

Why the U.S. is F'ed up, and what to do about it

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
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Mysterious massacres, homelessness, astronomical debt, nonstop topsoil loss, genetically modified crops, wars, mounting nuclear waste, etc. -- these seemingly unrelated crises are part of an unprecedented onslaught by the U.S. against itself and the world. The outrages are becoming less tolerable, as they appear out of control with no end in sight. But we are supposed to accept them all in the name of "society" or "civilization." "Hope" is offered as a way to magically take care of matters.

At some point, many a discerning citizen comes to say "This nation is f---ed up!" The danger of this mindset is that it shuts down further analysis and any constructive action. But it also counts as an open-eyed, justified alarm.

Towards a consensus of the root problems and how to address them realistically, this essay presents a chronological list of the mistakes, crimes, unchecked trends that led us to this point. This is followed by an even shorter offering of prescriptions for deep changes toward turning things around.

Believing the prevailing television narrative only leads to another meaningless election. The risk is that on this course, we will get where we are going. More deadly strife and ecocide are nothing to sneeze at, although ignoring the unprecedented threat is still *à la mode*.

This writer is a long-time activist, offering these ideas unbought and non-funded. One point I've long tried to convey is that even seemingly independent, hard-hitting commentators do not really critique the system we live under. Rather, they are, like most people, railing against symptoms.

Consider the biological and ecological idea that a crash in population of humans and other species is a concern of utmost importance. The possibility or likelihood of its happening fairly soon is supported by both science and history, but is mostly a taboo subject. A slightly less suppressed subject, much related, is that we all need a healthy rather than toxic, unfriendly environment, and too many consumers spoils it. But this is far lower on the list of acknowledged "hot-button" issues than "jobs" or what amounts to infotainment.

Our trashing the environment is the crux of the crisis, for our relationship to the land is much wanting. It's the main fuck-up of the U.S.: we made a bad trade for the short-term benefit of the greedy few, while the once-growing middle class, going along for the ride, thought it too was comfortably rich. Now the foundation built on the sand of unsustainable resource-extraction is collapsing.

We needed the healthy rather than toxic, unfriendly environment "yesterday," not tomorrow or someday when the powers-that-be may allow it (when it won't be available anymore).

We've gotten to the point where the once stable, benign global climate is knowingly being thrown away like a dumpster-load of unrecyclable plastic trash. How could this happen? Some trace it to the cultural and political foundation at the start of the European invasion of the Western Hemisphere. The "New World" was at that time a highly populated, diverse and rich environment. Losing it has been dressed up as part of civilization's inevitable, glorious march forward. However, the sicker our system reveals itself to be, we discover our delusions and myths to be a crock of toxic shit.

So here are ten basic developments that got us to the present precipice:

- The mindset of the Spanish and English explorers, as God-fearing servants of their ruthless royal masters, was superiority that justified conquest and exploitation.
- Intolerance, genocide, theft and dishonesty dominated the colonial adventures. Riches and seeking converts -- after killing anti-immigrant opponents defending their lands and traditions -- set the stage for wiping out entire peoples and obliterating or decimating useful species.
- A hierarchal, non-tribal strain of European social development successfully sought to dismantle and push aside the ways of indigenous societies that lived in harmony with nature and her abundance. When the growing population of European invaders, most under the yoke of their super-rich masters, proceeded to live as worker-slaves, political institutions worked to solidify inequality and enforce competition for material existence. Additional patriarchal institutions conveniently served to help divide the population and safeguard the status quo.
- By the time the "Indians" were mostly killed off and put on poor reservations, and blatant slavery was outlawed, today's corporate state was consolidating its base. Pre-fascist institutions and pseudo-grassroots movements countered populist efforts to unionize and hold on to homesteads and farms.
- War was profitable, and was foisted on a peaceful population via deception and corruption. World War I was in reality over the control of oil supplies in the Persian Gulf, but this was not disclosed to the masses.
- New sciences of psychiatry, psychology, public relations, promotion of consumerism, along with the suppression of hemp, ongoing racial division and fear-mongering, set the stage for mass conformity and unprecedented "growth" at the expense of good farmland and the commons (forests, plains and water).
- The victorious U.S. did not de-mobilize after World War II. The fateful rightward lurch after the successful New Deal may be pinpointed as Henry Wallace's replacement by Harry Truman as vice president. With Operation Paperclip -- the induction of Nazi spies and scientists into the growing national security state -- and the Red Scare, the post-war trend in the U.S. was industrial profits über alles. Strict public acceptance of whatever government and industry did was found by the 1960s to be part of a deeply flawed culture.
- The lessons of the Vietnam War debacle and Watergate were suppressed fully by the time the Reagan-Bush wing of the corporate establishment seized power. These ultra-Republicans and the false alternative of "centrist" Democrats meant a return to wars of choice and never-ending expansion in the guise of "development," "freedom" and "progress."
- By the 1990s, most Nobel Prize-winning scientists were warning of ecological collapse. But the corporate media and closely allied politicians were able to steer discourse away from real issues of community health and sound economics toward debates over street crime, abortion, "over-regulation" of Big Business, and bogus foreign threats. Defense is legitimate, but the U.S. was the top global arms purveyor, and rapacious banks furthered conflict and privatization abroad with tragic, predictable results.
- The mass drugging of the population through questionable pharmaceutical drugs, and mind-control via massive poisoning through legal toxic substances, as well as propaganda against Middle Easterners and Asians, pacified and manipulated the majority population. The present period in history was thus fixed as barely reactive: popular resistance by the comfortable and aspiring consumers was naturally lacking. Common-sense grassroots attempts at bettering people's lives have stood little chance of making headway against powerful interests that own Congress and the Executive branch. Yet, in what seems to be growing misery, millions of people are losing the one solace remaining: the ability to find a little happiness through shopping. They will not regain it, due to the end of both cheap petroleum and related economic growth.

