

A LETTER TO MY UNBORN CHILD (#1)

I do not know who you are or what you would have become but I know the time. was never right for you and I to meet. For you, I wanted better than what I had. I wanted you to feel whole and healthy, strong and empowered, loved, respected and accepted. Most of all I wanted you to live a life full of challenge and meaning to grow into your own full potential while at the same time be able to build bridges of co-operation with those around you, be they near or far.

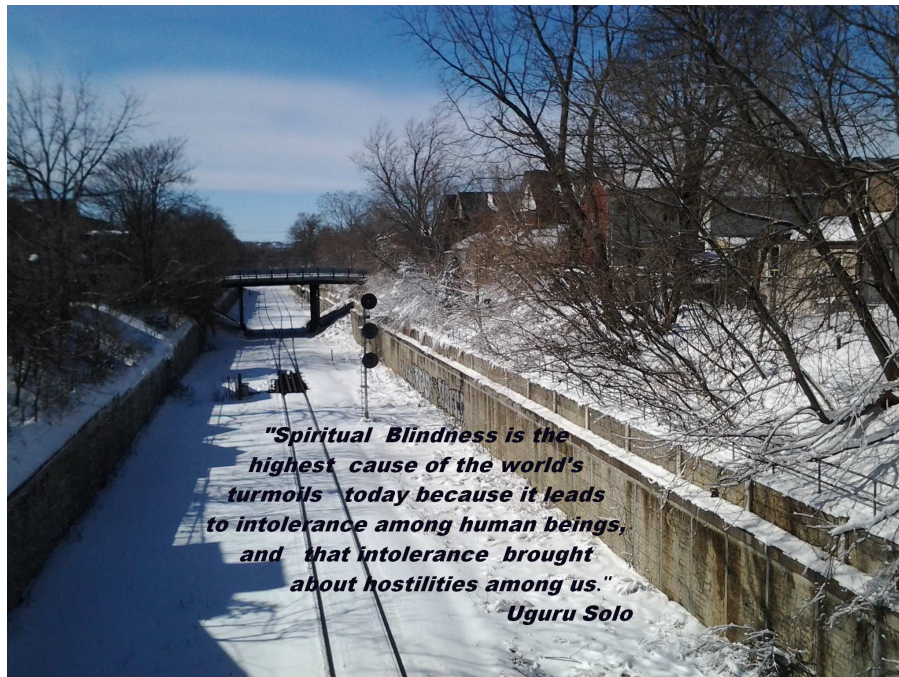
On some deep guttural level, I knew I could not give you any of this: not from a personal perspective, not from a family perspective and certainly not from a societal perspective. Though I cried myself to sleep for many years when mid life arrived knowing children would not come, not bringing you into the world was the right choice.

There is good in this world, a lot of it, with many hands trying to tip the scales. Yet, somehow we, as a species, have not yet been able to break through the glass ceiling of negativity so that the good in us can lead. I have not yet given up hope that some day, you can come to this world and find it a better place:

- A world where we treat each other with respect, where no person considers her/himself as more than or less than another.
- A world of sustainability where we have learned to live as part of nature, not as its masters.
- A world where decisions are made through consensus by everyone across the globe, with exactly one voice and one vote, for each person who has reached the age of consent, an age we have yet to agree on.
- A world where we act locally to raise our young to be their best selves to live empowered lives so that we have positive communities, spread across our globe, with bridges of co-operation between them.
- A world where the goal is to be contented with enough so that we can be a beautiful mosaic and thus a positive force of love in this grand universe that lifts up, instead of "love" that brings pain!

"There is only me AND us; US and Me!
You cannot have one without the other.
We each leave our imprint and
we are each an equally important member of the universal mosaic.

All ME! ME! ME! doesn't work
and all US! US! US! doesn't work, either.
Life needs to be about finding the balance
between the Me and the Us."





ARE WE NOT ALL ANGELS IN TRAINING? (#2)

Parenting is the most difficult job on the planet, yet how many of us are genuinely equipped to help our young face the complexity of our world. Some mothers and fathers do pair up well and figure out how to help their offspring be their own best selves. Others scar their children for life. Sometimes, it is the young that help to heal the parents. Sometimes, the life experiences of the parents and the fresh eyes from the young form a symbiotic relationship in adulthood from which both can benefit.

Let us also not forget the grandparents, who can also play a significant role, more so in some cultures than in others. Often the grandparents have learned from their own mistakes and can pass on great wisdom to our young far more meaningful than a game of tag or football. And yet with modern day life, the grandparents are often fixated on a way of life that no longer exists, all too often dishing out judgment, not able to understand their grandchildren though they do love them. The busyness of modern day lives, coupled by huge separations in distance all too often, has added to this division. Worse, our old are housed in institutions partly because we cannot live with each other any more. In our quest for progress, a term few of us agree on, we humans have added yet another layer of division: an age gap!

I lost my birth culture, extended family, and all that knew that gave me a sense of belonging when my parents, my 2 siblings and I left the aftermath of world war 2 behind when Nazism and Fascism had ripped apart Holland along with the rest of the European continent. In 1951, I landed in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, approximately 50 miles from the Western end of the New York, U.S.A. state border, a place that at that time was more Victorian than Queen Victoria herself.

My parents did love me and at great sacrifice to themselves, kept me alive to adulthood. And yet, somehow, all that should have gone right with the best of intention ended up all wrong, for me. I was too nice, too helpful, too caring, too responsible, too bound by duty.

When parents carry internal damage, be it through:

- war,
- poverty,
- drugs,

- being too busy,
- too narcissistic,
- too caught up in some sense of false morality,
- absenteeism,
- or worse, a closed mind,

we pass the damage from one generation to the next since it is not possible to teach our young that which we do not know ourselves.

Yet no one is an island unto ourselves and we can help each other learn the necessary lessons of life and inner healing, one person at a time. As we try and make sense of current affairs and examine our combined history, **the good, the bad and the ugly**, let us remember that none of us are perfect and we are all walking around with various degrees of inner damage, some a little, others a lot.

Once in Canada, I had trouble adjusting resulting in repeated bouts of stress related psychosis requiring outside intervention in the form of psychotherapy, from early adulthood, peaking in mid life, and came to some sort of fruition in my early 70s. This was a step by step, moment by moment, daily process of internal self examination and self correction requiring brutal self honesty lasting 3 to 4 decades.

