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Transforming the Root Causes of Violence

The following article covers a recent address by Dr. L. Robert Keck at the Foundation for Global Community in Palo Alto. It was based in part on his book Sacred Quest.

Where others see violence as endemic in the human species, Robert Keck believes that violence is a relatively recent phenomenon in human history, limited to the past 8500 years. If that is so, he says, there is real hope for the human race to transform our world to one that is far more peaceful than it is today.

Keck is not alone in assessing violence as a recent phenomenon. He points to the prestigious, international, interdisciplinary group of scientists who gathered in Seville, Spain in 1986 to address the essential question: “Did we inherit our violence propensities from our animal ancestors?” In what is referred to as The Seville Statement, they concluded that we did not. It is scientifically incorrect, they said, to think that war or any other violent behavior is genetically programmed into human nature. Nor has there been, in the course of evolution, a natural selection for aggressive behavior more than other forms of behavior. We can free ourselves from biological pessimism, these scientists concluded, because violence is not fundamental to human nature nor inherited from our evolutionary past.

EPOCH I: The “Childhood” of Our Evolutionary Journey

Keck, who has invested a good portion of his career in researching the history of human values, refers back 35,000 years to a time when he believes there is enough evidence to draw some conclusions. It was the beginning of what he calls Epoch I. Utilizing the metaphor of maturation, Keck describes Epoch I as the “childhood” epoch of human evolution. “This epoch and its dominant value system lasted for 25,000 years, or until about 10,000 years ago.

“The Epoch I deep-values are evidenced in the sculpture, figurines, and the ‘sacred art’ found in the more than 300 sanctuaries, or galleries, of Paleolithic cave paintings,” Keck explains. The first prominent value was “a thorough unity with nature in general and a profound respect for the powers of the animal world in particular. The paintings are mostly of animals. It was thought originally that these paintings were to guarantee successful hunting, but evidence shows that the animals in the paintings were seldom the ones the people ate.

“The second deep-value was an emphasis on the feminine. Human societies were matricentric, centered around the woman, and matrilineal, tracing our lineage back through our mothers. It is important to note, however, that they were not matriarchal, a hierarchy with a woman at the top. As a consequence, humanity worshipped an immanent and very present Earth Goddess—understandable, given the emphasis upon that which gives and nourishes life.

“The third influential deep-value was that of nonviolence. In all the evidence left from this 25,000 year period—and it is considerable —there is simply no indication of human-on-human violence. No human sacrifice, no artistic depictions of war or warriors, and no evidence of standing armies.”

EPOCH II: “Adolescence”

Keck extends his metaphor of the human maturation process to the movement from Epoch I to Epoch II, “humanity’s adolescent epoch,” which, he says, began 10,000 years ago. “We had developed the body, and now it was time to develop the mental side—the ego, the self-identity, and the mind—to distinguish that this is me and that out there is not me; this is me, that is other; this is humanity, and the rest is nature. It changed what had previously been a close and symbiotic at-one-ment with nature. We separated, divided, and distinguished, and that led to manipulation, control, dominance, use, and eventually, abuse.

“Epoch II was the beginning of agriculture, horticulture, and animal husbandry. It was a shift that led, eventually, to an adolescent and selfish anthropocentrism—humanity as the be all and end all of evolution, and the rest of nature is here simply to serve our purposes.” Keck likened the relationship to that of a teenager and the refrigerator—in which the refrigerator represents “a handy resource for whatever we are hungry for, with the expectation that ‘Mom’ will keep it well-stocked.

“Separating humanity from nature, which represents the organic and archetypal feminine side of soul, created a feminine-impoverished soul. That inevitably led to the subsequent values of patriarchy, hierarchies of power, wars of conquest, slavery, and a great many other forms of violence. All this emerged, virtually simultaneously, about 8500 years ago. It has been those values that have defined and dominated the world up to, and including, our time in history. Patriarchy, of course, also led all the major theistic religions that emerged during Epoch II to replace an immanent Earth Goddess with a hierarchical, transcendent Father God ‘up in His Heaven.’”

The Causes of Violence

Keck suggests that it is the Epoch II deep-values that are the causes of violence. “The value of reducing wholes into parts began with separating humanity and the rest of nature. We then reduced every whole we could get our hands on into parts, eventually believing that the parts were fundamentally separate and distinct.

“We arranged the parts in hierarchical order with power and value judgment flowing from the top down. This led to viewing the world through a “prism of isms”—anthropocentrism, sexism, racism, tribalism, anti-semitism, nationalism, and the various manifestations of religion-isms. Once you’ve separated everything, you see the other as totally different and distinct. Through anthropocentrism, for example, you see the whole

universe as here just for human purposes—we are the pinnacle of evolution and everything is here to serve us.

“In sexism, you have that same distinction—dominance, submission, and distortion. And the same in tribalism—my tribe is the one and only tribe, and if someone is different, I can fight them. They are the enemy, they are the other. You can see the pattern that takes shape. In religion, it is that my religion is the one and only religion, and since God is on our side, it means God is not on the other side.

“We then justified all sorts of violence against the ‘other,’ utilizing theological and sacred text rationalizations, out of the fear of ‘category pollution’—the fear that ‘our’ religion, race, or gender, would be polluted by the nonbelievers, the infidels, the heretics, or the women who too closely represented sensuality, sexuality, and earthiness. And, the males who had assumed leadership roles, or were the self-proclaimed protectors of category purity, went to all sorts of desperate, and self-justified, lengths. The combination of these values led to millennia of horrendous violence—the extremely violent practice of slavery, the tortuous Inquisition, the Crusades, witch burnings, holy wars, genocide.”

