

Once this country was famous for the ease to change one's name. It did not cost much, took one visit to a judge. But now it seems people are less interested in changing their name, more interested in changing their country. The first full day I was in America went to see a distant relative, a family I had known, but not well, before they managed to escape before the war. Their name was changed from German Jewish to old money AngloSaxon. The first piece of advice she had was to avoid any relationship with Negroes, the second was to at least drop one of the two F's in my last name. It was not only German but Jewish. I played with the second suggestion because I had gone through the war under German occupation and the two f's made it German. I didn't change of course. Today having a German name, pronounced in American, is common. Boehner is pronounced Bayner and Bachman Backman. Americans probably don't know those names are German; to me not their names but their talks painfully remind me of the Germany I knew during WWII in occupied Netherlands.

It is a modern American idea that any word can mean anything the speaker intends it to mean. Democracy can mean anything, from We the People to government by Corporations. The word compromise hides defeat. Jobmakers are the ones who feverishly outsourced jobs. All with the help of MSM that I learned stands for Main Stream Media. Or is it Main Street Media? Not long ago that was just Media with a capital M. The word media also is no longer plural even though it stands for quite a few TV conglomerates and newspapers, all with their tentacles on the web, also called the net, fast on the way to be controlled and yet they are fiercely against any kind of regulation.

However, nothing can hide any more that this country is deeply divided. The only surprise I have is that it has taken so long to show. Sixty years ago a professor sat me down to tell me what democracy is: "democracy means a two party system." I did not dare say anything, but my face must have shown my astonishment, because he went on, "No, what you in Europe have is not democracy; *you have a Queen!*" My thought then was that with only two parties it is inevitable that there is always a split. When after nine years I was finally able to vote I could not find much difference in the two parties because it seemed they were trying their darndest to be alike, neither of them appealing. I quickly learned that a vote for a third party candidate always made the Republicans win. After Reagan it became obvious that my mild social justice ideas about government were closer to the Dems than to the Reps. For the next 30 years the Reps have had a closely knit program to take over all branches and levels of all governments. As Speaker Boehner said after the last made-up crisis-of-the-debt-ceiling, "I got 98% of what I wanted. I'm happy."

I'm fortunate to be able to read news from many parts of the world. The whole world seems to be seething with the rising revolt of slaves against their wealthy owners. After the surprising success of the first such uprisings, now the owners fight back with all the might they can buy.

But I am a psychologist by training. I know very little about economics or politics. Frankly, I don't want to know. They seem to be as confused and contradictory as tired children bickering over nothing.

The Tower of Babel (Babylon, a town a few miles south of Baghdad), trying to build a tower to reach heaven. A symbol of hubris. The species that can do anything it wants. One of the millions of species of this planet has so swollen that the planet can no longer provide our need for food and water. And within that one species a tiny, tiny minority has plundered the planet so severely that the planet is changing. Now that minuscule minority is not satisfied yet. They want—whatever it is they want—all. The greatest concentration of power ever.

As a psychologist that intrigues me. What I know about humans is that first of all we are a social species. We cannot survive on our own, we must rely on each other. That has been true all through the one or two hundred thousand years of our existence as homo sapiens. And now, suddenly, a tiny group thinks they can do without the rest of us. What world do they see for themselves? I imagine a few tightly insulated bubbles where a few people survive with some slaves and a few plants and trees, a few animals as pets and/or meat, calculated to be sufficient for their need while the planet cooks. As if only the captain and crew, or the owners, of the Titanic got in the lifeboats leaving all passengers to go down in the now boiling waters of the world ocean.

It does not work that way.

Someone tell those 400 people who have more wealth than 150 million Americans that it is *all of us or none of us*.

What we call history is a very brief end time, the last few thousand years of millions—a million is a thousand thousand. But even in that short time there is only one story: elites who own a population of slaves going down, the slaves surviving. The French revolution has become a model where the masses won, fighting with pitch forks and sticks against rifles, albeit after some years and obviously enormous losses. The Queen had to eat her own cake.

I imagine that the politicians who snuggle up to the very rich hope to be admitted to the artificial bubbles; maybe as servants? Do they really believe their propaganda that there is no climate change? A few years of 100+ temperatures in summer, buried in snow storms in winter, rising rivers, droughts and wildfires not convincing enough? Or maybe they believe in geo-engineering. But they don't believe in science, remember? They also don't believe that our atmosphere, our food, our water, are lethally polluted by modern applied science, applied by monster corporations. They don't believe that smoking tobacco kills. They do believe that 9/11, the destruction of three towers that killed two thousand people must be followed by an endless war on terror--although that same year 1100 people died from smoking, and the next year another 1100, and the next year and the next.

What they believe is none of my business, of course. But when they own the

MSM and make half of 300 million people believe as they do, they are dangerous.

Just read an article, *What is Wrong with Obama?* What is wrong with a nihilist Tea Party that somehow has taken over that tight group of already right wing politicians? What is wrong with the kind of economy the super rich have created? What is wrong with greed? *What is wrong with money...*

For six years I lived in the Northwest, Washington State. I learned of a custom of many northwest Native American tribes, Potlatch¹. That custom has many forms, but the essence is the redistribution of wealth, all kinds of wealth: things but also culture, dance, stories. It's a sharing, erasing extremes and excess. I held a potlatch every birthday. My house was open to friends and their friends. I gave away everything in the main room of my house. (A few things I kept in my bedroom, for instance my computer.) I gained considerable wealth not measured in money.

Money truly is the root of all evil. That is something I can understand, because I experience it. It is real. Money has become more important than food and shelter. Before we had money we, humans, knew how to survive because we knew how to find food and shelter, and live warm and cozy lives in small groups. Above all we lived sustainable lives for most of the many thousands of years we have existed as humans. Maybe we did not live as long as we do now, we had none of the gadgets we cannot do without today. But we were an awful lot happier. We did not own—the concept of owning was unknown. We did not know concepts like government, we had no leaders. We did not know the word or the idea of democracy; we lived it.

Yeah, I know, we cannot go back.

But the way things are going what choice do we have other than to be who we were born to be. Maybe without civilization but civil. Hopefully no money, but sharing skills and love, the very first emotion we learn as newborns.

robert wolff, 6 august 2011, Hiroshima Day

Recommended reading (in addition to my books of course)
Colin Turnbull, *The Forest People*, © 1987

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potlatch>