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INSIGHT

'THE NEW PALLADIUM'

Multiculturalism and its spiritual conflicts

Editor's note: Following is an excerpt from remarks delivered by Susan Au Allen, president of the United States Pan Asian American Chamber of Commerce to the Defense Mapping Agency in Reston, Virginia. It is one in a series of speeches Allen is giving on these subjects to such diverse organizations as the Library of Congress and the MultiCultural Institute.

By Susan Allen

There is a book out on the market right now by a professor from Harvard, Dr. John Mack. When I first read about this book in the Washington Post, I immediately thought about the Defense Mapping Agency's theme, Unity: Together as One.

The book suggests that you have some competition, unusual competition. Others, it seems, are also doing some mapping.

Perhaps you have read about the book. It's called "Abduction - Human Encounters With Aliens."

Now normally, I don't pay too much attention to stories or books about aliens - from space that is; but my mother told me to take anyone from Harvard seriously. I also knew that I would be speaking to you today, and that you would be interested in knowing the mapping techniques of the aliens.

But it turns out, and now I am really serious, that what the aliens told the humans they had abducted has everything to do with our meeting here today. Dr. Mack has interviewed 29 individuals who claim to have contact with aliens, and a common theme, a common question the aliens asked the abducted people is why do so many humans commit so many atrocious acts against their fellow human beings? Why do men and women fight over whose god is best? Why do teen-agers kill for a jacket or a pair of shoes? Why do humans of one particular color hate another group of humans because they have a different color? Why do gangs fight over turf? Why can't everybody just work together, play together and live together in harmony? Why can't we have unity? Why indeed?

Well, let me try to answer that question from an Asian American perspective, so if you are ever abducted, you will have the answer. I should note quickly that the views of Asian Americans are not monolithic, and that we differ on a variety of subjects. But there are some widely shared beliefs that many Asian Americans cherish and I will try to stay in these areas.

Those of us with origins in Asia need not be given lessons on what a great country we are living in. There certainly is opportunity in a number of Asian nations, but none can match the opportunity this country offers. No Asian nation has the freedoms we enjoy as a daily right. And though we have poverty, it is nothing compared to the poverty in some Asian nations. Though there is racial prejudice and discrimination against women, it is nothing compared to what we see in a number of Asian nations. So those of us from Asia can look at the United States from a perspective, a comparative perspective, that gives a better understanding of what this country offers, than many citizens who have lived here all their lives.

We believe we have much to be grateful for, but Asian Americans, along with many black, white, Hispanic, and native Americans, also have a number of very grave concerns about our nation's future.

Let me teach you a Chinese expression. It is called Feng-shui. That expression goes back to the Han dynasty, 202 B.C., the time of the ancient Greeks. The literal translation of the expression means "wind and water" but the figurative meaning is much deeper - "vital forces". Now for centuries there have been masters of Feng-shui - those who have the ability to define good and harmful spirits, as defined by the great religions of China - Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. One task of these masters is to detect the vital forces that are on the landscape, and design homes and offices that would capture the good spirits and ward off the bad ones.

There has been, generation after generation, century after century, prediction of the end of Feng-shui. Ancient Greece has gone and so have the Roman and Ottoman empires. But Feng-Shui remains. Today, if you go to Hong Kong, you'll see one of the most advanced, sophisticated buildings in the world, costing over \$1 billion dollars. It has a solid foundation. It is the headquarters of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation. The orientation of the building was set up by Lung King Chuen, a Feng-shui master.

Now, the United States was founded with powerful positive Feng-shui forces. You know what they are - The Constitution and the Bill of Rights which created the opportunities and freedoms of this land. As citizens of this great country, all of us - no matter our color or heritage - are endowed with certain rights that should allow us the pursuit of happiness. We have the right to an education, to get a job and pursue a career, to raise a family, to live in peace. These are also the common goals that should unite us, despite our different racial or ethnic origins which some will use to divide us.

Granted, the scope of freedom and opportunity were initially limited. Granted, throughout our his-



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tory, and even today, those principles have not been universally applied.

