

“USA Pretend” Unmasked

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Region: [Asia, USA](#)

Theme: [History](#)

Viet Nam – Epiphany for the USA

There was a moment in Viet Nam when I questioned whether everything I had been taught about “America” was one big fabricated lie – a huge pretend. It was April 1969, and I had just experienced witnessing the aftermath of a series of bombings of supposed military targets. They were in fact inhabited, undefended villages where virtually everyone in those villages perished from low flying bombings, that included napalming. The majority of dead – murdered – were young burned children. On several occasions I observed those bodies up close, sickened by the sight, now burdened by the criminal nature of the US war. The policy of accumulating massive numbers of body counts was an inkling of the Grand Lie. Reading the entrance sign to my squadron in-country headquarters, “Welcome to Indian Country,” was a first clue.

My duty station was the “home” of the fighter-bombers and pilots who followed orders to destroy those “enemy targets”, i.e., villages. I was the USAF night security commander following orders to protect those soldiers and planes from mortar and sapper attacks.

A few days later I was reading an article in *Stars and Stripes*, an official, independent newspaper for soldiers, reporting on a recent Supreme Court decision (*Street v. New York*, 1969) that upheld the right of desecrating our “sacred” symbol – the US flag. During a period of increased burnings of the US American flag in protests of the US wars against African-Americans at home, and Asians abroad, an African-American veteran recipient of a Bronze Star, Sidney Street, publicly burned his personal flag on a New York City street corner for which he was arrested and convicted.

Depressed, I pondered how it is that one could be arrested for burning a piece of cloth – even a national symbol – that represented an official policy of criminally burning innocent *human* beings, including large numbers of young children, while the pilot-perpetrators were commended, and whom, in my duties I was protecting? Initially suicidal, I had difficulty wrapping my head around this dystopian nightmare. I was in psychic shock from extreme cognitive dissonance.

Our behavior against the Vietnamese, a nation of peasants with one-sixth the population of the USA, one-thirtieth its size, certainly must rank as one of the worst of a number of barbarisms in the 20th Century. The US left 26 *million* bomb craters, sprayed 21 *million* gallons of DNA-altering chemical warfare on the landscape and people, murdered some 6 *million* Southeast Asians, destroyed by bombing over 13,000 of Viet Nam’s 21,000 villages, 950 churches and pagodas, 350 clearly marked hospitals, 3,000 high schools and universities, 15,000 bridges, etc.

Why all this overwhelming firepower and destruction? Incredulously, to prevent the

Vietnamese from enjoying their self-determination, absurdly touted as necessary to stop “communism.” Does there in fact exist a kind of psychopathy in our cultural DNA? Though I hadn’t fired a bullet myself, or dropped a bomb, I had been a compliant participant in a mindless murder machine. Viet Nam was not an aberration, but consistent with a long history of arrogant interventions revealing something very dark about who we are. Was I part of a savage culture of unthinking sadists, I wondered?



Clockwise, from top left: U.S. combat operations in [Ia Đrăng](#), ARVN Rangers defending [Saigon](#) during the 1968 [Tết Offensive](#), two [A-4C Skyhawks](#) after the [Gulf of Tonkin incident](#), ARVN recapture [Quảng Trị](#) during the 1972 [Easter Offensive](#), civilians fleeing the [1972 Battle of Quảng Trị](#), and burial of 300 victims of the 1968 [Huế Massacre](#). (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

Learning Real People’s Versus Fake, Kool Aid US History

I have spent countless hours studying a more comprehensive people’s version of world and US history. Study of US history of course is part of the Eurocentric globalization/colonization over the past 500 years. The 20 percent Eurocentric “developed-world” is a product of self-proclaimed “superiors” violently and deceitfully stealing resources and labor from the other 80 percent, all cloaked in the conceited rhetoric of spreading “civilization.” This patriarchal policy is totally unsustainable from a social, political, ecological, psychological, and moral perspective.

It is instructive to learn that the “Founding Fathers” chose, not democracy, but oligarchy/plutocracy “to protect the minority of the opulent against the majority.” Jefferson’s “empire of liberty” was a vision to expand private property for large landowners. Our Constitution is more a document to preserve freedom of “property” and commercial transactions, than it is to preserve human liberty, of which free speech is the most fundamental. Historian Staughton Lynd summarized it thus: inherited land replaced inherited government. Recently the highest court of the land ruled the legal fiction that property (money) is a person with free speech rights, as preposterous as the earlier legal fiction that a person (slave) is property.