EPOCH III: Reasons for Hope

Keck believes that humanity, at this very time in history, is going through another transformation of Soul. In his view, the Epoch II values that gave rise to violence are clearly on the wane, and a new deep-value system is emerging, in what he calls Epoch III. In maturation terms, this evolving from adolescence into adulthood is reason enough, he believes, to hope that humanity might move toward a more peaceful world.

Though “profoundly influential evolutionary energies are at work,” the transition will not be easy, he emphasizes. “The Epoch II years were a long time to get conditioned to one particular value system, and we should not trivialize the desperate means some will use to try to maintain their favored status quo. There are people who fear the loss of the old values and will try desperately to retain their prominence. Nevertheless, the human Soul is evolving, unmistakably, into a more mature Epoch III.”

The first emergent deep-value of Epoch III, he says, is in humanity’s reconnection with nature. “The environmental, ecological, and eco-feminist movements, however timely and appropriate, are only the early ripples of a tsunami that will wash over the landscape of our souls and change us dramatically.” Keck suggested that an “ecology of the heart” will not tolerate systems of dominance and submission. “Patriarchal institutions will either change or die out. They cannot and will not survive in an Epoch III Soul.”

The second Epoch III deep-value flows from the understanding that “the entire universe is an ‘unbroken wholeness.’ Ironically, science, the very discipline that took reductionism to the limit, is the discipline that is probably most responsible for convincing us that everything is interconnected and interrelated.

“As we truly absorb the implications of unbroken wholeness,” notes Keck, “we will still be able to see and value the distinction between the parts (religions, races, nations), but we will also value how permeable the membrane is between the parts. As in ecology, we will know the value of diversity, and at the same time, know that for the greatest amount of health and well-being there is a profound interdependence at work—naturally.”

The third Epoch III deep-value that points toward a nonviolent world is the global process of democratization. “There has been an inexorable change from totalitarianism, colonialism, and imperialization to democracy. Beginning in 1776 with the United States of America, there are now 120 democracies in the world, and virtually all scholars who study the democratization process agree that it now defines the world stage.”

The more democracies, the fewer wars, Keck maintains. “Throughout Epoch II, wars of conquest were the ‘name of the game.’ It was the accepted strategy for the way a nation became a great nation, the way an empire became a great empire. If you had the might, you had the right to invade any other nation, or conquer any other peoples and add them to your ever enlarging entity. And nobody apologized for it. The British, for instance, said with pride that ‘the sun never sets on the British Empire.’

“But in the middle of the 20th century, wars of conquest began to lose their legitimacy. Only wars of defense or liberation were permissible in the world’s Soul. In the last half of the 20th century, three out of every four wars were wars of liberation. And, significantly, it appears that democracies do not wage war on other democracies. Together, these factors will make our world very different in the future vis-a-vis warfare.

“There is also a democratization emerging from the human Soul that will take over every aspect of our lives. You can also see the change in your own life. How many people do you know who have changed their notion of religious power? How many more today are saying, ‘I’m not going to have anyone in any kind of position of authority tell me what I have to believe. I’m going to figure that out for myself.’

“In summary, then, the reasons why we can entertain hope for a future without violence are:

Violence is a relatively recent historical phenomenon, apparently limited to only the past 8500 years.

The Epoch II deep-values that gave rise to violence are clearly dying.

3. The Epoch III deep-values that will not tolerate violence are clearly emerging.”

THE CHRYSALIS: From the Caterpillar to the Butterfly

“So we find ourselves in this transition between the values of Epoch II and Epoch III. I like to use the metaphor of the chrysalis, where the Epoch II caterpillar is dissolving and

the Epoch III butterfly is beginning to take shape. I find it interesting that the Greek word for butterfly is the same as their word for Soul—a new Soul is emerging from this chrysalis. I call it a crisis of chrysalis, because the caterpillar at this point feels death, destruction, disintegration—major loss of identity. Imagine if you think God created the world for caterpillars and you have this dissolving going on in the chrysalis. That’s when the fear and desperation can emerge into an enormous amount of violence.

“Unfortunately, this kind of violence will still happen in this transition period, this chrysalis. But if enough of us awaken to the unique responsibilities inherent in living within this extraordinary transitional time in history, if enough of us choose to make a difference, to become active peacemakers, and to be diligent in our efforts to usher in this new epoch of the human journey, there are reasons for hope.”

To emphasize this final point, Dr. Keck closed his talk with a quote from a poem by Rumi:

*The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you. Don't go back to sleep.
You must ask for what you really want. Don't go back to sleep.
People are going back and forth across the doorsill
where the two worlds touch.
The door is round and open.
Don't go back to sleep.*

Rumi

Dr. L. Robert Keck has a degree in sociology from Cornell College, a master’s degree in theology from Vanderbilt University, and a Ph.D. in the philosophy of health from Union Graduate School. He has been a United Methodist minister in Iowa and Ohio, served on the medical school faculty of Ohio State University, and is currently a scholar-in-residence at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. Keck is the author of four books: *The Spirit of Synergy*; *Sacred Eyes*; *Sacred Quest*; and the forthcoming *Sacred Healing: A Story of Personal, Medical, and Spiritual Transformation*.

