

Justice for All

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Every morning at school we would pledge allegiance to the flag; each week, first at Cub Scouts, from eight to eleven years of age and then Boy Scouts from eleven to eighteen, we affirmed oaths with lofty standards and laws which we swore to live by. We were taught the story of many a patriot hero or heroine whose depicted character we were lead to idolize and emulate. We learned of the grand plan of the founding fathers, the forfeiture of their fortunes and their lives, while holding to their sacred honor, to purchase life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Little did we suspect that there were a multitude of human tears which lie hidden in the dark recesses of the gleaming alabaster cities. We were completely unaware of the manifold flaws which were in dire need of mending. The mechanisms of injustice and engines of inequality were many.

In this paper I hope to identify the root cause of injustice without regard for the manner of its manifestation.

In the following section, for the sake of brevity, I will use the words jerk and idiot and a phrase, people like me. If some are offended by this usage, please understand that it is my belief that all of us, cohorts and assessors alike, are "people like me". Thus I will use the words jerk and idiot to speak of a particular type of person generically and first person personal pronouns to refer to "people like me", which includes present company and others of like heart and mind. Perhaps we can all agree with Fromm (p. 19, 1973) when he states "I believe words are very important, but also that one should not make a fetish of them and become more interested in the words than in the thought they express".

Considering the issues of injustice drives me to view the world in a certain manner. This philosophy is most rudimentary, but it is, in my estimation, a valuable tool for bringing such issues (and many others) out of the realm of emotional reactions into that of the intellect. The basic foundation is that where two or more people are gathered together one or more will try to dominate the other(s). The functions of this paradigm are a simple reality that there are basically three types of people; there are those who are contemptible, obnoxious and overbearing, those who are mentally or emotionally handicapped and then there are those who are well balance, intellectually and emotionally. In the non-scholarly vernacular of the common person, these are jerks, idiots and people like me. This is very "me-centric" but it is my epistemological stance, and I will continue to adhere to it. For further brevity I will refer to this paradigm as "JIM"; shorthand for Jerk-Idiot-Me.

The dynamics of JIM are these:

- Jerks try to control or hurt everybody, including fellow jerks. This can easily be seen in Adolf Hitler and his National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP), commonly known as the Nazi Party, the various people who filled the position of General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Saddam Hussein in Iraq, and many others. In each of these examples there were attempts from within and without to overthrow the principal jerk. In the end two were taken down by external force and the other by a combination of decaying, corrupt internally flawed cultural philosophy and structure and the changing realities of the world.

- Idiots follow jerks because they do not have the intellectual capacity to devise a method to overcome the assertion of the jerks as well as, in many cases being fearful of being hurt by the jerk. Please see the previous examples.
- People like me try to help the idiots, but the idiots do not, in many cases, listen, much less understand what people like me saying. Thus, the idiots decide to follow the jerks. Again, please see the previous examples.
- In some cases idiots can be reached with patient entreaty by people like me.
  - Once the idiots understand they might have the intestinal fortitude to do whatever is required to over throw the jerk
  - Or the idiots might be too afraid to speak out against the jerk much less take action.

Many other permutations of this dynamic could be defined but these are the most basic. JIM has been around since before the dawn of history and is with us still; evident in the political arena (at every level), the entertainment industry, the classroom and the home.

"Lorentz...concept of aggression is originally that of a biologically adaptive, evolutionarily developed impulse that serves the survival of the individual and the species..." (Fromm, p. xv 1973)

In the distant past or of prehistory, based upon this JIM paradigm, one can easily see how the big, strong cave man, if he were a jerk (herein after referred to as the big jerk), would control the tribe through fear. If there were an attempt to wrest control of the

tribe from him an intra-tribal altercation would ensue. If knowledge of another tribe indicated that there were an encroachment on the tribal territory or a challenge an inter-tribal altercation would ensue.

