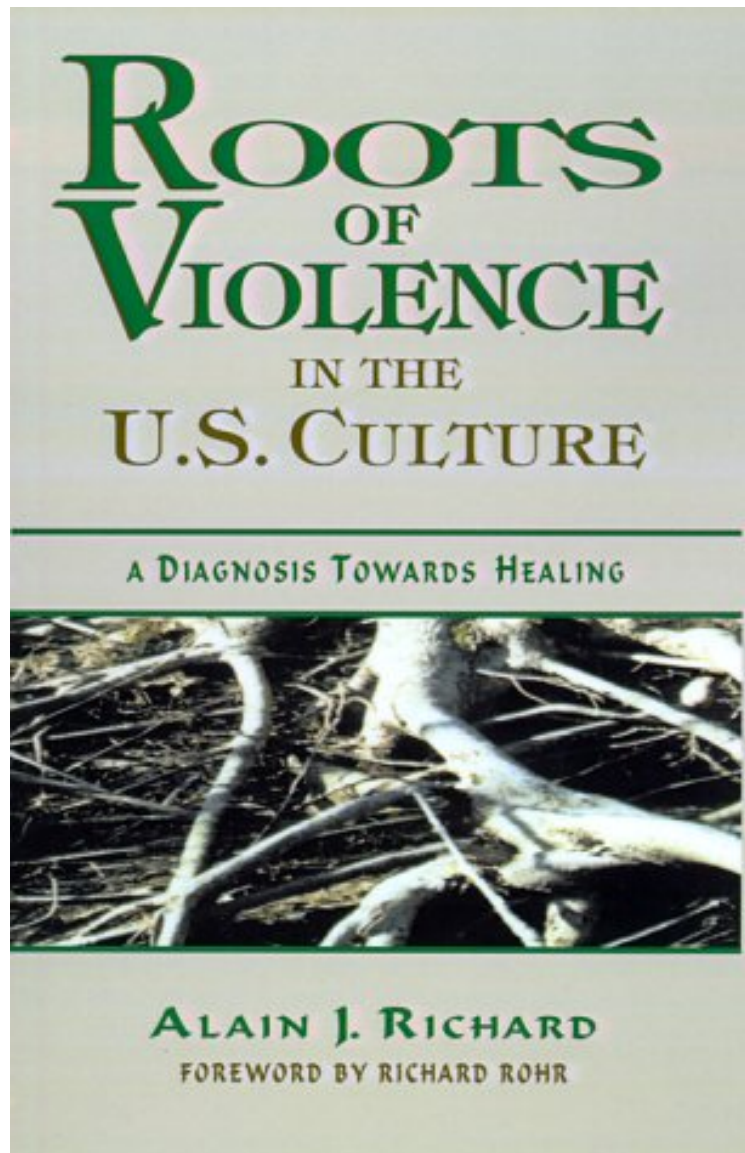


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## Roots of Violence in the U.S. Culture: A Diagnosis Towards Healing

*Alain J. Richard*

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**Alain J. Richard : Roots of Violence in the U.S. Culture: A Diagnosis Towards Healing** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Roots of Violence in the U.S. Culture: A Diagnosis Towards Healing:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Destructive Market Culture and SuggestionsBy bdolphin@netshel.net After reading Roots of Violence in the U.S. Culture, I am moved by Alain's lament for my own

people, robbed of their cultural inheritance and set adrift with no home ground for nurturance. As a sociologist and as someone who has lived several years outside my own U.S. culture, who has traveled and worked in other American countries as well as in Europe, Asia and Africa, I can concur with his diagnosis of the serious illness we are suffering here today. As a Franciscan Sister, I take heart in his assessment of the effectiveness of the healing power of nonviolence. Within the tangled roots of violence in the U.S. culture, Alain Richard locates and describes the particularly destructive Market Culture. This diseased root has emerged during the last half of the twentieth century, and is fed, to some extent, by other roots described in Richard's valuable diagnosis. While those other roots such as racism, individualism, manifest destiny have been increasingly the subjects of studies that point to illness in U.S. society and the possibility of healing, Market Culture is newer, and more subtle growth. I believe that Alain Richard's critique of this Culture will provoke further discussion, study, and efforts toward overcoming the debilitating effects of this malignancy. Some will argue with the idea that Market Culture has its origins in the U.S. It would be difficult, however, to deny that whatever its origins, it is now smothering authentic homegrown U.S. culture the way Kudzu is smothering U.S. woodlands. More, it is in the process of engulfing cultures across the globe with its rapacious growth. Richard shows how a market culture has actually replaced the traditional values and moral principles of the U.S. culture (it might be more helpful to speak of traditional U.S. cultures). He insists that the resulting loss of a sense of sacredness, together with a loss of mutual and reverent relationship as a basis for social life, is a key factor in the violence we are experiencing today. He speaks passionately of a people deprived of the nurturing environment that their culture once gave to them, submitted to an environment with no room for the mysterious, the Sacred, destroyed by a materialist culture that considers life from the perspective of potential profit or loss. Without the inclusion of "Some Principles of a Nonviolent Culture" at the end of this book, we might be too overwhelmed and dispirited. Instead, we are given some guideposts that resonate with deeply held longings. His "tentative" suggestions will grow more certain for us as we find our way along a healing path to our future. - Mary Litell

