

I knew something was brewing when I saw her hovering around the barista.

It all started off as a sidetrip to pick up a coffee while I had some free time in the middle of my day. I thought I'd pop in, grab a java, relax a few minutes, read for a few minutes, then get back into the groove of my day.

But little did I know that I was about to come face to face with a life lesson - or perhaps I should say, a little life reminder.

Let me set the stage for you ... I am standing in line, waiting patiently, behind one person who is paying at the cashier. Let's just say it's not a very long line, being all of two people. A third person enters the mix - an older woman strolls towards the line, then stands to the left of person #1 (the line is to the right of person #1). Let's call her Soon-To-Be-Rude-Woman #1. She then wanders past me. Ahhh, I think, she sees the line now and realizes that lines are for maintaining some level of organization and order amongst the potential chaos of people waiting for their cup 'o morning joe.

But I was wrong.

She walks right past me again - to hover around the barista ... leaning forward to place her order ... while the two of us in line stood and watched in disbelief. Right before our very eyes.

Now, I don't think I was raised much different in Canada - though I may be wrong on this one. I was always taught to be polite, to wait my turn, to say "please" and "thank you" ... and have since realized that putting good into the world allows it to come back to me.

I turn to look at STBRW #1 ... at first, I thought that a simple glance at her would respectfully remind her of the line. She ignored the glance as though nothing had happened. So I reminded her that there is a line which she can occupy after me. Just a simple reminder, nothing more, nothing less. No response.

Written by Allan Besselink
Saturday, 10 May 2008 12:55

It escalated to a "Can you not just wait in line like the rest of us, or do you have to subvert the process here?" ... with her finally responding with a "perhaps you are too polite". Apparently she was a little surprised that I had decided to call her out on her ploy. But it was the gall that she displayed and her obvious disdain for process that really got my goat. And as I get older, not much gets my goat anymore. This had done it.

"Being polite may actually get you some place in the world" ...

"Asshole" was her oh so intelligent response (when in doubt, throw around expletives).

Apparently I was in the wrong (in her eyes) for actually waiting my turn - and expecting her to do the same.

I decided to write about this not because of the insanity of the moment (though it definitely qualified for that) but to make note of some simple values in interacting with other humans. We're all on this planet together, and if people like STBRW #1 can't even bring some semblance of manners to ordering a cup of coffee, what the hell are we going to do as a species, or as a humanity that struggles with war, religion, and inequality?

Thanks Mom and Dad, for the simple things. I take it for granted that people will "play nicely" but once again I am reminded that that isn't necessarily the case. It's amazing the realizations you can have over a cup of coffee.