Sacred Quest: The Evolution and Future of the Human Soul by *L. Robert Keck*
Chrysalis Books, West Chester, PA. 2000. \$24.95

Nobel Laureates Look Ahead

OSLO, Norway. At the Symposium celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Nobel Prize in December, 100 Nobel Laureates from around the world issued the following statement:

The most profound danger to world peace in the coming years will stem not from the irrational acts of states or individuals but from the legitimate demands of the world’s dispossessed. Of these poor and disenfranchised, the majority live a marginal existence in

equatorial climates. Global warming, not of their making but originating with the wealthy few, will affect their fragile ecologies most. Their situation will be desperate and manifestly unjust.

It cannot be expected, therefore, that in all cases they will be content to await the beneficence of the rich. If then we permit the devastating power of modern weaponry to spread through this combustible human landscape, we invite a conflagration that can engulf both rich and poor. The only hope for the future lies in co-operative international action, legitimized by democracy.

It is time to turn our backs on the unilateral search for security, in which we seek to shelter behind walls. Instead, we must persist in the quest for united action to counter both global warming and a weaponized world.

These twin goals will constitute vital components of stability as we move toward the wider degree of social justice that alone gives hope of peace.

Some of the needed legal instruments are already at hand, such as the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the Convention on Climate Change, the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. As concerned citizens, we urge all governments to commit to these goals that constitute steps on the way to replacement of war by law.

To survive in the world we have transformed, we must learn to think in a new way. As never before, the future of each depends on the good of all.

The Signatories:

Zhohres I. Alferov Physics, 2000
 Sidney Altman Chemistry, 1989
 Philip W. Anderson Physics, 1977
 Oscar Arias Sanchez Peace, 1987
 J. Georg Bednorz Physics, 1987
 Bishop Carlos F.X. Belo Peace, 1996
 Baruj Benacerraf Physiology/Medicine, 1980
 Hans A. Bethe Physics, 1967
 James W. Black Physiology/Medicine, 1988
 Guenter Blobel Physiology/Medicine, 1999
 Nicolaas Bloembergen Physics, 1981
 Norman E. Boriaug Peace, 1970
 Paul D. Boyer Chemistry, 1997
 Bertram N. Brockhouse Physics, 1994
 Herbert C. Brown Chemistry, 1979
 Georges Charpak Physics, 1992
 Claude Cohen-Tannoudji Physics, 1997

John W. Cornforth Chemistry, 1975
Francis H. Crick Physiology/Medicine, 1962
James W. Cronin Physics, 1980
Paul J. Crutzen Chemistry, 1995
Robert F. Curl Chemistry, 1996
His Holiness The Dalai Lama Peace, 1989
Johann Deisenhofer Chemistry, 1988
Peter C. Doherty Physiology/Medicine, 1996
Manfred Eigen Chemistry, 1967
Richard R. Ernst Chemistry, 1991
Leo Esaki Physics, 1973
Edmond H. Fischer Physiology/Medicine, 1992
Val L. Fitch Physics, 1980
Dario Fo Literature, 1997
Robert F. Furchgott Physiology/Medicine, 1998
Walter Gilbert Chemistry, 1980
Sheldon L. Glashow Physics, 1979
Mikhail S. Gorbachev Peace, 1990
Nadine Gordimer Literature, 1991
Paul Greengard Physiology/Medicine, 2000
Roger Guillemin Physiology/Medicine, 1977
Herbert A. Hauptman Chemistry, 1985
Dudley R. Herschbach Chemistry, 1986
Antony Hewish Physics, 1974
Roald Hoffman Chemistry, 1981
Gerardus 't Hooft Physics, 1999
David H. Hubel Physiology/Medicine, 1981
Robert Huber Chemistry, 1988
Francois Jacob Physiology/Medicine, 1975
Brian D. Josephson Physics, 1973
Jerome Karle Chemistry, 1985
Wolfgang Ketterle Physics, 2001
H. Gobind Khorana Physiology/Medicine, 1968
Lawrence R. Klein Economics, 1980
Klaus von Klitzing Physics, 1985
Aaron Klug Chemistry, 1982
Walter Kohn Chemistry, 1998
Herbert Kroemer Physics, 2000
Harold Kroto Chemistry, 1996
Willis E. Lamb Physics, 1955
Leon M. Lederman Physics, 1988
Yuan T. Lee Chemistry, 1986
Jean-Marie Lehn Chemistry, 1987
Rita Levi-Montalcini Physiology/Medicine, 1986
William N. Lipscomb Chemistry, 1976

Alan G. MacDiarmid Chemistry, 2000
Daniel L. McFadden Economics, 2000
César Milstein Physiology/Medicine, 1984
Franco Modigliani Economics, 1985
Rudolf L. Moessbauer Physics, 1961
Mario J. Molina Chemistry, 1995
Ben R. Mottelson Physics, 1975
Ferid Murad Physiology/Medicine, 1998
Erwin Neher Physiology/Medicine, 1991
Marshall W. Nirenberg Physiology/Medicine, 1968
Joseph E. Murray Physiology/Medicine, 1990
Paul M. Nurse Physiology/Medicine, 2001
Max F. Perutz Chemistry, 1962
William D. Phillips Physics, 1997
John C. Polanyi Chemistry, 1986
Ilya Prigogine Chemistry, 1977
Burton Richter Physics, 1976
Heinrich Rohrer Physics, 1987
Joseph Rotblat Peace, 1995
Carlo Rubbia Physics, 1984
Bert Sakmann Physiology/Medicine, 1991
Frederick Sanger Chemistry, 1958; 1980
José Saramago Literature, 1998
J. Robert Schrieffer Physics, 1972
Melvin Schwartz Physics, 1988
K. Barry Sharpless Chemistry, 2001
Richard E. Smalley Chemistry, 1996
Jack Steinberger Physics, 1988
Joseph E. Stiglitz Economics, 2001
Horst L. Stormer Physics, 1998
Henry Taube Chemistry, 1983
Joseph H. Taylor Jr. Physics, 1993
Susumu Tonegawa Physiology/Medicine, 1997
Charles H. Townes Physics, 1964
Daniel T. Tsui Physics, 1998
Archbishop Desmond M. Tutu Peace, 1984
John Vane Physiology/Medicine, 1982
John E. Walker Chemistry, 1997
Eric F. Wieschaus Physiology/Medicine, 1982
Jody Williams Peace, 1997
Robert W. Wilson Physics, 1978
Ahmed H. Zewail Chemistry, 1999