A fear-laden gun culture originating in violent settler-colonialism and white nationalism-supremacy serve as a basis for the founding ideology and military strategy of the United States. Slave patrols and Indian fighters were our first “special operations,” establishing the essential White *character* of our militarized culture. As the systematic dispossession project continued, the US government signed over 400 treaties with Indigenous nations, violating every one of them, establishing deceit and outright lying as part of our cultural DNA.

The politics of violence based on classism and racism has been incessant throughout our history. Examining the US criminal injustice system housing a *quarter* of all the world’s prisoners reveals brutal truth when comparing extreme disparities in punishments by race, and class. Justice?

I studied the history of the city of my birth – Geneva, New York, which in the 1700s was Kanadesaga, capitol of the Seneca nation. On September 8, 1779, Major General John Sullivan and his forty-five hundred soldiers eradicated these “merciless Indian Savages” in the largest Revolutionary War battle of 1779 – a terrorist, scorched-earth campaign massacring civilians while destroying all forty of the well-established Seneca towns,

including Kanadesaga. By 1788, the European settlers renamed it Geneva, as if nothing had happened, a deserved reward for superiors.

All those arrowheads I enjoyed collecting as a child possessed a profound dark secret about the nature and character of my ancestors. However, I would only discover their secret after deep reflections from my Viet Nam awakening.

Official US military interventionism began with the US Marine invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1798 during the undeclared naval war with France. However, hundreds of settler paramilitary units had been killing Indians since the 1620s. But imperialism has been *explicit* policy since the late 1890s to assure *domestic* prosperity. In 1907, Woodrow Wilson while president of Princeton University (six years before being elected US president) lectured:

“Since trade ignores national boundaries and the manufacturer insists on having the world as a market, the flag of his nation must follow him, and the doors of the nations which are closed against him must be battered down.....Colonies must be obtained or planted, in order that no useful corner of the world may be overlooked or left unused.”

President McKinley, and various Senators continued to advocate “a foreign market for our surplus products.” US meddling, both “soft,” and hard, has never stopped.

Traveling to a number of nations in Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East have exposed me to details of *hundreds* of US overt interventions, and *thousands* of covert destabilization actions. These policies have caused the murders of *millions*, 20 to 30 million alone since WWII during the so-called “Cold War”. Only five of these nearly 600 military interventions have been declared wars as required by the Constitution, clearly indicating our sacred document is not taken seriously. This also tells us the system has no interest in being accountable to its own Constitution, or international law. Speaking with peasants in these victim-countries invariably reveals the horrendous cruelty of US interveners and their surrogates. Does the US possess any intentions to be law-abiding? Does the US possess any feelings for others, or only selfish imperial ambitions? And does anyone care?

Violence against even White citizens has matched violence we have carried out in foreign policy. The Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 were enacted to suppress anti-war dissent against US entrance into World War I. *Thousands* of US Americans were deported and imprisoned following World War I for “radical” anti-war expressions, including labor leaders and socialists. Some were tortured in US prisons. Ironically, free speech dissent is most critical when a government decides to go to war. The original Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 stifled free speech of US citizens, including elected officials, who objected to the undeclared war against France. Free speech? Huh?

While the US was locking up and deporting citizens for opposing World War I, the FBI was *ignoring* extremely violent KKK supremacist groups whose six million members – nearly 25 percent of the white male population at the time – were lynching with impunity an average of six African-Americans a month. Equal protection?

The first known use of air power against civilians was committed by US Marines in Haiti in 1919. But, the second known use of US air power against civilians occurred in Tulsa, Oklahoma, May 31-June 1, 1921, when hundreds of economically successful Black residents

living in a 36-square block community were murdered, including from low flying white-piloted planes dropping incendiaries, destroying nearly 1,300 buildings. How many US Americans know about this abomination?

Walter White, a longtime leader in the National Association for Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), concluded that southerners *fear* of Negro *progress* offends the intangible feeling of racial superiority, explaining the intensity of White savagery. The sense of established White superiority (or anyone possessing those feelings) often leads to an insecure character from lack of practicing accountability with others in a world of varied, challenging relationships. Those feelings easily morph into paranoia of others, and delusions of self grandeur – one of the most difficult psychological orders to treat, as the persistent pathology of racism (and classism) so attests.

