

BARSAMIAN, from page 10

throughout the world is directly connected to the fossil fuels being pumped into the atmosphere, resulting in the heating up of the Earth's water and air temperature. So, again, the consequences have to be acknowledged and dealt with in an urgent manner.

R.H.: *Can you take an example of a current event and flesh it out a bit? What have you observed about the way the media has covered it?*

D.B.: Let's stick with poverty, which I think is a huge scandal in this incredibly rich country where wealth and income is concentrated in just a sliver of the population, and that's accelerating, not decreasing.

Since Obama announced the recovery from the Great Recession, 95 percent of all income gains have gone to the 1 percent. So

people are running full speed just to stay where they are and many of them are falling behind. They're not even keeping pace with the cost of living. Now on the issue of poverty, there's no talking about the connection with the economic system. In fact, you cannot even mention capitalism when talking about poverty. ...

R.H.: *(The economic recovery) was announced with very little interrogation by the corporate media. The question to ask is, who benefits from these economic policies?*

D.B.: You don't even see those questions ever posed at all in the corporate media, even in much of the alternative media. They'll focus famously on some welfare queen driving a Cadillac, exploiting the system, getting multiple checks.

First of all, that whole thing was invented by Ronald Reagan — the Great Communicator. It became part of the folklore that, well, poor people — maybe there's something in their genes, maybe it's in their lack of values — another obscene term that makes my blood boil.

R.H.: *You said in all this there are some bright spots in the gloom and doom. Where would you suggest people turn to for their information?*

D.B.: They should turn to independent radio programs like "Alternative Radio." They should turn to "Democracy Now." They should turn to The Intercept, which Glenn Greenwald, a wonderful independent journalist, is directing along with Jeremy Scahill and Laura Poitras and Liliana Segura and others. Murtaza Hussain is part of that — he's a Canadian journalist based in Toronto. There are excellent books coming out, largely from Haymarket Books in Chicago but also from The New Press in New York. There's lots of excellent websites. Al Jazeera TV in English is widely available now. They've produced and are producing a series of excellent documentaries called "Fault Lines" — really top-notch stuff that you don't find anywhere

else.

R.H.: *What advice do you have for people who still want to participate in politics and still want to do something, given that you call our options for political candidates "cyanide" and "arsenic"?*

D.B.: Yes, that question comes up everywhere. And I think the area where citizens can get involved is at the city council level. So, for example, Kshama Sawant, the first socialist elected in the United States in decades and decades, right there in Seattle.

It's possible to get on school boards and local elections and create grass-roots movements through societal organizations. That puts pressure on people at the top. Change is going to come, historically, as Howard Zinn said, from the bottom pushing up; it's never come from the top. The top

will take credit for any change in any new law, as JFK did and LBJ did around the Civil Rights Movement, but they were under tremendous pressure from movements of people in the street demanding social justice, just as we see again today with the Black Lives Matter movement and other movements.

"It's possible to get on school boards and local elections and create grass-roots movements through societal organizations. That puts pressure on people at the top. Change is going to come, historically, as Howard Zinn said, from the bottom pushing up; it's never come from the top."

R.H.: *You talked a lot about whistleblowers in your Town Hall*

lecture: Chelsea Manning, Edward Snowden. You call them heroes, but there are those who call them traitors.

D.B.: Well, those are highly charged terms — they're very pejorative and slanderous. I think treason is in the eye of the beholder very much like terrorism is in the eye of the beholder. So, whereas Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King Jr. and others for years and years were regarded as terrorists and regarded very negatively by J. Edgar Hoover's FBI, today they are regarded as heroes and almost saintlike.

So it's a constantly moving definition, and I think what Snowden did really harkens back to Daniel Ellsberg and the release of the Pentagon Papers in 1971, which kind of blew up the whole U.S. propaganda effort, that people had been fed a slew of lies and distortions.

I think Edward Snowden and Chelsea Manning and WikiLeaks and Julian Assange have done a great public service in making available information about what government policy is really about. In Snowden's case, unmasking the greatest surveillance dragnet in the history of the world. People simply did not know that their text messages and emails and phone calls were all being not only traced but collected and stored without their permission. I mean, again, a clear violation of the Bill of Rights and the expectation of privacy.

If Obama had any cojones, he would take the Nobel Peace Prize that he was given in 2009 and give it to Edward Snowden and Chelsea Manning, eliminate Chelsea Manning's 35-year prison sentence, restore Edward Snowden's passport so that he can

travel to the United States and drop all charges against Snowden.

R.H.: *If you could get all of America's future journalists in a room, what would you want to say to them?*

D.B.: Be skeptical. Challenge existing assumptions. Do not accept at face value any official story. And always ask the question: Who benefits? Who benefits from these proposals or these policies?

Think outside the box. Be independent, the way young people are very independent when they want to distance themselves from their parents. They're constantly asking, "Why?" (to the dismay of their parents, probably). Why, why, why? That is really critical because the media is somewhat good at answering the who, the what, the where and the when, but they completely fail on the why.

Without understanding the context and the background and the history and the politics and the culture, you're kind of left in left field.

R.H.: *At your Town Hall lecture, you shared a poem with the audience about your parents living through the Armenian genocide, because you said you want them to know where you're coming from. How does that past and that history shape the work that you do?*

D.B.: Well, it was a huge shadow growing up in New York in the 1950s. It was always in the background but it was never really spoken about in any clear terms. It was: "Something terrible happened, there was this huge atrocity," but no one was really willing to talk about it. It was kind of a survivor's guilt as they call it, and I wanted to find out more about that history and why the Armenian genocide was virtually invisible; why it was not talked about, much less acknowledged.

So that led me to an informal study of politics and history.

I was a voracious reader, whatever I could get my hands on. I would read and spend lots of time at the Webster branch of the New York Public library on 78th Street and York Avenue, which I loved to go to for three reasons: First of all, they had books, and we didn't have any books at home because my parents weren't very literate, it was well lit and there were no cockroaches. So I liked going to the library, and that background, that history that was never really acknowledged, was a huge influence on me and it continues today.

People ask me, you know, how is it to interview Noam Chomsky or some of these other people that I work with like Arundhati Roy and Vandana Shiva and Tariq Ali. It's a cinch, by the way, compared to interviewing your mother and other family members trying to get them to describe unbelievable horrors. The hardest interview I ever did was with my mother.

Reprinted from Street Roots' sister paper Real Change News in Seattle.

Resilience

by Rachel D.

I give no heed to personal safety.
Americans are paranoid,
Afraid of different.
People say I'm brave,
but I'm still afraid.
Though in my mind,
"Fear means do it!"
I am so strong,
Though it's tiring.
A little emotional breakdown later
And I can do this.
Why are people so resilient?

Stay Or Go

by Cactus

Why am I here and not there?
Is it worth the risk and trouble
to be elsewhere
Inner universe/outer world
Can anyone really do anything
Do things actually exist
Tranquility is all universe inside
Why am I here
Who am I
Stay or go
Do or Don't
Only
Being
When
What is time
Does now even exist
Now can only be discussed
in past tense
Yesterday is gone
Tomorrow is a dream
Sights that are seen
Sounds that are heard
Is the past the only thing that's real
Or are things gone by
A shadow of the present
Present a reflection of tomorrow
Dust and shadows
Smoke and mirrors
There can't be any doors
without walls
No travel without obstruction.