

# The Rainbow Nation – A Land of Tears

I have just returned from the World Parliament of Religions. One of the sessions I attended was about a youth program in Cape Town, lead by an energetic, confident young white woman of privilege whose father was an Anglican priest and a Colored woman Anglican priest from the Cape Flats – an area of relocation, destitution and deprivation. The Cape Flats are where Colored people were relocated and forcibly removed from what was deemed White areas, during the apartheid era. These two women have the vision, the commitment and the dedication to work towards reconciliation, unity and equality in their land through helping the youth have dialogue across racial, ethnic and religious barriers.

The young woman talked about being arrested and being in demonstrations in which the police threw tear gas as she has protested the ongoing racial disparity at the University of Cape Town. Forty years ago my sister was one of those students being thrown into the back of a paddy wagon and hauled off to jail, for the very same reason. It left me wondering, has their actually been any progress, despite the very best efforts by people of vision, like these two women.

The ending of apartheid and the new era of democracy in 1994 was a time of hope, triumph and deep joy as South Africa came together as “The Rainbow Nation,” – one people united under the visionary leadership of Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. There was toy-toying (dancing), goodwill and rejoicing as white and black reached across the great racial and economic divides to heal their nation. The Truth and Reconciliation commission became a model for healing and forgiveness in a land torn apart by violence and oppression. Identified victims came forth and told their stories and perpetrators came forward to accept their responsibility for acts of oppression, violence and murder. Mothers of victims and perpetrators fell into one another’s arms. There was a fervor and zeal to reconcile differences, heal past rifts, break down walls and unite under a rainbow of hope.

In as far as it went the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was a remarkable feat of encouraging people to take responsibility, not hold on to the shame of secrets and victimization, own their part in perpetration, and change. And, indeed there are countless stories of true nobility of spirit and compassion.

And it did not go far enough.

The focus on the TRC was on relationships *between* people. It did not directly address the issue of relationships we all have with ourselves internally. It did not address the intra-dynamics of the war within our own psyches, the walls and rifts that divide us internally, the self hatred, judgment and criticisms we all heap on our own heads. It did not address the splits created by denial, repression. It did not address the unmet needs of children that result in a substratum in unawareness of fear, shame and anger that motivates adult behavior. It did not address the issue of how within each and everyone of us lives both the perpetrator and the victim and are actually both. It did not address how it is that this internal dynamic is projected out on to the world in external relationships, creating families, communities and countries that are torn apart by these projections of inner self-hatred and self victimization.

Yes, the victim must be allowed to tell their story and be heard with compassion. Yes, the perpetrator must own up and accept responsibility. Yes, the shame and fears must be dealt with. Yes, the distorted beliefs of prejudice and hatred must be corrected. Yes, truth must be told. Yes, compassion, which is the willingness to “suffer with,” must be brought to the condition of both

victim and perpetrator. And my question is, “When will humanity accept the responsibility of turning their eyes inwards and seeing deeply how this victim and perpetrator situation is set up within our own souls? Until this is seen, recognized, in full awareness with Truth and Love for ourselves, NOTHING will heal outside of ourselves. This inner condition of brokenness is indeed projected out into victimization and perpetration of others in communities all over the world, not just South African.

It is easy to see outer solutions, but few look within and heal themselves. As the great leader, who started his campaign of passive resistance in South Africa, Gandhi said, “We must be the change we wish to see in the world.” And yet, as nice as this sounds, no one really wants to do it.

- Because it is easier to look outside and try to control others.
- Because there is a lack of awareness about what this means.
- Because, there is a desperate failure and dirth of spiritual leadership, because we are still caught in fundamental religious ideas of dependency on an external “God,” who will save us and we do not have to do the work.
- Because there is a corrosion of even the most basic morality.
- Because it takes vision and courage, and determination, devotion and dedication to the Inner path.
- Because it takes humility and backbone and grit.
- Because it means embracing living through old shames, hurts and past suffering. Because we do not know how and are not supported in this inner quest.... Because we do not yet know how to love and our hearts have not broken open for our own lost and sinful condition of inner separation, alienation and emptiness. Because we are all too willing to follow the path of least resistance – the outer journey of external answers that makes us feel good and in control.
- Because we mistake goodness to necessarily be loving.

To think this is where the answer lies is nothing other than the magical thinking of small children.

It seems to me that everyone has ignored the one thing that both Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Tutu modeled and lived. They looked within. They found within themselves the victim and the perpetrator. They brought a condition of empathy and understanding to the reasons for their own inner and personal failures to live with equality and respect with others, and found it was a reflection of the inner split within themselves.

Nelson Mandela spoke of this often, for those that have ears to hear it. It talked about having been “an arrogant young man,” and that the suffering of jail taught him to take stock of that and see in himself what he could see in his jailors. Archbishop Tutu, when he spoke to the press after Winnie Mandela’s rather inadequate apology to the world at the TRC, said, “I would you remind you that the words, “I am sorry,” are the hardest words to say – I find it hard in the privacy of my own bedroom with my own wife.”

Yes, it takes a mature soul that is truly loving and filled with truth to be present to our inner shame and fear, inadequacies and failures.

It grieves me deeply to go back to my homeland and see that the hope of 1994 has burned into ashes of hopelessness, anger, frustration, and resentment. Not much has changed for those who are in the deepest need. The phoenix can only rise when each and everyone does the deep inner work of seeing how they at once perpetrate against themselves and are victims of their own self hatred.

It grieves me deeply to attend something like the “World Parliament of Religions,” and to never hear the one thing that can actually change humanity being said or modeled, “Turn your eye inward and heal yourself.”

Instead what I see is a plethora of programs to change everyone else, not from the heart but from the brokenness, need and unaware fears and shame of empty people trying to feel better about themselves.

When the victim/perpetrator condition is healed within, by one’s own love, then and only then, will whatever you do in the world ripple out into sacred action that is filled with creativity and renewal, hope and vision. Only then will we work together in a way that actually makes a difference in the world. Only when goodness comes from a broken heart willing to practice compassion instead of control, will real change happen in the world.

I urge all religious leaders in the world, to STOP. Change yourself first. Dedicate your life to your own healing with your whole heart and mind and soul. We need spiritual leaders – we do not need dogma and religion any longer. We do not need morality and good programs, we need loving leaders that know the inner journey and live it. We need leaders who are filled with joy and hope, creativity, vision and bliss. We need leaders with humor and deep compassion with whom we can feel safe enough to go within. We need leaders who will challenge us when we do not live Truth because we are lying to ourselves; who will challenge us when we are controlling and call it love; who challenge us when we engage in acts of inner terrorism and self hatred and tell us to stop it. We need leaders that we want to emulate, and let them show us the way to the Promised Land, that is only within.

My South African brothers and sisters, go inside. Examine your hearts and your minds. Do your inner work. Live into your God-given destiny. Create inner rainbows of harmony and peace, self love and dignity. You can make your land all that our great leaders spoke of, but it requires more of you than you even imagined. It means turning inwards and finding your way through the treacherous terrain of your own inner perpetration and victimization and healing the inner splits and dualities of your own soul. It means inner reconciliation, integration and peace making, within. It requires you to be the loving God to your own wounded soul. It requires you to become aware of what you are not yet aware so that your awareness can become aligned with the Truth and Love of all that is. When you are at one with the One, then there is nothing that cannot be overcome in our world.

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