As I have seen life evolve over my three quarters of a century, I am beginning to believe we are all on a human journey of spiritual recovery where blame, shame and guilt serve none of us well. Empathy and understanding will! Not only for others but more importantly for our own selves....a journey of inner healing that is anything but fun.

Life, for me, is not about me nor we, but about finding the balance between us, our needs: the physical first:

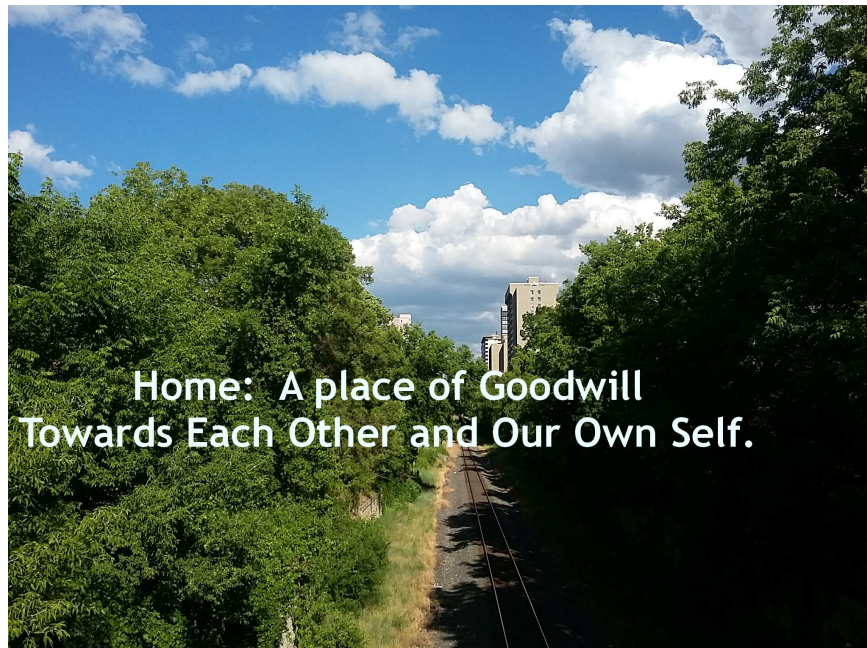
- air
- water
- food
- shelter (including clothing)

and esoteric second. Examples are:

- love
- acceptance
- acknowledgement
- purpose

I will go through this life but once with no desire to ever repeat any of it. I do welcome the day I can leave and yet, I will also feel a sadness, not ever knowing if humanity will be alright. I hope so. Everyone needs enough resources to live a life of balance to find their inner healing, deal with the daily grind, to grow in spirit. I do hope the day comes when our children (all of them) have a future that is long enough and well enough on this planet, an equitable, sustainable future, a future that is currently very much in doubt!

To ensure such a future, is this not a position open to anyone who chooses to work for humanity's betterment in whatever role we happen to find ourselves? Is this not the role of what "angels in training" do when we hear the call and we sign up for a life of service to humanity?



DESTINATION: HOME BUT WHAT IS HOME? (#3)

Home is a place where I can be myself, a place without judgment, a place where I can feel safe, a place where I can heal from the day and process my feelings, a place where I can examine my mistakes, find ways to make amends (if possible) and try to do better the next day thereby gaining wisdom as I age. Home is a place where I can grow on the inside, in spirit.

First, we go through the hello stage of life, then the middle muddle and lastly, the goodbye and letting go stage. Each stage has its challenges and its bonuses. However, for some, life is a sprint and for a few others, a triathlon. For most, however, if we embrace life's journey well, I hope it is a marathon. Such a journey does require good planning, pacing and health that not enough of us have the resources to embrace, at least not yet!

When young, we have great physiological reserve, flexibility and energy. We have a better chance of recovery from the many mistakes we make as we experiment with who we are, not having yet learned about life though we think we know all and are invincible. That is the normal, natural folly of youth. In the middle, we learn, hopefully, the act of juggling past and present challenges. As we age, our physiological reserve declines. Our physical aches and pains increase. Hopefully, we have learned some wisdom along the way so that we make less mistakes and continue to grow, in spirit, as our bodies prepare for our last day. Good habits can help this journey in life so that we age in a way that is as healthy as possible, growing into wise elders and not into old people.

I once asked what happens after we have inner peace (which I have come to know I have) and self actualization (which I also have, now at a conscious level after decades of undoing the damage, one day at a time, living mindfully, unlearning and relearning). After completing my inner healing journey, at age 70 or so, I realized "*the I*" no longer mattered, so much. I still need to do enough to stay standing to finish my "assigned job as a human being" but that job has little to do with me, in a personal way. My life, these days, is about figuring out how the human and non-human collective can become a beautiful mosaic of empowered individuals, each one of us our own best self. My personal experiences play into that role but the goal has less and less to do with "*the I*"

Today, deep down, I am a contented person, I am calm in my heart. My inner spirit is whole, once again, after a long journey of undoing the damage that came from the outside starting in the middle of world war 2.

Today, I know consciously who I am and the reason I am here. Soon I will take my leave hoping my being here is enough to help others find their own self actualization, inner peace and inner healing so that some day, we can all go to our permanent HOME, not a perfect place but a place where LOVE and BALANCE leads. Today, I am fortunate to have learned to live in the eye of my own hurricane while life's hurricane continues to circle around me.

Until the day I die, your joy is my joy and your pain is my pain. Knowing this, I will be bopping up and down, sometimes also in circles, both clock wise and anti clockwise. That is my makeup. That is part of being an empath (a psychological term that describes people who are highly sensitive) and Type 1 BiPolar. The conscious awareness that I developed over time and did not have when young, helps me cope in the here and now. For that I am grateful



GOD OR NOT? AN ODE FOR THE NEED TO THINK CRITICALLY (#4)

We each have a belief system and that includes Atheism. Some find their beliefs inside an organized religion and others outside. Whether one believes in "God" or not, is not an issue for me. What is in a person's heart and how that person chooses to show her or his character is of interest.

