

Looming Crisis of Climate Chaos

Amid the anti-science fervor on the American Right, Republican presidential contenders either shy from the worsening crisis of global warming or deny the problem exists. But the crisis of climate chaos is already spreading across the earth, warns Richard Lee Dechert.

By Richard Lee Dechert

On June 21, I had six hours of surgery for renal cell cancer. At age 79, I'm devoting my remaining time and energy to the vital issue of climate chaos and dedicating this piece to Luc, my first grandchild, who was born on Aug. 31 as an innocent, unaware member of what researcher and writer Mark Hertsgaard calls "Generation Hot", "the two billion young people worldwide who will spend the rest of their lives coping with mounting climate disruption."

Since the First Industrial Revolution began in Britain in the 1730s and the Second Industrial Revolution began in the U.S. in the 1860s, global atmospheric CO₂ has exponentially increased from a stable level of about 280 parts per million (ppm) to a record 394.97 ppm in May 2011.



Meanwhile, world population has exponentially increased from about 730 million to 7 billion in 2011 and is projected to top 9 billion by 2050. Population stabilization is an essential condition for climate stabilization. Yet for religious, cultural, political or other reasons, the massive increase in world population is often downplayed or ignored as a major component of human-induced (anthropogenic) global warming.

In his monumental 1988 testimony to the U.S. Senate, Dr. James Hansen, NASA's chief climate scientist, "declared that man-made global warming had begun . . . [and] that human activities, notably, the burning of oil, coal and other carbon-based fuels . . . could trigger dangerous climate change."

But, as Associated Press writer Charles J. Hanley recalled in [a recent report](#) on the politics of global warming, "when Hansen was called back to testify in 1989,

the White House of President George H.W. Bush edited this government scientist's remarks to water down his conclusions, and Hansen declined to appear.

"That was the year U.S. oil and coal interests formed the Global Climate Coalition to combat efforts to shift economies away from their products. Britain's Royal Society and other researchers later determined that oil giant Exxon disbursed millions of dollars annually to think tanks and a handful of supposed experts to sow doubt about the facts.

"In fact, a document emerged years later showing that the industry coalition's own scientific team had quietly advised it that the basic science of global warming was indisputable."

In December 2008, two decades after his landmark testimony, Hansen and nine other climate scientists suggested that global atmospheric CO₂ must be lowered to a mean level of 350 ppm or less "if climate disasters are to be averted." However, that limit was breached in 1987 and CO₂ is increasing about 2 ppm a year and at that rate could rise to a climate chaos level of about 470 ppm by 2050.

President Barack Obama and representatives of over 100 governments attending the December 2009 Copenhagen U.N. Climate Change Conference "endorsed the 350-ppm target and its corollary of limiting temperature rise to 1.5 [degrees Celsius] above preindustrial level," as Hertzgaard noted in his book, *HOT: Living Through the Next 50 Years on Earth*.

A rise of 2.0 degrees Celsius in the mean global atmospheric temperature was not endorsed, because such a change would inundate island nations like the Maldives and cause other climate chaos.

In the final hours of the deadlocked conference in 2009, the non-binding Copenhagen Accord was unofficially adopted by the U.S., China, Russia, India, Brazil, Bangladesh, the Maldives and 21 other nations that represent over 80 percent of the human-induced greenhouse gas emissions and the people most affected by them.

The accord calls for the U.S. and 185 other nations to reduce emissions by 2020, invest in clean energy technology and practices, and help people adapt to the effects of climate change, according to a summary by the U.S. Climate Action Network.

The accord also, for the first time, acknowledged that staying below a rise of 2 degrees Celsius may not be sufficient. The agreement included a review in 2015 of the need to potentially aim for staying below 1.5 degrees Celsius, or an atmospheric CO₂ concentration of 350 ppm.

However, a weakness of the accord is that it allowed nations to set their own, ineffectual emission reduction targets for 2020. The December 2010 U.N. Climate Change Conference in Cancun, Mexico, officially adopted similar non-binding provisions.

As reported by Hertzgaard and other researchers, CO₂ and other greenhouse gas emissions have raised the mean global temperature by 0.8 degrees Celsius since 1900, and 0.6 more has been locked in by climate system inertia.

With the temperature continuing to rise about 0.2 degrees a decade since 1990, and with the U.S. and other Copenhagen Accord nations not doing enough to reverse the rise or adapt to it, the 1.5 and 2.0 limits will likely be exceeded well before 2050, and the chaotic impacts of human-induced global warming will become the paramount issue of the 21st century.

