

Jayson Woodward © Dec., 2019

HAPPY NEW YEAR?

In the waning days of the old year, now is the time to be writing about the coming new year. The new year, with all its hopes, dreams and resolutions should be about well wishes for your friends, loved ones, and all inhabitants of Earth. The old year should end with a heartfelt, “I tried my best,” and be consigned to the dust bin of yesteryear. But somehow, this year, I am left with the feeling that “Somethin’s Happening Here, what it is ain’t exactly clear.” (You sang it in your head...I know you did.)

It reminds me of the old childhood game, Fruit Basket Turn Over. All players sit in a circle, with one player standing in the middle. Players are given a name of one of three fruits, like, apples, cherries, bananas, including the one in the middle. When the name of a fruit is called, those players must stand and race to a different chair, including the one in the middle. The player who doesn’t make it to a new chair is now the one in the middle. The world today reminds me of this.

People everywhere are leaving their country of birth and trying to gain acceptance into a new country. Sometimes they leave their country because of war, like Libya, like Syria.

Sometimes they leave their country because of inescapable poverty, like Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and Somalia, which sits at the very bottom of the poverty list with a per capita gross national income of \$130.00. Imagine.

Sometimes they leave their country because of internal upheaval and lack of an established authority, leaving the populace at the mercy of gangs and violence. Countries like El Salvador, Guatemala and Congo. The corruption in the Democratic Republic of Congo is an endemic problem.

Those who flee their native country are known by various names: migrants, refugees, illegal immigrants. They travel to new countries by any means necessary. They walk, they pay human traffickers, they go by leaky boats that often capsize and kill hundreds, they sneak, hopefully unobserved, one by one into an adjoining country. Take for instance North

Korea. Imagine sneaking out of North Korea, in fear for your life, into China, which to them is a better prospect. Imagine.

This 'Fruit Basket Turn Over' has not always been the norm. There were times in history when people lived and died in whatever type of country they were born into. There were times in history when people rebelled against their own country and stayed and fought to change it. The norm now is to just leave whatever horrible circumstance your native country offers and try to grab on to the nearest, most accessible, country that is better. Like lifejackets thrown out to those drowning, the more livable countries offer refuge. The safe harbor exists until that country, too, is inundated with cultures, languages, mores, and habits foreign to them, and begins the inevitable sinking from the weight of non-unity.

Is the entire world to become one heaving mass of displaced and searching humanity? Is there no way to calm the world-wide epidemic of mass relocation? Is there no answer for those compelled to leave, and those compelled to welcome, or reject?

And so my New Year begins on a pensive note. My heart yearns to offer well wishes and positive professions to all. But somehow, this year, that just doesn't seem like enough.