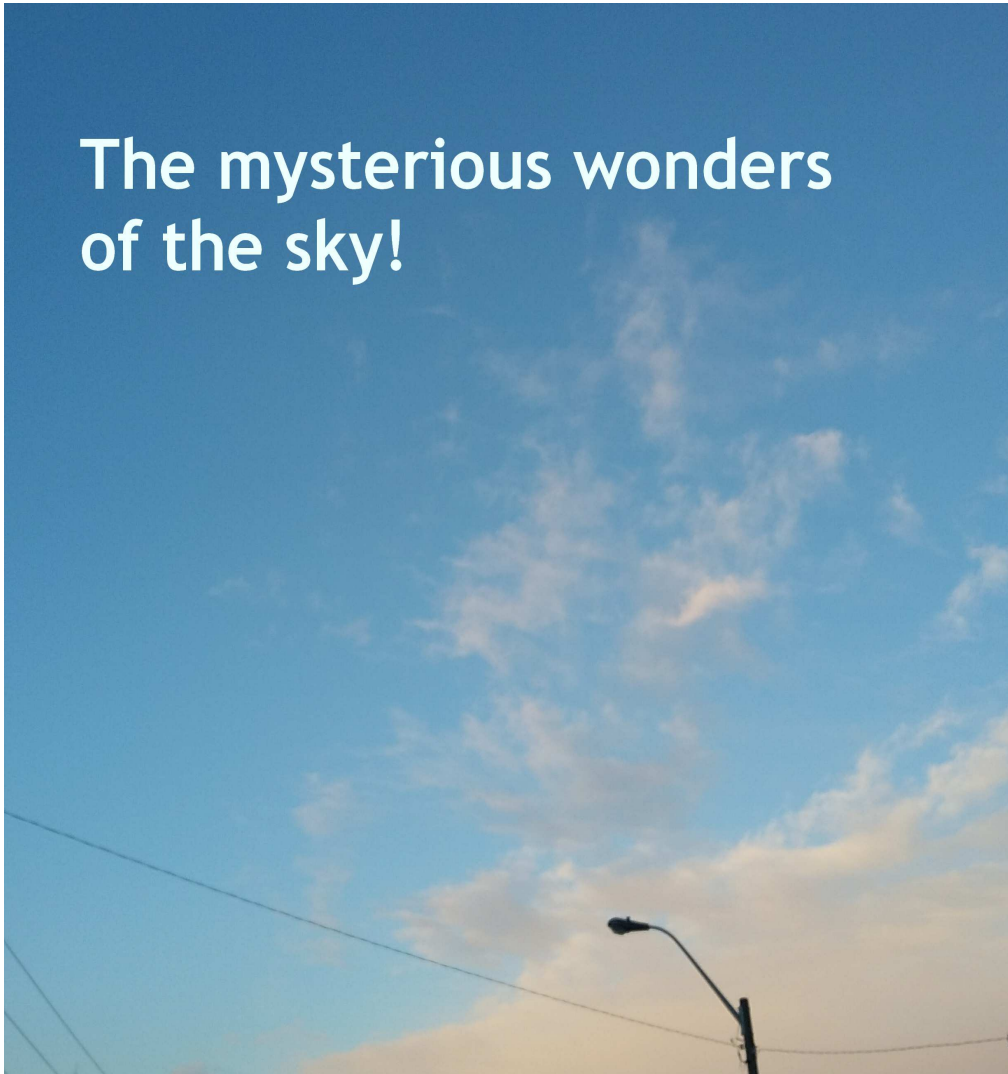
Is it not critical that whatever a person believes, that person questions everything and uses critical thinking to NOT fall prey to the vultures that use religion for their own narcissism? Life is a double edged sword, is it not? My parents hated religion but let me go to a variety of protestant churches, after we emigrated to Canada as they figured that was better than other alternatives open to young people. It also was free baby sitting.

At age 11 going on 12, when we had just moved again, I was exposed to an extreme, right wing, almost a cult-like, very small religious group called the "Church of God" at a time I was looking for family to fill a hole in my young life. I was also looking for "God" and the meaning of life. By the time I was 15, the hypocrisy I had encountered in the church was so devastating that I landed in the public school's counselling office, my first mini breakdown. At that time, I was taken out of the "cult like" church (I offered no resistance) and joined a protestant church often described as "religion lite". Once in university, I left the church all together. I did, however, NOT stop my search for "God" and the meaning of life.

From those early days, in the various churches, I was taught parables about love, forgiveness, care, and service to one another. I kept those lessons close to my heart, throughout my life. I have learned to despise the other lessons about hypocrisy, elitism, taking advantage of those in a weakened position. I think both the good and the not so good lessons from those early days have served my personal spiritual journey well.

Whatever, however or even whoever put me together, I have discovered works in mysterious ways to have provided me with this unique life lesson plan by guiding me, in an active way, every minute of the day. I feel a connection to this life force I call the infinite, absolute love that comes from beyond, deep within me. It is my guiding light.

**The mysterious wonders
of the sky!**



MY GUIDING LIGHT (#5)

Without guidance for some inexplicable place somewhere in this grand universe, I would not have been able:

- to stay standing,
- to deal with a very stressful career, in computing
- to improve my health at an age where most are losing health after being almost at death's door at age 51 when I retired from full time employment
- and most importantly, to stay true to myself in a world that has developed a way of life that, overall, tends to bring the worst out in each of us, our lowest common denominator, with immense pressure.

To finally “master” my BiPolar, listening to my doctors at the right time and NOT listening to my doctors, also at the right time, allowed me to be able to do the hard work of self correction. I attribute this journey to my guiding light of infinite, absolute LOVE. “God”, “Lord” or the “Guy Upstairs” are my short hand notations for this invisible force that I cannot adequately describe but can feel. Others may choose a different name such as; Jah, Jehovah, Allah, Human Kindness, Enlightenment, Buddha, the Great Spirit, Ngai (pronounced “Guy”, one of our first monolithic “god” concepts from the Kikuyan peoples, a Bantu tribe). The name, I feel, is not so important but invoking the inner discipline to learn the ways of being a loving, forgiving being is. Part of this process means, I need to say; “**No!**” to my negative side each and every minute of the day. To date, life has been quite a ride, mostly solo but with just the right amount of support when needed to get from one step to the next. And my life is not quite yet over.





AND "GOD" SAID NO! (#6)

In my preteen years, when exposed to the concept of Hell, I wanted to be a missionary as I did not want anyone to burn for an eternity in such an awful place. But "God" said: "No!".

