

# STRAIGHT WHITE MALE

A semi-autobiographical exploration of Western culture and values \*

Based upon surreal events

- ☒ Single
- ☒ In a relationship
- ☒ Married
- ☒ Divorced
- ☒ It's complicated
- ☒ In studio
- ☒ Writing book

Nic Briscoe

\* No minority groups were harmed or discriminated against whilst writing this book

## SECTION 1

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Title & Copyright Page

# Straight White Male

A semi-autobiographical exploration of Western culture and values \*

Based upon surreal events

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Freedom of speech cannot be limited without being lost.



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# Dedication

8<sup>th</sup> September 2020

For Celina, though we are apart you will always be a part of me.

My deepest wish in life is that everything that I do with my body, speech and mind is as useful as possible to as many as possible.

The thoughts, words and active intention that have gone into creating this book all flow from this wish.

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Julia, Marco, Sven, Mikel, Philipp, Lena & Sophie in Stuttgart

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Anna in Graz

Kris in Bristol

Tass in NY

Daniele in Marbella

My daughter

Freedom of Speech cannot be limited without being lost.

Humble thanks to all those countless who made freedom of speech possible today.

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# Preface.

Written 14<sup>th</sup> February 2020, Andalucía.

**Words are wonderful and powerful.  
More powerful than any weapon ever known to humankind.  
And as wonderful as Mother-nature herself.  
They can destroy and they can create.  
They can attack and they can protect.  
Words can deceive and inform.  
They can divide and unite.  
Words, potentially, are freedom.**

Without the individual freedom for each of us to use our own words – written or spoken, privately or publicly, deeply contemplated or glibly spontaneous – then there is no individual freedom. If, without fear of persecution or discrimination or retribution, we cannot transparently say what we think or believe – whether what we say is right or wrong, clever or stupid, profound or shallow – then there is no basis upon which freedom can exist and thrive. The open dialogue – which is the most necessary component of lasting beneficially informed change – cannot exist.

Real-life stories about everyday people are the most powerful of all words. They represent practical experiential fact, not hypothetical theoretical fictions.

Real-life stories about everyday people are what connect all of us, they shine a bright light on our innumerable similarities, and blur the boundaries of our seemingly greatest differences. In this way we can become as one. We all have our own story. We are all storytellers.

For thousands of years the remarkable real-life stories about everyday people have been told and retold, mixed and merged, they form the mythical archetypes for all cultures and become the fabric of civilisations worldwide. These stories have provided all civilisations with their moral compasses, philosophical frameworks, and the foundations upon which many value systems have

been established. These values are not static, they can equally continue to evolve, or wildly metamorphosise, or erode, or simply cease to exist.

Without values there can be no civilisation of any kind.

Without storytellers and real-life stories about everyday people, values cannot exist or evolve (in any direction).

We are all part of this process.

We all have a story to share.

This is my story. It's an Andalusian love story and tragedy.

It's a true story about a vivacious beautiful friendly young Andalusian woman.

And a shy introverted painfully private middle-aged Englishman.

It's a tale about dark pasts and sinister secrets.

It's about dysfunctional families, with delusional siblings, dishonest uncles, and destructive controlling parents.

It's about fatherhood. It's about motherhood. It's about childhood. It's about forgiveness.

It's about being transparently in the moment, and about hiding behind or clinging to what seems safest.

It's about illusion and reality, about protection and vulnerability.

It's about deep love and absolute betrayal, about authentic friendships and superficial acquaintances.

It's about a clash of cultures and integration, about being accepted and always being an outsider.

It's about connection and rejection, transcendence and transgression.

It's about potential and growth, about devastation and destruction.

It's about agreements and disagreements, about conflicting ideas, and incompatible paths.

It's about male and female, about activity and wisdom, about attraction and repulsion, about relationships and separation.

It's about purest idealism and childlike naivety, it's about sly deviousness and premeditated cunning.

It's about religion and money, generosity and greed, about sharing and coveting.

It's about an elite hierarchy in ivory towers and humble monks in serene humility.

It's about dark cynicism, calculated control, politics, corruption, power and nepotism.

It's about unimaginable happiness and heartbreaking sorrow.

It's about bliss and pain. It's about vision and hope, and it's about loss.

It's about deep confidence and openness, about truth and honesty, and the law and justice.

It's about deceit and lies, gossip and humiliation, self-doubt and inequity.

It's about adventure, purpose and opportunity, about boredom and being trapped in isolation.

It's about loneliness and unity, about broken promises and evaporating dreams.

It's about recovery and renewal, change and transformation, about fear and courage.

It's about determination and focus, about disappointment, depression and struggle.

It's about passionate drive and debilitating burnout.

It's about the nanometer in-between sanity and insanity.

It's about life and death. It's about impossible choices.

It's about making mistakes, and about living with them.

It's about being judged and vilified, it's about encouragement and second chances.

It's about finding ones place in the world, about independence.

It's a stark warning, and it's beacon of optimism.

It's about silent disbelief and finally finding a voice.

It's about screaming for help or speaking out for change.

It's about doing nothing or becoming a catalyst.

It's about patience and restraint, and it's about action.

It's about doing my best to choose and use my words wisely, always.

Most of all it's a story about values and freedom, and my journey — both inner and outer — to really authentically attempt to understand what these words actually mean, on many levels: historically, intellectually, philosophically, culturally, theoretically, practically, spiritually and personally. What are our values today? Where did they come from? Are they valid and valuable, and are they valued? Will these values endure over time? Will they evolve, or erode and be replaced, and if so into what or by what and by whom? Will real freedom, in the few places in the world where it still really exists, this unbeliev-

ably new and rare and fragile phenomena, will it survive? Can I or indeed any of us do anything to influence this process?

This is my message in a bottle.

I put it out into the world in the hope that maybe, just maybe, it will be useful to at least someone, and maybe, just maybe it will start or contribute to some useful dialogue that helps improve how we understand one another. I firmly believe that sharing our stories breaks down barriers, our stories help us understand one another more clearly.

This is my story...

\* \* \* \* \*

Added 15<sup>th</sup> May 2020, Immenstadt.

Looking back at my life I realise that everything I thought, had, was, been doing days, weeks, months, years ago is gone.

