

Flip Side Barbara Ehrenreich

Hell Is a Gated Community



Another utopia seems to be biting the dust. The socialist kibbutzim of Israel have vanished or gone increasingly capitalist, and now the paranoid residential ideal represented by gated communities may be in serious trouble. Never exactly cool—remember Jim Carrey in *The Truman Show*?—these pricy enclaves of privilege are becoming hotbeds of disillusionment.

At the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association in Washington, incoming association president Setha Low painted a picture so dispiriting that the audience guffawed in schadenfreude. The gated community residents Low interviewed had fled from ethnically challenging cities, but they had not managed to escape their fear. One resident reported that her small daughter has developed a severe case of xenophobia, no doubt communicated by her parents.

Low recalled the resident's words:

"We were driving next to a truck with some day laborers and equipment in the back, and we stopped beside them at the light.

Barbara Ehrenreich is the author, most recently, of "Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy." Her website is www.barbaraehrenreich.com.

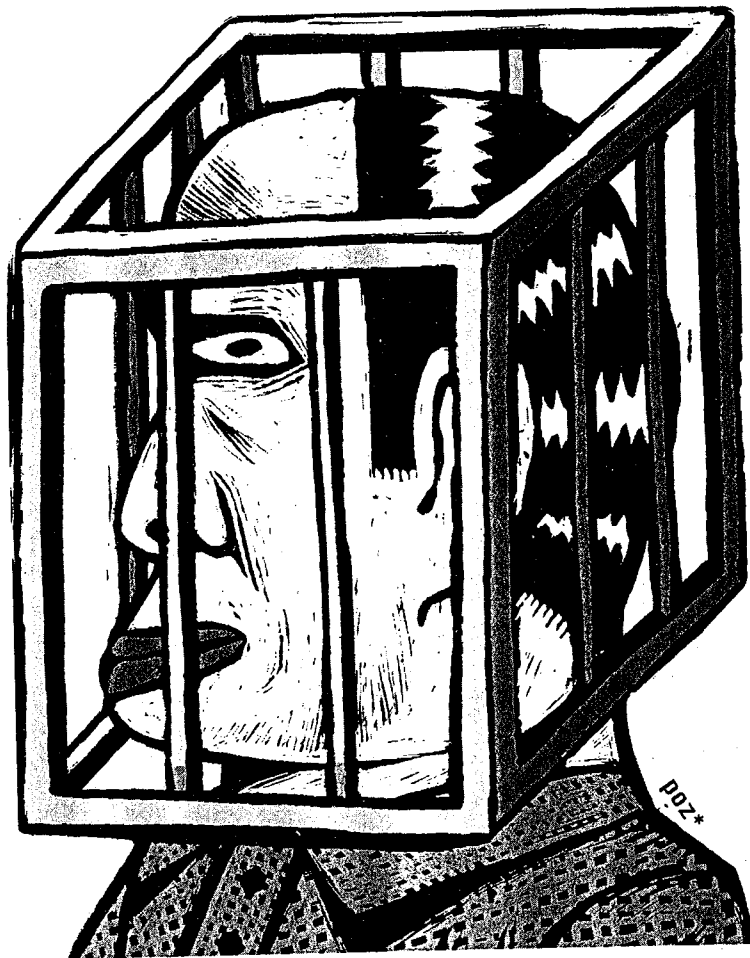
She wanted to move because she was afraid those people were going to come and get her. They looked scary to her."

Leaving aside the sorry spectacle of homeowners living in fear of their landscapers, there is actually something to worry about. According to Low, gated communities are no less

Myers gated community last spring and left with a houseful of furniture. Or the crime comes from within, as in the Hilton Head Plantation community in South Carolina, where a rash of crimes committed by resident teenagers has led to the imposition of a curfew.

Most recently, America's gated communities have been blighted by foreclosures. Yes, even people who are able to put together the down payment on a half-million dollar house can be ambushed by Adjustable Rate Mortgages. *Newsweek* reports that foreclosures are devastating the gated community of Black Mountain Vista in Henderson, Nevada, where "yellow patches [now] blot the spartan lawns and phone books lie on front porches, their covers bleached from weeks under the desert sun." Similarly, according to the *Orlando Sentinel*, "countless homeowners overwhelmed by their mortgages are taking off and leaving behind algae-filled swimming pools and knee-high weeds" in one local gated community.

