

The Collective American Consciousness: America is to be Judged by its Citizens, not its Politicians...

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America is to be judged by its citizens, not its politicians. But if Americans lose contact with one another; substitute real, tangible realities with virtual ones projected on internet and television screens; refuse to engage in the democratic process and choose passivity over involvement, nihilism over hope, fatalism over self-determination; remain complacent about if not ignorant of US actions and wars in the world; adopt definitions of themselves that are crafted by self-serving special interests, profiteers or merchants of war and hate running now for president from both political parties, they lose all concepts of who they are, what they stand for, and what really constitutes American values.

As it stands, Americans are on the cusp of recognizing that they are losing their historic identity, or the one they embraced before 9/11.

In the collective American consciousness questing for material objects, success, fame, wealth, property and stock equities, together with a megalomaniacal drive for Empire to dominate a world now splitting itself into East and West, there remains no public figure speaking for “everyone”; for unity through diversity; for peace; for the poor, homeless, disabled and elderly; for children and young people who will inherit a financially bankrupt nation that cheerleads its populist billionaires who take all, avoid taxes, give little back, blame the scapegoat, and ignore the plight of others, particularly the plight of young generations who will inherit it all as they advance into tomorrow’s leadership positions. Who speaks for them?

Almost unconsciously, Americans salute a market-centric culture unaware it is controlled by Wall Street, bond traders, speculators, hedge funds and enormous multinational corporations and banking hegemony. Silicon Valley young technocratic tycoons provide proof of American superiority and exceptionalism and the momentous rewards capitalism bestows. The rewards of capitalism, however, go to the few and fewer and what are concealed in a sea of commercials and seamless hype are what many young people should already know; for during a majority of their years as mature adults America has been a nation of non-stop endless wars; has become the largest debtor nation in the world – debt that can’t be repaid and probably won’t be repaid. It has devolved into waves of police-sanctioned violence and murders, socially damaging hate-groups and vicious political vitriol. When done in the name of competition and profits, it legally sanctions illegalities.

Young people have learned privacy is non-existent and social interactions take place using costly digital devices connected through toll booths owned by corporate networks behind whose one-way mirror sit both government and mega-corporations amassing personal information, biometrics, opinions, attitudes, consumer behavior, political affiliations, friendships, credit and banking details, and their psychographic profiles for private profit

and for social and government behavior-mod programs and social engineering.

Many have learned a stable job of 40 hours per week with benefits, sick pay and vacation time is a luxury afforded a few. Some have learned to live at home with mom and dad at age 25 because they can't afford high rents at meager wages, let alone purchase a home. Some will live through decades of paying-off college loans that delivered greater debt peonage than employment opportunity. They have seen how credit is mistakenly viewed as an asset and used to salvage households that have undergone decades of stagnant wages. They have seen benefits accrue in accumulation of wealth for employers, corporations and investment banks.

Should they ever run for president, they know they will have to agree to kill "innocent people and children", conduct drone operations on "targeted assassination" lists, approve and expand America's seamless dragnet surveillance state, enlist people their age to die for wars they had no say in and no true understand of. If young people think the American Dream is over and act apart and clustered together in a swarm, they do so for good reasons: there are no public figures offsetting the "post 9/11 normal" with incisive alternatives, real debate, knowledgeable dissent and penetrative truths about the causes underlying America's many imbroglios. It should be no surprise that most millennials didn't vote in 2014 (87% stayed home).

But the "9/11 normal" in this country is not the normal I knew, is not the America that weaned me, is not the normal I wish to live under or see young people struggle with in order to survive. If any group is blameless in causing any one problem now afflicting America, it is they. But they are too young to have known a better time; some can't imagine one; many have relegated America before 9/11 to the history books! This is how it seems for a millennial.

My employee was neither normal nor "new normal", but an example of what UK economist Guy Standing calls "The Precariat: The New Dangerous Generation". [1] This self-defined uneducated, politically unaware person who worked for me over five years suddenly presented a dangerous and threatening remark recently. Knowing she cannot find Chicago on the map; knowing she is encircled by friends and family with little grasp of government, American history or the democratic process, she asked me to define a "white supremacist", which I did in detail. Knowing she defines African-Americans as "dem people" and everything she hears about President Obama is that he's "gonna take guns away", I proceeded cautiously. At the finish, she replied to my explanation with emphatically shocking defiance. She shouted back ferociously: "Obama should be assassinated!"

Keeping calm, I asked why he should be assassinated? "Because he's not good for America," she quipped. "Why isn't he good?" I asked. She looked up and down, rolled her eyes, looked up and down and with a coy self-effacing smile beamed, "Gee, I don't know."

