

Finding Freedom in the 21st Century

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I recently spent a month sailing and traveling in Southern Italy..., the ancient ruins, the food, the wine, the shops, the clickitey-clack trains. Almost no one spoke English. From the tiny bit I could understand, the Italians did have complaints about their world, but for me.., ahhh..., the life.

Then, back to my 'real' world, which is 'first world' Vancouver, Canada, with all my first world problems.

But I / we live in the whole world, and with the internet and 24-hour news, we learn about the whole world faster and deeper than we have ever known it.

How can I avoid being like the man, to quote Dryden, who
 *".., trudged along unknowing what he sought,
 And whistled as he went for want of thought."*
How do I stop whistling and start thinking?

How do we reach through the prevailing cynicism and resignation of our time and kindle within ourselves and those around us a spirit that brings the insight and inventiveness to create the future?

A quick overview of my life:

The 60's: studied journalism at a major small liberal arts university – thrown out for publishing my own newspaper. Headed to Berkeley (free speech please). Helped create The Memphis Country Blues Festival. Avoiding the 'draft', headed to Canada.

The 70's: 10 years of living 'off the grid' with a community in the woods of British Columbia.

The 80's: 10 years of **est** - "to transform one's ability to experience living so that the situations one had been trying to change or had been putting up with, clear up just in the process of life itself."

The 90's and beyond: 20 years of organizational consulting, impacting the fundamental patterns of organizations, producing profound and deep change.

And the last four years: Incubating social impact businesses with a commitment to fixing capitalism (*read Umar Haque, Betterness*).

Not sure about you, but I was convinced as I learned about the holocaust and other terrible experiences that it could never happen again. I try not to be cynical (cynicism is simply an *adult* way of avoiding being disappointed).

Bad stuff continues to happen. Being confronted with an industrialized 'Walmart World'..., watching the next humanitarian disaster..., it is almost impossible not to become cynical or to submit.

How do I walk the tight wire: balancing that *accepting* – taking what is offered, doesn't become *submitting* – letting the truck run over me?

How do I brush the chips from my shoulders: "*Don't tell me.*"

There was a big sign in Howard Behar's office – one of three guys who built Starbucks – "*Nothing sounds like the truth, like the truth.*"

Where do I find moments of good..., whispering, saying, or yelling a little of my truth?

Finding the good stuff that is happening. (read *How to Save the World* by Daniel Boorstein writing about the Ashoka fellows, or watch www.landfillharmonicmovie.com, and many more.)

And re-membering:

Remembering that we have forgotten is the first practical step home; the opening of a tidal gate that brings us into contact with the larger, stronger currents of existence. Exile and forgetting are natural states for most human beings, but so are remembering and recalling. All tasks are completed through cycles of visitation and absence. We should get used to this cycle and integrate it fully into the way work or a vocation is achieved and not hold ourselves to impossible standards that are often quite tedious, giftless states. (David Whyte, The Three Marriages.)

Stravinsky was conducting an orchestra, rehearsing a new piece of music he had written. After several attempts the violinist stood up and said to Stravinsky, "*It is too difficult, I cannot play it!*" Stravinsky answered, "*What I am after is the sound of someone trying to play it.*"

Where I find freedom is remembering that all I have to do is make the sounds of someone trying to live my life.