Almost like it never happened. As if it never existed. Like it was just a fiction — a story, from a movie or a telenovela or a book, just endless words on countless obscure pages or passing images on a screen. But which version am I watching or reading? Is it the edgy controversial unreleased director's cut? Or the film-studio's play-it-safe public version? Is it the authentic unedited mind-stream of the author's manuscript? Or the publisher's heavily edited, redacted and homogenised book?

What we do, and how we do it can change the meaning of these memories, of these words and images, not only for ourselves but for others too. It's as if in some way the decisions we make today and tomorrow and next week can somehow inadvertently influence and adjust the past of others and ourselves. The way we thought things were changes. The myths we tell ourselves and others about our lives today, the way we talk ourselves and others into believing our own script, as we act out the scenes of our day-to-day dramas and tragedies and love stories and successes and failures, rapidly become firstly yesterday's forgotten outtake and then, eventually, yesteryear's conflated legend — an amalgam of fact, fiction, omission and embellishment.

Big questions become raised from this realisation. When we understand that what we wish for, think, say and do can deeply effect the lives of others, then maybe it becomes time to acknowledge this and somehow take responsibility for it. Whilst at the same time realising that how we manage our body, speech and mind absolutely influences our own future, that ultimately the only person we can change is ourself. Understanding and acting upon this is ultimate freedom. We are in control of our own future. But this also creates a dichotomy – we also influence the future of others, and they ours.

And, not only our future, as mentioned, we can also influence how we and others see our pasts, history gets rewritten, and we are all often responsible for this... people talk... fake heroes are created and applauded, innocent people are demonised and their reputations ruined. Unbelievable legends built upon a heady cocktail of fact and fiction, upon truth and lies, spread by those who speak loudest and longest, and believed most often by those who are hungriest for unreliable dramatic opinion and destructive gossip.

And sometimes these inaccurate legends can invade and influence our future. Time ceases to be a unidirectional phenomena, always heading forward toward tomorrow and next year. Instead the past, the future and the present moment merge, all influencing and influenced by one another. The perfect dream-life we thought we were living can implode into a living nightmare from one moment to the next... simply by one decision made by someone else, simply through a few of their spoken and written words, an action or two, and the whole direction of one's current life can be rewritten in an instant, the meaning of one's past dissolves into an entirely different story, and the predicted future evaporates into unpredictable chaos.

It's at the same time the worst and the best situation to be in. Traumatic. Painful. Distressing. Vulnerable. Like being in free-fall, with no fixed point of reference, nothing to reach for, nothing solid to grasp and cling to. But at the same time it's a void full of potential, of endless exhilarating possibilities.

In such situations, from this void, from rockbottom, well, there are only two or maybe three possible outcomes.

To give up. To end the free-fall by clinging to old dysfunctional beliefs, which halt all advancement and growth, concluding in stagnation, or total self-destruction, the end, full-stop.

Or a new beginning, a breakthrough, a rebirth... a metamorphoses... a new story.... a continuation from a new point of reference, from a completely different way to understand everything. In this case the only way forward is openness, honesty and surrender. It's an absolute release. One has to find the courage to let go and fall into the abyss, and perhaps oblivion.

The pages of this book are extrapolated from this void where one possible version of my future, another unpredicted version of my past, and the total chaos of my present moment collide. It's an attempt to understand the multiplicity of my past, and how, hopefully, to predict and influence a better future. It's a hunt for honest words, true values and real freedom. It's a search through the wreckage of my downed flight through life in Spain these passed seven years. Scouring the mountainside crash-site for some intact remains of this amazing adventure, with the hope I may find the black box intact. The flight recorder with the data about what really happened. The irrefutable truth. Hopefully there will be some correlation between my version of events, my memories and the flight data. If not then who the fuck or what the fuck am I? But even more worryingly – what if my memories do synchronise with this data, what if there is a correlation? Then who the fuck was she?

### **'No legacy is as rich as honesty.'**

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

From: All 's Well that Ends Well – Act iii, Scene 5

\* \* \* \* \*

# Prologue.

Written: 16<sup>th</sup> February 2020, Andalucía.

## **Hunting for words, values and freedom: An Andalusian love story.**

**It was the 10<sup>th</sup> of December 2019. As I walked slowly Westward along the mainly sandy beach parallel with Torre del Mar's Paseo Marítimo I slowly felt myself begin to relax – just a little.**

By now in Andalucía normally it should at least feel a bit like winter. The snow on the very peak of mount Maroma, which presided majestically to the North, seemed to affirm this assumption. But the brilliant afternoon sun shone down on my face from a cloudless breezeless perfect blue Mediterranean sky and warmed me.

There was a mild midweek out-of-season hustle and bustle from the chiriguitos and beach bars, and the rich charcoaled aroma of burning logs and espetos de sardinas made me wish I had not been so bloody organised in bringing and just finished eating my own not so inspiring picnic lunch. I knelt momentarily up close to the shoreline and splashed seawater to rinse away small bits of cheese imbued with tiny bread-crumbs from the serrated blade of my tactical knife and then placed it in my pocket.

It felt good to walk. Generally I felt quite exhausted, and the crisp fresh sea air and the calming sound of gentle lazy waves soothed my all but wrecked head and at least momentarily quietened the almost constant internal dialogue emanating from my heavy heart, broken and battered it still generated ceaseless reminders of Celina, my now ex-partner whom I had separated from at the beginning of July that year. Celina and I had spent seven difficult but amazing years together, and for me they had been without doubt the most incredible adventure of my entire life. I had loved our life together, even with all its challenges, and she was unquestionably the love of my life, the woman I thought I would grow old with, but it was not to be.

Yes, the last six months since we split had been the toughest time of my life, and the last seven days or so had been super intense.

