

Political correctness



March 10, 2020

By Nate Smelle

What I love most about this gig is the access to information one has as a journalist. As frustrating as it can be at times when important facts are withheld, having the opportunity to hear people's stories firsthand is one of the most enlightening and rewarding experiences there is. Since sitting with artist/author/lithographer Arne Roosman recently to discuss his new book, *Touching the Great Again: Visiting a Nursery* I have been thinking about how lucky I was to hear him share his experiences of growing up as a refugee in Europe during and after the Second World War. Listening to his firsthand accounts of the war and the devastation that followed, it felt as if I was being given a glimpse into a chapter of history most people alive today only get to know through books or online. Given the horrific nature of the carnage he witnessed, the conversation became painful at times as he vividly described scenes from this time in his life. Imagine the fear one must feel watching bombs fall from the sky, or seeing a woman hanged in the streets for speaking out against a deceased dictator. From these painful memories however, there is much to learn about how tyranny has and is taking hold around the world. While explaining how today's tyrants are again taking power away from the people for their own gain, Roosman also pointed out to me how humanity's history of oppression and atrocity continues to repeat itself. Having seen the rise of tyranny many times before, Roosman said a good way to spot it, is when it rears its ugly head in the form of ?racist and anti-immigrant rhetoric? used by politicians to gain or stay in power. When politicians talk about building walls to keep immigrants out; and/or align themselves with white supremacists, homophobes, and other deplorable factions commonly associated with the far-right, I agree with Roosman that if we truly desire to break free from this pattern of complacency with oppression, then silence is not an option. Furthermore, if we are going to correct the mistake of electing politicians that follow the tyrant's path to power we need to understand and reveal the motivation behind their political aspirations. Whenever there is an election on the horizon these intentions, as well as the use of such dangerously divisive rhetoric, become more and more prevalent as the campaign heats up. Now, unless Dr. David Suzuki somehow gets his name on the ballot, I admit that it is highly unlikely I will be casting a vote for any of the candidates currently vying to lead the Conservative Party of Canada. Still, whoever does get elected does have the potential of leading this country starting in 2023. For that reason, even though I am not a card carrying Conservative, I will definitely be keeping Roosman's life lessons in mind while paying close attention to the language these candidates are using.