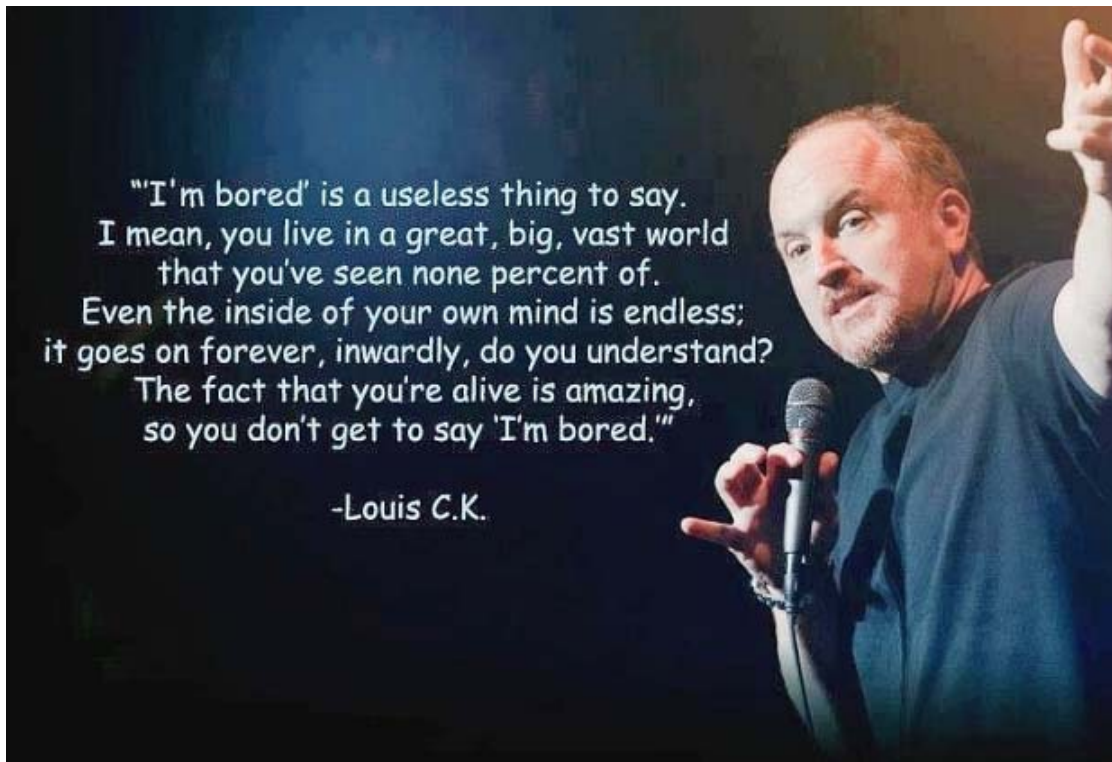


Shelley Fralic: Everything is amazing and nobody is happy

We expect a lot, but too many don't want to pay the price

BY SHELLEY FRALIC, VANCOUVER SUN JANUARY 26, 2014



Louis C.K. laments our growing affection for complaint, and the widespread lack of appreciation for our cushy lot in life.

It's the kind of everyday situation where what you planned doesn't work out, maybe because you messed up, maybe through no fault of your own.

Like, you slept through the alarm. Or the bus was full and passed you by. Or you weren't expecting that 3.5-per-cent fare increase to take the ferry to Sechelt. Or a border guard searched your car because you were lippy. Or your boss wanted you to move to a different desk.

These, of course, are the minutiae of life, those minor inconveniences and annoyances that happen to all of us, all the time, but when weighed against real travails are really rather insignificant.

Or, so you would think.

Trouble is, more and more of us seem unable to cope when someone moves our cheese.

Instead of taking life's little roadblocks in stride, more and more of us seem inclined to overreact, without benefit of sober second thought or even civility, instead screaming at authority, venting on radio station hotlines and launching human-rights complaints.

We grouse to everyone within earshot, when we're buying a \$4 latte at the local coffee shop, that it's nothing short of criminal that we should have to pay \$2 to house our vehicle all day long in a, newly expanded \$4.5-million South Surrey park-and-ride lot as part of our daily commute.

We protest the closing of a scenic Westside Vancouver road that most of us never used anyway, just

because we think it might favour someone who is not us, like the guy who invented Lululemon.

We demand affordable comfort and ready convenience, like heat for our homes and gas for our cars, but please, no pipelines, as if the two are mutually exclusive.

Maybe our short fuses and lack of both insight and foresight these days can be blamed on social media, the sole purpose of which seems to be the sharing of cat videos and the encouragement of a universal flash mob tendency to blow every little thing out of proportion.

It's as if humans are shape shifting into a put-upon race, and it's the kind of musing that comes upon you while watching *Call the Midwife*, a BBC drama set in postwar London's east end, where crushing poverty is a constant fog.

It's a show that deftly and realistically portrays all manner of human behaviour, from incest and infidelity to abortion and unrequited love, but as you watch from the comfort of a world where the living is easy, where food is plentiful and healthcare a given, where most babies are born alive and robust, where there is well-paid work and equality isn't just a dream, you realize that we seem to have collectively abandoned our survival instinct, our resiliency.

Forget about how we of the 21st century First World would cope with work houses, concentration camps, infant mortality and tuberculosis, like millions of our forebears. We couldn't because, these days, we're far too busy sweating the small stuff, stress being a mostly self-inflicted modern plague, as if we need to invent problems because ours tend to be so, you know, paltry.

Just ask comedian Louis C.K., who laments our growing affection for complaint, and the widespread lack of appreciation for our cushy lot in life.

"People on planes are the worst," is the start of one of his much-viewed YouTube skits.

He's right. We've become bitchy about flying, angry at long lineups and shoe searching, ticked off at the lack of leg room or having to pay \$7 for a sandwich.

"They say 'I had to sit on the runway for 40 minutes,'" he rants in one clip. "Oh, really. And then did you fly through the air like a bird, incredibly? Did you partake in the miracle of human flight? You're flying! You're sitting in a chair in the sky!

"Everything is amazing right now and nobody's happy," says the comedian. "We live in an amazing world and it's wasted on the crappiest generation of just spoiled idiots."

Think about our culture of complaint the next time the bus is late or you can't drive all the way to the end of Point Grey Road or the ferry fare to your Gulf Island cottage has increased by the price of a Subway sandwich.

Because we have won the lottery: We live in a part of the world where our babies aren't being blown up by the Taliban or born in refugee camps, where we have indoor plumbing and washing machines and cellphones and stores full of fresh fruit and where there's a crowded Starbucks on every corner. Where we can get on a plane and a few hours later be sitting on a beach nursing a piña colada.

Two dollars to park and ride? Get over it.

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Generally I agree....but... on the Point Grey Road closure I strongly disagree. I used that route for 36 years - saving me and others a significant amount of time, gas, and reduced pollution. I estimate that, over those years, that personally was worth about \$700 (using conservative estimates). Multiply that by the many thousands that daily used that road the savings have run into the millions of dollars. - cjk