

The Grand Theft of America

by Root

September 21, 2005; updated December 31, 2013

I am an American. I am an American citizen. I am an American patriot. I write what I write because I love my country, the principles upon which it was founded and because my country faces ominous threats to its very survival as we know it — threats that are never more pressing than this very moment. I write what I write and say what I say because it is the right thing to do when one is called to a higher moral purpose.

Our country and its constitution are in the process of being stolen by the very people in “formal charge” of its protection. *Democracy* is indeed fragile and by its very open, diverse and diffuse nature it is ever vulnerable to perversion, corruption, oppression and ruin. It is readily undermined by subversion, if not subject to blatant robbery, from power structures that relentlessly effort to steal power from the people, thus co-opting the essence of democracy — saving, perhaps, a residual bone left as its faintest resemblance in the now discredited farce of “the vote.” If we citizens do not stand up to protect our constitution and democracy through our words and non-violent actions, in short order we will see the last of its powers and protections wane into the dry ink of hence meaningless and impotent words on old parchment paper kept under lock-and-key that once represented a dream for a free people at the birth of our nation. We will continue to see these powers subsumed and exploited by a tiny minority of power-wielding people who represent nothing but their own agenda — and that agenda is readily apparent as the *domination and control* of the planet and all aspects of planetary life. They like to call it “dominion” because it makes it sound like God is involved with approval for their takeover. How many fanatical fringes of different religions invoke their sacred texts to justify domination and control of others by any means necessary? But that is nothing other than the continued exploitation of “God” by charlatans and pimps to further their agenda of domination and control under the façade of “supreme authority.” These are con-artist profiteers at their best and they are viciously ruthless in their seizure of power. All the while they put on the front appearance of smiley caring Christian boy scouts, invoking their own invented and distorted logo-labels like “compassionate conservative” to manage the perception and self-identity of their ignorant¹ base. As they smile and shake your hand, offering you reassurance, they amp your fears while they gut your country and the livelihoods of its people, its future and that of the generations that follow. This is the state of an infamous perversion of democracy to which the neo-Republican Party has descended. Yes, yes, they paint themselves over and over with these words “democracy, growth, jobs...” and tell you relentlessly that it’s all about the “freedom” of “your” money and “your vote” that they placate you with. But it is not their words by which they should be judged; it is their decisions and actions, and the subsequent outcomes that have real effects on real lives of real people for which they need to be scrutinized and held accountable. When it comes to their choices between money, property and people, most of the people lose every time.

These people are traitors to the principles that form the foundation of our country, who masquerade themselves as owners of the name “United States of America” and who commandeer and exploit the American Flag, wrapping themselves in it as if it were their

¹ Ignorance — lack of knowledge, comprehension and awareness in general and/or about something in particular; in this case about what is happening to their country as a general pattern, being perpetrated by those whom they trusted and voted for.

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own personal corporate logo. Upon that image, they project their private agenda as the “American agenda” and go about their criminal takeover, domination and exploitation of the world, leaving ordinary Americans the options of apathetic and cynical resignation; cheering them on in ignorance, fear or greed; or, struggling to counter this behemoth monstrosity with minimal means, if terrific courage and purpose. These people disgrace my country before the world.

When I served my country as an officer and Vietnam combat veteran in the United States Air Force, I took an oath to uphold and protect the Constitution of the United States of America against all enemies — domestic as well as foreign. I internalized it as a lifetime oath and I live it every day of my life.

Yet I even have a higher moral calling than this. I am one of several billion human beings on this planet we call *Mother Earth*. Like all other human beings, *my* soul has manifested from the spiritual realm into the physical form of *my* body. Together, *my* soul and *my* body become “*I*”. It is *my* body — a gift from God — and it is *my* soul that is empowered to make moral choices about what *I* do with *my* body, naked in *my* soul before God and all of creation. The essence of human morality is embedded in *choice*. The denial of choice is the amoral, if not immoral, imposition of domination and control — by someone else’s choice. I can choose to waste this blessed life I am granted or I can choose to serve a higher purpose. As my soul is blessed with the gift of my body, *I* am simultaneously called to purpose and responsibility as a human being, beyond all boundaries, beyond all borders, beyond all allegiances, beyond all beliefs, beyond all dogmas... to serve the best interests of humanity and the planet we inhabit.

My words are my sword and with this sword I will tenaciously endeavor to cut through the *ignorance* upon which this *paradigm of domination and control* depends to acquire, hold, sustain and entrench its power. With my words I will continue to focus the brilliance emanating from the light of truth and understanding in ever increasing intensity on the forces and constructs that underpin this destructive paradigm.²

Government — the realm of people in civilization

The focus of *government* is people. It is the corruption of government that is disabling and disastrous, not “government.” Government is the name we give to the people, structures, and entities that civilized societies set up to “govern” various collective functions of their societies — for the mutual benefit of all.

It is such a cruel, offensive and disgusting disservice to the people of this country for these neo-Republican clowns and thugs to continually browbeat, bash and trash our government services and all of its employees with their mantras like, “inefficient and incompetent bureaucrats... you see, big government is the problem... ‘Government’ is the problem... ‘Government’ is in the way... ‘Government’ is taking away and wasting *your* hard earned money... etc., etc.” Their self-serving rhetoric is nothing more than a propaganda exercise to feed manure to their ignorant voting base that readily eats it up,

² If you are new to the word “paradigm” or “paradigmatic,” when you see it in my writing think “pattern” or “patterned,” as in an example or model that represents a broader pattern.

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thus ensuring they are kept in ideological line like a string of lemmings blindly following the “leader.” And it works, as one can see from the results and the comments of the parrots who uncritically regurgitate it all into letters to the editor and on. Then, with this distorted premise of “government is bad” entrenched in place as the “*problem definition*,” they argue that government should therefore be eliminated and everything under the sun “privatized,” as if that is somehow the *automatic solution* to all problems facing the people and our society. With their premise presented and *assumed* to be true, they want that to mean the end of thinking and the end of discussion — not for anyone informed and with the intelligence to see through it, but for the millions of ignorant voters whose perceptions they know they can control through their communication complex. This is the model that they endeavor to cram down the throats of the rest of the world, as well as our own country. The vacuity of their claims is the reason they shy away and hide from anything resembling science, critical reasoning, or conscious discourse about what is *really* going on. Because properly understood, their paradigm collapses in upon itself; thus, their communication complex must strive to sustain voter ignorance. It is why they deceive, lie and distort their claims and why they *must* control the mass media — especially what gets talked about through the channels these people depend on for their information about what is going on in the world. To understand what is going on, we need to be more discriminating in how we parse out their words and implied meaning, and who benefits from such a propaganda campaign. If some aspect of government isn’t working, we need to examine what the fundamental source(s) of that failure is (are).

Before we do that, I want to say to all the good hard working and conscientious government employees and public servants of our country at all levels — federal, state and local — I really appreciate the work you do for our people and our country. It is a shame the way you are treated and portrayed by these thugs. The vast majority of you aren’t who these neo-Republican thugs say you are. Enough of their filthy projections! The ones who prevent you from doing good work and undermine both the purpose and processes of your public organizations are the political cronies they put in place to prevent, distort, corrupt and redirect the funds and services you are charged with. These are the top positions of political bureaucracy and as we are seeing, no matter how conscientious and diligent you are in doing your work, they have the power to neutralize it, thereby co-opting, if not discrediting, your entire agency. Then they turn around and point at “the failures of government” so they have reason, they believe, to argue that more of it should be in their private control. It’s a crime against the people of the United States of America and their government. Some of you find the calling from your conscience and patriotism to expose corruption by these criminals when you know it is going on, at great risk to your job, career and person, and I salute your courage. All too many others, unfortunately, join them and become their lieutenants for implementing their dirty work against the people’s interest and the nation’s interest. To you I say, what do your country, its government, its constitution and its people mean to you; search your soul for what is right?

Beyond the military, I’ve worked for the government in the United States Forest Service, both in R&D and natural resource management and planning. I am privileged to

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have had the opportunity to work with such a fine and competent group of technical experts from a variety of multidisciplinary fields. The people of this country need to be proud of you and respect your important, if difficult, tasks and purpose. You are in the service of your country and should be proud of that. For those in the upper reaches most susceptible to political pressures, ask yourself why you cared to pursue a career in the management of the nation's natural resources on behalf of the people before you succumb to political pressure and intimidation by these ideologues who want it all for their paradigm of private domination and control.

In my private training and consulting business, I've worked directly with scientists and engineers and other professionals from a variety of agencies including the Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Interior, Department of Energy, Department of Agriculture, Federal Aviation Administration, many state Departments of Environmental Quality and other natural resource management agencies. You folks are some of the finest and most competent technical people in the country and I am most appreciative of your service and professionalism for which I publicly state my gratitude. I resent how these neo-Republican scoundrels label you and trash your efforts in so many ways. You don't deserve that and your country doesn't deserve that.

I appreciate the fine and important work that conscientious and caring law enforcement and intelligence officers do for our country, as well as emergency responders of all kinds in the various government agencies. You are the people who work hard to help make our country function properly and provide for our safety and health and emergency needs. I respect you for that and give my thanks to you all for your service and courage. But all too many of you come to see yourselves as servants of the ideologues in power rather than your country and its people; and this leads you to abuse your power and think of and treat ordinary citizens who have the courage to stand up and protest injustices with their words and non-violent actions as "your enemy" or "suspects" or "wrong doers who need to be arrested and jailed" simply because they don't agree with what the ideologues are doing with our country. It seems that anyone who has the courage to stand up and protest is now marked and labeled as a potential... — a potential what? Real citizen with a conscience? I ask you to study our constitution and our nation's history and internalize what really has made this a great country. The great strides haven't been made by a bunch of compliant fearful followers of those in power. They have come from true patriots who have had the inner strength and courage to stand up against unjust power for what is right for the people. You need to understand them and see them as true patriotic citizens and treat them with respect, not brutalize them as if they were the enemy. If you don't feel this way, you need to reexamine your own integrity. We are not the enemy, we are the Americans.³

³ Why don't you start with:

Howard Zinn. 2003. *A People's History of the United States*. HarperCollins, NY.

Then if you want a model of courage from a former insider's insider, whose conscience led him to expose the corruption of the system that he participated in for years of his life, read:

John Perkins. 2004. *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, San Francisco.

You can get a good overview of this book from the hour long interview Amy Goodman did with Perkins on

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I appreciate the commitment and sacrifice of liberty and risk to health, limb and life that our military people must endure to respond to orders, whether sane or not, in the spirit of service for the defense of our nation. I salute every one of you, from the highest general to the lowest enlisted. I also suffer your losses with you; having been in a similar situation I feel your pain and offer you and your families my prayers and compassion for your sacrifices. But I do not and will not put a yellow or red-white-and-blue “support our troops” ribbon on my car, because it is typically used by those who really mean “support our policies” that put you where you are; or, it is done out of a sense of guilt over what has happened that created such a mess. It is cheap “patriotism” and most of them wouldn’t be able to stand up and address the question: “Exactly what do you do to support our troops?” I will relentlessly attack those policies and the premises upon which they are based, along with the bungling mismanagement of their implementation. I guess I expect you folks on the front line to be big enough in deed and consciousness to understand what that means and accept what I am doing as American patriotism to the most core principles of our country, and appreciate the fact that what I and millions of others are doing in this regard is the best “support our troops” action any American could do for you. You volunteered to serve your country as did I, irrespective of the situation you now find yourself in, and you are not “babies” who so many fear will have their feelings hurt by those of us who protest this illegal and immoral war, and the way our military has been co-opted and employed in the furtherance of a private agenda of domination and control by any means available. And when you return to civilian life, whether officer or enlisted, I expect a higher calling to come forth in you and demonstrate a similar courage to really stand up for the principles upon which our country is based and against those who would gut our country’s government with an agenda of private domination and control.

In every organization, there are those who are sincere, hardworking and honest, and do their work with the highest integrity and competence. There are also some who are incompetent, corrupt and dishonest, and that degrades the purpose and integrity of their organization; but, these are few whereas the solid employees are many. So it is offensive, unpatriotic and damaging to our country for these neo-Republican thugs to categorically trash and castigate “government” as the “problem” in support of their agenda of private domination and control by the tiny minority of extremists who own and control vast empires of capital.

So as some government functions in fact do degrade and fail to meet expectations and standards — a hallmark trait under this neo-Republican administration — we must be discerning about the source of the failure, rather than mind numbing and thought blocking ideological rhetoric that attempts to trash the institution civilization calls

the last day of the year, 2004 (www.DemocracyNow.org). And then, for a good overall exposure of how aspects of our system can so easily fail us, see:

Amy Goodman and David Goodman. 2004. *The Exception to the Rulers: Exposing Oily Politicians, War Profiteers, and the Media that Love Them*. Hyperion, NY, and

Greg Palast. 2003. *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy: The Truth About Corporate Cons, Globalization, and High-Finance Fraudsters*. Plume, NY.

