

Human population data are
garnered from statistics
provided by the
United Nations, and
are poignantly
presented in
a dizzying
time
clock
at:

www.worldometers.info

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pursue to conserve the Planet Earth is to
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*Or to compensate for couples who beget
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Birth Control or Birth Out-of-Control

Honor Thy UnMother and Thy UnFather

by Mark Mathew Braunstein

All moms and dads want to raise smart and healthy and handsome sons, and smart and healthy and beautiful daughters. One would think that society would want the same. Yet parents who aspire to raise their families conscientiously face many challenges institutionalized by society. Mothers and fathers must choose whether to shield youngsters from the violence and vulgarity of television, or to trust that their children will survive staring into the black hole of the boob tube just as they, too, survived. Parents must decide whether to comply to compulsory immunization of their children, or to contest the rules of school administrators and government bureaucrats. Whether every morning to pack for their kids a special lunch box filled with fresh fruits and green vegetables, or to mount campaigns to improve the dismal lunches served by school cafeterias. Whether to shelter children from the onslaught of industrialized and commercialized dead glop that poses as food, or to entrust children with the freedom to make their own educated choices when eating outside the home.

While the list of challenges can lengthen to fill this page, an underlying question may make moot any noble effort toward raising enlightened and enlivened children. Before grappling with the above dilemmas, we first must consider whether the Earth really can sustain many more future generations of consumptive Homo sapiens. Before asking how best to raise children, we first must decide whether to give birth to them at all.

Scientists who can read the smoke signals forecast that we soon will surpass our planet's capacity to support the voracious appetites of our swelling numbers. The countless environmental canaries already falling silent in our coalmines hardly require enumer-

ation here. Yet experienced from the isolated comfort of our temperature-controlled and water-filtration goldfish bowls, many affluent Americans have scant idea of the overcrowded lifeboat on which we all are adrift. While aware of the rising costs of housing, fuel, and food, we the affluent seem to ignore that the root cause is demand that is outstripping supply. Demand by whom? By the hungry hordes of humanity worldwide.

Between the dawn of human history and 1804, the global population rose slowly to 1 billion people. In 1927, we doubled to 2 billion; in 1960, we climbed to 3 billion; in 1974, to 4 billion; in 1987, to 5 billion; in 1999, to 6 billion. A scant 12 years later, in 2011 our numbers made a meteoric ascent

to 7 billion. Measured another way, from 1970 to 2014 we took less than two human generations to double our dizzying numbers. For the sake of our children's children, we should dread if our population proliferates twofold yet again.

We North Americans at long last are in the midst of reversing, somewhat, our diets and lifestyles of self-destruction and overconsumption. Fine and good. And yet the rest of the non-Western world is actively pursuing what we previously had fashioned for ourselves. To understand why so many teeming masses clamor to gain entrance into our already congested country, we must look not just into past centuries but also beyond our borders. **CONT'D ON P. 62**

BIRTH CONTROL OR BIRTH

OUT-OF-CONTROL, CONT'D FROM P. 29

So here are some more numbing numbers. In 2010, London, Chicago, New York City, and Los Angeles County each hosted between 8 and 9 million people. In the same year, Tokyo totaled 33 million people; Sao Paulo, Brazil—18 million; Seoul, South Korea—17 million; Mexico City—17 million; Osaka—16 million; Manila—15 million; Mumbai (Bombay)—14 million; Delhi—14 million; Jakarta, Indonesia—14 million; Lagos, Nigeria—13 million.

Now add China, the most populace nation on Earth. Entire mega-cities in China have names we may never have heard and can only guess how to pronounce, yet their citizenry exceeds those of any American city. Such Chinese cities are Shanghai—24 million; Beijing—21 million; Guangzhou—13 million; Tianjin—12 million; Shenzhen—11 million; Wuhan—10 million; and Dongguan—more than 8 million. The last, Dongguan, is reputed as the sex capital of China, but really every city is a sex capital because how else but by sexual reproduction do we multiply? Little wonder China was the first nation to mandate a family policy limited to one child.