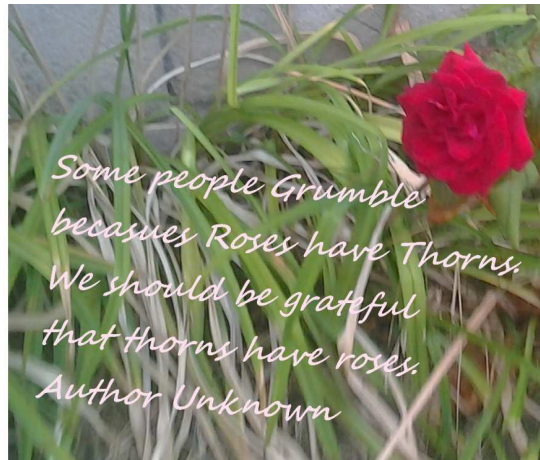
In my teenage years, when I started to learn about some basics about life such as procreation, I wanted to have my own family: a husband, two children, a house, a picket fence, a dog and a cat! I also wanted to help find a cure for cancer! But "God" said: "No!".

I floundered around my first half of my life. I may have helped someone find a cure for cancer but I may also have helped another develop a better killing machine. And "God" said: "Wait, your journey is not yet over."

Then as I watched my chance to have children slip away, I asked if maybe I could have a husband with children that I could give an assist to. And "God" said: "No!" "Oh! Then can I have a husband?" And again the answer was: "No!" "A boyfriend?", I asked. The answer from "God" was another: "No!"

How about a good friend, someone that would get involved in my life beyond the surface of: "How are you? Let's do Lunch?" And "God" said: "No Marianne! You have a different journey to walk...a solo one...for now. You have enough. You have shelter. You have an income. You have four cats! You have an inner guidance system that will sustain you so that you can reflect on the journey each one is required to walk....a journey of inner healing, learning to walk tall and proud, in spite of imperfections, yet always striving for better on your rocky little bumpy road **up**, learning the difficult journey of love."

So with a sigh, I must conclude that I am very blessed because "God" said "NO!" and continues to do so. Maybe one day "God" will say: "Yes!".





STRIVE TO BE WELL (#7)

When my small nucleus family emigrated to Canada in 1951, I had my birth culture ripped out from under me within a week, at age 8, losing my grandparents, particularly my maternal grandmother's support along with the move, virtually overnight. Cultural interruptus, I would say. From that day on, my home environment, one of fear, rigidity and conflict rose to the surface and I have not been fully at home anywhere since. War damages people, in this case the second world war in Holland under the Nazis followed by the Dutch hunger winter. Preceding that my family survived world war 1 and the depression embracing a society based on classicism, patriarchy, nationalism, genderism and racism.

Apparently, I was a "wanted" baby born in the middle of that second world war. To this date, all I can say to my parents is: "WHAT WERE YOU THINKING bringing me into this mess?" and then I work on forgiveness as they were young and not thinking, living in very horrendous circumstance. They came here to Canada looking for a "better" life but that war stayed inside them and lives in my subconscious as well, a fact that is very evident if a person takes the time to see me.

In search of trying to fit in somewhere, I joined church and community groups available at that time, personal help not being available. In 1954, my parents moved us to a "better" neighbourhood, making my life worse. It was then I exposed myself to right wing evangelism at age 11-15, looking for love, family and a place to belong. I became neurotically ill when faced with the hypocrisy in that world. I ran out.

In my early 30's, I almost converted to Islam but I could not quite do so as I bumped into an essence of patriarchy and religious elitism in that sphere that never felt right.

Over the years, I made my way as a female in, at that time, a man's world of science, engineering and with a playboy body to boot (talk about a cosmic set up!). By mid life, I ended up very confused, lacking self esteem, looking for love in all the wrong places, and all the wrong ways with a near fatal attraction to the group we call NEGRO in a very "white" world with our ill conceived notion of supremacy based on race.

In the end, turning to Africa became part of my healing experience, for which I say: "THANK YOU!". That racism and "white" supremacy continues to reign in

2017, though more subtle these days, at least “in my hood” (neighbourhood). Sadly, there are still enough explicit acts of racism and “white” supremacy that remain very sore sticking point that continues to fester inside me.

My healing journey was also kick started through psychotherapy that followed each stint in the “funny farm”. Finally at age 38, I was exposed to new ideas about what makes people tick and I grabbed the tools (assertiveness, anger management, cognitive feedback and behavioural modification) and started a long, long journey of consciously rewriting my own inner script with brutal self honesty, sorting through what to keep, what to throw out and what to either learn anew or relearn.....not a fun journey but a necessary one.

From September 6, 2013 on, as my 72nd year drew to a close, I have healed from the inner damage to discover that it is the world that is broken. My inner essence was, is, and will always be fine. That does not make me a perfect being. I tend to work things out from what I see, hear, feel, sense running my own experiment in terms of what works for me, in balance with life around me, following a deeper instinct that lives in my gut, continually knock the “lizard side” of my brain into submission. That is all I got and that is all I can offer.

Furthermore, I am not a student of Buddhism nor any other particular belief system be they from the “East”, the “West” or closer to our tribal roots. I do believe in something far bigger and grander than any of us can imagine or describe, in terms of true love and forgiveness. I would have self destructed a long time ago had it not been for this life force. Today, I have come to realize, it is not even possible for others to understand how little I want to be here on earth figuring out how to live with Homo Sapiens, a species I love but whose behaviour I cannot understand. My wish for this broken world is for each of us to find our own inner healing to become our own true self, to live in serenity as life's storm rages around us, until the storm winds down and we can all sit beside the quiet waters, together in peace, not in perfection but in balance with enough so that we can grow positively in spirit, indefinitely.

To me life is beautiful but as I conceive it to be in my own essence, finding my own balance in a universe that behaves in a Bi Polar fashion of matter and anti-matter

***I DO NOT HAVE A BIPOLAR DISORDER! (#8)
I HAVE A BIPOLAR ORDER!***

"Beauty comes from within.

*A beautiful heart creates a beautiful person", a Kenyan
Proverb that runs through many indigenous cultures*

[WARNING: If you have BiPolar Type 1, as I do, or Type 2, this note is NOT to be taken as medical advice. Please do not go off your medications without seeking professional guidance and then only if you are prepared to live a life of extreme life and stress management, likely solo. Without the medications, I must limit my time I spend with people to about 95-99%, confined in my own house, in order to stay sane, meaning having access to my own mind.]

Thriving for me is NOT possible unless humanity learns to overcome the tough lesson that we are a species at war with its own self. Instead of fighting each other, refusing to see ourselves as part of nature, that some how we have "rights" in the grand scheme of things, we could, instead, learn to dance together in whatever format we each like to dance. We have the space, we have the resources, we have the knowledge. What we do not have is the collective will.

There is no need to spend money and brain power on expeditions to Mars or going for a joy ride to the moon. We are doing a good job of turning Earth into Mars and there simply is not time for us to move to Venus in time to save humanity from itself.