Afghan/Global Community Team Welcomed in Washington, D.C.

A Report by Mike Abkin

When a team of Afghans and members of Beyond War went to Washington, D.C., in 1989, they were met with a polite but chilly reception. At that time, the Soviets were in full retreat from Afghanistan, and few in the U.S. government seemed interested in helping the Afghans form a stable, representative government.

A dozen years later, with Afghanistan dominating the news and the military action far ahead of the political, the response to our 2001 Afghan/Global Community team was far different. This time when we presented our updated proposal to the power players in Washington—two months after September 11 and on the day the Taliban abandoned Kabul—doors were opened, and people went out of their way to see us. In five days, our 11-member team had over 50 meetings with Congress people, their staff, the State Department, the National Security Council, and several NGOs (nongovernmental organizations).

We were impressed with how accessible our government leaders are despite the current presence of guards, guns, and concrete barriers. Many hallways in the House office buildings featured plywood panels, plastic sheeting, and duct tape sealing off anthrax-contaminated offices. With members of Congress forced to share facilities, meeting rooms were in short supply, and we often had to meet leaning on reception area desks, standing in hallways, sitting in basement cafeterias, and in one case gathered around a park bench.

The strategy we presented included both short-term and long-term strategies toward eliminating the root causes of terrorism. For the short-term, we focused on an Afghan-developed plan to form a representative government in Afghanistan by convening a *Loya Jirga* (grand assembly), a process the Afghans have long used to resolve their national crises. For the long term, we called for large-scale international humanitarian aid and development assistance for Afghanistan and the region; a balanced Israeli/Palestinian peace process; and a reduction of U.S. dependence on foreign oil.

When asked how our *Loya Jirga* plan differed from other such proposals, our answer was that to be successful, the *Loya Jirga* must have full representation. The plan the Afghans on our team presented has wide Afghan support. It proposes a process in which the Afghan people themselves, in every district of every province, choose their own representatives to attend the *Loya Jirga*. Also represented would be the nomadic population, Afghan refugees in Pakistan, Iran, and around the world, and one woman representative for every 50,000 Afghan women.

The timeliness of our proposal, together with the opportunity to talk directly to Afghans, resulted in meetings scheduled for 15 minutes stretching to two hours. One congresswoman took time out from a committee hearing to meet with us standing in the cramped anteroom behind the dais; she offered to send our proposal to the United Nations. A congressman met with us in a hallway outside the House chamber, periodically excusing himself to run in to cast a vote; he called to others walking by to come over and listen.

Some encounters were not as productive, such as our first meeting with the State Department. But the second State Department meeting made up for it. In that meeting, a former ambassador to Pakistan, recalled from retirement to head up the Afghanistan reconstruction effort, eagerly listened to what we had to say and asked us to stay connected as the process unfolds. Our meeting with the enthusiastic program development coordinator for USAID's Central Asia Task Force was equally encouraging.

One of our pleas was that the U.S. not walk away from Afghanistan this time. We didn't have to push this idea too hard: Almost everyone we talked with in Congress and the Administration, Democrats and Republicans alike, acknowledged that the U.S. made a mistake in the 1990s and vowed that the mistake would not be repeated this time.

Our mission to Washington was organized in under three weeks. Volunteers poured into the Foundation's office from all over the San Francisco Bay Area to lend a hand with telephoning, faxing, e-mailing, and following up for appointments; preparing, reviewing, critiquing, and revising presentation materials and executive summaries; compiling background information on Afghanistan, the region, terrorism, and the people we'd be seeing in Washington; arranging travel and lodging; and photocopying and collating everything into binders.

Since our return, the Afghan/Global Community team has continued to meet regularly, planning how we can most effectively support the Afghan proposal for a fully representative *Loya Jirga*, helping to make sure that Afghan women play a significant role in their country's future, and assuring that the U.S. stays in for the long haul, providing humanitarian and reconstruction aid wherever it is needed.

Pursuing a Key Role for Afghan Women

By Mac Lawrence

You cannot accuse Nafisa Rouhani of being bashful about the role of women in the future of Afghanistan. A member of the Afghan/Global Community team that went to Washington, D.C. (see preceding article), Nafisa spoke out strongly for Afghan women everywhere she went.

As Director of Fremont's Afghan Center, which serves some 26,000 Afghans in the San Francisco Bay Area, Nafisa has become sufficiently well known that in late November

she and another member of the Afghan Center staff were invited by the organization Vital Voices to a three-day leadership training session in Washington. There she joined eight other Afghan women, all refugees living in places ranging from Pakistan to the U.S. The goal of the event was to prepare women for leadership in rebuilding Afghanistan.

