

Stepping Back from Trump's Election: Critique of underlying US Culture in a List - 25 Limitations

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
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I have been reflecting upon the ascendancy of Donald Trump to the top spot of the U.S. power structure. It has been disturbing to about half the country, and this demographic is further frustrated that not even half of the voters voted for Trump. Many people in other countries are appalled, and some pleased because Trump adds to the humorous or wild aspect of the increasingly rogue former colony.

At Culture Change (est. 2001) we have focused on root problems that give rise to the full range of dangers of racism, bigotry, misogyny, war, and ecocide. With the patience of a historian we have to watch the usual complete inaction. Yet every so often a movement or campaign comes along, such as Standing Rock or Occupy to fascinate millions of us.

Culture Change (formerly Auto-Free Times magazine) refers to the changing big picture in our shared background. We address the interrelated crises that threaten our existence. We have tried almost every method of communication and agitating. Why not present a simple list of interesting omissions and questionable values that the dominant culture has racked up?

This may somehow deepen understandings of Trumpism as well as put into perspective some misplaced faith in the pro-war, pro-surveillance, pro-growth Democrats. When values are unquestioned, in favor of fighting about policies and who gets to head the corporate state, the pattern of re-electing the basic status quo remains in force.

The following list items can seem innocuous for each considered by itself, but when considered with even two or three others, is easy to glimpse the cultural backdrop of today's discontent and dysfunction in the nation. Meaningfully, these realities listed are mostly limited to the U.S. Let us try to distinguish between disasters of policy and instances of cultural values coming up short. Here is food for thought, toward encouraging fundamental change rather than the usual anaemic reforms:

- Too few U.S. Americans see very often or are attached to their grandparents.
- A person living in the U.S. often doesn't know his or her neighbors, oftentimes not even their names.
- USAnians rarely share things such as cars, TVs, ovens, and computers beyond their own rooms or houses.
- They are detached from the land. Very few people are growing their own food. Drinking water is little considered for its source and purity.
- The U.S. has too much pavement (tarmac), which raises urban temperatures, and it is in that wasted space that people need to grow food and sequester carbon.
- The dominant culture uniquely locks up the food. So people need to liberate the food and enable its natural growth.
- People can come to realize once again that nature offers all life's essentials without charge: food, materials for shelter and clothing, heat, medicine, beauty, and entertainment.
- The cities and towns are too inhospitable to walk or bicycle in, in safety and pleasantness, relative to several large cities in the world.
- Americans have put up with the militarism so much that over 50% of all tax revenue has for decades gone to military purposes in some form.
- USAnians are seldom versed in other languages, although Latinos are. This discourages understanding between peoples.
- The stereotypical white American is unaware or doesn't care that his or her energy consumption is twice as high as Western Europe, per capita.
- They take too much guff from the police. In other countries, unless in a war zone or desperate dictatorship, one is free

from getting hassled by curious, aggressive cops.

- USAnians watch so much TV that they are poorly informed, no matter how much news they watch.
- They read far too few books.
- They equate education with narrow pursuit of certain facts, as a means of material success, not realizing that a specialist is often not educated in general (although there are exceptions).
- They are not composting food scraps, human urine, or yard waste.
- Their diets involve much too much factory-farm meat, dairy, and eggs. Tainted food, such as with GMOs and pesticides, is the rule.
- They don't know their history, very importantly the massacres of the indigenous peoples or the lynching of uncounted blacks, or the deliberate failure of the U.S. government to save very many Jewish immigrants as the Holocaust began.
- Over 6 million Indochinese were killed by the U.S. in the 1960s and early 1970s. The "American War" on Vietnam and its neighbors has been so poorly evaluated by U.S. society that evidently few lessons were learned from that wasteful, genocidal, racist, pointless war.
- The Americans were unaware and uncaring about the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s, which has implications for understanding fascism's role in the 20th century.
- They don't question things such as constant propaganda against Russia, despite military history and the advantages of peace by treaty.
- USAnians are heavy users of pharmaceutical drugs, partly because of Western Medicine's avoidance of dealing with causes of disease. The drugs are often another form of poisoning that is rife throughout the whole lifestyle (toxic air pollution, radioactive spills in the ocean, etc.).
- USAnians don't form cooperatives, rarely invent their own jobs, nor have a supportive community approach to survival.
- USAnians work too much. They are exploited more than in several other societies, partly from receiving less in benefits. The U.S. worker's vacation time is on average less, and the working hours are greater. Health care is much more expensive and time consuming, compared to the vast majority in most of Europe covered by the social safety net. The result of these difficulties and trying to survive as isolated consumers in the U.S. is a common fixation on money and job instead of centering life around friends, family and having fun.
- They put far too much faith in their quasi-democracy's endurance via near sham elections. While voting may be manipulated with historic impacts, even when elections work properly and transparently they seem designed to limit the citizenry's potential. Becoming more active than making the occasional vote is another, higher level sought by very few.

Instead of taking action, being more active in their community, engaging in mass demonstrations and civil disobedience, the mass of Americans sit back and feel they can always use the power of their vote. How well has this worked, when election candidates are installed every time with little positive change to show for it? The labor movement is barely strong enough to pull off strikes, let alone a general strike. The U.S. worker is not well protected and is averse to direct action, as workers are in many other countries.

The lack of full involvement in one's own community and society reflects a lack of sense of mature responsibility. When we consider these failings and the many untried, reasonable actions for reforms, the average state of mind that resists logical solutions seems to reveal a childishness or dependency, lacking a mature response to the world around.

