How The U.S. Population Can Overcome Its World Class Confusion

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
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When we think of the millions of U.S. Americans who have needlessly attacked or harmed millions of others in dozens of countries, and have harmed themselves -- without fully knowing why -- and when we acknowledge that many in the U.S. seem resigned to allow more of the same, one can extend this phenomenon to the nation's population in general. We can call it a common trait, and find it to be a U.S. tendency upon historical analysis or reading between the lines of corporate news. Let us name the national condition confusion. Under this we can lump poor education, being propagandized, exploitation of the
poor, rampant ill health, environmental devastation, and the rape of Mother Nature (and therefore of ourselves and our spirit).

Calling it confusion is kind sounding, when we think of three million U.S. personnel going to Vietnam to kill millions of soldiers and civilians. About 54,000 U.S. soldiers died there. Many more were sickened both physically and mentally. For what ultimate goal did these casualties on both sides occur? For the Vietnamese, it was their national defense -- whether Communist or peasant Vietnamese. Even when one considers U.S. imperialism, and the false flag action of the Gulf of Tonkin, and one forgives all of that, and says the nation made an honest mistake that ended in defeat, it is still unanswerable: what was it for? To make money on napalm and agent orange? One can revisit the war ad infinitum, but most people can probably agree it was "for nothing" -- worthy of confusion.

Perhaps most instances of confusion fall under the heading of war, such as the Iraq Invasion and Occupation. There was no Al Qaeda there, and no weapons of mass destruction. With the recorded death toll since March 2003 of over 150,000 Iraqis, roughly 80% of whom were civilians -- that would not have happened without the U.S./UK invasion and occupation -- one should expect retaliation labeled terrorism against U.S. and UK populations. Sowing confusion in order to wage war certainly resulted in more confusion and worse.

To explain the Iraq War with bitterness, one can call it just an oil war or profitable military-industrial-Congress complex scam. But the tools of the exercise -- soldiers and their support -- are only going to keep repeating their "confusion" for paychecks, if they are just ignored or are called killers. So if the nation can openly address past and present confusion, without attacking verbally the most confused individuals, this can lessen future confusion.

Author and antiwar activist Brian Willson told this writer last year, "Since WWII, the US has, according to my research, overtly invaded militarily over 350 times in more than 100 countries (covertly intervening thousands of times, while bombing 28 countries, & threatening Nukes on 20 other occasions). Estimates of numbers murdered range from 20 million to 75 million (John Ralson Saul, "The Unconscious Civilization"). Billions have been impoverished. All this to preserve a basic notion of a way of life that indeed itself is killing us. This is both absurd and a mental illness."

Confusion and guilt from war and killing cause suicide far above normal rates. Why does it occur? The answer may lie in the population's supposition that the U.S. is basically "a good Christian nation," while it kills millions while waving the flag of freedom and democracy. No doubt, the idea of "God is on our side" for war, while Christ was known to be all about peace and love, is confusing deep down.

For the U.S. to have a couple dozen nuke plants like the faulty (pardon the pun) Fukushima reactors that blew and melted, this is truly confusion of a monumental, cosmic nature. The General Electric-design reactors in the U.S. can be hit with earthquakes, floods, human error by confused operators, and decay from neglect that will happen when the U.S. no longer endures in its present monolithic form. In the case of designing thousands of years of lethal radioactive waste and fallout, we might add "criminally insane" to the confusion label, due to the nuclear terrorism bequeathed to our descendants.

One can step back even more deeply than calling our main social problems "confusion" by characterizing senseless

violence and fouling our ecological nest as simple symptoms of overpopulation. The scientific proof for this reasoning is that when rats in a cage get too numerous, they begin to kill each other, go insane, commit suicide, eat each other, and carry out other deviant self-destructive/self-preservation strategies. The interests of the rat tribe, the family and the community are thus badly eroded, and any sense of oneness is lost. The analogy is simplistic, but we might allow "as with rats, humans." We are but animals, although at times marvelous. Seven billion of us is a problem because of overshoot, or the exceeding of ecological carrying capacity. Admittedly, confusion is a symptom of overpopulation -- and of overconsumption.