You see, we aren’t the enemy. This stuff is really going on and we are struggling to save our country.

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government. There are five major proximate sources of failure, all of which do severe damage to our country and its ability to function properly, which is why these people who employ these means need to be thought of as traitors to their country:

- i) **Funds:** The ideological gutting and misdirection of funds, including a stream of tax breaks that overwhelmingly benefit the rich, ultra-rich, and the corporation device at a time of great national need and distress, which should call forth sacrifice by all rather than a party of riches for the tiny minority of elite;
- ii) **Staffing:** Filling top level positions with incompetent cronies, political patrons, frat-boy college roommates, or dogmatic ideologues who cripple or destroy the internal machinery of entire agencies through mismanagement and/or intent;
- iii) **False and Misleading Information:** Systemic distortion of information, lies, secrecy, selective disclosure, and intentional leaks to attack opponents and confuse or mislead the public;
- iv) **Corruption:** Corruption in personal behavior, conflict of interest, theft and the funneling of public funds to cronies in the private sector through unethical contracting policies; and
- v) **Fear:** Driving fear *into* all levels of the organizational complex; exactly the opposite of what enlightened sages like Dr Edwards Deming spent a life time teaching American and Japanese industry — drive fear *out of* the organization.

This is how they go about taking control of our country and destroying its government. All of these are in turn, in the service of the overriding neo-Republican agenda of *domination and control* by private interests that serve some other purpose than the common good of our country — and this is the root cause of the grand theft of America. The result is increasing oppression at home, empire abroad, regional if not global instability, increased risk to our health and safety, inability to prepare for unforeseen disastrous events (intentional or acts of nature), environmental degradation, exposure to planned or unplanned interruption in critical resources, an ever mounting national debt so monumental it will cripple our future for generations, and increasing repression against any protest to the contrary. These are the outcomes of the neo-Republican agenda for domination and control by private interests. They don't want government — in any form, in any country — to serve as a model that works! So, here and abroad, they undermine it with their rhetoric, decisions and actions — and then they point to the mess they've created and say: "See? Government doesn't work." But the reason it doesn't work is that the people responsible for managing it (the political administration) are subjecting it to wholesale sabotage. No worries to them, however, because they can count on their "base" to be asleep awash in ignorance and, with a compliant corporate media, they can always spin any closer look off into the ionosphere.

After that, when things fall apart, they point fingers at everyone but themselves. And then, after a catastrophe like Hurricane Katrina they come in after the fact acting like "leaders," but looking like buffoons, and say something stupid for the cameras like, "Rest assured, America. I'm in charge now; we're going to get to the bottom of this!" Then onto some more photo-ops on military ships and with military troops to show how "in

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charge” and tough they are. Then, out of the chaos come the mimics, like Governor Blanco Bushette, ready to sound tough, take charge and save corporate property. Thousands of poor blacks, elderly, sick, and invalid people were trapped, suffering in shock, having been abandon in the mass POV⁴ exodus, lost everything and had little or no basics like water to survive — among a few looters grabbing TVs with no where to plug them in. In the midst of this calamity, Governor Bushette puts everyone under suspicion (after all, most were poor blacks) and amps the fear and heartlessness by threatening to “kill” anyone looting corporate inventory, following White House lead, even the basics for survival like food and water. Out of ‘shear courage,’ with troops at her beck-and-call, she gives the suffering survivors a good taste of old fashioned “compassionate conservatism” iced with “conservative compassion,” by announcing that she had troops from Iraq just itching to pull the trigger. “These troops are fresh back from Iraq... They have M-16s and they are locked and loaded. These troops know how to shoot and kill and they are more than willing to do so if necessary and I expect they will.”⁵ Well now; you have to do a little bit of critical thinking to understand who this message was addressed to. Since the few looters had no place to plug in their TVs, it’s doubtful that they would be sitting there listening to the governor’s message. This message was to the rest of the country — *the political administration of this government cares more about corporate inventory than suffering people!* They will identify, try and execute on the spot with the pull of a trigger anyone suspected of stealing a loaf of bread in the middle of devastation and massive human suffering where everyone lost everything. It wasn’t but a couple of days and the corporate private armies, people like Blackwater “private security” mercenaries, were on the scene, not to help people, but to protect inventory. These people are hired, trained and paid lots of money because they have a reputation for being quick to pull the trigger, shooting people in the face, and only then maybe ask questions. Their role is to instill fear and intimidation in the populace. There are reams of them, along with a cadre of Israeli security people who are seasoned city guerrilla fighters, now roaming New Orleans with impunity, not even answerable to local law enforcement because they are... “security.”

The treatment of the victims of this catastrophic event just trying to survive day after day after day as officials seem paralyzed and no one responds to the humanitarian crisis is a disgrace to what we think of as American values. People were treated as “undesirables” to be corralled, herded and controlled, at best, and “criminals” or “mobs or potential rioters representing threats to others” that need to be scattered, held at bay with guns and terrorized with shots over their heads, if not killed, at worst. This is the manifestation of the heartless and ugly face of a general culture these neo-Republicans call “compassionate conservatism,” and it is in full alignment with their agenda of domination and control. Virtually any person representing authority acted like *they* were under siege instead of stepping forward with compassion and what ever help or guidance they could muster to help confused, shocked and stranded people under these trying circumstances. Ordinary working class people, however, who are not of this ilk, showed compassion and courage and without hesitation acted on behalf of those who needed

⁴ POV: Privately Owned Vehicle.

⁵ Democracy Now! September 2, 2005.

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help. These people pulled together and helped each other as you would expect from an evolved civilization. You may have heard about or read the chilling story of a couple who were in New Orleans attending a convention for Emergency Service Workers, of all things. It is so illustrative of this repugnant attitude they call “conservative compassion” toward helpless victims of monumental tragedy in our country, the United States of America, that I am attaching it in its entirety as an appendix to this manuscript.

Then there are immediate offers of help from a country who has more experience with hurricanes than most and certainly has shown the ability to care for *all* of their people — and animals — with a concern and care that our private domination and control paradigm is hopeless to conceive of, let alone manifest. Last fall, Cuba evacuated more than 1.5 million people before a huge hurricane struck. 20,000 homes were destroyed, but not one person or animal perished. Children were kept with their families. People were told to take their animals with them and vets were provided in shelters. The evacuation of animals with their families actually helped prevent chaos. Here in America, we could see on our TVs, the heart-wrenching sadness as all pets were abandoned, and over a thousand children separated from their families as we could see even infants taken from the arms of their mothers — what the hell are people thinking about? “One elderly man survived five days in a tree with his beloved 16-year-old dachshund. When rescuers finally came, they would not let him take his dog, so he killed her rather than leave her to starve to death or drown. Another man stood on a chair in 5 feet of water for three days, holding his cat. When rescuers arrived, he was told that the cat, who meowed in his ear and licked his face to keep him from falling asleep, could not go... [they] stole that last comfort from thousands of people who had nothing left... Gandhi said that the greatness of a nation can be judged by the way its animals are treated.”⁶

We didn’t have a clue how to care for anything or anybody. Yet, when immediate assistance from these hurricane experts was offered within hours, not days, in the form of over 1000 Cuban medical doctors ready to go with the know-how and “hurricane backpacks” stuffed with the supplies they know they would need, as well as food and water, the neo-Repugnant response was to scoff at them and rattle their sabers. This is unimaginably uncivilized behavior by these neo-Republican scum who are stealing our country — like nasty hateful immature children, they spit in the face of compassion, saying “We hate you, Cuba; and we just might attack your country and its people, so don’t stick your offers of help in our face... You lookin’ at me funny, bwoy? The mighty eagle gonna’ soar over their and kick your fuckin’ ass, bwoy. You hear that, bwoy?” This behavior is for their ignorant voting base; without this level of ignorance and amped up hostility, the neo-Republicans don’t have a chance.

It would be very enlightening for you to listen to the hour-long exclusive interview Amy Goodman⁷ did with Ricardo Alarcon, President of the Cuban National Assembly, who was in the U.S. for the UN summit marking the 60th anniversary of the organization’s General Assembly. It is amazing how all of their society and government

⁶ “Pets should be evacuated with owners,” reported in *The Durango Herald*, 9/25/05, by Dyan and Jon McClure of Durango.

⁷ DemocracyNow.org, September 21, 2005.

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services pull together to care for their people in a time of catastrophic emergency; could we not learn something from them? That is, if we value outcome rather than snarling ideologues? Alarcon pointed out that in Cuba, “Our entire national defense, our entire army, and our entire society is prepared to defend itself, not attack others, not to occupy foreign lands... It is everyone’s responsibility to prepare and act on behalf of all.” Immediate offers of assistance came from all over the globe; but, the neo-Republicans ever grasping their ideology of selfishness and hatred, had no qualms about taking \$25,000 from Tsunami devastated Sri Lanka and \$1 million from Bangladesh, one of the poorest countries in the world, but rebuffed offers of food, water and fuel from Venezuela.⁸ Check out the two-part series of interviews Amy did with Venezuelan president, Hugo Chavez while he was here for the UN summit.⁹ You really need to hear their own words, so you can make your own proper discernment about what the neo-Republican hateful saber-rattling thugs are putting out in their threats to peaceful nations around the world.

So where is *your* patriotism, neo-Republican sheep asleep? Is it all wrapped up in the display of little flags and yellow ribbons, as your county’s government is degraded, funds gutted and its ability to function in the service of its people destroyed? Since they’ve programmed your numb minds to see government as *the* “problem” rather than an institution intended to serve the people (as originally intended by our founders and embedded in the constitution, let alone the common construct of civilization), it becomes ever easier to fulfill their own prophecy. Through the five mechanisms above, along with their control of the national agenda, in deed they have crippled governmental services to the point that government cannot perform many of the functions it’s supposed to, or can only do so at an extremely degraded level. Then, an entire cadre of ideologues, from neo-Republican politicians and spin masters to a tag team of supporting super pundits and “news” media all singing in harmony from the same sheet of music,¹⁰ continue the battle for control of your minds so that you will be primed to accept their conclusions and subsequent actions — Government doesn’t work and any nation whose government focuses on caring for the interest of their ordinary people is our enemy; so, society needs to look to the privately owned corporation device as the ‘new’ source for reprieve and services, including catastrophe relief, all societal infrastructure and indoctrination “education” of the people. This is their *re-education* campaign and as long as you’re asleep, they will find it very effective.

This paradigm has become so programmed and embedded in our psyche that it’s hard to step outside of it to examine it critically. People in the aftermath of Katrina uncritically rant and rave about how the government bureaucracy has failed them; yet they know not why and who has failed them. Let’s just look at a couple of very current examples, which illustrate some of these points.

As the disaster of Katrina continues to unfold (with more hurricanes on the way heading into the progressively more intense hurricane season in just *this year* of our neo-

⁸ DemocracyNow.org, September 8, 2005.

⁹ DemocracyNow.org, September 19th and 20th, 2005.

¹⁰ It is not necessary to assume any sort of conspiracy.

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global climate), this paradigm is coming very much into focus in its various dimensions. First of all, consider who was in charge of the very agency that was supposed to be designed to respond to disasters — “Brownie Boy,” who later on got an “attaboy” pat on the back from the president for “doing a great job.” How did he get such a significant and responsible job that requires the ability for rapid assessment, knowledgeable triage of the situation, and the effective marshalling of resources in order to maximize the number of survivors? This guy was some administration official’s college roommate and the most significant thing he had worried about before this job, as the prior director of some horse association, was how much fat was on a horse’s ass. His emergency response: To write a polite letter to his boss, head of Homeland Security; and then to ensure that his people make a good impression with locals and media for the agency. Wasn’t he also the one responsible for delaying the arrival of hundreds of volunteer emergency response professionals from all over by diverting them through a “sensitivity training” course for two days in Atlanta before they could get to the scene? This is so bizarre that one has to consider the very real probability that the delay tactic was in fact intentional; it fits so well with the paradigm of their agenda to undermine any appearance of government competency. This one man is surely another example of the president’s incompetence in staffing — or, is it? As I’ve been pointing out, with no overwhelming evidence to the contrary we really have to assume that such incompetent staffing is actually intentional, since it fits so well with the paradigm of their agenda — intentionally gutting our government.

