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9/11 and 11/9 – Six Songs About Two World-Changing Events

By Michael Reddy, PhD

I grew up deeply influenced by, and singing, the socially relevant songwriting of Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, early Bob Dylan, Phil Ochs, and later the amazingly well crafted lyrics of the Canadian Stan Rogers. For half a century, there's been little popular interest in songs like these. Now, however, we face wholesale loss of consensus in Western democracies. Consider the gridlocked failure (in the US at least) to address social and economic inequality, refugee migrations, climate change, peak oil, and a massive extinction of species--not to mention the rise of what looks once again like fascism.

Songs addressing these issues, and the often-glossed over or obfuscated realities behind them, rise thus once again into positions of possible importance. Insightful lyrics can be read as poetry in their own right, or listened to and sung as tuneful melodies. Dylan just won a Nobel prize for some.

It's interesting that the World Trade Center in New York was attacked on what is remembered now simply as "9/11," and the 2016 election of Donald Trump happened on 11/9. These two dates bracket the Mayan New Year, but signal turning points more precipitous than December 21st, 2012. Here, then, are six song lyrics that arise around these tipping points to look deeper into the relevant issues. You can read them, or watch initial videos to hear them sung on you tube.

A Fork in the Trail

By Michael Reddy, PhD

This song was written shortly after the attack on the World Trade Center in 2001. It was part of a CD of songs by the same name still available on iTunes and YouTube. I had hoped they might help influence the direction of the US response at least somewhat in the direction of what is called "soft power" and awareness of the international inequalities that led to the event. These hopes were pretty much stillborn. Over the years, I've changed the choruses slightly to reflect the fact that we continued in the same pattern of purely militaristic responses. So this version differs from the original.

[CLICK HERE](#) to see and hear the song performed on YouTube

There's a hole up in the sky
Where airplanes used to fly
Without fear of an evil intention.
As the smoke rose up so high

Children asked us why
 And governments talked of prevention.
 The world that we thought
 Our might and money bought—
 Perhaps it was not all for sale...
 More had fallen down
 Than just rubble on the ground
 And we stumbled on a fork in the trail.
 Yes we stumbled on a fork in the trail.

Debris then clogged the air
 Police and firemen stared
 At brothers and sisters gone forever.
 We stood reeling from the shock
 But still it broke the lock—
 On lives that were not wise, but only clever.

 The world that we thought
 Our might and money bought—
 Perhaps it was not all for sale...
 More had fallen down
 Than just rubble on the ground
 And we stood then at a fork in the trail.
 Yes we stood then at a fork in the trail.

Businesses slowed down
 Would Wall Street turn around?
 Consumers were asked to re-arrange things.
 Though maybe it was true
 We had to fight then too—
 But that's all we did well, and did it change things?

 The world that we thought
 Our might and money bought—
 Perhaps it was not all for sale...
 More had fallen down
 Than just rubble on the ground
 We were gathered at a fork in the trail.
 Just walked blindly past that fork in the trail

You can tell us what to buy
 But we hear the children cry
 There's deeper dreams than wealth we must keep sacred.
 In the end we're much the same
 We like to win life's game
 But something's wrong when souls fill up with hatred.
 The world that we thought
 Our might and money bought—
 Perhaps it was not all for sale...
 More had fallen down
 Than just rubble on the ground
 And we stood then at a fork in the trail

Stumbled badly at that fork in the trail.
Took the wrong road at that fork in the trail

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How Would it Be?

By Michael Reddy, PhD

This song now asks what it might be like to be born, live, and grow old in a world where humans cared for themselves and their planet. The third verse asks whether such a world is even possible when our social empathy systems are stunted by the loss of embodied, physically present communication. In my seventies now, these lines come straight from my heart.

