

Upheaval, Back to School, 1984

Nobody asked but ...

A confluence of at least 3 elements brings this blog post to you — it is a mosaic of Jared Diamond, a new school year, and George Orwell.

I got the idea of the mosaic from Jared Diamond, in the intro of his book, *Upheaval*. He gives the example of the marks made on the psyches of Bostonians who were victims, or associated with victims, of the 1942 Cocoanut Grove night club fire which consumed 492 lives and crippled 100s of surviving, direct victims. Diamond was a pre-schooler in Boston then. I can empathize and I can attest. Although I was still 5 months from being born, and far away in Chattanooga, my mother hailed from Boston, and my maternal grandparents still lived in Beantown. I heard about the grisly catastrophe every summer for the next 16 years. It was a colossal event. Jared Diamond summed it up by writing that all touched by the occurrence were immediately a mosaic of what they had been before the fire, what they were by the fire's consequences, and what they would become.

It dawned on me that everyone is at any moment a mosaic of her past, present, and future — a separate, unique, different, and distinguished mosaic. And the mosaic is a part of all mosaics that are connected by relationships.

In nearly all of my relationships, this is back to school time. The relationships that are most pressing this year are those having to do with self-ownership and effects on those for whom I care most. The most critical self-ownership question is, do I understand the consequences of the mosaic mentioned above. Know thyself is an ancient, wise admonishment. But to do this, one must understand constant change, affecting not only your own mosaic but those of all relationships. In the past, I have shared in the all-too-human shortsightedness that wishes to control all events in hopes of maintaining a *status quo*. Let go. Life will go on, until it doesn't. In a perfect world, each of us would author our own education — then it makes no difference whether we choose a given vehicle, home school, unschooling, Thoreau-like experiential exposure, public school, or private school. Grant Allen opined often that one should not let one's schooling interfere with one's education. Mark Twain seconded the notion. Your responsibility to educate yourself happens 24/7/365, whereas the ritual of back to school is a seasonal thing. Responsibility and education are biological mandates. The school year is a statist fiction.

The third element referred to above is that I have just finished reading George Orwell's 1984. I saw the chilling movie in 1957, when 1984 was at the end of a telescope reversed. I thought that the scenario would come true until about calendar year 1985. Reading the book in 2019, 1984 is way back in the rearview mirror. And now I know that the predictions

have come true in a far more profound way. They were true in these ways in 1949, the year Orwell's vision was published.

At any rate, Orwell is an author with stunning power over words and narrative. He is a philosopher of the first water. He is an irresistible intellect. Needless to say, it is time to continue your education. Get a copy and read it ASAP.

— Kilgore Forelle