

Pandemic Panic *by Joe Gaziano*



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In April we awoke to the swine flu scare with a 24/7 media frenzy. Originating in Mexico, this new flu strain rapidly spread throughout the world, raising the potential for a pandemic. Pictures of people walking around Mexico in surgical masks were a common sight. Governmental strategies dealing with the problem were also reported. In Egypt, they killed all the pigs, resulting in the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of animals. In China, 300 people were quarantined in a Hong Kong hotel when it was discovered that one of them was diagnosed with the flu.

The State Department warned against travel to parts of the United States and Mexico. Customs officials assured us that they were guarding the borders from people with the flu and Homeland Security confirmed that the flu did not originate with any terrorists organizations as part of a biological attack on the United States. Even Vice President Joe Biden felt compelled to comment. When he appeared on a network morning television show he recommended the avoidance of airplanes or trains because swine flu spreads in confined spaces.

For weeks, public health officials warned of imminent danger and the potential for millions of deaths worldwide. The lead story on television and in the newspapers was the number of flu victims, deaths, and warnings about what to do to avoid getting the flu. Then, about a month later, just as fast as it had first appeared, the media reports disappeared. There was only an occasional mention of someone dying from the flu and the possibility that it might return during the fall and winter flu season.

So, what are the important lessons learned from this cultural phenomenon? There are five main lessons:

1. The media overreacts to the events of the day. When it comes to reporting crises of any kind the media is prone to exaggerate. It seems as if the media conjures-up a new scare every week because fear sells. Remember the West Nile virus, Lyme disease, SARs, and the bird flu? These health issues were reported in the same way as the swine flu. Pseudo-dangers and fear

mongering dominate the discussion at the expense of a realistic approach to the issues. In the case of the swine flu, the facts suggest that there were only a handful of cases reported in the U.S. and with far fewer deaths than from the seasonal flu experienced every year.

2. The government does not know how to provide practical information. The list of Center For Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggestions for avoiding the flu included: after you blow your nose throw the tissue away, avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth, and avoid people with the flu. This advice from the CDC is about as useful as the terrorists color alert system in effect since 2002. According to Homeland Security, every day is an orange alert (a high likelihood of attack) day at the airport and has been since the system was first initiated.

3. It is our perception of danger that has increased, not the actual level of risk. It appears that Sociologist Barry Glassner was right when he argued in his book *The Culture of Fear* that Americans are obsessed with pseudo-dangers while ignoring real dangers. For example, in the case of the swine flu about 150 people died worldwide, while seasonal flu kills about 36,000 in the U.S. every year. During the last swine flu scare in 1976 one person died from swine flu but more than 200 died from taking the swine flu vaccine.

Glasser also points out that the public needs to become aware of the people that profit from our fears. We need to recognize that there is big money to be made in the swine flu scare. The pharmaceutical companies that produce Tamiflu and the vaccine will benefit financially if the government makes the vaccine available to all U.S. citizens as it did in 1976.

4. The media is willing to provide continuous coverage of an issue but avoids certain political aspects of the topic. For example, there was little discussion about how the swine flu originated. This was, in large part, to avoid criticizing the practice of factory farming and implicating the U.S. pork industry which has a significant presence in Mexico. Few in the media were willing to tackle this issue and instead allowed industry spokespersons to insist that the swine flu had little to do with pigs.

Once pork profits began declining, the pork industry and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) started damage control by suggesting that the swine flu be renamed the H1N1 virus, and insisting that a person could not get the flu from handling pork. This claim was made despite warnings from the World Health Organization that contaminated meat posed a danger. Most mainstream media quickly adopted the name change even though they had been using the swine flu label for weeks.

