



WARREN'S WORDS:
SMART COMMENTARY ON

SOCIAL JUSTICE

WARREN J. BLUMENFELD, ED.D.

1. HOMOPHOBIA: HOW WE ALL PAY THE PRICE

It is often said that in the midst of misfortune, something unexpectedly valuable arises, and this has indeed been my experience. While traveling alone through Scandinavia one summer, I began to lose the vision in both of my eyes. When I reached Denmark, I went to a hospital for an evaluation, and, after a number of tests, a physician notified me that my retinas had detached, probably because of a congenital defect. She advised immediate surgery to prevent further deterioration, and I was admitted to the Community Hospital in Copenhagen. The next day, my sister, Susan, flew to Copenhagen to be with me for what turned out to be nearly two months.

That summer in this distant northern land, fearing the permanent loss of my vision, I lay in a narrow hospital bed longing for friends and relatives back home. But as Susan sat with me day after day, giving her love, her courage, her humor (and spectacular Danish pastries), something remarkable happened. Amid the bells of a distant church tolling away the passing hours, Susan and I genuinely got to know one another for the first time.

Although we inhabited the same house for over seventeen years, there was always some unspoken tension between us, some wall keeping us apart. Having only eighteen months separating us in age, we attended the same schools and had similar peer groups. For the first few years of our lives, we seemed to get along fine. We had a few friends in common, and we usually found time to play together most days. Our closeness, however, was soon to come to an end.

By the time I reached the age of seven or eight, I was increasingly becoming the target of harassment and attack by my peers, who perceived me as someone who was different. Names like queer, sissy, little girl, fag, were thrown at me like the large red ball the children hurled on the school yard in dodge ball games. During subsequent years, the situation only got worse. I tried to avoid other children and increasingly kept to myself. Susan and I grew apart. Only when we were both in our early twenties, about the time I went to Denmark, were we beginning to rediscover one another and to share the details of our lives.

While in college, I began to sort out how I had suffered as a gay male under the force of homophobia, but until my hospitalization I had very little idea how it had also affected Susan growing up as my heterosexually-oriented younger sister. Smart, attractive, outgoing, she appeared to have, at least from my vantage point, plenty of friends and seemed to fit in. In Denmark, however, she confided to me that throughout our school years, she was continually teased for have a faggot brother. On one occasion, she recalled some of the older boys laughing at her, asking if she were “like her brother.” When she witnessed other students harassing me, peer pressure, coupled with her own fear of becoming a target, compelled her to distance herself from me by adding her voice to the chorus of insults. I felt betrayed and despised her for it.

Our time together in my hospital room permitted us the needed chance to define the basis of our past estrangement. Through the tears, the apologies, the rage at having been raised in an oppressive environment, and the regrets over losing so much precious time, we began to process of healing our relationship. As it turned out, my vision was not the only thing restored to me that summer in Denmark.

WARREN'S WORDS: SMART COMMENTARY ON SOCIAL JUSTICE

WARREN J. BLUMENFELD, ED.D.

Print: ISBN: 978-0-9850986-5-0

E-Book: ISBN: 978-0-9850986-7-4

If you enjoyed this chapter, you may purchase the book on
Amazon and Kindle

http://www.amazon.com/Warrens-Words-Commentary-Social-Justice/dp/0985098651/ref=sr_1_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1342476792&sr=1-4&keywords=Warren%27s+Words

or on your favorite e-reader

2012

Published by Purple Books Publishing

www.purplebookspublishing.com

Palm Desert, CA 92260