

# Countering Despair in America: Social Progress by Instructive “Presidential Caricatures” of “What’s Wrong”...

Opportunities to transform Social Suffering into Social Beauty

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Global Research, October 28, 2016

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#), [History](#),  
[US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [U.S. Elections](#)

*This essay is intended to counter the despair generated by the American presidential campaign (and the associated global chaos and wars) with a positive, constructive reaction to what is occurring. I want to try to explain why the current state of affairs, as depressing and frightening as it may seem, represents a tremendous opportunity to accelerate Social Progress and create unprecedented Social Beauty (the foundation of which is creation of collaborative, independent, national Public Economies).*

Exemplary of the despair and fear is an email message I recently received from a patient who lives in Eastern Europe:

“I hope that your president (whether Clinton or Trump) will do not much harm to our planet and its people.”

She is scared, worried, and depressed by the American presidential campaign and what is happening in the world as a whole. She feels anger and frustration—particularly when considering how difficult it is to make sense out of what is happening, and how little control she feels over what seems so out of control and so difficult to remedy.



As with this patient, the current U.S. presidential campaign, and the associated chaos and wars going on in so many countries of the world, have left most Americans and most aware global citizens similarly frightened, worried, depressed, angry, frustrated, confused, and despondent—and I am talking about people other than those in the Middle East, north Africa, and elsewhere who have directly suffered (killed, maimed, or displaced) from the chaos and war. The indecency (past and present) of both Trump<sup>1</sup> and Clinton<sup>2</sup>, the lies both have told, the fears and hatred each has stirred, the beguiling confusion each has created, the depth and breadth of their mis-education, and their failure to present adequate solutions, have left people feeling frightened, hopeless and helpless, and have caused people to even question their own decency and their own ability to make sense out of life.

People feel belittled, betrayed, and bewildered. Furthering the frustration and depression, has been the absence of a clear vision of how Social Suffering could be transformed into Social Beauty. Most seem to have accepted the depressing (but untrue) notion that such transformation is impossible.

This essay is intended to remind readers that just because Trump and Clinton have exhibited so much sleaze and indecency does not mean that we, too, are indecent and sleazy. Their hateful behavior need not make us hate ourselves, or others, and need not undermine confidence in our own goodness and our own ability to bring remedy to social Suffering. Just because they have exhibited the worst aspects of Human Nature, does not mean that Human Nature is bad.

Human Nature is comprised of capacity for both good and bad—and we can create opportunities that give practice to Human capacity for goodness, allowing it to prevail. Just because Trump and Clinton seem likely to exacerbate, rather than resolve current national and global crises, does not mean that we cannot find just and kind solution. In fact, the

theme of this essay is that both Trump and Clinton, precisely because they represent such horrible Caricatures of What's Wrong, are providing us with a tremendous opportunity to transform Social Suffering into Social Beauty. We can seize that opportunity

But, before going further, please consider the following historical analogy, regarding how "Instructive Caricatures of What's Wrong" have accelerated Social Progress in the past:

✘ One could argue that the three people who did the most to accelerate Civil Rights advances during the 1960s were Martin Luther King (of course), George Wallace, and Lester Maddox (the racist governors of Alabama and Georgia, respectively, who insisted on blocking little black girls from attending "whites only" schools)—Dr. King, because of his exemplary social conscience, social philosophy, and leadership; Wallace and Maddox because they represented highly Instructive Caricatures of What's Wrong.

Wallace and Maddox were gross caricatures of horrible racism. Their racism was so blatant and so obvious, that segregation, which had been continually and successfully defended and accepted by politicians for decades, very quickly became obviously indefensible and "socially unacceptable," once the behaviors of Wallace and Maddox were witnessed on television. Lynching, which had occurred frequently for decades, also suddenly stopped (or at least became rare, at least in the literal sense), because Wallace and Maddox had so effectively exposed how awful and obviously unacceptable it was. The racist attitudes and actions caricatured by Wallace and Maddox were very instructive. Thanks to them, attitudes and actions that had been socially defended and tolerated for decades, suddenly became "socially unacceptable." Little progress in Civil Rights had been made, for decades, until Wallace and Maddox became Instructive Caricatures of What's Wrong. Their behavior helped Dr. King to drive home his message

Fast forwarding to Trump, Clinton, and the current global crises:

The good news is that because both Trump and Clinton, in their own different ways, represent such gross Caricatures of What is Wrong with American thinking and behavior<sup>1,2, 3</sup>, their caricatures will be more instructive (to all of the world's people) than would more bland and masked representatives of American exceptionalism, mis-education, and mis-behavior (e.g. Obama). Grotesque caricatures (if we can survive them, and we will!) raise social consciousness and social understanding faster and more accurately than do bland, gentler, masked representatives of the status quo. So, the good news is that either one (Trump or Clinton) will make it more obvious than ever before "what's wrong" and what we can do to fix it.