I'd arrived back in Spain five days earlier, having spent a month in a lakeside picture-postcard-perfect Austrian mountain village just outside Salzburg. My original flight had been cancelled almost last minute due to an air traffic controller's strike in Paris. I found this out just as I was leaving the home of my very good and close friend, Stan, possibly one of the most intelligently intense men I have ever known, also one of the most generous. He drove me to the station. My hopefully relaxed train journey (earmarked as reading time) from Salzburg to Munich suddenly became an online flight and accommodation booking session. I battled with an intermittent mobile network and by the time I reached Munich I had a new flight booked a day later than planned. Now I had to let the car hire company in Malaga know I'd be a day late and see if I could arrange to stay at a friend's flat overnight in Stuttgart. All that done and now onboard a train bound for Stuttgart, finally there was some time to read. I'd just finished the classic ancient work *The Art of War* allegedly by Sun Tzu. I had four other books on the go: *Maps of Meaning* (J.B. Peterson), *Sapiens* (Y.N. Harari), *The Science Delusion* (R. Sheldrake), and *You Can't Hurt Me* (D. Goggins). I chose Harari's *Sapiens* and started to read about ancient civilisations and empires – which somehow seemed to dovetail well with my thoughts on Sun Tzu's work, composed in imperial China. The topic was their common myths, the universal belief in which made these first civilisations and empires possible. I admired Harari's skilful clarity and his unusual almost humble yet academic ability to unravel and compare maybe three contemporary historical theories at a time in order to demonstrate that we (including he) simple just don't really know exactly what was happening back five or six thousand years before, and maybe we'll never know. I liked this direct honesty. Again I was reminded how repelled I was by rigid historical, religious, philosophical and scientific dogma and the experts that espouse and pedal it.

For the past five years, but in particular during the past two years, I'd become fascinated with the values of Western Civilisation. At the moment, in this short introduction, I use these terms very loosely. However hopefully during the following pages of this book what I mean by these terms will become (hopefully) crystal clear. Trying to unravel the history, origin and meaning of these values had become almost an obsession for me, and my reading list re-

flects this. The ideas behind Western values, their transformation into laws and rights, the various interpretations of the philosophical and religious creeds that underpin our Western civilisation, concepts like 'freedom' and 'democracy' and 'humanism' became daily topics of research and contemplation.

Why? Why was I doing this? Initially I thought I understood all of these things quite well, however the more I researched the more I realised I understood so little, almost nothing. How could I live in and be part of (meaning participate in and contribute to in any meaningful way) a civilisation I did not understand? How could I let my life be governed by concepts that I began to realise I did not fully agree with or fully understand? The more I researched and the more I talked with my friends about these topics and my viewpoint, the more I realised I was not alone. Many people felt the same way and had similar doubts and questions.

How, just for example, on the one hand could 'we' (meaning citizens of Western Civilisation, so Europe, North America, Australasia) claim that we live within cultures that pertain to constitutionally uphold human rights (as set out in the United Nations' Universal declaration of Human Rights of 1948 whilst on the other hand a law was passed in Canada in 2016 which legally compels Canadians to use an ever-growing list of preferred personal pronouns based upon the idea that 'gender' is nothing more than a social construct (Bill C16)? How can we be legally compelled to use certain words AND at the same time have the right of freedom of speech, which should allow us to choose the words we want to use (based upon our own opinions)? Why should politicians and lawmakers decide and punitively control what we can and can't say and how we say them? How can politicians and lawmakers assert that 'gender is merely a social construct' when there is absolutely no scientific evidence that supports the idea gender and sex and individual biology and sexual proclivity vary independently? Or where is the scientific research and evidence? How can it be made illegal overnight to speak in a manner that supports a previously predominant and accepted widespread opinion based upon century upon century of shared experience and observation? For example when you see a person that anatomically-speaking looks like a woman you refer to HER as if SHE is a woman. Same for a person who looks like a man, you refer to and address HIM as if HE were a man. This traditional established and experiential manner of speaking is in opposition to the unsubstantiated claim that

gender is a social construct, and that you are therefore now legally compelled in Canada, by Bill C16, to use the preferred personal pronoun of the person in front of you – whether you know or not what their preferred gender is at that precise moment in time, and whether you are aware, or not, of the ever growing list of personal pronouns associated with this idea of gender-fluidity?

___ laughed.	Ask ___!	That's ___ pen.	That pen's ___.	Did ___ enjoy ___?
co	co	cos	cos	coself
en	en	ens	ens	enself
ey	em	eir	eirs	emself
he	him	his	his	himself
she	her	her	hers	herself
they	them	their	theirs	themselves
xie	hir ("here")	hir	hirs	hirsself
yo	yo	yos	yos	yoself
ze	zir	zir	zirs	zirsself

The table above provides examples of gender pronouns for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual etc etc.

The phrase ‘batshit crazy’ may come to mind. But be careful with this. Voicing such an opinion and in such a way could be deemed as being offensive to some, and therefore these words (written or spoken, established urban slang or not) could be categorised as hate-speech, which is now becoming widespread criminally illegal, punishable by fine and / or imprisonment. Especially be careful if you think this kind of stuff is funny and could be used comedically or satirically, a case in point being that of the standup comedian, Mark Meechan, and his girlfriend’s ‘Sieg Heiling’ pet pug dog.

Milan Kundera’s 1965 satirical novel The Joke depicts the direction in which a state’s society can go when totalitarian ideology permeates the populous’s thinking... for telling a joke to his ‘friends’, Ludvik, the book’s central character, is duly reported to the authorities, and ends up in a forced labour camp. The

Joke was banned in soviet Czechoslovakia and Kundera eventually had to go into exile (for writing a novel about the results of telling a joke).

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's controversial Gulag Archipelago (he was also exiled from the USSR for his writings) recounts graphically the direction of discrimination and persecution and outright murder a state heads towards when its supreme leader and political elite become the ones deciding what the masses can think or not think, say or not say, do or not do. It's widely asserted that the staggering contents of Solzhenitsyn's book contributed massively to the seed-change in political view and diplomatic positions of many countries towards, and the eventual dissolution of, the USSR.

However it seems that nothing has been learned even from such recent history, and once again much of the social justice philosophy and progressive politics behind current attempts at directing the world towards a global superstate are focussed on overturning and removing, and not on implementing and protecting, basic human rights, such as freedom of opinion, freedom of thought, and above all freedom of speech.

These two contradictory positions – loosely speaking one based upon individualism and the other based upon collectivism – fuel a cognitive dissonance which exemplifies the current status quo and endemic tensions within the societies of most modern Western countries, Brexit being a classic example...