But despite these imperfections, there was - until recently - one common thread that united Americans for generations. It was the idea that the future would be better for our children. In other words, there was a high sense of optimism and hope for the future - very powerful inspiring Feng-shui forces. Adults would work hard now, knowing we were creating a better world for our children.

Many Americans still have that belief. Many have that special Feng-shui spirit.

But let us not delude ourselves. That spirit of optimism, of better futures for those who follow us is no longer the prevailing belief. That belief faces serious challenges.

Many have written and spoken in great detail of the decline of the middle class. You can go to the local library and read the May issue of the Atlantic Monthly for an excellent article on the subject by senior editor Jack Beatty. Mr. Beatty will overwhelm you with statistical data to make the point, but I will give you one more. Just a few weeks ago, the National Study Center released a study that showed a dramatic increase in the vulnerability of all workers - professional and non-professional - to permanent layoffs.

The family is at risk because the economic future is in doubt.

The two parent family isn't what it used to be. In the past 30 years, there has been a doubling of the divorce rate, a 400 percent increase in illegitimate births, a tripling of children living in single parent homes, and a tripling in the teenage suicide rate.

Beyond that, there is the frightening aspect of crime. In 30 years, there has been a 500 percent increase in violent crime. In many urban areas, the thugs own the streets after dinner time. They steal optimism from our future.

It is wonder that optimism no longer prevails.

Well, what can we do about it? Can we restore our once dominant Feng-shui - vital forces - optimism and hope for a better future for those who come behind us?

From the perspective of this particular American, we are now fighting a spiritual war - philosophical battles - which, depending upon how it is resolved, will determine our nation's destiny. It will determine whether we will be a united people who work together as a team.

The first battle in the spiritual war is rights versus responsibilities. There is today an over emphasis on rights without a corollary emphasis on responsibilities.

Most Americans believe that adults have a responsibility to nourish, raise, educate and care for our young. The young have a duty to obey their parents, and to get an education. Young and middle aged, we all have a responsibility to respect and care for our parents. In sum, we have a responsibility to the family. Beyond that, we have a responsibility to our community. As citizens, we respect the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and we want harmonious relationships with people of other cultures.

Most Americans - white, black, Hispanic, native and Asian Americans share that view. But many don't agree.

Who will prevail?

There is in our land a philosophy that excuses personal behavior for whatever reason is most appealing. Asian gangs, white gangs, black gangs, and Hispanic gangs believe it is perfectly acceptable to kill a person over a pair of shoes or a jacket.

If a thug thugs, society is at fault or a class of Americans, not the thug. It is a doctrine excusability. Blame someone or scapegoat somebody. Point the

finger. Recently, Khalid Abdul Muhammad, a minister for the Nation of Islam, gave a speech at Howard University condemning both whites and Jews for all that ails black people. One thousand six hundred blacks cheered him wildly. But I have no doubt most blacks would disagree with those who were clapping, just as most whites would disavow a speech by a member of the Ku Klux Klan.

But who will prevail?

Many Americans reject the notion of parental responsibility. There are a number of subcultures which promote the belief that a man is somebody if he has illegitimate children. As a consequence, the number of illegitimate children - black, white, Hispanic, Asians too - soar, as do the number of missing fathers. And going up too is the amount in unpaid child support.

Should these destructive attitudes prevail, we can

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forget about the prospect of a harmonious society. We can forget about unity. There would be an abundance of poverty, both of the material and spiritual kind.

The second battle in the spiritual war might be called substance myopia. How many Americans today know what are the true values that enhance and nourish us as a person, a family, a community, a nation?

Many Americans fall victim to the illusions that to be somebody, you have to wear a certain type of jacket, drive a certain car, or live in a certain home. In some neighborhoods, to be somebody they kill for shoes, jackets and cars. In some executives suites, to be somebody, they plot illegal schemes for profits.

How do we win battle? How do we communicate the simple verity that to be somebody depends upon what you are, not what you own or how much money, or physical or political power you have?

The third and final battle in the spiritual war is the conflict between individual rights and community rights.

That, translated, means we can't have an optimistic view of the future if we can't have safe schools, safe streets and safe neighborhoods.

There has been much criticism over the canning of Michael Fay in Singapore. But let me ask you a question. What do you think about a society that captures an armed felon at nine in the morning, and put him back on the street by five in the afternoon, before the police have finished their paperwork on the arrest?