Her supervisor didn't find the remark troublesome but did cite her for talking politics to a client and pulled her from my account. "You finally got to see who and what she really is," stressed the supervisor. Later, in conversation, a police chief told me her inflammatory statement was to be considered a "form of free speech"; and I should "consider the source". I replied that for many people who lived through three assassinations in the 1960s, a call for the killing of a president is not to be defended as free speech or viewed lightly. If a majority of Americans do find it defensible, America is in far worse shape today than at any other time in my 68 years, I answered. Although this worker is far from committing such an act,

how many people does she represent who might try to commit this crime? No president need be assassinated when the legal system is available to remove one from office peacefully.

The worker is a “precariat” and does not represent America, nor do those who feel as she does. Police-violence and murders of young blacks by errant and rogue officers do not represent the standard for law enforcement and are illegal acts in both character and degree. Wall Street greed and asset-stripping neoliberalism are byproducts of a capitalism that has been unregulated, becoming voracious and predatory. America is a nation and capitalism is an economic and market system adopted by the nation. Capitalism is not a nation unto itself controlling its host country. Yet, the market system is striving to gain complete control over this nation at all levels through powerful economic institutions with support from libertarian zealots, “small government” conservatives to far-right extremists hoisting flags, a Constitution and a Bible.

The right-wing presently in control of the Republican party and exhibiting increasing power over Congress, the White House and media are not American but anti-American and unAmerican in my opinion. Indeed, they constitute a “fifth column” undermining democracy, peace, security, welfare and brotherhood which are the true historical hallmarks of our secular democracy. What seeds have been planted during the last decades – from the presidency of Ronald Reagan to financial capitalism, privatizations, off-shoring of jobs to the Pacific Rim and China, collapse of the country’s industrial base and infrastructure, neoliberal restructuring of public finances, neoconservative Empire building through endless wars of aggression, decimation of social and welfare programs that were won for all Americans in the 1930s and 1960s – have borne the bitter herbs today of hate, violence, religious bigotry, racism, and mounting threats of war with Russia and China in order to circumvent and abort an inevitable transition from a U.S. dominated unipolar world to a bipolar one.

Such a bipolar world challenges America’s “full spectrum dominance” and particularly threatens to dislodge the U.S. dollar as world reserve currency. The agents of this “post 9/11 new normal” are leading the nation into the grip of what Europeans today call by its rightful name: fascism, the merger of state and corporate power militarily enforced . Will Americans allow it?

European nations are seeing a rise of neo-Nazis and self-proclaimed fascists. [2] [3] By reflecting popular discontent over imposed austerity, an influx of immigrants fleeing war zones in the mid-East, the perceived loss of national sovereignty to Brussels, the rise of fascistic right-wing parties in many EU nations are exploiting growing anti-government attitudes and creating political power formations in scenes highly reminiscent of the 1930s. In some respects, the propaganda diatribes and appeals by the Tea Party, Faith and Freedom Coalition and other U.S. “anti-government” groups of far-right libertarians, survivalists, white supremacists, militias, sovereign citizens, nativists and Christian theocrats bear comparison to programs and platforms of Pegida in Germany, National Front in France and Golden Dawn in Greece. [4]

More importantly, resemblances exist between the anti-government, anti-immigrant, racist, nativist and anarchistic rhetoric and appeals of these groups in both Europe and the United States with positions publicly endorsed and vocalized by Republican candidates for president, particularly by Donald Trump and Ted Cruz. [5] In the course of more than a decade, the GOP permitted itself to be hijacked by right-wing conservatives advancing

today's extremism in order to win elections and in winning perpetuate the rise of the corporate, banking and military-industrial state at the expense of workers and the social safety net. Populist far-right "people" movements from below and the corporate-military-intel-wealth "power elite" from above are twin forces undermining what remnants remain of American democracy. They will call it by many other names, but Europeans call it fascism.

Americans resist the label "fascism" because, as Sinclair Lewis observed eighty-one years ago, Americans are convinced "it can't happen here". [6] They are wrong. It can happen here, is happening here and the question becomes how far will it metastasize within the body politic? The frightening degree of popular interest measured by TV ratings of recent political debates where collective hate and war-mongering are staged as positive and constructive solutions to America's imbroglios of crises further demoralizes the population and weakens the national immune system against this cancer metastasizing.