[CLICK HERE](#) to see and hear the song performed on YouTube

As I look now back on a long life
It's certainly been quite a ride
Sometimes I've been so damned happy
Other times dying inside
What makes growing older much harder
Is watching the fall of our race
Why are we so damned destructive
Killing ourselves and this place

How would it be to grow old in a world
Where people cared for their Earth?
What would it be like to live among people
Who knew what a planet was worth
Who thought of great grandchildren first

We claim to find raw nature savage
While raping and killing our own
Who do we think we are kidding?
How can we ever atone?
Take a good look at your brothers
Sisters and children have skin
Just cause it's not your same color
You're gonna bash their heads in

How would it be to grow old in a world
Where humans loved one another?
Wouldn't it be better to die among people
Who actually cared for each other
Who knew how to share with each other

We think we're so super intelligent
Alone with our shiny bright screens
While high tech develops in robots

Autonomous killing machines
 But your body talk's lost when you're texting
 And empathy grows face to face
 You don't learn to come to consensus
 Tweeting in cold cyberspace

How would it be to be born in a world
 Where humans still touched one another?
 Wouldn't you like to grow up among people
 Who worked out solutions like brothers
 Who respected their sisters and mothers

It's not all that clear how much longer
 I'll still be hanging around
 70 years are all gone now
 Before long I'll rest in the ground
 But all I can say is it's tragic
 To kill such a beautiful place
 Good luck if you think you can find one
 Anything like this in space

Or maybe it's actually better
 To kill off a dangerous race
 Look out if you ever find one
 Anything like us in space

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Somebody Else Will

By Michael Reddy, PhD

There has been a steady erosion in the economic viability of human skills in the face of relentless automation. This translates quickly into widespread loss of meaningful employment for people. As the next great wave of venture capital investment pours now into artificial intelligence (autonomous, expert, legal, medical, and warfare systems; driverless cars, trucks, etc.), the media cliché that “we will always need humans” is revealed for the lie that it always was.

All of this is driven by the fear-based belief that, “if I don't do it, somebody else will.” Of course, the elephant in the room is—who is going to buy the products when there's nothing left it makes economic sense to pay humans to do? And isn't this a recipe for a large part of the labor-related backlash that helped decide the 2016 US election?

[CLICK HERE](#) to see and hear the song performed

I earned a blue collar dollar
 Makin' GM factory cars
 Till robot welders came online
 And sent us to the bars
 They say it's not competitive

To hire us for our skills
They say if they don't automate
Somebody else will

I earned a pink collar dollar
Takin' shorthand every day
Typed 90 words a minute
Earned a senior steno's pay
But desktop software grew up fast
And I became a frill
They say if they don't modernize
Somebody else will

I earned a white collar dollar
As a manager was trained
Kept departments running
Helped the customers we gained
But now it's all computerized
And I don't pay my bills
They say if they don't downsize then
Somebody else will

I earned a knowledge worker dollar
Building high end software tools
Retrained every other year
To learn all the new rules
But expert systems found a way
To duplicate my skills
They say if they don't use them quick
Somebody else will

I earned a journalistic dollar
Seeking truth among the lies
Tried to write the stories that
Helped citizens be wise
But everyday more blogs are posting
Trending spills and thrills
If you don't get the followers
Somebody else will

I earned a truck drivin dollar
 Loadin' up for the long hauls
 But now I sit at home and drink
 'Cause no one ever calls
 The big rigs that can drive themselves
 Are filled up to the gills
 They say if they don't ship in them
 Somebody else will

We had a middle class economy
 Distributed **some** wealth
 Lots of problems were not solved
 But still it had some health
 Now you've built these smart machines
 That replicate our skills
 Do you think when we can't buy stuff
 Somebody else will?

What jobless humans cannot buy do you
 Think the robots will?

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The Human Race

By Michael Reddy, PhD

Here is nuanced look at some of the energies behind right wing extremism and the election of Donald Trump in the United States. This is about male privilege, and white privilege, on the one hand, but also simply the idea that life, in Western dominant cultures at least, is conceived of as primarily a competition. An ever-accelerating race for survival of the fittest.

Please note that leading edge research has made it clear that “survival of the successfully bonded” is equally important. But that has had little impact on the mainstream at this point. This song plays on two meanings of the word “race.”

Ultimately, as in a feeding frenzy of sharks when the prey species is eaten up, there is nothing left for individuals and institutions locked in a competitive race to do except consume each other. As the song below says, “what we do to you, comes right back at us.”

