

TRUTH, JUSTICE AND WHITE SUPREMACY

Happiness is not an adequate goal in life. We must live with the citizens of our world, and strive with them and give ourselves for the good of humanity.

Stefan Zweig¹

I use to be part of a white supremacy group. It is an Oregon based prison gang, although now it has members in several states and the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP). The operative words here are "use to be". That's no huge revelation. I've wrote about it before. As I write this (2015) I had left the group over 10 years ago. I'll write more on this in a moment.

I say it now because it is a Truth. It is a part of me and an unshakable part of my past that pops up from time to time. Recently I've had some new friends inquire about it as if they are shocked to learn it, as if I am still part of the group. How could I be a white supremacist when I'm so vocal for gay rights and anti-racist activities? It's not true, I'm not still a white supremacist. Of course, people who are new to your life are also new to the dirty past.

The recent renewal of interest in my past had me thinking about redemption. Truth and justice are words we often hear thrown around. 'We must get to the Truth to find or get justice.' But we rarely hear

about redemption. Can justice be redemption? What is Truth? Justice for one may not be justice to another. And some may not find redemption.

Truth and justice are, therefore, subjective. The classical writer Strabo wrote that the ancient Druids studied 'Moral Philosophy'.² In the story of Oisín, the son of Fionn MacCumhaill, he is asked by a christian cleric, what had sustained his people for so long before the coming of christianism, and he replied:

The Truth that was in our hearts,
and strength in our arms,
and fulfilment in our tongues.

Author Brendan Myers pointed out, "[I]t is interesting that [Oisín] should cite truth first, as though truth had an overriding place in culture. This evidence leads me to believe that the first moral principle of Druidism: in a situation where a moral decision must be made, we should always choose truth, in the expansion and enrichment of human knowledge, in ourselves and others, and at all levels of our being."³

So, in a decision where a moral decision must be made, we should seek Truth? Again, what is Truth? Some argue global warming is a reality, others argue it is an invention — even a conspiracy. Then we can look around the world at the spectrum of politicians, from the far left right on down the scale to the far right. Each has their own flavor of Truth and justice based on their own experiences. I want you to think about my past involvement

in white supremacy. How does that make you feel? I left it all behind 10⁺ years ago, does that matter? Now, I want you to think about the following situations:

COLD BLOODED MURDER

A day after christmas 2003 Oklahoma Trooper Nikki Green on a routine patrol came across the car of Ricky Malone. Malone lay asleep on a back street in his vehicle when Green attempted to make contact. The lives of Green and Malone would be defined forever by the seconds that followed.

The entire incident was caught on the video camera in Trooper Green's patrol car. A struggle ensued as the men fought over Green's gun. Malone gained control of it and Green could be seen on video pleading for his life and telling Malone he was married and had children. With a total disregard for Green's plea to live, Malone shot him twice in the back of the head. A cold and thoughtless crime that cries for "justice". During the trial Malone testified he had been cooking Methamphetamine when Green confronted him.

After a lengthy trial, Malone was ultimately sentenced to death. Malone had gone from a former paramedic and firefighter to a death row prisoner. Malone, like many prisoners, appealed his sentence and in August 2007 his death sentence was overturned. One of the grounds on which the sentence was reversed was the victim impact statement of Linda Green, Nikki Green's widow.

In her testimony to the jury Linda Green invoked

the christianism bible, suggesting the jury had a christian religious obligation to sentence Malone to death. The Oklahoma court of Appeals found that invoking religious belief and obligation in the context of capital sentencing recommendation is "totally inappropriate."

Linda Green's statement illustrates the subjectivity of justice. Not all christians believe in the Death Penalty. I can understand Mrs. Green's deep hurt and anger. I can also understand the Oklahoma Court of Appeals rationale. The courts decision provoked responses from "tough on Crime" advocates like Rep. Doug Cox.

Rep. Cox expressed his outrage at the "lack of justice" when he told a local newspaper that people who commit murder do not deserve to be a member of the human race.

It is a case that causes powerful emotions in many and presents questions on the death penalty, the impact of hard drugs in society and religion. It also calls into question interpretations on what justice is. Could Malone be redeemable in 25 or 30 years? Could he make a contribution to society during that time even from behind prison walls? I believe that he could, and I believe there is Truth in that belief.

POLITICAL CONSCIENCE

There are millions of people on the streets doing whatever they can to hussle up money to put food in their families mouths. Selling drugs, boosting from stores, and a plethora of other

crimes. These people account for a large part of the 2.5 million incarcerated in the U.S. But are they really the ones who need locked-up?

