

# *On Life and Meaning*

MARK PERES

## **Episode 18 – Deborah Bosley – Plain Language**

### *The Ink is Black, the Page is White*

And now a personal word,

When I listen to Deborah Bosley talk about communicating clearly and the music of the 1960s and helping others, she and I have a few things in common.

There were three things that informed my youth: reading and writing, music, and a belief that that I could make the world a better place.

In 1972 I lived in Rego Park in a high-rise apartment in the borough of Queens in New York City. Our building was at the end of Burns Street and Thornton Place. I was in 4<sup>th</sup> grade (which is sort of like 7<sup>th</sup> grade now). We lived on the second floor with a balcony where my father could toss quarters down to us when the Good Humor truck came by. I almost always got the toasted almond or strawberry shortcake bars, a red, white and blue bomb pop, or a screwball if I wanted a brain freeze. After school I would play street hockey, throw a plastic football between parked cars, build models of Creature Feature monsters, and play Rock 'em, Sock 'em robots or checkers and chess with my friends.

My brother and three sisters were older than me. They were teenagers. They went to Russell Sage Junior High School. My oldest sister had started at Forest Hills High School. They wore bell bottom jeans with patches and boots and vests with leather fringes. Their world was mysterious to me.

When I wasn't playing with my friends I was reading. Everything I could get my hands on. We had a set of the World Book Encyclopedia. I would read a volume from cover to cover. I would look up words I didn't know in a Merriam-Webster dictionary. I would sit in my room and organize books on my shelf. I would write stories in pencil in a loose-leaf notebook.

Then there was the music. The older kids played albums on portable turntables. The Beatles had broken up in 1970 and there were rumors they might reunite, how could they not, but Paul was holding a grudge. Other people blamed John & Yoko. Someone had the new release of 'Sticky Fingers' by the Rolling Stones, with the working zipper on the cover, but the kids who listened to the Beatles didn't talk much with the kids who

listened to the Stones. Everything was in the air. Elton John and *Rocket Man*. Paul Simon and *Me and Julio Down by the Schoolyard*. Carly Simon and *You're So Vain*.

I listened to my own personal anthem every day on the radio. *Black and White* by Three Dog Night:

*The ink is black  
The page is white  
Together we learn to read and write  
A child is black  
A child is white  
A whole world looks upon the sight  
A beautiful sight*

All of what it meant and what the teenagers did was out of reach for me but the soundtrack was there. There were concerts at Madison Square Garden that people talked about. The Concert for Bangladesh in 1971. Stevie Wonder and John Lennon on the same stage in 1972. Something about Jose Feliciano.

The world was open. It could be made better. I was growing up believing I could make a difference.

Reading and writing and the music of the early seventies and the sentiment of changing the world has followed me throughout my life. I have always had a book in my hand. I have always thought of myself as someone who communicated well. I have always listened to classic rock and pop to inspire and move me. I have always served and contributed and created work and taught with the hope and optimism that the world could be made better.

It may be idealism that Deborah and I have in common. Idealism that is beaten and battered in the rough and tumble of our times. I don't have any illusions about the world. But I do have a choice about how to live. I'm grateful that Deborah Bosley cares about words and music and helping others. What could matter more?

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