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Mass Psychology and Cult Behavior within HOA-Land

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There is a mass psychology present in HOA-Land. Mass psychology is a study of how your behavior is influenced by large groups of people — *“birds of the same feather flock together.”* It is the result of the longtime conditioning and indoctrination into identifying with the principles and beliefs promoted by the *CAI School of HOA Governance*. Following the advice and guidelines of cult experts to focus on the need to reeducate cult followers, my Plan to restructure HOAs begins with the need to reorient the BOD and the members away from the CAI School doctrine. This is a critical first step toward substantive HOA reforms!

***“We must make the injustice visible”* Mahatma Gandhi**

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Mass Psychology and Cult Behavior within HOA-Land

In several of my work products¹ I've alluded to HOAs being cult-like communities where members are cult followers identifying with the principles and views of the *CAI School of HOA Governance*;² and are authoritarian followers of their boards of directors.

*They [members] are portrayed as being true believers seeing no wrong with the HOA, much as one sees with many religious cults. They are portrayed as openly and eagerly waiving their rights in favor of the HOA no matter how disastrous to them.*³

*It argued that Americans were accepting authoritarian control, which seemed to be a cause for the behavior of cult-like, dogmatic member acceptance of the HOA board's (BOD) actions and attitudes. It seems that the more predisposed to authoritarian control the more the member acted as a diehard, dogmatic, true-believer in the BOD.*⁴

In other words, there is a mass psychology⁵ present in HOA-Land. Mass psychology is a study of how your behavior is influenced by large groups of people — “birds of the same feather flock together.” My extensive research indicates that it is the result of the longtime conditioning and indoctrination into identifying with the principles and beliefs promoted by the *CAI School*.

I understand that many of you will react in angry defensiveness, yet are quick to tell others “that’s not politically correct. They do not realize that their cherished view of being an independent thinker and that *no one tells me what to do* are blinded by their cult adherence to this pro-governmental doctrine.

Allow me to first present my case by examining just what can be described as a cult. My resources are the voices of acknowledged authorities.⁶ As you read the material below you will discover how well the descriptions and characteristics fit HOAs.

Short history of HOAs and CAI

As part of reorienting, reeducating, and deprogramming⁷ of all the players including legislatures, developers, boards of directors, and HOA members allow me to provide a short history of HOAs and CAI.⁸

*“ULI published the original concepts and framework for planned communities in its FHA funded, **The Homes Association Handbook** in 1964.*

“In 1973, FHA, ULI and the National Association of Home Builders formed CAI because of problems encountered in trying to sell this concept to American home buyers.

“It [this book] will record what ... the founders of the CAI had to say about how CA s and the CAI should function and whether that functioning was consistent with the potential for CAs to offer attractive housing and political participation to their residents.... For this potential to be realized, home buyers must choose to purchase homes in CAs [bold is my emphasis]. They are a product and sold by businesses for profit, a legal entity imposing rights and obligations on their purchasers, a corporation, a community, and a lifestyle.

“With a CA, they [home buyers] may not be willing or able to read a complicated copy of CC&Rs. As a result, developers must try to ensure that consumers know that they are purchasing a home and an organization. Real estate agents need to give accurate information about CAs. Home buyers need to shop around for alternative homes and learn what life in a CA will entail for them.”

What really is a cult? How do they operate and entice followers?

Please keep the above history in mind as I present the views and understandings of cults based on the Ross book.⁹

First, cults are not restricted to the murderous, sexually oriented, child molester religious cults exposed by the media.

“Whatever the cult, there is almost always sustained deception. This act raises the issue that there is an absence of informed consent. . . . My experience has taught me that a cult can potentially recruit anyone regardless of his or her education or social background. No one is invulnerable or somehow immune.”