Consider the commander of the USS Bataan who stood by paralyzed, waiting for days for “orders to help out,” which presumably arrived days later or never even came. He was probably the most significant authority on the scene, able to respond rapidly with resources at his disposal and make a show of leadership and command that would have helped put people more at ease, giving them a sense of hope that at least someone from the United States of America with the power to act was there to help. It would also have helped prevent the situation from deteriorating into chaos. He had resources, the presumption of authority, communication capability. Yet, as the country’s top executives showed no leadership whatsoever, taking their time sauntering back to Washington from their vacation homes, shoe-shopping trips and celebrity tennis lessons while the disaster unfolded, the commander of a United States Navy ship was frozen. As the man on the spot, he could have found a higher calling within himself to take charge and *act* as “the commander on the scene” on behalf of human suffering in the face of a monumental catastrophe. Yet, in this administration, he chose not to exhibit the personal courage to rise to the occasion and step forward into the vacuum of leadership. Does this mean he is a coward? Not necessarily; what it means is that as the commander of a USN ship equipped to respond to a crisis, he chose to be a military bureaucrat instead. Well, he was also probably given a pat on the back for not acting without orders from higher up; might go on to be a top admiral some day. Was he fearful of the impact it might have on his career? He would have been a national hero, and forever he will have to live with the fact that opportunity came to him this lifetime to demonstrate courage and step forward as the man on the spot in a time of national crisis, but he failed to respond. That opportunity is forever lost to him. Instead, he was a good bureaucrat (“But what could I do without

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approval from above?") and will probably be rewarded for it. This is an example of the impotence of leadership when bureaucratic fear is driven into the operational organizations of our country and trained and seasoned commanders on the scene are afraid to act in the face of a disaster, frozen by the bureaucracy mentality of "Don't act on your own without higher level approval... It could be career limiting." It's a rational fear because this administration is ruthless with anyone who presents an alternate view, contrary but accurate information, or dares to question even horrid decisions that are being made at the top. It does take courage to overcome this and risk suffering potential consequences in order to do the right thing.

The Pentagon released a statement¹¹ on September 6th indicating that the Northern Command "was prepared to send in search and rescue helicopters from the USS Bataan almost immediately after the hurricane hit. 'We had things ready. The only caveat is: we have to wait until the president authorizes us to do so.' That authorization didn't happen for days even though the ship was docked just outside New Orleans. 'On board the ship we had doctors, hospital beds, food, and the ability to make up to 100,000 gallons of water a day'." The next day it was announced that two Navy pilots were reprimanded for saving 100 hurricane victims.¹² What a disgraceful example for the United States military.

Now, right on cue the other shoe drops. Since "government" at all levels has once again demonstrated its total incompetence, we just have to rely on the corporation device for efficient and effective management, able to respond like a speeding bullet in short order. In harmony and on key with paradigmatic message, the neo-Republican super pundits are now pointing out the "obvious lesson" with dogmatic purity.¹³ The message identifies Wal-Mart as "one of the few institutions to improve its image after Katrina... Shoppers who have been without power for weeks [were] marveling that there are still generators in stock (and priced at \$304.04)... [along with lots of] giveaways... [The] assessment you hear from public officials in Louisiana [is that] you get more justice at Wal-Mart [than FEMA], and there's even been talk of letting Wal-Mart take over FEMA's job... How often do you suppose someone at Wal-Mart headquarters dispenses \$500,000 and doesn't bother keeping track of it? ... The Republican senator from Louisiana was so impressed with the rapid response of Wal-Mart and other companies that he promised to introduce a bill to abolish FEMA and contract its job out to the private sector."

The neo-Republican agenda is to destroy all aspects of government that serve the people, co-opt the functions of government into servicing the corporation device, and then through their mass-media indoctrination brainwash the people into believing that it's all for their own good. And it is your ignorance, fear and apathy, American people, upon which they prey to achieve their selfish agenda. It is anything but democracy; in fact, it is the gutting of democracy to facilitate domination and control by an elite few.

¹¹ Democracy Now! September 6, 2005.

¹² Democracy Now! September 7, 2005.

¹³ "FEMA to WEMA? The Wal-Mart answer to disaster relief." Syndicated column, in *The Durango Herald*, September 21, 2005.

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Private — the realm of self in civilization

The focus of *private* is self. What's wrong with that? Well nothing in some contexts and a whole lot when it comes to the nature of what we call civilized *society*. If it relates to education of our people, for example, or providing core infrastructure services or the management of our national treasures and resources, "private" means transferring control from public decision making by public institutions, whose mission and focus is directed at serving the interests and needs of the people, to private decision making by a few to serve their selfish interest of growing money. But more than that, it means the invasion of the domination and control paradigm into all sectors of public life. It means the seizure of the freedom for public involvement in decisions crucial to the well-being of people's communities, public institutions and society at large. The result of "privatization" is a gutting of public institutions and the waning of democracy since democracy needs to be implemented through more effective redistribution of concentrated wealth — not magnifying its concentration. The power of scale (and leverage through the corporation device) represents a structural antithesis to democracy.¹⁴ Society needs funds from the economy and a balance of wealth distribution commensurate with the overall well-being of humanity. *Public* funds need to be put into *public* services that the people decide they want and need to enhance the general well-being of society as well as caring for those who are unable to care adequately for themselves. It's called civilized progress. But all this they bash as "waste" and then grab it for themselves and let the rest of us live with the costs — we usually refer to that as greed. The neo-Republican circular formula is:

compassionate conservatism = greed and excess = right =
private wealth = growth = more private wealth

And it is accompanied by pumping your public funds into fundamentalist "faith-based" organizations, giving them dominant control over how the system failures are serviced, as well as the opportunity to reprogram your mind to further serve the paradigm. Charlatan assassination promoter Pat Robertson's 700 Club is third, behind the Red Cross, in receipt of federal funds! It's a scam perpetuated by voter ignorance.

The neo-Republicans crank out a continual stream of dogmatic propaganda (did I mention "to numb your minds") in order to convince whoever doesn't happen to be awake or isn't listening closely that the paradigm of domination and control through ownership and control of all resources and services is actually what "democracy" looks like. Obviously, it's a charade to perpetuate and sustain ignorance. They work hard to equate them in the minds of their ignorant base; who then parrot the dogma in letters to the editor and rightwing talk shows.

democracy = freedom of money = private domination and control

safety = starting unprovoked wars = invasion and permanent occupation of other
peoples land = "privatization" = corporate take over of a people's resources

and don't forget that it all = 9-11

¹⁴ John H. Bodley. 2003. *The Power of Scale: A Global History Approach*. M.E. Sharpe Press, London.

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The absurdity is that they amp your fears about government taking everything away from you, while they do just exactly that. All they want you to think is selfish thoughts about “it’s your money the government taking.” Now, that’s for the little guy in order to corral their votes; for the big guys it boils down to control of planetary society and resources. They dump most all of “our money” that they’re so concerned about getting back for us into a weapons and war machine — and guess who benefits from that. With the weapons and war machine they destroy or threaten to destroy other societies, and then never with any competition involved, they dump more of “our money” into a very few major corporations to go rebuild those societies in our own image. It’s a scam to the core. They don’t do it because it’s right or legal; they do it because they know that they can get away with it. They are grabbing hard and fast now, because their window of opportunity is closing and when the people awaken their scam will be exposed and their system will be subject to the threat of collapse. They are in the process of wrapping it up tight now, including control of the top level of the judicial branch of government. They are very close to being within control of total power and they know that no one will be able to do anything about it once they hold it all. They rotate executives back and forth at the highest levels of national and corporate governance; the same corporations that get the billions of dollars are the ones in control of our government borrowing while sticking the ordinary people with the debt for generations to come. The debt is so astronomical now it can never be repaid, so that means eventual collapse of our government as we know it, since all but an insignificant amount of the planet’s financial capital and capability will be in the hands of a few. They have their private mercenary armies now. All they need is an ignorant base to keep voting them into power because of the “issue” scraps they throw them. This is where “private” is leading us. What will we do?

Spice it with the gutting of all government functions, except (at this point still) your involvement in sending your children to die in a private war for the domination and control of planetary resources behind the chaff of “spreading American values, democracy and freedom around the globe.” Just think of it; private interests profit enormously, you do the dying and incur the debt, and then we’ll call it all “democracy” with the façade of the all important “vote.” They will claim “victory for the spread of democracy and good American values” while your children die to install an Islamic theocratic government that subjugates women, among other things.

Well, we know from a long record that the neo-Republicans care about winning for their private agenda at all costs — not the democratic process of voting. Voting is all a snow-job for appearance, not because they believe in it. They revel that the head of the state Republican Party is also in charge of seeing that the state’s election process is fair. They revel in no audit trail voting machines, with open software back door and security holes you could drive a truck through, made by a company whose CEO promises to do everything he can to deliver the state to the neo-Republicans. They discriminate in voting opportunity by class and race by putting lots of good voting equipment in upper middle class areas and a few low grade voting machines in inner city poor areas. They rig election districts to their advantage, subvert election results, and amazingly brush aside strong evidence of voting anomalies that are so statistically unlikely, it’s more like they won the lottery than a popular vote. Around the world, they promote “American

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democracy” under the banner of the vote. “Let the people have their say,” they boast. Yet, they undermine those voting processes, rig who will run and intimidate anyone but the corrupt politicians who support their domination and control paradigm through the power and control of capital. At all costs, it must be the owners of capital who are in charge. Anyone who attempts to democratically represent their populace and direct their national resources to alleviate suffering and improve their lives, is branded, labeled and then verbally, if not economically and militarily, attacked as a threat to our country. And, if they don’t like the democratic results where the people of a country overwhelming (only needs to be a majority, of course) elect someone they want, these neo-Republicans go about undermining and toppling the elected head of state, usually through subversion and surrogates but by direct force if necessary. They are pleased to have so-called “Christian” charlatans and pimps call for assassination of democratically elected leaders who represent their people, since that is all sung in harmony from the same page of the domination and control sheet of music. The neo-Republican conception of democracy is a sham, a hoax, full of cheap falseness. It is vicious and harmful to humanity and represents a perilous hazard for the future of the planet with great risk of catastrophic failure.

Let’s look at a specific example here in Colorado regarding neo-Republicans who are jockeying for position to be the next governor of the state. For background, you have to know that the Colorado State Constitution caught Brucellosis disease over a decade ago. It incubated for many years before erupting under the right conditions and circumstances to cause injury to the state government and its educational institutions. This is the infamous constitutional amendment perpetrated on the people by some guy named Bruce. It’s a paradigm of reactionary empty-headed ideological rhetoric substituting for good solid policy analysis. This guy Bruce convinced enough voters in the state that they should buy into his Tax Payer’s Bill of Rights (TABOR), which barred deficit spending and held spending increases to some formula, requiring all funds above that level to be returned to the people. Sounds reasonable for a budget-balancing fiscal conservative (now an oxymoron) doesn’t it? But there was also another amendment that required steady increases for all K-12 education spending, but not higher education, regardless of economic circumstances. All seemed fine, if tight, up until the economy went down instead of up. There was no ratcheting down, the government’s revenue dropped like a rock with the economy, but then was restricted on the upswing. Even someone with only a high school education might have enough sense to ask “Ah, excuse me Mr Save the Tax Payers; what if revenues went down due to a recession; how would your proposed constitutional amendment affect the state?” But, evidently no one did any policy sensitivity analysis before it got on the ballot and we are now living with the clear possibility, if not probability, of doing permanent crippling damage to our higher education system — I mean, without exaggeration, *gutting* quality higher education as we know it in the State of Colorado (among many other desperately needed state services and capital construction projects). Well now, let’s ponder this question: Is this an unfortunate oversight about which we are all horrified; or, is this the intent? Because if it’s the intent, this is a con-artist theft of essential elements of our modern society, since it eventually could require placing our institutions of higher learning into private hands, under private control and private funding in order to survive. We have many such

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institutions like, the University of Colorado, Colorado State University, Fort Lewis College here in Durango, and several others around the state. This guy Bruce, one might think should be appropriately horrified that through his own personal efforts, the state is actually in financial crisis at risk of destroying fine institutions as we know them. Not so!

Most conscious lawmakers (that means they have the intelligence and courage to think and act beyond their party's ideological dogshit dogma) who must decide how much money is coming in and where it should go are horrified, and so is the neo-Republican governor who gives nominally positive words about the "Brucing" of Colorado. It's not that we don't have some "excess" revenue collected; it's that we have to return it to the people as individuals (which the Bruce's are all smiling about) instead of collectively in services for everyone. Over the past couple of sessions, they've gone through all sorts of gymnastics to "balance the budget" and still meet the basic societal needs of the state's institutions and programs. These efforts have even included accounting tricks to move payments from the last month of one fiscal year to the next, which simply postponed the crisis a little bit and of course that came home to roost the next year. So, the crisis has led to two measures, "C" and "D", which together will allow the state to keep enough tax revenue to fill in some gaps for a few more years. Mr Bruce is very upset that this would take away his branded impositions on the Colorado constitution and has threatened to sue the state to not allow it to implement C and D, even if the voters wake up enough to approve them and give their public institutions some reprieve. Once the voters pass C&D, they should go on and do with this disastrous amendment what we did with prohibition amendment back in the 20s.