Nafisa's first surreal experience came when she and the other women had tea in the White House with First Lady Laura Bush. "It was amazing. She was sitting right there with us. She was very supportive of the need to have Afghan women play an important role, not only politically, but in the economy of Afghanistan. She gave us lots of time. We felt relaxed, like talking with a friend.

"Later, when the media interviewed us, we emphasized the need for the U.S. to stay and help Afghanistan, not abandon us again. We talked about our 1964 constitution, reminding them that there were two women ministers in Kabul before the Soviets came. We talked about our women helping form an institute for democracy in Afghanistan.

"A big need is education. There has been fighting for so long that many of the women in Afghanistan know nothing about the 1964 constitution. With the Taliban, they have lost their self-esteem, their self-confidence. One idea we support is to have Intermedia, a Washington-based media and research agency, set up a radio station that can reach the Afghan women and give them hope."

Nafisa's second surprise was meeting with former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who proved to be as receptive and supportive as Mrs. Bush. "I asked Secretary Albright what she could do for us, and she replied: 'I'm not Laura Bush, but I do have a lot of contacts.' And she said at least twice, 'We need a plan, and we need to get to work. Stay in touch.'"

Nafisa's third surprise was a reception which featured speakers such as Kofi Annan, head of the United Nations, and Secretary Albright. At the end of the evening, the Afghan women stood at the front of the room, clasped hands, raised them in unison and said, "We are not just Hazarah, Pashtun, Uzbek, Tajik. We are Afghans—we are all Afghan women."

Nafisa's Washington experiences were not over, however. Shortly after her return home, she was invited by the White House to attend the signing of a bill supporting the education and health care of Afghan women and children. After a red-eye flight to Washington, Nafisa found herself standing among a dozen Afghan women and a score of Afghan children from the D.C. area; women senators, including Hillary Clinton, Barbara Boxer, and Kay Bailey Hutchison (whom she had met before and to whom she had given the proposal for a *Loya Jirga*); a variety of other luminaries; and a full complement of the media.

In his speech, President Bush praised the courage of the Afghan women and affirmed his long-term commitment on their behalf and on behalf of the children. After the bill

signing, Nafisa was one of the Afghan women who spoke. Another, Sima Wali, had attended the Bonn meeting where she was offered an administrative position in the interim Afghan government. It was an offer Wali turned down, Nafisa reported, because she was not looking for power but wished only to continue working for the cause of the women and children.

An American Woman in Kyrgyzstan

The following is a journal entry written by Tanya Weaver. She and her husband, Eric, are working in Kyrgyzstan with Habitat for Humanity International.

Not only am I an American living and working in a foreign land, I am also an American living and working in a Muslim country.

In light of the horrors that happened in the United States this week, we didn't really know how affected we would be. We heard reports from other Muslim countries where people were actually dancing in the streets and celebrating because America had been attacked. But it was hard to consolidate that image with Kyrgyzstan, as it is a peaceful country whose people have done nothing but make us feel at home. Of course we take precautions, because there is a small pocket of people who might wish Americans harm. So, we don't speak English on the streets, we go from home to the office and to the site together, not alone. If Eric needs to go on site alone, Marat will take him in his car.

This morning we arrived at the Habitat site and were working away when I was made aware that today was the memorial service for the brother of one of our homeowners who died this week. The family invited Eric and me to attend the service, but only I could attend, because a second group of volunteers was scheduled to arrive on site and Eric was needed to work with them.

With my hair covered in dust and wearing my dirty sweatpants and shirt, I felt that I should probably not attend, but the family would not hear of it and insisted that I go. Knowing how important it is to celebrate the life of those who have died, I decided to go, no matter how grungy I looked. At the gathering, I stood out. I was the only foreigner amongst a huge group of Muslim Kyrgyz people. I sat quietly in a corner, trying to disappear and not intrude on their memorial service.

Kubat, the man whose brother had died, would have nothing of it and invited me to sit at one of the tables, surrounded by women in mourning. In spite of their pain, each one of those women gave me their sympathy for what happened in New York City and Washington. They put aside their own feelings of grief to ask about my family and friends, telling me that they were so sorry that such a barbarity could be carried out in the name of Islam. We chatted throughout the dinner, which consisted mainly of horse entrails and large chunks of lamb.

Suddenly, a chant was heard from behind me. It was the mullah (Muslim priest) and he was reading from the Koran in memory of Kubat's brother. A prayer was said. With the ceremony almost over, Kubat stood up, red-eyed and unable to speak very strongly. But what he said was amazing. He asked the mullah to read from the Koran in memory of those who died in America and to pray for peace.

As I sat with my eyes closed listening to the Arab words from the Koran being chanted in a most haunting way, I had a hard time controlling the fall of tears. I could not believe that I was sitting amongst a large group of Muslims who were praying for my countrymen. Then the mullah said a prayer as we held our hands out in a cupping motion in front of our faces. The prayer was one of asking God for forgiveness for evil, for mercy. The ceremony being over, I stood up to offer my condolences to Kubat and to leave. As I walked toward him, I felt a tap on my shoulder. There was a woman I didn't know, telling me how sorry she was for the loss of life in my country and for the senseless killings. Every person in that room followed her, and each one expressed horror and sadness for the terroristic events that took place in the USA.

So while there are people in this world that actually celebrated what happened, the Kyrgyz people I know have taken the time and effort to make Eric and me feel even more comfortable in their country. They have expressed their sorrow in the most touching way possible—sharing the memorial service held for a loved family member with the expression of sorrow for Americans who died, and for those who will live to remember and grieve.