There is a medical analogy here: How have physicians learned about normal human physiology and how beautifully it works?

Much of that learning has occurred (or at least been reinforced or confirmed) by studying diseases.

Diseases, particularly extreme versions of diseases, are “instructive caricatures” of things gone wrong. By studying those diseases, we can figure out how human physiology works normally and optimally (and most beautifully). Often, the most severe versions of disease (the greatest caricatures of what’s wrong) teach us more quickly and definitively than do subtle versions of disease (some of which even go unrecognized, undiagnosed, and unaddressed). Similarly, Trumps and Clintons provide better learning opportunities than do “kinder, gentler” (but just as harmful) versions of mis-education and misbehavior (like Obama)—and, thereby, advance knowledge, understanding, and Social Progress more quickly.

Physicians are physicians because they deeply care about learning from and treating diseases. They don’t ignore, deny, or run away from disease; they run towards disease and eagerly embrace the challenges of diagnosing, finding cause, and creating remedy. They view presence of disease as opportunities to make things better, not as depressing experiences to avoid.

Likewise, it would be good if all people cared deeply to understand and treat caricatures like Trump, Clinton, and current US foreign policy—to figure out what is wrong and determine how societies could work and think optimally and most beautifully, individually and together; i.e. determine how to transform Social Suffering and diseased thinking into Social Beauty. Trump<sup>1</sup> and Clinton<sup>2</sup>, and the USA itself<sup>3</sup>, all caricatures of diseased thinking and diseased social behavior, have been giving us that opportunity. Unwittingly, Trump, Clinton, and the USA, because they are caricatures of American mis-education and misbehavior, have, in fact, presented an unprecedented opportunity for us to advance Social Progress and create Social Beauty. If we take advantage of this opportunity, the world can become a much better place, even rapidly so. If we ignore this opportunity, if we run away from this chance

to diagnose social illness, seek its causes, and create remedy—then, disease will worsen and the world’s people and the earth itself will succumb—either quickly (via nuclear disaster), or more slowly (via neglect).

The most positive and helpful response, therefore, to Trump, Clinton, and current USA foreign policy, is not to allow ourselves to become depressed and despondent, not to run from these problems; but, rather, for all of us to become enthusiastic Social Clinicians—committed to bringing the nation’s and the world’s problems before the Social Clinic, where Social Suffering can be rigorously examined, diagnosed, understood, and treated; where work can be done to create Social Beauty. The positive response to Trump, Clinton, and the USA is to view them for what they are—Instructive Caricatures of What’s Wrong—that teach us, give us new clarity, and give us new opportunity to make things better, to create Social Beauty and Social Justice, to reverse the Social Suffering of so many of the world’s people. In that sense, this is an exciting time, not a time for fear, despondency, self-doubt, resignation, and acceptance of the status quo.

It is difficult to know who will be granted the Presidency. We will be able to survive either one—but, only if we recognize these caricatures for what they are and use their caricatured mis-education and misbehavior as “teaching moments” to facilitate and expedite true social learning and Social Progress, and only if we rigorously evaluate and challenge their policies and actions every step of the way, always holding them accountable. In that sense, they both represent a better “teaching opportunity” than has Obama and those before him.

So, don’t let Trump and Clinton demoralize you, undermine your sense of self-worth, and snuff out your hopes for Humanity and Mother Earth. Recognize them as Instructive Caricatures of What’s Wrong—caricatures who can serve to accelerate Social Progress. Yes, both are dangerous, in their own different ways, as well as in similar ways. But, don’t be overly frightened. All diseases are dangerous and strike some fear. But, don’t run away from disease. Those who are suffering the most need you to run towards it. With knowledge, discipline, focus, practice, hard work, deep empathy, high spirit, resolve, and appropriately bold risk-taking—diseases can be conquered. Physicians have demonstrated that. Similarly, all of us can become Social Clinicians, participate in the Social Clinic, and contribute to the transformation of Social Suffering into Social Beauty. That Transformation will likely require creation of collaborative, independent, national Public Economies, starting with thorough public discussion of this notion—but, further specific discussion of how to work towards creation of Social Beauty is a subject for a subsequent essay.

1,2,,3 - Both Trump and Clinton represent horribly flawed candidates—each in different ways, neither being fit for public office.