A Consuming System

Overconsumption is not only what the global economy depends on for growth and corporate profits, but is a lifestyle enabled by the dominant culture rooted in materialism. It's not so much that civilization must be about the material aspect of life. Western Civilization, however, became the ultimate runaway train, as it developed through the combination of technological progress, surplus and growth, and exploitation of nature and people without regard to either's inherent rights. In the late stages of Western Civilization when we have reached the frontiers of lands and have used up most regions' finite resources, while population grew thanks to cheap petroleum in the last several decades, confusion has grown apace. Stress, fear, uncertainty, illness and depression certainly create confusion, and vice versa.

The system we live under breeds confusion especially as the system collapses. I wrote in the Culture Change article Social and Individual Breakdown: Pent up toward Collapse last year, "I detect a quickened intensity of breakdown across the board that cannot be cured under current conditions. It is manifested in many areas, such as minimal civic involvement in one's own life-and-death interest."

Confusion is fomented in large part by the powerful, manipulative elite that wants to hold on to its position and wealth. This is true not only in the U.S. but elsewhere -- excluding non-overcrowded rat cages. Confusion takes many forms, as does its related state known as chaos. But we forget to be compassionate about the symptoms befalling us, in our overcrowdedness and stress from the loss of abundant resources. In fact, in our confusion we easily point a finger and accuse the puppets of the elite of being evil, violent, stupid, etc. Perhaps they are, in many cases. But it is counterproductive and risky to tell a victim of cultural brainwashing that his or her "duty" of going to a distant country, in the U.S. uniform to kill in order to protect corporate interests, is mistaken, or stupid, or murderous. More and more U.S. veterans see that they were confused or lied to, but probably they are the minority. So it is better, safer and kinder to limit our impulse to agitate by finding common ground to discover together whether confusion has indeed been our problem, and explore why we have been so confused. Our survival as a species may depend on it.

The poor who can't consume much are nevertheless confused by others' overconsumption, as society's encouragement of consumption undermines basic human values of community and living in harmony with nature.

Overcoming Confusion

Meanwhile, many are acting to end confusion. Whether peace activists, anti-nuke campaigners, or advocates for the hungry and homeless, they may not realize they are in a greater "deconfusing movement." One of my favorite examples of lessening confusion is to stop unsuspecting U.S. youth from being preyed upon by salesmen known as military recruiters: the Humboldt cities of Arcata and Eureka have sued the government, and the case is in federal court on a slow track. An example of overcoming military confusion individually is the song Masters of War by a very young Bob Dylan. His protagonist in the song took the position of an irate, articulate youth under threat of being sent to die by the older generation's corrupt sinners.

Speaking of sin, perhaps a religious faith in our problems' being solved by a god does not differ much from other

confusion. After all, divine intervention doesn't seem to have occurred so far to deliver us from our worsening human-caused crises. Let's say a god's name is George. Then recall the sin of "Letting George do it." We need to fix our own problems, not wait for George or Barack or Tweedle Dee.

The consciousness revolution of the 1960s, that Bob Dylan helped accelerate, opened the mind to reality beyond "plastic society"'s mental straightjacket. Although the movement all but died, people did not revert to their past confusion. Once you discover some truth, it helps you to discover more. Besides uncovering truths, Culture Change has promoted many measures toward self-sufficiency and resistance to the system, all toward lessening confusion and achieving liberation.

Do we not have a modern culture fraught with confusion? Are our aggressive European roots -- Viking, Roman -- from confused origins? Does this mean that curing cultural confusion means adopting major culture change? What do traditional, sustainable indigenous societies offer?

Here's to recognizing and overcoming confusion!

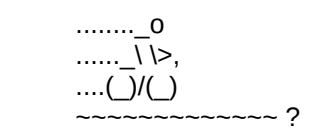
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Further Reading:

Blood on the Tracks, Brian Willson, PM Press, 2011, Oakland

Social and Individual Breakdown: Pent up toward Collapse, Jan Lundberg, Feb. 27, 2010

Iraq War Logs: What the numbers reveal, first published Oct. 23 2010



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