This brings us to the neo-Republican agenda here in Colorado, for another example, of domination and control (sold to you under the banner "freeing your money for the working family" and employing tired old clichés like "tax and spend liberals") by gutting all forms of government, or forcing them into financial insolvency. Mr Marc Holtzman, neo-Republican candidate for governor of Colorado, would start by selling off state owned property to private investors in order to meet cash flow needs. This is a man who, even as a former university president offers policy rhetoric that would see our fine institutions of higher education decline into mediocrity, as best, and not survive at worst, claiming that budgets can be met by squeezing out more "fat and pork." Okay, let's hear it, ignorant neo-Republican base, "Duh, yeah. Dat's right!" Holtzman appeared in a television commercial funded by his father blasting C & D as "pork-barrel spending and used snorting hogs to illustrate his point."¹⁵ This man's father has donated \$100,000 to a greed-based committee called "If C Wins, You Lose," formed to defeat these two life saving, albeit temporary, measures¹⁶. Holtzman says in his own words, "The state's problems can be solved by selling state buildings and... by cutting a bloated bureaucracy ... supporters of C&D have a liberal philosophy of tax and spend."¹⁷ Now that might sell well to every self proclaimed Bubba Billie Bob "Bluuue" Buster Bushite Bozo Butthead, like the one in Crawford, Texas, who showed how tough he was by trying to frighten ("terrorize?") grieving mothers who lost children in the private Bush War by firing his

¹⁵ "When pigs fly, debate flares," AP, in *The Durango Herald*, 9/17/05.

¹⁶ "Opponents question Holtzman's connection to television ad," AP, in *The Durango Herald*, 9/21/05.

¹⁷ "Debaters tangle over Refs C & D," *Rocky Mountain News*, 9/20/05.

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guns into the air right near them. “Duh, yeah. Dat’s right!” Neo-Republicans can’t find any other approach than old hollow clichés to make their arguments, because they depend on preaching to the ignorant for success.

All this is happening while U.S. education as measured against worldwide standards steadily declines.¹⁸ “The United States is losing ground in education, as peers across the globe zoom by with bigger gains in student achievement... The U.S. is ninth among industrialized nations [with] at least a high school degree [and tied for] seventh in share of people who hold a college degree... By both measures the United States was first in the world as recently as 20 years ago... Education’s contribution to [the knowledge] economy is weakening [and we] ought to be worried... [Those performing higher than the U.S. include] Finland, Korea, the Netherlands, Japan, Canada and Belgium.” The neo-Republican solution is to take education out of the public domain and privatize it. They are already gearing up to implement this in their dream of a new corporate-military-state for New Orleans, passing out private school vouchers (with your funds) rather than rebuilding public schools. Of course then they could get more of their own ideas some undeserved space since they rarely stand on their own weight; “Hey, you’ve got your theory and I’ve got mine.” In their continued preference for ideological dogma over science, the president said that he “believes schools should discuss ‘intelligent design’ alongside evolution when teaching students about the creation of life.”¹⁹ Then maybe the students could just vote on which one they liked the best. It’s all sort of “free market democracy,” of course, just pick the idea you like the best; who needs critical scientific thinking anyway?

“In the context of our culture, it is easy to see that critical thinking is a threat... [The system desired by the captains of industry is] explicitly set up to ensure a docile, malleable workforce to meet the growing, changing demands of corporate capitalism... ensure a workforce that will not rebel... that will be physically, intellectually, and emotionally dependent upon corporate institutions for their incomes, self-esteem, and stimulation, and that will learn to find social meaning in their lives solely in the production and consumption of material goods.”²⁰ Besides wallowing in their own ignorance, the neo-Republicans employ ignorance as both a strategic and tactical weapon against the people. One method is to bias perceptions by choosing the facts that fit and let politics dictate what science can be used. Another method is renaming things, such as reclassifying highly radioactive waste as “incidental waste.” The neo-Republican “scientific method” is to “regard scientific findings as the raw material of spin, to be dribbled out, manipulated, or suppressed as it suits the political needs of the moment.” The domination and control paradigm allows neo-Republican industry interests, through their tight relationships with neo-Republican top-level bureaucrats on the other side of the revolving door, to prevent government scientists from appearing and speaking at public conferences and events if they have anything critical to report, pull funding from studies that would expose risks and hazards to human health and the environment, not release

¹⁸ “U.S. position in education worldwide slips, study say,” AP, in *The Durango Herald*, 9/21/05.

¹⁹ “Bush urges teaching of intelligent design,” AP, in *The Durango Herald*, 8/2/05.

²⁰ John Taylor Gatto. 2002. *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*. New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, BC, Canada. p xxiii.

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information they already have, and suppress data that fails to justify desired outcomes while they hold manufacturing data that does.²¹

At the turn of the millennium, the U.S. Department of Labor statistics regarding the occupations most widely held by Americans today pointed to the following sobering facts: “The job that is held by the largest number of individuals, as well as the corporation that has shown the greatest growth in the past 30 years, is that of Wal-Mart clerk. Second is McDonald’s burger flipper. Third is Burger King flipper. And close behind? Elementary school teacher... The number of people employed by Wal-Mart and their families is greater than the population of each of the following states: Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming.”²²

Their mantra of “privatization” pervades all aspects of planetary life, but especially natural resources critical for human existence. Water and energy are obviously two of the most significant resources, because through the control of the ownership and distribution of these, you control the population of the planet and its ability for involvement in its own destiny. The public is entirely excluded from public policy, so private interests are already dictating in secrecy what’s right for themselves and to hell with any other input, scrutiny, or say.

In the case of water, their domination and control agenda is converting abundance into scarcity. “The water crisis is the most pervasive, most severe, and most invisible dimension of the ecological devastation of the earth... Between 1990 and 2025 the number of people living in countries without adequate water is projected to rise from 131 million to 817 million.” In a planet that is two-thirds covered by water, we face an acute and growing water shortage. We mine water from aquifers that can’t recharge at the rate we are drawing it. The water of water-rich regions are poisoned with pollution. The “rights” of the industrial sector to pollute the commons, dumps their costs onto the populace, which by neo-Republican design will have less and less control over a fundamental resource we all need to survive. We are not living in balance with our hydrological cycle. Industrial scale deforestation, mining, monoculture agriculture, climate change and a host of other “private development” activities are sucking our ecosystems dry. Privatization of water itself systematically denies community control over water for all and excludes the lower economic levels of society from even this most basic of human and ecological needs through the erosion of communal water rights. The “privatized” water goes to where it makes the most money, not where it makes the most

²¹ For a thorough exploration of this and a plethora of case-in-point examples, see: Carl Pope and Paul Rauber. 2004. *Strategic Ignorance: Why the Bush Administration is Recklessly Destroying a Century of Environmental Progress*. Sierra Club Books, San Francisco. Quotes from pages 143-156.

²² Gatto (2002), p xxii-xxiii.

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sense for sustaining humanity and its life support systems, to say nothing of the spiritual and traditional role water has played in communities throughout history.²³

Neo-Republican energy “policy” is to have global oil giants own and control all sources of energy and exclude all public input to their decision making process. That’s it! Oh, come on, Root, what about solar energy? How can they control that? What, are they going to build a screen around the world and only let sun light in for those who can pay? Actually, the “secret” private policy (as the neo-Republicans do things) is to ensure that current fossil fuel dominated energy companies *do* control all significant access and potential for solar energy by controlling the capital resources needed to develop it. And besides that, billions of dollars in tax breaks (that means public money spent privately with no public input) have been given to the richest and most profitable corporations on the planet to do just that. Again, it takes a little bit of critical thinking to understand how this happens. Public debate over energy policy threatens private corporate control over the *definition of the problem*, and grassroots citizens’ movements question the legitimacy of corporate control. So, citizens; you’re out! “An alternative political movement dedicated to solar energy has been reduced to begging utilities for a share of the business.” In the aftermath of the oil embargos energy companies were hugely invested in the major percentage of the world’s fossil fuel supplies and “weren’t about to let small imaginative inventors capture the sun’s rays and the nation’s imagination, and thereby threaten their hegemony over energy services. While they could not halt federal support for research on renewable energy sources, the electrical equipment and oil giants secured the majority of federal research handouts, then moved swiftly to buy out the best of the new companies to bring them under control... [This is how they] hang a meter on the sun.”²⁴ So what’s different 30+ years later? The opportunity for a national drive to energy independence has been squandered under private control, simply because they could grow more money faster by preventing it. Now, instead of energy independence we have a global grab for control of dwindling energy resources and the wars to prove it. We also have blown the golden opportunity for local ownership and democratic control of energy that are necessary, if not sufficient, conditions for a solar²⁵ economy. We need some other model than “privatization” for the governance of energy. “By 1996, almost twenty years after the first Sun Day, standardized industrial formulas had sucked most of the democratic pizzazz out of solar energy. Today, the resurgence of solar technologies is strictly managed by the same energy corporations who undermined solar hot water heating in the 1970s and 1980s. If the utilities continue to control the process, most solar energy will be generated at big, expensive, intimidating installations surrounded by barbed-wire fences... even though decentralized rooftop and building-integrated solar designs are often more practical and economic... The sabotage of solar projects (as well as research programs into alternatives to automobiles and freeways) offers proof that the energy crisis has actually been caused by the policies and practices of the energy giants. Solar energy in the

²³ Vandana Shiva. 2002. *Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution, and Profit*. South End Press, Cambridge.

²⁴ Daniel M. Berman and John T. O’Connor. 1996. *Who Owns the Sun? People, Politics, and the Struggle for a Solar Economy*. Chelsea Green Publishing, White River Junction, Vermont. P7-8.

²⁵ “Solar” includes wind power and other renewable energy sources, since they are all derived from the sun.

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absence of economic democracy will be marginal... Solar power without a grassroots solar movement will be merely another form of business as usual.”²⁶

The domination and control paradigm, of course, respects the power of money to influence public decisions more than anything. Take the case of a spoiled Texas billionaire who is used to getting his own way. Self-proclaimed Bubba Billionaire Billie Joe “Red” McCombs Buster Bushite Bozo Butthead, owner of various sports franchises and the corporate media giant “Clear (gag) Channel” string of over 1000 radio stations — you know, the ones that sound the same no matter where you are in the country — expects all public officials to bow and give him whatever he wants from the public.²⁷ Back in the 1980s, 1986 I think it was during the Reagan-Bush regime, he managed to swindle some political pressure to “trade” some land he had for a block of some 288 acres of inaccessible untouched public land in the middle of 4 millions acres of public Forest Service land in the wild southern Rocky Mountains near Wolf Creek Pass, just east of Pagosa Springs. Actually, the first Forest Service official back in 1986, much to his professional integrity and credit, turned down the proposal because he knew that developing that pristine land above 10,000 feet in the snowiest spot in Colorado was not in the public interest and would be an ecological nightmare and destroy a national treasure, which it was his job to protect. However, three weeks later that decision was overturned (Reagan-Bush regime, remember) after self-proclaimed Bubba Billionaire Billie Joe “Red” McCombs Buster Bushite Bozo Butthead made a phone call to Washington, and the ill-advised land-swap was then approved. No one knows what happened to the career of the original Forest Service official, but “Red” is now aggressively trying to get approval to build an 8,000 person town, larger than Vail, Colorado, on his island of private land (they need Forest Service approval for an access road) near the continental divide.²⁸ Why? Because he wants to, that’s why.

Well, in pure neo-Republican domination and control style, they still unabashedly use the power of their wealth and contacts to strong-arm public officials to get their way over the objections of public common sense. Now a public concern organization, Colorado Wild, who is suing “Red” and company over their meddling in public policy decisions, points to continued collusion of the “Red” project and political officials so that “Red” can have his way (after all, he is a neo-Republican and does have billions of dollars of wealth).²⁹ Both Republican state representative, Mark Larson, and Democratic U.S. representative, John Salazar, are against the deal and pressing for more information. Larson says the Forest Service is [again] bowing to political pressure for McCombs. “It’s sad,” he says, but “all you have to do is follow the money. The Forest Service, who is supposed to be the caretakers of our public lands, is now being driven by the attorneys. It stinks to high heaven.”

²⁶ Berman and O’Connor (1996), p11.

²⁷ For mug shot, see: http://www.durangoherald.com/news/05/images/news050923_4.jpg

²⁸ For an overview with photos, maps and details, see: www.FriendsOfWolfCreek.org

²⁹ “Colorado Wild charges collusion: Billionaire’s lawyers behind policy (and DeLay’s help was sought),” *The Durango Herald*, 9-23-05.

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Further, “seeking to bypass Forest Service review of the proposed Village at Wolf Creek, developers sought the help of powerbroker U.S. Rep. Tom DeLay, to craft legislation in favor of the controversial development... ‘We would have never gotten to first base without your help,’ Texas billionaire Billie Joe “Red” McCombs wrote in a May 2002 letter to the House majority leader... [His point-man] asked DeLay, a Texas Republican, to assist in attaching ‘midnight riders’ to several bills before the House Appropriations Committee. Those riders would have provided immediate access to the development site, circumventing a Forest Service approval as required by Federal Law... ‘The priority is now obtaining full commitment from U.S. Rep. McInnis (R) and U.S. Senator Campbell (R)... we need firm commitments, no weasel room, so that DeLay can do his thing,’ the recently disclosed memo says. ...A critical decision by the Forest Service is due in November that could grant developers access over National Forest land into their property.”

