

## Trying to walk a mile in someone else's clogs.

I sat across from the family because there was no room. The son, a twerp of a man-child, kept on saying ridiculous things that could not not be listened to.. The parents seemed sweet, though, so I kept on eavesdropping. "It's sort of ironic that we're going to a concentration camp on a train, isn't it," the father asked. I smiled a little bit because of course it was morbidly ironic.

They were Australian Jews with roots in South Africa (and I imagine some European ones, too, on account of the father's accent) and here we all were, riding on the same tracks as thousands of others had to their punishments for being themselves. I expected it to be an emotionally heavy ride, but the son's stupidity kept on annoying me too much to allow for sentimentality. All I could do was silently scorn and then wonder how such nice people ended up with such a fool.

You do see all the houses en route to the Scheinhausen and can't help but--or I couldn't, at least--get angry about the whole thing again. Everyone saw what was going on--why didn't *they* eavesdrop more? Why didn't they help, goddammit? Their gardens are right there!

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One thing I learned on the Berlin walking tour (though I learned a lot more than just this) was that in the time preceding Hitler's power takeover, 1 U.S. dollar was worth 4.26 billion German marks.

4.26 *billion*. At the time it was the worst inflation ever. People would get paid three times a day to keep up with the prices and have their wives run to the stores with baskets full of money to buy a single loaf of bread. I obviously can't endorse the actions taken to remedy it, but I sort of can begin to sense how bat-shit crazy everyone must've been getting. After I don't eat a meal for a day I get real cranky and can't think straight. What if I don't eat a meal for days on end and when I do I have to bring in baskets overflowing with money to pay for it? Money had lost its currency completely. People used it as wallpaper. What's the point? Everything is ludicrous. Nothing makes sense.

The U.S. has a healthy economy and people are freaking out about immigrants. Clamp down. Stop this. They're the root of our ills. And these are the jobs that most Americans would not take.

In the days after September 11th people stole war hero's flags from off their lawns, committed hate crimes against Muslims that were thousands of miles from any sort of cooperation, shot up a Sikh temple (because they were brown, and thus must have been Muslim). Craziness. Insanity. Bush was re-elected!

And why? Because fear, panic, and terror can effectively paralyze sanity.

A couple summers ago a gas pipeline broke in Arizona. Gas shot up to 3 or 4 bucks a gallon and you had to wait in line for hours to get any. So people started siphoning off gas from parked cars. Shipping off your neighbors is certainly more drastic than stealing gas, but I'm not sure the line of thought is as different as we would hope. Doth protest: "I didn't siphon gas!" But are you sure you wouldn't have if it had gone on longer than a week, someone siphoned gas from you, or you were dirt poor with no sign of getting out?