Yvo de Boer, outgoing head of the U.N. Climate Change Secretariat, said, "It is clear that while the pledges on the table are an important step toward the objective of limiting growth of emissions, they will not in themselves suffice to limit warming to below 2 degrees Celsius."

Additional studies have confirmed this dangerous pattern. In a report entitled, "Long-term trend in global CO₂ emissions" by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre and PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency, it was reported that global emission of CO₂ has increased by 45 percent between 1990 and 2010 and reached an all-time high of 33 billion tons by 2010, despite increased energy efficiency, nuclear energy and a growing renewable energy industry.

See No Problem

Rampant conflict within and between nations is one of the chaotic impacts of human-induced global warming and is sure to grow much worse as climate change accelerates. Yet, the issue has grown increasingly politicized in the United States, with many key figures in the Republican Party siding with the global-warming deniers.

"As recently as the 2008 U.S. presidential election, both the Democratic and Republican candidates professed belief in the threat of global warming, and each advanced policies designed to curb U.S. carbon emissions," Bryan Walsh wrote for Time magazine. "Not anymore. With the exception of Jon Huntsman, who barely registers in polls, you can't find a Republican presidential candidate who unequivocally believes in climate science, let alone one who wants to do anything about it. ...

"That's deeply troubling. It's one thing when people disagree on the

effectiveness of different approaches to fix a problem; it's worse when they refuse even to believe that a problem exists, despite an overwhelming scientific consensus that says it does. One of America's major political parties has, in effect, adopted denial as policy."

Connie Hedegaard, the European Union's climate chief, has expressed dismay over the prominence of global-warming deniers in the Republican presidential field.

"I'm shocked that the political debate in the U.S. is so far away from the scientific facts," Hedegaard said in a Danish newspaper interview. "When more than 90 percent of researchers in the field are saying that we have to take [climate change] seriously, it is incredibly irresponsible to ignore it.

"It's hard for a European to understand how it has become so fashionable to be anti-science in the U.S. And when you hear American presidential candidates denying climate change, it's difficult to take." she said, in a reference to GOP candidates including Texas Gov. Rick Perry and Minnesota Rep. Michele Bachmann.

It also is true that many U.S. "peace and justice" organizations have not embraced a climate chaos agenda that could prevent or reduce social upheavals. [Below, the Appendix of 28 conflict reports shows why such an agenda must be a key part of every organization's actions.]

Measures must urgently be taken and sustained to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and lower the mean global atmospheric temperature to a viable level.

But with decades of human-induced global warming already locked into our planet's climate system, U.S. "peace and justice" organizations should primarily focus on measures that will enable populations in our nation and other nations to *adapt* as best as they can to increasing climate chaos.

Key resources on *adaptation* include:

- Climate Change 101: Adaptation
http://www.pewclimate.org/docUploads/Adaptation_0.pdf
- UNDP | Adaptation to Climate Change
<http://www.unmdp.org/climatechange/adapt/>
- Adaptation | Climate Change – Health and Environmental Effects | U.S. EPA
http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/effects/adaptation.html**

Two key resources on dealing with climate change skeptics and deniers are:

- The Climate Science Rapid Response Team, which "provides high-quality information about global warming issues to media and government officials."
- According to the Union of Concerned Scientists, "Skeptical Science is the

leading website for debunking spurious claims regarding climate science. The site tackles everything from flawed research papers to conspiracy theories about scientists.”

Richard Lee Dechert has been a Twin Cities “peace and justice” activist, researcher and writer on a wide range of domestic and foreign policy issues for over 45 years. He became aware of the dangers of human-induced global warming when he read the Club of Rome’s largely ignored but sadly prophetic “The Limits to Growth” in 1972. He has served as a public-interest lobbyist on environmental issues in the Minnesota Legislature and has co-produced, moderated or presented over 30 Global Issues Forums as a Board Member and Vice-President of the Minnesota Chapter of Washington, D.C.-based Citizens for Global Solutions.

Appendix

- U.N. chief: Warming as dangerous as war
http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17401890/ns/us_news-environment/t/warming-dangerous-war-un-chief-says/

“Human-induced global warming poses as much danger to the world as war, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said . . . as he urged the United States to take the lead in the fight against global warming.”

- UN Climate Talks and the Prevention of Violent Conflict
<http://www.friendsjournal.org/un-climate-talks-and-prevention-violent-conflict/>

“We, the young people of today, will be the recipients of an irreparably damaged planet if the international community fails to deal with climate change.”, Alexandra Stark, a Quaker observer and the report author.