Cults characteristically display the following:

1. Groups united around an idea and using thought control processes, false representations, and behavior patterns creating an identity distinct from society;
2. Employ brainwashing techniques – a process of resocialization – to cause people and leader-types to act against their own best interests and in the interests of the cult leaders or organization;
3. Systematically apply manipulative techniques of persuasion, education, advertising, propaganda, and indoctrination;

4. Deceptively change people without their knowledge and recruited without their consent;
5. Provide a sense of security and well-being by imposing strict obedience and compliance;
6. Leadership has absolute authority without meaningful accountability with no genuine democratic form of government to serve as a check and balance on the leadership;
7. Leaders define right and wrong and members are expected to defer their independent judgment, and criticisms and critical questions -- almost any criticism - is viewed as hostility;
8. Acts of the leadership are justified no matter how harmful to the people;
9. The cult may have affiliates and “front” groups pretending to be neutral resources to mislead the people.

Second, as to the cult followers/members,

1. The followers cannot be held to blame because of their deceptive recruitment;
2. Everyone is vulnerable to cult recruitment;
3. There is a lack of awareness and information in regard to how the cult truly works and its motives; people believe that the cult has a solution to their concerns;
4. Followers have a need for belonging, community, and acceptance that the cult promises relief and satisfaction — just believe, and follow the rules;
5. Members have developed a selective view finding the tiniest faults with outside groups or arguments;
6. They have a human need for security and a sense of safety that cults feed upon.

HOA-Land as a national cult

At this point I will use “*HOA*” to represent a large Arizona adult-community that is a poster-child HOA, to illustrate the above arguments.

HOA has and has had for some time board members (BOD) who were also CAI members. Its assigned attorney is also a CAI member of standing and employed by a very active CAI member firm. Its managers have been and are CAI members or trained by the *CAI School of HOA Governance*.

Ostensibly, *HOA* gives the appearance of openness, transparency, communicative, informative with a host of democratic processes and procedures. It publishes the monthly financials, makes videos available of its Fireside Chats, Meet

the Directors, Townhall Meetings, etc. that allow members to raise questions and complaints subject to the standard time limits found with state legislative committee hearings.

The illusion of democracy fails when the members cannot file initiatives to force the BOD to put the initiative to a vote of all the members. The member “citizens” are at the suffrage of the BOD to take up the matter under the argument, the BOD speaks for you; they are volunteers doing their best for the community, and you can vote them out at election time. These are fallacies and false representations that are discussed in detail in my Plan to Restructure HOAs¹⁰ and HOA Member Bill of Rights¹¹ publications.

It publishes on its online newsletter weekly and monthly in its magazine propaganda and advertising of what is the *HOA*. It is not what *HOA* strives to be and what it stands for, which are proper mission and values statements. The following contrasts the *HOA* attempt to indoctrinate its members by false repetition and my proper restructuring:

*HOA vision statement: [HOA] **is** the premier active, age-restricted community in Arizona.*

Restructured Vision Statement: To become the premier active, age-restricted community in Arizona.

*HOA mission statement: [HOA] **provides** residents with a high-value community, with resort-style amenities, in which every person can choose to participate and live well, based on their needs and desires. This high standard will maximize our investments and promote our well-being in an active close-knit community.*

Restructured Mission Statement: To provide residents with a high-value community with resort-style amenities to maximize our investments.

HOA values statement: In support of our Mission Statement, we hold to these values:

- *We foster relationships built on respect, trust, and effective communications.*
- *We listen to understand.*
- *We are open-minded, collaborative, and always look for ways to improve our community.*
- *We believe in life-long learning and a desire for active well-*
- *We are a forward-looking, fiscally-sound community*
- *We encourage an environment of empowerment and personal responsibility.*

Restructured Values: We believe in a community culture having high standards and principles of conduct and behavior that,

- fosters relationships built on respect, trust, and effective communications.

- listens to understand.
- is open-minded, collaborative, and always look for ways to improve our community.
- believes in life-long learning and a desire for active well-
- is forward-looking, fiscally-sound community
- encourages an environment of empowerment and personal responsibility

HOA members for the vast majority 1) reject the argument that the HOA is a form of local government operating outside the Constitution, 2) believe it is democratic, 3) do not seriously question the harmful and outright wrongful conduct of the BOD 4) voted overwhelming to support harmful to their interests under a mock amendment vote running over 1 year in order for the BOD to reach the required approval percentage, and 5) do not criticize the BOD for declaring the HOA a social welfare organization in contradiction to the private member community set forth in its CC&Rs, without a necessary amendment to the CC&Rs.

