

Drowning In The "Mainstream"—Hearing Voices Of Hope In The Wilderness



by Niánn Emerson Chase

to shoot some scenes for a film in the making, *The Hangover III*. Understandably people who live in the area (from both sides of the border) were very excited about all of this, especially the financial rewards that could be reaped in this economically depressed area. And of course, many wanted to grab sight of some of the more well-known actors in this movie, like Bradley Cooper. When I asked, "Who is Bradley Cooper?" I got, "What?! You don't know who Bradley Cooper is?"

When I share with someone about what I heard Thom Hartmann say on his television program on Free Speech TV or read in one of his books, I usually get "Who is Thom Hartmann?" and I answer, "What?! You don't know who Thom Hartmann is?"

Among the U.S. population, most people know who many Hollywood actors are and all kinds of personal details about them, but only a small percentage of the population is even aware of the existence of individuals like Thom Hartmann, who are also on television, radio, and other media formats, though they are less mainstream, are often non-profit or "public," and

are definitely alternative. Like Hollywood stars, people like Mr. Hartmann have a following—though much smaller—who pay attention to his programs and books. The difference between him and most Hollywood stars is that Thom Hartmann is not "mainstream" in his viewpoints of the world's situation and the route to a more sustainable future for all.

Mr. Hartmann is not like most other television commentators and political pundits, though he is considered an "entrepreneur" alongside many mainstream money-makers who have a totally different world view than his. He has been labeled "progressive" and rated in 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011 among the top ten "most important talk show hosts in America," with the other nine being "conservatives" and very mainstream.¹ But the millions who "follow" the other mainstream media guys are far more in number than those who pay attention to Thom Hartmann. And that, I think, is really sad.

The entertainment industry of Hollywood and sports venues—with all of its advertising that encourages unsustainable consumption—perpetuate the status-quo consciousness of materialism and selfish pursuit of instant gratification, with very little consideration for future generations and their lot on this problem-plagued earth.

There are few Hollywood films that encourage deeper, more compassionate, out-of-the-box thinking that might lead to more creative and intelligent solutions to the political, societal, and environmental problems that threaten to end all of life on this planet.

I find it appropriately fitting that a film like *The Hangover III*—which promotes childish and irresponsible pleasure-pursing that results in poor health, exploitation of others, and a continuation of the "ugly American" syndrome—is set in a Mexican town bordering the United States, in an area whose peoples have, for centuries, suffered the impact of European and American colonialism and, today, neocolonialism.

Every year in the United States, Columbus Day is officially celebrated as a holiday in October. Indigenous and other people in the borderlands area of Ambos Nogales, in Arizona and Sonora (Mexico), do not celebrate Columbus Day in the way that most Americans do, for they recognize the fact that Columbus did not "discover" a new world that already had 100 million indigenous people inhabiting the places that he (and others) claimed for Spain (and other European nations). The late Lakota activist leader Russell Means stated that *from an indigenous vantage point, Columbus' arrival was a disaster from the beginning. Although Columbus' own diaries indicated that he was greeted by the Taino Indians with the most generous hospitality he*

¹ For more information about Thom Hartmann, see his Web site: thomhartmann.com and other links.

had ever known, he immediately began the enslavement and slaughter of the Indian peoples of the Caribbean islands. And it didn't stop in the Caribbean but continued on into other lands. As eminent Columbus biographer Samuel Eliot Morison admits in his book, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea*, Columbus was personally responsible for enslavement and murder of indigenous peoples.² The offspring of indigenous peoples are still suffering the ramifications of colonialism that Spain and other European nations brought to the Americas, which include Latin American countries, the United States, and Canada.

In his letter to the King and Queen of Spain in 1503, Christopher Columbus stated: *Gold is most excellent; gold constitutes treasure; and he who has it does all he wants in the world, and can even lift souls up to Paradise.* That statement pretty much sums up what the underlying principle of colonialism is—a conquering of peoples, culture, and land with motives of greed and power, sinfully using religion as one of its tools to accomplish this.

Russell Means concurred with other non-mainstream historians that Columbus was personally responsible for the design and operation of the *encomienda* system that tied Indians as slaves to the lands stolen from them by the European invaders.³ Today the “*encomienda* system”—in the forms of industrialization, globalization, democratization, capitalism, and so on—is implemented by the 1% and their cooperating governments, enforcing military, and accommodating cultures-of-consumption that are comprised of masses of citizens drugged by materialism and selfish pursuits.