- Tomgram: Chip Ward, Occupy Earth
http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/175459/tomgram%3A_chip_ward_2C_occupy_earth/#more

“At some point, we’ll discover that you can’t exist for long beyond the boundaries of the natural world, that (as with every other species) if you overload the carrying capacity of your habitat, you crash. Warming temperatures, chaotic weather patterns, extreme storms, monster wildfires, epic droughts, Biblical floods, an avalanche of species extinction that collapse is upon us now. In the human realm, it translates into hunger and violence, mass migrations and civil strife, failed states and resource wars. . . .

“After Occupy Wall Street, isn’t it time for Occupy Earth?”

- Pentagon to rank global warming as destabilising force

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jan/31/pentagon-ranks-global-warming-d-estabilising-force>

“The Pentagon will for the first time rank global warming as a destabilising force, adding fuel to conflict and putting US troops at risk around the world. . . . The quadrennial defence review, prepared by the Pentagon to update Congress on its security vision, will direct military planners to keep track of the latest climate science, and to factor global warming into their long term strategic planning.”

- National Security and the Threat of Climate Change

<http://securityandclimate.cna.org/news/>

A compilation of 2007, 2008 and 2009 reports from U.S. military and intelligence perspectives.

- Global Warming Is Just the Tip of the Iceberg

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/01/02/AR2009010202280.html>

“The Cold War shaped world politics for half a century. But global warming may shape the patterns of global conflict for much longer than that, and help spark clashes that will be, in every sense of the word, hot wars.”

- Climate Change and Global Conflicts

<http://www.wfs.org/node/370>

“Responses to resource shortages extend beyond fighting over dwindling crumbs of bread and drops of water, but include economic change, trade, technological and social innovation, and peaceful resource distribution.”

- Climate Conflict: how global warming threatens security and what to do about it -Launch

<http://www.iiss.org/whats-new/iiss-podcasts/adelphi-webcasts/climate-conflict/>

“Climate change has been a key factor in the rise and fall of societies and states from prehistory to the recent fighting in the Sudanese state of Darfur. It drives instability, conflict and collapse, but also expansion and reorganisation. The ways cultures have met the climate challenge provide object lessons for how the modern world can handle the new security threats posed by unprecedented global warming.”

- Climate change ‘will spark global conflict’

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/earthnews/3335483/Climate-change-will-spar>

[k-global-conflict.html](#)

“A stark report, written by two senior EU officials, Javier Solana, foreign policy chief and Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the Commissioner for External Relations, highlights seven threats unleashed by ‘intensified competition over access to, and control over, energy resources.’. . . One major concern is growing rivalry with Russia over a scramble to claim the geological resources opened by a thawing Arctic, developments with ‘potential consequences for international stability and European security interests.’”

- Climate change will increase threat of war, Chris Huhne to warn
<http://www.b4esummit.com/2011/07/climate-change-will-increase-threat-of-war-chris-huhne-to-warn>

As the Secretary for Energy and Climate Change in the cabinet of British Prime Minister David Cameron, “[he] believes the UK and other countries must act urgently to prepare for the threat. ‘We cannot be 100% sure that our enemies will attack our country, but we do not hesitate to prepare for the eventuality. . . . The same principle applies to climate change, which a report published by the Ministry of Defence . . . has identified as one of the four critical issues that will affect everyone on the planet over the next 30 years.’”

- Global Warming and the Stresses of War – A Post Bin Laden Perspective
<http://blog.nwf.org/wildlifepromise/2011/05/global-warming-and-the-stresses-of-war-a-post-bin-laden-perspective/>

“In December 2001, even in the immediate aftermath of the World Trade Center and Pentagon disasters, 100 Nobel Laureates declared in a public 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.’”

- The Linked Challenges of Global Climate Change and Local Peace
<http://www.e-ir.info/?p=11301>

“As climate change impacts interact with features of the social, economic and political landscape, countries with weak governance systems will become overwhelmed, and face a high risk of falling into political instability and violent conflict. The risk of instability both adds to the burdens faced by vulnerable communities, and makes it harder for them to *adapt* to climate change.” [Italics added.]

- Mental illness rise linked to climate
<http://www.smh.com.au/environment/mental-illness-rise-linked-to-climate-20110828-1jger.html>

The report "A Climate of Suffering: The Real Cost of Living with Inaction on Climate Change". . . suggests a possible link between Australia's recent decade-long drought and climate change. It points to a breakdown of social cohesion caused by loss of work and associated stability, adding that the suicide rate in rural communities rose by 8 per cent."