The third known use of US bombing civilians occurred at Blair Mountain, West Virginia, August-September 1921. As many as 15,000 striking coal miners attempting to unionize were attacked by 2,000 armed sheriff's deputies, coal company paramilitaries, US troops, and US Army Martin MB-1 bombers, killing as many as 100 miners, with many more wounded. Before the battles had ended, more than a million ammunition rounds had been fired. Nearly 1,000 miners were ironically indicted for murder of the nearly 30 deaths among the miner's attackers. Over 700 union organizers have been murdered in our history. Is this known by many?

We continue to be obsessed with personal and government guns (police and military) as a guarantor of our security. Those who question easy access to guns, even assault weapons, or the ridiculously wasteful military spending, are thought of as nearly traitorous. US citizens personally own nearly 400 million firearms, or 40 percent of all private guns in the world. On average, three US citizens are killed every day by police, disproportionately African-Americans. So far in 2019, the US has experienced more than one mass shooting (4 or more shot) everyday. Our gun death rate is ten times above that of other high income countries. Using violence as a default position historically ends in disaster, as it has been proven over and over that violence spirals out of control into more violence, while distracting from serious discourse. Why the incredible record of violence? Insecurity?

Under its doctrine of Full Spectrum Dominance, the US government routinely dispatches military ships to every sea space, military planes to every airspace, hundreds of satellites into outer space, while ordering Special Forces units to operate clandestinely in nearly three-fourths of the world's countries. Additionally, of the 1.4 million US soldiers in the world, nearly 200,000 are positioned in as many as 150 countries, most stationed at 800 major military bases in 80 nations. The US also possesses a large percentage of the world's weapons of mass destruction, and recently has dispensed with any genuine effort at containing the spread of nuclear weapons. The annual military budget, including hidden costs, amounts to an exorbitant \$1.25 trillion a year, more money than the next seven countries combined spend on their militaries. If you want to be guaranteed health care and a modest house, join the Army. Otherwise these human rights are "unaffordable." If you want gun control, start at the top.

How to explain the extent and breadth of our violent militarism and global imperialism? Paranoia? It seems that our sense of superiority justifies hurtful dispossession from others to acquire and preserve undeserved privilege.

After exiting the military in 1970, my opinions about the US war against the Vietnamese were affirmed with the 1971 release of the Pentagon Papers revealing the more than 20 years of criminal intentions, and deceit, to thwart Vietnamese aspirations for self-determination. Earlier in 1971, January 31-February 2, Vietnam Veterans Against the War conducted the “Winter Soldier Investigation: An Inquiry into American War Crimes” when nearly 120 veterans testified about the war crimes and atrocities they committed or witnessed in Viet Nam. I was aghast when learning about Nixon’s intended Huston plan to criminally interrupt antiwar activities, the FBI’s sixteen-year COINTELPRO of more than 2,000 illegal actions against innocent US citizens, the CIA’s Operation CHAOS keeping tabs on 300,000 citizens opposed to the Viet Nam war, and the National Security Agency’s Operation SHAMROCK watch lists of those communicating with people overseas. Respect for the law? Huh? Further research revealed that as early as 1934 President Roosevelt instituted a long-standing joint FBI-military program to conduct domestic intelligence with broad investigative scope. The “American” Kool Aid indeed has sedated us.

Today our freedoms are further curtailed, for example, as the National Security Agency (NSA) spies on every US American, the Authorization of Military Force Act (AUMF) allows warrantless electronic surveillance of anyone suspected of aiding terrorism, and the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) enables indefinite detention of US citizens, even arrest by the military. Where is the Constitution when we need it? Or was it ever really there for us?

One of the most revealing chapters in our history is the incredible sympathy the US possessed for authoritarian Nazi Germany. Even though the Soviet military was most critical in defeating the Nazis in World War II, deep fear of the Bolsheviks (the emergence of an alternative social-economic system to capitalism) motivated US America’s wealthy class, with complicity of the US government, to support the rise of Nazi Germany from the *mid-1930s* into the war years themselves. The US capitalists supported the Nazi capitalists to defeat the “threat” of socialism. Elite power brokers included leaders of Wall Street and wealthy “barons” such as the Rockefellers and Andrew Mellon, and businesses such as Ford Motor, IBM (tabulating daily location of Jews in the Holocaust), General Motors, General Electric, Standard Oil, Texaco, ITT, International Harvester, Chase Manhattan Bank, the House of Morgan banking dynasty, DuPont, United Aircraft, etc., who enjoyed huge profits from the war. And following the war, the US’s “Operation Gladio” systematically defeated popular *anti*-Nazi groups throughout Europe, while “Operation Paperclip” secretly brought Nazi scientists and other professionals *to the US*. Our affinity for fascism has been established.