The American presidency has become a hood ornament for the privatization scam. It involves the election of actors and pseudo-actors who practice, read, memorize and deliver scripts written for them in order to placate the ignorant masses and make them feel all warm and fuzzy, while the real power behind the scene goes about their agenda of gutting the American government. They don’t care who is in the oval office — actor, empty head, combination of both, whatever — as long as they promote their paradigm of domination and control through the ownership of capital, painted with the façade that they are wise visionary fiscal conservatives thinking about good governance and efficiency in the interest of saving their constituents money. “Rulers who aspire to hegemony... must make out an ideological case that they rule, to some degree, on behalf of their subjects.”³⁰ That is why we see the absurdity of Senator Orrin Hatch promoting the “Ahnold Constitutional Amendment,” which would allow a “tough-guy” actor (who happens to be currently ineligible to run for president being born a foreigner), *act* as president to “make people feel strong and safe” while distracting them from the real agenda. Wow! Orrin; did you see the Toyminator dunk that bitch’s head in the toilet!? What is it, Orrin? The group sex? His admiration for Hitler? His narcissism? The testosterone? The way he treats women? What? Wow, guys can you imagine what a script he could write for those terrorists!? Why, with the Toyminator as president they’d be shaking in their boots. Can you imagine what a great “*reality*”-TV drama this would make? It’ll be another showdown at high noon, with the Toyminator smoking out the *terrorists*.

This is a guy Orrin wants to see as president so badly, he’s willing to promote a constitutional amendment just to see it happen. This is a guy who, like our current neo-Republican air-head, didn’t have the political courage to sit at a debate table with his competition for governor unless the questions were restricted to a list given to him well before the debate so his political script-writer hacks could give him the answers to memorize and recite! Well, the Californians sure do like to project fictional characters onto real actors, because he won anyway. Then as governor facing huge cash flow

³⁰ James C. Scott. 1990. *Domination and the Art of Resistance*. Yale University Press, New Haven. p18.

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deficits, he did what all neo-Republicans do; he borrowed the money from future generations “solving” the crisis. Yea, Ahnold! This is what the neo-Republicans see as their kind of leader. They don’t need anything else, because the rest of it is all show. The real agenda is going on everywhere else as they “borrow and spend” our government into ruin and lay the debt at the feet of generations yet to come, who will by then be totally dependent on the corporation device. It is their purpose, folks; GET IT? They *want* to bankrupt the United States Government beyond recovery. Then who are you going to look to for money to do anything? They’re grabbing all the financial wealth and power for themselves — *now*. Democracy can’t survive and will be subsumed indefinitely for ages by private power. All this inflated neo-Republican guy Ahnold could do to counter a female candidate’s point was tell her what kind of role he would write her into with his next Toyminator script. My goodness, what a commanding presence! Besides being a political coward; when it comes to women, you’re a fucking asshole, Ahhhhhnowd. If you need a bus moved, call Ahnold; otherwise, get your head out of your ass, people, and wake up to what these neo-Republicans are doing to our country.

What are we to do?

When the great lord of nobility passes, the wise peasant bows deeply and silently farts
— Ethiopian Proverb.

Society is a very mysterious animal with many faces and hidden potentialities... None of us knows all the potentialities that slumber in the spirit of the population
— Václav Havel.³¹

Corporation — the realm of the device in civilization

The focus of corporation is leveraged power. The corporation device is the ultimate lever of power with its own paradigmatically innate agenda of growing money, increasing power and ensuring its survival in perpetuity. Any functionary participant not acting in line with the paradigm of this device is ejected from the system — no rebels need apply. Which CEO is going to stand up and say for the sake of civilization, “enough is enough!” and still keep his job? It is a self-selecting device that underpins the domination and control paradigm. It is a concentrator of capital and power for the device itself and a concentrator of wealth and power for the relatively few dominant owners who control the device and wield it as their lever of global influence. Its dominance leaves no room for any other guiding philosophy for humanity than the growth and accumulation of money. Such a device that has no regulating mechanism³² results in the cancerous expansion of capital, and this relentless and expansive pressure leads to ecological and societal destabilization and destruction as its ultimate outcome. It is the focal device of the domination and control paradigm. In a collective sense, the corporation device is the underpinning of capitalism. In harmony they constitute “a single world-dominating order,

³¹ Quotes from Scott, 1990.

³² It only answers to another device, an epidevice called the financial market. This device seeks and rewards entities that are better than others in growing money — the more the better, the faster the better.

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and even though it still has not reached everywhere, it cannot be reformed, cannot be satisfied with less than everything, and has the institutions in place for its purpose.”³³

Without a drastic change in its driving purpose, the restructuring of its power and influence, and the reestablishment of societal control of this device, it sets the modern-day benchmark for what we might call an *evil force*. It is out of anyone’s control and heading the planet toward catastrophic failure of its ecological and societal systems. “Capital is not what most people take it to be. It is not a rational system of markets in which freely constituted individuals create wealth in healthy competition. It is, rather, a [device] that integrates earlier modes of domination... and generates a gigantic force field of profit-seeking that polarizes all human activity and sucks it into itself.”³⁴ In the context of this hegemonic imperialism — the progressive domination of humanity and nature on a world scale — global ecological decay and fundamentalist terror share some of the same basic features. The dissolution of all the old ways under globalization through forcibly imposed “free trade” leads to “fundamentalisms arising within disintegrating peripheral societies as ways of restoring the integrity of ravaged communities. The project [of forced ‘free trade’] becomes irrational because of the hatred induced by powerlessness, and as it does, turns towards a pattern of terror and counter-terror in a cycle of vengeance.”³⁵

And, as the wise sage Dom Helder Camara has long ago pointed out so well, the cycle of violence is perpetuated endlessly by injustice resulting from the domination and control paradigm.³⁶ He speaks of three kinds of violence, which challenges the uncritically assumed premises of terrorism that they are “evil people and do what they do because they have hate in their hearts.”³⁷

Injustice: The first kind of violence is *Injustice*. It is the subtle, institutionalized destruction of human possibilities not often apparent to those comfortably situated — a violation of personhood and the oppressive deprivation of basic human rights and dignity.

Revolt: The first kind of violence, injustice, leads to the second kind of violence, which is *Revolt*. When the injustice of a society becomes too oppressive, the second kind of violence bursts forth — “the lava flowing from the top of a volcano fed by the deeper fires of social dislocation and injustice.” Those who have been the victims of injustice finally decide they must throw off the shackles of their oppression and end the massive

³³ Joel Kovel. 2002. *The Enemy of Nature: The End of Capitalism or the End of the World?* Fernwood Publishing, Nova Scotia. p83.

³⁴ Kovel (2002), p149.

³⁵ Kovel (2002), Quotes from p x - xiii.

³⁶ Helder Camara. 1971. *Spiral of Violence*. Sheed and Ward, Sidney. Dom Helder Camara, Archbishop in North-East Brazil, political figure, and progressive humanitarian world figure for the cause of the peoples of the Third World, was a formidable organizer making the peasant movement a force to be reckoned with in contemporary Latin America. His short little book (83p) addresses the hidden social dimension of violence. He was a Nobel Peace Prize nominee. He died in 1999 in his 90s.

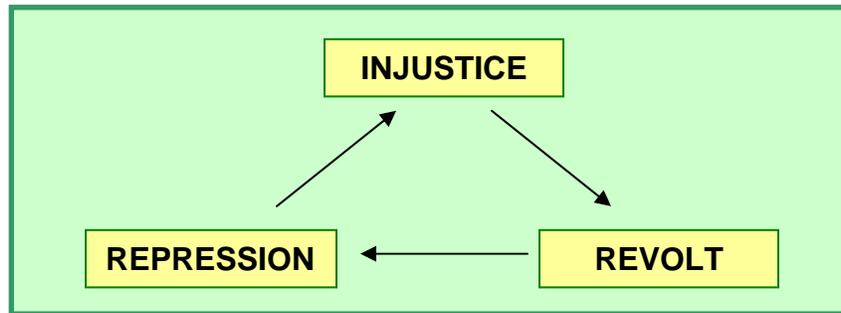
³⁷ I am grateful to Professor of Sociology, Kalin Grigg of Fort Lewis College, who brought Camara’s perspective to our awareness at the FLC Symposium on Social Justice, “Repairing the Fabric of Humanity 2004,” October 7 and 8, 2004. The summary notes of Camara’s points are from his handout.

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injustice they have suffered. The basic cause of most violent revolt is injustice and inequality, violation of personhood, and symbolic violence.

Repression: Finally, this leads to the third kind of violence, *Repression*. Confronted with revolt, those who hold power put down the revolt by whatever repressive means are necessary to ensure their power is not threatened. Token concession may be allowed but tolerance is repressive (“repressive tolerance”) since no widespread changes are allowed. If subtle ways of acting repressively are insufficient, those with power are always prepared to act more openly and destructively. Repression leads to exacerbated injustice.



One reason neo-Republicans from their paradigmatic perspective have so much trouble doing any critical examination of the social causes of violence is that they immediately label anyone or any group or any leader who resists repression and supports people’s causes as “communist subversion,” and then attack their label. And by their actions we know that they hold the idea, which skirts fascism, that “order” is more important than “justice.” They come in leading with the only solution they can think of for any problem known to humanity from their basic world view — let capital take over (and suppress any resistance to that with repressive military force) — and then they hammer on the words of the problem definition to fit their solution. What a mind-stopper; we need to help them grow through their emotional and mental blockages and attachments, which is what I’m trying to do as I insult the ignorance of their base and the absurdity of their assumptions. Camara points out that it is a fallacy to confuse the good and indispensable notion of order, an admirable goal of human progress, with caricatures of it which are responsible for the persistence of structures which everyone recognizes cannot be preserved.

From the neo-Republican framework, the unawakened mostly associate the second form, revolt, with the notion of “violence.” But it is derived from the more subtle institutionalized form of violence—injustice. Injustice is the fundamental violence of the world, which always gives rise to revolt, which is always met with repression. The only way out is to non-violently work on injustice. “When I feed the poor, the government supports me. When I ask why they are starving, I’m called a communist.”

How do we stop the spiral of violence? Camara says: “The only true answer to violence is to have the courage to face the injustices which constitute the first violence. Justice is the condition for peace, the path, the way. It is only through justice that a true and lasting

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peace will be achieved.”³⁸ Camara is a paradigm of authentic Christianity in the truest sense as a follower of Jesus.

Yet in absurdity and pure irony, whether blind to its consequences (doubtful) or purposely precipitating them (likely), the neo-Republicans argue the exact opposite, putting this system of domination and control forth (under various labels) as the solution to everything, including poverty, when in fact *it is the cause of poverty* and so much more suffering around the planet. “Saying poverty breeds terrorism and despair, President Bush challenged world leaders [more than 160 presidents, prime ministers and kings at the U.N. General Assembly meetings]... to abolish all trade tariffs and subsidies — worth hundreds of billions of dollars — to promote prosperity and opportunity in struggling nations. ‘Either hope will spread, or violence will spread, and we must take the side of hope’.” This, the article referred to as “Bush’s compassionate approach.”³⁹ You see how their story telling leads you to the only two choices (they label as either “violence” or “hope”) and subsequent conclusion they want you to have — who wouldn’t pick hope? And then they attach that label “hope” to the expansion of their domination and control paradigm with the promise of “prosperity and opportunity.” Trapping you [and these leaders and anyone they can convince to listen] in the box of their paradigm, they define and label the problem — terrorism and despair — label its cause (poverty), and then without any analytical insight whatsoever, identify their paradigm as the solution — abolish all trade tariffs and subsidies — and call that “hope,” claiming such policies result in “prosperity and opportunity.” It is the fallacy of story telling as an effective problem solving method, although they can and do easily lead the unaware down their rosy path to their preprogrammed conclusion with their story. They don’t tell you that the prosperity and opportunity, if it comes at all, comes to the already wealthy *at the expense of* those already suffering, who reap greater poverty, injustice and oppression. Examples of the failure of this paradigm over decades abound.⁴⁰

The irony of this article is the identification of “urges help” and “compassionate approach” with the neo-Republican solution for everything. It is well known that in the face of such overwhelming size, power and agenda of the multinational corporation device, struggling and fragile economies are easily wiped out by the “abolishment of all trade tariffs and subsidies.” Such policy recommendations merely serve to open these countries to the predatory effect of the domination and control paradigm. There is nothing fair or democratic about it. The countries can then kiss their sovereignty and potential for a productive future for their people goodbye, as the device invades, occupies and consumes their economies. The core of this neo-Republican argument is a well-

³⁸ Camara (1971), p56.

³⁹ “Bush urges help for struggling nations,” AP, in *The Durango Herald*, 9-15-05.