No, no! This is not going to degenerate into some protracted Brexit discourse and rant, but Brexit has to be put on the table. I'm an ex-pat, living in Spain, and since the summer of 2016 UK referendum my life and world have been indelibly coloured by this process of the UK leaving the EU. So in short order. I'm pro-Brexit (or at least pro the original idea behind Brexit). BUT as an ex-pat Brexit – to say the very least, and as a total understatement – severely impacted and impacts my life (and the lives of many other ex-pats) on many levels. Especially it put an almost intolerable strain on my relationship with Celina, the uncertainty of not knowing what next was a constant dismal dark cloud hanging over us both. And Brexit for us went far beyond pub-politics, it influenced many of our decisions and took up huge swathes of our time and energy trying to predict, decipher and manoeuvre through all the bureaucratic minefields it created for Brits in Spain. When Spanish politicians and British

diplomats alike circulate public letters online and in the newspapers telling ex-pat Brits 'not to worry', well you know it's time to start worrying. House prices in the Brit enclaves nearby where I live, close by to Vélez-Málaga, plummeted from 2017 onwards as many ex-pat homeowners bailed out and headed back to Blighty – the uncertainty became too much for them, and created a localised buyer's market bubble. And I understand this. At times the stress of Brexit for me was almost unbearable – I seriously thought to leave. But I was in love with a Spanish woman, and I loved my life with her there, and I loved Spain, so I stayed. We ex-pats in Spain lived this bit of history, we felt it... and still it's not over, nobody knows what will happen at the end of the 2020 Brexit transition period, the divorce is not over yet. British ex-pats with Spanish residency have all been clearly told by officials from our local ayuntamientos that no one knows what laws will be implemented during the coming year / years and that our residency (although legal for now) is possibly subject to change. Any long-term 'guiri' will tell you integrating into Spain is challenging enough to say the least, but try living and settling in Spain with the additional fallout of Brexit hanging over your head.

On the one hand I can clearly see that humanity is naturally and progressively moving away from the idea of nation states with controlled borders towards one, or two, or three, more unified super-states, and maybe, just maybe that's not such a bad idea. For me the jury's out on this whole topic of globalism, it's being reflected upon. Let's just say that attempts at achieving a global nation so far don't seem to have worked out so well (think Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, both based upon differing versions and interpretations of humanism). The best attempt so far at establishing a 'humanistic' state (where all citizens are equal) is the US of A (based upon yet another interpretation of humanism), and after almost two-hundred-and-fifty years – since Jefferson, Franklin and the other Founding Fathers initiated hunters into the 'pursuit of happiness' – it's still a work in progress, and again for me the jury's out on this particular approach. But the EU and the idiot elitist Eurocrats in Brussels as a model for a future one-world-nation? No fucking way! And in the 2016 referendum the majority of the UK decided against being in the EU as well and probably, most definitely, for a very wide and varied amount of differing reasons. I was in Brighton, East Sussex immediately after the 52% majority voted to leave the EU. One evening there was a spontaneous post-defeat 'Remainers' protest-rally in one of the big public spaces in the city centre, just outside the old town hall. This was not an organised peaceful rally, far from it. This was

an angry 'you're either with us or against us' style protest, with thousands of student-age social justice warriors with homemade placards. I walked into one corner of this gathering, took it all in for ten minutes or so, and then swiftly exited, it didn't feel safe there. As far as I could see there was no police presence and no organised security. The rhetoric from the podium was close to anarchic, and the crowd's baying response felt like a step too close to an all-out riot. There was no sign of any Pro-Brexit attendees, which to me seemed unusual because normally at these gathering there is at least some opposing hecklers, and at least one tense frontline.

Probably you think I'm exaggerating about this event. In the past I've been involved with organising street marches in London, specifically with providing the event delivery logistics including adequate security. I've seen a few things, and in my opinion this post-referendum 'gathering' in Brighton just needed one little spark to set off one almighty explosion. If anyone had braved the podium to voice some counterbalance, I'm almost certain the situation would have devolved drastically, possibly into violence. This gathering, for me, is a quite typical example of the general atmosphere in UK during the past three years, a country divided almost 50:50, with an extreme growing tension between the two polar-opposite views. And my impression is that this is how it is in many countries in Europe. I've talked with friends in Germany, Austria and Spain and they all perceive something similar – countries divided opinion-wise almost directly down the middle. And the aggressive rise of Antifa on three continents during the past few years seems to me to be a symptom of this. With Antifa there's no dialogue to be had, you're either with them or against them.

So I kept searching for answers. I wanted all these ideas and concepts and beliefs based upon individualism and collectivism, on at least three different interpretations of humanism, to crystallise in my head so I could at least get a brief glimpse into their origin, their real meaning, and try to understand the values that emanated from them. And I haven't even mentioned religion yet...

Finally my train approached Stuttgart. On arrival at the central train station I was met by Hross, another amazingly intelligent and generous close friend, he'd agreed to let me stay with him until my newly booked flight to Malaga. We decided to go for a beer and a hand-rolled cigarette, which was our custom

on meeting. He took my acoustic guitar and laptop backpack, I lugged my main bag, and we set off in search of a bar.

That's how I came to arrive in Malaga airport at about lunchtime on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2019, one day later than planned. Originally I had intended to stay at my house near Vélez-Málaga for five nights, until 10<sup>th</sup> December, and then return to Stuttgart. During those five days I had two things on my agenda. That weekend there was an annual meeting at local Buddhist retreat centre, which was very near to the mountainside hamlet where my house was. This minute rustic village with a population ratio of probably more cats and dogs than humans, had become my home and my base on-and-off for the past seven years now. The meeting in the retreat centre was open to all the practitioners from all the different groups in Spain of this particular Buddhist lineage, of which I am a member, so I wanted to attend.

I also wanted to try to see Celina. There was a small chance she would also be at this annual meeting (she too was a practising Buddhist of the same school). But if she was not there then I would go to try to find her in Estepona, a beautiful coastal town maybe two hours drive away, towards Gibraltar. Celina and I had lived together there in the centre of the old town in an amazing old house that had been divided into various flats and business spaces. We had not spoken since July that year, but she had indirectly sent me two messages during the previous two months via a close mutual friend to say that she believed I owed her money and that she had started a legal action through the court in Estepona against me to recover this debt.