5. Americans are gullible to these health scares. It seems obvious that we do not know how to perceive a real threat or recognize media hype. Clearly there was overreaction: school closings, a run on Tamiflu, and people crowding into emergency rooms with flu symptoms. We live in a time when negative ideas generated by the media can produce a fear that is out of proportion to its real life threat. Deaths from projected pandemics and terrorism are almost nonexistent compared to those from everyday occurrences like seasonal flu (36,000) or car accidents (about 43,000 deaths a year in U.S., 1 every 13 minutes). The real danger is that the media will have "cried wolf" too many times and we will experience what happened in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina. Many people refused to leave the city because they did not believe that Katrina would be any different than the countless other hurricanes that had been described as "The Big One."

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Interview with Josh Wallaert, Co-Producer of *Arid Lands*

by Tina Volpe



The documentary film *Arid Lands* brings to light how defenseless we all are to the requirements and demands of our government. Families dwelling in Benton County in southeastern Washington State were evacuated and told that they had 28 days to leave their homes. The explanation? Their land was needed for war efforts, and the project was top secret. That was in 1943—and these families had nowhere to go.

Some of the people who were interviewed in the film reported that they felt expendable but were sincerely trying to be patriotic by complying. Years after moving away, they still did not know nor were they ever informed as to why they were forced from their homes. When the "bomb dropped" on Hiroshima and Nagasaki that was precisely the moment when they learned what was going on in their hometown and the site named "Hanford."

Hanford was built in 1943 as part of the Manhattan Project and it was here the government stored and created plutonium for the atomic bomb. Six hundred square miles were fenced off from public use and used for war efforts.

The process of making plutonium, as it was discovered, leaves a serious mess. There were no specific plans on what to do with the waste. The Hanford site dumped nuclear sludge into the soil and cooled their nuclear reactors by piping large volumes of water from the Columbia River, then returning that water back to the river, contaminated. By 1957 the plutonium production reactors at Hanford dumped a daily average of 50,000 curies (a curie is a unit of radioactivity) of radioactive material into the river.

The weapons production reactors were decommissioned at the end of the Cold War, but the process left behind 53 million gallons of high-level radioactive waste that remains at the site today, in huge storage tanks. These tanks are now leaching highly radioactive nuclear waste into the ground. Hanford represents two-thirds of the nation's high-level radioactive waste by volume and today is the most contaminated nuclear site in the United States.

What year did you create the film?

JW: We did the interviews in the summer of 2005 and edited it over the next year. Not much has changed at Hanford since then; the cleanup efforts, unfortunately, are very slow.

What was your motivation for making this film?

JW: I am interested in geography as a field, about the importance of place, and I got interested in this particular place, the Tri-Cities Area in southeastern Washington, because here you have so many different historical and cultural and natural forces coming together. You can really tell a fascinating story about how it all ties together. We were interested in spreading the word about Hanford and also in telling a story about a unique corner of the American West.

*In *Arid Lands*, wildlife is still thriving on the land surrounding Hanford. That surprised me.*

JW: Because Hanford was set aside for nuclear development, it's been protected from encroaching development and agriculture. So, surprisingly, you have a large area of land with a relatively

healthy ecosystem: sagebrush, bunchgrasses, mule deer, healthy salmon runs.

What are your thoughts on the dangers/benefits at Hanford?

JW: The benefits, I think, depend on your historical perspective. The costs are clear—releases of radioactive material to the river and the air from the 1940s through the 1970s, hazards to Hanford workers, and the continuing problem of how to safely store massive amounts of high-level nuclear and chemical waste. Hanford has a unique place in history, and it's a product of its time, but even today it's a reminder that if we are going to revisit the idea of nuclear energy, we need to find a way to deal with the waste.



Hanford, Washington: The Most Contaminated Nuclear Site in the U.S.

The drinking water safety concerned me—isn't that sludge leaching into the groundwater?

JW: This is one of the major focuses of the Hanford clean up—groundwater remediation, and preventing nuclear waste from reaching the Columbia River. Most of the liquid waste has been moved from leaking single-shell tanks to more secure double-shell tanks, but millions of gallons of radioactive material are in the groundwater—and they don't yet have the science to stop those plumes from reaching the river.

What is happening with the other sites similar to Hanford, same problems?

