

‘‘The Welcoming Committee’’

Joseph Mack

Inspired by Jen and counselling session of 20 Jul 2015

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FIRST DRAFT
7-JAN-2016

Authors Notes:

Script help: Jen, Anoo and her public speaking class, Judy.

This piece was prompted by a lunchtime conversation with Jen, who now lives in Austin, TX, at Anoo's summer Intensive. This was followed by a pair of e-mail exchanges with Jen and a counselling session a month later when I realised what had really happened at the lunch.

I met Jen a couple of months later, when she returned to town for a friend's wedding. It was clear that she had no idea what had happened at my end at that lunch, and wasn't even all that interested. It was like I'd been enlightened and all she wanted was to talk about the weather. The words I put into the immigration officer's mouth are what I heard Jen saying at lunch that day. It seems like I made up her end of the conversation. I thought that a woman (here the immigration officer) had recognised my progress towards the goals set by women's lib back in the '70's. I thought it worth writing a sketch about my journey and what I found on arrival at my destination. In fact Jen hadn't recognised any such thing, and no self proclaimed feminist had acknowledged my progress. As a man, I was hardly in a position to declare that I'd done what the women's libbers had asked. So nothing had happened at all at the lunch with Jen and no feminist had recognised my achievement.

I put the sketch aside, thinking there was no point in a sketch about an event that only happened in my imagination. Then in Jan 2016, I mentioned the sketch to Connie, who wanted to read it. I no longer had the validation from Jen that I'd arrived at the destination set for men by women's libbers in the '70's. However the point was still valid that women's libbers had never been interested in men's liberation, or having men as partners; the convention hall was empty, there was no party and no welcoming committee. I don't need confirmation from women's libbers for that even if I haven't reached their goal for men. I now know that they were never interested in anyone being happier and that they'd set a goal for me that would not help anyone..

Naomi Wolf's book "Fire with Fire" is an analysis of the failure of the Feminist movement to achieve its goals. On just perusing the chapter headings and from my own life, the most obvious failure is that feminists didn't enlist men, their natural allies, in their cause. Men, who are prepared to die to defend their country and the women and children in it, understand as well as anyone, that none of us are free until we're all free. Men were alienated by being ignored or treated as the enemy. Naomi's book does mention that men were often not welcome, *e.g.* men weren't allowed to step on buses going to women's rallies. It's clear that Naomi doesn't regard men as the enemy.

However being a man, I thought we at least deserved a subsection, if not a chapter. We do hold up half the sky after all.

I accept that for women to have brought men on board would have been difficult. However the consequences of not doing so has lost 50 yrs and alienated several generations of men.

I presented this at Anoo's public speaking course on 28 Jul 2015. From comments from Annabel, it's clear that the treatment that some women have received from men has made it impossible for them to think rationally about men. Men have no idea of the magnitude of the problems. It's clear from Annabel that we have a lot further to go than I thought. Annabel being angry last night reminded me of Lynn being angry at me over the phone.

Where I am is not obvious. When I approached the immigration officer, Anoo thought I was dead. The location is a place in my mind; I've arrived where, back in the '70's, the women's libbers told me that I had to reach before they would have anything to do with me..

Even in RC, men have not heard many stories from women.

It's no wonder that the women in RC didn't want men to get out of their distress. They would have made up anything to leave men where they were. This basically destroyed RC. No-one could trust RC when it allowed men to twist in the wind. The women in RC expect men to behave in a way that doesn't trigger their stuff. Since the men weren't doing anything wrong, other than being men, this removed the men in RC from those women's worlds.

Naomi Wolf in "Fire with Fire" p152-160, tells the story of a rape crisis center that over two years self-immolated through burn-out of the counsellors and strict adherence to doctrine that didn't work. RC did the same thing.

It's not surprising that the feminist movement would do the same thing by alienating the men.

The scene about "Misconceptions" happened outside the Whole Foods in Chapel Hill. I was talking to one of the vegetarian, liberal people who purchases food that's supposed to foster good health and consciousness raising.

The second random women talks about "The Women's Health Collective Table" a sketch which some will have already heard. It's about how I wasn't welcome at a women's health collective table.

JOE

RANDOM FEMALES

IMMIGRATION OFFICER female

ACT ONE

FADE IN

1. INT. CONVENTION HALL --- DAY

Joe holding Naomi Wolf's "Misconceptions".

RANDOM WOMAN

(polite but curt)

What's the book by Naomi Wolf
you're reading?

JOE

"Misconceptions". It's about
birth in the US for-profit medical
system. I'm hoping to learn the
things I missed.