What is America, its people, culture and set of values? By mid-century, it was the leader of the world politically and economically. By the mid-60s, it boasted a "mixed economy" balancing the needs of profit with social welfare. It once fostered peace at home and in the world; it co-existed with its main rival, the Soviet Union, in a balance of power arrangement and in so doing avoided war. Two nuclear powers can only assure each other peace through sanity lest mutual destruction be the result if one or the other starts war - a fact obfuscated by today's war mongers in Congress and on the presidential campaign platforms; their sociopathic threats are echoed without challenge in American mass-media, the very vehicles used to successfully engineer war-fever and hysteria on the basis of few facts, some lies, and reams of accusations lacking evidence. Americans fail to know the extent of its bombing campaigns, its coups, the number of dead innocents labeled "collateral damage" by the Pentagon, its purposeful destabilization of nations to secure resources and install puppet governments subservient to Washington. Few Americans suspect that the deaths of almost a million and injuries to millions more in the middle-east caused by American-NATO bombings might someday return in kind. Americans are fearful of terrorist acts within their country but fail to understand how we have sponsored, trained and financed terrorists to fight our "dirty wars" from the 1980s in Afghanistan to today in Syria and Iraq. Americans are fearful and thus paralyzed. What a perfect opportunity for a dictator and fascist to exploit.

"America is a moderate country with a slight tilt to the right," claimed a friend in the mid-West. On the other hand, activist-historian William Blum claims America is not a force for good in the world but a rogue state that is the greatest threat to humanity. [7] [8] People that largely ignore the rise of police powers, the surveillance state, the cost of endless wars, and the decline of civil liberties are called "sheeple" by critics. Members of the press and media who have abandoned their role as objective journalists and become public relations spokespeople for the State Dept., Pentagon, Wall Street and CIA are known as "presstitutes". Taken together, democracy is replaced with mindless consumption of media propaganda leaving authorities and power-centers freedom of movement to act and control without constraint or opposition.

World leaders are tentatively understanding the need to act together to resolve global crises that are infecting all layers within societies. The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists moved the hands of the Doomsday Clock to three minutes to minute citing nuclear wars and ecological cataclysms ahead given the current projectory. [9] Pope Francis in his highly secular encyclical *Laudato Si!* outlines a basal text for a concerted trans-national approach to solve climate change, economic disparities and mushrooming military build-ups in nations. [10]

Francis spoke frankly and truthfully when he bravely confessed to an unbelieving and disoriented world that World War III has already begun fought piecemeal. [11] The Dalai Lama also spoke frankly when he said God wasn't going to solve our problems. We created them and we need to fix them. God's not going to do it for us. [12]

America is at war and is planning for greater ones, but its greatest war is the battle within itself. Who is America? What is America? What does America stand for? These questions will be answered but not without conflict, social disruption, acts of civil disobedience, emerging whistleblowers risking careers and livelihoods to speak truth in a sea of disinformation and eroding morality. Campaign officials expect the cost for this year's presidential campaign to reach \$5 billion, most of that money going into the coffers of network and cable TV which, in turn, will please their sponsors – political parties, power brokers and wealth sectors – and media will remain a house of prostitution. [13] [14]

Democracy needs an informed electorate but Americans have been “dumbed down” enough to believe they have no power over government decisions and economic policies. They are paralyzed by it. In a relatively short span of time, beginning from September 11, 2001, democracy has been under attack by forces from within rather than from without. It has been stolen by hidden unelected financial, corporate and military-industrial cartels that have inculcated fear and exploited it as a pretext for citizens to relinquish liberties. By their own narrow vision induced by rampant consumerism, poor knowledge about government and economics, Americans have endorsed politicians who make wars, relegate human beings secondary to private profit and markets, who conquer dissent, diversity and strength-in-numbers using the mechanism of “identity politics”, who turn morality on its head by taking from the poor and giving to the rich, who call the peaceful weak and the warrior strong, who enshrine our Empire as “exceptional” and “indispensable” on the basis of myths that no longer exist and that fewer and fewer nations believe, including so-called “allies”.

Inscribed in the DNA of America is a deep-seated belief in “destiny”. America had it, lost it, and will someday regain it. It is not found in profits, property, gold, markets or Empire building. The work of ascertaining, identifying and perpetuating this destiny will fall upon tomorrow's leaders selected from the ranks of millennials and those younger, Generation Z. It will live or die according to their wisdom or their folly. They will build upon a new paradigm or fail trying to resuscitate the old. They will be Lot of the Bible and move forward knowing only one step ahead, or be Sara who turned to salt by fixing her stare upon what was crumbling behind her. The first question to answer must be: What is the ideal world you wish for yourself, family, friends, community and nation? Once realized and empowered by sincere intent and motivation, it will materialize. The world of tomorrow begins in concept today. To move forward, don't look back. Build it, and if it is for the common good of all Americans and all people of the world, “they will come”.

Others who staunchly support peace, world-wide harmony, justice, non-violence, democracy and the safety of mother earth are good people whose intentions, influence and silent acts now hold hope for our nation and world.

But many more good people must do something. And the time for doing it is now.

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