⁴⁰ Examples of its failure are so numerous; it’s amazing these neo-Republicans can stand there and still perpetrate such lies with a straight face and expect conscious people to still believe them. This is nothing more than their program of sustainable ignorance. See any of these references for a plethora of its failures: Noam Chomsky. 1999. *Profit Over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order*. Seven Stories Press, NY. Noam Chomsky. 2003. *Hegemony or Survival: America’s Quest for Global Dominance*. Metropolitan, NY. David Korten. 1995. *When Corporations Rule the World*. Kumarian Press and Berrett-Koehler. San Fran. Jerry Mander and Edward Goldsmith. 1996. *The Case Against the Global Economy: and For a Turn Toward the Local*. Sierra Club Books, San Francisco.

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demonstrated fallacy and putting it forth the way they do is a complete and disingenuous hoax, if consistent with their lack of integrity. Lest they hand over their countries to this paradigm of neo-Republican domination and control and reap its horrid consequences, all of these 160 world leaders need to steel themselves every time they hear the words, “Bush calls for...” or “Bush urges...” and then do their own independent analysis and thinking.

The system has acquired an aura of inevitability and immortality, with “globalization” and “privatization” as its current mutually reinforcing manifestation. These become mind-traps forcing all problem definitions and all solutions to come from within this box, which they want everyone to consider as a given starting point. It is a “screamingly obvious fact that society predicated on endless expansion must inevitably collapse its natural base.” Overall social well-being will never be allowed as the critical *measure of outcome* success criterion for the domination and control paradigm; since this paradigm operates on a basis of social hierarchy and inequality, it is the antithesis of overall social well-being and fails the test *prima facie*. Free market competition was supposed to decentralize and diffuse economic power (originally conceived), which was the surface argument for market deregulation and smaller government. But, that is not how it has turned out. It has taken antisocialism to extremes in defense of large corporations. Effective change will have to come from outside the ruling consensus with the focus on an ecologically worthy society, from local to global in scale.

Milton Friedman, America’s chief purveyor of corporate neoliberalism, said “the business corporation cannot be said to have [social] responsibilities at all because they are not persons... The sole responsibility of corporate officers is to make as much money as possible in the interests of the owners of the company.”⁴¹ For his thoughts, and the ascendancy of this neoliberal economic theory he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1976.

But, this view is at odds with other neoliberal arguments that the corporation device really is a “person” with constitutionally protected human rights to free speech, as well as the rest of the Bill of Rights, and the right to freely amplify its power by orders of magnitude through the right to own other corporations — but no inherent social responsibility⁴². This convoluted system is how some CEOs, like “Kenny-Boy” Lay, claim they inadvertently “lost track of” billions of dollars. This accepted notion that the corporation device is a “person” continues to undermine the intent and letter of the Constitution of the United States of America to protect the rights of the *people*. With the rights of people assumed by an enormously powerful device controlled by a few, ironically the constitution becomes the hijacked and foremost *device* itself in service of the domination and control paradigm — permanently, as long as society allows this corporation device to assume those powers and operate as is. The implications are ominous, since unlike human beings and all other forms of *life*, the corporation device is

⁴¹ Milton Friedman. 1970. “The Social Responsibility of Business.” *New York Times Magazine*, September 13, v33: 122-126. Quoted in: Bodley, 2003, p223.

⁴² The corporate PR you see promoting their performance in the arena of social responsibility is a response to market disturbances that are generated when they don’t do anything in this arena. Corporate and logo image is important to them in an economic sense.

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an extremely powerful immortal and soulless entity, exists in multiple places at the same time, changes its identity at will, and can even chop off parts of itself or sprout new parts. This coupled with Paulinist Christian fanaticism and their story that we, like corporations, are *separate* from divinity or consciousness, perpetrates a form of spiritual slavery and helplessness in the face of this behemoth. They are all singing in harmony from the same sheet of music and they all worship the corporation device.

“Corporate personhood is the story that a group of people can get together and organize a legal fiction (that’s the actual legal term for it) called a corporation — and that agreement could then have the rights and powers given to living, breathing humans by modern democratic governments. Democracy is the story of government of, by, and for the people; something, it turns out, that is very difficult to have function well in the same realm as corporate personhood.”⁴³ The corporation device leverages even more power out of these same rights you and I have, because it “doesn’t have the same fragilities or responsibilities, either under the law or under the realities of biology.” It is a device that only grows bigger and more powerful, to the point now that just a few colossal giants rule much of the wealth and power of the planet. The leveraged power of this resilient device in the hands of a few, puts the future of the planet in the hands of people who are themselves trapped in the single driving mechanisms of the capitalist paradigm — to focus solely on growing money, regardless of consequences on any scale, from local to global.

Like the epidemic of a viral disease similar to the results of Biblical endorsement of slavery and oppression of women, “this story of corporate personhood — which only came fully alive in the 1800s — was highly contagious: It has spread across most of the world in just the past half-century. It has literally caused some sovereign nations to rewrite their constitutions, and led others to sign treaties overriding previous constitutional protections of their human citizens.” This is the phenomena of the domination and control paradigm as implemented through the leveraged power of the corporation device. *This* is what our sons and daughters are dying for on the other side of the planet. *This* is why every sovereign nation needs to reexamine their relationship with this device.

Privatization through the corporation device continues to cause a massive realignment of planetary decision making and control through the shift of public assets into private hands, turning public revenues into private income on a massive scale, and surrendering the product of decades of work by thousands of people to a tiny minority of large investors whose wealth and power only grows. The paradigm promotes the fabrication of every lie imaginable to engender the perception that it’s all benevolent and good for society and America. You will see George Bush speaking somewhere and behind him is a well designed and prepared wall with subliminal messages all over it, with perhaps only two words like “growth” and “jobs” repeated over and over in a pattern across the wall. This isn’t for anyone who’s awake; it is for their ignorant base, so that well after the talk they will subconsciously associate the smiling good-old-boy neo-Republican face (and

⁴³ Thom Hartmann. 2002. *Unequal Protection: The Rise of Corporate Dominance and the Theft of Human Rights*. Rodale/St. Martin’s Press, NY. All quotes from p2-5.

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subsequently all their policies) with the perception of positive benefits, yet they won't have any data or critical reasoning to back up why they find themselves feeling that way. And this is precisely the cynical intent of the neo-Republican handlers.

When the corporation device moves into various areas, it sells itself (through its functionaries who service the device paradigm) as the benevolent and beneficial source of “jobs, jobs, and more jobs,” and so leverages this promise into massive tax breaks from naïve and gullible local public officials who bend over backwards with all kinds of economic development subsidies and incentives so the corporation won't take their “goodies” to some other location. These incentives range from property tax abatements, corporate income tax credits, land write-downs, infrastructure aid, and just plain cash grants. “In reality, many companies fail to create or retain the jobs they promise. Many pay poverty wages or fail to provide healthcare to employees. Some move jobs offshore or to other states. And many have not created *any* new jobs — or have actually *laid people off* since pocketing their incentives.”⁴⁴ Again, this is another way the paradigm of domination and control plays itself out. These entities play states and cities against each other, with even the assistance of a fledgling parasitic industry that helps businesses buy and sell economic development tax credits. These are public tax dollars they take out of the public good with the jobs scam. It is “a \$50 billion-a-year scam in which — in the name of ‘job creation’ — corporations play states and cities [and countries] against each other to win hefty taxpayer subsidies that routinely exceed \$100,000 per promised job... It is a costly bait-and-switch that swindles communities in more ways than one. They lose jobs — or gain jobs so low-paying they do nothing to help the community — and they lose revenue through massive corporate tax breaks. That means fewer resources for maintaining schools, public services, and infrastructure.” Of course, this is consistent with the agenda of the domination and control paradigm. All this “public stuff” is intended to eventually be “privatized” anyway, for the good of the nation, of course.

It is most important to at least mention the crucial role that control of communication plays in the domination and control paradigm and its destructive effects on democracy. Since the paradigm requires the management of perceptions, it requires dominant control of mass media, which is the antithesis of what democracy needs to survive. In his book⁴⁵, Robert McChesney lays out the “contradiction between a for-profit, highly concentrated, advertising saturated, corporate media system and the communication requirements of a democratic society.” He explores this theme from a variety of perspectives, including the interaction of the decline of journalism and the hyper-commercialization of our modern culture; and, the close relationship of the media system to the broader paradigm of globalization and neoliberal capitalism with its “dilapidated political culture.” He exposes the use of “the myth of the free market to defend this unaccountable private control over

⁴⁴ Greg LeRoy. 2005. *The Great American Jobs Scam: Corporate Tax Dodging and the Myth of Job Creation*. Berrett-Koehler, San Francisco. Quotes from the jacket cover. The author provides a multitude of case examples and situations with analysis of how the scam is carried out.

⁴⁵ Robert W. McChesney. 2000. *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times*. The New Press, NY.

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communication.” His main argument is that the survival of democracy requires a structural reform of the media system. So, you see, we find over and over everywhere we look that the neo-Republican domination and control paradigm, contrary to their relentless propaganda to convince us otherwise, undermines the very fundamentals of democracy, our nation and its constitution. It does not even measure up to the façade of “democracy” and “freedom” they say it is; it really is *the grand theft of America*.

I end this section with some real facts about the corporation device-as-person hoax. This is directly pertinent to the ominous decision the Senate is about to make on George Bush’s choice for Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States of America, neo-Republican John Roberts, which I will comment on below. In Thom Hartmann’s research, he learned that America’s Founders and early Presidents were extremely concerned about the potential for the corporation device to threaten our new country. It was the corporation device, after all, that the British used to control their colonial system. These Founders specifically warned that “*the safety of the new republic depended on keeping corporations on a tight leash.*”⁴⁶ The sad irony is that in spite of these warnings, “corporate values and powers have come to dominate our world... Along the way over the past two centuries, those playing the corporate game at the very highest levels seem to have won a victory for themselves — a victory that is turning bitter in the mouths of many of the 6 billion humans on planet Earth... [with most everyone, including the ‘winners’ and their families] touched by an increasingly toxic environment, a fragile and top-heavy economy, and a hollow culture — all traceable back to the frenetic systems of big business that resulted from the doctrine that corporations are persons... They are not human... they are an agreement, not a living being.”

Here is a list of Hartmann’s summary points:

- Traditional English, Dutch, French, and Spanish law didn’t say that corporations are people.
- The U.S. Constitution wasn’t written with that idea; corporations aren’t even mentioned.
- For America’s first century, courts all the way up to the Supreme Court repeatedly said, “No, corporations do not have the same rights as humans.”
- It’s only since 1886 that the Bill of Rights and the Equal Protection Amendment have been explicitly applied to corporations.
- Corporate personhood was never formally enacted by any branch of the U.S. government.
- It was never voted by the public.
- It was never enacted by law.
- It was never even stated by a decision after arguments before the Supreme Court.

⁴⁶ Hartmann (2002), the remaining points of this section come from p4-8.

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“This last point will raise some eyebrows because for 100 years people have believed that the 1886 case *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad* did in fact include the statement “Corporations are persons.” But... this was never stated by the Court: It was added by the court reporter who wrote the introduction to the decision, called headnotes. And as any law student knows, headnotes have no legal standing.”

“Constitutional mechanisms that were designed to protect humans got turned inside out, so today they do a much better job of protecting corporations, even when the result is *harm* to humans and other forms of life... America’s Declaration of Independence put it this way:

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed...

“Corporate governance is incompatible with people’s ability to create sustainable democratic communities... in this growing worldwide movement, governments should be of, by, and for human people — not of, by, and for corporations... These are the first shots in a new American Revolution... It is a revolution to win back democracy.”

The Supreme Court of the United States of America

Isn’t it amazing that in the selection process for one of the most important public servant positions in the nation, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, what we were distracted with was an intellectual fencing match by aristocrats. With one arm behind his back, smiley and bright Christian boy scout, John Roberts, fences with the United States Senate... *Tat tat... tat tat tat... tat... tat tat tat tat*. Just don’t disclose anything about who you are or how you think or what you thought or what you wrote (unless they already have a copy) or what you would think, and you’ll be in! Keep your defenses up; when they back you up, come back quickly with a well rehearsed flurry from all the moves you’ve been studying; and all the time put on a smile of confidence, sincerity and good sportsmanship. Create and sustain uncertainty, because they *have to* assume you’ve got the job, since you’re the president’s choice, unless they can force a chink in your shiny armor and expose something that would frighten everyone. Don’t let them do that, and certainly don’t let them draw any blood (which, as gentlemen they all abhor anyway) and by *defallitus praesumptus*⁴⁷ you’ve got the job. You’re greatest asset is your clean looks, sharp swordsmanship, practiced moves, and just flowing with the dance, back and forth, back and forth; look serious, keep smiling, back and forth, back and forth; *tat tat tat*. [Coaching by neo-Republican strategists]

How appalling! What ever happened to grounding yourself in the basics? This man is *prima facie* not qualified for *any* seat on the Supreme Court, let alone the powerful agenda setting seat of Chief justice, for two fundamental reasons:

⁴⁷ Default presumption; meaning they couldn’t find anything.

