

## AN ORGANISATION FOR PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIETY (OPUS)

### USA and the World at the Dawn of 2015 Report of a New Year's Listening Post



Encouraging The Reflective Citizen

#### **Part 1. THE SHARING OF PREOCCUPATIONS AND EXPERIENCES.**

In this part of the Listening Post participants were invited to identify, contribute, and explore their experience in their various social roles, be those in work, unemployed, or retired; as members of religious, political, neighbourhood or voluntary or leisure organisations, or as members of families and communities. This part was largely concerned with what might be called, 'the stuff of people's everyday lives', that relating to the 'socio' or 'external' world of participants.

#### **Part 2. IDENTIFICATION OF MAJOR THEMES**

In Part 2 the aim was to collectively identify the major themes emerging from Part 1. From several presented these have been drawn together under the following interrelated themes:

There is a problem in our society respecting Human Rights of others

We have difficulty with Justice

\*example - Achievement gaps between blacks and whites.

We seem to be in an era of permanent war

\* We have developed a higher tolerance for violence in our society

There is a lack of respect for human dignity

There is increasing polarization at all levels -  
Political, racially, socially

We as a society have problems with authority

Student debt more than worth – no way to achieve American dream

Technology has impacted negatively connection in our work cultures

We have unchecked capitalism

\*huge threat to humanity

We are more focused on task completion vs. process

Climate change-global warming

\*there is massive denial

We have unsustainable consumption in multiple areas

There is a breakdown of the family system.

\*The power difference when males are not part of the family system

Lack of the African American male as head of household

Lack of definition and clarity of roles in the community

We seem to be experiencing much more isolation

Citizen participation is at an all time low

How can people who are dissatisfied with society ever feel empowered?

We in this country have an unfinished civil rights movement

We are experiencing much more alienation as a society

There role of the professor has lost meaning as they are the most underpaid

(There is a lack of ) Valuing critical thinking

Social classism

We have developed a much more rigid Social Class structure

Sexual Trafficking rates highest among neglected and abandoned children

How much do we value our own kids?

The break down of the family structure.

\*Lack of love

\*Lack of bonds

\*Lack of Training

Technology of Revolution

How can we adapt and handle change

Are we all involved in negative group think?

Can we find positive themes in our preoccupations ?

We draw toward the negative vs the good

There is passivity in our society

It is a challenge to get participation and get people together

There is a prevalent theme of people being "Ungrateful and unthankful?"

We as a society have become more into self preservation

## **Part 2**

### **Themes Group 3**

- Values
- A link between issues and having a voice that is heard to help others become more involved.
- Self-Privilege
- Search for universal standard of behavior
- Search for safe places and safe container
- Doing vs Being
- What does it mean to live in the present?
- Alienation
- Search for support systems
- Connections can be more powerful in terms of engagement vs. the issues.

### **Themes-Group 1**

- Alienation and Disconnect
- Social Economic and Political Change
- Competition for Scarce Resource
- Education
- Respect for Human Dignity or Lack Thereof
- Systems and Interdependency

### **Themes-Group 2**

- Break down of family/community
- Balancing/handling technology
- Nutrition
- Social Inequality
- Alienation and Disempowerment
- All issues are interdependent, everything has to be seen in a wholistic manner, it makes it harder to blame a single cause or individual.
- Entitlement
- How do we transcend

- Do we really want to get rid of class?
- Morality and ethics and (in media)
- Tolerance and disire habituated to violence
- Relation to addiction
- Less family = less resistance

### **Part 3. ANALYSIS AND HYPOTHESIS FORMATION**

In this part of the Listening Post the members were working with the information resulting from Parts 1 & 2, with a view to collectively identifying the underlying dynamics both conscious and unconscious that may be predominant at the time; and, developing hypotheses as to why they might be occurring at that moment. Here the members were working more with what might be called their 'psycho' or 'internal' world. Their collective ideas and ways of thinking that both determine how they perceive the external realities and shape their actions towards them. The resulting analysis has been distilled into the following two interrelated hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 1** Because of globalization, capitalism, the explosion of technology and the constant search for cheap labor and markets, family systems are challenged by a highly competitive work environments requiring multiple family income earners, and this results in the fragmentation and breakdown of family systems.

**Hypothesis 2** Because of economic, social, and political inequality, members of American society are more competitive, less connected, more fragmented, and this results in an increasingly rigid American social class system and injustice.

**Convener: Janet Chandler.**