What would you do to become a multi-millionaire oil baron? Would you cause a war? Would you be willing to cause several hundred thousand deaths of men, women and children and cause generations of suffering? Would your crime be worse than those of Ricky Malone? What should be your punishment be? What would "justice" be?

Be what it may, but this is exactly what is going on in the world today. Take, for example, in 1997 a U.S. ultra-conservative⁴ think tank and policy advocacy group, Project for the New American Century, published its "Statement of Principles", which articulated market fundamentalism (or what conservatives guise as "Fiscal responsibility") for the U.S. to gain economic supremacy in the world.⁵ Many of the conservative politicians that signed the "Statement of Principles" were people we all know well: Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Zalmay Khalilzad and the all too famous Dick Cheney, to name a few.

It sounds harmless right? Well, it is the series of events that followed thereafter. It is like the moment Trooper Green faced off with Ricky Malone. The events that followed ultimately lead to the loss of a life. You may think I'm stretching reality by making the comparison, but bear with me a moment.

In 1998 those same individuals - Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, Khalilzad, Cheney, et al - "sent to President Clinton an open letter in which they argued for the invasion of Iraq."⁶ They didn't get granted their wish then, but

it didn't take long until they got to handle the business of "market fundamentalism" themselves. Five years later George Bush and Dick Cheney were in the White House with the freedom to do as they wished and Billions in surplus that the Clinton administration had left behind.

After Bush and Cheney took office they pushed an oil "forward strategy" with vigor. Of course, Cheney and Bush come from oil families and Cheney is deeply connected to Haliburton. "Plans were discussed in the spring and summer of 2001 — well before the events of September [11th] — for hamstringing Iraq and convincing the Taliban in Afghanistan to accept construction of an American (Unocal) pipeline from Turkmenistan through Kabul to Karachi, Pakistan. Talks with the Taliban continued in the summer of 2001 but apparently soon collapsed... Multiple press reports from sources in Pakistan and elsewhere, all officially denied in Washington, had the American government planning to attack Afghanistan sometime in the autumn."⁷ While the U.S. Government denied it, we now know an invasion did occur.

While oil was a motivating factor along with the so-called search for Osama bin Laden (who we now know was hidden by the Pakistan government not the Taliban), so was religion. "[T]he Republican Party has come under the domination of a curious alliance between religious fundamentalists and market fundamentalists. The two groups feed off each other — religious fundamentalism provides both an antidote to and a cover for the amorality of the market."⁸ "Iraq will become the center for spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ to Iran, Libya and throughout the Middle East."⁹ And Reverend Sun

Myung Moon, owner of the Washington Times newspaper, put it in these words: "[W]e must have an autocratic theocracy to rule the world."¹⁰

And it all dragged on for years. It continues to drag on. History now shows us the Truth: the Bush administration lied about Iraq and its connection to Al Qaeda. There were no "Weapons of Mass Destruction" (WMD's). Bin Laden wasn't in Afghanistan, but protected by Pakistan. Hundreds of thousands of people died, all guised to retaliate for 9-11. Cheney got his war in Iraq and profited leaps and bounds through his Halliburton connections."

Here we have Bush and Cheney lying to invade Iraq, hundreds of thousands of women, children and men die needlessly, for what? Where is the Truth in that? Where is the "justice". Ricky Malone goes to death row, Bush goes on Jay Leno.

WHITE SUPREMACY AND RACISM

I don't tolerate racism of any sort. I don't tolerate people calling whites "cracker" — a word with just as despicable of a history as the N-word — and I don't tolerate people degrading any race. That is how I was raised, but prison took me away from that. Socrates in *Protagoras* said, "No one goes willingly toward the bad." Racism is a learned behavior. It's something you pick up either through negative experiences in your life with another race or through environmental in-pu. Prison feeds both.

Racism is a pathogenic belief. Now, I'm no psychologist or psychiatrist, but a pathogenic belief

is, in sum, a type of belief that indirectly or directly to emotional and/or psychological impairment. To put it another way, when you hold pathogenic beliefs — of any kind — it is self-sabotaging and leads you to being separated from yourself and human well-being.

For example, you may exhibit "moral disengagement" where you know what to do, but then not do it because you have morally disconnected yourself from your behavior or action. For a number of years I suffered from moral disengagement. Not only in my gang activities, but violence in prison. I was part of the problem and not part of the solution. I made my environment more hostile and in turn I became more extreme.