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1. Lack of experience
2. A life time career as a servant of executive power and the levers of power

First of all, he has what(?); two or three years of *actual* experience as a judge? Oh, but they say, he's a *lawwwyer*. And he has lots of experience at that. And, beyond that he's argued umpteen dozen cases before the Supreme Court, so he already knows how the courtroom process works and where the bathroom is. What else is there?

Well, he's had lots of experience *arguing* a point of view for various clients, typically the ones who hold the most power. Good, he could qualify for the Parry Mason show, or maybe Law and Order. He has a novice level of experience actually applying his *judgment* in a public setting; especially a paucity of difficult cases. And thus, his judgment in difficult cases is virtually unknown and a major uncertainty in this profound selection decision. [Are you listening, senators?] So, the big question we are faced with is how do we deal with the uncertainty?

Uncertainty implies the consideration of at least two things: risk and hazard. These are topics I need to explore a fair amount with you all down the road; but right now let's just look at the basics, because when you do that the decision comes clearly into focus.

Risk is the chance that something can go wrong. Hazard is what happens *if* something does indeed go wrong, meaning the impact and consequences we suffer. So, while the fencing match was cordial and professional and apparently didn't surface any landmines; and no one got even a scratch, let alone a hole poked in them, the assumption then appears to be that there is no reason or "evidence" to presume much risk by voting for approval. Right? Seems like a nice amicable guy who put on all the right appearances to set everyone at ease. All you have to do is buy his story that he will "judge every case by weighing all the facts and applying strict interpretation of the constitution." Hey, no evidence to the contrary, because *there is virtually no demonstrated experience from which to make an evaluation*. So what should the presumption be? He's not being tried for wrong doing, so how is it that the automatic presumption is that, without strong evidence to the contrary, he is qualified for the job? [Strong evidence, of course does exist as I've indicated above.]

So let's come at it this way. Consider the hazard or the potential consequences of presuming the position that he'd be a "fair and balanced" judge, to borrow a corporate logo. On the one side, he may be just that way and surprise us all with well balanced and fair decisions, *sans* ideology. And if he were this way, to deny him this opportunity to serve at the highest judicial level in the land for decades to come would be an error. And the consequences of that error would be the lost opportunity for a good man, he and his family might be sad, George would have to dig up another name, the neo-Republicans would be angry, and the whole process would have to start again.

Now, since *there is virtually no demonstrated experience from which to make an evaluation nor did he provide any answers that would fill in some measure of how he would judge in the absence of any demonstration of such judgment*, what should we assume about the risk and hazard of making the wrong decision?

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Let's put the potential wrong decisions this way:

- a. **Rejecting the right man for the court:** Rejecting a fair and balanced candidate who does not have an ideological agenda
- b. **Putting the wrong man on the court:** Accepting a candidate with an ideological agenda that colors his decisions

Now let's examine things from the perspective of the United States Constitution and the people of the United States of America. Suppose he's not the nice smiley "fair and balanced" boy scout he appears to be. Suppose he is fully in line with the neo-Republican domination and control paradigm. Well, if he would have answered some substantive questions about his views and thinking on particular issues, we might have been able to lower the risk of making a wrong decision of letting such an ideological wolf in sheep's clothing onto the court; but, he didn't so the risk can't be lowered in that way. So, what should we take as our baseline assumption on who this man really is? And which risk is the more serious error — rejecting a good balanced candidate or letting in a poor candidate laden with ideological bias?

In order to take that question on, we have to ask who is at risk and what the potential consequences are. As stated earlier, the impact of rejecting a good candidate goes to the candidate's career, his aspirations, and the disappointment of his family and team. The impact of letting a poor candidate with ideological bias onto the Supreme Court for decades goes to the very principles of our country, the preservation of the constitution as we know it and the people of the United States of America. These are much weightier impacts than the first impact of personal disappointment. So, when you take that fact and add in the fact that he did virtually nothing to alleviate our concern about that risk by openly sharing views and thoughts on potential issues that might come before him, *the presumption must be that he holds such biases and should not be approved*, unless there is overwhelming evidence to the contrary. We must take the safest course for the future of the country, *in absence of overwhelming evidence to the contrary*, not just a snippet here or there. There is no reason to presume he should automatically get the job; and every reason to presume that he shouldn't in the interest of the people of this country. The onus then is on him to demonstrate overwhelming evidence that he doesn't hold such biases and he had the opportunity to do that by being straight forward and candid with honest answers to alleviate these concerns. He did not follow that path.

Let's examine what else we can muster for measures of uncertainty and the risk of putting the wrong man on the Court, since the consequences are indeed ominous. First of all, if he is just a balanced good man with no ideological intent for the Court, then why are George Bush and all the rest of the neo-Republicans so excited about his candidacy for the Court? Certainly they are anything but balanced. Second, why were they so reluctant to share any public documents that might have disclosed more to us about his earlier thinking and argued positions? What did we find out in the questioning about his view on court precedents, the *Stare Decisis* stuff? Well, he gave a good scholarly statement about their pertinence and consideration in future judgments, didn't he? Yet, we know from some of his writings that even given the tip of his hat to *Stare Decisis*, he actually has an intellectual strategy and some well thought out legal theories on how to

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overturn such *Stari Decisis* decision precedents, like the Roe v Wade decision — let's face it, he's a smart cookie. [Risk is getting higher, do you see?] Also, what kind of clients has he served over his career? With the exception of a couple of inoculations he got taking a liberal case or two, like the one as an advocate for gays on a particular issue, the overwhelming majority of his clients (almost all) have been the Executive Branch of the government at the top level and the corporation device. This man has spent his career defending the most significant power structures of the land — not the people! That includes most recently, the current administration on its extrajudicial handling of adversaries, war prisoners and terror suspects, like the tribunals on the Guantanamo prisoners, extrajudicial renditions, and probably several others I don't know about. Where has he stood on treaties, like the Geneva Convention, since treaties are constitutionally the law of the land? Can they be ignored by inventing new names for adversaries, like "enemy combatants?" Didn't he disagree strongly with an earlier Supreme Court decision on the 14th Amendment Equal Protection clause regarding a discriminatory Texas statute about schooling certain classes of children? Didn't he refuse to disclose his views on abortion, end-of-life decisions, and gains made with the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1968 Fair Housing Act? What about the power of the congress to pass acts that protect people or pass legislation to stop a war? Haven't his answers on sex discrimination and right to privacy been unclear, if not misleading?

All of this raises the level of uncertainty and drastically increases the risk of a wrong decision to put this man on the Court. Let's look closer at the potential hazard. Think about the profound level of the Supreme Court of the United States of America! This is the court of last appeals. This is the court that makes profound decisions about the Constitution of the United States of America. This is the court whose weight sets the standards for the separation of powers provided for in the constitution. What are some of the decisions that might come before it and, with what we know, what's the likelihood that Judge Roberts would come down on any other side than that of the neo-Republican ideology he's been associated with all his life.

First there is the ominous most fundament issue about being a human being — who owns your body? Are we spiritual beings in the sense that our soul is something other than our body and manifests itself from the spiritual plane onto the physical plane in a body and then leaves the body at the end of its physical life? That's the way I believe as do countless millions of others, not only in our culture but in a wide diversity of cultures and religions across the planet. We'll this gets into cosmological questions and beliefs, doesn't it? It gets right into how a human being is allowed to relate to the divine and their own sense of God. Right wing fundamentalist Christians don't believe this way; not only that, they invoke a book that charges them to go out and convert everyone on the planet to believe the way they do. Not only that, they believe they are chosen to dominate and control the planet with their beliefs, including everyone on the planet. So, you see, the only sane course that honors all beliefs is to presume that the soul has a right to own its own body and the right to enter into the realm of morality by making its own choices about its body — not someone else's body, whether or not they would make the same choice as them. Right now, the standing decision on abortion is that a woman owns her own body and the right to make her own moral reproductive decisions about it. So, is

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there a risk that Roberts would work to take that away and impose his own beliefs on her soul and take control of her body? Well, of course direct questions as such have been dodged, so all we can go on is past information and that is quite scary. Now that's fine if the only person involved is himself, but as a Supreme Court justice any view to the contrary is consistent with the entire neo-Republican paradigm of domination and control — in this case domination and control over everyone else's body as well as their own.

One senator brought up the frightening, if absurd, notion that one day, a neo-Republican government, under the assumed right to dominate and control, might decide that they have the right to take control of someone's body who hasn't done anything wrong and run it through a brain scanner to see if there is any evidence of criminal intent. You know, like that movie with Tom Cruise in it; I can't think of the title at the moment. Yet, Roberts has indicated that beyond the specific statements in a few amendments, there is no fundamental constitutional right to privacy. So what's to prevent these things from happening in our free country, except reasoned judgment from a seasoned sage, which Roberts is not?

Finally, although there are so many places to press these risk/hazard issues, let's consider a case that is bound to rise to the Court someday regarding the corporation device-as person façade with all of the ramifications I discussed above. Roberts spent most of his legal life arguing on behalf of the corporation device, presumably against the government, other corporations or against people. What do we have to go on, but his previous record, to decide the risk and impact of putting him on the court and having him hand the constitution wholesale over to the corporation device?

Lastly, what does it mean to be *Chief Justice*? How is it that this neo-Republican administration can get away with selecting the youngest most inexperienced judge ever for the highest jurisprudence position in the land? Two or three years experience judging!?! It is an outrage that the man is even being considered for the Court, let alone its highest position. Shouldn't the Chief Justice be the most experienced and seasoned sage we can find, with a lengthy demonstrated record of reasoned and balanced decisions that underscore core principles upon which our society is based, and have demonstrated that at a very high level, if not *as a Supreme Court Justice* before becoming its Chief?

I don't care whether you are a neo-Republican, an old paradigm fiscal conservative Republican, a Democrat or Independent or some other party; this vote is a vote that can tear this country apart. It will either ensure the gains society has made to this point and protect our country, or it will be a highly risky vote that tosses it all to the neo-Republican wind that happens to be in power and suffer the severity of the consequences should the risk just happen to go the wrong way and on any decision of importance or on the course of the Court's agenda. If you care about your country, this is the moment for prudence.

This man has been primarily a servant of power structures, and has not represented people in issues regarding those power structures, so our baseline assumption must be that he will come down on the side of the neo-Republican paradigm of domination and control that he has supported his entire career. The neo-Republicans have been toying with the Senate panel with their cat-and-mouse games, trying not to disclose anything, and panel members simply fall in line and play their games. But, if you go to basic

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principles that we use in all other sectors of society, like a person's experience, for such risky decisions you can easily justify a NO vote on this man.

If you care about this country and its core freedoms and principles, and *all of the people* in it, more than you care about taking it over for the sake of a few of you who wish to dominate and control this country and its people for the foreseeable future because you happen to be in power, you have to vote NO on Judge John Roberts, as well as any other candidate who falls along the same lines. It really is within your power if you have the courage to stand up and use it, to force George Bush to bring forth candidates that are worthy of solid support from the country.

I'm sure John Roberts will have a fine career outside the Court, but the future of the country cannot afford the potential consequences of assuming any level of risk to have him on this Court, let alone as the head of it. The one thing you can be sure of is that he will protect the current power structure and its lever, the corporation device in any equivocal judgment he's involved with. He is untested, unknown, with a demonstrated record of just that. He flippantly answers that "if the constitution says the little guy (people) should win, then he'll win, but if it says the big guy (corporation device) should win, then the big guy will win." But, the constitution doesn't talk about big guys and little guys, and he has refused to indicate how he will interpret the constitution. The constitution talks of people, not corporations. Yet his record is that he has repeatedly argued against the little guy and, if appointed, the constitution may no longer hear the cries for justice from the most vulnerable, nor protect individual rights and liberties.

Red, Purple and Blue

Red: This is the color of the barely winning, power grabbing, neo-Republicans who do so much destruction with that power. This is the color of violence, death, blood money and domination and control by any means. Their imperial focus is concentrated control of everything through the ownership of capital, with the illusion of fairness for everyone to own a little something yet decision making power being distributed according to wealth, which they then label "freedom" and "democracy." Red is the color of the party that is perpetrating the grand theft of America, its dreams, its hopes, its future and co-opting it all for the few. This is the color of the party that has gutted the integrity of our country. This is the party of global ecological and social instability.

Blue: This is the color the well-meaning Democrats, whose party has no oxygen; the reluctant participant in the domination and control paradigm that merely tries to rein in its excesses. To fight this Red monstrosity that is rapidly completing the theft of America, the Democrats gave us the "better Bush" candidate — the tough war hero who couldn't defeat the phony bottom recruit military slacker, who later in life became the war profiteer at the expense of the lives of real American soldiers. Blue is the color of the party that chose to spend its resources doing legal challenges in an affront to real-choice democracy by keeping any other viable candidate off the ballot, and hence reaped its own karma for the effort. This is the party that can't find its soul; the party of women candidates who think they have to find some balls in order to go after the hopeless bubba

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vote and placate the fears of the ignorant; the party of “middle Bush” leaders who think the answer is bravado with compassion.

