

Random Rumbblings

by SHERALYN ROMAN

Many years ago, I wrote a series of blogs (and columns too, if I recall correctly) using the above headline. They were mostly my random, and futile, attempts to find humour at this series of events we call 'Life.' These days, my random rumbblings are less about humour and more about frustration. It's a theme that seems to be consistently uniting many of us of late; a theme of an overwhelming sense of futility, and of frustration 'to say the least. Where is the world headed? What can we, as individuals, do about it? Why should we even care when the future seems so uncertain? Depressed yet? Read on and join the rest of us who are already deep down here in the pit of despair!

On politics I have a couple of thoughts. The first is someone, somewhere very high up and well-placed in the Conservative party, really, really doesn't like Patrick Brown. Imagine being sandbagged by your own party not once but twice! Each time allegations were let loose on the media late at night leaving Patrick Brown and his team scrambling for a toehold. In my opinion, either he has very effectively hidden an apparent dark side from us and is a very real threat to democracy OR, the people who ARE a very real threat to democracy don't wish to see Patrick succeed in their place. If you ask me, the Conservatives seem to have placed all their hopes and dreams on a man who loves lumber. Literally loves it. In a weird way. Watch the video and tell me what you think.

Also on politics, while we are seeing deeper divides here in Canada than we have ever seen before, our neighbours to the south are watching their pendulum swing wildly from left to right 'seemingly never even slowing down somewhere near what we might call the 'moderate middle.' The relentless rise of 'ism's' across various nations (including the US, and, yes, even here) is leading to increases in hate crimes, violence and protests and the impacts are many: a sense of entitlement and permission to spew hate, encourage violence and intolerance and to not be held accountable for one's actions. When members of the government pose for pictures with such protestors (nay, perhaps even incite them to riot) it doesn't matter what side of the debate you favour, any sense of maintaining perspective has been lost.

In further ramblings, I'm wondering how come in America one man has the freedom to purchase a gun despite indications of mental health issues and use that gun to mow down innocent people at a parade, then later be apprehended 'without incident.' Meanwhile another man, stopped for an alleged minor traffic violation was shot to death. Shot a total of 60 times! In the back. As he ran AWAY from police. It couldn't possibly be due to colour, could it?

I'm also wondering why food prices are rising astronomically while worker's wages (especially in health care where Bill #124 still exists) haven't budged an inch.

Farmers continue to struggle to both grow food and get paid for it, all on fewer and fewer acres of not yet paved over land, while grocery store magnates continue to make money like 'it's growing on trees.' How much money does one family really NEED? Most of us, and particularly young adults, are certainly not dining out on avocado toast and can barely make rent let alone afford healthy food. (Same goes for the workers discussed below by the way.)

Finally, the whole concept of the ethical consumer is what really tipped me over the edge this week. During an engaging dinner time conversation, the topic of worker's rights, child labour and warehouse staffing productivity expectations were discussed.

Human rights abuses are something we think of as happening in developing nations but in different ways 'through 'policy' and 'procedure' and workplace standards, employees are still being somewhat controlled to a degree even in developed nations. Harassment may not be physical and human rights not 'flagrantly' abused, but a rigid adherence to rules that prevent adequate time for a simple bathroom break (as an example) are problematic instead. Combined with the fact large corporations often whittle down supplier pricing to the barest minimum profit wise, is it any wonder that goods are cheaply made, and services rendered without care and attention?

Such is the vicious cycle that we are asking everyone to do more, with less, and then pay more for it at the till. We're all unhappy and it's showing. If you'd like to be an ethical consumer, how on earth do you do it? Who has the time and the resources (money!) to source out and pay more for quality clothing made by reliably employed adult workers earning a living wage? The pandemic has only heightened our reliance on large scale retailers who can stock, pick, sell and ship a product for far less than their closest competitor. If you are on a budget, can you afford to be ethical? Sadly, even when we're encouraged to 'shop local' that's when we then think it's ok to barter with the farmer at his roadside or market stand yet we'll pay an exorbitant price for raspberries shipped in from another country that pays their workers peanuts.

There's not much rambling to find the humour in these days. My random rumblings are getting darker, and more heavily weighted. Much like ponderous, thick, grey, and forbidding clouds portend a storm, with rumblings of thunder heard in the distance, I fear we too are headed for a storm. The kind that will bring an awakening. Unfortunately, I think it will be a rude one rather than enlightened.