So, for people who sought not just prosperity but perfection, here's another sad end to the American dream, or at least their ethnically cleansed version thereof: boarded-up McMansions, plastic baggies scudding over overgrown lawns, and, in the Orlando case, a foreclosure-



PETER O. ZIERLEIN

crime-prone than open ones, and Gopal Ahluwalia, vice president of research at the National Association of Home Builders, confirms this. The security guards often wave people on in, especially if they look like they're on a legitimate mission—such as the faux moving truck that entered a Fort

induced infestation of snakes. You can turn away the Mexicans, the African Americans, and other suspect groups, but there's no fence high enough to keep out the repo man.

All right, some gated communities are doing better than others, and not all of their residents are racists. The communities that allow owners to rent out their houses, or that offer homes at middle class prices of \$250,000 or so, are more likely to contain a mixture of classes and races. The only gated community I have ever visited consisted of dull row houses protected by a slacker guard and a fence, and my host was a writer of liberal inclinations. But all these places suffer from the delusion that security lies behind physical barriers.

Before we turn all of America into a gated community, with a 700-mile steel fence running along the Southern border, we should consider the mixed history of exclusionary walls. Ancient and medieval European towns huddled behind massive walls, only to face ever-more effective catapults, battering rams, and other siege engines. More recently, the Berlin Wall, which the East German government described fondly as a protective "anti-fascism wall," fell to a rebellious citizenry. Israel, increasingly sealed behind its anti-Palestinian checkpoints and wall, faced an outbreak of neo-Nazi crime in September—coming, strangely enough, from within.

But the market may have the last word on America's internal gated communities. "Hell is a gated community," announced the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* last June, reporting that market research by the big home-builder Pulte Homes found that no one under fifty wants to live in them, so its latest local development would be ungated. Security, or at least the promise of security, may be one consideration. But there's another old-fashioned American imperative at work here, which ought to bear on our national policies as well. As my Montana forebears would have put it: Don't fence me in!

—Preparing the Future—

The end of an Age and the beginning of a new Cosmic cycle, everything begins to fall apart. The old and tried ways of living no longer work, or meet the needs of an advancing humanity. Certainty gives way to uncertainty, the known has lost its power to convince, and men* feel bewildered, lost and filled with fear. Thus is it today as we stand, baffled, in this transitional phase between the old Age of Pisces and the new Aquarian dispensation.

The Aquarian Age will last approximately 2,350 years and will bring much benefit to men as its energies mount in potency over the centuries. However, at present, the old ways of Pisces, outworn but not as yet outgrown, still hold sway and determine the thoughts and actions of the majority of men. This being so, countless millions are held in thrall by the actions of those leaders whose nations are powerful and dominant at the present time. Thus is this a time of upheaval and stress, disharmony and strife.

Change

That this troubled time will not last much longer you may be assured. Already, the signs of change are evident to Us, your Elder Brothers. We see clearly the outlines of conditions altogether different from those that now prevail. We see a world at peace, a world where justice reigns, where freedom adorns the lives of men and women everywhere. We know that the present ills are transient

and passing, that the time is not far off for the light of the New Dawn to illumine men's lives and challenge them to action. We know also that men in their hearts are ready and longing for change, and will rise to the challenge with eagerness and will; they await only inspiration and guidance.

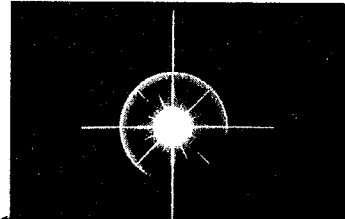
That inspiration and guidance

Maitreya is eager to bestow, in full measure and more, as he awaits the appointed hour which, by karmic law, allows him to proceed.

Challenge

Then will the Great Lord enter, openly, the domain of men. Then will he challenge the assumptions of the men of power and wealth. Maitreya will speak for the millions without a voice; for the destitute and hungry who live in anguish from day to day; for those who languish in the prisons of the world for daring to challenge the edicts of their 'betters'. He will speak for all men who love justice and liberty and will raise his voice aloud in their cause. He will temper the wrath of those who govern by war; he will seal for ever the door through which war enters and defiles the realm of man. All this, through men, he will accomplish, and so restore sanity and peace to Earth.

Calmly, and with purpose, he prepares the golden future, the inheritance of men, and gathers together the 'shining lights', the men and women who will fashion that future.



"The time is not far off for the light of the New Dawn to illumine men's lives and challenge them to action."

This article, published in *Share International* magazine, was written by a Master of Wisdom. The Masters, headed by Maitreya, the World Teacher, are highly advanced teachers and advisors of humanity who are planning to work openly in the world very soon.

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*men is a general term meaning humankind