

CIVIC

Life vs. fear

By: Daliborka Uljarević

Talmud says: "Perhaps it is not your destiny to succeed, but you must try". Our own folk tradition offers a much more vivid and perhaps more understandable adage: "Fear the herd, fear a turd, but when will you live?"

What is it about the first sentence that makes us stop or continue to read a text, except (the lack of) sympathy for the author? Mostly darkness, or light. We are afraid of the dark even if we're grown up now. Some fears are never defeated. Hidden and suppressed, these fears grow and bind our hands and minds. The experts call them phobias, psychotic breakdowns or states, but in fact these are reflections of our refusal to turn to ourselves, to dive into the depths of our souls, into the past, to re-run the old films and in them to find the causes of our insecurities and tensions.

But groping in the dark need not be terrible. If we consider it part of self-exploration, it can eventually be healing and enlightening.

Various fears have been diagnosed. From fears of the dark or of pain to fears of dependence on others, of madness, of love or falling in love, of walking, of own voice, of work, of the weather, of thinking, of dreams, of laughter, of decision-making, of new ideas or things, of loneliness, of change, of memory, of homosexuality, of our own selves... In their various guises, the scientists have analysed some 200 types, although they estimate their number at some 500 since the context and object of fears are often irrational and thus inexhaustible.

Some fear are visible both at the personal and political level in Montenegro, and that makes them as serious obstacle to the democratization process.

Fear of homosexuality

The discussion on the situation of LGBT population has been moving onto the social stage, slowly eroding the last bastion of an outdated, affectatious conservatism. The decision-makers have tuned their ears and throats for politically correct expressions, even if these grate on their political consciousness. In spite of that, every once in a while there is a spontaneous outburst of primal impulses, revealing the gap between the declared policies, even when they originate under the European stick, and the inner, uncontrollable fear. This is the line on which the worst coalitions are forged, because there's no sense in looking for common values between **Ferhat Dinoša**, Minister for human and minority rights, **Husnija Šabović**, a DPS MP and **Ervin Spahić**, an SDP MP. These political officials, all members of their respective minorities, should have more sensibility also for the minorities to which they do not belong, but it seems that their tolerance ends at the perimeter of their own interests. And what are the Montenegrin homophobes afraid of? Of themselves or of somebody else? Who are the politicians who are feeding hatred against the people of different sexual orientation? Should they have a place in the supposedly pro-European Government and the Parliament? What is the difference between them and those who write the most disgusting comments on the articles of LGBT rights and bravely, under the cover of nicks, call for violence?

Fear of memory

There are fears we try to cure by suppressing them. This is the case with the confrontation with the past in Montenegro, which has been long and systematically suppressed. And yet the Pandora's box was opened, revealing the incompetence and weakness of the institutions lead by terrified people, incapable

of dealing justice to the victims and punishment to the perpetrators. The trials are slow, verdicts are questionable, there is more concern for the accused than for the victims who are undergoing another experience of victimisation. This is why we have one **Ibrahimu Ćikiću**, a man who survived the most monstrous tortures intended to break the body, spirit and mind, being tried for being super-humanly strong to survive it and incredibly brave to talk about it. It is clear that the political pragmatism and the fears of those who can still influence the decision-making process is boundless. But that is not and cannot be a reason to end up in societal masochism which tries to lock up such tragedies into a closet of unstudied history and continue torturing the victim. We cannot forget that such crimes never expire and that they will not stop oppressing us just because we pretend they have never happened. The farce of the trial against Ćikić is evidence of the impossibility of creating a spruced-society on suppressed crimes. The road to Europe is the one we will walk with Ibrahim and his conviction that justice exists.

Fear of change

And finally the most ancient fear in Montenegro which survives under the excuse that the things can only get worse, and the thought of tomorrow turns the world into a dangerous, unsettling place which grips the stomach with an iron hand. It is one of the most powerful pillars of this government, its justification for trampling all over citizens who are sinking into helplessness. This is also the undefendable reason of your personal defection before you have even made the step forward.

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The biggest fears are those of ourselves and of the fear itself. The first feeds the second. And so on. Talmud says: "Perhaps it is not your destiny to succeed, but you must try". Our own folk tradition offers a much more vivid and perhaps more understandable adage: "Fear the herd, fear a turd, but when will you live?"

The author is executive director of Centre for Civic Education (CCE)