Now, most people know I'm a Druid by faith. A deeply committed Pagan. I was not particularly religious before prison. Never went to church, didn't read or believe in the bible, or any other faith. However, over the years I found Druidism and in 1998 had a formal name change. But like many, I fell away from my faith and explored others, never really feeling complete. Eventually the Gods called me back, and when They did it changed my life and life's path. Racism is not compatible with Druidism.

A number of things came to a head in my life. I could choose to continue down the path I was on and live and end my life with hate in my heart — which also affected one of my own daughters — or I could leave it all behind and return to the person I was before prison and at least, in part, was meant to be. I knew

it could and likely would cost me my life. There are some groups you can walk away from and others that follow you no matter what.

I decided to leave and have never regretted it. I use to be a foul-mouthed racist who cared not for anything but myself. But over the years I turned myself into a prisoner rights and human rights advocate that tries to put others before himself. I fight against racism, homophobia and for the rights of the LGBT community. I am deeply committed. I'm willing to die for it.

Even so, I've been out of "the game" for over 10 years. But from time to time people still say "I hear you're a racist" or "I hear you are in a white supremacy gang" as if it is a current fact, and express disappointment, or stop writing. That has been fresh lately. I accept that. My past gives me a unique view into the racist and extremist mind. Not only do I know it when others ignore it but I know what drives it. I know how to help pull the salvagable out and make them see the world in a new light.

Whatever we have in our past, it can serve as a benefit or a weight to hold you down. I choose to use it as a benefit to help others. Today, I write a lot about human rights and prisoner rights. I file lawsuits — putting myself in debt — for free speech and the rights of prisoners. My life is much different than it was 10 years ago. I am much different, as we all are.

Am I redeemable? Can my past be forgiven?
I suppose that answer is with the individual.

GATHERING AUTHORITIES

According to Criminal Justice literature, and the prevailing mainstream population, the primary purpose of punishment is to make a valuable member of society out of the offender, to prevent a criminal from repeating the crime, to make the person pay for their crime, and for retribution/compensation to the victim. But is that what we are really doing with our justice systems?

The general societal perception of prisoners is that we are scum-bags, human waste that deserves no sympathy. Thus, we should be treated with the most distaste as possible and whatever hardships we face in prison — beatings, rape, gang intimidation, guard abuse, etc. — is what we deserve.¹²

When a prisoner is murdered in prison and word slips out the greasy prison gates that the person had died at the hands of prison staff or other prisoners, society proclaims, "Good s/he deserved it! Scum-bag!" This is exactly the same type of "moral disengagement" I spoke about with my past racist beliefs. There is a moral disengagement as to the value of a prisoners life. This is also why the t.v. series titled "Orange is the New Black" has such a powerful title. It was only a few decades ago that racism was open hatred, the Klan was well and alive. Our societal values have changed and we have redirected that hate to prisoners. We speak of prisoners in the same way we spoke of slaves and, in fact, our constitution still defines prisoners as "slaves".

Societies attitude is not lost on us as

prisoners. When prisoners are beaten by guards, for example, and they lie and cover it up, the collective voice of society approves of this. The lesson then learned is: the authorities do it and get away with it so it is acceptable for me, too. "The government lies, cheats and murders for money, why shouldn't I." The prisoner is then turned back out into society to exercise his lessons on fellow citizens. That is basic psychology and sociology. This is very likely why the U.S. has the most brutal system in the "civilized" world. Heck, we are the only nation with a magazine, *Prison Legal News*, dedicated to that brutality.

This victim turned perpetrator has long been documented in Sociology studies. Society has slowly developed and solidified it into the social conscience. The idea was popularized by Erich Fromm in *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* in the 1970's.¹³ Lonnie H. Athens, a Criminologist, in his book *The Creation of Dangerous Violent Criminals*¹⁴, later collected a number of case studies of some of the most violent criminals in U.S. jails and found a recurrent pattern: abused youth chooses a perpetrator as a role model and starts imitating him.

This is completely consistent with even earlier case studies. In the 1920's sociologist Clifford Shaw¹⁵ observed that some Chicago neighborhoods had consistently higher rates of juvenile delinquency than others. These were immigrant neighborhoods. The theory was a culture of delinquency had become a way of life. It wasn't so much that teens were all the sudden deviating from societies norms, rather, they acted as they did because of the culture within their peer

group made committing crimes or bad behavior acceptable. Sociologist Walter Miller tested Shaw's theory¹⁶ and found the groups defined their values roughly as: trouble, toughness, smartness, excitement, fate, and autonomy — better called fighting, sexual adventures, drinking and crime.