1) Trump appears to be an arrogant, egotistical, narcissistic, undisciplined, impulsive, crude, predatory merchant who also appears to be a sexual predator, a racist, a pathological liar, and prone to fascist behaviors. He is either ignorant or ignorant (or both) of national and world history—particularly of our nation’s long and continued history of exploiting and abusing people all over the world.<sup>3</sup> His views on human rights, civil rights, women’s rights, health care, guns, economics, immigration, and climate change reflect gross mis-education, at best. He threatens to reverse social progress and dangerously increase social unrest, hatred, and incivility within the USA. He is a clear and present danger to American society, particularly to minorities.

His views and actions are full of contradictions. The only good things about Trump (if we can

trust any of the following) are that he is not afraid to speak truth to power, he is not afraid to shake things up, he is willing to expose much of what is wrong with the current Establishment, he has awakened an apathetic American public, he dares to state that getting along with Russia could be a good thing, he questions why the USA is supporting ISIS and other terrorist groups in Syria, he has been critical of the wars in Iraq, Libya, and Syria, and he questions the money we spend on NATO. There is also a possibility (though this cannot be trusted) that he actually has a big heart, truly cares about suffering people, and that most of his misbehavior and mis-guided thinking is due to mis-education and mis-culture, rather than absence of compassion or intelligence. Trump has presented himself as the populist, anti-establishment candidate who threatens to up-end the status quo. But, because he is so untrustworthy, it is difficult to know whether his anti-establishment rhetoric is a true reflection of what he believes and plans; or whether his rhetoric is all a ploy, with plans (once in power) to execute the Establishment's plans exactly as the Establishment tells and rewards him to execute them, and with greater force than we have seen them executed to date.

2) Clinton is particularly disturbing because of her foreign policy decisions and actions: She orchestrated the brutal murder of Gaddafi and the total destruction of Libya, both of which were unwarranted, unnecessary, unwise, and grossly illegal. Predictably, Libya became a failed state, over-run by ruthless terrorists—and she laughed about this accomplishment afterwards, in public (“We came, we saw, he died—ha, ha, ha”). She similarly orchestrated a brutal regime change in Ukraine, deliberately placing fascist thugs in power, who then carried out a reign of terror on the Russian population of Ukraine and Crimea—then, she falsely blamed all of the carnage on “Russian invasion of Ukraine and Crimea.” Despite knowing full well that Saudia Arabia and Qatar were financing and arming ISIS, she and Obama continued to ship huge amounts of arms and money to these countries, knowing that it was ending up in the hands of ISIS and similar terrorist groups.

She also orchestrated regime change in Honduras, ousting the democratically elected President Zelaya, replacing him with a brutal regime whose death squads murdered Berta Caceres, (right) a principled indigenous environmental activist who was on a hitlist distributed to US-trained “special forces units.” Berta was trying to protect the Aguan River from the ravages of US-supported (and Clinton-supported) corporate mining and hydroelectric projects. And, during her husband's Presidency, she, Bill, and her friend, Madeleine Albright, imposed economic sanctions on Iraq that resulted in the deaths of 500,000 people, many of them innocent women and children—a sacrifice that Ms. Albright concluded “was worth it.” (To whom was it worth it, Mrs. Albright, and who were you to decide?) The Clintons' “humanitarian efforts” in Rwanda and Yugoslavia, which they and Samantha Power justified by their “Responsibility to Protect” doctrine, were anything but humanitarian. There is more, but we will stop here.



Like Trump, Clinton is either ignorant or ignorant (probably more the latter) of national and global history. Despite her shameless claims to the contrary, she is willingly beholden to Wall Street/Big Finance. She appears to be committed to ruthlessly doing whatever is necessary to achieve the neo-conservative/neo-liberal goal of a uni-polar world totally dominated by Transnational Corporations (even killing thousands of innocent women and children, if necessary, as Mrs. Albright's policies did in Iraq and Obama's policies are now doing in Syria and Yemen). Guided by her gross mis-education and quest for power and wealth, she has dangerously and erroneously demonized Putin and Russia—e.g. irresponsibly calling Putin "a Hitler."

If she becomes President, there is high risk that she will take the world to the brink of World War III, if not over the brink. She is a carefully disciplined fraud, a pathological liar, a disingenuous empathizer, and a heartless war criminal. She is a clear and present danger to world peace. The only good thing about Clinton is that, compared to Trump, she would do more for the human rights, women's rights, minority rights, and health care rights of Americans (not globally)—not because she has genuine compassion, but because she realizes that it is "good politics" to do so. She would be more effective (than Trump) at saving American Capitalism, thereby delaying its collapse and temporarily propping up the American economy (but this is a negative, in my opinion). Clinton is the pro-Establishment candidate, who will seek to maintain the status quo and will do so with greater force and zeal than has Obama, whose main contribution has been a pathetic modicum of self-serving restraint.

