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MR. USA

Assessment Report on Mr. USA

**Client name:** Mr. United States of America

**Address:** Western Hemisphere, North of the Equator, Planet Earth

**Description of client:** Mr. USA was born July 4, 1776, and was 228 years old at the time of this assessment. He appeared as a well-dressed, rather heavy, middle-aged man with a somewhat arrogant manner. Still, he had moments when he was charming, humorous, and appealingly open. During our interview, Mr. USA looked anxious and exhausted. He was forgetful and had difficulty concentrating. When a car alarm sounded, he exhibited a strong startle response. Parenthetically, a squirrel had inadvertently triggered the antitheft device on Mr. USA's oversized Sports Utility Vehicle.

**Presenting problem:** Mr. USA made this appointment two years after an assault on September 11, 2001, that caused him great physical harm and mental anguish. This tragedy reopened scars from earlier traumas in his life, such as Pearl Harbor, Vietnam, and the bombing in Oklahoma City. A series of bad decisions, including adopting the Patriot Act, a preemptive attack on Iraq, and violation of the Geneva

resourceful, resilient, and pragmatic. And even though it wasn't apparent at the time of our interview, he's been sensible and peace loving during much of his life. Even in his worst times, Mr. USA has been capable of heroic acts, kindness, and creative problem solving.

**Treatment plan:** Mr. USA must begin by telling the truth. He needs to accept his mistakes, blind spots, and dark side, including his history of genocide of Native Americans, slavery with African Americans, and his mistreatment of immigrants. He must acknowledge his sabotaging of democracies in Africa and Latin America, and the blood on his hands from his governmental and trade policies.

As a victim of post-traumatic stress disorder, Mr. USA must work through various stages of grief: shock and denial, sorrow, anger, resolution, and moving on with hope. He could greatly benefit from lessons in impulse control and stoicism. Self-awareness is not Mr. USA's strong suit, but he must grow in this area if he is to survive and help the world community endure.

He needs detoxification from too much television and advertising, and needs to reconnect to his own past and world history. Mr. USA requires clear, honest feedback about the effects of his behavior on others. Currently, he has limited access to important indices that concern the quality of his life. He doesn't know what is in his air, food, or water, or how many of his resources are disappearing daily. He attends tangential measurements, such as the Dow Jones and the gross domestic product, and misses the big picture.

His therapist will be most helpful if she helps him establish an identity not connected to sports, competition, or war. Rather, treatment requires metaphors of hope, reconciliation, and cooperation. He needs to feel that his actions matter, that he can achieve success if he works hard, and that he is not alone.

Mr. USA will feel better when he realizes that there is no "us" and no "them." There is a great world heart that beats, and like Eritrea, France, Iran, and New Zealand, he inhabits the body fed by that mother heart.

**Progress milestones:** As this client improves, he will be less violent, and less obsessed with sex, shopping, and drugs. The tensions between his different parts will subside, and he'll benefit from a less compartmentalized, more integrated personality structure. He'll be calmer, and more honest and authentic.

Mr. USA will participate in more potluck dinners and fewer hostile takeovers. His streets will be full of people walking and talking to one another. People of all races and ethnic groups will share the best of their cultures with one another. His children will beg to go to school where, in addition to learning science, geography, math, literature, and history, they sing, act, dance, write poetry, and become skilled in emotional intelligence. His old people will be treated with great love and respect. Mr. USA will join with other nations to build a clean, healthy, and fair world. A Department of Peace will be established and funded. Nations all over the world will once again be friend and respect Mr. USA.

**Prognosis:** A good therapist will help this client to appreciate and develop all of his talents, and foster a world community where others also may flourish. Mr. USA is in crisis, which may motivate him to grow in new directions. He has the opportunity to emerge from this trauma a wiser and deeper person.

Respectfully submitted, Dr. Mary Pipher

the basis of short-term desires, and exhibits low frustration tolerance. He values style over substance, and is preoccupied with sex. Like most aggressive individuals, he overuses violence as a solution, and minimizes and/or justifies antisocial behavior.

As is common with traumatized clients, Mr. USA has regressed in terms of his moral development. He is hunkered down and defensive, always worrying about himself. He is greedy in a world of people in desperate need of basic resources. Mr. USA insists that his fellow nations obey rules that he violates at will. This behavior is particularly irritating to others because, based on his past history, they expect better of him.

He believes in buy now, pay later, and frequently makes poor choices about time, money, and relationships. He spends lavishly on weapons systems and baubles, but neglects to budget for his own health, education, and home maintenance. He flees from pain, and avoids, rather than deals with, his problems. His main attitude seems to be, If I ignore it, maybe it will go away. He's adopted this attitude with the AIDS epidemic, global warming, the population explosion, and economic and social injustice.

Under a flimsy veneer of bravado, Mr. USA is shell-shocked by a world that is too complex emotionally and cognitively for him to understand. What appears as frenetic activity is disguised despair. He's awash in contradictions and paralyzed by indecision. He lacks mental clarity and focus, as exemplified by his attention to inconsequential issues such as whether Janet Jackson intended to show her breast at a Super Bowl event.