Psychologically, it is important to note that our national *identity* has consistently been markedly defined by demonizing others – “merciless savages”, “uppity ni**ers”, “anarchists”, “radicals”, “communists”, “Russians”, “alien filth”, “narco-traffickers”, “terrorists”, “shithole countries”, “vermin”, etc., echoing psychologist Carl Jung’s principle of “shadow projection.” Jung described a cowardly trick we play on ourselves: avoid looking in the mirror so as not to take responsibility for seeing our own demons. We “see” the evil in others, perpetuating a nation addicted to war against them, obscenely profiting as we self-righteously deny our own severe pathologies. If we had looked in the mirror we would have learned what Pogo told us, “We have met the enemy and he is us.”

Eco-psychologist Chellis Glendinning suggests that modern humans suffer from deep insecurity that emerged from collective traumas hundreds of generations ago. A serious disconnect from intimacy with the earth occurred when our ancient ancestors began

controlling nature through agriculture and animal domestication. Evolutionary philosopher Gregory Bateson concludes that addictive behavior is consistent with the Western approach to life that pits mind against body, while behaving as if the natural world is a commodity. We seek various distractions to numb our pain from this feeling of aloofness. Technology, not Nature, has become our God.

Recognizing the Lie

Could it be that virtually everything I was taught by my parents, community, school, church, and political leaders in terms of factual history, morality, ethics, and rational thinking about “America” was the *opposite* of what had been represented? How could that be?

Yes, I have been conditioned by an incredibly comfortable fairy tale, a massive cultural system denying or distorting historic realities, founded on shameful genocides. I had been betrayed. We are told we are the greatest, even as we (s)elect imperial Presidents and Congresspeople in an orgy of fantastic fiction about “democracy.” The US Senate is a millionaire’s club, with many members of the US House also in that class. Indian author Arundhati Roy describes “democracy” and “pro-democracy” as the “Free World’s whores”, hollow words satisfying a whole range of tastes, available to be used and abused at will where facts don’t matter.

US America loves its myth of being committed to justice for all, but in fact it is a society ruled and funded by a wealthy elite. This is *not* a government of, by and for the people! It is a ruthless oligarchy sanctioned by a majority of the people *believing* their vote counts. Money has *always* mattered, severely rigging the game in many ways toward an upper class (obscenely bribing candidates, corporate personhood power, gerrymandering, proprietary election software, hacking capacity to effect results, Jim Crow laws, voter suppression, etc.). The oligarchy approves “acceptable” candidates, while contrived rhetoric, propaganda, and our education system keep us faithful to our political system comprised of one party with two right wings, the winner ruling by tyranny of its majority. But the bottom line is that (s)elected representatives obey their large donors who thrive on war-making against vulnerable others.

Nonetheless, these facts do not preclude existence of individual conscientious politicians. However, the political economic system itself is fixed, it is not broken, a dilemma every honest politician must face. This delicious Kool Aid has in fact concealed a delusional madness, a Kafkaesque, Orwellian nightmare. Our political leaders have consistently and collectively acted *outside* the Constitution, while selectively applying laws that preserve the cabal in power. It has always been this way, though the social revolution of the 1960s threatened to overturn the oligopoly. This revolution was unfortunately unsuccessful but the fearful system’s repressive reaction is now in its fifth decade. In the end, we are in fact a nation of men, not laws.

So, in effect, our mythological story made me functionally stupid, a “good kid” who became complicit in mindless, mass murder. And I am suggesting that it has created a society comprised of millions of functionally stupid people. This is different from intelligence. This is not idiocy. This is serious *non*-thinking of intellectually capable people who, in effect, have suspended their autonomous critical thinking, basking in an intoxicated spell of our sense of national invincibility. It has enhanced the Friedman era of neoliberal privatization, worshipping greed, while millions are without health care and homeless. This is mass psychopathy, a dangerous cultural mental illness.

German Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, while a prisoner in one of Hitler's jails, wrote about the role of stupidity in the German people that substantially contributed to the rise of Nazism and worship of savior Hitler. He argued that it is very separate from intellectual capacity but occurs when a cult-like belief system dangerously suspends critical thinking, bringing collective relief to an emotionally anxious population. It is a form of voluntary servitude more dangerous than malice, an entrenched belief system that makes genuine dialogue and education almost impossible. (Bonhoeffer was hung in April 1945).

