

MATTERS OF CONSCIENCE®

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VI

WHO ARE WE?

AND WHY ARE WE NOT WHO WE WERE?

CULTURAL CONFUSION IN AMERICA — PART 1

PREFACE

AS WE SAW IN OUR PREVIOUS ISSUE, WHICH FOCUSED ON ISLAM AS A CULTURAL THREAT TO BOTH THE U.S. AND WESTERN CIVILIZATION (WCIV), THE CULTURAL SCALE IS NOT ONE WHICH WE GRASP EASILY. COMBINING, AS IT DOES, SO MANY OF OUR CONSCIOUS AND SUBCONSCIOUS MOTIVATIONS AND JUDGMENTS, ITS COMPLEXITY IS FAR GREATER THAN THAT WHICH WE ENCOUNTER IN OUR USUAL NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS. AND YET, CONCEALED WITHIN THIS COMPLEXITY WE OFTEN FIND STARTLINGLY SIMPLE FACTS AND THE MULTIPLE IRONIES OR CONTRADICTIONS THAT MARK OUR HUMAN CONDITION.

IN THE COURSE OF OUR DEVELOPMENT FROM A FEW 17TH CENTURY RELIGIOUSLY INSPIRED COLONIES TO GLOBAL SUPERPOWER (FORMERLY, BUT NO LONGER, SOLE) WE HAVE THOUGHT OF OURSELVES FIRST AS RESIDENTS OF COLONIAL TOWNS/SETTLEMENTS; THEN OF STATES AND REGIONS; AND, FINALLY, AS A NATION. IN RECENT YEARS, AS OUR EXPERIENCE OF WAR AND TECHNOLOGY INCREASED AND AS WE FOUND OURSELVES FORCED TO ENGAGE IN POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND

SOCIAL CONTACT WITH OTHER POPULATIONS AND CULTURES, WE EXPANDED THE HISTORICAL BOUNDARIES OF OUR NATIONAL IDENTITY BY MEMBERSHIP IN A VARIETY OF GLOBAL/REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS THAT OUR GOVERNMENT AND/OR OTHER SECTORS OF OUR SOCIETY DEEMED NECESSARY TO IMPROVE OUR PURSUIT OF COMMERCIAL, DIPLOMATIC, MILITARY AND FINANCIAL SUCCESS. THE NUMBER OF THESE AGENCIES, BOARDS, COMMISSIONS AND TREATIES, AS WELL AS CO-OPERATIVE, DEVELOPMENTAL AND EXCHANGE PROGRAMS, HAS GROWN RAPIDLY AND STEADILY, AND AT THE TOP IS THE UNITED NATIONS WHICH CAN LAY REASONABLE CLAIM TO BEING “THE MOTHER OF ALL BUREAUCRACIES”.

IN CITING ISLAM AS A THREAT TO OUR CULTURE AND TO WCIV WE ARE DRAWING SOME IMPORTANT LINES OF DISTINCTION AS TO WHAT KINDS OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR OUR GLOBAL SOCIETY WILL PERMIT. AND WE ARE ALSO DRAWING A LINE IN TIME BETWEEN OUR PAST AND OUR FUTURE, A LINE THAT SAYS OUR PRESENT CANNOT BE A PASSIVE ONE, BUT RATHER THAT NATIONAL AND GLOBAL FORCES EXIST THAT REQUIRE US TO THINK IN TERMS

IN THIS ISSUE: WE EXAMINE SOME ROOTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF AMERICA’S CURRENT CULTURAL CONFUSION AS WELL AS OUR INABILITY TO DEAL WITH THEM.

OUR NEXT ISSUE WILL BE OUR FIFTIETH. IN IT WE WILL CONTINUE TO EXPLORE CULTURAL CONTRADICTIONS, AND THEIR CAUSE AND EFFECT, IN OUR SOCIETY; AND WE WILL UPDATE SOME CONCERNS FROM PREVIOUS ISSUES.

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OF DEFENDING OUR WCIV.

LOOKING BACK OVER OUR BRIEF HISTORY, THREE OCCASIONS STAND OUT WHEN OUR EXISTENCE AND IDENTITY WERE THREATENED SO STRONGLY THAT WE HAD TO TAKE SUCH ACTION. THE FIRST WAS OUR CIVIL WAR WHEN THE ISSUE OF SLAVERY DIVIDED THE COUNTRY IN MANY WAYS AND PUT AT RISK OUR PROCESS OF WESTWARD POLITICAL/TERRITORIAL EXPANSION AND OUR NATIONAL BELIEF IN "MANIFEST DESTINY" WHICH FUELED AND GUIDED IT.

THE OTHER TWO LINES WE DREW WHEN WE ENTERED WWS I AND II. THEY ASSURED A LEADING ROLE FOR THE US IN WORLD AFFAIRS WHICH BECAME A DOMINANT ONE WHEN WE INITIATED THE ATOMIC AGE IN 1945. THEN, FOR A BRIEF TIME, WE SPOKE GLOWINGLY OF OUR CIVILIZATION'S FUTURE, BUT THE IMMEDIACY OF LESSER CONCERNS TOOK OVER, AND WE RETURNED TO THE ALWAYS PRESENT AND INCREASINGLY NUMEROUS PROBLEMS OF ARMAMENTS, BORDERS, RELIGIOUS/POLITICAL STRIFE, CURRENCY VALUES, ENERGY SOURCES, ETC. THE REALLY IMPORTANT ONES WHICH WERE CIVILIZATIONAL IN THEIR SCALE, AND REQUIRED COMMENSURATE EFFORTS TO SOLVE, SUCH AS POPULATION, THE ENVIRONMENT, IMMIGRATION, RESOURCE DEPLETION AND SPECIES LOSS, WENT UNATTENDED.

THE TIME OF THEIR NEGLECT IS NOW OVER, AND ONE BY ONE, ALTHOUGH SOMETIMES IN UNISON IF WE PAY ATTENTION, THEY ARE TELLING US THAT THEY WILL NOT GO AWAY MERELY BECAUSE WE PRETEND THEY DO NOT EXIST. THEY ARE WITH US AND THEIR EFFECTS ARE INTENSIFYING, MOSTLY BECAUSE WE IGNORE THEM.

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IN THIS ISSUE, AS WE EXAMINE A VARIETY OF THREATS TO OUR CULTURE, WE MUST ALWAYS KEEP IN MIND THAT ALL CULTURES, OURS INCLUDED, HAVE BEEN STAGES OF ASCENT AND DESCENT IN THE LARGER, UNFOLDING TALES OF CIVILIZATIONS AND WORLD HISTORY! FOR EXAMPLE, THE RICH ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA REVEALS HOW SUCCEEDING CULTURES WERE LAYERED OVER FORMER ONES, SOMETIMES SO CLOSELY THAT EARLY WALLS AND BUILDINGS BECAME FOUNDATIONS FOR CONSTRUCTION BY LATER GROUPS.

RICHARD HEINBERG, FOUNDER OF THE POST CARBON INSTITUTE, IN HIS RECENT BOOK, AFTERBURN, ASKS THE ONE, SUPREME

IMPORTANT QUESTION THAT WE HAVE NOT DARED TO ASK. CAN WE ASSURE:

"THAT THE WORLD OF IDEAS WILL GO ON WITHOUT US: THAT OUR DESCENDANTS WILL CONTINUE TO COMPOSE MUSIC, INVENT TOOLS, REFINE SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE, AND WRITE HISTORIES, EXTENDING INTO THE INDEFINITE FUTURE THE CUMULATIVE, CONSTANTLY EVOLVING UNIVERSE OF SIGNS, SYMBOLS AND SKILLS THAT ENRICHED OUR LIVES"?¹

THIS QUESTION IS UNTHINKABLE AND UNASKABLE BECAUSE IT PLACES US WITH, OR PERHAPS ONLY A STEP OR TWO BEHIND, THE VANISHED CULTURES OF EASTER ISLAND, THE LASCAUX CAVES AND THE MAYAN JUNGLES. CULTURAL DEATH DOES NOT APPEAR ON OUR ACTION SCALE; BUT JUST BEYOND IT LIES THE ABYSS OF CIVILIZATIONAL AND SPECIES COLLAPSE.

HOW CAN SUCH A THING HAPPEN ? WHY DO WE ONLY NOW MAKE MENTION OF THIS ? BECAUSE WE ARE AT A TIME WHEN MANY OF THE ATTITUDES AND NUMBERS THAT INFLUENCE OUR CULTURE ARE REACHING LEVELS WHERE THE BENEFITS THEY SEEMED TO OFFER IN THE PAST ARE GREATLY DIMINISHED AND ARE BEGINNING TO IMPOSE PENALTIES UPON OUR SOCIETY FOR OUR ABUSE OF THEM.

THIS TENSION BETWEEN OUR CULTURAL PAST AND PRESENT EXPRESSES ITSELF IN OUR SOCIETY AS SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONTRADICTION. WHEN IT WAS WRITTEN, OUR CONSTITUTION WAS DEEMED THE PRIMARY SOURCE FOR DEALING WITH THE CONTRADICTIONS INHERENT IN THE OPEN DEMOCRACY CREATED BY OUR FOUNDERS. BUT TIMES HAVE CHANGED, AND AMERICA NOW FINDS ITSELF FACING THE EXISTENTIAL PROBLEMS CAUSED BY OUR GROWING DIVISIONS WITH A GOVERNMENT THAT MANY CITIZENS, AS WELL AS POLITICIANS FROM BOTH PARTIES, REGARD AS "BROKEN".

IN OUR DEMOCRACY IT WAS ENVISAGED THAT GOVERNMENT COULD AND WOULD BE CHANGED AS THE RESULT OF POPULAR OPINION EXPRESSED THROUGH OUR ELECTORAL SYSTEM BY EACH CITIZEN'S INDIVIDUAL VOTE. FOR MOST OF OUR HISTORY, WHILE REVEALING OCCASIONAL AND REPAIRABLE FAILURES, THIS HAS WORKED, BUT TWO RECENT DEVELOPMENTS HAVE GREATLY COMPROMISED THE VOTERS' INFLUENCE ON THEIR GOVERNMENT.

FIRST AND FOREMOST, HAS BEEN

THE INCREASINGLY GENEROUS AMOUNTS AND FORMS OF COMPENSATION CONGRESS HAS ESTABLISHED FOR ITSELF, THEREBY CREATING A NEW CLASS OF PERMANENT, FULL TIME POLITICAL REPRESENTATION MARKED BY MULTIPLE RE-ELECTIONS OVER MANY YEARS. THESE TIGHTEN CONTROL OF GOVERNMENT IN THE HANDS OF INCUMBENTS AND RAISE THE COSTS OF ELECTORAL CHALLENGES.

THE OTHER DOMINANT FACTOR IN BRINGING ABOUT OUR “BROKEN” GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN THE ENORMOUS EXPANSION IN WASHINGTON OF THE PRESENCE AND INFLUENCE OF LOBBYISTS REPRESENTING A VERY BROAD ARRAY OF SPECIAL INTERESTS. THESE TWO ELEMENTS ARE NOT “EITHER/OR”. QUITE TO THE CONTRARY, THEY ARE CLOSELY RELATED, AS THE LOBBYIST GROUPS DIRECTLY INFLUENCE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS AND COMPENSATION.

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TO ANSWER OUR QUESTIONS OF HOW CIVILIZATIONAL COLLAPSE CAN OCCUR AND WHY WE MENTION IT, WE WILL RETURN TO THE TOPIC OF OUR PREVIOUS CHAPTER — ISLAM AS A CULTURAL THREAT — AND EMPLOY SPECIFIC NUMBERS TO ILLUSTRATE ITS POTENTIAL TO MENACE OUR SOCIETY. ESTIMATING FUTURE, AND EVEN PRESENT, POPULATION NUMBERS IS NOT AN EXACT SCIENCE. THEY DEPEND LARGELY UPON ERRATIC HUMAN BEHAVIOR INVOLVED IN POLITICS, PROCREATION, ECONOMICS, WARFARE, SCIENCE/ TECHNOLOGY, PUBLIC HEALTH AND, OF COURSE, RELIGION; AND IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT ISLAM DIFFERS MARKEDLY FROM OUR WCIV IN ITS ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE IN THESE AREAS.

ANY FUTURE PROJECTION MUST HAVE A STARTING POINT IN THE PAST OR THE PRESENT. FOR OUR EFFORT TO ILLUSTRATE THE CONSEQUENCES OF ISLAMIC GROWTH UPON OUR CULTURE WE USE THE FIGURE OF 7 MILLION MUSLIMS PRESENTLY LIVING IN THE US² WITH EACH FAMILY HAVING AN AVERAGE FERTILITY RATE OF SIX CHILDREN. BOTH OF THESE ASSUMPTIONS ARE NOT ONLY REALISTIC, BUT MAY BE CONSERVATIVE CONSIDERING ISLAM’S CURRENT GLOBAL POPULATION PARADIGM.

FROM 2015 TO THE BEGINNING OF THE NEXT CENTURY REPRESENTS A SPAN OF JUST UNDER THREE GENERATIONS. AT OUR PRESENT POPULATION OF 320 MILLION, MUSLIMS (7 MILLION) REPRESENT ABOUT 2% OF OUR TOTAL, BUT AS OUR OVERALL FERTILITY RATE IS ABOUT A THIRD OF THE MUSLIM RATE (2 CHILDREN PER FAMILY AS OPPOSED TO 6), IT CAN BE EXPECTED THAT THE MUSLIM SHARE OF THE TOTAL WILL GROW OVER TIME SO THAT A US POPULATION OF A BILLION BY THE END OF THE CENTURY COULD BE 42% MUSLIM.³

THESE NUMBERS WILL NOT PLAY OUT STATISTICALLY IN A MANNER CONSISTENT WITH THE PHYSICAL, SOCIAL, ECONOMICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF OUR TIME. RATHER, THEY WILL BOTH REFLECT AND DRIVE THE DRASTICALLY DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES THAT WILL OCCUR IN THE REMAINDER OF THIS CENTURY. WE CAN EXPECT MORE OF SOME THINGS AND LESS OF OTHERS. POPULATION, POLLUTION AND HIGH FOOD PRICES ARE “MORES”; THE AVAILABILITY OF WATER, ARABLE LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES WILL BE “LESS”. THERE WILL BE OTHER

DISLOCATIONS — SOME MINOR OR GRADUAL; OTHERS MAJOR OR SUDDEN — BUT ALL WILL BE EXACERBATED BY A MUSLIM, OR ANY OTHER, FERTILITY RATE OF 6 BIRTHS PER FAMILY. THIS LAST IS IMPORTANT. POPULATION NUMBERS ARE NUMBERS REGARDLESS OF THEIR RELIGION OR ETHNICITY, WHEREAS IMPACTS OF POPULATION GROWTH BY CULTURE CAN VARY WIDELY.