The biggest problem with Democrats is that you can't count on them to show up when their country needs them — from seasoned Senators like Russ Feingold, who in frustration can't find any reason not to vote against an unqualified ideologue for Chief Justice, to seasoned Senators who shirked their constitutional responsibilities to decide if and when the United States goes to war by having *a reason to vote to declare war*. And as a lot, they handed cart blanc to the neo-Republican paradigm of domination and control and the horrible quagmire, destruction, suffering and death it has brought upon the planet. Even after the fact, Senator Kerry in his campaign based on better administration of the war, stated he still would have voted for the power to go to war because it's what he would have wanted as president. I don't want *any* president to assume the powers that constitutionally belong to the legislative branch of government *for the very reason we are now living with*.

That said, we need the Democrats to really step up their game now because they are the only source of power we have to wrestle power away from this Red monstrosity before it truly does do irreversible damage to our country and planet that will surely come from the path we are on. Until the country gets another chance to find itself and reclaim our future, we need *real* Republicans to step forward who care about their country more than they care about pumping the neo-Republican paradigm of domination and control. We need Republicans who have the courage to find their conscience and step out from the pack of neo-Republican sheep and demonstrate the courage to show up for their country and counter the monstrosity that has consumed them.

But the long term sustainable future of America will not be secured with the color Red or the color Blue. They are two sides of the same coin and America needs something other than the continual flip of the same coin. Nor will it come by trying to stand the coin on its edge to find some blended **Purple in the middle**. The future of this country needs something other than the same game we've been playing for decades. What is needed is to quit flipping the coin.

Green

Green: This is the color of a new paradigm that focuses on the healing and well-being of life on this planet. **Green** is the color of awakened consciousness, truth and understanding that cut through ignorance and fear. **Green** is the color of integrity, respect and justice that quell the sources of hatred, violence, death and destruction. **Green** is the color of earth-based community that is founded on mutual respect, relationship and partnership with each other and with the earth. **Green** is the color of true spirit that will nourish and sustain life on our mother earth in harmony and balance as life ever cycles while time goes on. ☺

Hurricane Katrina - Our Experiences

by Larry Bradshaw & Lorrie Beth Slonsky

Emergency medical service workers and retired paramedics from the San Francisco Fire Department who were attending an EMS conference in New Orleans when Hurricane Katrina hit. [To listen to Lorrie Beth tell their story, go to DemocracyNow.org, 9/16/05]

September 9, 2005

Two days after Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans, the Walgreen's store at the corner of Royal and Iberville streets remained locked. The dairy display case was clearly visible through the windows. It was now 48 hours without electricity, running water, or plumbing. The milk, yogurt, and cheeses were beginning to spoil in the 90-degree heat. The owners and managers had locked up the food, water, pampers, and prescriptions and fled the City. Outside Walgreen's windows, residents and tourists grew increasingly thirsty and hungry.

The much-promised federal, state and local aid never materialized and the windows at Walgreen's gave way to the looters. There was an alternative. The cops could have broken one small window and distributed the nuts, fruit juices, and bottle water in an organized and systematic manner. But they did not. Instead they spent hours playing cat and mouse, temporarily chasing away the looters.

We were finally airlifted out of New Orleans two days ago and arrived home yesterday (Saturday). We have yet to see any of the TV coverage or look at a newspaper. We are willing to guess that there were no video images or front-page pictures of European or affluent white tourists looting the Walgreen's in the French Quarter.

We also suspect the media will have been inundated with "hero" images of the National Guard, the troops and the police struggling to help the "victims" of the Hurricane. What you will not see, but what we witnessed, were the real heroes and sheroes of the hurricane relief effort: the working class of New Orleans; the maintenance workers who used a fork lift to carry the sick and disabled; the engineers, who rigged, nurtured and kept the generators running; the electricians who improvised thick extension cords stretching over blocks to share the little electricity we had in order to free cars stuck on rooftop parking lots; nurses who took over for mechanical ventilators and spent many hours on end manually forcing air into the lungs of unconscious patients to keep them alive; doormen who rescued folks stuck in elevators.

Refinery workers who broke into boat yards, "stealing" boats to rescue people clinging to their roofs in flood waters. Mechanics who helped hot-wire any car that could be found to ferry people out of the City. And the food service workers who scoured the commercial kitchens improvising communal meals for hundreds of those stranded. Most of these workers had lost their homes, and had not heard from members of their families, yet they stayed and provided the only infrastructure for the 20% of New Orleans that was not under water.

On Day 2, there were approximately 500 of us left in the hotels in the French Quarter. We were a mix of foreign tourists, conference attendees like ourselves, and locals who had checked into hotels for safety and shelter from Katrina. Some of us had cell phone contact with family and friends outside of New Orleans. We were repeatedly told that all sorts of resources including the National Guard and scores of buses were pouring in to

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the City. The buses and the other resources must have been invisible because none of us had seen them.

We decided we had to save ourselves. So we pooled our money and came up with \$25,000 to have ten buses come and take us out of the City. Those who did not have the requisite \$45.00 for a ticket were subsidized by those who did have extra money. We waited for 48 hours for the buses, spending the last 12 hours standing outside, sharing the limited water, food, and clothes we had. We created a priority boarding area for the sick, elderly and new born babies. We waited late into the night for the "imminent" arrival of the buses. The buses never arrived. We later learned that the minute they arrived at the City limits, they were commandeered by the military.

By day 4 our hotels had run out of fuel and water. Sanitation was dangerously abysmal. As the desperation and despair increased, street crime as well as water levels began to rise. The hotels turned us out and locked their doors, telling us that the "officials" told us to report to the convention center to wait for more buses. As we entered the center of the City, we finally encountered the National Guard. The Guards told us we would not be allowed into the Superdome as the City's primary shelter had descended into a humanitarian and health hellhole. The guards further told us that the City's only other shelter, the Convention Center, was also descending into chaos and squalor and that the police were not allowing anyone else in. Quite naturally, we asked, "If we can't go to the only 2 shelters in the City, what was our alternative?" The guards told us that that was our problem, and no they did not have extra water to give to us. This would be the start of our numerous encounters with callous and hostile "law enforcement".

We walked to the police command center at Harrah's on Canal Street and were told the same thing, that we were on our own, and no they did not have water to give us. We now numbered several hundred. We held a mass meeting to decide a course of action. We agreed to camp outside the police command post. We would be plainly visible to the media and would constitute a highly visible embarrassment to the City officials. The police told us that we could not stay. Regardless, we began to settle in and set up camp. In short order, the police commander came across the street to address our group. He told us he had a solution: we should walk to the Pontchartrain Expressway and cross the greater New Orleans Bridge where the police had buses lined up to take us out of the City. The crowd cheered and began to move. We called everyone back and explained to the commander that there had been lots of misinformation and wrong information and was he sure that there were buses waiting for us. The commander turned to the crowd and stated emphatically, "I swear to you that the buses are there."

We organized ourselves and the 200 of us set off for the bridge with great excitement and hope. As we marched past the convention center, many locals saw our determined and optimistic group and asked where we were headed. We told them about the great news. Families immediately grabbed their few belongings and quickly our numbers doubled and then doubled again. Babies in strollers now joined us, people using crutches, elderly clasping walkers and others people in wheelchairs. We marched the 2-3 miles to the freeway and up the steep incline to the Bridge. It now began to pour down rain, but it did not dampen our enthusiasm.

As we approached the bridge, armed Gretna sheriffs formed a line across the foot of the bridge. Before we were close enough to speak, they began firing their weapons over our

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heads. This sent the crowd fleeing in various directions. As the crowd scattered and dissipated, a few of us inched forward and managed to engage some of the sheriffs in conversation. We told them of our conversation with the police commander and of the commander's assurances. The sheriffs informed us there were no buses waiting. The commander had lied to us to get us to move.

We questioned why we couldn't cross the bridge anyway, especially as there was little traffic on the 6-lane highway. They responded that the West Bank was not going to become New Orleans and there would be no Superdomes in their City. These were code words for if you are poor and black, you are not crossing the Mississippi River and you were not getting out of New Orleans.

Our small group retreated back down Highway 90 to seek shelter from the rain under an overpass. We debated our options and in the end decided to build an encampment in the middle of the Ponchartrain Expressway on the center divide, between the O'Keefe and Tchoupitoulas exits. We reasoned we would be visible to everyone, we would have some security being on an elevated freeway and we could wait and watch for the arrival of the yet to be seen buses.

All day long, we saw other families, individuals and groups make the same trip up the incline in an attempt to cross the bridge, only to be turned away. Some chased away with gunfire, others simply told no, others to be verbally berated and humiliated. Thousands of New Orleaners were prevented and prohibited from self-evacuating the City on foot.

Meanwhile, the only two City shelters sank further into squalor and disrepair. The only way across the bridge was by vehicle. We saw workers stealing trucks, buses, moving vans, semi-trucks and any car that could be hotwired. All were packed with people trying to escape the misery New Orleans had become.

Our little encampment began to blossom. Someone stole a water delivery truck and brought it up to us. Let's hear it for looting! A mile or so down the freeway, an army truck lost a couple of pallets of C-rations on a tight turn. We ferried the food back to our camp in shopping carts. Now secure with the two necessities, food and water; cooperation, community, and creativity flowered. We organized a clean up and hung garbage bags from the rebar poles. We made beds from wood pallets and cardboard. We designated a storm drain as the bathroom and the kids built an elaborate enclosure for privacy out of plastic, broken umbrellas, and other scraps. We even organized a food recycling system where individuals could swap out parts of C-rations (applesauce for babies and candies for kids!).

This was a process we saw repeatedly in the aftermath of Katrina. When individuals had to fight to find food or water, it meant looking out for yourself only. You had to do whatever it took to find water for your kids or food for your parents. When these basic needs were met, people began to look out for each other, working together and constructing a community.

If the relief organizations had saturated the City with food and water in the first 2 or 3 days, the desperation, the frustration and the ugliness would not have set in. Flush with the necessities, we offered food and water to passing families and individuals. Many decided to stay and join us. Our encampment grew to 80 or 90 people. From a woman with a battery powered radio we learned that the media was talking about us. Up in full

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view on the freeway, every relief and news organizations saw us on their way into the City. Officials were being asked what they were going to do about all those families living up on the freeway? The officials responded they were going to take care of us. Some of us got a sinking feeling. "Taking care of us" had an ominous tone to it.

Unfortunately, our sinking feeling (along with the sinking City) was correct. Just as dusk set in, a Gretna Sheriff showed up, jumped out of his patrol vehicle, aimed his gun at our faces, screaming, "Get off the fucking freeway". A helicopter arrived and used the wind from its blades to blow away our flimsy structures. As we retreated, the sheriff loaded up his truck with our food and water. Once again, at gunpoint, we were forced off the freeway. All the law enforcement agencies appeared threatened when we congregated or congealed into groups of 20 or more. In every congregation of "victims" they saw "mob" or "riot". We felt safety in numbers. Our "we must stay together" was impossible because the agencies would force us into small atomized groups.

In the pandemonium of having our camp raided and destroyed, we scattered once again. Reduced to a small group of 8 people, in the dark, we sought refuge in an abandoned school bus, under the freeway on Cilo Street. We were hiding from possible criminal elements but equally and definitely, we were hiding from the police and sheriffs with their martial law, curfew and shoot-to-kill policies.

The next day, our group of 8 walked most of the day, made contact with New Orleans Fire Department and were eventually airlifted out by an urban search and rescue team. We were dropped off near the airport and managed to catch a ride with the National Guard. The two young guardsmen apologized for the limited response of the Louisiana guards. They explained that a large section of their unit was in Iraq and that meant they were shorthanded and were unable to complete all the tasks they were assigned.

We arrived at the airport on the day a massive airlift had begun. The airport had become another Superdome. We 8 were caught in a press of humanity as flights were delayed for several hours while George Bush landed briefly at the airport for a photo op. After being evacuated on a coast guard cargo plane, we arrived in San Antonio, Texas.

There the humiliation and dehumanization of the official relief effort continued. We were placed on buses and driven to a large field where we forced to sit for hours and hours. Some of the buses did not have air-conditioners. In the dark, hundreds of us were forced to share two filthy overflowing porta-potties. Those who managed to make it out with any possessions (often a few belongings in tattered plastic bags) we were subjected to two different dog-sniffing searches.

Most of us had not eaten all day because our C-rations had been confiscated at the airport because the rations set off the metal detectors. Yet, no food had been provided to the men, women, children, elderly, disabled as they sat for hours waiting to be "medically screened" to make sure we were not carrying any communicable diseases.

This official treatment was in sharp contrast to the warm, heart-felt reception given to us by the ordinary Texans. We saw one airline worker give her shoes to someone who was barefoot. Strangers on the street offered us money and toiletries with words of welcome. Throughout, the official relief effort was callous, inept, and racist. There was more suffering than need be. Lives were lost that did not need to be lost. ☹