Since receiving the first of these messages from our friend – which had been on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2019, my birthday – I had been trying to contact Celina to try to get to the bottom of all of this. I actually left Spain on 22<sup>nd</sup> October (as part of a preexisting plan, not a spontaneous debt avoidance 'runner') to travel to Germany, then the UK (to see my family) and then to Austria. My general plan was to stay out of Spain until at least the end of March or April, to get my head clear and to figure out what next, because after splitting with Celina well, the simplest way to say it is that all my plans of the previous seven years evaporated overnight, and I had no Plan B. Celina was my life, when we split my whole world collapsed, and my future seemed to disappear in a puff of smoke. When I was with Celina my life in Spain, being in Spain, made sense, everything made sense. Now, nothing made sense. I felt I needed some time-out and

distance away from the whole situation to gain some fresh perspective, and let things settle in my head and my heart.

However, far from being able to create some healing space and gain clarity to evaluate what next, I now had the threat of legal action against me from a loved one hanging over my head, and it came to me on my birthday and the eve of leaving Spain to figure out my future. Receiving that first message from Celina was a real WTF moment and I didn't want to think it but it really felt like a calculated parting-shot, a very low-blow. When I told my friend Stan in Austria what had happened, about the threat of legal action, and that I wanted to avoid unnecessary legal battles with expensive lawyers, and that I just wanted to talk with Celina and sort all of this out peacefully, I remember he told me: 'Nic, you're already at war!' His comment didn't compute, it didn't sink in. He was wrong, he didn't know Celina like I did, probably there was no legal action, it was just sabre-rattling, she was angry, this was all just her blustering, and for sure she'd calm down and realise that she and I just needed to talk... and all of this would dissolve.

After this first message in October — which to say the least I found very frustrating — I'd tried to phone Celina almost everyday, but she would never answer. I texted her almost everyday too, but she would not reply. I'd written her emails, again almost everyday, but no response. A week or so after my first quite angry reaction (which was more or less tit-for-tat, me saying if you start a legal action against me then I'll start one against you) I calmed down, and the gist of all my subsequent messages was always the same: Celina, I don't agree that I owe you any money, but let's talk and sought all of this out, let's do it in a friendly peaceful way. I also said several times that if she could show me how I owed her money, and that what she asked me for was a reasonable amount, and generally inline with the dynamic of our shared finances, then I'd agree to pay, and that I'd agree to put this in writing, because I just wanted to live in peace and get on with rebuilding my life.

Our mutual friend contacted me by phone once again during the last week of November to say Celina had contacted him yet again to say she believed I owed her money and that she had started a legal action against me to recover this debt. So exactly the same message as before.

I couldn't understand this. Seriously I couldn't get my head around it on so many levels. Above all and apart from anything else Celina had been (and in my head and in my heart still was, and even to this day still is) my best friend. For me she was my closest family. I trusted her with everything. I had no doubts about her. I'd do anything for this woman. We'd shared so many experiences and had been through so many situations together – at both ends of the spectrum from total bliss to total shit, and everything in between. I loved this woman. Add to this that we shared the same Buddhist values, we were both idealists, we valued generosity and friendship as the basis for all meaningful growth, and we both strongly identified with nurturing others towards achieving their full potential. This connection – meaningfully linking with those we encounter in our lives – was for me a million times more valuable than any quantity of money. I did not want in any way to damage my connection with Celina, I wanted to avoid that happening at any cost. I wanted her and I to talk amicably and come up with mutually agreed resolutions to any post-relationship issues either of us perceived. That was my deepest wish.

Although I had suggested it and recommended it more than once, Celina and I had never had any formal agreed financial arrangements. When I had money we both spent it. When she had money we both spent it. If she needed my help financially I helped, and vice versa. By my estimation, when I balanced everything that we shared with one another since we first met, in my view she owed me nothing and I owed her nothing, we were quits, and even if my estimation was off (because of differing perspectives or something I'd overlooked), it would only be off by plus or minus some thousands of Euros, at most five or ten thousand maximum either way. So depending on how one viewed the situation, we were either quits, or she owed me something or I owed her something. We're not talking about tens or hundreds of thousands, or houses, nothing significant, nothing that could not be easily resolved by simply talking it all through and coming to some agreement.

The nagging questions I had was why then was Celina contacting our mutual friend and not responding directly to me? If she felt I owed her something why didn't she talk to me about it directly before putting one of our friends in the middle of things? Why hadn't she talked it all through with me first? And if she really had already started a legal action against me then why hadn't the police or the court in Estepona contacted me? There had not been any letters from either of them about this, no phone calls either. It didn't make any sense

to me. I really couldn't understand it. None of it made sense to me. At this time I asked our mutual friend if Celina had said anything else to him. I explained to him that I was asking because it just didn't understand why she was contacting him, putting him in the middle and not contacting me directly. At the time he told me that she had not said anything else to him. This turned out to be not entirely accurate, and as will be seen in a subsequent chapter of this book our mutual friend later explained to me that Celina had in fact said much more to him. In fact Celina had said many things to many people about her and I, and the dynamic of our split. However for some reason at this time in November 2019 our mutual friend had decided not tell me anything about any of this. Much later he explained to me why he had decided not to tell me, however to this day I don't totally understand why he decided not to give me all the details at the time.

Having had this phone call in late November I decided to go back to Spain for five days in December, to go to the annual meeting in the Buddhist retreat centre and to try resolve all this post-relationship bollox with my ex-partner face-to-face, to attempt to get to the bottom of it all. I just wanted to talk it all through with Celina and try to find a peaceful resolution so we could both just get on with our lives, and to try to do it before the end of the year, so that we could both start 2020 on as clean and as blank a page as possible.