- Climate Chaos: Christian Parenti's New Book Exposes How Global Warming Could Lead to Global Warfare

http://www.democracynow.org/2011/6/30/climate_chaos_christian_parentis_new_book

"In Afghanistan . . . I was reporting on the poppy economy, the heroin economy, and asked the farmers, 'Why are you growing this illegal crop that the government and NATO come after you for growing?' And one reason they would give was that it's drought-resistant. . . . Afghanistan is suffering the worst drought in living memory, that coincides with the U.S. occupation there, and the Afghan government and the NATO forces attack poppy as part of their counterinsurgency strategy and nation-building strategy. The Taliban defend poppy. The farmers grow poppy because it uses one-fifth the amount of water that wheat uses."

- Global Warming Increases Risk of Civil War in Africa

http://woods.stanford.edu/cgi-bin/focal.php?name=civil_war&focal_area=climate_and_energy

"Climate change could increase the likelihood of civil war in sub-Saharan Africa by over 50 percent within the next two decades, according to a study led by a team of researchers at Stanford University, the University of California-Berkeley, New York University and Harvard University. . . . The study provides the first quantitative evidence linking climate change and the risk of civil conflict. It concludes by urging accelerated support by African governments and foreign aid donors for new and/or expanded policies to assist with African *adaptation* to climate change." [Italics added.]

- Glaciers go, leaving drought, conflict and tension in Andes

<http://wwp.dailyclimate.org/tdc-newsroom/2009/05/glaciers-go-leaving-drought-conflict-and-tension>

"In 1991, tropical Andean glaciers covered some 1,065 square miles, with 70 percent in Peru, 20 percent in Bolivia, and the rest in Ecuador, Colombia and Venezuela. Since then, glaciers have disappeared from Venezuela and are shrinking in the other countries. . . . With cities growing and agriculture expanding throughout South America, experts predict that climate change will exacerbate water scarcity, increasing conflicts between competing users."

- Water Wars: Climate change may spark conflict

<http://www.globalministries.org/get-involved/justice-and-advocacy/water/water-wars-climate-change-may-s.html>

Dangerous tensions exist between Israel, Jordan and Palestine; Turkey and Syria; Angola and Namibia; Ethiopia and Egypt; Bangladesh and India; China and India.

- Rising sea levels 'could spark conflict over energy and food reserves'

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/environment/climatechange/4161206/Rising-sea-levels-could-spark-conflict-over-energy-and-food-reserves.html>

"Rising sea levels caused by climate change are threatening to destabilise island nations and spark conflict across the world over energy and food reserves, the Australian military has claimed. . . . Resource-hungry nations are already snapping up large tracts of agricultural land in poor Asian and African nations."

- Global warming impact like "nuclear war": report

<http://www.enn.com/climate/article/22981/print>

"The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) security think-tank said global warming would hit crop yields and water availability everywhere, causing great human suffering and leading to regional strife. . . . Overall, it said 65 countries were likely to lose over 15 percent of their agricultural output by 2100 at a time when the world's population was expected to head from six billion now to nine billion people."

- Population and Security: How Demographic Change Can Lead to Violent Conflict

<http://www.mafhoum.com/press6/179S21.pdf>

"While overall population growth and population density do not generally predict political risks, a number of distinct kinds of demographic changes, rapid growth in the labor force in slow-growing economies, a rapid increase in educated youth aspiring to elite positions when such positions are scarce, unequal population growth rates between different ethnic groups, urbanization that exceeds employment growth and migrations that change the local balance among major ethnic groups, do appear to increase the risks of violent internal political and ethnic conflicts. In addition, there is some evidence that countries with larger populations have greater risks of both armed conflict and state repression."

- World needs refugee re-think for climate victims: U.N.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/06/06/us-climate-refugees-idUSTRE7553UG20110606>

“The world must invent new ways to protect people driven from their homes by climate change without copying safeguards for those uprooted by wars or persecution, the head of the U.N. refugee agency said. . . . ‘We must now reconsider our approach’ to help people uprooted by global warming, he said in a speech, adding that he considered environmental degradation and climate change to be ‘the defining challenge of our times.’”

- Workable Peace: Current Conflicts – The Global Warming Debate

<http://www.workablepeace.org/now.html>

“There is more than one way to analyze the global warming debate. It can be viewed in terms of scientific evidence, comparing research of those who claim that climate change is a result of man-made greenhouse emissions, and the reports of scientists who claim that natural climate patterns characterize recent warmer weather.

“The conflict can also be viewed economically. When looking at global warming from an economic standpoint, one must consider the implications of doing nothing about the current warming trend, or risking shorter-term economic growth to create an energy efficient economy. One’s position in the global economy may strongly influence which scientific views they advocate.

“Global climate change can also be analyzed politically, on a national and international level. Because climate change is an international issue, actions taken by individual nations may have short-term economic costs to be borne locally, even if longer-term international benefits include slowing or reversing climate change. This trade-off has been particularly charged in the United States. . . .