AGAIN, POPULATION PROJECTIONS ARE BY THEIR NATURE REMOTE, BUT THERE SEEMS TO BE A CONSENSUS FROM MULTIPLE SOURCES THAT THE U.S. IS HEADING TOWARDS A MID-CENTURY POPULATION OF AROUND 500 MILLION AND CLOSE TO A BILLION TURNING INTO THE NEXT CENTURY. FOR ISLAM, POPULATION IS NOT A MATTER OF COMMUNITY, GOVERNMENT OR INDIVIDUAL CONCERN. IT IS AN ASPECT OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF/PRACTICE ORDERED BY THE DIVINE TEXT OF THE QURAN. IT IS A VERY IMPORTANT PART OF WHAT ISLAM IS AND DOES, AND WILL NOT BE DISSUADED BY THE ENVIRONMENTAL OR CULTURAL INTERESTS OF “INFIDEL” (I.E. NON-MUSLIM) GROUPS WHETHER RELIGIOUS, NATIONAL OR REGIONAL.

ON THE `WORLD SCALE, OUR PLANET NOW HAS A POPULATION OF ABOUT 7 BILLION WHICH MOST SOURCES EXPECT TO STRETCH TO 9.5 OR 10 BILLION BY 2100. THESE NUMBERS DO NOT REFLECT THE POSSIBILITY OF A GLOBAL MUSLIM EXPANSION; NOR DO THEY CONSIDER SUCH UNPREDICTABLE, NATURAL DISLOCATIONS AS REGIONAL WATER LOSS, CROP FAILURES, MARINE AND INSECT SPECIES COLLAPSE AND OTHER EVENTS CAPABLE OF DISRUPTING THE FOOD CHAIN ON WHICH WE RELY FOR OUR SUSTENANCE.

WHATEVER COMBINATION OF NATURAL AND HUMAN INTERACTIONS MAY OCCUR IN THE REST OF OUR CENTURY, IT IS CERTAIN THAT ISLAM’S AGGRESSIVE AND RELIGIOUS POPULATION MODEL WILL WREAK CONSIDERABLE HAVOC UPON OTHER SYSTEMS ACCUSTOMED TO COOPERATIVE PLANNING AND METHODS.

AND THERE IS AN ALMOST ULTIMATE IRONY HERE IN THAT THE SAME POPULATION EXCESS THAT FUELS AND DRIVES ISLAMIC EXPANSION/CONQUEST, CARRIES THE SEEDS OF ISLAM’S OWN DESTRUCTION AS IT ACCELERATES THE DECLINE OF RESOURCE LEVELS AVAILABLE TO OUR WORLD AND ECONOMY. OUR 21ST CENTURY WILL BE A TIME OF “MORE PEOPLE CHASING FEWER RESOURCES” — A TIME WHEN IT WILL BE INCREASINGLY DANGEROUS TO HAVE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS DETERMINE RESOURCE AVAILABILITY AND USE; AND A TIME TO RECOGNIZE THAT OUR PLANET’S ABILITY TO SUPPORT LIFE AND CIVILIZATION IN THEIR PRESENT FORMS AND NUMBERS IS LIMITED.

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WE MUST ALSO RECOGNIZE THAT WE HAVE A CULTURAL CARRYING CAPACITY IN OUR COUNTRY AND THAT THE CONTINUING INFLUX IN THEIR RECENT NUMBERS OF MEMBERS OF A CULTURE AS ALIEN AS ISLAM WILL BRING A TIPPING POINT AFTER WHICH OUR CULTURE WILL BE OVERWHELMED AND DEPRIVED OF ITS HISTORICAL RESILIENCY.

WITH A GROWING AND UNCONTROLLED ISLAMIC PRESENCE IN AMERICA WE WILL HAVE TO CONFRONT TWO VERY

POWERFUL FORCES — UNRELENTING NUMBERS AND A FAITH THAT TOLERATES NO COMPETITION. IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD CHRISTIANS, JEWS AND OTHER BELIEFS ENGAGE IN EFFORTS TOWARDS GREATER UNDERSTANDING, ECUMENISM, THE COMBINATION OF TEXTS AND SERVICES, AS WELL AS OUTREACH TO MEMBERS OF SEXUAL AND RACIAL MINORITIES AND TO THE VAST NUMBERS OF THOSE WHO LIVE IN POVERTY. AT BEST, IT'S ACCURATE TO SAY THAT ISLAM IS UNDERREPRESENTED IN THESE ACTIVITIES AND WILL NOT CHANGE AT OUR REQUEST.

EXPANDING ISLAM PRESENTS THE EXTERNAL THREAT OF A VIOLENT AND AUTHORITARIAN BELIEF SYSTEM BEING INSERTED INTO OUR CULTURE. IN AUGUST IT WAS REPORTED IN BANGLADESH THAT FOR THE FOURTH TIME THIS YEAR AN ONLINE BLOGGER HAD BEEN KILLED BY SUSPECTED MEMBERS OF A MUSLIM MILITANT GROUP, ANSARULLAH BANGLA TEAM. IN THIS RECENT ATTACK SEVERAL MEN GAINED ACCESS TO 28-YEAR OLD NILADRI NILOY'S APARTMENT AND HACKED HIM TO DEATH, OSTENSIBLY BECAUSE "HE HAD A FACEBOOK ACCOUNT IN WHICH HE CRITICIZED RADICAL ISLAMISTS AT HOME AND ABROAD"⁴; NOR SHOULD WE FORGET THE TALE IN OUR JULY ISSUE OF CHRISTIANS THROWN OVERBOARD FROM A BOAT BY MUSLIMS FOLLOWING A RELIGIOUS ARGUMENT ?

THESE TWO EXAMPLES OF RELIGIOUSLY MOTIVATED KILLINGS RESULT FROM DIFFERENCES OF OPINION WHICH WE GUARANTEE UNDER OUR CONSTITUTION, BUT WHICH IS CONSIDERED AS THE BASIS FOR REASONABLE HOMICIDE BY ISLAMIC EXTREMISTS. HOW WILL THESE TWO VERY OPPOSITE CULTURAL ATTITUDES BE RESOLVED IN AN AMERICA WITH A MUSLIM POPULATION OF 7 MILLION AND GROWING ? OUR CUSTOMARY ANSWER IS THAT "IT CAN'T HAPPEN HERE", BUT THAT NO LONGER HOLDS. WE HAVE ALREADY EXPERIENCED MUSLIM VIOLENCE THAT HAS DEFIED OUR CULTURE (I.E., 9/11, FORT HOOD, ET AL) AND WE CAN BE ASSURED THAT NOT ONLY CAN IT HAPPEN HERE, BUT THAT IT WILL.

HOW WILL WE REACT ? AS CITIZENS ? AS "A NATION OF LAWS" ? AS A PROCLAIMED OPEN/TOLERANT SOCIETY ? AS CONSTITUTIONALISTS ? AS JEWS, CHRISTIANS OR MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH OF YOUR CHOICE ? THE RELIGIOUS KILLER IN AMERICA TODAY, IF TAKEN INTO CUSTODY, TRIED AND CONVICTED, WILL THEN FACE EITHER LIFE IMPRISONMENT OR A DEATH PENALTY THAT WILL ALLOW AN APPEAL PROCEDURE OF 20 YEARS OR MORE. IN SUCH A PROCESS THE INFLUENCE OF GOVERNMENT, MEDIA, RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL AND ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS WILL BE FELT, AND OFTEN IN CONTRADICTORY WAYS.

BUT WHO WILL SPEAK FOR AMERICA'S CULTURE ? WHO WILL SAY THAT OUR FREEDOM OF RELIGION IS SOMETHING WE VALUE BECAUSE OF ITS ABILITY TO EXPAND OUR RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE, AND WE WILL NOT ALLOW OTHERS TO USE IT AGAINST US ? WHO WILL SAY THAT ISLAM'S TEACHING BASED IN THE QURAN IS SO ANTITHETICAL TO OUR VALUES AND HISTORY THAT AN UNCONTROLLED AND EXPANDING ISLAMIC POPULATION CONSTITUTES A GRAVE THREAT TO OUR WCIV CULTURE ? OUR CULTURE, WHICH HAS COME UPON HARD TIMES IN RECENT YEARS, IS GENERALLY, BUT NOT ALWAYS, SOMETHING OF WHICH WE CAN BE PROUD. BUT WHO WILL DEFEND IT ?

THESE ARE QUESTIONS WHICH ALL FAILED SOCIETIES WOULD NOT, OR COULD NOT, ANSWER. THEY ARE ONES TO WHICH ANSWERS COULD HAVE READILY BEEN HEARD AT A 19TH CENTURY VILLAGE BANDSTAND CONCERT OR AT CHICAGO'S 1876 WORLD'S FAIR. SUCH ANSWERS WERE LIKELY TO BE OFFERED BY READERS OF H.W. LONGFELLOW'S POETRY; BY THOSE WHO SANG THE WORDS AND LISTENED TO THE MUSIC OF GEORGE M. COHAN; BY WW I AND II YOUTHS ON THEIR WAY TO ENLISTMENT CENTERS; BY FAMILIES VISITING OUR NATIONAL PARKS AND MONUMENTS SUCH AS MT. RUSHMORE AND WILLIAMSBURG, VA; AND EVEN BY 1930S DUST BOWL FARMERS PRESSURED BY DROUGHT, DEPRESSION AND BANKS.

OUR CULTURE, TROUBLED BY SERIOUS CONFLICTS AT A TIME WHEN WE FAIL IT AND IT FAILS US, DESERVES OUR ATTENTION.

CULTURAL AMERICA, 2015

LIKE A FABRIC, OUR CULTURE IS COMPOSED OF MANY THREADS ALIGNED BOTH VERTICALLY AND HORIZONTALLY THAT PROVIDE STRENGTH AND ALLOW IT TO MOVE IN ANY DIRECTION. THIS MOVEMENT MAY BE SO AGONIZINGLY SLOW OR SO STARTLINGLY QUICK THAT OUR CULTURAL ANTENNAE FAIL TO REGISTER IT; AND WHETHER BY LARGE SHIFTS, OR SMALL, OUR RELATION TO OUR CULTURE HAS BECOME PASSIVE RATHER THAN INTENTIONAL.

WE MUST GO BACK FOR A MOMENT TO THOSE CRITICAL FIFTEEN YEARS OF OUR FOUNDING FROM THE D OF I IN 1776 TO THE RATIFICATION OF THE BILL OF RIGHTS IN 1791. THE THIRTEEN COLONIES THAT BOUND THEMSELVES TOGETHER BY THE CONSTITUTION HAD EXISTED INDEPENDENTLY FOR ABOUT 150 YEARS WITH DIFFERENT ECONOMIES, POPULATIONS, DEBTS, RELIGIONS, CURRENCIES, LAWS AND LEADERS.

IN THE PROCESS OF COMING TOGETHER, THESE MANY DIFFERENCES HAD TO BE VIEWED AND TREATED AS SUBORDINATE TO THE NEEDS OF THE NEW NATION. THIS WAS NO SMALL FEAT. TIMES WERE TOUGH DURING AND AFTER OUR REVOLUTIONARY WAR; LABOR WAS HARD AND HOURS LONG; AND OUR FOUNDERS FOUGHT BITTER BATTLES OVER MANY OF THE ISSUES THAT OUR NEW FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAD TO RESOLVE. PROBABLY, THE ONE FACTOR THAT ENABLED OUR FOUNDERS AND OUR NATION TO SURVIVE THESE DIFFERENCES WAS THAT, DESPITE ITS BEING HOST TO VARIOUS NATIONALITIES (I.E., ENGLISH, FRENCH, SWEDISH, GERMAN, DUTCH), COLONIAL AMERICA WAS PREDOMINANTLY OF ONE CULTURE, NORTHERN EUROPEAN, AND ONE LANGUAGE, ENGLISH, WHICH HAVE PROVIDED THE BASE FOR AMERICAN CULTURE EVER SINCE.

NO MATTER WHAT THE TEXTS OF OUR D OF I AND CONSTITUTION SAID, OUR NEW GOVERNMENT COULD NOT HAVE SUCCEEDED HAD NOT THE THIRTEEN COLONIES BEEN ABLE TO RESOLVE A BROAD ARRAY OF DIFFERENCES MANY OF WHICH WERE NOT POLITICAL. THE BRIDGE THAT CONNECTED, RATHER THAN SEPARATED, THESE INTERESTS WAS THE GOAL OF CREATING A NEW FORM OF GOVERNMENT BASED ON THEIR COMMON CULTURE.

THAT AMERICA HAS SUCCEEDED AS GREATLY AS IT HAS MARKS ANOTHER STEP IN THE EVOLUTION OF WCIV.

OUR POLITICAL CULTURE

THE ROLE OF POLITICS IN CULTURE IS NOT THE SAME IN ALL SOCIETIES. NOT SURPRISINGLY GIVEN OUR CIRCUMSTANCES, POLITICS, WHETHER PRINCIPLED OR MERELY CONTENTIOUS, HAVE BEEN A CONSISTENTLY PROMINENT ASPECT OF OUR CULTURE, AND YET THEIR QUALITY AND NATURE HAVE CHANGED DRAMATICALLY.

IN THE BEGINNING, OUR GOVERNMENT WAS LONG ON IDEALISM AND SHORT ON MONEY AND POWER. WHAT WAS EQUALLY AS UNIQUE AS OUR NEW FORM OF GOVERNMENT WAS THE CONTINENT-WIDE EXPANSE OF LAND THAT WAS OURS FOR THE TAKING ONCE WE REMOVED ITS INDIGENOUS TRIBES, WHICH WE READILY ACCOMPLISHED BY USE OF GUILLE AND GUNS. IN THE PROCESS WE LOST SOME OF OUR IDEALISM AND GAINED ENORMOUS WEALTH/POWER FROM OUR ENLARGING TERRITORY.

