

This is the new world

by BRIAN LOCKHART

Several years ago, I was acquainted with a woman I had worked with in an office setting for several years.

We were very friendly and had a lot of conversations.

She happened to be Irish ? specifically from Northern Ireland.

My grandparents, on my maternal side, were also from Northern Ireland and came over to Canada on a ship in the 1920s as a young couple seeking new opportunities.

Northern Ireland has always had a divided population when it came to religion. The two sides didn't mix very well, and the situation quite often came to violence.

I was discussing this with my Irish friend one day at work and asked her about the whole situation since she grew up there.

Her family were all Irish Catholic. My grandparents were Irish Protestant.

Considering everyone involved is white and northern European looking, I asked her how you knew someone's religion so you knew who the enemy was.

?By your name,? she said.

She asked what my grandparent's surname was, and when I told her, she mentioned a certain neighbourhood where they probably lived ? based on a simple name. The fact that they were from this neighbourhood and didn't have a typical full Irish name made them a natural enemy to the other side.

I never knew my grandfather, as he died just after I was born, but my grandmother lived to a ripe old age. In the 30 years I knew her, never once did I hear her make a political comment about that situation, nor did she ever make a derogatory comment about someone of the Catholic faith.

In Northern Ireland, this work friend of mine and I probably would never have ended up in a social situation together, and at one time, we could have been the victim of a bombing or other means of violence.

Yet, here we had a good discussion about the situation with absolutely no animosity at all. I even made a joke that perhaps at one time, my distant relatives had traded potshots with her family over some ridiculous dispute.

The paternal side of my family, my dad's family, were pioneers ? homesteaders who fled religious persecution in Europe and landed on Canadian shores during the days of the Wild West and Western expansion. They cleared a farm in Saskatchewan in the mid-1800s.

I am 100 per cent Canadian, and have no ties, in any way, to where my ancestors came from.

To me, it is inconceivable that I would even think of having a dispute with anyone here based on the origins of someone else's family.

Yet, now, we have threats, protests, and violence based on a conflict that is taking place thousands of miles away.

Someone actually fired a gun at three different schools in Montreal. How do you justify protesting violence in one part of the world by committing an act of violence in another part, in a country which has no impact on and is not involved in the conflict?

Firing a gun to terrorize a group of people in this country is exactly that ? terrorism. It is designed to intimidate and threaten another group of people.

There is no place in this new-world country for old-world grudges.

What's going on in the Middle East is a generational thing. Kids don't naturally hate their neighbours. They are taught to hate their neighbours by their parents. Then those kids grow up and teach their children to hate as well.

Unfortunately, some people can't let this type of thinking go away and bring their violent tendencies with them.

I have a neighbour who arrived in Canada from a rather poor South American country several years ago.

He told me he came here for the lifestyle and to provide his family with a better life. He has assimilated and is doing very well. He also told me that he is disappointed that he knows others from his home country who have arrived here and brought the same bad behaviour that caused him to leave his home country with them.

He doesn't understand why, as he puts it, ?They bring the Third World with them,? and cause the same problems that they sought to escape in the first place.

Canada is an open and welcoming place.

Don't provide this country with the grief of old-world problems.

Leave them in the old world where they belong.