So there I was on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December in Torre del Mar on the beach after eating my not so inspiring homemade sandwich. My rescheduled flight back to Stuttgart was the following day, late afternoon, and during the previous five days I'd achieved both of the two main points on my agenda for this trip – I'd been to the annual meeting at the retreat centre, and I'd been to Estepona and seen Celina. However NOTHING had gone to plan, not even close. And as I walked along the beach in Torre, I reran the events of last seventy-two hours or so in my head – what a fucking mess it was, what a bloody soap-opera style drama it had turned into. How had it come to that, how could such a simple intention, a wish to have a face-to-face conversation with someone I have known closely and loved deeply for seven years transform into an almost textbook Latino telenovela? For sure Celina has a hot-blooded Latin temperament. Her father was an Italian restaurateur and businessman, from near Naples, and by all-accounts a very colourful character to say the least (I'd never met him, he had died several years before I met Celina). Her mother – whom I knew well – was a hardy brusque woman raised in the Franco era in

Asturias, northern Spain. And Celina herself was born and raised in the southern most coastal region of Andalucía – until very recently famed as a pretty wild, lawless and corrupt must-go-to haven for criminals from all over the world on the run or looking for action – so, to put it mildly – Celina was street savvy. Add in the fact that I'm pretty much an average straight-laced reserved middle-class Home Counties Brit, with a pretty atrocious grasp of Spanish (especially given the machine-gun like bursts of Andalus dialect that Celina could spout when she became animated), and there are no surprises that sometimes things between she and I could go slightly off-piste, pear-shaped and get wildly superheated. But the events of the last seventy-two hours or so where in a whole new dramatic category, a totally different league, and one that I could not really classify or recognise, it was brand new territory for me. I could almost not bring myself to think about it, I just cringed and thought to myself: 'Tomorrow evening you'll be back in Stuttgart, at Hross's. You'll drink a beer and smoke a rollie, and from there, well, you'll work out what next. Leave this mess of the last days and months behind you now, let Celina do whatever she wants. You know in your heart of hearts you tried to resolve all of this amicably and peacefully with her, you know that the best way to do that is to talk face-to-face, so you did everything you could do. Leave it now, relax and move forwards.'

And right then my mobile began to ring. I looked and there was no caller ID. Normally I never take these calls, it's usually some company trying to sell you car insurance or something of that nature, but for some reason I decided to pickup. It was an officer from the Policía Nacional in Torre del Mar. After confirming with me that I was 'Nicolas Wee-yam Briscoway' he asked if I could come to the local Comisaria de Policía. I asked why. He told me my ex-partner had made a complaint against me and that he wanted to talk with me about it, and could I come now. I said my Spanish was not so great, so maybe I should go and find someone to translate for me and then I'd come. The police officer told me I didn't need to find an interpreter, he'd get one and that I should come the next day at around 10:00. I asked what the complaint was about (I already had an idea) and I also asked if it was something to do with a debt. He said to me: 'It's something like that, I can't tell you on the phone, just come to the police station tomorrow morning, and I'll give you the details.' He was very relaxed, almost friendly.

And that was that. I felt sure the complaint was about my visit to Estepona two days before on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December. I'd seen Celina but, as I've already mentioned, absolutely nothing had gone to plan. I sat for a minute or two on the beach, and thought to myself: 'I don't want to do this tomorrow, I want to get it done now so that tomorrow I can relax, get my flight back to Germany and get out of Spain for some months.'

And with that I walked the fifteen minutes or so to the police station, and told the officer that received me my name and that I'd just had this call asking me to come in. He went off and came back to tell me that shortly a detective would come out to talk with me. I sat in the waiting room. I was the only person there, it was maybe 15:00 or so, I sat and waited, I tried to think through in Spanish what I was going to say because for sure this detective would not speak English. I thought about the events two days before in Estepona and tried to construct suitable Spanish sentences in my head to explain what had happened.

On the waiting room walls there were various posters, one about cyber-crime and how to protect yourself against online identity fraud. Another about how foreigners wanting to become Spanish residents should not come to this office but go to another one, or phone a dedicated phone line. And there was a poster about how to get help if you were a woman and the victim of gender violence, it outlined woman's rights and gave a dedicated phone hotline number, an email and a website.

By the entrance to the waiting room there was a doorway, from time-to-time uniformed police men and woman came and went through this door, which obviously was a main access point to the internal section of the police station.

I waited.

I waited thirty minutes. Then an hour. I asked one of the uniformed police officers entering the depths of station if he could find out how long it would be before the detective would see me. He asked my name and disappeared. Ten minutes or so later he reappeared and went to leave. There was another quite short guy in plainclothes – jeans and a hoodie – with him, this guy looked around the waiting room. By this time there was a few other people sitting waiting, and he said something to one of them, a teenage girl, who was sitting

there with an older man who seemed to be her father. They both entered through the door with this short plainclothes guy, who took a very long look at me as I asked in my rubbish Spanish to the uniformed officer how long the detective would be. The officer just kept walking out the door and said: 'He's busy.'

I waited another hour or so and then I decided to leave. I waited for the next uniformed guy to come to the entrance and explained who I was, that I'd been waiting two hours, I was going to leave now and I'd come back tomorrow morning early, maybe at 09:30. The officer asked me to wait a minute, he went through the door and came back five minutes later with the short guy in jeans, who said to me to come in, and that he could see me now.

And that's what I did. I walked through that inner-sanctum entrance door with this detective. It was maybe 17:30 by now.

Even though I know always to expect the unexpected in Spain, especially in Andalucía, nothing could have prepared me for what happened next. In some kind of inverse-serendipity I was about to come face-to-face in real life with all the concepts and ideas I had been thinking about and grappling with deeply for the past two and more years. The concepts behind human rights, and in particular the concepts that led to extreme prejudice and discrimination, so extreme that one's freedom could be in jeopardy, were about to become a million percent less of an abstraction for me, and instead become the stuff of my daily reality. The different interpretations of humanism and of justice were about to become crucial to my own liberty. In particular from now on I had to choose my words very carefully in Spain. From that point onwards it became clearer minute-by-minute that I was not free to express myself as I wished or to say what I really thought, or to say what I really wanted to say, even if what I wanted to say was the truth, it could have a devastating effect on my future and my freedom in Spain. I found myself in a real-life abstractly dystopian 'you're either with us or against us' situation. If, in that moment, I disagreed with or I behaved in a way contrary to some recently established norms in Spain, norms that had been ratified by updating and upgrading certain preexisting regressive Draconian laws during the second-half of 2017, then I risked going to prison, and I risked becoming a criminal, with a criminal record, and being placed on a public register, that ultimately would affect many key aspects of my life in Spain, or Germany, or the United Kingdom. These norms were clearly not norms in place in other EU countries, in particular not the UK

(at that moment still part of the EU), and also not norms in many other places in the world, for example North America and Australasia. Or at least, and maybe it's better to say it this way, these were not yet norms in these countries. I could not have predicted this but, as I have said, I was about to become subjected to, amongst other very toxic concepts, one-hundred percent pure undiluted discrimination.