“Finally, the global warming debate is a moral issue. If, indeed, humans are systematically destroying the planet, it will have enormous implications for future generations of human and animal life. A person’s moral opinion also has a lot to do with their scientific, economic, and political perspectives.”

- Snubbing Skeptics Threatens to Intensify Climate War, Study Says

<http://www.stopglobalwarming.org/news/snubbing-skeptics-threatens-to-intensify-climate-war-study-says/>

“That insight by social scientists was illustrated by what the paper describes as the ‘climate whiplash’ of the last two years, when polling showed an eroding number of people who believe in global warming. Establishing a scientific consensus on warming represents the beginning, not the end, of building a ‘social consensus,’ the paper says. . . . ‘When presenting the climate change issue, it is critical that the frames and categories used do not threaten

people's values and therefore [create] dismissive resistance to the argument,' the paper says, noting that 'dormant' climate connections to religion, technology and national security might work better."

- US Military Goes to War with Climate Skeptics
<http://www.commondreams.org/view/2011/05/21-2>

"Federal legislation to combat climate change is quashed for the foreseeable future, scuttled by congressional climate cranks who allege the climate-science jury is still out. . . . Fortunately, though, a four-star trump card waits in the wings: the US national security apparatus. . . . For years, in fact, high-level national security officials both inside the Pentagon and in think-tank land have been acknowledging climate change is for real and that we need to take action to preserve and enhance US national security interests."

- Disarmament for Development Program . . . Climate Change and Conflict
<http://www.ipb.org/i/disarmament-and-development/III-J-01-DADP-climate-of-war-climate-change-and-conflict.html>

"The International Peace Bureau congratulates the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and Al Gore on the award of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize. . . . Worldwide climate change is not only a peace question because of the risk of new conflicts that may follow, as stated by the Nobel Committee, but also on account of the enormous negative impact the military itself has on the environment, through pollution, use of scarce resources, and diversion of colossal sums of money away from sustainable development."

- Climate Change and Conflict
<http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/key-issues/climate-change-and-conflict.aspx>

"A key challenge today is to better understand the relationship between climate change, environmental degradation and conflict and to effectively manage associated risks through appropriate conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms."

- Climate Change Adaptation, Social Entrepreneurship and Peacebuilding
http://www.cusa.uci.edu/programs/climate_change.html

"Our research explores the security implications of climate change as well as the potential for social entrepreneurship to support peacebuilding and *adaptation* activities." [Italics added.]

- Climate Security Now! – Warming Means War
<http://www.globalclimatesecurity.org/home>

“Climate Security will develop joint actions between the climate change and peace movements in order to confront climate change effectively and equitably thereby reducing the risk of climate-related conflict. Climate Security was developed by Friends of the Earth and Voters for Peace.”

- Climate Change: Crisis and Challenge – How our movements can achieve both global justice and ecological balance

<http://resistinc.org/newsletters/articles/climate-change-crisis-and-challenge>

“There is no better example of the interconnection of the root causes of social injustice, ecological destruction and economic domination than climate change. . . . What will the solutions to the climate crisis look like? They will be found in a model that is the opposite of the dominant economic model of incessant and unsustainable growth, oppression and injustice. . . .

“The movement against climate change in the United States plays a pivotal role in the global effort to avoid climate catastrophe. This is because the US is historically responsible for the lion’s share of global greenhouse gas emissions; the US military is the largest single emitter of carbon on the planet; the US and the World Bank dominate the discussion of what to do about global warming; and the historic role of the US in climate negotiations has been to obstruct forward progress. . . .

“This will require broad alliances with diverse peoples and movements around the world, and it will require the fundamental transformation of society to one that is based on principles of justice and ecology.”

Occupy Wall Street’s Tough Challenges

Occupy Wall Street has succeeded far beyond its early dreams, but the protests face challenges, from the coming winter to troublemakers acting to discredit the movement. But Danny Schechter notes that changing a well-entrenched status quo is never easy.

By Danny Schechter

The tarps are flapping and the tents are not bringing much warmth. Harsh winter-like winds are lashing the encampment at Zuccotti Park, or as many would prefer. “Liberty Plaza,” the symbol of a wannabe revolution against the status quo and the power-crats of the American oligarchy.

The hard real-world contradictions of urban life have bumped up against the idyllic hopes of the occupiers as all the urban crises that our society has ignored and neglected surface in that half acre of hope.

There are man (and woman) handlers and gladhanders, doers and dopers, ragers and even rapists and many poor with nowhere else to go. There are cops on the outside (and some inside) who plan for and hope for the worst.

