The United States of America:
A "Culture of Violence"

Charting a "Culture of Violence:" Causes and Consequences

As the immediate emotions of the presidential elections pass -- the euphoria and elation of the winners, the grief, despair, anger of the losers -- the harsh realities of daily life once again emerge. Among these is the widespread violence that exists in the United States as displayed in Figure 1. As Figure 1 demonstrates, the manifestations and consequences of violent acts are extensive. This suggests the existence of a "culture of violence" that is generated, sustained, and promoted by acts that arise from individual and collective impulse and intent, and that too often find tier tolerance and approval across political, economic, educational, military, and moral policies of institutions.

Regardless of our wishes this were not the case, the United States of America constitutes a "culture of violence." The Figure 1 (i.e., chart) offers a quick visual display and is neither comprehensive nor explanatory, aside from recognizing the reciprocity of the different acts and sources of violence. There is an obvious inter-dependency across the acts displayed, in which cause-effect disappears amidst the complexity. Each act is both a source and consequence. A cultural ecology.

Figure 1
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: A CULTURE OF VIOLENCE

The Omnipresence of Violence

Violence abounds in American society, touching everyone's life as victim, perpetrator, or anxious observer and witness of the endless violent acts committed locally, nationally, and internationally. Ultimately we are all victims and perpetrators through acts of intention or acts of silence and indifference that support a tolerance of the situation. There is no escape from this reality. How much more violence can we view on TV, how much more violence can we cheer and applaud in entertainment, how much more violence can we experience before we are faced with a constant state of stress, anxiety, anger, and/or moral indifference?

There is a widespread fear, anxiety, and stress that leaves citizens of all ages feelings vulnerable and insecure, awaiting the possibility of violence touching their lives, and bring with it grief and sorrow. It is clear violence is widespread in the world. Every person -- regardless of location -- is compelled to live with daily reminders of risk and danger. What is distinct about violence in the USA, however, is the existence of a national culture of shared, learned behaviors and meanings transmitted across generations via ethoses, values, attitudes, and ways-of-life that are violent. These inform and guide our institutions resulting in the socialization of a culture of violence.

USA Foreign Policy: Driver of National and Global Violence

The foreign policies and actions of the United States of America over the course of the past 100 years are rooted in intentions to control and dominate international order of nations and cultures. These policies and actions have proven destructive to national and global peace, and have served and empowered the interests of a limited number of individuals and groups. Ultimately, under the guise of protecting "national interests" these policies and actions are major sources, carriers, and promoters of violence nationally and globally. They are asymmetrical and hegemonic in nature, sustain the status quo in consequence. While all are announced as intentions to bring democracy and freedom, they have too often resulted in occupation, oppression, and repression of human rights. An obvious result -- visible in virtually every nation caught in our efforts – is the costly growth of a vast USA network of: (1) military bases and operations, (2) (3) massive fortress embassies/consulates, (3) encampments/prisons, (4) death squads, (5) cultural disintegration and decline.

These policies and actions do promote cooperation and admirations, rather they encourage instability via reflexive protests, insurrections, rebellions, revolutions, and acts of domestic, state, and international terrorism. Table 1 display the spectrum of USA foreign policy and action choices, options, and alternatives. All nations act in their own interests, The issue, however, is that in a global era, in which the understanding of the causes and consequences of violence and war is now better known, selfish national interests result in direct and indirect opposition. For many nations who feel they have been victimized and humiliated by the USA, revenge is considered just and

appropriate. This creates an endless cycle. Who benefits? Table 1 displays a spectrum of USA foreign policy and action practices.

Table 1
USA Foreign Policy and Actions Choices, Options, Alternatives:

Assassinations/death squads/drones,
Bounties for info/capture
Bribery/blackmail/entrapment
Celebration of national "morality"/necessity of torture
Collaboration/contracts with universities, scientists, professional organizations
Contingent "humanitarian" aid
Contingent foreign aid
Development of domestic crowd controls (militarization of police)
Diplomacy
Disproportionate support of "allies" and enemification of others,
Establishment of military bases [more than 900 known foreign bases],
Exportation of popular American culture
Foreign student/faculty/consultant exchanges
Glorification of war and militarism,
Mass surveillance, monitoring, and archiving of data,
Massive government/private intelligence security agencies/organizations
Media influence and control
Military intervention
Mind control technologies
Negotiation/conflict resolution
Non-Prosecution of military or civilian law violators and abusers
Occupation
Promotion of nationalism/pseudo-patriotism
Propaganda and promotion of USA exceptionalism,
Purchase and installation of pro-American leaders and dictators,
Recruitment of spies, informers, collaborators, agents
Use of false flags incidents,
Vilification of domestic/international critics.
Weapons/arms dealer/sales

Closing Remarks

I have published two articles in recent years regarding war and peace. The first article is entitled: "The United States of America: A Culture of War**" (Marsella, A.J. [2012]. The United States of America: A "culture of war." *International Journal of Intercultural Research, 35, 714-728.*** This article documents the long history of war in the United States, and the American cultural ethos that has spawned and nurtured wars. The second article is a please for nonkilling and an end to violence. It

is entitled "Nonkilling psychology and lifeism" **(Marsella, A.J. (2011). Nonkilling psychology and lifeism. In J. Pim & D. Christie (Eds.) *Nonkilling Psychology* (pp. 361-378). Honolulu, Hi: Center for Global Non-Violence.).** This article calls for humanity to move beyond unbridled national identities to an identity with life itself, the very force that animates our world and universe.

In both of these articles, and in this article, it is clear to me that we are headed for a "dreadful reckoning" (Grieder's term) if we do not come to an awareness of the many sources and consequences of violence in our lives, particularly the perpetuation of "cultures of violence" that are sources of endless suffering, destruction, and death. The answer resides in the necessity of non-violent activism to prevent violence. This is the timeless answer of every great peacemaker.

Anthony J. Marsella, Ph.D.
Emeritus Professor
Department of Psychology
University of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii 96822
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