But wait, you say, "What does this have to do with Malone, Bush-Cheney, White Supremacy, Truth or justice?" Well, everything. It mirrors our society and it mirrors prison. It is also true whether you are rich or poor. Peter Cookson and Caroline Persell, for example, in their book *Preparing for Power*¹⁷, similarly described how the rich and privileged from elite social backgrounds develop similar ties in their prestigious prep schools and learn the same behavior and conduct. The difference, however, is the rich elite never see prison. Like Bush, they go on Jay Leno. So, it is what we as a society have come to define as justice: we "morally disengage" ourselves when it is the poor and disadvantaged acting a particular way, but we allow the elite to get a break — like we do abusive prison guards.

I suppose, depending on one's perspective, Truth and justice are built on shaky ground with one definition for the rich and another for the poor and disadvantaged. This couldn't be more glaringly obvious than FOX news, which panders to rich Christians, while CNN and other stations try to maintain a more balanced approach. The problem is, in part, if you believe you have the Truth why would you look elsewhere at someone else's? If you believe your Truth is right you invade a country at the expense of hundreds of thousands of lives with a moral disconnect, you shoot a cop under the

... belief you somehow need to to protect yourself from arrest, you participate in gangs, you may do many things — such as Rep. Cox asserting people like Malone do not deserve to be part of the human race as if he has both the Truth about judging who is or isn't human and the moral right to do so.

I don't know where redemption and forgiveness play into all this. I do not have the ultimate Truth. I do know I believe I am redeemable and worth value. I do not think I can be defined by my past. Where my value in redemption and justice come in is up to you, as an individual to decide. That is your Truth to come to. And that goes for all people. Even the Bush's and Cheney's of the world.

And that's my Truth.

If we could change ourselves, the
tendencies in the world would also
change

Mahatma Gandhi

Essay dedicated to Dr. H. Leitner, Austria

FOOTNOTES

- (1) Zweig, Stefan. Royal Game and Other Short Stories. New York: Holmes & Meier (2000). print. p. vi (in introduction by Jeffrey B. Berlin citing Zweig)
- (2) Strabo, trans. by Dinan W. Geographica, IV, 4, 197-8
- (3) Myers, Brendan. Dangerous Religion: Environmental Spirituality and Its Activist Dimensions. Earth Religions Press: London (2006). print. p. 61
- (4) It is odd that politicians are proud to call themselves "conservative". The Merriam-Websters Dictionary and Thesaurus defines it as "disposed to maintain existing views, conditions, or institutions", and conservatism is defined as "disposition to keep to established ways: opposition to change." (Merriam-Webster Dictionary and Thesaurus (2007). print. p. 164). The last thing this world would seem to need is conservatives.
- (5) See June 3, 1997 statement on www.newamericancentury.org (Last checked June 8, 1997 — and with the fluid nature of the internet I don't know if this site is still available, but I'm sure the statement is out there somewhere).
- (6) Soros, George. The Bubble of American Supremacy: The Cost of Bush's War in Iraq. New York: Public Affairs (2004), print. p. 8-9; A letter that's part of the Public Record.

~~Source: www.pdca.com~~

- (7) Phillips, Kevin. American Theocracy: The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil and Borrowed Money in the 21st Century. New York: Penguin Books, (2006). Print (updated edition). p. 83 (citing "The War for Pipelineistan", Asia Times, January 6, 2002)
- (8) Soros, Id at p. 14-15
- (9) U.S. Christian Missions in the Middle East. Los Angeles Times. March 18, 2004.
- (10) Farrell, Maureen. On a Mission from God. Buzzflash.com / farrel / 04 / 03
- (11) For a detailed description of Halliburton's connections, see: Chatterjee, Pratap. Halliburton's Army: How a Well-Connected Texas Oil Company Revolutionized the Way America Makes War. (Nation Books)
- (12) See: www.prisonlegalnews.org. Prison Legal News is the premiere magazine on Human Rights in U.S. prisons and thoroughly deconstructs the belief our justice system works.
- (13) Fromm, Erich. The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston (1973). Print.

- (14) Athens, Lonnie H. The Creation of Dangerous Violent Criminals. New York: Routledge (1989). Print.
- (15) Shaw, Clifford R. Delinquency Areas: A Study of the Geographic Distribution of School Truants, Juveniles Delinquents, and Adult Offenders in Chicago. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (1929). Print
- (16) Miller, Walter B. Lower Class Culture as a Generating Milieu of Gangs Delinquency. Journal of Social Issues, 14, 1958. Print. pp. 5-19.
- (17) Cookson, Peter W., Persell, Caroline H. Preparing for Power America's elite boarding Schools. New York: Basic Books (1985). print.