OUR WESTWARD EXPANSION WAS AN ENORMOUS UNDERTAKING AND, ALTHOUGH IT STRETCHED OUR BORDERS TO EMBRACE OVER THREE AND A HALF MILLION SQUARE MILES AND SPECTACULAR VISTAS UNKNOWN TO OUR EAST COAST SETTLERS AND THEIR EUROPEAN FOREBEARS, IT WAS A POLITICAL, AS WELL AS A PHYSICAL, PROCESS. IN EVERY TOWN, COUNTY AND STATE POLITICAL STRUCTURES HAD TO BE ESTABLISHED BY THEIR ORIGINAL SETTLERS AND THEN OFTEN ADAPTED TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF STATEHOOD AND THE ACTIVITIES OF OUR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. POLITICS WAS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF OUR EXPANSION — SOMETIMES PEACEFUL AND COOPERATIVE; AT OTHER TIMES, VIOLENT AND BLOODY. BUT NO MATTER HOW DIFFICULT POLITICAL RELATIONS BECAME, THE JOURNEY WAS ALWAYS WORTH IT; THE GREAT PRIZE LAY JUST AHEAD AND ALMOST WITHIN REACH.

WITH UNLIMITED WEALTH, FREEDOM, OPPORTUNITY AND LAND AHEAD, IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT MONEY AND POWER TRAILED CLOSELY BEHIND READY TO ESTABLISH THEIR OWN EFFICIENCIES AND RULES OF CONDUCT.

THE INTERACTION OF THESE FOUR FORCES — SEEMINGLY LIMITLESS NATURAL ABUNDANCE, TOTALLY INDEPENDENT PIONEER POPULATIONS, EMERGING POLITICAL POWER THAT COULD WRITE ITS OWN RULES AND THE RETURN OF LARGE REWARDS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS FROM SETTLERS' EFFORTS — ENERGIZED A CENTURY OF AMERICA'S GREATEST GROWTH AND ITS INDUSTRIALIZATION. ALL ELEMENTS DID NOT WORK SMOOTHLY TOGETHER AT ALL TIMES, BUT WHEN ONE SPATTERED OR FALTERED, THE OTHERS COULD ADJUST THEIR PACE/FUNCTION AND MAINTAIN MOMENTUM.

ANY NATIONAL EFFORT ON A SCALE SUCH AS OUR WESTERN EXPANSION CANNOT AVOID HAVING A MAJOR IMPACT UPON ITS NATIVE CULTURE, AND AMERICA IS PROOF POSITIVE FOR THIS STATEMENT. IN WAYS FAR TOO NUMEROUS TO LIST THE US WAS TRANSFORMED FROM ITS FLEDGLING NATIONAL STATUS IN THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY TO A DOMINANT WORLD POWER A HUNDRED YEARS LATER, AND MUCH OF THE DRAMA OF THIS HISTORY —

ITS SUCCESSES AND FAILURES, ITS CHANGES IN OUR CHARACTER AND VALUES, AND THE WAYS IN WHICH WE VIEW OURSELVES AND OTHERS — IS FLAWLESSLY RECORDED IN OUR CULTURE. IN NO ASPECT OF OUR NATION IS THIS MORE EVIDENT THAN THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF ITS POLITICS.

POLITICS IN AMERICA — 2015

THERE IS LITTLE THAT OUR TWO MAJOR PARTIES AGREE UPON, ESPECIALLY IN THIS YEAR RUNNING UP TO A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, BUT CANDIDATES AND OTHERS FREQUENTLY ADMIT THAT “WASHINGTON IS BROKEN”. THIS JUDGMENT HAS BECOME A POPULAR ONE IN RECENT YEARS, AS IT HAS BEEN LEVELLED AT OUR TAX CODE, OUR IMMIGRATION SYSTEM AND OUR NATIONAL BUDGETARY PROCEDURE. CONTEMPLATING THE EXTENT OF THIS WRECKAGE AND ITS IMPACT UPON OUR POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT IS NOT A HAPPY TASK.

IT LEADS US TO THE CONCLUSION THAT OUR NATION WOULD BE BETTER OFF WITH BETTER GOVERNMENT AND LESS POLITICS, BUT UNFORTUNATELY JUST THE REVERSE IS TRUE TODAY. POLITICS RULES AND THE QUALITY OF OUR GOVERNMENT, DESPITE ITS BLOATED SIZE, HAS BEEN CONSISTENTLY DOWNGRADED. TO INDULGE IN THE FINGER-POINTING BLAME GAME TWO FINGERS ARE NEEDED, AS OUR GOVERNMENT'S DETERIORATION HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED BY THE FULL AND EQUAL PARTICIPATION OF BOTH DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS.

IN THIS PROCESS THE IDEALISM THAT MARKED OUR FOUNDING HAS BEEN EXCHANGED FOR AN ATMOSPHERE OF BRUTAL IDEOLOGY IN WHICH POLITICAL PURITY, WHETHER EXPRESSED IN REPUBLICAN/DEMOCRAT OR CONSERVATIVE/LIBERAL DIALOGUE, ENJOYS PRECEDENCE OVER HOW OUR GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONS AND THE INSTITUTIONS WE HAVE CREATED AND BUILT FOR THAT PURPOSE. THIS SHIFT FROM IDEALISM TO IDEOLOGY HAS CORRUPTED OUR PROCESSES AND INSTITUTIONS; AND OUR PRESENT STATE OF STALEMATED IDEOLOGICAL WARFARE ADMINISTERS A SLOW, DRIP ANESTHETIC TO OUR GOVERNMENT. AS FOR WASHINGTON BEING BROKEN, BOTH PARTIES ARE, OF COURSE, RIGHT IN WHAT THEY SAY AND TERRIBLY WRONG IN WHAT THEY HAVE DONE.

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THIS EXCHANGE OF OUR EARLY IDEALISM FOR TODAY'S IDEOLOGY IS AS IMPORTANT A CULTURAL SHIFT AS ANY IN OUR HISTORY. IT LEAVES A CULTURAL RECORD OF CHANGED VALUES, DIMINISHED STANDARDS AND LESS RESOLUTE CHARACTER FOR OTHERS TO VIEW AND PONDER. AND IT RENDERS OUR OWN INTERACTIONS OVER TODAY'S COMPLEX ISSUES LESS SURE AS TO THEIR MEANS AND ENDS.

IN THIS PROCESS OF “IDEALISM FOR IDEOLOGY EXCHANGE”, ONE EXPERIENCE STANDS OUT FOR ITS CONSISTENCY AND IMPACT. IT IS CORRUPTION IN ITS MANY FORMS — FINANCIAL, CONSTITUTIONAL, ELECTORAL, POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL — WHICH ARE SO PERVASIVE THAT PROVIDING GOOD GOVERNMENT

BECOMES MORE DIFFICULT EVEN AS ITS SIZE AND FUNDING ARE INCREASED.

CORRUPTION IS A WORD WE HAVE BECOME ACCUSTOMED TO USING WHEN WE REFER TO THE POLITICS OR FINANCES OF LESSER COUNTRIES IN THE THIRD OR DEVELOPING WORLDS, BUT, IF WE ARE HONEST, IT CAN BE SEEN TO APPLY JUST AS WELL TO OUR OWN GOVERNMENT. WE HAVE, FOR INSTANCE, CORRUPTED THE VALUE OF OUR CURRENCY OVER A PROLONGED PERIOD BY POLICIES THAT HAVE BUILT OUR NATIONAL DEBT TO ITS PRESENT \$18 TRILLION AND GROWING LEVEL. THESE POLICIES ARE NOT THRUST UPON US BY CHANCE, DISASTER OR FORCES BEYOND OUR CONTROL, BUT ARE THE RESULT OF SPECIFIC ACTIONS EITHER TAKEN, OR NOT TAKEN, BY OUR CONGRESS AND OUR FEDERAL RESERVE BANK (FRB) EACH ACTING WITHIN ITS OWN SPHERE OF INTEREST. IN BRIEF, CONGRESS IS CHARGED WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE NATION'S FUNDING AND BUDGETARY FUNCTIONS, AND THE FRB FOR REGULATING INTEREST RATES AND OUR MONEY SUPPLY.

THESE ISSUES HAVE BEEN FRACTIOUS ONES THROUGHOUT OUR HISTORY FOR MOST OF WHICH, UP UNTIL 1913, THERE WAS NO FRB AND THE HEALTH OF THE BANKING SYSTEM WAS SUBJECT TO THE SUDDEN MOVEMENTS OF OUR UNSYNCHRONIZED MARKETS IN THE FORM OF FREQUENT AND SOMETIMES SEVERE "PANICS".

EVEN IN THE CENTURY SINCE THE FRB'S FOUNDING WE HAVE CONTINUED TO EXPERIENCE FLUCTUATIONS IN THE BUSINESS CYCLE WHICH WE NOW REFER TO AS "RECESSIONS" OR "DEPRESSIONS" BECAUSE THEY HAVE A SOFTER SOUND THAN "PANICS", BUT FOR THEIR VICTIMS THE PAIN REMAINS THE SAME.

FOR THE CONSUMER, THE VOTER AND THE TAX PAYER, THE CONSEQUENCES OF THESE LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY PROGRAMS ARE USUALLY FELT IN SMALL AMOUNTS OVER LONG PERIODS. INTEREST RATES USUALLY ARE ADJUSTED BY MINOR FRACTIONS, PRICES RISE BY SMALL PERCENTAGES AND THE EFFECT OF CHANGES IN CURRENCY VALUES, WHICH ARE TRADED DAILY, REQUIRE A LONG PERIOD OF TIME TO REFLECT HISTORICAL TRENDS.

TOWARDS THE END OF WW II THE US AND ITS ALLIES SOUGHT TO CONSTRUCT THROUGH THE BRETTON WOODS AGREEMENT A NEW FINANCIAL SYSTEM THAT COULD AVOID THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE MAJOR FINANCIAL DISASTERS THAT HAD OCCURRED BETWEEN THE WARS. WHAT RESULTED WERE NEW TRADE, BANKING AND CURRENCY SYSTEMS AND A NEW WAY OF THINKING THAT ALLOWED AND PUSHED THE US TO DOMINATE THE WORLD'S ECONOMIC TRANSITION FROM WAR TO PEACE.

CULTURALLY, THIS ROLE CHANGE WAS A DIFFICULT ONE FOR OUR NATION. WHEREAS THE VALUE OF OUR DOLLAR AND OTHER CURRENCIES HAD BEEN BASED ON GOLD FOR MANY YEARS, THIS WAS CHANGED BY BRETTON WOODS AND THEN LATER TERMINATED UNDER PRES. NIXON. AND FROM OUR EARLIEST TIMES WE HAD BEEN A FRUGAL NATION OFTEN GUIDED BY APHORISMS FROM BENJAMIN FRANKLIN OR THE BIBLE SUCH AS "WASTE NOT, WANT NOT" AND "A PENNY SAVED IS A PENNY EARNED". BUT IN THE POSTWAR WORLD OF KEYNESIAN ECONOMICS FRUGALITY WAS OUT AND LENDING WAS IN — AND IN BIG!

THE ECONOMIC/POLITICAL THEORIES PROPOSED TO MANAGE THE NEW ERA OF PEACE AND PROSPERITY ANNOUNCED AT BRETTON WOODS, BASED AS THEY WERE ON CREDIT FINANCING, WERE FUELED BY THE STEADILY INCREASING AMOUNTS OF MONEY AND POWER THAT ACCRUED TO AMERICA IN THE COURSE OF EUROPE'S AND ASIA'S POSTWAR RECONSTRUCTION. IN MOST OF THE WORLD INFRASTRUCTURE AND MACHINERY OF EVERY KIND HAD TO BE REPLACED, WHILE US INDUSTRY HAD ONLY TO RECONVERT TO THE PRODUCTION OF CONSUMER GOODS.

MANY FUELS ARE EXPLOSIVE, AND MONEY AND POWER ARE NO EXCEPTION. AS THEY GREW AND TRANSFORMED AMERICA INTO A SOLE SUPERPOWER, THEY CORRUPTED OUR POLITICAL PROCESS AND WITH IT THE THINKING AND CONDUCT OF OUR LEGISLATIVE AND EXECUTIVE BRANCHES SO THAT IDEOLOGICAL ISSUES AND RESULTS TOOK PRECEDENCE OVER ACTIONS DESIGNED TO IMPROVE, OR AT LEAST RESPONSIBLY MANAGE, OUR GOVERNMENT.

WHETHER BY NEGLIGENCE OR INTENT, AND THE CONSISTENCY OF OUR ECONOMIC PATTERN FAVORS THE LATTER, OUR POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IS NO LONGER ABLE TO CONFRONT SUCH BASIC PROBLEMS AS PREPARING ANNUAL BUDGETS, MAINTAINING THE NATION'S INFRASTRUCTURE AND REVISING OUR TAX CODE.

DEBT CAN BE A USEFUL ECONOMIC TOOL IF AN ORDERLY SYSTEM OF BORROWING AND REPAYMENT CAN BE MAINTAINED, WHEREAS DEBT THAT EXCEEDS THE BORROWER'S ABILITY TO REDUCE OR REPAY IT CAN BE A TRAP FOR BOTH LENDER AND BORROWER. IN GOVERNMENT THE MATTER OF DEBT IS FURTHER CONFUSED BY ITS STATUS AS A POLITICAL AS WELL AS AN ECONOMIC ELEMENT.

IN AMERICA DEBT IS ONE OF CONGRESS' MOST POPULAR "FOOTBALLS" AND THE SUBJECT OF CONSTANT PARTISAN WRANGLING. BOTH PARTIES EMBRACE SOLUTIONS OF LONG TERM REDUCTIONS WHILE ALLOWING FREQUENT SHORT TERM INCREASES. THE NUMBERS THAT RESULT WILL NOT "WORK" EITHER NOW OR IN WHAT LITTLE WE CAN SEE OF OUR FUTURE. LATER THIS YEAR CONGRESS WILL HAVE TO EITHER RAISE OUR DEBT "LIMIT" AGAIN OR FACE DIFFICULT ECONOMIC AND/OR POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES. HISTORY AND POLITICS FAVOR ANOTHER INCREASE.

