would happen to a Thomas Edison today? If he survived school with his mind intact, he would be shackled by government regulators. His wealth would be confiscated by the IRS. He would be accused of "unfair competition" for inventing so many more products than his competitors. And university professors would get tenure arguing that a wino is his moral equivalent.

Is it any mystery why there isn't more talent in the world today?