From the Middle Class to the Mutual Class

Contributed by Paul Glover
16 November 2014

Americans have the tools and money to create an America where all workers are employed, whose every square mile is beautiful; whose cities are safe playgrounds for children; whose food is fresh and affordable; whose waters are clean from sea to crystal sea. An America run by Americans for Americans is fully capable of rebuilding all homes so they're earthquake-proof, hurricane-proof, tornado-proof, flood-proof, drought-proof, fireproof, and bank-proof. When Americans take control of money, we are wealthy enough to build an America where it's easy to stay healthy and to get healed; where costs of living get smaller and our lives get bigger.

What blocks these goals? Both Us and Them.

On the one hand, all of America's institutions have become too big to change. Like sumo wrestlers in a basketball game, they move too slow. Big Government, Big Oil, Big Insurance, Big Finance, Big Agriculture, Big Highway, Big Education, Big Military, Big Prison, Big Police, Big Poverty--these feed on disaster and control. They no longer exist primarily to fix problems, but to grow.

Then on the other hand, millions of us are employed by these institutions to enforce the past. Millions of us depend on their stocks. Many of us watch their commercials and obey their laws. Many prefer dull safety to risky action, even to save America. We drive straight, even when the road curves.

Therefore the American economy wallows like a car stuck deep in mud with an elephant sitting on the roof, dragged by a lazy donkey, going nowhere but deeper.

As a result, the Middle Class dream has become a burden sinking millions through mortgage, insurance, utilities, tuition, credit card fees, cars and fashion. Consumerism by liberals and conservatives alike has depleted America's essential resources and our national sovereignty.

The next American generations will never achieve Middle Class excess. That standard merely rubs it in. Fortunately, though, Millennials can become a prosperous Mutual Class by starting genuinely nonprofit mutual aid systems that enable them to live well by sharing resources. Such programs were widespread and successful one hundred years ago.

Through them we create millions of jobs that revive our neighborhoods. We give ourselves raises by lowering prices. And all our current skills are employed while we enjoy new talents.
Young and old, we will become the government as we create these regional food systems and regional stock exchanges, establish green co-housing programs and green labor administrations, reduce dependence on fossil fuels toward zero, replace automobile space with train and bike space, convert vacant urban land into greenhouses and orchards, develop co-operative health plans and clinics, issue our own education credentials and our own community money.

Such local systems prepare us to take power by creating parallel authority. By taking power together we regain time for creative individuality. We move from dependence to ownership.

The Mutual Class will also pioneer Mutual Enterprise--local businesses committed to community, ecology, and social justice.

Let's look at a sample Mutual Day. We start with sex and music, then breakfast. We walk or bike to work, four days per week. After three hours work, we return home for a long lunch and sex, or we eat with co-workers: we discuss work plans, utility and durability of product, marketing, sales, prices and wages. Then two more hours of work. We have time and energy for an afternoon stroll or game, then prepare dinner, make music, make love (Why so much sex? Because we're relaxed). We finish with an evening stroll in our beautiful neighborhood.

To achieve such better dreams, Americans must at the same time confront anti-American institutions. Laws that forbid urgent change are a cage for us to die in. Regulations must be broken when they block American liberation from debt, layoffs, foreclosure and bankruptcy, earthquakes, tornados, floods, heat waves, cold snaps, blackouts and traffic jams.

This is merely the revolutionary American tradition that ended slavery, gained votes for women, won the eight-hour workday, secured civil rights, and started this nation. By contrast, conferences and elections are powerless displays.

Yet the most direct path to deflate bad authority is to withdraw personal dependence. Time to leave the car in the mud and get back on track. Use train, bike or feet rather than car. Shop less and shop local. Move your money into a local bank or credit union. Insulate your housing. Be a creator, not a consumer. Eat less meat or none. Have one or fewer children.

The next America will look entirely different than the one we know. We'll have fun building it and our grandchildren will thank us. America went to the moon. Now America will go to the future.

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The above essay appeared originally on Paul's webpage paulglover.org on November 16, 2014.