THIS VIEW OF DEBT AND DUTY IS NOT ONE OF ONLY ECONOMICS AND POLITICS, BUT ALSO CARRIES STRONG CULTURAL CONNOTATIONS. WITHIN THE PAST TWO GENERATIONS AMERICA HAS TRANSFORMED ITSELF FROM THE POSTWAR PERIOD'S WEALTHIEST NATION AND MOST EXTENSIVE CREDITOR TO OUR PRESENT STATUS AS THE WORLD'S LARGEST DEBTOR.

OUR PRESENT EXPERIENCE OF DEBT, ITSELF, HAS COMPLETELY REVERSED ITSELF FROM THAT OF OUR COLONIAL ORIGINS WHEN OUR PURITAN STRAIN CELEBRATED FRUGALITY AND CALLED FOR DEBT TO BE AVOIDED. AND FREEDOM FROM DEBT, AS OUR COLONIES COMBINED AND BECAME A NATION, WAS CONSIDERED AS A LESSER ASPECT OF THE LARGER POLITICAL FREEDOM TO WHICH WE ASPIRED.

WE HAVE COME TO RELY UPON DEBT AS A PAINLESS WAY TO AVOID THE HARSH REALITY OF THE CONSEQUENCES

OF OUR POLICIES AND POLITICS, AND, WHILE BOTH PARTIES HAVE ADOPTED IT WITH VARYING RHETORIC AND DEGREES OF ENTHUSIASM, IT IS NOW GRADUALLY BEING RECOGNIZED AS A THREAT THAT DEMANDS ACTION. WE MEASURE OUR DEBT IN TRILLIONS OF DOLLARS — NUMBERS SO LARGE THAT THEY DO NOT RELATE IN ANY MEANINGFUL WAY TO THE NUMBERS AND SCALE OF OUR LIVES. THIS DISCONNECT IS BAD ENOUGH ECONOMICALLY AND POLITICALLY. IT IS EQUALLY, IF NOT MORE, DAMAGING CULTURALLY — TO HOW WE VIEW OURSELVES, AND HOW OTHERS VIEW US.

OUR LAWS AND OUR CULTURE

THE UNIFICATION OF OUR THIRTEEN COLONIES INTO A SINGLE, COOPERATIVE NATION REQUIRED CONSIDERABLE LEGISLATIVE SKILL AND VISION. DIFFERENCES COULD BE DEEP AND ARGUMENTS BITTER, BUT ONCE PASSED, BILLS BECAME ACTS WHICH COMBINED TO ESTABLISH “THE LAW OF THE LAND”. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN INCONCEIVABLE FOR ANY BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT TO DISREGARD LEGISLATION DULY PROPOSED AND PASSED BY CONGRESS.

AND YET SUCH DISREGARD IS CLEARLY EVIDENT IN OUR CURRENT POLITICAL CLIMATE, MOST NOTABLE IN REGARDS TO OUR IMMIGRATION ISSUE. THERE WE FIND SELECTIVE ENFORCEMENT OF THE LAW SO COMMON AND FREQUENT THAT IT HAS BECOME ROUTINE. IN THIS CIRCUMSTANCE BOTH OUR LEGISLATIVE AND EXECUTIVE BRANCHES REFUSE TO EXERCISE THEIR VARIOUS POWERS TO ENFORCE “THE LAW OF THE LAND” AS IT EXISTS.

IN OUR SYSTEM EACH OF THESE BRANCHES HAS AVAILABLE TO IT MEANS TO CHANGE OR DO AWAY WITH EXISTING LAW. FOR OBVIOUS REASONS, IN A CONSTITUTIONAL, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC SUCH AS OURS, REVISING OR ELIMINATING ANY LAW THAT HAS BEEN PASSED BY CONGRESS AND SIGNED BY THE PRESIDENT SHOULD NOT BE AN EASY PROCESS. BUT IT CAN BE DONE AND OFFERS A MORE HONORABLE CHOICE THAN TRASHING OUR LEGISLATIVE/ENFORCEMENT PROCEDURE. AND HONOR IS A CULTURAL VALUE.

WHILE IMMIGRATION HAS ATTAINED RECENT PROMINENCE AS AN ELECTORAL ISSUE IN THE GOP NOMINATING DEBATES, IT HAS BEEN THE “POSTER BOY” FOR SELECTIVE LAW ENFORCEMENT FOR OVER A QUARTER OF A CENTURY. FOLLOWING PRES. REAGAN’S 1986 SIGNING OF THE IMMIGRATION REFORM AND CONTROL ACT (IRCA), WHICH ESTABLISHED A “ONE TIME” AMNESTY FOR SEVERAL MILLION ILLEGAL ALIENS IN RETURN FOR IMPROVED ENTRY CONTROLS, THE IMMIGRATION FLOODGATES OPENED WIDE, AS ADMISSIONS SOARED AND RESTRICTIONS WERE RELAXED. SINCE THEN, DURING THE TERMS OF FOUR PRESIDENT (2 BUSHES, CLINTON, OBAMA) AND THIRTEEN CONGRESSES, NO EFFORT HAS BEEN MADE TO ENFORCE EITHER THE SPECIFIC LANGUAGE OR THE GENERAL INTENT OF OUR EXISTING IMMIGRATION LAW.

NOT ONLY HAVE THESE PRESIDENTS AND CONGRESSES IGNORED THIS EXTENSIVE BODY OF LAW, BUT THERE HAVE BEEN EFFORTS TO BOTH CIRCUMVENT IT AND, BY PRES. OBAMA, TO

CHALLENGE IT IN STATE AND FEDERAL COURTS. THESE EFFORTS ARE ESPECIALLY CYNICAL CONSIDERING THE MEANS POSSESSED BY BOTH BRANCHES TO CHANGE LAWS.

BUT IT IS NOT ONLY THE DIRECT PARTICIPATION OF PRESIDENTS AND CONGRESSES THAT IS SO CYNICAL. THE EFFORTS TO NULLIFY AND DELEGITIMIZE OUR EXTANT LAW ARE OFTEN APPLIED BY EXECUTIVE PRESSURE THROUGH GOVERNMENT AGENCIES/DEPARTMENTS SUCH AS THE DEPTS. OF JUSTICE (DOJ), TREASURY (DOT), HOMELAND SECURITY (DHS) AND OTHERS THAT HAVE BEEN FORMED TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF THE NATION AND ITS PEOPLE. HOW DO CIRCUMVENTION, EXECUTIVE COUNTER ORDERS OR LITIGATION, ESPECIALLY AGAINST STATES, ADVANCE THOSE PURPOSES?

OUR GOVERNMENT AND MUCH OF OUR CULTURE THAT HAS GROWN OUT OF IT ARE BASED IN OUR CONSTITUTION AND D O I. CONSIDER, FOR INSTANCE, THE PREAMBLE TO THE FORMER:

“WE THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES, IN ORDER TO FORM A MORE PERFECT UNION, ESTABLISH JUSTICE, INSURE DOMESTIC TRANQUILITY, PROVIDE FOR THE COMMON DEFENSE, PROMOTE THE GENERAL WELFARE, AND SECURE THE BLESSINGS OF LIBERTY TO OURSELVES AND OUR POSTERITY . . .⁵”

THOSE ARE HONORABLE, NOT CYNICAL, AIMS. THEY ARE LOFTY, GENEROUS AND DESIGNED TO BENEFIT ALL. HOW CAN WE RECONCILE THEM WITH BOTH PARTIES’ LEADERS’ EFFORTS TO SUBVERT OUR IMMIGRATION LAW AND THE PROCESS THAT PRODUCED IT? THE ANSWER IS, “WE CAN’T”. WE HAVE ARRIVED AT A POINT IN THE LIFE OF OUR GOVERNMENT WHEN ITS LEADERSHIP HAS NO MORE BELIEF IN THE RIGHTS OF ITS CITIZENS THAN THE AUTHORITARIAN POLITICAL FORMS WE SO OFTEN CONDEMN.

CYNICISM IS THE SWORN ENEMY OF THE IDEALISM THAT DROVE OUR FOUNDERS AND LED JAMES MADISON TO DESCRIBE THEIR ACHIEVEMENT AS HAVING “NO MODEL ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH”; AND IDEALISM DRIVES POLITICS BECAUSE PEOPLE WANT LAWS THEY CAN TRUST AND A REASONABLE HOPE FOR ETHICAL GOVERNMENT — FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR CHILDREN.

OUR GOVERNMENT’S FAILURE TO ENFORCE ITS OWN LAWS RESULTS FROM ITS BEING UNABLE TO RESIST THE CORRUPTION BY LARGE AMOUNTS OF MONEY AND POWER OFFERED ON A DAILY BASIS BY SPECIAL INTERESTS. CORRUPTION INEVITABLY BREEDS CYNICISM WHICH IS REFLECTED IN OUR CULTURE. THERE, IT CONFLICTS WITH OUR EARLY IDEALISM AND LEAVES DEEP WOUNDS AND UGLY SCARS.

IF WE ARE EVER TO RETURN AND LAY CLAIM TO OUR FOUNDERS’ IDEALISM, WE MUST COMMENCE THAT JOURNEY WITH THIS RECOGNITION: THEIR POLITICAL IDEALISM WAS GIVEN PRACTICAL FORM IN OUR CONSTITUTION WHICH ESTABLISHES THE RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR THREE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT AND THOSE BETWEEN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND THE STATES. IT IS TRUE THAT TODAY OUR GOVERNMENT IS BESET

WITH PROBLEMS THAT DID NOT EXIST IN 1787, BUT THAT IS NO REASON TO ABANDON THE PRINCIPLES OF WHAT HAS BEEN OUR GUIDING DOCUMENT FOR OVER TWO CENTURIES.

THE “LAW OF THE LAND” IS JUST THAT — UNTIL IT IS CHANGED OR REMOVED IN AN ORDERLY MANNER AS PRESCRIBED IN THE CONSTITUTION — AND IT APPLIES AS EQUALLY TO IMMIGRATION AND OTHER DIFFICULT 21ST CENTURY ISSUES AS IT DID WHEN THE NATION WAS FORMED. SADLY, AS OUR POLITICAL LEADERS NOW FIND THEMSELVES UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO CHANGE OR ENFORCE IT, THAT RESPONSIBILITY MUST BE EXERCISED IN THE VOTING BOOTH BY AMERICA’S CITIZENS.

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IT’S TRUE; “WASHINGTON IS BROKEN”, AND THIS IS A POWERFUL ACCUSATION, REGARDLESS OF WHICH PARTY MAKES IT, BECAUSE THE ACCUSER KNOWS HIS TARGET HAS NO QUICK OR CREDIBLE REPLY TO ESCAPE RESPONSIBILITY. HERE, AS A PRESCIENT FULFILLMENT OF ORWELLIAN PROPHECY, THE POLITICAL MOOD OF OUR DAY SEEMS TO RECOGNIZE INACTION AS A VALID FORM OF ACTION. BUT HISTORY TELLS A DIFFERENT STORY TO WHICH WE MUST PAY ATTENTION. THE DAMAGE DONE BY THE INFUSION OF UNCONTROLLED AMOUNTS OF MONEY AND POWER INTO OUR POLITICAL SYSTEM IS EXTENSIVE AND REFLECTED IN OUR CULTURE. BOTH CAN BE RESCUED, BUT NOW, IT SEEMS, ONLY BY AMERICA’S CITIZENS. IT’S A “TWOFRER”. CAN WE RESPOND? CAN WE RECLAIM OUR GOVERNMENT AND OUR CULTURE? CAN “BROKEN WASHINGTON” BE REPAIRED?

THESE QUESTIONS COME AT A TIME WHEN MUCH OF OUR POLITICAL PROCESS IS SUBJECT TO THE AFFLUENCE OF OUR MAINSTREAM MEDIA (MSM), HEAVY FUNDING BY SPECIAL INTERESTS AND THE POLITICAL DETERMINATION OF OUR TWO MAIN PARTIES; AND IN COMBINATION THEY LESSEN THE CHANCE OF A GRASS ROOTS UPSWELL OF THE TYPE OF INDEPENDENT THOUGHT THAT COULD REOPEN OUR SYSTEM.

BEING TRAPPED BETWEEN POWERFUL FORCES OF CONTAINMENT, THE RISK TO OUR DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IS THAT THE PUBLIC WILL GROW INCREASINGLY RESTLESS AND FRUSTRATED AND WILL SUCCUMB TO ARGUMENTS FROM THE FAR RIGHT OR FAR LEFT TO LIBERATE ITSELF. FOR A DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC WITH OUR POLITICAL AND CULTURAL TRADITIONS, EITHER ONE WOULD BE AS BAD AS THE OTHER.

ALTHOUGH OUR “NOBLE EXPERIMENT” IN POLITICS WAS VIEWED AS EXTREME WHEN IT WAS FIRST PROPOSED, AMERICA BECAME A POLITICALLY CENTRIST NATION. WE DID NOT RESORT TO GULAGS OR GUILLOTINES TO DEAL WITH DISSENT, BUT INSTEAD RELIED ON OUR MASS OF MODERATE OPINION FOR ORDERLY POLITICAL PROGRESS AND TRANSFERS OF POWER. WHILE THE PRESENCE AND EXPRESSION OF EXTREME OPINIONS WERE ALLOWED AS PROOF OF OUR CONSTITUTIONAL LIBERTIES, THEY COULD NOT ATTRACT THE BROAD SUPPORT REQUIRED TO CHALLENGE THE POPULAR AND ESTABLISHED CENTER.

BUT, LIKE OTHER ASPECTS OF OUR AGE OF MSM MANIPULATION, POLITICAL FUNDING HAS INCREASED

DRAMATICALLY WITH SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNTS FLOWING TO THE FAR RIGHT AND LEFT. AT THESE EDGES, AND ARMED WITH FUNDS, EXTREME OPINIONS CAN OPPOSE AND CHIP AWAY AT THE CENTER MORE SUCCESSFULLY THAN THEY HAVE IN THE PAST. THIS SETS UP ANOTHER POWERFUL CONFRONTATION OF OUR TIME. CAN THE STRENGTH OF MSM CONTROL AND RECORD AMOUNTS OF FUNDING, INCLUDING THOSE FROM CORPORATE SOURCES, COMBINE TO WEAKEN THE CENTER ENOUGH SO THAT IT CAN NO LONGER FUNCTION AS THE NATION’S STABILIZER ?