Something's Happening Here

By John Balzar

Is America going to change now? It's not one of those everyday conversation starters, is it? It's not one of those questions we raise after having formed our own opinion as to the proper answer. Not like asking what did you think of so-and-so's speech. Or how about the Lakers' chances this year.

Perhaps it's a measure of change already underway that we're asking an important question for which none of us has an answer.

The president tells us to get back to business, but it won't be business as usual. For travelers, life will be more tedious. For workers, more uncertain. For men and women in the armed forces, more dangerous and tougher. For New Yorkers, emptier. For many thousands of mourning families, less joyful and more painful, forever.

But there are broader, if not always so poignant, degrees of difference suggested when we look at our nation and ponder the question of change.

Fear is the foremost consideration, of course. How will life change with our homeland as a battleground? When will we next hear screams and see carnage? Will worries about safety distract us from other concerns, such as civil liberties, the environment, education, health care?

But something else is embedded in this question of national change: Hope. As in, let's hope for change, and for the better, in our everyday pursuits. For my liking, America has grown both too soft and too hard in the last quarter-century. Too soft in spirit; too hard of heart.

Individualism, which is our heritage, betrayed itself as a mass movement absorbed chiefly with wealth and celebrity. There is nothing inherently wrong with either, but they too narrowly defined our aspirations and success.

The fact that few of us could make it to the front of the pack created a national sense of malaise, even as we prospered materially. Some people got trampled along the way. Others became lethargic. A few violent. We spent our evenings as voyeurs, peering in on lives that somehow felt more meaningful than our own.

At the same time, those who triumphed became a new Gilded Class, the likes of which we have not seen in a century—a small group segregated by gated streets, private guards, personal jets, political privilege.

In countless ways, our values became trivialized. *Gary Condit*. Apocalyptic thinkers warned that we were lapsing into baby talk in our civic discussions. *Monica Lewinsky*.

If America is to change now, let us hope that we begin by rethinking those ideals we live by.

Not so many days ago, it was possible to alarm people at a social gathering by wondering aloud: Say, what do you suppose the meaning of life is, anyway? You'd scatter a crowd as fast as if you had lit up a cigarette in the host's living room.

I don't see the same reaction now. Introspection has been forced on us.

Is America going to change?

I believe the country, in fact, has reached a transformational moment.

War and economic upheaval hit like floodwater. The ordinary flow of events, when charged with peril, can jump banks and carve new channels.

Prior to the attacks, there were countercurrents building strength in our culture. Volunteerism was on the rise. More of us were relearning the pleasures of cooking and knitting and woodworking and gardening. Artisans and craftsmen when someone left a

high-powered position to “spend more time with the family.” Just beneath the headlines, throngs of Americans went searching for meaning in different directions.

So is America going to change now?

The answer won’t be found by looking out across our vast landscape.

It will arise as the sum of a different question, asked 280 million times over, by each of us: Am I going to change? Then we’ll know if America is going to.

This column appeared in the Los Angeles Times on October 3, 2001. Reprinted with permission.

A World Out of Touch With Itself

Where the violence comes from

By Rabbi Michael Lerner

There is never any justification for acts of terror against innocent civilians—it is the quintessential act of dehumanization and not recognizing the sanctity of others, and a visible symbol of a world increasingly irrational and out of control.

It’s understandable why many of us, after grieving and consoling the mourners, will feel anger. Demagogues will try to direct that anger at various “target groups.” The militarists will use this as a moment to call for increased defense spending at the expense of the needy. The right wing may even seek to limit civil liberties, end restraints on spying, and move us toward a militarized society. President Bush will feel pressure to look “decisive” and take “strong” action—phrases that can be manipulated toward irrational responses to an irrational attack.

To counter that potential manipulation of our fear and anger for narrow political ends, a well-meaning media will instead try to narrow our focus solely on the task of finding and punishing the perpetrators. These people, of course, should be caught and punished. But in some ways this exclusive focus allows us to avoid dealing with the underlying issues. When violence becomes so prevalent throughout the planet, it’s too easy to simply talk of “deranged minds.”

We need to ask ourselves, “What is it in the way that we are living, organizing our societies, and treating each other that makes violence seem plausible to so many people?” We in the spiritual world will see this as a growing global incapacity to recognize the spirit of God in each other—what we call the sanctity of each human being. But even if you reject religious language, you can see that the willingness of people to hurt each other to advance their own interests has become a global problem, and it’s only the dramatic

level of this particular attack which distinguishes it from the violence and insensitivity to each other that is part of our daily lives.

We may tell ourselves that the current violence has “nothing to do” with the way that we’ve learned to close our ears when told that one out of every three people on this planet does not have enough food, and that one billion are literally starving. We may reassure ourselves that the hoarding of the world’s resources by the richest society in world history, and our frantic attempts to accelerate globalization with its attendant inequalities of wealth, has nothing to do with the resentment that others feel toward us. We may tell ourselves that the suffering of refugees and the oppressed has nothing to do with us—that that’s a different story that is going on somewhere else.

But we live in one world, increasingly interconnected with everyone, and the forces that lead people to feel outrage, anger and desperation eventually impact our own daily lives. The same sense of disconnection to the plight of others operates in the minds of many of these terrorists. Raise children in circumstances where no one is there to take care of them, or where they must live by begging or selling their bodies in prostitution, put them in refugee camps and tell them that they have “no right of return” to their homes, treat them as though they are less valuable and deserving of respect because they are part of some despised national or ethnic group, surround them with a media that extols the rich and makes everyone who is not economically successful and physically trim and conventionally “beautiful” feel bad about themselves, offer them jobs whose sole goal is to enrich the “bottom line” of someone else, and teach them that “looking out for number one” is the only thing anyone “really” cares about and that people who believe in love and social justice are merely naive idealists who are destined to always remain powerless, and you will produce a world-wide population of people feeling depressed, angry, and in various ways dysfunctional.