My time in Canada has allowed me to survive as myself because we do not have a strong, single unified social structure, making it easier to not conform to a cultural norm. With a very large immigrant population from around the globe, more so since the late 1960s and early 1970s, we have many cultures living side by side connected loosely, the workplace and educational institutions being the primary unifying factor. This made an oddball like me possible but to date, I have yet to find a social group that I feel I belong to. To add to my feelings of social isolation, I know one misstep on my part and I will be thrown into "shrink jail" even if the cause is physical such as electrolyte loss causing kidneys to shut down. This happened to me in Dec 2014, preceded by an explicit bout of Post Traumatic Stress.

My single payer medical system appears not able to listen to the individual anymore, but has become a system based on statistics, probability theory, mathematical computations done on a series of computers strung together by similar machines, the so called "Cloud" people are willingly and unwittingly storing their whole life's data on. Granted the medical system works reasonably well for most people, under most circumstance and no one in Canada loses their house when emergency care is required. That my medical system can no longer help me, I suspect, is because we appear to have an overload of "customers" and a serious lack of funding. Please note! I want Canada's single payer health care improved, not dismantled.

Following standard protocols, in 2014, I was pumped full of anti-psychotics given my 50 year history in "mental health" but those drugs turn me into something I am not: a dangerous person while possibly killing off what is left of my kidney function courtesy of 37.5 years of a prescription mood stabilizer. This last statement is conjecture on my part based on personal observation and medically measured rapid kidney decline since 2012 when the anti psychotic/seizure drugs were first introduced into my bodily system for eight long months with Myalgia in my right leg as a side effect, from which I have not yet fully recovered. I had no say in all this.

With aging, I can now add more physical pain to the journey but I will resist pain killers nevertheless (legal and illegal, including coffee), the dental office excepted, for now. I believe such drugs will kill my empathy circuits if I take them too long and too often, along with my remaining kidney function. I worked too hard to learn to feel all the crescendos of life and yet stay sane at the same time. I choose instead to own, process and FEEL my pain so that I can empathize with the plight of others instead of turning our human condition into an intellectual exercise of "right fighting", posturing, propaganda, pro vs con (with emphasis on the CON! as in con job).

As far as I am concerned, life is about turning lemons into lemonade unless the recipe calls for lemons, in which case I do my best to not squeeze the lemons too much. Each loss and disappointment in my attempt at relationships, I own, I process, sometimes for years, since I am the only common denominator in my own life. Why? I do not want my wound(s) to fester too much fearing I might explode and break this world in two. All is tuition in the school of life is it not?

Finding My Way Home, One Breath at a Time



***I GOT MYSELF INTO TROUBLE. I GOT MYSELF OUT OF TROUBLE:
A CONSISTENT THEME IN MY LIFE'S JOURNEY (#9)***

From mid life until January 2011, I used to cut my daily multi vitamin tablet in half to take one half in the morning and the other before bed (1AM back then) for better absorption. By breaking the tablet in half, one edge was very rough and bumpy. One night, it got stuck in my throat and I tried to cough it up. This back fired and the halved pill lodged in my throat completely covering my air path. **No breath would come in! "Okay! I'm in trouble! Think Girl Think!"**

Thanks to the fact I had taken three first aid courses, I knew about the Heimlich manoeuvre and immediately started doing so with my fist, pretending I was the person behind me coming to my rescue as best as I could, looking for something to help push up. There wasn't anything but a toothbrush which is of no use! My first attempt failed. I pushed again! Nothing! Do I venture outside and hope somebody is awake and on the street at 1AM? My neighbours would not open their doors at that time. No point calling emergency. *I have no voice with only minutes to live.* I pushed up a third time, the damn thing dislodged and flew several feet out of my mouth! I was so thankful to be able to breathe air again, I ran my first 1K the next day. The "Guy Upstairs" (my affectionate term for that infinite, absolute life force we call love) doesn't want me "home" just yet. Needless to say, I no longer cut my vitamin tablet in half.

Is an ideal life not one of healthy aging, accepting our human limitations? The only anti-aging process I know of is death itself. And though I long to leave since being here feels wrong, I also believe that premature death, mine or that of another, is a moral, ethical wrong, in an absolute empirical sense. This belief of mine helped me fight that voice that said: "Marianne! Kill Yourself" that rang in my head, starting at age 9 and was silenced only in September 2013. Not believing in premature death, also helps me find a way to forgiveness when I wanted to kill them, so much so I needed to seek out therapy to ensure I would not.

Nothing is so strong as real gentleness.

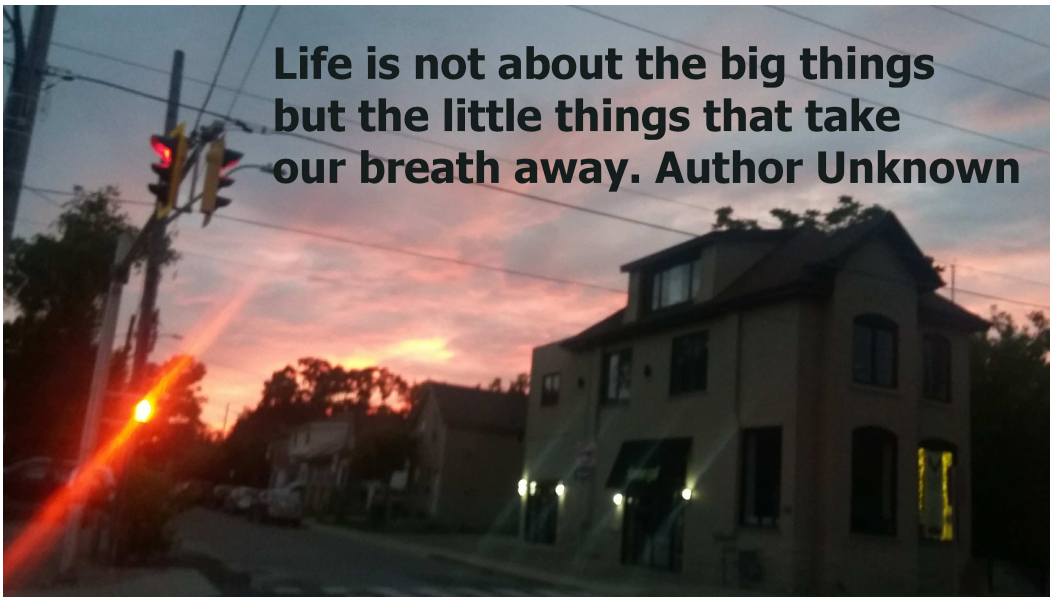
Nothing is as gentle as real strength.

