

# NORTH COAST



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*'In a dark time the eye begins to see'*  
~THEODORE ROTHKE

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DRAWING BY DALE FLOWERS

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A paradox that underlies history is that the eras of greatest creativity and discovery are also the most dangerous. The six decades since World War 2 are unparalleled in advances of knowledge and productivity, comparable to the entirety of the previous ten millennia, and human culture has consequently structured technologies that are disintegrating civilization even as civilized life owes its existence to them.

Seers of government and industry patronize the public with visions of increasing affluence and certain virtually painless technological solutions to deadly problems caused by technology. The flimsy assumption is that the *haves* will be able to endlessly amuse themselves to death. A persistent irony that a world in which at least half its human population is threatened with death every day because it has scarcely enough with which to survive, is that the portion that has much more than it knows what to do with is strangling on the effluence of its affluence.

Science and its handmaiden technology modernized civilization by routinely ripping away its fabric without making much effort to repair it in a kaleidoscopic surge into an incomprehensible future. This is the point at which history is declared dead, without significant meaning except as memory and latent nostalgia because it is claimed to no longer have any bearing or effect on present or future: the race is to the swift who disregard consequences; the present is patently obsolete as it careens into the future.

Although progress is generally measured through technical achievement, it should at least be as important to concentrate on the contradictory evolution of political liberty and the slow development of a world civilization. Marx anticipated such a civilization in the 19th century, the two world wars of the 20th century made the concept impossible to resist. The great contradiction lies with the rights and liberties of individuals and minorities, and with former colonies of disintegrated empires that reassert their claims as separate and independent peoples while genociding themselves with internal feuds and virulent ethnic cleansing. Everything points to human rights and the reversion to the age-old struggle of rich against poor; whatever masks or complexities surround ideologies, their design is to either protect privilege and power or to establish and extend rights and liberties to the powerless.

Capitalism and democracy are not synonymous. During the half century Cold War with Russia they were equated with each other, but since the dissolution of soviet communism the old antipathy between power at the top and the struggle for freedom at the bottom has accelerated in the United States. The top capitalists do not believe in democracy; they believe in predatory capitalism and in their own sovereign right for power over the rest of the people. They publicly proclaim capitalism coexistent with democracy to mollify the masses, and elections are held; but their wealth hand-picks and elects their chosen candidates. The only real politics in the country are between the

Rich Party and the Poor Party: the so-called New World Order the nation's plutocrats currently manifest in the name of democracy is a direct schism between the affluent and impoverished, domestically and globally

America is always at war with itself. It is a battleground of disparity. Political equity and liberty have not been easy achievements nor justice anything but a bloody war between those who would extend democracy and those who would limit it. The nation's founders insisted that these rights and liberties would be fought for here — but anyone who smugly assumes that the United States and its citizens are exclusively the seeds of liberty for the rest of the world is wrongheaded in a most sublime degree. The USA is not a triumphant example of the historical struggle for democracy but a perpetual work in process; of necessity the people of this country must always be in revolution as well as civil war about the very fundamentals of democracy or it will stagnate and be suppressed.

Yet the USA seems hell-bent to throw off its last vestiges of democratic government and reemerge as a militant theocratic corporatocracy. The rights and equities of common citizens are in peril. Discrimination against distinct groups is redirected at members of those groups who refuse to assimilate into the mainstream. Dissent in opposition to the nation's militaristic response to 9/11 and subsequent attempts at suspension of civil liberties is harshly criticized and whoever protests unilateral seizure of power by the nation's current leaders is vilified and spied upon — and apparently everybody else, which not only erodes privacy but violates the cornerstone agreement between government and people that no one should be treated as a criminal (or traitor) until it is proven they are. Also freedom of religion is certain to be a major casualty as all religions other than a (corporate) state sanctioned creed will inevitably be subsumed or liquidated.

The current political climate in the United States is one of incendiary reversion, of savage descent to public ignorance and intolerance, which are generally present but not always given the respect or power of recent years. Serious, almost morbid attention is paid to the pathological pieties and simplifications of religious zealots, racial supremacists and far-right ideologues who act at the extreme edge of our anxieties and reduce the national dialogue to a medieval level while manipulating the democratic process to ultimately destroy it.