JW: All of the country's nuclear sites, particularly the older ones, have had contamination problems. But Hanford was not just a World War II site; it continued to produce most of the plutonium for the nuclear arsenal through the Cold War. So the problems are on a much larger scale. There is nothing in the United States like Hanford.

President Bill Clinton, in 2000, proclaimed this land a National Monument. Why?

JW: It's the land around the Hanford site that became a National Monument. The military safety buffer around the site was no longer needed, and there was a chance that it would be turned over to development and agricultural use. The area was declared a monument to protect a valuable ecosystem and a historic place. It's actually a very special place because part of the monument is open to the public, so you can go out there and go hiking, you can go float the river, and get out there and see Hanford for yourself. Much of the footage in the film was shot from these publicly accessible areas.

Meanwhile the tanks containing 53 million gallons of toxic sludge are still leaching. Are efforts to prevent damage to the environment working? The film indicated that there are 2 billion dollars per year slotted for efforts in clean up—is that money being spent wisely?

JW: It's very difficult for me to say how wisely the money is being spent. Clearly, the cleanup is not moving fast enough. They've missed many legal deadlines over the last fifteen years and I expect they will miss more over the next forty. But it's hard for me to say how well the money is being spent. Definitely, the money is needed.

Are the class action lawsuits for elevated doses of radiation by the people who lived down wind of the river still active today, and also, are the cases of cancer higher in this area?

JW: There are elevated rates of cancer and thyroid-related illnesses in the area. But it's very hard to prove for certain that someone's health problems are specifically related to Hanford exposure. The downwinder cases are still in court, and a lot of the downwinders have passed away or have left the area.

It surprised me that the Tri-Cities are thriving with vineyards, etc. I would think that most people would have moved away from such a high-risk area. People interviewed in the film did not seem concerned, should they be?

JW: Nuclear technologies are scary to people who have not lived around them. When you grow up with it, it doesn't seem like such a big deal. The Hanford site today is not a huge risk to people going about their everyday lives, not like in the 40's and 50's when massive amounts of radioactive material were released into the river, soil and air. The current health risks "off site" are likely relatively low for those who are not eating fish from that stretch of river. The Hanford scientists say that it's safe to eat the fish, even.

Would you eat the fish out of the Columbia?

JW: The Columbia, yes. That stretch, no.

Arid Lands is produced by Grant Aaker & Josh Wallaert, Sidelong Films, LLP. To obtain a copy of the DVD or for more information, visit www.sidelongfilms.com.

What's Up with Radical Yoga?

A GK Exclusive Interview

Good Karma had the pleasure of interviewing Andrea Boyd and Jeffrey Cohen, husband and wife team and co-founders of Jivamukti Yoga Charleston. Jivamukti (pronounced gee-va-mook-tee) yoga is cutting edge and refreshing in its approach. It has often been referred to as “radical yoga.”

Andrea describes Jivamukti yoga as “unapologetically spiritual.” It is not just about tightening buns. It is about

So how does one live a free life in the Jivamukti tradition? What distinguishes Jivamukti from other forms of yoga is its “no compromise” approach. Andrea and Jeff define Jivamukti as having a foundation built upon the third tenet of ahimsa, translated from the Sanskrit to mean non-violence. Jeff states it plainly: “Unless you are talking about ahimsa, unless you’re talking about veganism, you’re not teaching yoga.” He confides, “Being vegan is probably been one of the single most happiness producing elements of my life. It brings joy to me.”

Andrea adds: “Yoga is about seeing ourselves in other beings, or seeing God in all. It is very hard to have reverence for others if you are eating them.” The couple also feels that yoga practitioners are short-changing themselves if they approach yoga with concern for serenity, a nice body, fulfilling relationships and don’t address their relationship to food. Jeff says, “We live in a culture where it is not radical to have a breast removed but it is radical to have a vegan lifestyle. Food is a huge arena where we can exert the most kindness and the most non-violence.”