The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy defines colonialism as “the control of one nation by ‘transplanted’ people of another nation—often a geographically distant nation that has a different culture and dominant racial or ethnic group.” There are classic examples of European nations colonizing countries not only in the Caribbean islands and Americas but also in the Pacific islands, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Asia, and

India. Though there often are benefits for the people and land that have been colonized, the long-lasting, harmful effects far outweigh any good when the motive of the controlling force behind the colonization is arrogance, greed, and lust for power. Thom Hartmann, Russell Means, and other contemporary, non-mainstream scholars, philosophers, historians, economists, scientists, and theologians have documented through their writings, films, and other media the destructive impact of colonialism for generations to come.

Interestingly, the United States of

If we could sniff or swallow something that would, for five or six hours each day, abolish our solitude as individuals, atone us with our fellows in a glowing exaltation of affection and make life in all its aspects seem not only worth living, but divinely beautiful and significant, and if this heavenly, world-transfiguring drug were of such a kind that we could wake up next morning with a clear head and an undamaged constitution—then, it seems to me, all our problems (and not merely the one small problem of discovering a novel pleasure) would be wholly solved and earth would become paradise.

—Aldous Huxley from his essay, “Wanted, a New Pleasure”

America evolved out of a rebellion against English colonialism of the new world. Unfortunately, the U.S. is one of the main proponents of neocolonialism, which is “control that is economic and cultural, rather than political”⁴—though, more often than not, there is behind-the-scenes control in the political realms of a country being “neocolonized” today. From the viewpoints of those being “colonized,” “globalized,” “democratized,” or “capitalized,” they are suffering a form of conquering, and this empire-building in their lands and nations is thievery—thievery of their land, their culture, their identities, their

resources, their children, and their future.

My ancestor, Ralph Waldo Emerson, realized that “an empire is an immense egotism” and was one of those voices of another century who spoke out against empire-building that was motivated by greed, selfishness, and arrogance. Frederick Douglass, who at 20 years of age escaped his own enslavement and ended up a free man in New York, became a strong, brilliant voice against the type of colonialism and capitalism that resulted in slavery with religion supporting that abomination. Soon after his emancipation from slavery, in an impassioned narrative about his own experiences as a slave, Douglass stated: *The slave auctioneer's bell and the church-going bell chime in with each other, and the bitter cries of the heart-broken slave are drowned in the religious shouts of his pious master. . . between the Christianity of this land, and the Christianity of Christ, I recognize the widest possible difference—so wide, that to receive the one as good, pure, and holy, is of necessity to reject the other as bad, corrupt, and wicked.*⁵ Unfortunately, not much has changed since Frederick Douglass' days, though the language and forms of slavery have changed. Mainstream religion still is supportive of the status-quo way of thinking and doing, which is based on empire building of nations at the expense of most people's health, happiness, and at times their lives, as well as the health and life of the planet's eco-systems.

Outspoken, Irish-born playwright, critic, and social reformer George Bernard Shaw once stated: *In the arts of life man invents nothing, but in the arts of death he outdoes Nature herself, and produces by chemistry and machinery all the slaughter of plague, pestilence, and famine.* Today humankind has inherited the ramifications of many centuries of empire-building and colonialism that developed “the arts of death” in the never-satisfying hunger for “gold” and power. Today, that hunger continues to determine the ways of most corporations and governments, and, unfortunately, the masses have embraced those ways of thinking and doing.

Much-respected and beloved General Dwight D. Eisenhower, who helped lead the way to victory for the U.S. and its allies in World War II, made the following statement on April 16, 1953: *Every gun that is made, ev-*



2 For further information, look at the Web site: russellmeansfreedom.com and the essay, “Why AIM Opposes Columbus Day and Columbus Day Parades” by Glen Morris and Russell Means.
3 Ibid

4 *The Dictionary of Cultural Literacy* [E.D. Hirsch Jr., Joseph F. Kett, James Trefil, ed.] (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company)

5 For more information, see *Frederick Douglass*, William S. McFeely (New York: W.W. Norton)

ery warship launched, every rocket signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, from those who are cold and are not clothed. The world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. Though this five-star general—who was a hero in a war that involved many nations of Western civilization as well as those of the Orient, with battles occurring on and over the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans—was admired enough to be elected as President of the United States, his new-found consciousness of the horrors of war and the need to make radical changes in how people perceive progress and civilization-building did not inspire and influence enough people to change the status quo in world views, progress, and problem-solving.

