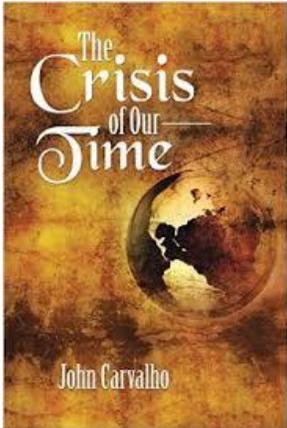


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The Human Condition

Posted on [June 19, 2015](#) by [Valerie Milano](#)



THE CRISIS OF OUR TIME

“We must set aside old notions and embrace fresh ones; and, as we learn, we must be daily unlearning something which it has cost us no small labour and anxiety to acquire.”

– Homer, The Iliad

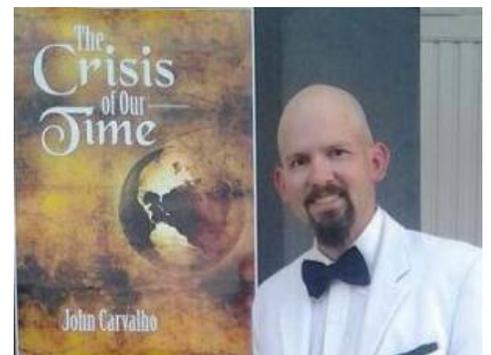
By: *Dr. Laura Wilhelm, LauraWil Intercultural*

West Hollywood, CA (*The Hollywood Times*) 6/18/19 – This reporter is very proud to be a PROOF Influencer ever since TNT’s launch event held at the London West Hollywood on Thursday, April 30th, 2015. Led by starring actors Jennifer Beals and Joe Morton, the dedicated doctors in PROOF investigate paranormal phenomena relating to life after death. Here these scientific skeptics are trying to put the horrible human suffering they see daily in ER and hospital rooms into a broader metaphysical context conspicuously missing from many medical dramas.

In his Pulitzer Prize-nominated book THE CRISIS OF OUR TIME (2014) Dr. John Carvalho, former Harvard academician and winner of the United States National Research Service Award, pushes the boundaries of human inquiry in similar ways. As in PROOF, scientific fact is buttressed by philosophical speculation to balance the existential equation. Dr. Carvalho frames his incisive observations on global health, economic, and human rights crises within a memoir format. The absorbing autobiographical material makes the heavy subject matter more accessible to the general reader without diminishing the weighty impact of Carvalho’s message.

Like many American and emigre scientists before him, Dr. Carvalho triumphs over his limiting childhood experiences to reach the top of the heap at Harvard Medical School. He is very honest about the difficulties involved. The intellectual and political pressures of graduate school in the “Ivory Tower” have indeed driven many who did not just drop out to suicide and homicide.

Like Carvalho this reporter completed her PhD with full ride scholarship



support while grappling with serious family and health problems, taking six years to finish when twelve to 25 were more the norm in her department. She entered the program in 1988 and some of her classmates are still ABDs.



During the late 80s and early 90s her studies took her all over the war-torn world while Communism was on the wane. She too discovered the tragic grandeur of Russia, Rome, Greece, and many other major global outposts. Along with Carvalho she found that existential and social philosophers like Rene Descartes and Victor Frankel could both bolster one's emerging sense of self ("I think, therefore I am") and put crises of all kinds into a broader context that added meaning and purpose to life.

Given this kind of background both she and Carvalho recognize common biases in American culture based upon wealth and notoriety rather than knowledge. Unqualified celebrities and sports figures like Arnold Schwarzenegger and Ronald Reagan often end up in politics for these reasons. Even qualified politicians most often have degrees in economics, law, and political science that do not fully equip them to grapple with major global health and social crises of the sort that Carvalho dissects so insightfully. About these things he is precisely right.

Most of America's educational crises definitely have an economic basis. Poor students simply cannot afford higher education while rich ones may not care to pursue it. At this writing local public figure Paris Hilton is already worth over \$100 million at the age of 34 without a PhD. What would be HER educational incentive with this kind of economic success already in hand? And expensive degrees no longer guarantee higher earning power the way they once did in the US.

As Carvalho observes, all this can make America a victim of our own economic success when it comes time to compete and collaborate with other nations knowledgeably. This is part of a "causal circular system" whereby causes feed off of and exacerbate effects, which, in turn, reinforce those same causes. With no incentives to excel we in the US start to glorify mediocrity and thus weaken our position vis-a-vis the bigger world.

Thanks to his background in microbiology Dr. Carvalho dedicates much of his discussion to major world health crises such as HIV/AIDS and the common cold. He also has much to say about the world economic meltdown beginning in 1987 from which many of us have not fully recovered. His pages are populated by key world figures such as US Presidents and Vice Presidents, Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Osama bin Laden, Nicholas Papandreou and Nobelists of all kinds.

But the political is always personal. Health, economic, and human rights crises affect us all on some level. In theory we Americans know this in a democratic society, but in practice our First World wealth and privilege may shield us from real global awareness.

In THE CRIS OF OUR TIMES issues such as infectious disease, war, recessions and depressions, psychological disorders, and human rights violations are all seen to have common causes rooted in a lack of self-reflection spurred by an existential fear of our own mortality. We in the USA may literally be scared off by the plight of

the Third World knowing full well how precarious our own economic and political position has become. What if WE were to become like THEM and regress rather than lead others to progress as we always hope to do?

Being or Nothingness matters now loom large in our American minds. Even Jean-Paul Sartre could not sort us out any more. Either we are Number One or we are Nothing.

Our isolationist history still causes us to see the world in black and white. Now we need to add all the subtle the shades of gray. Here the world's 200 other nations may be of help.

At one point Carvalho rather idealistically locates solutions to all these world crises in the pages of Homer's ILLIAD. This should be good news for Reed College students like this reporter and her husband who were required to read Homer's timeless opus the summer before they entered their Reed freshman class. Many of the book's chapter titles such as "Dionysius And The Midas Touch," "Bankruptcy And The Oracle Of Delphi," "Zeus," "Poseidon," "Metamorphosis," and "Mount Olympus" also allude to epic mythological themes.

After leaving Harvard Dr. Carvalho came to us in LA to teach at Cal State Dominguez Hills. He lives in the lovely South Bay amidst tropical splendor reminiscent of the Mediterranean countries we both adore. Both of us are fortunate beyond words to have found this perch in Paradise where we can afford to analyze world crises to our heart's content.

Social action is the next and hardest step toward change. We must keep listening to the men and women in the street the way Dr. Carvalho has been for so long and let their despair drive us forward to a better global future.

<http://www.drjohncarvalho.com/new-articles/>

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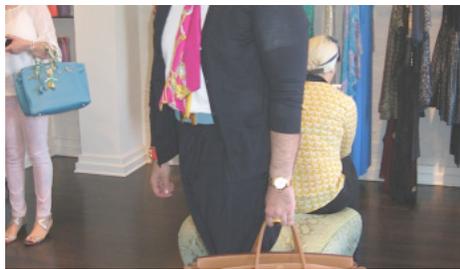


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About Valerie Milano

Southern belle from Alabama who writes the inside view about Hollywood happenings. I am very passionate about the charities I support and I live a positive life no matter what!

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