Andrea gets a little more explicit: “If we eat crap we are going to feel like crap. If you are filling your body with the anger and fear that the animals feel, and the toxicity that is in meat and dairy, you are not nourishing your body. But if we eat healthy by consuming grains, legumes, vegetables and fruits we will bring about a “lightness of body.”

They also feel that yoga can not only offer a healthier physical and spiritual path but psychological serenity as well. Jeff turned to yoga because of behavioral and addiction problems. He attributes yoga to turning his life around. “Yoga is a spiritual program of

recovery. What we are recovering is our spirit, that oneness of being, that which is the same in all beings, or what in yoga is called Samadhi.” We look to be fulfilled by something, whether it is a drug or addictive foods, but “we are seeking outside of ourselves for that which is in us already.” He explains, “We delude ourselves to believe we can only be happy if we have a set amount of money, an alcoholic drink, or a certain kind of relationship.

Yoga is the de-hypnotization of this inculturalization. Everything in our culture is reinforcing outward — seeking to the point that when most people retire they will be on medication for the rest of their lives. But this is largely due to the food they have been eating. So we find ourselves as a culture of addicts. But yoga is seeking that source where we are content no matter what our circumstances.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF JIVAMUKTI YOGA CHARLESTON

developing the whole person. Jeff explains further, “Jivamukti translates from the Sanskrit to mean soul and liberation so the emphasis is on learning to live free. It brings together all different classical styles of yoga, including selfless service such as being socially or politically active.”

Every Jivamukti class has five components that facilitate asanas (yoga postures): 1) Scripture—Exploration of the foundational texts of yoga; 2) Bhakti—Cultivation of devotion and humility; 3) Ahimsa—Peaceful lifestyle that emphasizes the integration of ethical vegetarianism (this is where the radical label comes in); 4) Nada Yoga—Deep listening, chanting, elevated music; and 5) Meditation—Connecting to inner stillness and understanding the mechanics of the mind.

It's obvious that Andrea and Jeff are acute observers of U.S. culture. But they also try to work with cultural tendencies for positive advantage. Jeff illustrates this point. "If one notices commercials on TV you might view an ad stating that you can get your vegetables by putting ketchup on your sausage. Then you'll see a commercial to lower your cholesterol. Then you'll view a commercial on erectile dysfunction. Hello. There is a connection here."

He explains, "We're suggestible. As a culture, we are always outward looking so we are going to pay attention to whatever is shouting loudest outside of us." When you come to their Jivamukti Yoga studio what is shouting loudest is the pictures of positive people who have influenced them. Classes move with music that is high vibration chanting or modern like Michael Franti, Coldplay, U2, or the Beatles. "We are using messages of peace so the yoga experience is elevating consciousness."

They also have photos in their studio of non-humans and their personal mentors. Among them are rescued animals living in sanctuaries, meditation teachers, Jack Kornfield and Ram Dass, musician Krishna Das, founders of Jivamukti Yoga in New York, David Life, and Sharon Gannon, activist Julia Butterfly Hill, and Ingrid Newkirk, co-founder of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals.

Andrea and Jeff also walk the talk by having created a new yoga center that is "green." They recycled everything they could from their previous center and contacted Habitat for Humanity to find other furniture items. They have totally sustainable bamboo flooring and environmentally friendly paint on their walls. They don't sell bottled water. They sell water bottles instead. Jeff contends, "We don't want to reinforce to our yoga students that we live in a disposable world."

Jeff asserts, "I can't stand going into a yoga center and seeing paper towels in the bathroom. Something is missing here. What is so hard about using a towel?" So no paper towels either! They also have unique twist on offering reading material in their restrooms. They list the names of companies that do and don't test on animals on the walls of their bathroom stalls.

Ready to Go Radical?

To explore Jivamukti in the Chicago area, visit Jessica Aiken at www.smileyogachicago.com.