Today, the threat of a third “world war” is ever-present, with countries lining up with their allies for the final showdown. The intimidating military presence—peaceful or otherwise—of many of the countries with histories of imperialism⁶ (of which colonialism is a form) in smaller and less powerful countries is a fact. The backlash of these smaller countries fearing occupation has led to increasing acts of terrorism and civil war on their part, which gives reason for the more powerful countries to increase their military presence for “security.”

So, as was in Christopher Columbus’ time, governments, businesses, and religions continue to make unholy alliances to promote empire-building, which has culminated in what we are experiencing today worldwide—extreme weather events and other environmental disasters, economic collapse, and social upheaval. And, in spite of decades (even centuries) of warning of these dire ramifications from prophets, visionaries, and other non-mainstream “voices crying out in the wilderness”—such scientists, theologians, psychologists, philosophers, economists, sociologists, educators, physicians, and so on—the madness continues.

In this issue of the *Alternative Voice*, writers point out certain aspects of global changes in the social, economic, and environmental arenas as a result of empire-building that is not within divine pattern, but a hopeful vision of a coming Divine New Order is also presented. All of us writers live and work at Avalon Organic Gar-

dens & EcoVillage and adhere to divine administration principles that resonate with the divine pattern of the First Source and Center of All, the Gift of Life, the Divine Controller, the Infinite Upholder, the Universal Center, the Universal Father, or the Great Spirit, the Creator, God, Yahweh, Allah, or whatever other name has been given to the divine Personality who does indeed exist.⁷ Those divine administration principles are based on the foundation of love—a love far beyond what we humans can comprehend fully, though we can begin to recognize, experience, and express a pattern of that divine love and principles here on earth.

A chain is no stronger than its weakest link, and life is after all a chain

—William James



Throughout the history (and “herstory”) of humankind, there have been individuals and small groups of people who have had an inkling of the pattern of divine love that dictated how they perceived reality—their world view—and how they lived within their cultures that were more sustainable for all in their community as well as for their neighbors and the earth’s natural world around them. Not all cultures throughout history have been sustainable within some divine administration principles, including the so-called “indigenous” tribes. But there have always been some, and there are those today, outside of the status quo, who live within some of those principles. And, of course, there are those individuals who struggle to live by their level of understanding of these principles within mainstream society, but it is lonelier and more difficult when not united in living and working with others of similar persuasion.

Previously I referred to one of those “voices crying in the wilderness”—Thom Hartmann, a spiritual man who thinks outside of the compromised religion of a materialistic, consumer-driven, power-hungry, empire-building culture. Like Frederick Douglass who embraced “the Christianity of Christ,” but not “the Christianity of this land,” Thom Hartmann exposes in his writings and other media expressions the destructive patterns of any society that is motivated by selfish interests rather than the common good of all. But like the writers for this issue of the *Alternative Voice*, he presents some solutions based on beginning-level divine administration principles, thus giving a vision of possibilities for creating a better world.

In his book, *The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight*⁸, Hartmann emphasizes the need for global radical change, global transformation for the leaders and the masses. When our thinking changes to be more in alignment with the patterns of the Universal Father/Mother, then we transform ourselves, our technologies, our science, our politics, our economics, our medicine, our education, and our cultures. We begin to progress into the first stages of light and life that offer the opportunity for all people (100% rather than 1%) to experience true freedom, healing, health, and happiness if they choose to go that higher path.

As I strive to do daily, I encourage us all to spend more time expanding our minds and viewpoints, reading and researching in exposing ourselves to more “alternative” media as well as beginning to delve into the literature and history of the world’s many diverse and beautiful cultures, for as we begin to truly understand our planetary brothers and sisters and discover our commonalities and each others’ plights and frailties, we can genuinely unite as the human race and become inspired to tackle the world’s impending problems as one global family under the one God. I wish you many blessings as you embark of this adventure of discovery, seeking unity without uniformity.

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Níánn Emerson Chase is the cofounder of Global Community Communications Alliance, Avalon Organic Gardens & EcoVillage, Soulistic Medical Institute, Soulistic Hospice, and Global Family Legal Services. She is a descendent of Ralph Waldo Emerson.

6 The *Dictionary of Cultural Literacy* defines imperialism as: “Acquisition by a government of other governments or territories, or of economic or cultural power over other nations or territories, often by force. (Colonialism is a form of imperialism.)”

7 For more on God, the Universal Father, see *The URANTIA Book*, especially Papers 1 through 5. (Chicago: URANTIA FOUNDATION)

8 *The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight* by Thom Hartmann has been revised and updated several times since its first publication in 1998.