This fight is not just the 99 percent against the 1 percent because, truth be told, this movement has so far only motivated a minority of the conscious and has yet to reach a majority of the beleaguered and oppressed.

When I joined a march last Saturday, one occupier seemed to recognize this reality with a home-made sign, that read "I am part of the 1% of the 99 % that is protesting, Where are the rest of us?"

Polls showing broad public support are not enough. Public opinion can be fickle and easily manipulated. True, some unions are reaching out to the Occupy Movement but they are at their lowest point in a century. They are fighting for survival.

JA Myerson writes on the new, must read OWSNews.org website that many are preparing to evacuate the park in this winter of growing discontent as the lines between those who want change and those who don't become clearer.

"For the last week or so, the 1%-owned media have been doing everything possible to give their fellow 1%-er and good friend Mayor [Michael] Bloomberg the political cover necessary to seize Zuccotti Park. They have made an example of a restaurant whose business is suffering because of barricades but who put up the barricades?

"They have made an example of the unsanitary conditions arising among a community deprived of facilities but who deprives it of facilities? They have made an example of the homeless people and drug addicts who populate the park but who has denied them anywhere better to go?

"And now that they have cultivated the image of a failed project (after themselves erecting the barriers to its success), they appear to be gearing up to demolish it."

The New York Times believes (and perhaps hopes) the occupation is sputtering, writing, "Occupy Wall Street Protest Reaches a Crossroads."

That could happen because revolutions don't run in straight lines and don't happen only when those most aware among us want them too. The occupiers have the

sympathy, but a company called Brookfield owns the property in a society where property rights trump human rights. There are rumors that a new location is being considered.

Revolutions happen when social and economic conditions insure they are unstoppable, when the crisis makes millions understand not only their inevitability but their desirability, and when many forces converge and see no alternative.

It's one thing to call a "general strike," but mounting one requires more than staging a mass protest in one city for one day after less than a week of mobilizing. Yes, the turnout in Oakland was impressive, but it could not be sustained.

As Noam Chomsky advised before it happened, "you have to educate educate yourself and others before you strike."

The violence of a few was used to discredit the efforts of the many, prompting as many criticisms from within as from without. Why does a macho handful always feel the need to prove how militant they can be?

There are no shortcuts to building a deeper and broader movement. Organizing is not easy but is always essential. Being right is never enough!

The Italian theorist Gramsci advised revolutionaries a century ago to fuse "pessimism of the intelligence and the optimism of the will." He was right about that then and is right now.

A group of Democrats in Lower Manhattan looked for some historical lessons, warning: "Revolutionary pretensions can be dangerous. They threaten the status quo, suggest instability, and often threaten and provoke real violence.

"America, like it or not, has a stable and venerable system of government which yields ceaseless peaceful transfers of power, and is in actual fact fairly responsive to voter sentiment, despite even the most level-headed criticisms made over the issues of inaction and corruption. Isolated incidents and injustices aside, our civil servants are professional and disciplined."

While this may have been once true, that system is cracking under the weight of cynicism, polarization, and corruption. The polls show Congress enjoys record lows of public support. So does President Obama and, in fact, his Republican challengers.

This does not mean the country is ready to scrap the system but is a sign of growing dissatisfaction. While some of us have become intensely politicized, others

are tuning out, taking refuge in the distractions of consumerism, entertainment and sports.

While the financial industry is the main enemy, it is allied with, and finances, a media industry that specializes in obscuring issues and propagandizing 24/7. It is a master of withholding important information and ridiculing dissidents while it boosts war and promotes passivity.

We have to get beyond our own self-righteousness and hear our critics, not just among the buffoons of the Right who are the easiest to refute and dismiss.

We have to study the long history of failed attempts to turn our country around and learn from it. We have to acknowledge our mistakes as well. This generation of activists is not the first to take on the status quo.

Revolutionary zeal may be driving many but can also drive them to disillusion and despair in a society focused on instant remedies like Alka Seltzer. We are a generation that wants everything, and wants it NOW! We may have speed-dating but not speed social transformations and political revolutions.

Today's occupations are not the first either. The Democrats whom I referenced before looked to an earlier moment in our own revolution's history: #OccupyValleyForge. True, that was a war, not a movement, but its methods deserve scrutiny.

As I have just learned, "they brought in what were known as Regimental Camp Followers, women and children, basically, relatives and families of enlisted men. They built structures, erected defenses, and two more things. They worked out an alliance with France, and they basically made the Continental Army out of their troops at Valley Forge.

"They did this with the help of Baron Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, who had been, dare I say, a community organizer type for the Prussian military community. The Continental Army was built through shared hardship and struggle, with excruciating drilling and training, and they were provided with ample moral support in the form of the Regimental Camp Followers."