RANDOM WOMAN

(sarcastic)

So you're going to be a mother are
you?

woman walks off

JOE

(looking at her as
she recedes into the
distance)There's things in this book I, as
a father-to-be, wish someone had
told me. I'm going to do something
to make sure women, giving birth
in the US, are treated as people,
rather than cattle.

edit

ANOTHER RANDOM WOMAN

You! You were at the women's
health collective table. What the
hell were you doing hanging around
a table about women's health?

woman walks off

JOE

I was hoping to have a woman in my
life sometime, and to be aware of
her health.

CONTINUED

edit

Joe holding Brittany Gibbon's book

Immigration Officer walking across stage sees Joe's book and sits at the passport booth, puts on officer's cap, motions Joe to step forward.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER

(pleasant but
official)

why are you reading that book?

JOE

Brittany Gibbons is a woman who weighs 300 lb. She stood in front of TV cameras in a bikini in Times Square, to show the world what a 300 lb woman looks like in a bikini. She did the same thing later in a TED talk.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER

Why do you care?

JOE

Because she's a woman and she's prepared to tell me about her world, something most women won't do. Women are oppressed, but if they won't tell us about their world, it's hard to know what to do about it.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER

Tell me about her world.

JOE

I couldn't believe she made it through high school. She didn't really. She had an awful time. She's only made it in adulthood because she has a personality, courage and can laugh at her appearance.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER

how important is appearance to a woman?

JOE

It's a matter of life and death. If you fail, you don't find a mate, you don't reproduce your DNA and you'll spend your life alone. You'll do anything to avoid that,

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)
including leading a miserable life.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER
OK. passport please.

Immigration Officer motions for Joe to give her his passport. Joe hands it over. Immigration Officer opens it up crossways, looks at Joe and then the photo, checking that they match.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (CONT'D)
(matter of factly)
Just checking you're a man.

Immigration Officer flips pages, looking through passport

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (CONT'D)
I see three disasterous
relationships with women. With
one you produced a child of whom
you're very proud. I also see
three ex-girlfriends, you're still
on good terms with.

Immigration Officer runs the passport through the mag card reader, photocopies the front page, stamps the passport and hands it back to Joe, who puts it in his shirt pocket.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (CONT'D)
How long did it take to get here?

JOE
50yrs

IMMIGRATION OFFICER
how was the journey?

JOE
It had its ups and downs. ... So
I'm here?

IMMIGRATION OFFICER
It's your journey. Why don't you
tell me where you think you are?

JOE
Well I was expecting lots of happy
faces, happy women, some happy men.
I didn't know how many men, but
there had to be some. It wasn't
easy getting here ... I thought I
might be a welcoming committee ...
But the place is dusty and empty
and it doesn't look like anyone has
(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)
ever been here. Am I the first?

IMMIGRATION OFFICER
You don't care whether you're
first. Did you really struggle for
50yrs to be the first?

JOE
(ruefully)
No, I didn't ... I did it so I
wouldn't have to spend the rest of
my life alone.

Immigration Officer gestures, matter of factly, to the empty
convention hall behind her.

JOE (CONT'D)
... and now I find that I'm alone,
as alone as I ever have been, and
alone as I feared I would be if I
failed.

JOE (CONT'D)
But looking around and seeing no-
one here, I don't care that much.
Mostly I really didn't want to miss
out on the humanity of being with
people like me, or whatever fun I
thought the people were having,
while I was slogging my way here.

JOE (CONT'D)
Now I see that there's nothing
going on and no-one's here. It
seems I didn't need to hurry.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER
What makes you think this is your
destination?

JOE
You're here. You're a feminist.
You gave me a pass just now. I
must be somewhere. You recognise
me as a man who knows that an
oppressed woman can't be a real
partner. You're the first one
I've found. I assume I've arrived
at the outskirts. There must be
others here as I get closer to the
centre. I must be here.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER
It was just chance that you're
(MORE)

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (CONT'D)
talking to me. I happened to be walking through. I saw you with that book and I sat down. A minute earlier or later, you would have found yourself talking to a woman, who wouldn't understand why you were reading a book by Brittany Gibbons or if she did, she wouldn't talk to you about it.

JOE
so where are the rest of the feminists? Why aren't they here?

IMMIGRATION OFFICER
You know where they are.

JOE
still calling men assholes and trying to overthrow the patriarchy?

IMMIGRATION OFFICER
did you really think they'd be waiting here for you and looking out for your arrival?

JOE
yes I did. They lied to me. This is where they told me I had to get to, but they never intended to be here and had no interest in welcoming me when I did arrive. There isn't a happy world of feminists here. I see this isn't my destination.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER
are you done here then?

JOE
yes. I guess so.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER
OK. passport please.

Joe hands over passport. Immigration Officer stamps passport, then hands it back.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER (CONT'D)
All the best for the rest of your journey.

Immigration officer exits. Joe stands ruefully/philosophically looking at his passport.

FADE OUT

THE END