# Why the U.S. is a helluva country

Contributed by Lorna Salzman
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Some people are giving a lot of thought to how to build a movement around global warming. This is a tough challenge but given American know-how, can-do, ingenuity, cojones, knee-jerk patriotic hubris, suspicion of foreigners, a staggeringly high 50% literacy rate, reliance on conspiracy theories, faith in one god or another, and unflagging belief in progress in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, I am sure it can be done. This is a helluva country. Here's why.

1. A commitment to representative democracy conditioned only on the necessity of belonging to one of two parties, Republican or Democrat. Republicans have the upper hand given that their 24th pair of chromosomes codes for Greed. Democrats' 24th chromosome codes for Deceit. It's Win-Win for either of them.

2. An abiding love for gambling, monster theme parks, shopping in giant malls, riding in huge vans, and family values that use churches and TV sets to bring everyone together. These shared values give a remarkable cohesion to American society even in the face of ecological collapse. No one wants to be a nattering nabob of negativity as the world crumbles around us. Stiff upper lips are enough for the British but not for Americans, who need overstuffed credit cards to reassure themselves that they are the salvation of the world and if you don't like it you can go back where you came from.

3. A fervent belief in the right to cheap gas. After decades of paying under a dollar per gallon for gasoline -- 35 cents in the 1960s -- Americans are now getting really pissed off at the chutzpah of royal monarchs, royal leftist pains-in-the-ass and Royal Dutch Shell executives who think they have as much a right to make money as Americans do. What gives foreigners these privileges? Don't they know we can send in the troops anytime we want for any reason?

4. An indissoluble adhesion to religion in one form or another. It is undeniable that the existence of dissent, protest and freedom of expression causes discomfort to many Americans, sending them into the arms and shelter of various religious cults and institutions, who will, on their behalf, fight against these basic freedoms and rights so as to make them feel better. Generally speaking, they are cheaper than psychoanalysts depending on how much of your meagre salary you turn over to these delightful snake oil salesmen. (Nothing wrong with snake oil; lots of it, under different names, is sold in "Health food" stores to the conspiracy theorists on the left and right who think all doctors and medicine are poisoning them).

5. There is nothing like conspiracy theories, except maybe some stand-up comedians, to keep people amused and connected. We can thank the internet for making this political networking possible, since it ties up people who might be making serious mischief elsewhere.

6. An unprecedented web of multiculturalism, ranging from extreme Political Correctness which bans words like "beggars" and "midget," to Rambo Limbaughs, to posturing paleoliberals like Eric Alterman and The Nation, to New Age gurus like Deepak Chopra, to street-theater rabblerousers like Al Sharpton, not to mention the mammalian diversity in the halls of Congress, where the promise of equal opportunity is fulfilled in the election of liars, louts and lechers every two years. This country can be rightly proud of its tolerance for dissent, where blacks think all whites are racists and whites think all blacks are Arabs.

7. Only in America could the conundrum of disdain for government and politicians be so perfectly illustrated by the election-year digestion of the whole cloth of candidates' promises.

8. An adherence to the time-tested practice of misogyny, whether in the corporate glass ceiling, skewed pay scales, domestic violence, or the female slavery in Mormon religious brothels that condemns generations of girls and women to illiteracy, inequality and isolation. Let no one accuse Americans of forsaking the prejudices and practices of their pioneer ancestors.

9. A obeisant compliant media industry that, unlike its brethren in congress, is willing and eager to feed the demands, biases and fears of its readers and listeners. It cannot be accused of elitism or pandering to the select few; on the contrary, it faithfully brings, every hour of the day and night, the promise of prosperity and material success to tens of millions of people even as the country's political and economic leaders strive to deprive them of these things. Truly, it is a balm for troubled Americans who are tired of being bombarded with the bad news about global warming, epidemics, food shortages and the prospect of parking their RV in their backyard indefinitely.

Given these conditions, who should be leading our country? The only people qualified to lead our country fall into at least one of these categories: atheists/secularists; women; libertarians; homeless. Atheists and secularists are independent rational thinkers and resistant to cult thinking and behavior. Women are obviously the more compassionate, stable and

social justice-oriented gender. Libertarians, though they have some peculiar ideas about guns, taxes and the environment, are highly tolerant of dissent and defenders of civil liberties. And the homeless need to replace the corporate lobbyists and executives and be allowed to pursue their own self interest: getting a roof over their heads and a hot meal. (Note: I have left out gays and lesbians because basically they are really no different from the rest of society).

Here is my proposed list for the top positions in Washington:

President: Dennis Kucinich. A little guy with a big brain and heart.

Vice president: Weird Al Yankovich. Because we need another VP named Al.

Secretary of State: Christopher Hitchens. A gutsy smartass atheist with no ax to grind, who is hated by the left and the religious community...testimony to his value.

Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare: Ayaan Hirsi Ali. A reward for her moral witness and courage in facing down islamist extremism and PC.

Secretary of Commerce: Rev. Billy of the Church of Stop Shopping.

Secretary for the Environment: James Gustave Speth. For being a non-leftist fingering capitalism as the root of the world's problems. (If he declines, I nominate Dave Foreman).

Secretary of Labor: Ralph Nader.

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Lorna Salzman started her forty-year career as environmental activist saving wetlands on eastern Long Island and got her big boost and inspiration when Dave Brower hired her as regional representative of Friends of the Earth in New York. After serving over ten years with FOE, mostly fighting nuclear power and fending off the Army Corps of Engineers, she had brief stints at National Audubon Society's American Birds magazine, at Food & Water fighting food irradiation, and in the 1990s served three years as natural resource specialist at the NY City Dept.of Environmental Protection. In between she founded the NY Green Party, ran as a green for congress in 2002, and sought the party's presidential nomination in 2004.

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