CULTURE SHOCK

WHILE CULTURE AND POLITICS CAN OFTEN BE SEEN AS PARTICIPANTS IN A “SHOTGUN WEDDING” WITH HISTORY HOLDING THE GUN, THERE ARE OTHER ASPECTS OF OUR NATIONAL CULTURE THAT RAISE RELEVANT QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS. LET’S TAKE A LOOK AT MUSIC AND, STAYING WITHIN THE SHADOW CAST BY POLITICS, LOOK AT THE MUSIC THAT HAS EMERGED FROM OUR WARS AND BECOME POPULAR.

THE SEVERAL SONGS THAT REMAIN WITH US TODAY FROM OUR REVOLUTIONARY AND CIVIL WARS WERE PRIMARILY UPBEAT MARCHING SONGS THAT AIMED TO BOLSTER SOLDIERS’ PRE-BATTLE SPIRITS. THIS GENRE CONTINUED TO PLAY A ROLE IN LATER WARS, BUT WAS GREATLY OVERSHADOWED BY THE MORE PERSONAL MUSIC AND LYRICS OF THE TWO WORLD WARS.

IN WW I, FOR INSTANCE, GEORGE M. COHAN’S OVER THERE BECAME IMMENSELY POPULAR AS A MEANS OF PROCLAIMING OUR NATIONAL PRIDE AND PURPOSE, BUT THE TWO SONGS THAT MOST CLEARLY AND FREQUENTLY EXPRESSED OUR SOCIETAL RESPONSE TO THE HORROR OF FOUR YEARS OF TRENCH WARFARE WERE THERE’S A LONG, LONG TRAIL A WINDING AND KEEP THE HOME FIRES BURNING. READING THEIR WORDS AND MUSIC, AND IMAGINING THEIR BEING SUNG BY SOLDIERS PINNED DOWN IN FLOODED TRENCHES BY CONSTANT SHELL FIRE, DRAWS A POWERFUL CULTURAL CONTRAST BETWEEN LIFE ON THE WESTERN FRONT AND FONDLY RECALLED TIMES OF PEACE.

“THE GREAT WAR” PRODUCED MANY OTHER SONGS OF LESSER POPULARITY, BOTH SERIOUS AND HUMOROUS, BUT NONE COULD EQUAL THE TWO ABOVE IN PORTRAYING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHAT HUMANITY INTENDED AND WHAT IT DELIVERED.

BY WW II, ONLY 20 YEARS LATER, OUR WORLD OF COMMUNICATIONS HAD COMPLETELY CHANGED. RADIO HAD GONE GLOBAL, PROVIDING INSTANTANEOUS REPORTING OF EVENTS; ALL PRINT MEDIA COVERAGE BECAME MORE TIMELY; AND THROUGHOUT THE DEVELOPED WORLD, BUT ESPECIALLY IN AMERICA’S NUMEROUS TOWNS AND CITIES, MOVIE THEATRES SHOWED FILMS WHICH PRESENTED BOTH THE HEROISM AND EVIL OF WAR WITH THE FORCES OF GOOD ALWAYS TRIUMPHING. WITH THE ACTION OF BATTLE AND THE APPEAL OF ROMANCE ON SCREEN, THE POSSIBILITIES FOR AN ACCOMPANYING SOUND TRACK WERE ENDLESS. HOLLYWOOD, BROADWAY AND LOCAL TIN PAN ALLEYS GAVE IT THEIR BEST WITH THE RESULT THAT FROM 1940 THROUGH 1945 OUR POPULAR MUSIC WAS FOCUSED ON THE MANY DEMANDS, SUCCESSES AND FAILURES IMPOSED ON OUR

LIVES/CULTURE

AS A BODY OF POP MUSIC, WHAT WAS CREATED HERE AND IN EUROPE WAS QUITE AMAZING. UNLIKE WW I WE DID NOT ARRIVE LATE AND DELIVER A QUICK VICTORY. QUITE TO THE CONTRARY, OUR AMERICAN EXPERIENCE OF THE WAR WAS FORMED BY OUR HAVING BEEN HIT FIRST AND HARD WHICH SET A DIFFERENT MOOD FOR WW II'S MUSIC. ANOTHER VARIANT IN ITS STYLE REFLECTED THE EXPONENTIALLY LARGER MARKET CREATED BY THE EMERGENCE OF OUR MASS COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY AND THE VAST RADIO AND FILM AUDIENCES IT SPAWNED.

TECHNOLOGY CHANGES EVERYTHING — FASHION, ART, ARCHITECTURE, WEAPONRY, MEDICINE AND IN THE WAY WE SEE, HEAR AND USE THEM — AND WW II'S MUSIC WAS SEPARATED FROM ITS PREDECESSOR'S BY A GENERATION OF EXTRAORDINARY CHANGE. NOT SURPRISINGLY FOR A LONGER, LARGER AND MORE LETHAL WAR, PERHAPS, ITS SONGS BECAME MORE PERSONAL IN THEIR MESSAGES. THE WAR YEARS' OUTPUT WAS ENORMOUS, AND THERE WAS THE USUAL AMOUNT OF "JUNE/MOON", "OF YOU/LOVE YOU", STANDARD ISSUE LYRICS. BUT THERE WERE ALSO SONGS THAT DEALT WITH HOW LIVES WERE FORCED TO CHANGE AND THE INEVITABLE PAIN, LONGING AND YEARNING CAUSED BY ABSENCE IN THE COURSE OF EVERYDAY LIVES WHOSE COLOR, SHAPE AND CONTENT WERE TRANSFORMED BY WAR. THE FIRST LINE OF ONE SONG FROM 1943, DON'T GET AROUND MUCH ANYMORE, COMES TO MIND:

“MISSED THE SATURDAY DANCE,
HEARD THEY CROWDED THE FLOOR,
COULDN'T BEAR IT WITHOUT YOU,
DON'T GET AROUND MUCH ANYMORE.”

OTHER STANZAS DESCRIBED SIMILARLY HUMAN REACTIONS TO THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND EVENTS OF WARTIME.

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THE POSTWAR PERIOD REVEALED A CHANGED WORLD THAT WE HAD BEEN DECISIVE IN CREATING, BUT WHICH WE COULD NOT CONTROL. CULTURALLY, WE FELL UPON HARD TIMES. THE KOREAN WAR PRODUCED NO MEMORABLE MUSIC AND THAT OF THE VIETNAM WAR DEALT MOSTLY WITH ITS POLITICAL, RATHER THAN ITS HUMAN, ASPECTS, AS EVIDENCED BY HIGHLY POPULAR NUMBERS SUCH AS BOB DYLAN'S WHERE HAVE ALL THE FLOWERS GONE ? AND PETE SEEGER'S KNEE DEEP IN THE BIG MUDDY. THE DROUGHT IN OUR POP MUSIC CULTURE RESUMED AND CONTINUED THROUGH THE YEARS OF OUR LONG RUNNING ENGAGEMENTS IN AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ.

THIS IS NOT SURPRISING, AS A CULTURE IS NOT ONLY JUDGED BY ITS REFLECTIONS OF WAR. STARTING IN THE 1960'S OUR POP MUSIC OF ALL KINDS BEGAN TO EXPERIENCE THE BROAD CHANGES THOSE YEARS BROUGHT TO OUR AND OTHER CULTURES. ELVIS PRESLEY AND THE BEATLES WERE SEEN AS THE INITIATORS OF THE ROCK MUSIC AGE IN WHICH WE ARE STILL MIRE, BUT THEIR STYLES AND CONTENT PALE BY COMPARISON TO WHAT RULES TODAY, AND THEY ARE LONG GONE.

THE TRUTH OF OUR POP MUSIC CULTURE TODAY IS THAT BOTH WORDS AND MUSIC ARE GIVEN TO EXPRESS AND ENCOURAGE OUR SOCIETY'S SURRENDER TO RACIAL AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE, TO DRUGS, CRIME, MISOGYNY, KILLING AND THE DEGRADATION OF LAW AND ORDER AS PROTECTORS OF OUR COMMUNITIES. AT ROCK "CONCERTS", THE MUSIC ELECTRONICALLY AMPLIFIED ("TECHNOLOGY CHANGES EVERYTHING") AND JOINED BY VOCALISTS, REACHES A LEVEL OF ASSAULT AT WHICH THE AUDIENCE IS ENERGIZED AND MANIPULATED TO RESPOND WITH MORE AND CONSTANT NOISE. IN THESE CULTURAL EVENTS ARE PRACTICES OF CROWD CONTROL EQUAL TO THOSE OF ANCIENT CULTURES AND TO THE TOTALITARIAN ONES OF OUR TIME.

LOOKING AT OUR CONTEMPORARY POP MUSIC, THE QUESTION THAT WON'T GO AWAY IS, WHAT WOULD MOZART HAVE THOUGHT OF IT? OR BACH? OR, NEARER OUR OWN TIME, STEPHEN FOSTER, ELGAR OR GERSHWIN? AND FOR OUR LYRICS, SO MANY OF WHICH REFER TO "HOS". "PIMPS" AND "BITCHES" IN A LINGUISTIC MIX THAT DRAWS HEAVILY ON STREET AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, HOW WOULD THEY BE REGARDED BY THOSE EXTRAORDINARY SHOW BIZ LYRICISTS OF THE 1930-60 GENERATION — COLE PORTER, OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN, LARRY HART, ALAN JAY LERNER AND IRA GERSHWIN? WERE WE ABLE TO CALL BACK ANY OF THOSE EARLIER ARTISTS WHOSE EFFORTS ELEVATED OUR CULTURE, HOW COULD WE EXPLAIN ITS PRESENT STATE AND OUR ACCEPTANCE OF IT ?

THE NAKED, AND AWFUL, TRUTH SEEMS TO BE THAT MOST AMERICANS HAVE AND SHOW LITTLE CONCERN FOR THEIR CULTURE BEYOND WHAT IS OFFERED (AND THEY ACCEPT) FROM THE SINGLE, MOST POWERFUL ELEMENT IN OUR SOCIETY TODAY — THE UBIQUITOUS, COMMERCIAL MEDIA/ENTERTAINMENT/SPORTS COMPLEX. IT IS SO LARGE AND POWERFUL THAT IT EXERTS A GRAVITATIONAL PULL UPON OTHER SECTORS SUCH AS TRAVEL, FASHION, EDUCATION AND REAL ESTATE. IT CAN REASONABLY LAY CLAIM TO BE THE HEART PUMP OF AMERICAN CONSUMERISM.

SPORTS

WITHIN THIS COMPLEX THAT DOMINATES AMERICAN LIFE AND CULTURE THERE IS ONE, UNDISPUTED KING — FOOTBALL. PRIOR TO OUR POSTWAR TECHNOLOGY EXPANSION, PRINT MEDIA REPORTED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY ON COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S SATURDAY GAMES, AS PRO FOOTBALL BARELY EXISTED AND THE MOST THAT HIGH SCHOOL GAMES COULD EXPECT WAS A BRIEF PARAGRAPH IN LOCAL PAPERS THAT REPORTED OUTCOME AND ANY HIGHLY UNUSUAL EVENT. NOW, ONLINE, IN PRINT OR BY BROADCAST MEDIA EVERYDAY OF THE WEEK, FOOTBALL COVERAGE IS INESCAPABLE

THE MASSIVE GROWTH OF FOOTBALL IN POSTWAR AMERICA HAS NOT RESULTED FROM A COMING TOGETHER OF HAPPY CIRCUMSTANCES AND LOFTY GOALS. IF WE LOOK CLOSELY, WE CAN FIND IN ITS CULTURAL ASCENDANCE SOME DISTURBING TRUTHS ABOUT OURSELVES AND OUR INSTITUTIONS.

FIRST, ABOUT US; IN MOST OF AMERICA, BEGINNING IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GRADES AND EXTENDING THROUGH

COLLEGE, FOOTBALL IS IN EMPHASIS, STATUS, FUNDING, STAFFING, POPULARITY AND CELEBRITY THE MOST IMPORTANT SPORT OFFERED. FOR SOME, ITS STANDING IS A SIMPLE FACT OF LIFE; FOR OTHERS, IT'S AN ANOMALY; BUT FOR MOST AMERICANS IT IS ALSO AN ACT OF IDENTIFICATION. UNFORTUNATELY THE IDENTITY GAINED BY CONSTANT EXPOSURE TO FOOTBALL BEYOND ITS ACTUAL PLAYING ON THE FIELD IS ONE GAINED BY ASSOCIATION RATHER THAN ACCOMPLISHMENT.

WHAT WAS ONCE A NATURAL UNDERGRADUATE EXPRESSION OF COLLEGE TEAM LOYALTY/ENTHUSIASM IS NOW CARRIED INTO AND CAN CONTROL MULTIPLE ASPECTS OF LIFE'S LATER YEARS. IN MANY PARTS OF THE COUNTRY ARDENT FOOTBALL FANS DISPLAY CHARACTERISTICS SIMILAR TO THOSE ASSOCIATED WITH CULTS AND RELIGIONS

SPORT IS SPORT AND LIFE IS LIFE, AND OFTEN THE TWO INTERACT IN PLEASANT WAYS WITH BENEFICIAL RESULTS FOR BOTH. BUT WE ARE CONCERNED WITH ONE SPORT'S CULTURAL EMINENCE AND WHAT IT SAYS ABOUT OUR CULTURAL VALUES AND ENERGIES. AT THE PLAYING LEVEL IT PROVIDES MANY OF THE BENEFITS THAT OTHER TEAM AND INDIVIDUAL SPORTS DO, BUT IT SURPASSES THEM IN ITS COMMITMENT TO AND TOLERANCE OF VIOLENT PHYSICAL CONTACT. THIS ACCEPTANCE OF VIOLENCE DOES NOT OCCUR ONLY DURING THE PLAYER'S SCHOOL/COLLEGE YEARS, BUT CAN GO DORMANT AND THEN RESURFACE IN OTHER FORMS AND CIRCUMSTANCES. AS WE HAVE SEEN INCREASINGLY IN RECENT YEARS, VIOLENCE THAT BEGINS IN ATHLETICS CAN END IN OUR CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.