[CLICK HERE](#) to see and hear the song performed on YouTube

We walk tall, we own the planet
 We're not small—we think we're gods
 We take all, we've got the answers
 When we call—you'd better get in line
 Yeah boys
 Do it fast, yeah boys

You animals, you're plants and insects

Just stand aside, while we have rough sex
 Don't ask us why, cause we're not thinking
 We're high on poisons that we're drinking

Dominating's what we do best
 Move on over you've flunked our test
 We'll mow Earth down, then conquer space
 We're the human race
 Yeah boys
 We'll erase you, yeah boys

You blacks and browns, you'd better run
 'Cause were around, and we've got big guns
 It's our town, we own the voters
 Face on the ground! You're just floaters

And then there's girls, we like their asses
 If they're not flat, and don't wear glasses
 We let them play, like they have power
 Until it's time for their baby shower

White man's privilege is what we've got
 A big disease that we've long since caught
 It's not a thing we have time to face
 'Cause we're running the human race
 Yeah boys
 It's a race yeah boys
 And we're the white-race, yeah boys
 It's such a tight race, yeah boys

We talk on phones and click on buttons
 We post our tweets and eat like gluttons
 Still there's a ghost in those smart machines
 Our jobs are rotting--inside those shiny screens

Corporations speak now as the people
 Big bucks scream, government crumbles
 High tech brains have jumped in the ring now
 Smart money knows they get better at every...

...thing and they don't ever sleep
 Data mines build their knowledge deep
 It's a truth we don't want to face
 But we're losing the human race
 Ah hell
 It was OUR race, ah hell

What we do to you, comes right back at us
 But we want to keep our privileged status
 We're mad as hell, but it's not over
 CEO's are still rolling in clover

They're all connected and we don't know
 What they're doing 'cause it don't show
 Our smile grows now on a robot's face
 We're losing the human race
 Too bad
 We'd slow it down, if we knew how
 Turn it around, if we knew how

Maybe it shouldn't have been a race...
 ...after all

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Thanksgiving Day USA

By Michael Reddy, PhD

This song was written Wednesday and Thursday of Thanksgiving week 2016. Living in a cabin in a small woods, trained as a shaman, I had decided to spend the days alone with the trees and the other energetic symbols that surround me here. The lyric contrasts the gaudy, disconnected, terribly commercialized holidays of so many now in the US with a different kind of celebration. Essentially, one in much quieter communion with the divine energy we animists feel in everything around us.

I was very surprised at the emergence of the chorus. It voices rather stridently the deep ancestral traumas that engulf us in Western "democracies," especially here in the US. Did it actually belong in the same song as the verse? And even more surprising to me were the final lines of the last verse, in which something larger makes itself felt and heard through the song.

But there is an "InnerNet," you know, that is vastly older and more powerful than that "OuterNet" we call the "Internet." It is there in genuine spiritual experience to hold steady any of us who still care to "log in" to it. But of course our kids are being distracted and shallowed by that "OuterNet."

[CLICK HERE](#) to see and hear the song performed on YouTube

I sit alone in this log cabin in the forest
 Late November in a fractured USA
 On the radio the pundits keep explaining
 How not to fight with friends Thanksgiving day
 But the friends around me now are great big trees
 And we know we don't have to try to please
 We have grown here side by side across the years
 And watched the races shed their bitter tears

In a country that was stolen from the Red ones
 And built upon the slavery of the Blacks
 In the melting pot that never really melted
 Where fat cats skim the cream behind our backs
 We are shredded by the sins
 of our father's dreams
 And don't know how to patch up all the cracks
 And don't know how to sew up all the seams

I look around me at the tables and the chairs
 Wishing there were friends or lovers to sit here
 But I've been with many families during holidays
 And felt the brittle texture of their cheer
 Slick pictures on the big screens blasting sound
 Shout lies about how happiness is found
 And the children and the husbands and the wives
 Can't reconnect their isolated lives

In a country that was stolen from the Red ones
 And built upon the slavery of the Blacks
 In the melting pot that never really melted
 Where fat cats skim the cream behind our backs
 We are shredded by the sins
 of our father's dreams
 And don't know how to patch up all the cracks
 And don't know how to sew up all the seams

So am I thankful for this feeling of contentment
 Knowing that the cabin's looking at me too
 There is a deeper presence singing in the silence
 When I stay still enough to let it through
 Great big trees and empty chairs are all my friends
 From the Earth we do this message send
 You are connected to a network deep within
 Which holds you fast despite the growing din...