If Americans did not pay so much in taxes, benefiting the likes of Big Pharma, road building boondoggles, and the Military, that wouldn't be so bad — but the planet is being rapidly destroyed by fossil fuels, nukes, and overpopulation. So the role of the citizen is increasingly likely to be part of a complete breakdown in civic life. A large segment still believes politics should be left to the experts and opportunists who have been failing us for many decades.

The Mechanical Man that violates the spirit of life can be counted on to conform to stifling conventions, and to believe

that the best society is this one — despite all the negative evidence and the waning positive features. Scientific, technological society has been adding to its problems faster than solving them, while these pillars of American civilization are ably defended at all costs by a form of priesthood on its high ivory tower.

The election results in the U.S. from Nov. 8, 2016 show that the Left is very weak, or was not strong enough to install the more deserving, popular Bernie Sanders as president. But is the answer a Right-Left confrontation? Culture change is what is needed. The defective, dominant culture brought about all the problems and the strife, including the conflict between Right and Left.

I didn't vote for Trump, and this is not an article supporting him. I am delighted to the extent that Trump as president raised the possibility of his resisting the Military Industrial Complex and the Deep State: he says he wants to stop the phoney civil war in Syria and normalize relations with Russia. That being said, he is not "the issue," nor the subject of this essay. Trump is a symptom, as was his anointed and disappointed and disappointing general-election opponent.

The sources of the above 25 information-bullets include the daily news channel of your choice, and any conversation with U.S. residents not obsessed with sports, guns, porno, or working out at the gym as one's major "outside" activity.

As one who researched and wrote hundreds of Culture Change columns since 2001, I have constantly noted cultural trends and interesting statistics. This goes back further, since 1988, when I broke with the oil industry to oppose fossil fuels by founding Fossil Fuels Policy Action. As much as one learns about any topic or skill in any kind of job, I have done so in developing a radical critique of society. The mission was not to perfect knowledge of academic issues or point a finger at the bad guy du jour, or the latest outrageous policy, but rather to arrive at strategies to deal with war, environmental destruction, and the lost solidarity among groups of people formerly in tight communities enjoying nature's healthy bounty.

Why were the bullet points all negative? The positive points of the USA would be an even longer list, to include priceless phenomena such as the grandeur of the Grand Canyon. Beauty and art don't escape us, but they are made more real and permanent by lifting up the curtain, raising discussion, and taking action in response to a crisis.

Further readings:

Rejecting Dangerous Saviors: Can "The People" Save the US?

"In this election, Trump and Clinton supporters were both looking for a leader to save them and the country. It's time we matured beyond the desire for saviors and started building a progressive politics in which people unite to save themselves from an oligarchy that is not working." - Peter Bloom, Truthout

Trump's Team Will Start New Wars in the Middle East - Patrick Cockburn, CounterPunch

"The US army and air force is today heavily engaged in Iraq and Syria and that is not going to end with Obama's departure."

Is there anything more important than the fact that The Year 2016 Set To Be Hottest On Record? - AFP.

"The year 2016 will 'very likely' be the hottest on record, the UN said Monday, warning of calamitous consequences if the march of global warming cannot be halted. Average temperatures for the year were set to hit about 1.2 Celsius (2.16 degrees Fahrenheit) over pre-Industrial Revolution levels – meaning that 16 of the 17 hottest years on record were this century, said the UN's World Meteorological Organization (WMO). The new record means the world is already more than halfway to the upper limit of 2 C of warming overall..."

S. Brian Willson wrote *Blood on the Tracks* about his peace-activist career, and placed this on his Facebook page on November 23, 2016: "For the record - pattern of US savage behavior, with Intention, a bi-partisan policy:

- Seventy-five percent of South Viet Nam was considered a free-fire zone (i.e., genocidal zones)
- Over 6 million Southeast Asians murdered
- Over 64,000 US and Allied soldiers killed
- Over 1,600 US soldiers, and 300,000 Vietnamese soldiers remain missing
- Thousands of amputees, paraplegics, blind, deaf, and other maimings created
- 13,000 of 21,000 of Vietnamese villages, or 62 percent, severely damaged or destroyed, mostly by bombing
- Nearly 950 churches and pagodas destroyed by bombing
- 350 hospitals and 1,500 maternity wards destroyed by bombing
- Nearly 3,000 high schools and universities destroyed by bombing
- Over 15,000 bridges destroyed by bombing
- 10 million cubic meters of dikes destroyed by bombing
- Over 3,700 US fixed-wing aircraft lost
- 36,125,000 US helicopter sorties during the war; over 10,000 helicopters were lost or severely damaged
- 26 million bomb craters created, the majority from B-52s (a B-52 bomb crater could be 20 feet deep, and 40 feet across)
- 39 million acres of land in Indochina (or 91 percent of the land area of South Viet Nam) were littered with fragments of bombs and shells, equivalent to 244,000 (160 acre) farms, or an area the size of all New England except Connecticut
- 21 million gallons (80 million liters) of extremely poisonous chemicals (herbicides) were applied in 20,000 chemical spraying missions between 1961 and 1970 in the most intensive use of chemical warfare in human history, with as many as 4.8 million Vietnamese living in nearly 3,200 villages directly sprayed by the chemicals

Winona La Duke: Indigenous Perspectives on the DAPL. She speaks eloquently and passionately about the Rights of Nature and of Indigenous values relevant to the ongoing struggle of the Water Protectors...