BUT OUR MAIN INTEREST IS IN FOOTBALL AS A CULTURAL PHENOMENON WITH A NEGATIVE IMPACT UPON OUR SOCIETY THAT OWES MORE TO THE WAY WE HAVE TREATED AND MANAGED IT THAN TO THE GAME ITSELF. THE VIOLENCE AND CRIME, THE VERY LARGE SUMS OF MONEY THAT WORK THEIR WAY THROUGH ALL STAGES OF THE SPORT, THE EXTRAORDINARY DEGREE OF IDENTIFICATION BY FOOTBALL FANS THAT RISES FIRST TO A LEVEL OF CELEBRATION AND THEN TO NEAR IDOLATRY — THESE ARE OUR VALUES ADDED BY US, AND THEY LEAVE A DARK MARK ON THE CULTURE WE CREATE. FOOTBALL, THE GAME, COULD NOT DO THIS ON ITS OWN, BUT HAS HAD TO BE ABLY ASSISTED BY POWERFUL PARTNERS IN OUR POLITICAL, EDUCATIONAL, MEDIA AND COMMERCIAL SECTORS.

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STILL, IT IS NOT ONLY THEIR SUDDEN GROWTH IN THE SPAN OF SOMEWHAT LESS THAN A CENTURY FROM NEGLIGIBLE TO DOMINANT STATUS IN OUR CULTURE BY WHICH PROFESSIONAL SPORTS HAVE COME TO MARK OUR CULTURE. THEY ARE ANOTHER, LESS POLITICAL, MORE SOCIAL ASPECT OF AMERICA'S PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COMMITMENT TO MONEY AND POWER.

THE SPORTS THAT DRIVE THIS PROCESS ARE, NATURALLY, THOSE THAT DRAW SPECTATORS TO THEIR STADIUMS, FIELDS OR COURTS OVER PROLONGED REVENUE PRODUCING SEASONS. THERE ARE OTHERS SUCH AS ARCHERY, CREW, FENCING, SQUASH AND OTHERS THAT ARE MOSTLY ENGAGED IN AT CLUB

OR SCHOOL LEVELS; AND THERE IS ONE NOTABLE EXAMPLE OF A SPORT IN TRANSITION — OUR SOCCER WHICH UNTIL RECENTLY WAS SEEN IN THIS COUNTRY AS A DISTANT AND INFERIOR RELATIVE OF FOOTBALL. ON THE WORLD SCALE, HOWEVER, IT IS IMMENSE, TRULY GLOBAL, AND THE MONEY, MEDIA AND MADNESS OF ITS WORLD CUP CONTESTS HAVE SPILLED OVER TO THE US WHERE LEAGUES AND GOVERNING BODIES HAVE BEEN FORMED, PARTICIPATION PROMOTED AND HIGHLY PAID ATHLETES WELCOMED. WHETHER IT CAN RISE TO THE LEVEL OF ACCEPTANCE AND ENTHUSIASM IT ENJOYS ELSEWHERE IS STILL UNCERTAIN, BUT THERE ARE INDICATIONS OF PROGRESS.

THIS CROSS-FERTILIZATION PROCESS IS NOT ONE-WAY, AS OUR PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL AND BASEBALL LEAGUES NOW CULTIVATE FOREIGN MARKETS WITH BOTH EXHIBITION GAMES AND REGULAR SEASON EVENTS. THE MONEY/POWER CONTEXT IS AS PREVALENT IN INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL AS IT IS HERE, AND ITS GOVERNING BODY, FIFA, IS THE OBJECT OF MULTIPLE CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS INVOLVING BRIBERY, MONEY LAUNDERING, OFFICIATING IRREGULARITIES AND MORE. IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT "CROSS-FERTILIZATION" MIGHT MORE ACCURATELY BE TERMED "CROSS-CORRUPTION".

WHY SO MUCH ATTENTION TO SPORTS ? SURELY OUR CULTURE IS ONE COMPRISED OF MORE IMPORTANT ELEMENTS. YES, BUT BECAUSE OF ITS SIZE SPORT DOMINATES MANY AREAS OF CULTURE — WHAT WE WEAR AND EAT, HOW WE SPEND SOCIAL TIME, WHAT WE READ, WHAT WE THINK ABOUT AND WHAT OUR MSM TELL US IS IMPORTANT BY DINT OF ITS COVERAGE.

BUT WITH CULTURE THERE ARE ALWAYS CONTRADICTIONS. THE PUBLIC IMAGE OF PROFESSIONAL SPORTS IS ONE OF STADIUMS ON A BEAUTIFUL AFTERNOON FILLED WITH CLEAN, APPROPRIATELY DRESSED PEOPLE, ALL SMILING AND CHEERING THEIR TEAMS. THEY RADIATE LOYALTY, HAPPINESS, PRIDE, COMMUNITY AND WHOLESOMENESS — CERTAINLY A NOBLE FACADE, BUT BEHIND THE PUBLIC PERSONA CONTRADICTIONS OF SPIRIT AND PURPOSE ABOUND.

HERE, IN SPORT'S INTERIOR SPACE, THE PURSUIT OF MONEY AND POWER IS AS CONSTANT AS IT IS IN POLITICS. TEAMS ARE OWNED BY WEALTHY INDIVIDUALS WHO OPERATE THEIR TEAMS AND APPOINT THE PEOPLE WHO MANAGE THE LEAGUES AND CONDUCT THEIR BUSINESS AFFAIRS WITH THE MEDIA, GOVERNMENT, PUBLIC, ETC. WITH SPORTS FRANCHISES NOW CHANGING HANDS FOR HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS, OWNING A MAJOR SPORTS TEAM HAS COME TO BE SEEN AS AN ULTIMATE STATUS SYMBOL, CONSIDERABLY MORE IMPRESSIVE THAN, SAY, HAVING A YACHT OR A PRIVATE ISLAND HIDEAWAY.

WHY ? THERE ARE CRITICAL DIFFERENCES. THE FIRST IS PURELY ECONOMIC AND IS THAT OF THE MARKET. THE GROWTH IN OUR MONEY SUPPLY AND DROP IN VALUE OF THE DOLLAR MEANS THAT MORE DOLLARS OF DEMAND ARE COMPETING FOR A BASICALLY STATIC SUPPLY OF TEAMS AND, AS THE RANKS OF THE SUPER RICH HAVE GROWN STEADILY OVER THE PAST HALF CENTURY, THE NUMBER OF BUYERS, WHO CAN AFFORD TOP DOLLAR FRANCHISE PURCHASES AND THE COMPETITION BETWEEN THEM, HAS ALSO GREATLY INCREASED. WHAT RESULTS IS A CLASSIC

“SELLERS’ MARKET”.

THERE IS ALSO THE POWER, OR EGO, FACTOR WHICH PUTS SPORTS FRANCHISE OWNERS ON DISPLAY IN A WAY NOT AVAILABLE TO YACHT/ISLAND OWNERS. IT IS WIDELY ACKNOWLEDGED, AND OFTEN BY BUYERS THEMSELVES, THAT LATER LIFE INVOLVEMENT WITH AND OWNERSHIP OF A SPORTS TEAM CAN SATISFY OR COMPENSATE FOR UNFULFILLED DREAMS OF ATHLETIC SUCCESS IN YOUTH. THIS IS A POWERFUL PROCESS OF IDENTIFICATION THAT ARISES FROM PLACES IN OUR PSYCHE USUALLY BEYOND MEMORY’S REACH.

BUT THE PSYCHOLOGY OF IDENTITY IS NOT ALL THAT DRIVES BILLIONAIRE SPORTS TEAM OWNERS. THEY ENJOY THE CELEBRITY FACTOR — THE DESIRE TO BE IN THE PUBLIC EYE, TO BE INTERVIEWED, QUOTED AND PHOTOGRAPHED AND, BY VIRTUE OF THEIR OWNERSHIP, TO MAKE THINGS HAPPEN, TO CONTROL EVENTS, TO ISSUE PRESS RELEASES, COMMENTS AND CRITICISMS NOT JUST ON TEAM MATTERS, BUT TO CLAIM RELEVANCE TO THE LARGER WORLDS OF LOCAL COMMUNITY ISSUES, POLITICS, COMMERCE OR WHATEVER ELSE MAY SERVE THE MOMENT OR THE EGO. IN OUR MEDIA DRIVEN AGE OF PERSONALITY AS A COMMODITY, THE SPORTS FRANCHISE OWNER CAN BE A MARKET MAKER.

IN MATTERS OF CULTURE, SPORT CAN OFFER CONTRADICTIONS AS READILY AS POLITICS. CONSIDER THE CASE EARLIER THIS YEAR OF LOS ANGELES’ NBA⁶ TEAM, THE CLIPPERS, AND ITS WEALTHY, BUT NOT WISE, OWNER, DONALD STERLING. IN A SPORT DOMINATED BY AFRO-AMERICANS, AS WAS ALSO HIS TEAM, STERLING DELIVERED RACIALLY DEMEANING REMARKS ABOUT THEM TO AN EITHER CURRENT OR FORMER GIRL FRIEND WHO RECORDED AND THEN RELEASED THEM TO THE MEDIA.

THE RESULT WAS INSTANT AND EXPECTED. STERLING WAS FOUND BY HIS FELLOW OWNERS TO HAVE VIOLATED HIS OWNER’S CONTRACT WITH THE NBA BY ACTIONS THAT DAMAGED THE LEAGUE AND THE GAME. HIS CONTRACT WAS TERMINATED AND HE WAS FORCED TO SELL THE CLIPPERS. THE PAIN OF HIS EXPULSION AND TRANSITION FROM OWNER TO OUTCAST, HOWEVER, WAS SOMEWHAT MOLLIFIED BY THE CLIPPERS’ SALE PRICE OF SLIGHTLY LESS THAN ONE BILLION DOLLARS. MAJOR SPORT FRANCHISES APPEAR TO BE LOSS-PROOF ASSETS IN OUR CURRENT CULTURE.

AS THE KEY DRIVER OF OUR ENTERTAINMENT CULTURE, SPORTS CANNOT BE IGNORED — NEITHER BECAUSE OF WHAT WE INVEST IN THEM, NOR FOR WHAT WE TAKE IN RETURN. THE STERLING/CLIPPERS TALE, AS OLD-TIME NEWSPAPER REPORTERS USED TO SAY, “HAS EVERYTHING” — WEALTH, RACE, INDISCRETION, FAILED ROMANCE, RETRIBUTION, CELEBRITY, RESCUE, ETC. — A CULTURAL COMET, BRIEFLY LIGHTING UP OUR MEDIA SKY AND CAPTURING OUR ATTENTION AS IT PASSES.

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AT THE BROAD, POPULAR BASE OF THE SPORT PYRAMID IS THE “FAN” — ONE PERSON WHO HAS BEEN INCENTIVIZED TO GIVE PRIORITY TO A TEAM’S “BRAND” IN WHAT HE BUYS OR USES,

WHAT HE WATCHES ON TV OR READS, WHERE HE TRAVELS AND SOCIALIZES AND HOW HE DRESSES. ALL THESE CHOICES COME TOGETHER TO FORM A BOND AND VALUES WHICH THEN PRODUCE AN IDENTITY. THIS CAN BE TRICKY GROUND FOR A BASE, AS IT CAN ALSO BE USED TO SHARE OR TO EXPRESS SUPERIORITY.

IN OUR SPORT CULTURE, IT DOES BOTH. THE INDIVIDUAL FAN IS STRENGTHENED BY HIS BOND WITH THE MANY MILLIONS OF OTHERS WHO “LOVE THE GAME”. BUT JUST BEYOND THAT BOND OF COMMONALITY EMERGES A SENSE OF SUPERIORITY THAT DEMANDS ONE FAN’S BRAND MUST BE PERCEIVED, PURSUED AND PROVEN AS BETTER THAN ALL OTHERS — MORE COLORFUL, MORE EXPRESSIVE, RICHER, MORE SKILLFUL, MORE JUSTIFIED, WARMER, MORE DESERVING, ETC. MANY OF SPORT’S FAN VALUES ARE CULTURAL ONES WHICH WE, AS A SOCIETY, EMBRACE. IN 21ST CENTURY AMERICA SPORT IS CULTURE AND CULTURE IS SPORT; AND SPORT IS ALSO ENTERTAINMENT AND IDENTITY.

THEIR DIFFERENCE IS A MATTER OF CULTURAL IMPORTANCE. IN THE BEGINNING, SPORT WAS INTENDED TO PROVIDE EXERCISE AND COMPETITION FOR PLAYERS AND ENTERTAINMENT FOR OBSERVERS. MOST SPORTS ORIGINATED IN THE AMATEUR ENVIRONMENT OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES, ALTHOUGH SOME ESTABLISHED THEMSELVES BY A “PASS THE HAT” REVENUE SYSTEM.

WW II SERVES AS A CRITICAL DIVIDING LINE FOR OUR SPORT CULTURE. IN PREWAR AMERICA, EVEN THOUGH PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL WAS STILL DEEMED “OUR NATIONAL GAME”, ITS SIXTEEN TEAMS REPRESENTED ONLY 9 CITIES, ALL LOCATED EAST OF THE MISSISSIPPI. POSTWAR COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAY, HOWEVER, DOMINATED THE AUTUMN SEASON THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. WITH THE RESULTING GROWTH OF MEDIA AND MONEY, SPORT BECAME ENTERTAINMENT PLUS IDENTITY.

WE CAN CITE THIS SHIFT AS BEING ONE DERIVED FROM ATTENDANCE/POPULATION GROWTH, OUR NEW NATIONAL HIGHWAY SYSTEM OR OUR EMERGING MEDIA TECHNOLOGY. EACH PLAYED ITS PART, BUT THERE WAS SOMETHING ELSE TAKING PLACE BENEATH THE SURFACE AND BEYOND THE RANGE OF OUR VISION. THIS SHIFT WAS CULTURAL, A RECALLING OF THE ANCIENT PRACTICE WHEREBY OUR SENSE OF IDENTITY ATTACHES ITSELF TO TRIBAL DIFFERENCES. THE SPORTS BOND, THE NEW IDENTITY, THE INTENSE LOYALTY ARE FUELED BY GAME ATTENDANCE OR TV VIEWING, BY SOCIALIZING BUILT AROUND THEM, BY CONVERSATION AND DRESS AND BY CONSTANT PUBLICITY.

