WHY DON’T WE SUPPORT EDUCATION

Americans are neither as hungry nor as poor as they once were and it has dampened their ambition and their anxieties and made education less of a priority.

American exceptionalism assumes we are the best, we are dominant, and we will remain so regardless of the quality of our education system.

American culture cheers the self-made man/woman and considers education only a part, often a small part, of that success model. Money, the defining measure of American success, is not closely linked to education level in American beliefs regardless of the actual link. Immigrants are the exception to this belief system as well as certain ethnic groups.

Americans do not have a compelling cultural belief in anything but minimal education and are, in many contexts, anti intellectual. Our preferred model for leaders is the warrior or, at the minimum, the fighter. We are uncomfortable or even hostile to serious, deliberative, debate and process.

Americans are ego-centric versus socio-centric in their world view and prefer individual success, and personal independence to the general good. This shifts dramatically in crisis. But on an everyday basis we find it hard to give up our individual gains or freedoms for the benefit of the larger community.

We resist sharing with or giving to those with whom we have small differences (ethnicity, class, citizenship, religion, etc.)

Our puritan ethic foundation disdains individuals who need help or do not take sufficient responsibility for their lives or families. “Let them sink or swim on their own” is the preference for a significant number of American voters.

There is resistance to educating the children of “others.” They are not our children, they are not even like us and why should we educate them? We take care of our own.

Many Americans are disaffected, they just don’t care much about what happens as they can feed and clothe themselves without participation in the larger society. Seniors are increasingly becoming part of this detached group. Others may say, “I don’t have time to think or care about education,” because of the increasing speed and complexity of their lives.

There is a minority that does not want to educate groups that they do not want to give power to. We still have people in power who see a lack of education as a way to weaken what they consider undesirables. They prefer to create private schools that can exclude certain children.

There are groups of Americans, usually religious, who prefer to have full control over the education of their children. Control over their children’s access to information and society ensures that their group continues through succeeding generations. There is a genuine fear of losing their children to a corrupt world.

There are many communities that have given up on or have been traumatized by their education systems, ex. Detroit. Desegregation and incompetent staff have shattered their belief that education is even available for them.

The teachers unions have undermined the support for education in some communities as citizens believe that union priorities are in direct conflict with quality education.

Education is a low priority even for those who support it because military defense, lower taxes, transportation, finance, consumerism, etc. have higher priorities in American culture.