...of a country that was stolen from the Red ones
 And built upon the slavery of the Blacks
 In the melting pot that never really melted
 Where fat cats skim the cream behind our backs
 We are shredded by the sins
 of our father's dreams
 And don't know how to patch up all the cracks
 And don't know how to grow up so it seems

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The Rainbow Shuffle

By Michael Reddy, PhD

Though this was written way back in the mid eighties, I include it here so as to leave you with something positive. And also, in a curious way, it speaks of the central aspects of any and all solutions to our current planetary crisis. We need to “let love” move us towards choice, wisdom, hard work, and yes also enjoyment of the process, whatever forms it takes.

As Charles Eisenstein says so eloquently in *The More Beautiful World Our Hearts Know is Possible*, we are “between stories.” The death spasms of the “story of separation” are everywhere apparent. And the shape of the new story, which Charles calls the “story of interbeing,” and I here characterize in musical terms simply as “harmony”—is not yet clear to us. If we are true to our deeper dreams, we all hold pieces of it. They are different melodies that need to be woven into a larger harmony.

In a way, this song calls to mind also Otto Scharmer’s ideas in *Theory U: Leading from the Future as it Emerges*. It is the quality of some larger, loving presence in group efforts to champion constructive change that is the key ingredient.

[CLICK HERE](#) to see and hear the song performed on YouTube

Gonna get down to it
 Reach out and let love do it
 Puttin’ some heart in it
 We’re gonna choose
 Look at this world spinning
 Who here is really winning
 Take a little chance people
 What can you lose?

In the rainbow shuffle all the colors dance
 To love’s bright melody
 We’re gonna give this planet another chance—
 We’re gonna shuffle up some harmony...
 We’re gonna shuffle up some harmony

Gonna get down to it
 Reach out and let love do it
 Puttin’ some smarts in it
 We’re getting’ wise
 Look at this Earth ailing
 Lands and the seas are failing
 Better think twice people
 Death rides the skies

In the rainbow shuffle all the colors dance
 To love’s bright melody
 We’re gonna give this planet another chance—
 We’re gonna shuffle up some harmony...
 We’re gonna shuffle up some harmony

Gonna get down to it
 Reach out and let love do it
 Puttin’ our backs to it
 We’re growing strong

Catchin' a world falling
 Answer, the planet's calling
 Bring it on through people
 Sing out the song

In the rainbow shuffle all the colors dance
 To love's bright melody
 We're gonna give this planet another chance—
 We're gonna shuffle up some harmony...
 We're gonna shuffle up some harmony

Gonna get down to it
 Reach out and let love do it
 Puttin some joy in it
 We're gonna shine
 Pretty blue world smiling
 Earth Mother so beguiling
 Do her little dance bothers
 Sisters unite

In the rainbow shuffle all the colors dance
 To love's bright melody
 We're gonna give this planet another chance—
 We're gonna shuffle up some harmony...
 We're gonna shuffle up some harmony

Michael Reddy, PhD, CPC, is currently active as an author, healer, and trainer most interested in working to resolve and promote understanding of two forms of trauma—personal and inherited ancestral. Previously, he helped found cognitive science at the University of Chicago and Columbia, developed IT systems in business, and was trained for 7 years as a shaman. Musically, on iTunes and YouTube, you will find him as “Michael Cougar Reddy.” He is also a member with Robert Schwarz, PhD of “The Keynoters”—a duo that has performed original songs on the main stage at annual conferences of the Association for Comprehensive Energy Psychology (ACEP) and the Institute of Noetic Studies (IONS).



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