"Permaculture Visions? Rethinking Our Past and Future Mythology" - Article by Marian A. Lee. Study Questions from Willi Paul Studio / Planetshifter.com

I am pleased to re-post the following article from Ms. Lee. For me, it is brimming with kindred spirits and equally tough issues. Please see my study questions from my own exploration that follow; may they be a helpful guide on your journey.

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A New American Vision: Rethinking Our Past and Future Mythology by Marian A. Lee

Black Elk, a Native American visionary and Lakota Sioux medicine man chronicled by John Neihardt in Black Elk Speaks, believed a coherent vision to be central to a people's well-being. Black Elk prophetic message was clear: "Without vision, the people perish." A vision encompasses not only the values and goals a people strive to honor but creates a mythology of who we are, what we stand for and how our vision fits into the cosmic order. Out of this mythology comes its symbolism of meaning that functions in maintaining the moral integrity and stability of the community as a whole, while assisting the individuals as part of the whole through the stages of life, supporting them through crises by grounding them in their vision.

Vision permeates what Jung calls the self, "-the organizing principle of the personality", through the archetypal symbolism we embody tied to the collective unconscious. According to Jung, the self is the archetype of order, organization and most importantly, unification, which harmonizes all other archetypes and their manifestation. The visionary connected self carries us through crises that occur during the course of our individual lives and the history of a people.

Joseph Campbell, a professor and lecturer on comparative mythology and author of The Hero with a Thousand Faces, found that danger exists when the social order requirements of social institutions such as religion and political interpretations "-press on people mythological structures that no longer match their human experience". Furthermore, the symbol or metaphor which expresses the societal mythology must possess a "spiritual aura" signifying a living spiritual core of awakening. If mythological symbols are "-reduced to the concrete goals of a particular political system of socialization", they lack the "connotative meaning of metaphoric imagery" that leads to a realization of transcendence. This type of concrete symbol merely denotes a localized ethnic meaning caught in a static historical context devoid of universal spiritual significance.

The American mythology of the Old West "rugged individual" symbolized by the lone cowboy riding into to town to save the people, is of the ethnic variety of an incomplete hero's journey that has become brittle with age and no longer gels with our contemporary globalized world nor serves us in a world that for the most part thinks in collectivist terms. The illusion of the lone cowboy saving the world through individual heroics is a worn-out Messianic construct-an interjection of a non-existent idealized past which in reality is littered with the genocide of our indigenous people, the nightmare of slavery and a whole host of other violent indignities. We forget that these false symbols of American daring are perpetrated on the backs of the impoverished and least powerful among us. These kitschy boastful expressions dredged up from archaic symbols of our American past merely act as destructive consumerist substitutes for an authentic reality.

A pivotal moment in American history, when we could have turned towards a renewed American vision for the new century, occurred at the time of 9/11, now indelibly etched in our minds as witnesses to a greater escalation of fear and terror. Unfortunately, out of the rubble, an opportunity to create a more collective ideal for peace was lost by invoking the worn-out national mythology of the lone cowboy iconic imagery of western frontier individual heroics. In response to a reporter's question regarding the fate of bin Laden, President Bush said, "I want justice. And there's an old poster out West, I recall, that says, "Wanted: Dead or Alive". This hackneyed construct of American mythology failed to connote a deeper sense of spiritual connection to our inner lives.

At this inner level, we transcend the historical concrete "here and now" to what Campbell terms the universal "ah" giving one - "a sense of actual participation in such a realization of transcendence, infinity, and abundance-". The function of these metaphorical symbols is to speak to our deepest levels of being whenever they arise in a context of contemporary experience. The fact that we did not move beyond the pain of loss through the threshold of a deeper level of shared experience to the rebirth of a new worldview continues to burden our country and drives the current

political discourse of dissension, contempt and moral self-righteousness.

We have also been reminded constantly that if we work hard we can realize the American dream. The once idolized "American dream" rings hollow in our current social and political milieu and as Campbell stated, has become a dangerous symbol that no longer aligns with many Americans' human experience, leaving some to feel cheated and demoralized. Rather than adhering solely to the individualistic "can do, pull oneself up by the bootstraps" mantra coursing through everyday life, a new American mythology would allow us to examine our values, assumptions, and sense of purpose that dominate our worldview and consider alternative interpretations by creating a larger more inclusive and realistic context for defining what it means to be American.

Visionary fiction books, such as *The Way of the Peaceful Warrior, The Alchemist and The Celestine Prophecy*, have moved many Americans to reconsider the world as they know it along with all the old mythologies and move to a more transcendent vision of themselves and the world as it truly is-interconnected on all levels of existence, infinite and abundant. From experiencing the wisdom contained in visionary fiction narratives, envisioning an evolved consciousness becomes possible for individuals, as well as, communities and nations.

A broader American vision based on a more diverse collective narrative of transformation, speaks to us on a soul level. While rooted in the constitutional fundamentals of governance of the people, by the people and for the people, this new vision would shine a critical light on the larger context (beyond paranoid delusions of security) of our political, economic and military actions affecting the world, while still affirming our authentic core values of equality, liberty and rule of law. A radical shift in our nation's inner psyche, from one embedded in individual unilateral heroics to a more collective consequential focus, would have been a transformative debate profoundly affecting "the state of the union" and the lives of future generations for the better.