History never repeats itself. The bearded oracle once said that when it does, the second time is farce. We have to prepare for the possibility that Occupied Wall Street will take new forms, and may have to spread out and decentralize as is already happening with meetings in public atriums and church yards.

It has already outgrown one park and spread through the world. It has, to its credit, brought issues like economic inequality and Wall Street crime into the national conversation. It has so far succeeded beyond its greatest hopes.

It is revolutionary in its very leaderless small “d” democratic being, but it has not yet made a revolution. No surprise there! There is quite a way to go.

The battle with the oligarchy as symbolized by the greedsters and fraudsters on Wall Street will go on, with or without a park, as a form of non-violent guerrilla-style class warfare, always bearing in mind, that moral power can defeat physical power when it is creative, courageous, non-violent and committed for the long run.

News Dissector Danny Schechter covers these issues daily for newsdissector.com. He directed *Plunder the Crime of Our Time*. A DVD o the financial crisis as a crime story. (Plunderthecrimeofourtime.com) Comments to dissector@medichannel.org

Dehumanizing Late-Stage Capitalism

Occupy Wall Street (OWS) – and similar protests – don’t fit into the trite frames of America’s mainstream news, but rather represent a collective message of people laying their bodies down against the depredations of modern-day capitalism, as poet Phil Rockstroh explains.

By Phil Rockstroh

In my opinion, when people opine that the OWS movement is about – or should be about – the airing of this particular grievance or that it must bandy this or that particular demand – they have missed the point.

Of course, collectively, OWS evinces a force of resistance against corporate greed and a critique of the failings of the present political system. Yet, as is the case with any living thing, to reduce its essential nature to facile descriptions diminishes it.

As with human perception of life itself, experiencing freedom carries an ineffable quality, a wordless grandeur.

“Human language is like a cracked kettle drum on which we beat out tunes for bears to dance to, when what we long to do is make music that will move the stars to pity.” Gustave Flaubert

Through it all, the immanent quality of and inchoate longing for freedom remains within us: Although present, it is not always in plain view. Its presence in our lives is, perhaps, best summed up by this Irish aphorism: “Mrs. O’Kelly, do

you believe in fairies?" "No, I don't – but they're there."

Over and over again, too many well-intentioned sorts continue to insist that it is imperative that we inform the nice people of the middle-class (nice people who, given the nature of imperium, willingly feed off the blood of empire like the charges of a vampire) that there are well-mannered working people on site at OWS encampments – not only spittle-launching, leftist radicals.

Excuse me, but, for many years now, so-called "crazy" leftist radicals have been damn near the only ones who have had the clarity of mind to give a cogent critique of empire have been willing to point out the exploitive, soul-demeaning mode of existence inherent to the militarist/national security/corporate/consumer/ duopolistic state—and, as a result, we have been marginalized, entirely excluded from mainstream debate and discussion.

Let us have a little rendezvous with reality; otherwise, the operatives of the status quo will frame the narrative, once again, and will claim victory by co-option.

This is the method by which the capitalist status quo has maintained its inverted totalitarian set-up since the popular uprisings of the 1960s, by means of generous economic rewards (the perks and privileges of the corporate state) for its de facto propagandists and exclusion from the official narrative for dissenters. Don't buy into the false narrative.

Personally, I refuse to eschew the designation of anti-capitalist radical. You cannot shame me for knowing where the bodies of empire are buried and who laid them in their graves. To the landfill of history with capitalism – the wasteful, cracked-brained economic system that created said landfill.

The preening liars at Fox News and other well-rewarded propagandists of state capitalism will disseminate lies, big and small, regardless of our actions ... that is what they do. Be cautioned: Never tap dance for the approval of a lying, manipulative, power-mad fascist. Once, you begin to do so you co-sign his narrative – thus he owns your hapless ass.

"I've been absolutely terrified every moment of my life – and I've never let it keep me from doing a single thing I wanted to do." -Georgia O'Keefe

Accordingly, the lessons of the 1960s e.g., COINTELPRO operations reveal that when street and riot police are ordered to pull back, as in Oakland, agent provocateurs will infiltrate mass political gatherings. Withal: You can bet those masked bastards shouting hate-speak and breaking windows are cops.

He is there to draw the cameras of the corporate media towards the scenes of

chaos and strife that he seeds in order to turn bourgeois sentiment against reform movements that might change their lives for the better to create the false narrative that the police are the only bulwark the middle-class has against destruction-sowing crazies, who, if given free reign, will leave in rubble and ashes everything the middle-class holds dear.

