

## The Legacy of A Baby Boomer

By Doug McGregor

Like many people these days, I feel stressed and bummed out about the state of the world. Much of this hails from the actions of various nations and societies. Is there something about our generation that has re-spawned the evils of racism, extremism and even state sponsored torture? Or is it a simple resurgence of mankind's darker behaviours?

As a child, I learned about the horrors of WW II. I naively felt at the time that the evils committed then were behind us as species as if it were part of some great learning. Our political and social systems had evolved to be strong enough to prevent bad conditions from forming and letting bad people into power. Genocide and state institutionalized torture were things that all but died in 1945 and evil had been stamped out. Imperialism was dead and all we had to do was patiently overcome the Cold War.

As an adult I was lucky to work for a multinational company and met people of all different races, religions and countries. Many became friends and I became a better person for it. At the time it seemed like the world was pulling together as a global community and I felt somewhat comfortable in my outlook, particularly after the Berlin wall came down.

However the world hasn't turned out this way. Terrorism, genocide and racism have become more serious. Disappointingly the tools of the 5th estate (journalism) have faded as competition from the internet and sensationalist biases mean we can no longer rely on a single source to keep us informed. Indeed, it is a struggle most days to figure out where the truth lies.

So one way or another we seem headed for self-destruction. Depressed yet? Me too!

So where do OUR responsibilities lie as individual citizens. For me, that's a real dilemma. I used to think I had three major roles: 1) to live my life in relation to others as I would like to be treated; 2) to stay informed about current affairs domestically and abroad; and, 3) make the best choice possible for election to government. But is that enough?

I have to admit the recently departed Harry Smith got me thinking. His commitment to social justice seems to have been the *raison d'être* of his later years, if not his life. His sentiments lay very similar to many in terms of being your brother's keeper. However Harry did not just feel or talk, he ACTIVELY opposed injustice. He personally kept the spotlight on many evils so that those with the power and resources could see what was happening and move to remedy. It's food for thought in a troubled age.

But are things really that bad? Well yes and no. Clearly the advent of the internet means we are far more aware of developments and issues across the globe than we ever have been before. A click of a mouse button can tell you about weather in Seattle or the political unrest in Uganda. I'm hoping that this means we are still in a period of transition as the world becomes increasingly more connected and aware. The internet should be a tremendous vehicle for bringing us closer together but first we still have to get over the shock of discovering and more deeply understanding other cultures. There is a foundation being laid for this, especially in Canada. I hope it spreads in a sustainable fashion.

Lastly, I leave you with one further point and this one is more optimistic. While far from solved, the number of people living in extreme poverty is falling. In just 20 years over a billion people escaped extreme poverty through goal setting by the UN. Tons and tons of more work needs to be done, including in this country, but clearly something is going right. The baby boomers have not been up to some of the challenges of this new world, but this is something to feel good about.



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