Mr. USA experiences daily panic attacks. While some of his fears, such as those concerning terrorism, SARS, or the world's fifty thousand atomic bombs, are realistic, others are self-induced and even paranoid. His media, his advertisers, and his politicians keep him

hypervigilant. Of course, many of his fears are both realistic *and* exaggerated. As we psychologists say, just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they aren't out to get you.

**Character structure:** Mr. USA is a decent man. He likes to be called Uncle Sam, and there have been times in his history when he merited that fine moniker. He has assisted his neighbors in floods and famines, and, after World War II, he helped reconstruct Europe. Since 9/11, he has been more self-absorbed and immature than usual. However, he is not a psychopath or career criminal. He wants to be loved, and to behave properly. Historically, he's served as a model for the world in terms of freedom, cultural development, and opportunity for all. If he can control his anxiety and his temper, his friends will eagerly return to his life.

**Diagnosis:** Post-traumatic stress disorder, multiple addictions. Rule out delusions.

**Personal strengths:** Mr. USA has great natural talent, wealth, and potentially good looks if he lost some weight. He is a mixture of almost all the peoples of the world: Latino, Native American, Asian, African, Middle Eastern, and European. His family life is rich in traditions from every corner of our planet. He has many support systems in place—county fairs, bluegrass festivals, public libraries, and a host of restorative retreats he calls national parks. He contains within himself Annie Oakley, Stephen Foster, Sacajawea, Louisa May Alcott, Thomas Jefferson, Ralph Stanley, Edward Hopper, W. C. Fields, Lance Armstrong, Henry Moore, Martin Luther King Jr., Stanley Kunitz, Humphrey Bogart, Abe Lincoln, Venus and Serena Williams, Crazy Horse, Mark Twain, Louis Armstrong, Cesar Chávez, and Ethel Waters. He's

Conventions, has forced him to confront his mental health issues. As this client's life has spiraled out of control, his colleagues at the United Nations have encouraged him to seek therapy.

As we talked, it became clear that even before 9/11, Mr. USA had not been dealing with his problems in a healthy fashion. For the last forty years, he's grown increasingly overwhelmed and lonely. While his fortunes have fluctuated during this period, his overall quality of life has steadily diminished. Especially during these last few decades, he has lost the capacity to simply relax and have fun. Mr. USA suffers from multiple addictions: caffeine, sugar, alcohol, drugs, nicotine, shopping, gambling, watching television, and playing video games. His finances are a mess.

**History:** Mr. USA reports a violent birth and a turbulent difficult life. Yet he acknowledges many happy, peaceful times. He comes from a family that values education, art, and music. However, he lacks discipline and, given his opportunities, is not as well educated as he might be. He's been exposed to many religious belief systems: Catholic, Buddhist, Jewish, Protestant, and Muslim. Currently, he is an Evangelical Christian, although in religion, as in many other aspects of his life, Mr. USA is in conflict with himself.

During the early decades of his life, Mr. USA found himself frequently in fights, but he was never seriously injured. When he was in his eighties, he was in a violent altercation that he refers to as the Civil War. Scars from that event still fester. Roughly seventy years ago, he suffered a decade of dust storms, bank failures, high unemployment, and severe poverty. Because he thought clearly and acted decisively, he pulled through that period with admirable resilience. He has fought several other brawls in the last one hundred years, some started by him, some by others.

Mr. USA values independence over connection, and freedom over obligations and commitments. He boasts of his Declaration of Independence and War of Independence, and he calls his birthday Independence Day. He crafted a Bill of Rights, but no corresponding Bill of Responsibilities. He is a doer not a thinker, and fares better with men than with women. He has trouble sharing, compromising, and keeping his promises. His bullying and tantrums have soured numerous relationships. He has an unreasonable, perhaps delusional, view of how he is perceived. He likes to see himself as altruistic, but many of his choices have harmed his fellow nations.

Mr. USA's oldest friendships are with countries in Western Europe; however, currently, he is not close to any of those friends, except England. He reports that even England doesn't seem to want to spend much time with him. This social isolation could be detrimental to Mr. USA's mental health.

Mr. USA suffers from the effects of his addictions. He has poor vision, hypertension, and a sluggish metabolism. He's restless and moody. While he tests in the superior range intellectually, he is not functioning at that level. His mental impairments appear to be stress related, and could be reversed with therapy and healthier lifestyle choices.

**Personality features:** Even though chronologically an adult, Mr. USA has regressed to functioning as a social and emotional adolescent. His ideas are extreme, shallow, and rigidly held. He indulges in either/or and us/them thinking. He demonizes his enemies without making any effort to understand them. He lacks basic factual knowledge, and has trouble with perspective. He considers himself exceptional, and has great difficulty understanding others' points of view.

Mr. USA appears incapable of long-term planning. He acts on

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