Why is there this prevalent blindness to reality? The arguments given above seem to provide the answers to the underlying social and political dynamics in operation within the HOA culture.¹²

“The numerous ‘educational’ seminars taught by the attorneys and managers, many of which are sponsored by state and local governments, serve not to fully inform but to indoctrinate the members into roles of obedience and passivity, is well documented. Good people doing bad things or remaining silent in the midst of wrongful acts and actions by the HOA is well documented.”

Is there a way out?

Definitely yes!

It is not by going to state legislatures to be repeatedly rejected or given token reforms but no substantive redress of grievances. It is not by repeatedly expecting the courts to do homeowner justice in spite of the strong *stare decisis precedent* of pro-HOA laws and public policy favoring HOA-Land. It is not by expecting law colleges to provide a balanced educational program in law for students that includes HOA constitutionality. And it is not by hoping that the media — granted special 1st Amendment protections to inform and educate the citizens on political matters — will measure up and so present the whole HOA truth so long hidden from the public.

As a result of my 21 years of activism and advocacy for HOA constitutionality, and my education and detailed research, I have come to understand the greater

social and political forces at work. These forces that have led to the current culture and environment surrounding the HOA legal scheme and structure. They are detailed in my “The Cultural Dynamics of HOA-Land.”¹³

My plan is to restructure HOAs¹⁴ begins with the need to reorient the BOD and the members; it follows the advice and guidelines of the cult experts focuses on the need to reeducate HOA-Land followers. HOA cult behavior is responsible for the authoritarian conduct of its members.¹⁵ This is a critical first step toward substantive HOA reforms! It requires the restoration of and the subjectivity of HOAs to the US Constitution. It demands that those who have the knowledge and ability to provide and expose the long hidden information to step forward.

References

¹ See in general: [Reorienting the HOA board and its followers, Restructuring the HOA model, Authoritarianism in the HOA-Land Nation; HOAs deny opposition free speech, Biden must order law colleges to uphold HOA content-neutral free speech.](#)

² The foundation and principles of the *School* can be traced back to CAI’s Public Policies, The *CAI Manifesto* (its 2016 “white paper”), its numerous seminars and conferences, its Factbooks and surveys, its amicus briefs to the courts, and its advisories, letters, emails, newsletters, blogs etc. I have designated these foundations and principles collectively as the *CAI School of HOA Governance*.

³ [Alleged waiver of rights in HOAs are invalid.](#)

⁴ [HOA political dynamics: totalitarian democracy.](#)

⁵ “Mass psychology” is “the mental and emotional states and processes that occur in a large body of individuals who, although they may not have any common characteristics, are considered as a whole.” ([mass psychology – APA Dictionary of Psychology](#), Dec. 15, 2010).

⁶ See in general, Rick Allan Ross, *Cults Inside Out: How people Get In and Out*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014. The author speaks from years of experience as a “deprogrammer” and cites multiple acknowledged authorities on cults.

⁷ *Id.* “Deprogramming is providing members with information about the cult [HOA] and showing them how their own decision-making had been taken away from them.”

⁸ Donald R. Stabile, *Community Associations: The Emergence and Acceptance of a Quiet Innovation in Housing*, Greenwood Press, 2000 (A CAI and ULI funded publication.)

⁹ *Supra*, n. 5.

¹⁰ *Supra* n. 1, Restructuring.

¹¹ [Resurrecting the argument for a homeowners bill of rights.](#)

¹² See in general, George K. Staropoli, [HOA-Land Nation Within America](#), Part 1, “The Cultural Dynamics of HOA-Land” (2019).

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ See [HOA constitutionality Plan supplement – BOD education.](#)

¹⁵ *Supra*, n.1, Authoritarianism.