Most Americans will feel puzzled by any reference to this “larger picture.” It seems baffling to imagine that somehow we are part of a world system which is slowly destroying the life-support system of the planet, and quickly transferring the wealth of the world into our own pockets.

We don’t feel personally responsible when an American corporation runs a sweatshop in the Philippines or crushes efforts of workers to organize in Singapore. We don’t see ourselves implicated when the U.S. refuses to consider the plight of Palestinian refugees or uses the excuse of fighting drugs to support repression in Colombia or other parts of Central America.

We have narrowed our own attention to “getting through” or “doing well” in our own personal lives, and who has time to focus on all the rest of this? Most of us are leading perfectly reasonable lives within the options that we have available to us—so why should others be angry at us, much less strike out against us? And the truth is, our anger is also understandable: The striking out by others in acts of terror against us is just as irrational as the world-system that it seeks to confront.

Yet our acts of counter-terror will also be counter-productive. We should have learned from the current phase of the Israel-Palestinian struggle that responding to terror with more violence, rather than asking ourselves what we could do to change the conditions that generated it in the first place, will only ensure more violence against us in the future.

Luckily, most people don't act out in violent ways—they tend to act out more against themselves, drowning themselves in alcohol or drugs or personal despair. Others turn toward fundamental religions or ultra-nationalist extremism. Still others find themselves acting out against people that they love, acting angry or hurtful toward children or relationship partners.

This is a world out of touch with itself, filled with people who have forgotten how to recognize and respond to the sacred in each other because we are so used to looking at each other from the standpoint of what they can do for us, how we can use them toward our own ends. The alternatives are stark: either start caring about the fate of everyone on this planet or be prepared for a slippery slope toward violence that will eventually dominate our daily lives.

None of this should be read as somehow mitigating our anger at the terrorists. Let's not be naïve about the perpetrators. The brains and money behind this operation isn't a group of refugees living penniless in Palestinian refugee camps. [But] imagine if the Osama bin Ladens of the world had to recruit people against America at a time when:

- America was using its economic resources to end world hunger and redistribute the wealth of the planet so that everyone had enough.
- America was the leading voice championing an ethos of generosity and caring for others, leading the world in ecological responsibility, social justice, open-hearted treatment of minorities, and rewarding people and corporations for social responsibility.
- America was restructuring its own internal life so that all social practices and institutions were being judged “productive or efficient or rational” not only because they maximized profit, but also to the extent that they maximized love and caring, ethical/spiritual/ecological sensitivity, and an approach to the universe based on awe and wonder at the grandeur of creation.

Think it's impossible? It's even more naïve to imagine that bombings, missile defense systems, more spies or baggage searches can stop people willing to lose their lives to wreak havoc and capable of airplane hijacking, or chemical assaults (like anthrax). The response of people to the World Trade Building collapse was an outpouring of loving energy and desire we all have to care about each other. If we could legitimate people allowing that part of themselves to come out, without having to wait for a disaster, we could empower a part of every human being which our social order marginalizes. Americans have a deep goodness—and that needs to be affirmed.

The central struggle going on in the world today is this one: between hope and fear, love or paranoia, generosity or trying to shore up one's own portion. There is no possibility in sustaining a world built on fear. Our only hope is to revert to a consciousness of generosity and love. That's not to go to la-la land where there are no forces like those who destroyed the World Trade Center. But it is to refuse to allow that to become the shaping paradigm of the 21st century. Much better to make the shaping paradigm the story of the police and firemen who risked, and in many cases lost, their lives in order to save other human beings whom they didn't even know. Let the paradigm be the generosity and kindness of people when they are given a social sanction to be caring instead of self-protective. We cannot let war, hatred, and fear become the power in this new century that it was in the last century.

It's about time we began to say unequivocally that violence doesn't work—not as an end and not as a means. The best defense is a world drenched in love, not a world drenched in armaments. The best way to prevent these kinds of [terrorist] acts is not to turn ourselves into a police state, but to turn ourselves into a society in which social justice, love, and compassion are so prevalent that violence becomes only a distant memory.

Lines in the Mind, Not in the World

By Donella Meadows

The Earth was formed whole and continuous in the universe, without lines.

The human mind arose in the universe needing lines, boundaries, distinctions. Here and not there. This and not that. Mine and not yours.

That is sea and this is land, and here is the line between them. See? It's very clear on the map.

But, as the linguists say, the map is not territory. The line on the map is not to be found at the edge of the sea.

Humans build houses on the land beside the sea, and the sea comes and takes them away.

This is not land, says the sea. It is also not sea. Look at the territory, which God created, not the map, which you created. There is no place where land ends and sea begins.

The places that are not-land, not-sea, are beautiful, functional, fecund. Humans do not treasure them. In fact, they barely see them because those spaces do not fit the lines in the mind. Humans keep busy dredging, filling, building, diking, draining the places between land and sea, trying to make them either one or the other.

Here is the line, the mind says, between Poland and Russia, between France and Germany, between Jordan and Israel. Here is the Iron Curtain between East and West. Here is the line around the United States, separating us from not-us. It's very clear here, on the map.