Author Unknown.

***PERFORMING THE HEIMLICH ON ONES SELF WITHOUT THE AID OF
AN OUTSIDE OBJECT WHEN NONE IS AVAILABLE (#10)***

- 1) Contract your belly button, horizontally, in the direction of your spine.
- 2) With tight fists, one under the other, with fingers and thumb touching, place the fists directly under the sternum, push up sharply and quickly with all the strength you can muster.
- 3) Repeat until ...

Better still, please take a First Aid course. The life you save from premature death, may be your own. Being in shape helped as my tummy was relatively flat and my arms relatively strong at age 71. If not saving your own life from premature death, you may save that of another. As for slapping someone who is choking on the back, that can work as someone did that to me in younger days. However, we have since learned, the Heimlich procedure tends to work better. Also note that for babies, children and animals procedures also exists but have their own twists on the basic principle of the Heimlich. Please take an applicable course and update frequently if in the public eye. For the rest, know the emergency numbers to call if available and please do so. Sadly, such services do have serious social biases and are still none existent in too many places.



COPING WITH LIFE ONE MOMENT AT A TIME: A BUMPY ROAD (#11)

Here is great stress reliever:

- Sit or stand up straight. If standing, please keep your knees slightly bent to not lock them.
- Spine in neutral position as if a straight ruler is running through the top middle of your head to your tail bone.
- Roll your shoulders up, back and down.
- Think about your belly button and using your core tummy muscles, contract it horizontally towards your spine.
- Visualize that beautiful Indian Ocean that rolls in and out of the African east coast. No Indian Ocean! No Problem! Any body of water will do.
- With your diaphragm push up and inhale deep. Hold for a few seconds and then slowly exhale. Repeat a few times and with each exhale in your mind tell yourself to let go of the angst, finding that quietness within that says: "Somehow it will be alright."
- Be still for a moment and then **believe**".
- Repeat until,...

Sounds simple. Sadly, taking 30 seconds to a minute and half, one or more times throughout out the day, in today's world of perceived need for speed, this much needed time out is no longer a simple matter. Tragic and I do cry cathartic tears for humanity as a result.

**Be Happy for this Moment.
This Moment is Your Life.
Omar Khayyam**



**CAN HUMANITY GET OFF THE TREADMILL OF THE FEW
CONTROLLING THE MANY??? (#12)**

Someone asked me a most important question: "Can Humanity Get OFF the Treadmill of the few Controlling the Many???" Can we indeed end poverty, have a more equitable distribution of the earth's resources? Can we learn to respect each others differences and autonomy while learning to collaborate, trust each other and share beyond our basic needs? Can we learn to respect our natural world and not continue to rape Mother Earth?

There is no simple answer. Governments, non profits and corporations are building roads, houses, schools and other basic infrastructure needs to continue (in the short term at least). But, we must look at this with our eyes open and ears to the ground, so to speak, and examine the entire picture, as best as possible. Are we building independence or dependence? What role does technology play? Will it enslave us or allow us to develop into our best selves? Will we be able to grow in the journey of finding personal truth while supporting others in theirs?, And what exactly is our "best" self?

I have always found the seeking of power rather repulsive preferring a life of service to those around me. In my meandering, faltering and picking myself up for three quarters of a century, I have learned that I cannot fix anyone but myself and that is where I believe the battle of good versus evil is actually won: within each of us. Yes, we can stand up to the evil behaviour in others and we can certainly learn not to co-operate with that evil but when we try to conquer evil in others, we can too easily lose our own way. We can become the "enemy" we are fighting often leading to hatred and revenge. I have been told: "Hate begets Hate", not Love. I believe this to be a human truth.

I have no power nor am I in a position of power as it should be, in my opinion, because in my mind "Power" belongs only to God[s] and not in the hands or any of us. The "power of one", I am learning is a myth. The empowerment of self to aid in the empowerment of those around us is a whole other story. If we do that locally in such a way that we think about our impact on all others around the globe, striving towards an equitable, sustainable balance, we may actually become the builders of peace in a world that needs that peace now before we run out of time..

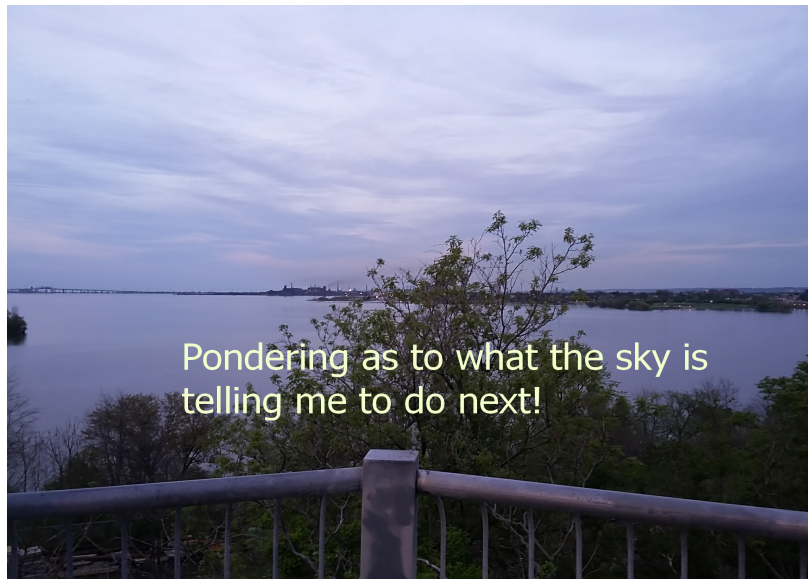
Everyday, I ask myself :

"How much am I contributing to the problems we humans face?" and "How much

am I contributing to the solutions?" This is an everyday balancing act since like everyone else, I am caught in this complexity of life that is both good and bad. Everyday I have to remind myself to examine me in my own psychic mirror asking:

- "Am I living a life of principle to the best of my ability?" or
- "Am I allowing my ego and fear to rule me?"
- "How much of what I do and think is coming from the direction of Love and how much from the direction of Hate?"

