

It's all Shakespeare's fault.

"If you prick us, do we not bleed"

By William Corden

Yes, it's the bedrock belief created by these lines from William in the Merchant of Venice, that we are all the same underneath the different skins that cloak us. The belief that we are triggered by the same external stimuli and that therefore all thought processes begin from the same design. In reality we are more like the animals that gather at the watering holes, the gatherings we see on those BBC Earth documentaries. They show the Zebra, the Deer and the Hippopotami etc. living in harmony, mingling at the water's edge with an overriding purpose of eating drinking and staying alive.

In truth the only thing they have in common is a fear of predators and the alarm sounded by one species is enough to warn the entire community, otherwise they keep themselves to their own brand and have their own way of getting by.

This has been brought to mind by a very interesting book I am reading at the moment, it was written over a 100 years ago and would probably be considered racist in today's world, it's called "Chinese Characteristics" by Arthur H. Smith and it could have been written yesterday for all that's fundamentally changed.

The reader should know where I'm coming from; I have been very happily married to a Chinese Girl for the past 24 years and during this time I have lived deeply within the North American Chinese community and developed my impressions of their culture and their general thought processes.

Trying all this time to understand the little quirks and foibles has been a mini-university education. The differences in their approach to social interactions and the way they view their understanding of the passage of time, the way they have no need for specifics when it comes to large numbers and their general unhurried nature in getting things done, well this is where Mr. Shakespeare's homogenous belief falls apart.



Whenever I'm in the company of a large social group of Chinese I feel like I'm from a different species. I do speak a modicum of Mandarin but if I try to surprise and speak the language to a mandarin speaking guest at a gathering, their thought processes cannot allow for a white man to be speaking in their own tongue. To them it's just unintelligible noise and it's only from the intervention of a bilingual Chinese English speaking guest that they are able to switch on the decoder.

In the current woke world I guess I would be harangued as a racist for my own beliefs and I must admit to an exasperation with the many times I have failed to get through but ... this book makes it very clear that I am not alone in my belief that the races are different in their views of the world, some of it embedded in the basic design and other parts epigenetic. I have witnessed every trait he describes on my journey so far. So it's not just the Chinese I'm talking about, it's all races and all countries.

I have, over the years, made great strides in understanding that differences are best handled by recognising them and understanding that the human species cannot be stamped with a 'one size fits all " label .Trying to impose our own view of things on variants of the species is what causes most of our

troubles.