To avoid being falsely labeled: First, endeavor, by inward searching and outward (even failed) endeavor, to know who you are. Then lay claim to your own identity. Otherwise, garnering the clarity required to apprehend what you're up against becomes difficult.

The Greek word for one of the three figures representing The Fates is Moira – which translates into portion. And that is key to grasping what is happening from Cairo to Athens to New York City to Oakland. Ergo, people are rising up and fighting for the rightful and just portion of their lives and fates that have been increasingly commandeered and controlled by a corrupt elite whose rule has, heretofore, been sustained by a disproportionate distribution of wealth, privilege and power.

Across Greece, people have awoken to the knowledge that passivity is slavery – that capitalism is economic cannibalism. State capitalism, also, devours the dignity of its victims. Yet, after a time, a number of people will rise up against exploitation and will demand their portion of fate.

At this point in time, the term “general strike” holds a deep and resonate appeal. The word “general” suggests that the isolation of daily life experienced under the atomizing circumstances of globalized corporate capitalism can be upended – that there can be a sense of unity – that a movement en masse is possible (yet not a mass movement to war, but a movement en masse towards equity and fairness) by beginning, at long last, to “strike” back – to counterpunch with focused blows those who have kept the harsh, inequitable order of the present era in place by means of intimidation and bribery.

Capitalism – you are a rotting, flesh-eating zombie – there are sacred spark stippling the air around you; these sparks are borne of flames of sacred vehemence. For too long, people have been bled dry by the heart-desiccating aspirations and dehumanizing modes of economic coercion that maintain the neoliberal paradigm.

Moreover, the flames of resistance are only fanned when your apologists claim that the system in place provides the best, in fact, the only way to exist in the world and attempt to smother the world's growing fury with police-state tactics.

The stakes are great. Much has been stolen from us: essential qualities, more valuable than money. As the populace of the corporate/consumer state, we have been induced, by means of small bribes and hyper-authoritarian coercion, to sign a social contract that sells our essential nature on the cheap, i.e., to be defined (hence diminished) as a consumer, a commuter, an employee, a Republican, a Democrat, a member of a demographic group, a cipher, a sucker, a bystander in one's own fate.

Don't let any system define you, narrow, then appropriate, your innate and essential self towards exploitive agendas, as does the present societal set-up, for the incommensurate profits of a self-serving few – who, in turn, insist that your objections to the situation are unreasonable, outrageous, untoward – too crazy to be uttered in decent company.

In short, a system in which its operatives demand that you stay in your place and not question the motives and actions of your betters.

In contrast, a radical sensibility insists you must inhabit an inner landscape wherein no state, corporation – nor any type of extant system holds dominion over your essential self – that you inhabit a landscape that is best navigated by your own interior lode star.

Therefore, you have no obligation to justify your existence to any man or system. To even attempt to do so would deliver an injustice to your heart, for this is a state of being as impossible to quantify as a flight of imagination – yet it exists within as immanent as the architecture of desire.

“The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning. If you knew when you began a book what would you say at the end, do you think that you would have the courage to write it?” –Foucault

Who will you meet, where will you travel, what battles will be enjoined and what loves surrendered to as you write the Book of Your Being? What thoughts and feelings will be discovered therein?

Will the words you etch upon the finite moments of your time on this earth evoke deep yearning, like Wordsworth's limning of his longing to see beyond the prison walls of quotidian experience?

[]I'd rather be
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreath'd horn.

excerpt, The World Is Too Much with Us—William Wordsworth

Or will you refuse to rise, when commanded to do so, as did Rosa Parks on her fateful bus commute through the Jim Crow-demeaned streets of 1950s Montgomery, Alabama; or will you be seized by holy lamentation, like Allen Ginsberg, as he howled anguished prosody into the pity-devoid face of the devouring Moloch of the commodified empire; or will your genius be revealed like the impertinent flutter of Groucho Marx's eyebrows on the screen of Depression-era movie houses; or will you reclaim your own heart by the act of telling off some son-of-a-bitch of a boss, as you quit a dead-end, heart-deadening job and then resolve to join the defiant multitudes at an OWS encampment?

Mainly, are you prepared to surrender to the everyday miracle that transpires when one, fleetingly, finds the resolve to open one's being to the uncertainties of freedom – when one chooses to break the hold of those fear-bestowing, resentment-besotted demons of banality known as Easy Cynicism, Displaced Resentment, and Habitual Passivity – those disingenuous, corporate/consumer state bards of the Bardo – whose (extant and internalized) narratives have sustained late capitalism.

“Cynicism is just another mode of conformity”. –Theodor W. Adorno

Don't delay: Act as if your life – if not the survival of the planet – depends on it, because, at this point, it does.

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