Eventually, as more people realize this duality, stop being afraid and choose a life of principle based on genuine love, I truly believe humanity will start to do better. Being human, is never an easy road and none of us do life's process perfectly, but we need to keep trying. We talk about a lot about: "**Love is The Answer**" and that is true but to practice love (even like) for our selves and those around us is a difficult, journey of overcoming our very basic instinct for survival. Continually, I pray to "God" (the Infinite Life Force of Love), a process of "Talking to the Sky", asking for guidance each day. Slowly, I am learning, doing and then learning again, growing in spirit to face my last day on earth with a clear and clean conscience. In other words with inner peace. No fear! No doubts!





AN ODE TO OUR GRADUATION DAY FROM THE SCHOOL OF LIFE
(#13)

Some of my thoughts provoked by Robin Williams' death. Robin Williams was a comedian and actor from the USA who died at age 63 of a suspected suicide though none of us, left behind, will ever know 100% for sure.

When I say: "It is by the grace of "God" (or the positive side of the universe if you prefer), that I am still alive today is a testimony to the work that I had to do under the guidance of the infinite life force of Love. I had to walk and walk for miles, literally putting one foot in front of the other, just to hold on and work through the darkness (like snakes crawling inside my body) that lived inside me and thoughts that continually said to me: "Marianne, kill yourself!" with a compulsive desire to drive a sword through my middle. This would go on for days, weeks, months and years, with varying intensity.

When I was not fighting that demon, I would be projected into a state of false ecstasy that would speed up my mind and it would race without a stop button to the point that I would produce chemicals in my body akin to every mind/mood alternating drug imaginable and I went into a state of psychosis. These episodes, often called a "high", happened on a continual basis with 6 of them so extreme I ended up in asylums for the insane with the polite name of psychiatric hospital, and today "Mental Health". I would seesaw between these two states, sometimes many times a day; then there would be a different level that would cycle for weeks and a more severe level that would cycle over several years.

I call both these up and down forces that live inside me "Satan" and over time I learned to recognize that both were not me! What kept me alive (and is still keeping me alive) is an instinct that lives deep within my gut and I listen to it. I never liked alcohol as a drink though I have tasted some, concluding grape juice with club soda tastes better, is cheaper and no headaches. I have no idea of what a hang over is never having been drunk. I gave up coffee and learned to be careful with other caffeine and stimulant drinks such as cocoa, black and red teas. I have always stayed completely away from mood and mind altering drugs. Had I not done so, I would have likely made my condition worse. This instinct has guided me through thick and thin. I call it my guidance system or a compass that comes from the good side of the universe through input from others and the sky. Please be warned. The negative side of our universe (and beyond, I suspect) also filters through on a continual basis hence life is and continues to be a sorting exercise of trial and error.

In 1971, after my third hospitalization for a psychotic high, I received intensive, one on one, therapy with a psychiatrist. That helped me deal with my anger issues with my father. In 1979's, after my fourth hospitalization and yet another very severe psychotic breakdown, I had weekly, one hour therapy sessions for 5 years, with a year's break after 4 years. This was life changing and turned night into day by giving me tools to handle life using Behaviour Modification and Cognitive Feedback to learn Assertiveness and Anger Management. We started to tackle my relationship with my mother that I am still finding recovery from, though she died on October 2016. I am fortunate in that I have a unique brain that allowed me to build my own therapist in my mind. I was able to continue the journey of self correction for two more decades. With declining health, both my mother's and mine, in 2008, I sought out counselling again for fear I would kill and/or commit suicide. Sadly, I discovered therapeutic tools are no longer available to the degree that I experienced them in the 1970s and 1980s unless a person pays a therapist privately. Luckily, I had those financial resources and I paid.

At age 71, my Naturopathic doctor and I found natural dietary solutions to add to my coping skills. That voice that said: "Marianne, kill yourself!" is finally quiet! Since September 6, 2013! Just in the nick of time! Thereby, life is infinitely more manageable by comparison. I no longer feel the pain when alone I used to feel, similar to the pain of being in a deep depression. However, living this very solitary life is not fun and I am vulnerable to human "cat and mouse" games, be they in business, non profits and/or social circles.

Please note that BiPolar is a chronic condition and will never go away. Without "meds", I need to monitor my daily activity, moment by moment, often unable to spend much time interacting with people for fear of overload. A personal catch 22 if you like.

For reasons, only the "Guy Upstairs" (God/Universe if you prefer) understands, I feel the emotions of others and that is one reason I was never able to laugh at Robin Williams' work as a comedian. If his death was a suicide, it is not a surprise to me. His soul (essence if you prefer) is now in that better place where the "God of Love" will help Robin find healing. This I know from my own experience with the "God of Love" that lives deep within my gut and is my compass. Sadly, we have a lifestyle today, that too many of us are not able to tune into our own compass that comes from that same source in the universe, the infinite life force of LOVE.

As I prepare to face my own death which will surely come in the next 30 or so years, and quite possibly within 3 or 4, I do not see death as sad though there is a sadness to that part of the journey. There is also joy, peace and inner growth learning to embrace the journey of letting go of everything. Without death, life has no meaning. What I would like to see stopped is the way we humans tend to expedite death while at the same time we pretend we can prevent it. One of our many paradoxes!





SMALL STEPS....BIG GOAL! (#14)

TWO ACTS OF LOVE ON OUR CITY'S PUBLIC TRANSIT SYSTEM

I would prefer to stand on one foot on a crowded bus with my nose stuck in someone's armpit than ride in a limousine. I use my public transit system when walking doesn't is not wise. Actually, I would prefer to avoid both scenarios, the limo and the bus, particularly on a freezing miserable, blustery winter day. Given only these two choices, I would definitely NOT choose the limo. I feel badly for people who use cars as their main means of transportation as they miss so much of life!