While we humans fiddle, our planet burns, and we put ourselves in peril with it. If ecological collapse is imminent as some doomsayers predict, we Euro-American humans will be the first to perish. Just turning off the electricity brings us to our knees. While awaiting our Eco-Armageddon, we bandy around many solutions, some during conversations at our heavily laden dinner tables. According to the pleas of vegans and vegetarians, one solution lurks in the very food upon our plates. Vegan evangelists proclaim that being veg not only spares the lives of farm animals, it also saves the world!

That certainly may help, yet being veg is hardly the most effective step we can take to conserve the Planet

Earth. Being veg merely redistributes more food to feed still more people, so is only a tertiary step. Secondary would be to eliminate or limit our personal use of combustion engine automobiles. But the foremost effective measure we can pursue to conserve the Planet Earth is to give birth to only one child. Or to compensate for couples who beget three or more children, to beget none. Because a No Child consumes far less food and drives far fewer miles than any Veg Child.

Every newborn child is a social statement.

A family with one child balances connubial happiness while acknowledging that Mother Earth should be made happy too. Many women assert that the female womb intrinsically yearns to blossom and to bear fruit and to manifest motherly love, even if but once. Most parents regard the moment of birth of their first child as the happiest of their lives. And every mother and father deserves the continued happiness they experience while raising a child.

A family of two children can be considered the married couple's birthright, though redundant, and a birthright which does not add to the present human pressure on the planet. Such zero population growth declares that everything is fine just the way the world now exists. Further, a family of two children provides each child with a playmate, else an only child becomes a lonely child. Every daughter or son deserves the happiness of growing up with a sibling.

A family of three or more children, however, is akin to two ticketholders who were granted two seats in a theater or on a plane, but who occupy three or four or five. The theater company or air carrier cannot survive such a business model, nor can the planet. And each ticket can be very costly even in terms of personal affordability.

According to a USDA report published in August 2014, a newborn

child will cost a middle-income American couple an average of \$245,340 until the child reaches age 18. That's a lot of disposable diapers and baby formula and doctors appointments. A lot of worn out cribs and baby carriages and bicycles and first automobiles. A lot of tired out babysitters and day-care workers and schoolteachers. A lot of outgrown sneakers and Levi's and blouses and shirts. A lot of cast aside Barbie dolls and baseball bats and Monopoly games. A lot of outdated televisions and iPhones and computers. A lot of useless "stuff" stockpiled and then forgotten in basements and garages and attics. A lot of landfills filling and groundwater drying and wildlife dying and wilderness disappearing. A lot of breakfasts and lunches and dinners.

The dinner party is over. Yet in the time you will take to read this paragraph, mothers and fathers will have continued to beget sons and daughters, and an additional thousand humans will have appeared upon the planet. One would think that over seven billion humans presently inhabiting this planet are enough.

A bumper sticker which advocates Voluntary Simplicity urges us to Take Just Enough. While thinking in slogans is not thinking, it is a contradictory slogan in that it appears on stickers on bumpers on combustion engine automobiles. It also begs the question, Enough what? Enough cars? Enough food? Enough stuff? A more precise slogan would be Make Just Enough. Make just enough babies. And one or two per carload surely is enough.

But such a call for population restraint is barely audible above the faraway din of millions of crying infants, especially those born to impoverished families who go hungry every night and so cry the loudest and the longest. For their sake, not ours, we should revise the tax code to levy surcharges, not allow deductions, for raising children. To celebrate unwed singles and married couples for

choosing not to perpetuate their lineage, we should retain our traditional Sunday holidays but also declare two new ones, UnMother's Day and UnFather's Day. To honor educators who chose careers teaching children but who themselves remain childless, we should bestow an annual award of Childless Children's Teacher of the Year. And a special



Albrecht Dürer, *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*

award should be reserved just for childless nutritionists who teach our children to be whole foods vegans.

We North Americans and Western Europeans, especially we who hold this glossy magazine in our hands or read its PDF on our computers, are an affluent and educated elite. We understand how human history has been shaped by the tenets of Thomas Malthus and of social Darwinism. Yet we understand that the terrors of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse no longer need reign upon the Earth. We need not rely upon the deprivations of Poverty, Plague, Famine, and War to contain our numbers. We can afford to seek humane alternatives. We can choose the Four Preventions of the Apocalypse: Contraception, Abortion, Voluntary Sterility, and Celibacy.

We can choose between birth control and birth out-of-control. 🏠



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