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# PLUTOCRACY OR DIRECT DEMOCRACY ?

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## Pain And Conscience

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**It is evident that a substantial majority of U.S. citizens are, in principle, opposed to the most destructive governmental policies stemming from the nation's capital. These include, but are not limited to—the continuing war and occupation of Iraq, as well as the pervasive consumer fraud that preys upon the innocent and the unwary and causes them undue hardship. These charges are born out by the abysmal approval rating of Congress and the president. It is equally evident that the government, while pretending to be sympathetic to these views, continues to carry forth those same policies both at home and abroad. It does so without the consent of the people and, therefore, it has abrogated its responsibility to them.**

**These destructive policies are formulated in the various branches of government and in the corporate board rooms of America. They are a prominent feature of the run amok presidency of George W. Bush, where they manifest themselves to the world. However, their history precedes Bush and his corporate gangsters by generations, and they are an outgrowth of the exploitive capital system.**

**In some respects the presidency serves as a distraction from the machinations that are operating behind the scenes to spew forth one disastrous policy after another. With so much attention given to Bush, the people are failing to confront the root cause of which George W. Bush is but a single manifestation: the sociopolitical system that put the present criminal regime in power.**

**Beyond capitalism, other destructive paradigms are operating to produce a hybridized and even more virulent form of economics. One might call it hyper capitalism. This explains why the American form of capitalism is so much more**

destructive than most of its European counterparts. For example, most European workers enjoy a shorter work week, higher wages, and have more paid vacation than do American workers; and most of them have union representation and, therefore, more and better benefits. In Germany, even Wal-mart is unionized.

One of these harmful paradigms that interact synergistically with capitalism is the idea of American exceptionalism: the persistent belief that America knows best and everything we do is good for the world. This synergism is tinged with powerful elements of racism, sexism, and other belief systems that are rooted in bigotry, hate, and religious intolerance. It is this lethal combination that gave rise to the concept of Manifest Destiny. It was these paradigms that attempted to sweep the continent clean of its indigenous population, and is blowing across the planet, touching ground in the Middle East and beyond like a violent cyclone.

What is so exasperating to many of us is that the corruption of the political system is widely understood and yet so little is done about it. The people continue to participate in it; they continue to vote in the absence of meaningful choice and they continue to support it with their taxes. There have been peace marches and other forms of token protest, but they have had little bearing on the continuing policies of economic disparity, environmental destruction, and imperial war that are prominent features of American capitalism.

Because protest in America has become more symbolic than effective, those in power can afford to ignore it. Even when participation in protest is great, it is of short duration; it does not cause serious economic or political disruption, and it does not pose a real threat to the established orthodoxy. After a few hours of peaceful marching, the people pack up and go back to their lives and everything remains as it was before they came.

Effective protest causes economic and political disruption. It persists until the just demands of the people are met. The established orthodoxy feels pain and discomfort from it; it feels a palpable threat and understands that the injustice cannot continue. Either it addresses the demands of the people, or it perishes. This is a manifestation of democracy. It is serious stuff that requires enormous sacrifice from those who protest in this way. The Montgomery bus boycott of the 60s was that kind of protest; and it was a protest that was won by the people, despite a constant threat of violence and death.

These days few people are willing to put anything tangible on the line. One wonders: Is there anything that the American people are willing to fight and die for? Is there anything real that we really believe in? Or do we relish the symbols of freedom more than we love freedom itself?

American exceptionalism is fostered in all of our social and political institutions. This includes the educational system and religious institutions. Thus, these beliefs are continually reinforced from cradle to grave, and never more so than in the corporate media. So it is not surprising that our political leaders behave as if they were endowed with the powers of deities, even though they are nothing more

than fallible human beings like everyone else. It requires enormous hubris for anyone to adopt such doctrines, but there appears to be an inexhaustible supply of hubris in this country and a paucity of humility and compassion. Those who think in this way are prone to behaving toward the world with vitriol, as we witness daily.

**The collective result of so many individually destructive paradigms is dehumanization. When we allow people to be dehumanized it is easy to hate them and to exploit them; to see them as entities endowed with less inherent value than ourselves or our chosen kind. It is easy to kill or subjugate inferior people and inferior beings. That is also how the government (the economic elite) perceives the working class and in their eyes that perception makes working people exploitable and expendable. Giving our continued allegiance to such government is irrational and immoral; it is also cowardly and self-destructive.**

We are faced with a situation in which the body politic not only does not care what the American people think; it disdains populism as much here as it does in Latin America and elsewhere in the world. Populism and its close cousin—democracy—pose an enormous threat to the established order; and that order provides wealth and privilege to a select few, while denying it to everyone else. This is why corrupt politicians and so many academicians spare no effort to suppress and crush democratic movements, and cover up their crimes through a disingenuous rendering of history.