3) Sadly, Trump and Clinton are not alone in their mis-education and mis-behavior. All of the American Presidents, since at least 1900, have caused great harm to the world's people and great damage to the earth itself. The most racist, arrogant, fascist, ignorant, ignorant, and dangerous notion of all is the American belief that the USA is "the exceptional and indispensable nation;" and that the USA's wealth has primarily been due to unique American industriousness, ingenuity, competence, and the goodness of our foreign policy. Nothing could be farther from the truth!!

America's exceptional wealth and power has primarily been due to more than a century of exceptionally brutal global exploitation of the world's people and resources—to the great harm of both. Yes, there have been some "trickle down" benefits to many, in terms of an increase in material "standard of living." But, even those improvements in material well-being (including all of the scientific and technological advances generated by the USA) could have been achieved and distributed (even faster and better) by other countries, other peoples, and other economic and social models, if only they had been given a chance.

Not only have other countries and peoples not been given a proper chance to create their

own existences, they have been deliberately sabotaged by American orchestrated chaos and war (e.g. Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya, Ukraine, Syria, Yemen, north African countries, most of central America, and most of South America to name just a few recent examples). The chaos and wars have been deliberately designed to prevent other peoples, countries, and social systems from successfully competing with American supremacy (which pretty much amounts to White Supremacy). The USA has not just built itself up; it has deliberately torn other people down and kept them from rising, so that no one else has a chance to threaten the USA's insistence on its supremacy and its economic model. Such a strategy is not only shameful and racist, it is enormously cowardly.

Even Obama believes in "American exceptionalism" and, astonishingly, believes Hillary Clinton is the "best prepared and most competent presidential candidate during our lifetime." These comments reflect profound mis-education, at best.

The fact is that the USA (its corporate and government leadership) is very far from exceptional, very far from indispensable, and has not been a force for good. Clinton claims that "America is great because it is good." I will agree that most American people, like the vast majority of the world's people, are good. But, history clearly reveals that the USA is powerful and wealthy, not because of altruism and goodness, but because of its rulers' ruthless greed and heartless exploitation of the billions of "unpeople" living in the rest of the world. The world will be a better place, if the USA is put in its proper place and is held accountable (for once). If any country deserves to have economic sanctions placed on it, it is the USA.

If any leaders deserve to be brought before a world court for crimes against Humanity, it is the leaders of the USA. If any country should have its armed forces stripped to a minimum (for defense only), it is the USA. If any country should be disallowed from having military bases outside of their own country, it is the USA. A Trump or Clinton Presidency, because they are such caricatures of wrong-thinking, mis-education, and mis-behavior, will make this much more obvious than has the Obama presidency. Frankly, a Trump presidency would be more instructive/educational than a Clinton presidency (because she is more disciplined in hiding her true nature and the true nature of American thinking and plans for Supremacy). Yes, Trump would be risky, but Clinton is just as risky—they are just risky in different ways. Trump clearly poses a greater risk domestically (within the U.S.), but Clinton probably poses a greater risk globally.

Clinton will probably "win" the election. But, a surprise Trump victory is possible—not because more than a third of the electorate supports his attitudes and policies, but because many caring and wise people are absolutely fed up with the hypocrisy and lies associated with Clinton and the dangerous foreign policies of American Exceptionalism that she shamelessly promotes. I might not vote—because I think an embarrassingly low turn-out of eligible voters would make the most effective statement, and because I refuse to give my consent to a Trump or Clinton presidency. I refuse to be an accomplice to their crimes, policies, and sleaze. Furthermore, as awful as both are, I believe that we have the capacity to control either one. If we care enough, we will be able to prevent either from creating the disasters they threaten to create. However, if it looks as though an embarrassingly low turn-out is not going to happen (because the American public has been successfully tricked and frightened into flocking to vote for the "lesser of two evils"), I will vote for Jill Stein, whose policies and attitudes seem the most wise and the most kind—by far.

We will be able to survive either candidate (Trump or Clinton)—but, only if we know our



history and use their caricatured mis-education as “teaching moments” to facilitate and expedite true social learning and Social Progress; only if we rigorously evaluate and challenge their policies and actions and insist on holding them accountable; and only if we believe in our capacity to develop and discuss alternative plans for creation of Social Beauty. Mass re-education will be necessary. The focus of mass public discussion will need to be ideas such as creation of collaborative, independent, national Public Economies. Creation of Social Beauty will depend on such discussions.



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