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# A REFLECTION FOR ELECTION DAY

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Cultural Famine: A Cycle

Walter Mosley

America stands on a fiscal precipice here at the start of the twenty-first century. China and India and South America present powerful challenges to our economic hegemony; Europe's united economy also imperils our dominance. Our money is worth less daily, our children's potential is dwindling; our medical insurance, Social Security and ability to make choices about when and if we retire are fast eroding.

We cannot, with our present economic system, compete with Asia's burgeoning workforce. We are no longer superior in technology or the culling of natural resources. We can't even afford to pick our own vegetables or dig our own graves.

We've made enemies of the adherents of Islam, socialists, the French and much of the rest of the world. Most of our citizens are in debt over products that were made according to the lawful conspiracy of planned obsolescence, and we are mired in a war that we cannot win and yet cannot stop waging.

We say, and most of us believe, that our form of government is democratic at its root. But contradictorily, we suspect that it is the wealthiest among us who control Congress, the legal system and the presidency itself.

If we are lucky enough to achieve old age we know that all of our savings must be lost before we are interred in public nursing homes that have the smell and feel of detention camps--the last stop in the American Dream.

Our prisons are overflowing with undereducated and angry people of color, poor whites and the mentally ill.

Fast food clogs our arteries, and sugar is sprinkled over everything like fairy dust on ever-expectant Cinderellas. Television distracts us, and the Lotto is one of the minor faiths under the greater religion of Capitalism.

This is America. This is our home.

We worry that we might come in second or third when we are used to thinking about ourselves as Number One with a bullet. We are supposed to be the wealthiest, smartest, most powerful among nations. Our people are supposed to feel pride in our politics, our charity and our moral superiority.

But lately all of that seems to be slipping away. B What happened to us? How did we start to wind down? Why are we hated so? Why are we losing traction on the international playing field?

The answer, I believe, lies in a basic contradiction in our current national definitions of power and success. It was not the promise of wealth that made America strong; it was the hunger for freedom and the expressed belief that any woman, man or child has the potential to realize his or her abilities regardless of origin. It is not the questing after wealth and property that made us great but the belief in the rights of all human beings.

What would be wrong if our belief in our people made us less wealthy on an international level? What if we worked harder but ate better? What if we educated more of our children to become doctors but paid our doctors less? What if we built homes that anyone could afford to live in and limited the pain that profit often demands from our workers? What if we demanded that we get value from our dollars and called out the credit card companies for what they are: loan sharks? What if we stopped policing the rest of the world and joined together with all nations as an equal looking for parity rather than professing our superiority because of our access to gold and the weapons we wield? What if we recognized the crimes we've committed from Cambodia to Cuba, from Alcatraz to Africa? What if we recommitted ourselves to health, education and a minimum degree of wealth for all of our people? This would only serve to make us stronger (if not richer).

Because the truth is, we are starving on this fast-food, power-hungry diet of ours. Our children's minds are being strangled by our own corporations disseminating video games and advertising cross-trainers, selling SUVs and proudly manufacturing the tools of war.

Maybe if we had a little less and cared a lot more there would blossom the potential for happiness in our nation, more sweetness in our tone; we would certainly be stronger if our labor could support our lifestyles and our education opened our minds to the world. If we could realize that our culture creates criminality from the greed and poverty that abound within our borders, then we might have a chance to live in the world as equals, proud of our heritage and certain of our actions.

For the full article, see <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20061023/mosley>

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## ACTIONS

1. In the spirit of this reflection, vote with your daily choices and actions, not just at the ballot box.
2. Share and discuss this leaflet with family, friends, coworkers and your faith community.
3. Download this leaflet in pdf format and use it for vigils and protests in your area. The pdf format has space for local contact information. 8th Day's peace leaflets are posted at this site each week for use in your area.

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