

There are no benefits in a polarized world

By John Sommer

Robert Hughes, the art critic of Time magazine, just published his latest book (after "The Shock of The New" and "Barcelona"). The book's title is "The Culture of Complaint".

In this book, Hughes argues that while the real victims of our capitalist system are getting a raw deal (native cultures everywhere, the farmers, the unemployed, to name a few of them), the countless people who have made a fine art out of victimhood are getting most of the attention of the media and the public and an inordinate share of the financial resources of our governments. He writes "the natural condition of America is turmoil," that "genuine multiculturalism is a source of strength in a multicultural society" but that "dumb separatism is to be avoided." "We should talk plainly and concretely with each other", he continues, "and not let our grievances overflow the limits of historical investigation".

Robert Hughes made me aware how far we have come with this culture of complaining in the last years. What we have come to call "political correctness" is really nothing else but censorship by different means. Every kind of censorship is a flight from reality. The attempt to make everybody feel good, to take the pain out of a world of often shocking contrasts and injustices, has led to a host of euphemisms of which "collateral damage" instead of "civilian killings", used over the air waves during the war against Saddam

Ideas & the Arts

Hussain, is one of the most insidious examples.

What good can possibly come from a polarized world divided into left and right, male and female, young and old, black and white, Muslim and Christian, all of them separately engaged in their own fantasies and the re-writing of history. We must stop seeing ourselves as victims and always accusing others of victimizing us.

I must confess that some of my best friends, if I listen to their stories, are apparently people who have been abused at every possible moment in their lives. Their parents never loved them, their teachers did not encourage their talents, their spouses betrayed them, their bosses exploited them, the recession made their business go belly-up and they are caught with a far too-big house to pay for. When I was a boy of five or six we had a cheerful young maid, obviously the motherly type, who liked to press me to her soft, warm bosom. Was that abuse? Did I carry a dreadful trauma all through life? I only remember that I rather liked it.

When I was 12 I had a teacher we conspired against. He was a most decent man, but unable to discipline us. The whole class behaved like a horde of monsters and I remember it with shame.

When I was 19 years old the Communists took our farm away and killed my parents. That was tough, but I survived.

As a matter of fact, I have had an

absolutely wonderful life, and my family has been a great joy.

When I visited East Germany lately and talked to the friends from my school days, who had lived their whole life behind the iron curtain, I considered myself lucky that I was forced out of there in 1945, and that I came eventually to Canada. My life could have been as grey and confined as theirs. But I came to another continent instead and widened my horizon.

Do I feel like a victim of the Communists? Not at all.

Life confronts you with challenges and you find out, to your own surprise, that you can surmount these challenges and come out the winner.

Robert Hughes has it right: "Self-esteem comes from doing things well, from discovering how to tell a truth from a lie, and from finding out what unites us as well as what separates us."

Seat belt campaign statistics

The Halton Regional Police participated in the province-wide April seatbelt campaign which ran from 18-30 April. Regular patrols and seatbelt spot check programs throughout our region resulted in the following statistics:

- Vehicles stopped 20,124
 - Motorists warned 745
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- The next two-week campaign is scheduled for October.



John Sommer has been the director of Gallery House Sol, located at 45 Charles St., in Georgetown, since 1962.

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7:00 Community Improvements	6:30 Focus on Europe	7:00 Germany Live	8:00 Germany Live
8:00 G.D.H.S. vs. Nelson - Baseball			
Tuesday	5:30 Religion	Friday	5:30 Community Calendar
6:00 Optimists TV Bingo	6:00 Sportszone	6:00 Region Council	6:30 (May 5/93)
7:00 Halton Hills Council Meeting			
Wednesday	5:30 TV Story Time	Check Schedule daily on Cable 4	
6:00 Community Calendar	TBA = To Be Announced (recently recorded programming)		
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