As US Americans we possess no *visceral* memory of the two *unspeakable* genocides our ancestors shamefully committed, forcefully dispossessing Indigenous Africans of their labor, and genuine Americans of their land, murdering millions with impunity. Even though we are superficially taught about slavery and conquering the Indigenous, their egregious suffering has been outsourced outside our feeling fields for 25 generations. Thus, was established our cultural "DNA" of achieving expansion benefitting a few (mostly White males and those who think like them) through *any* means while escaping any accountability whatsoever. Now nearly 600 overt, and thousands of covert interventions later, US Americans still know little or nothing about our unspeakable imperialism. Why not? Isn't it critically important that we seriously grapple with our diabolical history?

In 2019, the President, US military, CIA, and other "regime change" entities like the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), and their funders in Congress, continue to intervene almost everywhere, destabilizing with crippling sanctions, sadistically causing suffering, causing chaos, creating kill lists, murdering, bombing, etc. Does any of this criminal insanity even happen? Has it ever? Does it matter to most people? I believe there is a deep *shame* that burdens us. It is understandable to avoid looking at shame, but the cost is perpetual war for perpetual peace until we are all dead. The era of privilege is over, as we enter the terrifying era of consequences, bringing fear, insecurity and anxiety to many heretofore privileged folks. Denial becomes a lethal seduction.

Our amnesia has precluded *emotional* intelligence, a depth of character, so necessary for mature development, with little understanding of historical context. We are effectively emotionally retarded, blocking the universal embedded human feeling of empathy, and the collective solidarity that emerges therefrom. Thus, "America" is very insecure having been conveniently wrapped in a fake, pretend narrative, convincing us of our "exceptional" nature, ignoring both our systemic pattern of domestic violence, and global imperialism. The corporate media, and corporate-owned social media platforms, serve as stenographers for our oligarchic policies and values. They create an agenda-driven narrative that inoculates our minds with constant group think untruths of neo-liberal capitalism.

We now live in a post-truth world, where narcissistic life is experienced as virtual, not real. Do we feel the pain of the Afghani, Yemeni, the Syrian, Iraqi, Iranian, Libyan, Somali, the Russian, the Venezuelan, Nicaraguan, Honduran, Guatemalan, Mexican, Palestinian in Gaza, or our neighbor down the street whose cancer left her homeless due to foreclosure? How much do we care? Answering these questions can tell us a lot about our own survival, including yours and mine.

Serious discussion and debate of a broad range and depth of ideas is virtually nonexistent. Mention of "socialism" is considered traitorous to the religion of neoliberal corporatism. In reality, we promote individualism over community, competition over cooperation, and acquisitiveness over inquisitiveness. These capitalist characteristics condition human development in a way that is diametrically opposed to our inherent, genetic nature as a

social species requiring for survival cooperation in all our relations.

The economy and political system is now virtually dependent upon what Eisenhower proclaimed as the military/security industrial complex, and that complex thrives on creation of endless “enemies” which produce obscene war profits for a very few. Community and family units have disintegrated, and citizenship is less engaged as life is increasingly defined in terms of commodities. Everything and everybody is for sale to the highest bidder. This leads to anomie, violence and madness. And yet, we continue to enjoy shopping as the government conducts its daily bombing. How can this be? How can we pay taxes and go about our business as usual when so many people in the world are being impoverished or eliminated by US policies facilitating the wealthy getting richer?

The Deep Divide – 1959 – 2019

Having graduated from a rural upstate New York high school in 1959 at the height of post-WWII Cold War euphoria, in the midst of the short historic blip of aspiring consumerism, the “American” Kool Aid I and my 28 fellow graduates drank at that time was delicious. I was raised in a lower middle class home by conservative, religious parents, not dissimilar to the upbringings of many of my classmates. Life seemed great, and simple. However, my Viet Nam experience rudely exposed the poisonous nature of this delicious drink and its true ingredients.

Discovering information about my former classmates finds several still living in the same area we grew up, possessing similar views to that which we believed in 1959 – religiously and politically conservative, but now supporters of MAGA, Trump and Israel. One classmate who had been a basketball cheerleader, still married to her high school sweetheart after 60 years, read my Facebook postings from Nicaragua, then declared me “a fool” admonishing me to “stay there.” This same cheerleader chanted for each starter before games, such as “Brian, Brian, he’s our man, if he can’t do it, nobody can.”