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Prior to the 10<sup>th</sup> of December 2019, during the past two years or so, I'd already had an idea to write a book. In a sentence my idea: I've been thinking about some things and this is how I see them, maybe you see it all differently, so let's talk... I wanted to write a conversation starter.

The main topics I intended to write about are European values and, in particular, freedom of speech. The book I planned would discuss core Western cultural values, their origins, where they stand in the world today from my point of view, and propose some future considerations.

As stated my original idea was to use the book as a conversation starter, and then to film me interviewing people (and post the interviews online) discussing these ideas, and many many other topics – from the crazy ideas behind Cultural Marxism, to science, education, history, Political Islam, psychology, news media, tech, biotech, AI, health, space travel, business, psychedelics and beyond.

My approach would be to initially do these interviews with people I know who are professionals in these areas, with the idea to be able to attract big names and big thinkers to allow me to interview them, people that I admired and that inspired me, and with whom I felt some kind of connection, people like Camille Paglia, Yuval Noah Harari, Erin Gruwell, Jordan Peterson, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Rupert Sheldrake, Debra Soh, Joe Rogan, Sargon of Akkad, Tommy Robinson and Graham Hancock. But at the same time I didn't want to create some kind of unbalanced self-validating talkshow podcast. I also wanted to interview people that I did not feel so inspired by and with whom I did not feel such a connection, or in some other way I felt uncertain about. I wanted them to explain certain aspects of things that I'd heard them talk about which for me didn't seem to fit and I wanted them to challenge me on my thinking. Peo-

ple like Maajid Nawaz, Ana Kasparian, Sam Harris, Emma Watson, Richard Dawkins, Greta Thunberg, Russell Brand, Jeff Krasno, Hillary Clinton (lol), Stefan Molyneux etc.

My main idea was to promote and maintain freedom of speech, to encourage non-confrontational dialogue, and the ability to exchange points of view openly with the attitude:

'I've been thinking,  
I see things like this...,  
let's talk,  
tell me how you see them,  
maybe you see it differently,  
tell me why, and I'll listen,  
at worst we can agree to disagree,  
or maybe you'll successfully demonstrate the errors in my thinking,  
and you'll change my mind.'

My idea is that I see this as an antidote to the 'you're either with us or against us' attitude that is seeping into our Western cultures. I see this activity as a crucial cultural contribution because many such conversations in Europe, North America and Australasia are being prevented, censored and banned. Peoples' right to speak freely is being eroded.

Not for one single moment could I have ever imagined that I would be sitting writing the book that I am now writing. Never had I the idea to write an autobiographical account of my own experiences. Never had I had the idea to somehow incorporate all of the ideas I'd been contemplating, the results of my research, and my still-open questions about these topics into the book I am writing now. I'm not even sure that it's possible. I still only get fleeting glimpses of how to craft and intertwine my story and the ideas I'm grappling with together into the fabric of some kind of coherent, meaningful and readable book.

Also, not for one single moment had I an intention to (or do I now want to) write an exposé against any individual, or any public or private organisation. I do not want to wield a poison pen, and fill page after page with vitriol and revenge. Unfortunately telling the truth does not give me so much leeway to

avoid pointing out the actions and activity of certain individuals or public / private organisations. I think Plato said 'none is more hated than he who speaks the truth.' And I'm guessing there could and probably will be a backlash against what I say. As I have said I sent many messages to Celina after we split, and, stupidly, in some my frustration and anger spilled over. I'm not proud of this. Some of the things Celina did shortly after we split pressed all my buttons and I overreacted. But always within a day or two I was back focussed and repeating the same mantra: Celina, we need to meet and talk all this stuff through, so we can both move on with our lives. And that's honestly how I thought everything would get peacefully resolved.

I'm no longer the naïve man that I was a few months ago, and I can fully see that all of us are equally capable of doing obnoxious and abhorrent things, like publishing people's private letters or details of their private life online — so I have to accept and expect it. Most likely in writing and publishing this book my private life and my past will become much more a matter of public record. How, for such a painfully private person as myself, to deal with this necessary transparency without feeling the inevitable torment and shame, and to instead just stand strongly and accept the inevitable consequences of all the huge life-errors I have made? It is, after all, who I really am. And which among those of you reading this have not made your own fare share of big mistakes?

Add to this that at the time of writing this introduction, the 16<sup>th</sup> of February 2020, I still do not know what the final chapter of this book will be, it's still not clear how this stage of my life will conclude, nothing between Celina and I is resolved. In that respect my future is still very uncertain. And so beginning to write this book now in some ways could be seen as an attempt at a damage-limiting preemptive strike, with a view to start the process of repairing damage done by falsely made accusations against me. Let's be honest, people talk, they gossip, and whether guilty or not accusations and gossip tarnish and potentially destroy reputations. Coming forward and telling my side of my story openly gives anyone willing to take a balanced and rational view the opportunity to make up their own mind about who I really am and about what my true motives are for writing this book. As I've said before walking into the police station in Torre del Mar on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December 2019 I'd been planning to write a book for maybe two years, a cultural exploration of Western values circa 2020. I had no intention to write the book I'm now writing. I had no intention

to use my own life experience to illustrate the cultural crossroads we've arrived at, a point of no return in many ways.

A very wise friend of mine once pointed out to me that I had a tendency to stay in the background and keep quiet, and that staying quiet had its price... no one knew my opinions. He added that if I had something I believed needed to be said then I should say it loud and clear, but doing so also came at a price, an even higher price... not everyone would agree with me, and many would try to discredit me, to the point of even trying to ruin my reputation or my life. He concluded that staying quiet mainly benefits no one, whilst speaking truthfully and with full conviction ultimately makes us stronger as individuals, and can potentially benefit many others.