As humanity developed greater intellectual aptitude the capacity to reason was introduced. Elementary logic would dictate that things foraged for which caused an adverse reaction should not be eaten. While on the daily hunting/foraging trip, as the ball of fire in the sky reached the point of being directly overhead, it was time to return to the cave for fear of four legged nocturnal predators. When the big jerk disagreed and tribe members were consequently hurt or killed the tribe might begin to doubt his leadership. If there were sufficient intellectual advancement within the tribe the big jerk might be over thrown or he might instill enough fear to overcome the coup attempt.

As the human race grew and diversity developed differences became the basis for xenophobia and therefore separation. Thus bigotry was born.

Race and racism, in the United States, has been characterized as an issue which pits black against white (Andersen, M. L., & Collins, P. H., p67, 2013).. Yet, this is only a part of the paradigm, which has always involves a veritable rainbow of racial/ethnic groups which need to be considered when discussing issues of power and oppression.

To fully comprehend the enormity of this is to understand that the conquest of the world by Caucasians was more than an attempt to colonize new, unspoiled territory. But it was to force into subjection any and all who might inhabit the "new lands". Once these were subdued they would mostly become little better than slaves to their conquerors. And so it had been for many a millennium.

With the global conquest came an intermixing of genetic code such that from the early races were derived groups which did not fit into the main groups. Xenophobia engendered fear of those who were different such that subjugation was implemented, lest these "others" propagate and take over our culture/society/tribe/et al.

Racism and ethno-centrism are simply an adverse reaction of xenophobia. The mindset is that if somebody is different, then they are bad, not as good, a threat or something else negative. The natural reaction of fear, in this way of thinking, would result in a violent action to eradicate or subdue the dreaded different people.

The experience of those who inhabited "the village" in post world war two Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where there was no "Jim Crow", still had lines which they could not cross based solely upon an accident of birth (Hall, 2011). The story told by Linda Jean Hall is a horrendous one exhibiting a compounded oppression of her skin and doubtful parentage. Such gross intersectionality of repression would seem an insurmountable obstacle for any mature adult to weather. Yet, she, and many like her have shouldered the burden and bested many who were erroneously thought their betters. Truly theirs is the stern impassioned stress of which we sing.

Class, classism and inequality generally stem from the aforementioned forms of oppression. They are "civilized" methods used to subdue those who are different by "keeping them in their place". Class can be manifest in any number of variations and permutations of standard social categories. In the US, and perhaps the rest of the world, the twenty first century method of delineation is mainly in the realm of the "haves" and the "have-nots". People of various races, ethnic groups, religions and now sexual

orientation, will congregate, associate and even cohabit; as long as they are of the celebrity of moneyed set.

Issues surrounding gender, sexism, sexual orientation and hetero-sexism until the advent of the age of the "baby boomer" were hidden in the home and unknown to all but the closest friends and family. And still some were, as it were, in the closet. Now we have laws which prohibit oppression based upon these settings. It is true that there is still some resistance to the normalization of a variety of social conventions. But it should be expected that there will always be outliers.

It is believed by some that the subjection and oppression of women is a purely cultural construct (Dill, p. 317, 2013). And while in the main this is definitely true the probable foundation of this paradigm is most likely based upon nature and expedience. In the prehistoric world, as in our tribe lead by big jerk, once a female became pregnant there would be a natural reaction by the sperm donor and any other related tribe member to treat her differently. This would not be anything like that portrayed in early Hollywood, where the expectant mother would be treated with kid gloves and not allowed to do anything. But certainly she would be allowed to stay closer to the tribal cave. This was not oppression but protection of the future of the tribe. But since there are jerks in the world a good thing is bound to be turned to a bad thing. Thus, this Paleolithic politeness would in too many cases evolve into a system of domination.

Working for social change and social justice can only be completely successful if the root cause of injustice is determined and remedied. Before we can see real change we must learn to look passed the present reality, so that we may visualize the potential positive outcomes (Andersen, M. L., & Collins, P. H. , p. 470, 2013). With respect to

social justice, it has been a significant source of frustration that there are so many who wish to dwell on the past rather than look to the future. The maxim that one should not bring a problem to an authority without also bringing a solution seems to be lost on too many.

