

## KarenWest

My husband and I come from different countries, and although we are very much alike in some ways, we are different too, and I know my husband feels strongly that my country, the USA, could learn from other countries that have been around longer than mine has in terms of guaranteed rights of things like health care and education too, in terms of more consistency of it at the K-12 grade levels across all communities in the country, that in his country, is also inspected by their government.

However, I do think my country was founded at a time when democracy was not all that common in the world, and our small country stood up and said that they were not being represented fairly, in that the people governing them were making their laws and taxing them unfairly (at the time!) and they stood up to it and won - when not expected to do so. So I think the country was founded on good basic values in life, making sure (over time, and it continues to change) that the rights here are not influenced unfairly in any way, but that is not to say that my country is not an infant compared to the rest of the world. It has not dealt with experiences in culture where you learn from your experience, and change your system, so much as countries that have been around for many thousands of years in history longer than we have, or dealt with crowding and old buildings and preserving historic sites as other countries do.

My country guarantees people to get guns legally where as many other older countries do not--since when my country was formed, they were concerned about a brand new government that could become corrupt (possibly) and it was mostly land not settled, and felt the need for people to be allowed to have guns. Yet I hear debates from internationals where their countries do not allow guns, this no longer a right there, since they found in their longer historic experience, after the country was settled, that it did not make sense for an every day citizen to have the right for a gun. So I've heard my country criticized for allowing that right too, in that a simple temper tantrum from some silly dispute could result in innocent children and adults being murdered for an occasion where it should never have happened. Those people say if you remove that right, there would be less of these issues, and we can learn from them in that respect by removing a right.

So in many ways, I do think my country could learn from some more established places, that guarantee health care and better overseen education systems for the entire country with more consistency and fairness guaranteed for all. The gun debate is big here too.

Do I think this can change overnight? I think changing things such as this overnight could disrupt economies and debates have to be had and decided upon democratically, etc. So in these examples, I do not think that change can come overnight, although some, especially those that have lived in other parts of the world where those human rights are guaranteed, they don't understand sometimes that it can take time for these changes to happen in a country. I think a country's economy has to be evaluated for major changes such as that as well--and it is all beyond my education or experience -- just observations I've made.

I do think that there is no discrimination in terms that in my country, everyone has the chance to go to school without discrimination, but perhaps the schools are a bit inconsistent in terms of their ranking levels in various areas. Everyone can get health care here now, but you do have to pay, and it is not guaranteed by the government. There are programs for the poor to get housing, and programs for the elderly to get social security and health care at subsidized levels, but I have observed unfairness in the system that could be done better. I do not however think that major economic changes in a country can take place overnight. They take a lot of smart and reasonable bi-partisan people to make common sense changes together, and make those changes over time within a country's economy, based on a decided common goodness they feel is right as citizens of the country, and thus meeting some international

treaty's human rights over time rather than immediately.

Others above mentioned women's rights, and I think that has vastly improved in my country since the 1960's, and for black citizens as well. You still find yourself in some positions a minority, but I think there are enough people out there doing outreach to try to change it for the less fortunate women, minorities, etc, that over time, this will change. Someday diversity in all areas will be common place. I know this is not the case in all parts of the world--and I sign petitions every time I can, to support the organizations that support change for the oppressed people's of societies that it will take enormous efforts to change the oppression in their country's systems.