Ten countervailing movements

Given the powerful impetus of the foregoing ten disastrous scams, there is no unified active movement to counter the clear threats to human survival. We are past the point of achieving social justice in the context of an industrial quasi-democratic society. Global warming, nuclear disasters, overpopulation vis cheap petroleum, and financial panic or

economic collapse are either upon us or intensifying. But fortunately, level-headed, brave thinkers and activists have relentlessly pursued beautiful programs and philosophies that directly address today's interrelated crises. To call the following trendlets "solutions" would be false advertising, when we are actually up against dilemmas rather than problems. Without simple, clear solutions, we must soldier on and anticipate synergy for positive, rapid social evolution.

- Turn off the television. Connect directly with humans in the flesh, not relying on Facebook, to discuss critical issues and formulate a response.
- Strengthen one's independent learning base: study books and find authoritative, skilled experts or masters in useful areas beyond the technological.
- DIY (do it yourself) education, including learning skills and finding out about such things as the true history of the U.S. and European invasion of the Americas.
- Local community organizing and resiliency are the top priority.
- Awaken to healing one's body and the surrounding weakened community. Only then might the planet be healed.
- Zero-carbon transport (pedal-powered or sail-powered travel and trade) needs to be established as an integral part of local economies.
- Ecological restoration means sequestering carbon and countering the methane-release crisis.
- Don't waste much time with people who don't "get it." People in denial take years to come around to understanding, and are waiting only for a rude awakening.
- Engage in guerrilla education, propagandizing, media and arts such as street theater. Those not inclined to protest must at least take notice.
- Appreciate the miracle of living, and enjoy your time alive -- no matter what may be bringing you down. Inspire others.

The bad news mounts, and cannot be ignored. But it adds up to more convincing evidence that a break with convention is essential for saving our skins and preserving the beauty of life.

The U.S. is a bad actor in too many ways to ignore: radioactive scrap has been authorized by the federal government to make into silverware, zippers and more. This is a great instance of another fucked up situation. We can talk about it as yet another issue, another outrage. However, solving problems in a piecemeal fashion may assure we fall into a helpless pattern of trying to cope with too many distractions. Whereas, the entire system is collapsing, as evidenced by insane developments and persistent violations of decency. Collapse needs to be acknowledged in order to see through false promises and empty hopes.

The answer to our society's challenge is community, not technology. The temporary dominance of the market economy means that scams and schemes are foisted upon us, as if they are the latest goody to relish. But some day there will be, for example, a law against falsely claiming to be a neighbor -- perhaps you have seen that AT&T puts out junk mail that purports to be from neighbor to neighbor. This kind of advertising -- wasting trees and offering unnecessary products -- will go by the wayside when corporations are outlawed, or denied the current so-called right of personhood.

Until then, or until the hopeless fucked up system goes belly up, few of us see that we are really on our own. If the U.S. and Western Civilization are fucked, and they are clearly dragging us down, then Job Number One is disassociating ourselves from the toxic, dysfunctional system, and establishing viable, healthy communities today.

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Greetings from Berlin. - JL