My own experience is very definitely that — the truth will out. And maybe, just maybe, there could be some cathartic beneficial side effects to my disclosures within the following pages. What for to add another layer of repressed psychological sediment to my past? Why should I care too much what other people think if I know the real truth about myself and my intentions? Like I have already said, I am no longer the naïve man I was half-a-year ago, and I now fully recognise the wisdom in the phrase 'the road to hell is paved with good intentions.'

To go back to the stated aims within the preface: this book is a story about values and freedom, and my journey — both inner and outer — to really authentically attempt to understand what these words actually mean, on many levels: historically, intellectually, philosophically, culturally, theoretically, practically, spiritually and personally. What are our values today? Where did they come from? Are they valid and valuable, and are they valued? Will these values endure over time? Will they evolve, or erode and be replaced, and if so into what or by what and by whom? Can this even be predicted? Will real freedom, in the few places in the world where it still really exists, this unbelievably new, rare and fragile phenomena, will it survive? Can I or indeed any of us do anything to influence this process?

This is my message in a bottle.

I put it out into the world in the genuine hope that maybe, just maybe, it will be useful to at least someone, and maybe, just maybe it will start or contribute to some useful dialogue that helps improve how we understand one another. I

firmly believe that sharing our stories breaks down barriers, our stories help us understand one another more clearly.

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## About the Author: Nic Briscoe.



Professionally I have been: a sound recording engineer; studio and live musician; songwriter; record producer and remixer; DJ; event designer and manager; a senior charity fundraiser and department director; a freelance project manager and business development consultant.

Now, I would describe myself as an author, cultural-explorer, mind-bomber, recording-artist & singer-songwriter. At the same time as being an independent creator I'm also interdependent collaborator.

I'm a father, a grandfather, a practicing Buddhist, an avid traveler (both inwardly and outwardly), and when I'm not being a workaholic I remember that I'm a health enthusiast — particularly I'm interested in qigong and t'ai chi.

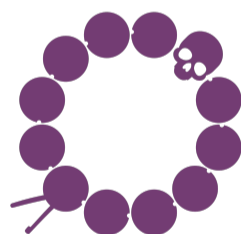
**Likes:** a good book; well-informed conversations (both participating in and listening to); a well crafted film (I'm more a fan of dialogue than special effects); mountain walks; shoreline cycle rides; motorcycle exploration days; no-recipe cooking experiments; back-to-basics barbecues; spending quality time with close friends and family; cities are okay to visit (and I visit many), but I feel more at home close to the ocean and forested mountains.

**Dislikes:** too many to mention here, but this gets covered quite a lot in this book!

**Basic outlook / mission** in life: I try to observe, contemplate, meditate, and do my best to place the results of all of this beneficially back into the world. I don't always get this right. I have made, still make and will probably continue to make a lot of mistakes, sometimes really big ones! But I try to do my best to connect genuinely, to listen attentively, to speak authentically, to write clearly, to create meaningfully, and to share openly. My main wish is that the results of all of this benefit many others.

I currently divide my time between Spain, Germany and the UK

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## About This Book.

**'Straight White Male' is based upon surreal events. One of the most surreal aspects of current contemporary Western culture is a narrative that is being pedalled almost globally it seems. And I question the validity of this narrative.**

The narrative is that the majority of the problems experienced in the Western world (so North America, Europe, Australasia) happen because our societies are being continually oppressed in some way by people like me... privileged, educated, 'cisgender', heterosexual, white 'Christian' (in terms of being born into a Christian society) males aka 'The Oppressive White Patriarchy'.

Apparently I am the problem! Apparently I'm both inherently oppressive and toxically masculine.

But, fret not, I can assure you that no minority groups were oppressed, harmed or discriminated against whilst writing this book, at least not intentionally, but of course you will have to take into account my unconscious bias, institutionalised systemic white racism, and, of course, my toxic masculinity.

And that's just part of the story... It seems that in 2020 we all stand together at a cultural crossroads.

What can be seen now is that governments globally ever more rapidly enforce the idea that our individual freedoms are secondary to the collective's security. And especially freedom of speech is being eroded. But Freedom of Speech cannot be limited in any way without being totally lost.

Which way to go? Group security? Or individual freedom?

In order to best determine in which direction we should head there's clearly need for some serious exploration into these topics...

And that's still not all the story...

Sometimes the perfect dream-life we thought we were living can implode into a living nightmare from one moment to the next... simply by one decision made, a few of spoken or written words, an action or two, and the whole direction of one's current life can be rewritten in an instant, the meaning of one's past dissolves into an entirely different story, and the predicted future evaporates into unpredictable chaos with everything hoped for lost.

It's at the same time the worst and the best situation to be in. Traumatic. Painful. Distressing. Vulnerable. Like being in free-fall, with no fixed point of reference, nothing to reach for, nothing solid to grasp and cling to. But at the same time it's a void full of potential, of endless exhilarating possibilities.

In such situations, from this void, from rockbottom, well, there are only two or maybe three possible outcomes.

To give up. To end the free-fall by clinging to old dysfunctional beliefs, which halt all advancement and growth, concluding in stagnation, or total self-destruction, the end, full-stop.

Or a new beginning, a breakthrough, a rebirth... a metamorphoses... a new story... a continuation from a new point of reference, from a completely different way to understand everything. In this case the only way forward is openness, honesty and surrender. It's an absolute release. One has to find the courage to let go and fall into the abyss, and perhaps oblivion.

Many of the pages of this book are extrapolated from this unpredictable chaos, the void where one possible version of my future, another unpredicted version of my past, and the total chaos of my present moment collide.

It's my attempt to understand the multiplicity of my past, and how, hopefully, to predict and influence a better future.

My hunt for honest words, true values and real freedom became beyond surreal. It became a search through the wreckage of my downed flight through life in Spain these passed seven years – scouring the mountainside crash-site for some intact remains of this amazing adventure, with the hope I may find the black box intact. The flight recorder with the data about what really happened. The irrefutable truth. Hopefully there will be some correlation between my version of events, my memories and the flight data. If not then who the fuck or what the fuck am I? But even more worryingly – what if my memories do synchronise with this data, what if there is a correlation? Then who the fuck was she?

**'No legacy is as rich as honesty.'**

William Shakespeare (1564-1616).

From: All's Well that Ends Well – Act iii, Scene 5.

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