Yoga Now Gold Coast, www.yoganowchicago.com

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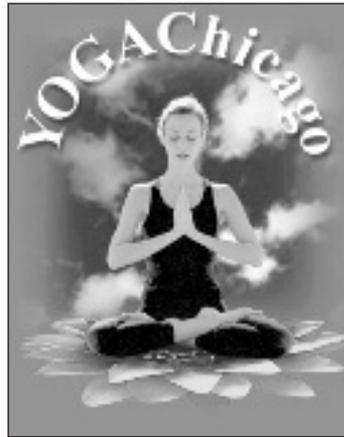
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PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT



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In the 60s, the young and hip smoked "grass." In 2009, the hip and stylish are wearing it. Zulugrass jewelry, that is.

Phillip and Katy Leakey's Zulugrass jewelry collection of beaded grass jewelry was created by the husband and wife team in response to a multi-year drought that had devastated their adopted homeland of Kenya. Phillip Leakey is the son of paleo-anthropologists Drs. Louis and Mary Leakey and has served as a Member of Parliament in Kenya for 15 years. Katy Leakey is an artist and designer with an interest in ancient cultures.

The Leakeys tapped into the Kenyan pastureland's abundant and renewable grass supply to create an ongoing source of income for their Maasai neighbors. The Maasai had previously depended upon cattle as a major source of their income until the cattle died off or had to be relocated because of the lasting drought.

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The Wakeful Dreamer



Teen Dreamwork: Useful Tool or Way to Power?

by Jacquie Lewis, PhD

I had my suspicions about *Teen Dream Power: Unlock the Meaning of Your Dreams* by M. J. Abadie (Bindu Books). Dreams, quite simply, are not about “power.” Dreams are about gain-

ing psychological knowledge into our emotional states, inner motivations, and daily concerns. Engaging in dreamwork offers a viable way to understand ourselves better. It is not so much about power as it is about gaining inner insight.

Teen Dream Power is not the first book to address teen dreaming. Other books have also addressed this issue. Most notably, *Demystifying Dreams: A Manual for Teens* by Marvin Rosen and *Dream Power for Teens: What Your Dreams Say About Your Past, Present, and Future* by Rob MacGregor. Noted and respected dream expert, Patricia Garfield also has written a book on working with dreams for an even younger set, 8-10 year olds, *The Dream Book: A Young Person's Guide to Understanding Dreams*.

There are features that are quite positive about *Teen Dream Power*. The first is that it is specifically directed at adolescents. Many people, who are clinicians or dream researchers, have stated that their interest in dreams first emerged during young adulthood. So adolescence is a perfect time to introduce people to dreams and dreaming.

Teen Dream Power starts out by giving a brief history and discussing dreams and dreaming throughout the world. It is both educational and

a workbook and is peppered with side bars consisting of quotes, tips, and factoids. The book also offers easy methods of recalling dreams, methods on how to use dreams to answer personal questions, how to record dreams in a journal, and development of skills to recognize personal dream symbols. Young adults also will discover how to work with nightmares and sexual dreams and gain understanding of both lucid and telepathic dreams.

The book also offers a number of writing exercises young people can do in order to become more in touch with their dreams. For example, one teen dream exercise lists about 70 different types of animals. The dreamer is discouraged from relying on dream dictionaries to make associations with each animal (good) and encouraged to make personal associations (also good) by jotting down whatever comes to mind when thinking of a particular animal.

Perhaps the author or publisher suspected the word “Power” would sell a “powerful” lot of books. Although the word “power” in the book’s title is a little over the top the quality of *Teen Dream Power* is very good. I would recommend this book to any young person. It is a great beginner’s guide to the world of dreams.

Jacquie Lewis, PhD teaches about dreams at California Southern University and is the Interim Co-Director of the Dream Studies Certificate Program at Saybrook Graduate School and Research Center. She is on the board of directors of the International Association for the Study of Dreams. Jacquie also teaches graduate courses in psychology at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology and at Argosy University in Chicago. She is the founder of Good Karma magazine and president of SPEAK (Supporting and Promoting Ethics for the Animal Kingdom), a national humane education speakers bureau.

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