PERSONAL IDENTITIES CAN BE FRAGILE CONSTRUCTS AT BEST, BUT WHEN MILLIONS ARE JOINED BY COMMON PRACTICE OR PURPOSE, THEY BECOME A MAJOR CULTURAL FORCE. AND, ALTHOUGH OUR MECHANISMS HAVE BEEN TRIBAL, WHAT HAS RESULTED IS A MAJOR COMPONENT OF OUR CURRENT CULTURE.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? WHY HAVE WE PLACED SUCH EMPHASIS ON SPORT IN OUR DISCUSSION OF CULTURE OTHER THAN ITS SIZE/POPULARITY? IT IS BECAUSE OUR ESCALATING INVESTMENT OF TIME, MONEY AND EFFORT IN SPORT, AS ENTERTAINMENT AND IDENTITY, HAS BECOME A FORM OF EXCESS THAT ROBS OTHER ASPECTS OF OUR CULTURE OF MUCH NEEDED ENERGY. ANY CHANGE WILL HAVE TO COMMENCE WITH A FEW

VOICES BARELY AUDIBLE OVER THE PRESENT DIN AND THEY WILL CONFRONT THE DETERMINED RESISTANCE OF THE STATUS QUO — COMMERCIAL, POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS INTERESTS — BUT CULTURES CAN BE CHANGED AND OUR PRESENT PARADIGM SHOWS NEED OF REPAIR.

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THE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE AND DOLLARS THAT COMPRISE OUR SPORTS CULTURE ARE TRULY IMMENSE, AND THEIR MULTIPLE INTERACTIONS ARE IMMEASURABLE, BUT THEY ALL COME TOGETHER IN ONE PLACE — LAS VEGAS, NV — THE CENTER FOR ALL US SPORTS WAGERING. HERE THE ODDS ARE DETERMINED AND MADE PUBLIC FOR COLLEGE AND PROFESSIONAL TEAM GAMES, HORSE RACING, BOXING AND OTHER EVENTS IN THIS COUNTRY, AS WELL AS SPECIAL INTERNATIONAL OCCASIONS. LAS VEGAS ODDS ARE PUBLISHED DAILY IN NEWSPAPERS THROUGHOUT THE US FOR ONE PURPOSE ONLY — TO FACILITATE BETTING; LEGAL WHERE POSSIBLE, AND ILLEGAL WHERE NOT.

NEVADA, BEFORE WW II, WAS A THINLY POPULATED, WIDE OPEN STATE OFFERING GAMBLING, PROSTITUTION AND “QUICKIE” DIVORCES. IT WAS EASILY ACCESSIBLE FROM LA AND SF AND SERVED AS A SHELTER FOR ORGANIZED CRIME BOSSES AND THEIR FUNDS EVEN AFTER THE KEFAUVER HEARINGS IN THE EARLY 1950S SHUT DOWN MOST OF THE NATION’S GAMBLING CENTERS. WITH THE GROWTH OF POSTWAR TV SPORTS COVERAGE, BETTING DEMAND EXPLODED, AND THE LEADING CRIME FAMILIES IMPOSED ORDER ON THE MARKET BY ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL SYSTEM FOR FIXING AND ADJUSTING ODDS.

BEHIND THE FACADE OF SPORT AS “GOOD, CLEAN FUN” THAT IS PROMOTED IN A PLAYER’S SCHOOL, COLLEGE AND PRO YEARS THERE IS A WORLD DRIVEN BY BOTH LEGAL AND ILLEGAL COMMERCIAL INTERESTS WHERE EVERY ACTION, PRODUCT AND PLAYER HAS A MONEY VALUE. WHILE IT HAS BEEN DEVELOPED OVER THE ATHLETE’S PLAYING YEARS, THIS VALUE EXPRESSES ITSELF MOST CLEARLY AND IMPORTANTLY AT THOSE CRITICAL TIMES OF PASSAGE FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO COLLEGE AND THEN FROM COLLEGE TO THE PROFESSIONAL LEAGUES.

NO YOUNG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENT CAN ENGAGE IN ONE OF OUR FOUR MAIN TEAM SPORTS (FOOTBALL, BASEBALL, BASKETBALL, HOCKEY) WITHOUT BEING MADE AWARE, EITHER AT HOME OR AT SCHOOL, OF THE PERSONAL BENEFITS THEY OFFER TO THOSE WHO PURSUE THEM AND SUCCEED — MONEY, STATUS, CELEBRITY AND THE ENJOYMENT OF “LIFE AT THE TOP”. TO BE FAIR, ESPECIALLY IN THE YOUNGER YEARS, THESE BENEFITS ARE NOT USUALLY VERBALIZED, BUT THERE IS GENERALLY AN AWARENESS AMONG PLAYERS, AND NOT DENIED BY COACHES, THAT ATHLETICS PROVIDE AN ALTERNATE PATH THROUGH SCHOOL IN WHICH “MAKING THE TEAM” BECOMES AN IMMEDIATE GOAL WHICH WILL THEN MAKE POSSIBLE PASSING THE TEST OF CHOOSING AND BEING ADMITTED TO THE NEXT EDUCATIONAL LEVEL. WHETHER VERBALIZED OR NOT, THERE IS AN ATMOSPHERE SHARED BY PARENTS, FRIENDS, COACHES, TEAMMATES AND LOCAL MEDIA THAT, LIKE A RAILROAD, EDUCATION OFFERS TWO TRACKS

POINTING IN THE SAME DIRECTION TOWARDS THE FUTURE. TAKE YOUR PICK.

THE ROLE OF OUR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES IN THE GROWTH OF SPORTS IN OUR CULTURE HAS BEEN A CONFLICTED ONE. INTERCOLLEGIATE TEAM CONTESTS FIRST APPEARED IN THE US IN THE LATTER HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY. THEY GREW IN POPULARITY IN THE GENERATION BETWEEN THE WARS, FORMING CONFERENCES OF REGIONAL COMPETITION AND ENJOYING THE PUBLICITY AFFORDED BY RADIO AND THE NEW EASY ACCESS BY AUTOMOBILE.

BUT TECHNOLOGY CHANGES EVERYTHING — SPORTS AND EDUCATION INCLUDED. IN THE AFTERMATH OF WW II COLLEGE ENROLLMENTS SURGED AS THE RESULT OF THE GI BILL; AND COLOR TV AND JET AIR TRAVEL SPREAD THE SPORTS EXPERIENCE TO EVERY HOME AND TO ALL PARTS OF THE COUNTRY.

A NEXUS OF FINANCIAL INTEREST FORMED WITH BENEFITS FOR ALL INVOLVED. ALUMNI SPECTATORS RELIVED THEIR YOUTH AS LATE-IN-LIFE HEROES AND IN THEIR NEW IDENTITY RAMPED UP THEIR DONATIONS TO THEIR COLLEGES’ SCHOLASTIC/ATHLETIC PROGRAMS. OUR INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING RESPONDED WITH YEAR ‘ROUND PR PROGRAMS, MAILINGS, SOLICITATIONS AND THE EXPANSION OF NAMING RIGHTS. THE LATTER, WHICH HAD HISTORICALLY BEEN USED POSTHUMOUSLY TO IDENTIFY LARGE STRUCTURES SUCH AS BUILDINGS OR ATHLETIC STADIUMS, WERE RESIZED SO THAT THE NAME OF A LIVING DONOR OF A MODEST AMOUNT COULD APPEAR ON AN ATHLETIC LOCKER, A DESK, A CHAIR AND EVEN AN INDIVIDUAL BRICK IN A COURTYARD.

IN A SOMEWHAT MORE SUBTLE WAY, THE “WE’RE #1” ARGUMENT WAS ABLE TO ENERGIZE OUR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AS WELL AS THEIR ALUMNI. MONEY FLOWED IN EVERY DIRECTION AND SEASONS WERE EXTENDED TO HOLD PLAY-OFF OR CHAMPIONSHIP GAMES. BUT WHAT HAS LED OUR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS TO THE RATHER QUESTIONABLE PATH THEY HAVE CHOSEN FOR EXPANDING SPORT’S PLACE ON CAMPUS AND IN OUR CULTURE ?

THE ANSWER IS A PRACTICAL ONE. THE GREATLY INCREASED NUMBER OF COLLEGE ENROLLMENTS CREATED BY THE GI BILL GAVE RISE TO STUDENT CALLS FOR MORE SPORTS PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES. AS FOOTBALL’S LARGE STADIUMS AND HIGHER TICKET PRICES HAD SUPPORTED ALL OTHER CAMPUS PROGRAMS, MANY COLLEGE STADIUMS WERE EXPANDED OR REBUILT TO ATTRACT LARGER CROWDS AND THEIR REVENUES. THESE DECISIONS PROVED TO BE DONOR POPULAR, AND COLLEGE LEVEL ATHLETICS HAD TAKEN A STEP THAT SEEMED PRAGMATIC AT THE TIME, BUT HAD FATEFUL FUTURE CONSEQUENCES.

FROM A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE, SPORT WAS NO LONGER PART OF SOMETHING. IT WAS SOMETHING — HUGE, COMMANDING, AND EVER PRESENT; AND STAGGERINGLY COMMERCIAL, TAKING IN AND PAYING OUT MONEY 24/7. BUT MONEY, AS POWERFUL AS IT IS, IS NOT THE ONLY DOMINATING FORCE IN SPORT; EQUALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR SPORT’S CULTURAL GROWTH HAS BEEN THE INCREASING, AND NOW NEARLY TOTAL, ATTENTION IT ELICITS FROM THE PUBLIC.

“ATTENTION” MAY NOT BE STRONG ENOUGH TO

DRUGS IN SPORTS

DESCRIBE THE POPULAR RESPONSE TO SPORT AND, ESPECIALLY, TO FOOTBALL FOR WHICH “ABSORPTION”, “IDENTIFICATION” OR “MANIA” MIGHT FIT BETTER. LOCAL NEWSPAPERS IN SMALL OR MEDIUM SIZE AMERICAN CITIES FILL THEIR SPORTS SECTIONS IN SEASON WITH DETAILED ACCOUNTS OF GAMES OR PRACTICE SESSIONS; AND OUT OF SEASON WITH VOLUMINOUS REPORTS OF PERSONAL OR TEAM TRIVIA. THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A SPORTS WRITER HAVING NOTHING TO WRITE ABOUT IN THE “DEAD” TIME BETWEEN SEASONS; IF THERE IS NO NEWS, THE WRITER MUST COME UP WITH SOMETHING THAT HOPEFULLY WILL PASS FOR IT. THE PUBLIC BEAST MUST BE FED ! HOWEVER WE MAY REGARD SPORT INDIVIDUALLY, IT NOW HOLDS A POSITION OF EMINENCE IN OUR CULTURE, AND WE HAVE PUT IT THERE.

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IN OUR AND OTHER CULTURES THERE ARE ALWAYS CONTRADICTIONS SOME OF WHICH, OVER TIME, TURN TO VAPOR OR DUST AND DISAPPEAR, LEAVING, AS IN SOME FADED PHOTOGRAPH, THE BLURRED IMAGE OF WHAT WE ONCE HAD BEEN. IN OUR 21ST CENTURY SPORTS CULTURE THERE IS NO SHORTAGE OF CONTRADICTIONS.

THOSE MOST CONCERNED WITH THE SOCIAL ILLS IN OUR COUNTRY TEND TO VIEW PROFESSIONAL SPORTS AS A SOCIETAL PLUS BECAUSE THEY OFFER ATHLETES FROM POVERTY BACKGROUNDS A CAREER, COMPENSATION AND AN EXIT PASS FROM THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THEIR EARLY YEARS. THERE IS SOME TRUTH IN THIS, AND WE SHOULD BE THANKFUL FOR IT, BUT THERE IS ALSO A RECORD OF CONTRADICTION WHICH REVEALS THAT MANY ATHLETES ARE UNABLE TO HANDLE NEW WEALTH OR THE PROBLEM OF RESTRICTING THE VIOLENCE OF THEIR CAREERS TO THE PLAYING FIELD AND NOT LETTING IT FIND ITS WAY TO THEIR FAMILY/SOCIAL RELATIONS.

A FURTHER AND LARGER CONTRADICTION OCCURS WHEN THE ATHLETE’S USUALLY BRIEF PLAYING AND HIGH COMPENSATION YEARS COME TO AN END. IN MANY CASES, WHEN PAST EXTRAVAGANCE LEAVES NOTHING FOR THE FUTURE, THE PLAYER’S EXIT PASS FROM POVERTY BECOMES A ROUND TRIP TICKET. AND EVEN IF WEALTH AND CELEBRITY CAN BE MAINTAINED, THE LIVES OF ATHLETES WHO ENGAGE IN THE MAJOR TEAM SPORTS CAN INCLUDE VISITS TO FAMILY/CRIMINAL COURTS AND BEHAVIORAL OR PHYSICAL REHAB FACILITIES.

THE FULL CYCLE FROM POVERTY TO SUCCESS AND BACK, IS ONE OF HUMAN WASTE THAT DRAWS OUR SYMPATHY. WE SEE IT; WE WATCH IT PLAY OUT; BUT WE ARE DISTANCED FROM IT BY THE GULF BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE AND WE CANNOT INTERVENE.

THE AMOUNT OF VIOLENCE IN OUR SOCIETY AND ITS INCREASING TOLERATION BY OUR MEDIA, COURTS AND POLITICIANS LEAVES A STAIN ON OUR CULTURE. WHETHER SPORT VIOLENCE IS PART OF IT, OR MERELY SIMILAR TO IT, IS NOT IMPORTANT. THEY ARE JOINED ON THE SURFACE BY TIME AND PLACE, AND BENEATH IT BY OUR OWN CONFLICTS AND CONTRADICTIONS WHICH, WHETHER RECOGNIZABLE OR NOT, ARE IMPORTANT IN THE RECORD WE WRITE AND LEAVE.

IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT, AS MONEY AND POWER WERE DRAWN TO SPORTS OVER THE PAST HALF CENTURY, DRUG USE WOULD QUICKLY FOLLOW. TODAY, IN AMERICA, OUR DRUG CULTURE IS PERVERSIVE. FOR MOST NON-ATHLETES THEIR DRUG EXPOSURE IS RECREATIONAL/SOCIAL AND PROVIDES A PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL “LIFT” TO THEIR ROUTINE CONCERNS.

WITH THE PHYSICAL COMPONENT OF SPORTS, HOWEVER, THE LURE OF DRUGS WAS SEEN TO MEET A WORK PLACE, AS WELL AS A RECREATIONAL, NEED. DRUGS WERE PROMOTED, AND PROVEN, TO ELEVATE PERFORMANCE IN A WORLD OF FIERCE COMPETITION WHERE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WINNING AND LOSING COULD BE MEASURED IN FRACTIONS OF SECONDS OR THE SMALLEST OF DISTANCES.

