

[Is This A New Dark Age?](#)

[Little proof to the contrary that we are indeed in a very long, bleak tunnel. Is there any light?](#)

- [By Mark Morford, SF Gate Columnist](#)

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Then come those times when you read about a 16-year-old girl [slashing the throat](#) of a 75-year-old woman for no apparent reason, a woman who was merely walking with her husband near a Berkeley public garden and it's right next to the one about the 16-year-old kid smiling and waving and donning a bulletproof vest before [shooting nine people and himself to death](#) in a remote, poverty-stricken region of Minnesota and you can feel the numbness like a wave.

And alongside that is the morbid and insipid case of [poor Terry Schiavo](#) and the equally insipid Bush evangelicals who trumpet the backward morality of maintaining her vegetative brain-dead state and the sad, tormented parents who can't face reality and the insidious GOP that has zero shame in using her decrepit body as a political football and that kowtows to its pseudo-religious contingency by making humiliating and rather illegal congressional maneuvers to try and keep a feeding tube in place and you just go, oh my God just stop already.

And it all seems to line up with one of those weird phases when everyone in your own life seems to be getting hit by something tragic or sad or somehow ridiculously painful -- a sister with a neck trauma, a best friend going through major depression, a parent struck by illness, certainly almost everyone on the progressive Left feeling sucker-punched and morally eviscerated -- friends and family and loved ones all seeming to suffer in ways you don't want to imagine and it's all against a backdrop of [more war dead](#) and more violence and the most bleak and Bush-ravaged era in recent American history and you say to yourself, what the hell is going on?

Because something in you knows. Something in you senses there is more at play right now in the world than mere depressing coincidence, that all the war and disease and brutality has more surrounding it than mere chance or fluke. Do you think? Do you feel it?

Proof? All you have to do is spend five minutes with any true healer or energy worker or divinely connected spiritual teacher in the world right now and they all say the same thing: This is not a good time. This is not the lightest, not the brightest, not the best period to be a human being. In fact, it's one of the darkest. Fiercest. Meanest.

It is, in other words, a low period in human, and especially American, history. And it's only getting lower.

We are in dark times. Five years of economic bloodshed and three of brutal warmongering and the worst environmental president in American history and you simply cannot deny that as the ruthless American agenda goes, so goes the populace, so goes the collective attitude, the shared vibration, the health of the planet and the feeling that this particular karmic sinkhole has no known bottom.

In other words, it is all connected. It is all of a piece. There is a direct correlation between the violent and heartless tone and attitude of our country and the mental and spiritual health of its people and by way of comparison just look at the Clinton era, which brought eight years of unprecedented prosperity and peace and a nearly balanced budget and high economic flush.

It's true. There was, we forget, a decided lack of sexual anxiety and uptight moral rigidity in the nation, minimal pseudo-religious puling from the uptight Right and much moderate lawmaking and I don't care a whit for what you say about the man's personal moral compass -- under Clinton, America had deeply supportive allies, intelligent foreign policy, more genuine concern for the planet and the health of our forests and oceans and air, and we had a president who was incredibly articulate and deeply intelligent and greatly beloved the world over and the nation enjoyed one of its most prosperous and nondivisive and peaceful periods in its history.

And now, the exact opposite. Everywhere you look, the culture is fractured and divisive and mean. Everywhere you look it's war and pollution and more toxins, red versus blue, good versus evil, more garbage and less concern where to shove it, fewer restrictions on industrial polluters and fewer controls on corporate abuse and an administration that has so shamelessly leveraged the worst tragedy in American history to further its brutal and hawkish right-wing agenda it would embarrass Mussolini.

The sad fact is, there are a great many among us who believe we have entered into a new Dark Age, that it will be a long and brutal slog indeed and BushCo is merely the precursor, the devil's handmaiden, and that we have a long way to go into the bleak and the bloody and the environmentally devastating before the pendulum begins its slow swing back toward the light.

Just look around. No one anywhere, not priests, not nuns, not healers or mystics, not Christians, not pagans, not Repubs or Demos or Libertarians, no one anywhere in this country is saying, hey, doesn't it feel like we're entering into a new era of health and healing and positivism and spiritual rebirth? Aren't our schools just teeming anew with eager students who seem to be getting smarter and *more* articulate? Isn't the air getting cleaner and aren't we proud of our government for protecting the health of future generations by pushing for more natural foods and signing on to the Kyoto Treaty and advocating antitoxin regulations and by protecting our forests and improving school textbooks and revolutionizing the hideous national health care system?

Doesn't that tone of enthusiasm and hope sound just completely silly, wrong, out of place, like so much Prozac-grade bulls--? Damn right it does.

There's a reason for that. We are not headed for light. Not yet, anyway. The coming years are not going to be about friendship and repaired foreign relations and a sense of our shared humanity, about equality and sexual freedom and a renewed sense of human rights. To believe this is to believe in fairy tales almost as insidious and hopeless as evangelical Christians who are right now stuffing themselves with Cheez-Its and pink wine and praying for Armageddon.

So, you do what you have to do. You focus inward and work on the self and radiate as much love and open-hearted support as possible, grit your karmic teeth and hope you survive this dark house of mirrors without cancers or tumors or bloodshed or getting stabbed in the garden by a vicious teenage girl as you ignore the fact that in all of North America, from Mexico to Canada's Prince Edward Island, there exists only one state, province or territory that does not yet have a McDonald's. (Nunavut, in northern Canada, inhabited by the Inuits at a density of one person per 3,300 square miles). Small solace, indeed.

So you pray your ass off to a forgiving and ambisexual and dogma-free pantheistic feminine god and you digest the increasingly nasty headlines as best you can, ever seeking that pinpoint, that tiny speck of light way, way down, at the end of this rank and desperate tunnel. Do you see it? Is it even there? It's one of those things you just have to believe.

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