We can hold the virtuous view that canning is a barbaric

practice. But then we should hold the view that letting thugs roam freely after their apprehension is equally barbaric. However, our current system is more concerned about the liberty of the criminal than the liberty of the community and the neighborhood.

We know enough about crime prevention to recognize that curfews on teen-agers have a significant impact on crime reduction. But putting a curfew into effect is not easy, as New Jersey and Texas residents will tell you. There is literally an army of lawyers ready to fight for the constitutional right of 13-year olds to

Fortunately, the supreme court has spoken. Just two weeks ago, it decided that a community has the right to impose a curfew on teen-agers. Just think! The issue had to go to the United States Supreme Court for a common sense resolution. But may be now, just may be, we can see curfew in all areas - both rural and urban - where young gangs run wild.

But this is neither the time nor the place to explore adequately what is needed for safe streets. The point is that crime perpetrators have many individual rights which diminish the rights of the community. We need to find ways to balance individual rights with community rights, as those who have successfully fought and won the legal battles for curfews.

In this spiritual war we confront, there are some very positive movements, tactical victories.

Many schools throughout the country offer character courses which teach true human values, such as knowledge, hard work, honesty, charity and good will. According to the Wall Street Journal, where these courses are taught, the results have been nothing less than spectacular in terms of reduced violence and increased academic scores.

I am in favor of teaching historical values, but I am not in favor of the state setting the agenda. I still recall with great trepidations that time when in China, Chairman Mao Tze Dong said that the state would be the child's parent and teach what was right and what was wrong. That system turned many sons and

daughters against their parents. I do not want that, nor do I want any group telling me what is politically right.

But clearly, much more has to be done if we are to restore our nation's compass, because the driving forces of optimism and hope are at great risk.

From an historical view, the destructive side of our nation's culture has always been with us. We have had our economic ups and downs. But, historically, we have been able to overcome that destructive side. We have won the battle over the Great Depression, and we have won many battles for civil rights.

Just over a century ago, there was a political party called the "Know Nothings." Its purpose was to prevent the Germans, the Irish, and all Catholics from any nation from immigrating. It took the country two decades to defeat the "Know Nothings," and several more decades to win a victory over race and ethnic bigotry with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Now, we are at war against a new type of "Know Nothings." Will we prevail?

The answer depends in the final analysis upon whether those of us who share values based on historic principles are willing to stand together and work for reform.

When George Washington gave his farewell address to the nation on September 17, 1796, he was worried about the future of our country. He believed that the future of our country lay upon its foundation, the states. If the states could remain unified, the new nation would grow and prosper, he thought.

So to get that point across in his farewell address, Washington used a metaphor - the palladium. That word comes from the ancient Greeks. The Greeks believed that for their nation to grow and prosper, the foundation of their statute of the goddess Pallas Athena must be preserved at all costs. This, of course, is where the word palladium came from. The palladium did not hold and Ancient Greece fell. Washington did not want that to happen to the new nation, the United States, so he called for a palladium of the States, a strong and unified foundation.

We are now in another time of great risk, where another type of unity is in view desperately needed if we as a nation are to grow and prosper. That is a unity of good citizens of all races, ethnic groups and heritages that transcends any form of racism or class hatred, and that restores the nation's compass - honor, truth, faith, gratitude and hope.

Good people - Jews, blacks, whites, Hispanics, Asians and native Americans - must come together behind the widely shared goals of safe streets, good education, and maximum potential for the individual.

If all of us who share these common goals stand together, and practice our rights responsibility, we will offer a powerful counter balance to the pessimism and despair that prevails in our society. We will form a new and strong palladium of the people that could be just as important from history's vantage point as the palladium of the states in Washington's time.

We have to do that. That is the right thing to do. Won't you agree?

Now I want to close with one final remark about the aliens. Dr. Mack, the author of the book, reports that those who were abducted by aliens are now strong believers in a benevolent society. They have in short adopted the views of the aliens. Perhaps the final solution for a unified society is a rapid increase in alien abductions.

What do you think?

Woman's Word will return next week.