The oppressive processes described here have a basic source according to Freud (p. 40, 1927). This would be the death instinct. But it seems Freud cannot speak of this without also referencing the libido, or sexual instinct. He differentiates these from each other as well as from the ego and the id. This is much the same as Fromm's dividing of aggression into categories of benign and malignant. In any framework the issue eventually can be distilled to the individual will. Though in our day it is much more than this yet it has its foundation in what Freud call a motor impulse of adult primitive humanity (1999). There is a movie which I recommend quite often to help people understand why people do what they do; that would be "The Reckoning". The movie is loosely based upon the book *Morality Play*. In the climactic scene (which does not occur in the book) there is a point where the hero asks the villain, why he did what he did (raped and murdered a boy). The villain's answers " You want to know why... I did what I did? Because I wanted to... and because... I could".

This describes perfectly why people do what they do; they want to and they can. The will of the individual can be driven in any number of directions; at the foundation we can easily see that it could mostly be either good or evil, though there are some directions which one might argue are neither. The seeming immutable epistemological stance of the individual is the specific basis of the decision making equation. And as this is altered by space and time (because nothing is immutable) decisions made in the past



are celebrated or regretted. Those who grow as a result of their missteps are not likely to follow the trajectory of historical mishaps. However, if the error of one's ways cannot be ascertained nor the machinations thereof, the repetitious cycle of failure will be their lot.

Thus the remedy for injustice must be to temper the will of the individual. Based upon epigenetic principles this would need to begin even before conception. But the culture espoused by the parents, immediate family and surrounding society will then mold the individual after gestation. Daily family practice in words and deeds, what is listened to, read and watched will soak into a child much like the process of osmosis. A child learns what they live (Nolte & Harris, 1998). If parents, extended family and friends consistently speak ill of a particular "other", the child will learn to hate and not trust that "other". Education outside of the home must also treat all as one, though we are not all the same. Our past must be a source of learning and not of indoctrination. None should be put down, all should be lifted up. If one is hurt we must all feel the pain. We are all family; we all came from the same place (National Geographic, 2014).

I do not believe we need citation for the fact that many people on this planet hate each other. The excuses are manifold and some are ancient to the point of barely being remembered; but the reality is that they are truly without reason. In addition to efforts within the west there needs to be a reaching out by the rest of the world by whatever peaceful means possible. The beautiful thing is that it is, and has been happening in a variety of surprising places. I am aware of an effort to bring together the moderate Muslim community with like minded Christian denominations for the purpose of pursuing peace called faith based reconciliation. I even stumbled upon a story about a group

called Slim Peace, a nonprofit organization that brings Israeli and Palestinian women together around the universal theme of weight-loss support (Kraft, 2013). In the end it is vital that we realize that uniformity does not foster unity. We can be different, coexist and work together for the good of all.

On the home front the efforts of civil rights leaders, well-known and unknown, are chipping away at the edifice of white male hegemony. Our youth must continue to be taught and shown friendship with the other. The opportunities available to all must be more than just posted on a bulletin board at the high school counselor's office.

Vocational guidance should start early and the paths to these professions published and then the individuals coached through the process. This means that the education community and the family must become a team in the process of energizing the next generation and enabling them for success.

In the frontier towns of the old western US, the well off individuals and families would fund the building of the school house and the hiring of the school teacher. The purpose was not wholly unselfish; the well to do knew that the children of the town would one day be either criminals and burdens or tax payers and contributors. The rich of this world, in material things, must recognize that with their great abundance they also have great responsibility. If they must be shamed into this, then so be it. But I would stop at any effort which leaned toward violence since that is the antithesis of my proposal. The Gates, Bransons, Slims and others of their ilk in this world must see this reality of the "frontier town" on the macro scale of the world. It will take the largess of these to fund the effort to teach peace and put the world to work. The process of coaching the youth to the point of being contributors will require more human resources.

Happily, there are many well trained, certified and experienced educators who are not employed in that profession due to the economic down turn. Those who are willing could easily be brought back into the fold and be doing what they have been trained to do.

It is only through changing hearts and minds that we can have justice for all.

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