Today, our culture promotes an alarming trend toward ever increasing acts of violence. When our children kill each other or gangs murder for turf, it is a glaring sign that our youth have not learned to revere life. What kind of future leaders are we creating? Alain Richard has spent the last 25 years studying the violent tendencies of the U.S. His theory, while unsettling, makes sense. Ever since colonists first traveled across the ocean, this culture has been an invasive one. In addition to our legacy of violence, our culture has created a strong market (materialistic) economy with an insatiable desire for money and possessions. We place more value on acquiring wealth than on spending time with our children, family, and friends. *Roots of Violence* exposes the origins and current causes of the underlying, explosive rage pervasive in our culture today. Understanding this is the first step toward healing our society.

From Kirkus sAn earnest, well-intentioned, but ultimately unpersuasive attempt to lay the blame for many kinds of violence at the doorstep of the modern market economy, American-style. Richard, a member of the Franciscan Order and the founder of *Pace e Bene*, a nonprofit organization devoted to promoting nonviolence and social justice, left his native France for the US in 1973 and has had considerable experience working with the poor and the disenfranchised in this country and elsewhere. He explains his thoughts on the origins and nature of violence with a winning clarity and simplicity. The violence convulsing American society, he contends, can be traced back to the rise of the American ideal of the self-made man, a figure largely independent of historically validated authority (church, community, state) in its pursuit of material gain. This dynamic figure has replaced the older human values of communal responsibility with market-centered values that both excuse many kinds of violence (to individuals, communities, and the environment) and generate others, including (apparently) criminal violence. Many critics of the current state of American society would subscribe to some elements of this analysis, though few would go so far as to assert that American individualism and the market economy are responsible for virtually all of the problems that plague society. The argument seems to go further off track as Richard contrasts contemporary American behavior with the violence that has convulsed Europe for centuries. To pin some of mankind's most enduring problems on an American version of capitalism seems more reflexive than reflective. And the author's understanding of the evolution of American culture, and of competing ideas of American identity, seems uninformed by serious historical research. While Richard clearly feels the suffering of the excluded deeply, his oversimplified inquiry into its causes seems unlikely to change minds or behavior. -- Copyright 1999, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. Alain Richard has spoken a Franciscan word to us all: a word of loving chastisement. He has spent his life serving the less fortunate and striving for peace and justice, and he speaks to us from out of the depth of that experience. We would all become better Christians and better human beings if we let ourselves be touched by his passionate concern. -- Gil Bailie, author, *Violence Unveiled* *Roots of Violence* is very gently but firmly written, with a great deal of empathy and concern. The author can say things about the U.S. culture which an insider cannot say. -- Kenan Osborne, Professor Emeritus of Theology, Franciscan School of Theology, Berkeley, California

From the Back Cover Why is there an epidemic of violence in this country? Today, our culture promotes an alarming trend toward ever increasing acts of violence. When our children kill each other over articles of clothing or gangs murder for turf, it is a glaring sign that our youth have not learned to

respect and revere life. What kind of future leaders are we creating? Alain Richard has spent the last 25 years reflecting upon the violent tendencies of the U.S. His theory, while unsettling, makes sense. Ever since colonists first traveled across the ocean, this culture has been an invasive one. In addition to our legacy of violence, our culture has created a strong market (materialistic) economy with an insatiable desire for money and possessions. We place more value on acquiring wealth than on spending time with our children, family, and friends. *Roots of Violence* exposes the origins and current causes of the underlying, explosive rage pervasive in our culture today. Understanding this is the first step toward healing our society.