Being raised in and conditioned by US America instills a desire to preserve a fantasy of post-WWII euphoria for many, at least until President Reagan. But experiential reality painfully destroys make-believe. I argue that the USA has never been great, but suspect many of my 1959 classmates would vehemently disagree.

Trump Exposes the Pretend Society

The phenomenon of the Presidency of Donald John Trump disturbingly “offers” our culture, and the world, an overdue *undisguised* photo of our real culture and its politics. Some say Trump brings out the worst in people – hatred, self-centeredness, cruelty, insensitivity, crassness, racism, insulting language, poisonous divisiveness, adolescent delinquency, etc. But is it possible that his language and demeanor are validating expressions of historically suppressed feelings and values which have never been sufficiently addressed or openly acknowledged in our Eurocentric, capitalist, money-oriented, nature-defying, often mean-spirited culture? These censored feelings once unleashed, no matter how adolescent they seem, are capable of manifesting in a vicious authoritarian and neo-fascist state, as they did in Germany nearly 100 years ago. It seems we are at that point again.

The “developed” world, now led by the United States of America, has historically been built on egregious exploitation and violence hidden under fanciful rhetoric. Inevitably, the chickens will come home to roost. As Eurocentrics we have been lying to ourselves and the

world with our highly touted economic system and “democracy,” fooling ourselves by myths and lies we have long believed about our “superiority” built on the suffering of others. As stated above, we have (s)elected leaders who are to varying degrees corrupted by money who use politically “correct” language and a finessed demeanor to gain approval. In fact, they have consistently been imperial and oligarchic, selfishly stealing to assure an insatiably consumptive lifestyle for under 5 percent of the world’s population (but only benefitting a minority of its own people), while gobbling up anywhere from 25 to 50 percent of the globe’s resources (depending on the resource and era examined). We *ad nauseum* excuse our interventions using “national security” or “humanitarian justice.” We have followed in the footsteps of our imperial teachers in the United Kingdom. Fair? Sustainable? Ever thought about the structural unfairness and gross arrogance that has enabled 500 years of colonization? Trump’s Presidency reveals a lot about us that we have not wanted to recognize. Scary? Our historical chronic complicity in this horror story cannot be ignored.

Trump serves as an avatar, or caricature, of a collective, creepy, violent, disgusting, mean-spirited, immature culture, at least as experienced by large numbers of people both in the US and the world. Trump’s appeal can largely be attributed to the fact that he has taken the clothes off of *Pretend*. His childish nature of lying, tweeting and exaggerating, ironically reveals an ugly “truth” about our modern selves that has been drowned under incredible “public relations” – education, the media, Hollywood, sports, the State Department, etc. His extreme personal narcissism matches well our extreme collective exceptionalism. Is it clearer now just how big the LIE has been, protected by our comfortable 500-year myths? Welcome to dystopia, Kafka, and Orwell.

Conclusion

The 400-year history of Western dualistic Cartesian thinking (named after French philosopher Rene Descartes’ view of reductionist mind-body dualism) divorcing human beings from study of observable nature, has produced a terribly flawed epistemology. The opposite basis for knowledge is holism, a framework that enables comprehension of multiple interconnections and historical context. Dispensing with any serious concern for consequences, the insatiably consumer-driven materialistic Western Way of Life has ironically and blissfully been destroying life itself by its addiction to burning finite fossil fuels. The harsh truth is that a capitalist system is on a direct collision course with sustainable societies that require conserving healthy interconnected relationships with each other and the earth’s eco-system. We have become accustomed to wishful thinking that resources are infinite, and that they belong to us. This theft can only happen, of course, by force or its threat, and deceit, while living in the toxic *illusion* we are better than others. Does this suggest a kind of arrogant collective stupidity?

Nature bats last, something our cortex apparently chose to fatally ignore. We now face the greatest existential crisis as Nature bats last humbling modern humans into extinction, or near so. We somehow forgot the most critical truth of all – that we all part of the One. If we can now recognize our various levels of “stupidity”, we have an adrenaline opportunity to leap out of our heretofore seductive comfortable fantasy, choosing instead to access our buried human characteristic of interconnection with everything and everybody, i.e., mutual respect and accountability. This leap now must be of a revolutionary nature, rocketing us out of our historic arrogant pleasureableness. Our survival foundation: embracing the evolutionary feeling of empathy. Saving ourselves is pretty damn important, and that means saving life for all. Let’s do it! We are not worth more; they are not worth less.

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