The presidential administration of George W. Bush is the most culturally and politically repressive in the short history of the American republic. A few white men of wealth have made an intolerable grab for power and ordination of a country club apartheid that has severely eroded much of the basic fiber of democracy, replacing it with a grim and malignant vision of apocalyptic governance that excludes diversity, intelligence and imagination and promotes laws that deny anyone disagreeable or threatening to them any rights as citizens. They are relentless in their attempts to subvert the wracked remnants of democracy and intend that those who have never quite enjoyed its fruits shall never grasp the inspired liberation it is rooted in.

The unelected President and his hard-right administration of corporate neo-Federalists are the very people the

## NEW WORLD DISORDER

nation's revolutionary ancestors warned against and tried to prevent with Constitutional government and separation of powers — as well as the series of initial addenda known as the Bill of Rights which clearly and concisely spell out the rights and responsibilities of the people.

President Bush and his agents might have been, if not harmless at least contained in peacetime, but war (which they claim in Orwellian cant as perpetual) has set them loose on the Constitution, and they represent the worst danger this nation faces, considerably more of a threat than the terrorism they exploit as a shield and *raison d'être* for annulling the very freedoms they shamelessly pretend to protect.

The issue is not whether the American people think it is a good idea to deny or abrogate certain liberties but whether the President can bypass Congress and the courts and dramatically alter the legal system by himself—the unilateral dismemberment of civil liberties and Presidential assault on due process and Constitutional law in general.

The obsession for world power, America's self-declared "manifest destiny," has given it the pyrrhic paradox of global supremacy and internal deterioration. Although military power has been the matrix of the USA's ascendancy, it has been at the expense of domestic priorities that until they are debauched act as the cultural glue holding the country together.

The military/industrial mafia of interlocking corporations and the Pentagon has created a black hole into which everything is eventually drawn and disappears, such as the nation's wealth and resources, with neither replaced. And amidst the flaming testosterone of a new world order managed by the USA, the infrastructure of American society has declined with ever larger numbers of the nation's most useful citizens sinking deeper into unemployment and poverty. Freedom and liberty, always tenuous and unfairly distributed, shrivels under assault by the privileged who maliciously loot the nation's substance and spirit as well as its fiscal treasure.

This new era of a rhetorical 'New World Order' — a term used by the 20th century's worst citizen Adolf Hitler to describe his own world vision — is an awesomely lopsided proposition in which the USA as the last reigning superpower (excluding China for the moment) moves to impose its jingoistic purpose economically and militarily upon the world: a distorted vision of a single nation possessing an immense arsenal of weapons of mass destruction dominating the planet through fear and repressive avarice disguised as democracy and liberation.

Yet nuclear power, the fortress of nationalism, has rendered it obsolete. Nationalism, capitalism, democracy, socialism and communism are no more than parts of a process of human development that is always evolving into something else. Ideals, which are usually expressions of concern that people have about the welfare of others, develop into ideologies that separate them as enemies. Ideologies do not translate well into realities. Governments generally violate their charters, and no matter how they wish to be considered, are most often oppressive to their populations and aggressive with their neighbors. Political rights or liberties hardwon by one generation are usually eroded by successors who take them for granted without realizing how necessary and rare they are. Calculated fears of enemies leads to abrogation of civil rights. Dialogue succumbs to what is safe to say or think. Demagogues thrive in atmospheres of fear and despair; without the cooperation of the populations they arouse and repress, they would have no power.

Communism and socialism, the failed creeds of the last century, were rooted in community and society; not so capitalism, a word and concept as cold and brittle as a coin. The raw excesses of corporate capitalism in its quest to dominate world trade, commerce and all exploitable resources since the end of the Cold War, are under siege by a rising turbulence caused by intense pressure from below, the bottom of the resources trickle-down, which is uniting the majority of overcrowded humanity that struggles for a decent living on the planet. This upheaval collates every previous civil rights and working class struggle. It might very well readjust the center of power and pioneer the first true universally human community in its long evolution.

It would be a grotesque irony that humanity might perish because it is unable to resolve conflicts from its earliest history, hopelessly mired in the irredeemable past and thus patently self-destructing its future.