Vision is not mere fantasy devoid of pragmatic realism but an expression of our core values linked to universal experiences. For a nation that used to pride itself on a universal concept of *E Pluribus Unum* (out of many, one), we have politically divided and compartmentalized ourselves in the "Pluribus", but have precious little "Unum" to show the world as the American political process continues to grind away defined by fractured relations and contentious posturing. Our "better angels" have obviously not alighted on this planet to guide our actions to date.

Both sides of the political spectrum confuse the "map with the territory" a concept first proposed by philosopher Alfred Korzybski and expanded upon by anthropologist Gregory Bateson. In essence, people confuse their own personal maps of the world with the territory the map represents by the conviction that their view is the one and only "truth". As a result, we engage in never ending arguments over whose version of the truth is the correct view of reality. When gazing through a universal lens, multiple realities exist which necessitates a collaborative response for effective governing so that each reality is honored at a given level of consciousness, while moving toward wholeness and understanding. Creating a national vision where multiple realities from diverse perspectives are organized into a coherent unified force to solve our complex domestic and global problems has clearly been lacking in the current political climate.

Furthermore, the capacity of our leaders to reach a high level of comfort with ambivalence-holding opposing extremes of conviction at one time-would result in executive and legislative actions that would begin to reflect the cohesive rendering of E Pluribus Unum from which our nation has evolved. A more collective rather than purely individualistic stance is not an anomaly in our history. Our founders faced a crisis during the American Revolution which galvanized a search for principles upon which they could build a unified nation culminating in the adoption of the Constitution.

Edmund Morgan writes in his book, **The Birth of the Republic** that prior to the American Revolution, "colonists were reputed to be a quarrelsome, litigious, divisive lot and historical evidence bears out this reputation." However, through inspired leadership they were able to come together in common purpose to address injustices inherent within the organization and functioning of the British governing institutions that controlled the colony at the time. This collective action ultimately resulted in independence and the rule of law sacred to our Constitution. A transformative American vision of E Pluribus Unum evolved out of this crisis and set a historical precedent that speaks to the American sense of fairness and necessity to act collectively on democratic principles to preserve individual liberties.

Clearly, we need to undergo a national re-imagining of ourselves. 9/11 was the chance to do just that and could have provided us with a bolder more authentic vision of ourselves grounded in our historic strengths and realities yet connected to enduring universal themes of abundance, unity, and infinity in which nothing is static except universal truths expressing spiritual realities. Ken Burns in his commencement address at Stanford University spoke to the need to see history as a non-static source of vision for our nation.

"Over those decades of historical documentary filmmaking, I have also come to the realization that history is not a fixed thing, a collection of precise dates, facts, and events that add up to a quantifiable, certain, confidently known truth. History is a mysterious and malleable thing, constantly changing, not just as new information emerges, but as our own interests, emotions and inclinations change. Each generation rediscovers and re-examines that part of its past that gives its present new meaning, new possibility and new power. The question becomes for us now - for you especially - what will we choose as our inspiration? Which distant events and long dead figures will provide us with the greatest help, the most coherent context and the wisdom to go forward?"

The saying goes: when the student is ready, the teacher will appear. Americans are ready for a renewal of the American vision. Many Americans are tired and "living rough" in day to day existence with no obvious purpose and meaning in sight. Visionary thinkers and authors are in a unique position to point the way toward transcendence, but it is incumbent upon us to walk this inner journey and share our experience with others. In his final years, Joseph Campbell saw the need for a new mythology that was based on a universal rendering of a transcendent hero found in all world mythologies instead of misconstrued localized metaphors "misread prosaically as referring to tangible facts." This transcendent hero goes forth on an individual, yet also a **collective journey of growth and self-actualization** returning to his community to share and embody wisdom gained from experience. This archetype points towards a consensual reality based on shared experience that could be articulated that should be articulated by our leaders in a manner that resonates with a majority of Americans. Indeed, Campbell's lectures on this very subject enthralled American audiences wherever he spoke.

Perhaps the rediscovery and embodiment of an ancient universal archetype such as the transcendental hero will serve us better -one composed of more depth and clarity of purpose through the embodiment of meaning referenced by people of many diverse backgrounds, and one which acts as a metaphor for a collective journey towards the wisdom and maturation of the American consciousness-rather than the incessant replay of shallow repetitious stereotypes from the past.

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Bio -

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Marian A. Lee is a hospice chaplain and holds a BA in Political Science from George Washington University. She has a Master's degree in Mental Health Counseling from the University of South Florida and has completed two years towards a doctorate degree in political science. She is revamping her fictional visionary book, **The Lioness of Brumley** Hall, to bring in a stronger narrative based on the precepts of magical realism, as well as, a children's magical adventure series imbued with subtle political irony.

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Study Questions-

1. Do you know any permaculture-fueled myths?

2. Is our understanding and implementation of the self now fractured? Can you give us some examples?

3. How can we refresh and promote a new metaphoric imagery?

4. Offer up some examples of currently worn-out Messianic constructs?

5. Who or what is responsible for what you call: "a- hackneyed construct of American mythology (that fails) to connote a deeper sense of spiritual connection to our inner lives."

6. Are you saying that the "new mythology" is interconnected on all levels of existence, infinite and abundant?

7. How do you propose that Americans shift to a collective consequential focus, based on the future?

8. Where do angels come from?

9. How does your sense of history impact your understanding of new mythologies?

10. How does one teach the value of ambivalence?

11. Is Capitalism responsible for the decay of the collective conscious?

12. Can we generate this "national re-imagining of ourselves" at the family or neighborhood level?

13. I tout the community as the real hero now rather than the individual. Who are you following?

14. One person's global transcendent experience is another's Amazon Prime purchase!