**Yet with so much of the population aware of the government's disdain of the people's needs, why isn't there effective organized resistance to it? Why isn't there widespread social and economic disruption? Why do the people not revoke their consent to be governed and refuse their allegiance to a government that is not only corrupt and devoid of moral capital but is also clearly predatory or even cannibalistic? Why do we continue to fund criminal governments, including our own, with our taxes? Why isn't there social unrest and civil disobedience in the streets? Why are those who expose these crimes punished and the criminals go free and reap financial reward for their malfeasance?**

**One explanation for the widespread social malaise in this country is that people are overwhelmed by it; shocked and awed by it; disorientated by it. They cannot believe the audacity of the Bush regime. Disorientation makes the plunder of the commonwealth easy to carry out. Even while dazed and confused, so many people remain wed to the idea of America's inherent goodness and moral superiority to the rest of the world, despite mountains of evidence against such**

**views. Thus, they view the criminal Bush regime as an aberration rather than a continuation of an historical pattern.**

**Social justice advocates are rightly infuriated to know that amidst this worsening climate a solid majority of the people can remain indifferent and willfully ignorant of what is being done in their names. There is a reason for this. The American people do not want to acknowledge any wrong doing on the part of their government, which is, in theory, an extension of the people. Of course, that is not the actual practice. This refusal psychologically absolves them from guilt or complicity and it permits them the luxury of apathy. By refusing to acknowledge wrong doing, no further action is required of them. They can go on consuming, falling asleep in front of the television and sending their offspring to die in unnecessary wars, while sinking ever deeper into debt and economic servitude.**

**Furthermore, the inert masses are mentally and spiritually ill equipped to deal with reality; so they block it out of their minds—aided, of course, by the corporate media and the propaganda apparatus of the government, itself. This is why fantasy is freely substituted for reality; plutocracy is mistaken for democracy, and the majority of the people do not know the difference. Millions of good people thus refuse to allow into their psyche the suffering and misery that U.S. policy has produced and exported to the world, even as that reality is closing in upon them. Unfortunately, I can point to my own family as an example of such delusional thinking, as no doubt can many of my readers.**

**Understanding this, the greatest obstacle to creating a vibrant and effective social justice movement is convincing the inert masses that they must acknowledge the suffering we have caused and are continuing to inflict upon the world. The multitudes must see the wisdom of looking behind the veneer of propaganda and confronting an ugly and often painful truth: the brutal and violent history of our nation, including the suppression of democracy wherever it is encountered. Eventually, perhaps very soon, they must also come to grips with the demise of capitalism.**

**We the people must find the courage to confront reality, and that means that we must be willing to feel the pain and suffering we have inflicted on others. We must admit that we are not exceptional or superior, and that we are not more entitled to our share of the world's bounty than any other people. But we must go even deeper than that: we must bring about restitution for our past wrong-doing.**

**The citizens of the United States must become one with the world and look beyond nationality; beyond race, sex, and religious creed. Suffering and joy are conditions of life and they should be kept in balance as much as possible. Because suffering causes discomfort that few people want to experience, the alleviation of suffering is powerful motivation to demand justice; and that is the force that motivates most good people to do what they do, which is resist the tyranny of evil government. Once our indiscretions have been acknowledged and acted upon, we will find that the world is more than willing to forgive our past transgressions. This act alone will allow us to rejoin the world, so to speak.**

**Many years ago I questioned my mother about eating meat and the suffering it caused so many innocent animals. Her response revealed much about the American consciousness. She did not witness the suffering of those animals. She did not hear their cries of pain. She saw no blood in the sanitized product that was sold in the grocery store, wrapped in clear plastic and served up on pristine styrofoam. So their suffering was not real to her; it was too far removed from her experience. But the suffering of those animals and their cries of pain are very real indeed; and so is the suffering the United States government is inflicting upon the world.**

**Were we on the receiving end of our government's foreign policies, we would have a very different perception of them. But like wrapped meat in the grocery store, we do not see the pain and the blood—or the suffering. So for many people it is not real; it is not happening...but it is.**

**By admitting some of this pain into our lives we are simultaneously admitting all of the other things into our lives that define our collective humanity; among them hope and joy. Then, and only then, can we take a principled stand for social and environmental justice and build an effective movement toward these ends. We must pry open closed minds and allow reality to penetrate delusion, as witnessing cause and effect often does. By this process sheeple are transformed once again into people, each of them endowed with a conscience capable of distinguishing right and wrong. This moral evolution is itself a revolutionary act of monumental import to any justice movement. It provides the means for people to act according to the dictates of conscience, and that is an act of liberation from dogma.**

**Revolution begins by altering consciousness. We stand at the brink of a multitude of possible futures, many of them tragic. The failure to act and rebel when the conditions demand it is a betrayal not only of our own humanity; it is a crime of great magnitude. The world's foremost thinkers and visionaries have always understood this. Can we?**

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(Emphasis added - B.M.)

Posted by Justice Lover at [3:34 PM](#) [4 comments](#)