SPORT EVERYWHERE CHANGED, AND ONLY RECENTLY HAVE WE LEARNED HOW WIDESPREAD DRUG USE HAS BECOME. LANCE ARMSTRONG INCREDIBLY WON SEVEN CONSECUTIVE TOUR DE FRANCE CYCLING VICTORIES. WHEN INVESTIGATIONS BY FRENCH AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL AUTHORITIES FOLLOWED HIM INTO RETIREMENT, HIS GUILT WAS SUBSTANTIATED AND ALL HIS TITLES/TROPHIES CANCELLED.

IN BASEBALL, PLAYERS BULKED UP ON STEROIDS, AND IN ONE YEAR TWO PLAYERS SURPASSED THE SEASONAL HOME RUN RECORD OF 61 BY ABOUT 20. AS RUMORS, AND EVEN EVIDENCE, OF DRUG USE GREW, TEAM OWNERS AND LEAGUE GOVERNING BODIES COULD CLAIM INNOCENCE FROM THE RESULTS OF INTERNAL INVESTIGATIONS AND HOPE TO DEFLECT PUBLIC ATTENTION. PROSECUTIONS WERE RARE, AND CONVICTIONS RARER, BUT OCCASIONALLY A “NAME” PLAYER WAS FOUND GUILTY OF VIOLATING LEAGUE REGULATIONS OR “CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE” LAWS AND SUBJECT TO PUNISHMENT BY FINES AND/OR SUSPENSION.

FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS, INCLUDING THE SOURCE AND NATURE OF TESTIMONY, APPEALS WERE OFTEN SUCCESSFUL AND REFORM EFFORTS FELL SHORT OF THEIR GOALS. TODAY, THESE ATTEMPTS ARE GAINING GROUND BECAUSE OF RECENT EVIDENCE OF THE SPREAD OF DRUG USE TO MORE SPORTS, AS WELL AS THE HIGH PROFILE EUROPEAN EXPOSURE OF DOPING IN CYCLING, INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL AND TRACK/FIELD EVENTS.

DRUGS IN SPORT LEAVE A VERY CLEAR TRAIL OF SHARED BENEFITS. THE ESSENCE OF PERFORMANCE ENHANCING DRUGS IS THAT THEY ENABLE THE BODY TO FUNCTION AT A HIGHER LEVEL WITHOUT INTERFERING WITH ITS NORMAL QUALITIES OF PERCEPTION, VISION, COORDINATION, ETC. PLAYERS WHO USE THEM GAIN BODY MASS AND STRENGTH WHICH, IN BASEBALL FOR INSTANCE, CAN INCREASE THE DISTANCE OF A BATTED BALL AND, IN DOING SO, CONVERT LONG FLY BALLS INTO HOME RUNS.

HITTING MORE AND LONGER HOME RUNS ENERGIZES THE FANS WHO BUY MORE TICKETS, MERCHANDISE AND THE OUTRAGEOUSLY HIGH PRICED FOOD AND BEVERAGES SOLD AT GAMES. MORE REVENUES FROM THESE SOURCES, PARKING AND, HOPEFULLY, POSTSEASON PLAY DELIGHT OWNERS AND TRANSLATE INTO LARGER RETURNS FOR LEAGUES’ AND OWNERS

MEDIA REVENUES. THIS IS A SYSTEM OF CONSIDERABLE CO-DEPENDENCY WITH BENEFITS FOR ALL, AND, MUCH LIKE THE COLLEGE PROFESSIONALS PROCESS, NO ONE WANTS TO BREAK RANK.

SPORTS, DRUGS AND POLITICS

CULTURE IS A MASS IDENTITY FORMED BY MANY INDIVIDUALS' THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS. OUR PRESENT COLLECTIVE OBSESSION WITH SPORTS AND OUR INDIVIDUAL ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS ARE BOTH WAYS IN WHICH OUR 21ST CENTURY SOCIETY HAS CHOSEN TO SEEK IDENTITY, AND THAT THEY HAVE FAILED US AND OUR CULTURE SHOULD NOT COME AS A SURPRISE, AS THEY LACK A KEY ELEMENT WHICH HAS BEEN A CRITICAL PART OF AMERICA'S DEVELOPMENT SINCE ITS EARLIEST DAYS.

TO THIS MISSING INGREDIENT WE APPLY THE LABEL COOPERATIVE ENERGY — A FORCE WHICH BLEW THROUGH THE USUAL POLITICAL DIVISIONS OF OUR FIRST GENERATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND THEN SET THE NATIONAL TONE FOR OUR WESTWARD EXPANSION AND INDUSTRIALIZATION. AND IT RESURFACED IN THE 20TH CENTURY'S TWO WORLD WARS. THROUGHOUT THIS CENTURY AND A HALF OF EXCEPTIONAL CHANGE, GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY THE COMBINED ENERGY AND EMERGING IDENTITY OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE PROVIDED A UNIQUE AND POWERFUL FORCE THAT WAS CONSTRUCTIVE, LIBERATING AND SELF-RENEWING.

TODAY, THAT FORCE APPEARS TO BE DORMANT, HAVING BEEN BEATEN DOWN BY GROUP THINK, PC, WEALTH, CORRUPTION AND THE MANY WAYS BY WHICH OUR POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE BETRAYED US.

THINK FOR A MOMENT OF THE AMOUNT OF ENERGY, TIME AND THOUGHT LOST TO WATCHING THE ENDLESSLY REPETITIVE STRUGGLE BETWEEN OFFENSE AND DEFENSE ON SPORTS TV; OR THE WASTED TIME AND EXPECTATION THAT OUR SOCIETY HAS ASSIGNED TO DRUG ADDICTION. CONSIDER WHAT WOULD BE THE IMPACT ON OUR TIME, OUR SOCIETY AND OUR GOVERNMENT WERE WE ABLE TO REGROUP THESE ENERGIES AND EXPECTATIONS INTO A NATIONAL COOPERATIVE ENERGY AND SET IT ON A DIFFERENT PATH.

THIS WOULD BE A COMPLICATED AND DEMANDING TASK THAT COULD RECAST OUR LIFE AND CULTURE. TO ACCOMPLISH IT WOULD NOT BE IMPOSSIBLE; NOR, HOWEVER, WOULD IT BE LIKELY. BUT, IN OUR OPINION, ANY POLITICAL PARTY OR LEADER WITH THE COURAGE AND CONVICTION TO MOVE THE COUNTRY IN THIS DIRECTION COULD EXPECT TO FIND INITIAL OPPOSITION FOLLOWED BY GROWING SUPPORT. WE WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO DO AWAY WITH OUR TRIBAL PATTERNS COMPLETELY, BUT BY SHRINKING OUR IDENTIFICATION WITH SPORT BACK TO ITS ENTERTAINMENT LEVEL AND APPLYING IT TO OUR NATION'S CULTURAL ISSUES WE COULD REDEFINE AMERICA'S FUTURE IN A WAY MORE CONSISTENT WITH ITS EXTRAORDINARY PAST.

WE HAVE GIVEN MORE ATTENTION TO SPORTS THAN WE HAD ORIGINALLY INTENDED BECAUSE OF THE MULTIPLE WAYS IN

WHICH THEY HAVE GROWN TO INFLUENCE AND DOMINATE OUR LIVES. IN 21ST CENTURY AMERICA, SPORT IS A CREATURE THAT WEARS MANY MASKS — ECONOMIC, ATHLETIC, EDUCATIONAL, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL — THAT CONFUSE ITS MESSAGE AND THOSE WHO OBSERVE AND ENGAGE IN IT.

OUR OPINION IS THAT ITS MOST VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION TO OUR CULTURE IS ON THE PLAYING FIELD WHERE ITS POSITIVE VALUES CAN BE DISCOVERED AND SHARED BY PLAYERS IN THEIR SCHOOL AND COLLEGE YEARS. THESE VALUES, WHICH INCLUDE JOY, TEAMWORK, DISCIPLINE, FAIRNESS, SACRIFICE, HONOR, EXCELLENCE AND MORE, BUILD CHARACTER, COURAGE AND CONSCIENCE THAT ARE KEY TO SUCCESS IN LATER LIFE. THESE ARE THE ORIGINAL VALUES THAT SPAWNED COLLEGE ATHLETIC CONTESTS AND THEN PROGRAMS. THAT WAS THEN.

THIS IS NOW, AND OUR MONEY/POWER SOCIETY HAS LEFT ITS MARK OF CONSUMERIST ADDICTION ON OUR EXPERIENCE OF SPORT. THE PLAYERS, FOR WHOM SPORTS EXIST, HAVE BEEN OVERSHADOWED BY AN OVERWHELMING COMBINATION OF COMMERCIAL, EDUCATIONAL AND POLITICAL INTERESTS. THESE HAVE COME TO DEFINE ATHLETES AND ATHLETICS IN WAYS WHICH ARE MEASURED BY SUPERIORITY OVER OTHERS AND SUCCESS AT ANY PRICE. IN OUR CULTURE, THESE RESONATE WITH THE PUBLIC CULTURE, AND CREATE IDENTITY WHICH IS A HIGHLY MARKETABLE PRODUCT. THROUGHOUT THIS PROCESS IT IS SUPPORTED AND ADVANCED BY THE PRESENCE AND FLOW OF LARGE AMOUNTS OF MONEY, WITH AMPLE OPPORTUNITY TO CORRUPT AT EVERY AGE AND STAGE.

IF WE THINK BACK TO OUR OWN YOUTH. WE CAN RECALL HOW IMPRESSIONABLE AND INTENSE WE WERE ABOUT ATHLETICS — ABOUT EQUIPMENT, PLAY, HEROES, LOYALTIES, PRACTICE AND MEDIA COVERAGE. IT WAS ALL AN EXCITING WORLD OF WHICH WE WERE BEGINNING TO TAKE PART WITH JUVENILE ENTHUSIASM AND PRIDE.

TODAY'S YOUNG STUDENT ATHLETE, LOOKING AHEAD TO COLLEGE AND BEYOND, CANNOT AVOID REPORTS OF CHEATING, DOPING, BRIBERY AND EVEN MORE SEVERE FORMS OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR THAT DERIVE FROM THE MONEY/POWER FACTOR. IT WILL TAKE A VERY DETERMINED COALITION OF INTERESTS TO UNDERTAKE, LET ALONE ACCOMPLISH, ANY MEANINGFUL REFORMATION, BUT IT MUST BE DONE. OTHERWISE, THE PURSUIT OF "MORE" IS BOUND TO GROW IN OUR CULTURE AND IN IMPORTANCE IN THE WAY YOUNG ATHLETES VIEW THEIR FUTURES.



ECD 9/28/15

P.S.

ON PAGE 7 WE MENTIONED "HONOR" IN A POLITICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT. NOW LONG GONE FROM GOVERNMENT, IT WAS PRESENT AT OUR BEGINNING IN THE LAST LINE OF THE D. OF I. — "WE MUTUALLY PLEDGE TO EACH OTHER OUR LIVES, OUR FORTUNES, AND OUR SACRED HONOR". SIMPLY UNIMAGINABLE TODAY !

EDITOR'S BIO

MR. AULT IS RETIRED FROM BUSINESS, A GRADUATE OF YALE UNIVERSITY, AND THE AUTHOR OF: A RETAIL FOOD STUDY (LA ROCHE & Co. NYC, NY 1957) WHICH DESCRIBED THE EMERGENCE AND GROWING DOMINANCE OF THE SUPERMARKET IN AMERICAN FOOD RETAILING; EMINENT DISDAIN: THE TRIUMPH OF CYNICISM OVER INTEGRITY IN 21ST CENTURY AMERICA. ; AND WHO LOST AMERICA? CAN AMERICA'S DEMOCRATIC IDENTITY AND GOVERNMENT SURVIVE OUR ETHICAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FAILURES?

YEAR END OPPORTUNITIES

AS YEAR END APPROACHES, WE HOPE YOU WILL CONSIDER A TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATION TO THE CPC AND/OR A SUBSCRIPTION TO MOC AS A FOUR TIMES A YEAR GIFT.

END NOTES

- ¹ AFTERBURN: SOCIETY BEYOND FOSSIL FUELS BY RICHARD HEINBERG. NEW SOCIETY PUBLISHERS, BC CANADA 2015
- ² ESTIMATES OF AMERICA'S MUSLIM POPULATION ARE MANY AND VARIED — US CENSUS BUREAU, PEW RESEARCH AND OTHER GOVERNMENT, ACADEMIC AND COMMERCIAL SOURCES. THE ONE COMMON FACTOR IS THAT OUR MUSLIM POPULATION HAS INCREASED RAPIDLY SINCE 9/11. THE YEARBOOK OF AMERICAN AND CANADIAN CHURCHES SHOWED THE NUMBER OF MUSLIMS IN AMERICA AT THAT TIME AS 3,950,000, WHILE ISLAMIC HORIZONS ESTIMATES THERE ARE NOW 8 TO 10 MILLION MUSLIMS IN NORTH AMERICA, AND THE FIGURE MOST GOVERNMENT SOURCES HAVE USED IN THE PAST IS 6 MILLION. CAROL BROWN, IN THE MUSLIM POPULATION OF AMERICA IS EXPANDING AT WARP SPEED, AMERICAN THINKER. COM, 1/21/15, CITES A RANGE OF 3 TO 7 MILLION. WE HAVE USED 7 MILLION BECAUSE OF THE RECENT, ACCELERATING PACE OF MUSLIM ADMISSIONS FROM THE NEAR EAST AND AFRICA ENCOURAGED BY OBAMA ADMINISTRATION POLICIES AND ORDERS.
- ³ THE TOTAL US POPULATION FOR OUR CENTURY'S END OF 1 BILLION IS ONE USED BY MULTIPLE SOURCES. THE PROJECTION OF A MUSLIM POPULATION OF 42% IS THE AUTHOR'S.
- ⁴ 2 ARRESTED IN KILLING OF BLOGGER BY JULHAS ALAM, ASSOCIATED PRESS VIA PALM BEACH POST 8/15/15
- ⁵ CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES. SEPTEMBER 17, 1787. PHILADELPHIA, PA
- ⁶ NATIONAL BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION
- ⁷ THE SECOND COMING, WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

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