The cosmonauts and astronauts in space (cosmonauts are theirs, astronauts are ours) look down and see no lines. They are created only by minds. They shift in history as minds never change.

On the earth's time-scale, human-invented lines shift very quickly. The maps of fifty years ago, of 100 years ago, of 1,000 years ago are very different from the maps of today. The planet is 4 billion years old. Human lines are ephemeral, though people kill one another over them.

Even during the fleeting moments of planetary time when the lines between nations are held still, immigrants cross them legally and illegally. Money and goods cross them legally and illegally. Migrating birds cross them, acid rain crosses them, radioactive debris from Chernobyl crosses them. Ideas cross them with the speed of sound and light. Even where Idea Police stand guard, ideas are not stopped by lines. How could they be? The lines are themselves only ideas.

Between me and not-me there is surely a line, a clear distinction, or so it seems. But now that I look, where is that line?

This fresh apple, still cold and crisp from the morning dew, is not-me only until I eat it. When I eat, I eat the soil that nourished the apple. When I drink, the waters of the earth become me. With every breath I take in I draw in not-me and make it me. With every breath out, I exhale me into not-me.

If the air and the waters and the soils are poisoned, I am poisoned. Only if I believe the fiction of the lines more than the truth of the lineless planet will I poison the earth, which is myself.

Between you and me, now there is certainly a line. No other line feels more certain than that one. Sometimes it seems not a line but a canyon, a yawning empty space across which I cannot reach.

Yet you keep appearing in my awareness. Even when you are far away, something of you surfaces constantly in my wandering thoughts. When you are nearby, I feel your presence, I sense your mood. Even when I try not to. Especially when I try not to.

If you are on the other side of the planet, if I don't know your name, if you speak a language I don't understand, even then, when I see a picture of your face, full of joy, I feel your joy. When your face shows suffering I feel that too. Even when I try not to. Especially then.

I have to work hard not to pay attention to you. When I succeed, when I close my mind to you with the walls of indifference, then the presence of those walls, which constrain my own aliveness, are reminders of the you to whom I would rather not pay attention.

When I do pay attention, very close attention, when I open myself fully to your humanity, your complexity, your reality, then I find, always, under every other feeling and judgment and emotion, that I love you.

Even between you and me, even there, the lines are only of our own making.

Donella Meadows' death last year deprived the world of a voice which promoted "a global view, a connected view, a long-term view, an environmental and compassionate view." Many of her syndicated articles had a timeless quality, and we reprint one of them here.

The Shambhala Warrior

By Joanna Macy

“Tell me, Choegyal Rinpoche, about the coming of the Kingdom of Shambhala.”

Among the Tibetans I had been hearing references to this ancient prophecy, and conjectures that, after twelve centuries, it was coming true in our time. “Can you please tell me in your own words?” I asked. And slowly, with pauses to reflect, he did. Watching his face, I listened to every word. I was arrested by his description of the Shambhala warrior, for this was clearly a metaphor for the bodhisattva—the hero figure that had so caught my attention in my studies of Mahayana Buddhism. Later in my room by the gully, I wrote down what he said.

“There comes a time when all life on Earth is in danger. Barbarian powers have arisen. Although they waste their wealth in preparations to annihilate each other, they have much in common: weapons of unfathomable devastation and technologies that lay waste the world. It is now, when the future of all beings hangs by the frailest of threads, that the kingdom of Shambhala emerges.

“You cannot go there, for it is not a place. It exists in the hearts and minds of the Shambhala warriors. But you cannot recognize a Shambhala warrior by sight, for there is no uniform or insignia, there are no banners. And there are no barricades from which to threaten the enemy, for the Shambhala warriors have no land of their own. Always they move on the terrain of the barbarians themselves.”

“Now comes the time when great courage is required of the Shambhala warriors, moral and physical courage. For they must go into the very heart of the barbarian power and

dismantle the weapons. To remove these weapons, in every sense of the word, they must go into the corridors of power where the decisions are made.

“The Shambhala warriors know they can do this because the weapons are manomaya, mind-made. This is very important to remember, Joanna. These weapons are made by the human mind. So they can be unmade by the human mind! The Shambhala warriors know that the dangers that threaten life on Earth do not come from evil deities or extraterrestrial powers. They arise from our own choices and relationships. So, now, the Shambhala warriors must go into training.”

“How do they train?” I asked.

“They train in the use of two weapons.” That is the word he used—weapons.

“What are they?” I asked. And he held up his hands the way the lamas hold the ritual objects of dorje and bell, as they dance.

“The weapons are compassion and insight. Both are necessary. We need this first one,” he said, lifting his right hand, “because it provides us the fuel, it moves us out to act on behalf of other beings. But by itself it can burn us out. So we need the second as well, which is insight into the dependent co-arising of all things. It lets us see that the battle is not between good people and bad people, for the line between good and evil runs through every human heart. We realize that we are interconnected, as in a web, and that each act with pure motivation affects the entire web, bringing consequences we cannot measure or even see.

“But insight alone,” he said, “can seem too cool to keep us going. So we need as well the heat of compassion, our openness to the world’s pain. Both weapons or tools are necessary to the Shambhala warrior.”

From Joanna Macy’s memoir *Widening Circles*. Reprinted with permission from New Society Publishers,

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*“Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that.
Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.
Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence,
and toughness multiplies toughness
in a descending spiral of destruction....
The chain reaction of evil—hate begetting hate,
wars producing more wars—must be broken,
or we shall be plunged into
the dark abyss of annihilation.”*

Martin Luther King, Jr.
Strength To Love, 1963

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