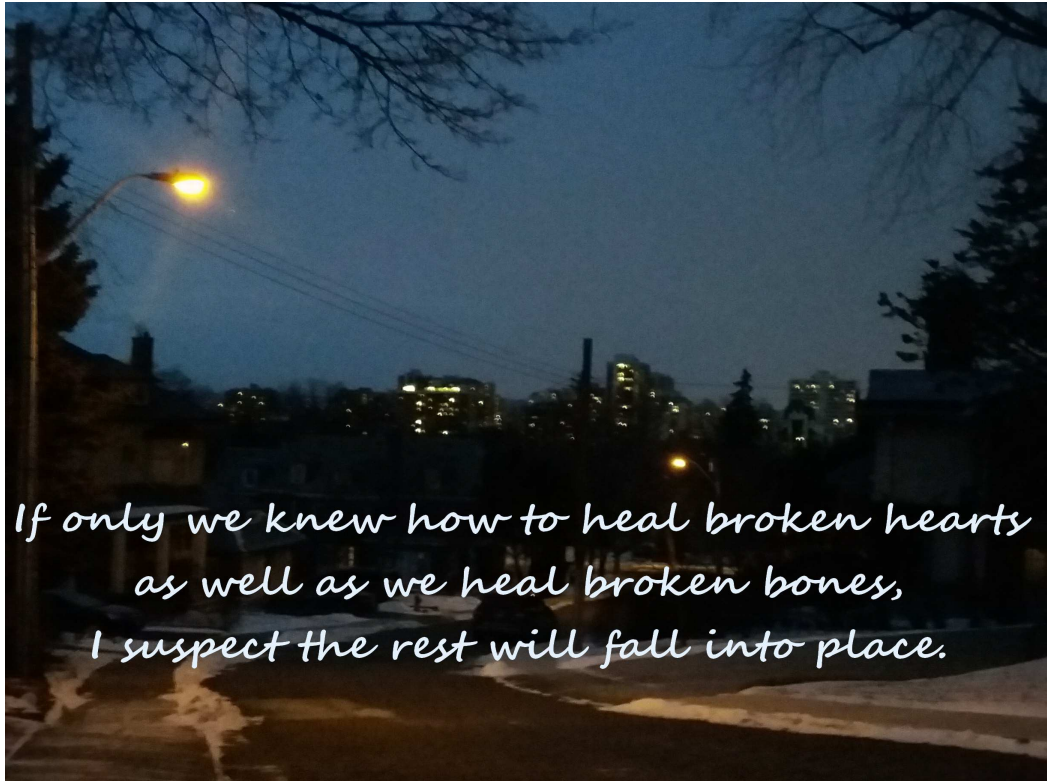
Recently I watched two acts of love between people who, clearly, had not previously met. Some people would call them "strangers". One was a young man sitting a few feet from an elderly lady with her walker and a cast on one of her legs. He did something that rarely happens in Western Society. He asked if she would be alright getting off the bus, she smiled and the young man got up and helped the lady off the bus. I was at the back watching.

Our bus drivers are not always the most gentle as I once literally landed in the lap of another person on the bus, when the driver slammed on the brakes, for no apparent reason, other than to let me off at my stop. Usually I just lose my balance but manage to stay standing. Being in shape helps, but is no guarantee against falls on the bus or anywhere else.

The other exchange was between a woman dressed in a Hijab as she was attempting to get off the bus with a child in a stroller. She couldn't because the bus had stopped at a bus shelter not allowing her to step back far enough to manoeuvre the stroller off the bus, by herself. A young man, clearly not dressed by Islamic dress code for men (hair unkempt, a little tank top, many tattoos) rushed off his seat, grabbed the far end of the stroller to assist. The space between the bus and the shelter was so tight that the man needed to help the lady with the stroller all the way to the end of the shelter where she could finally freely move with the stroller and child. The man had to run to get back on the bus as the driver wasn't waiting for him. He just made it back in time. At all times during this event, the man simply held the end of the stroller so that both the woman and the man worked together.

The Lesson: Little by little, we can, with kindness, look past our differences and learn to support each other in a loving, non judgmental way with an open heart and an open mind...not by changing each other but by simply accepting the

differences and then figuring out ways by which we can each survive, side by side. In time, our differences will grow into a source of strength: better for all, long enough and well enough.



**ANGER MANAGEMENT AND A CONSTITUTION THAT MAY
ACTUALLY BE WORTH MORE THAN THE PAPER IT IS WRITTEN ON
(#15)**

This note is not an invitation for people to go out and burn their nation's constitution as many do have merit but to explain the reason so many of us are feeling the angst and others are dying prematurely.

- Anger: Anger is NOT hate! Anger, can, however result in hateful behaviour when we allow it to control our behaviour.
- Anger: Anger is a normal response when a human feels hurt, frustration or fear much like a knee reflex when a doctor hits your “funny” bone. No one can make a person angry though we can trigger such a response so easily in others by pushing our emotional trigger points causing yet more hurt, frustration and fear. Nevertheless, the anger is mine no matter how unfair the circumstances may be.
- Anger Management: It is my job to process my feelings, to calm myself down (through exercise, years of therapy, or just plain punching some pillows that can take the abuse, as I can buy another pillow).

Once calmed down, and a cooler head prevails, then and only then, can I choose an appropriate course of action. I can decide to let the matter go (as I do not have to fight every battle that comes along). I can ask for clarification (I do make mistakes and do not always see the whole picture). I can discuss my concerns with the other party or parties (provided they are willing) without pointing fingers and bringing up past baggage. I can seek legal action (if appropriate and affordable). There are many other techniques that are not hateful but have the goal of resolution, particularly for yourself. Others may or may not respond the way I like them to. I need to accept this if I want inner peace. That is where love and forgiveness comes in. This does not mean I have to like the situation or take the other participant(s) out for lunch. It means, at some point I will work through my feelings so that I can let the matter drop, walk on the other side of the street if need be and choose not to blow up their house (or worse).

Anger management is NOT easy and depending on the situation, can require years even decades of processing, made more difficult when others involved keep the pressure on our trigger points and/or is extreme.

Examples of extreme, atrocious behaviour are: rape, murder, child abuse! Such

matters are made yet worse when we do not have the adequate resources to feed ourselves or have bombs dropping on our heads. Saddest of all, is that we can grow so comfortable with our anger that it becomes almost impossible to let go, translating into a permanent state of hatred. We hold on using rationalization and any justification we can think of, some of it almost logical and seemingly reasonable, at least to ourselves. Making the situation worse, "the powers that be" for whatever reason(s), tend to use our hurts, our frustrations, our fears helping to keep too many of us in a perpetual state of anger that can rise to a level that we can no longer see straight, on the one hand. Self Abuse, Violence, Riots, Armed Revolutions and Wars erupt! Possibly worse, on the other hand. We can also become too apathetic, too comfortable, not giving a hoot, tuning out, dropping out, almost like a zombie, the walking dead.

If we humans really want peace, we need to ensure, in an active non violent way, that everyone has nutritious food, unpolluted water, clean air and adequate shelter sufficient to give us a place to work out our own inner stuff. The concept of whether a person DESERVES food/water/air and shelter is irrelevant. Each one of us NEEDS these things! I am convinced only when basic human needs are enshrined in all our governmental constitutions and are actually provided by all societies so that everyone can afford them, then and only then, can humanity move forward. At this point in time, I know of no such constitution that makes basic human needs (water, air, food, shelter) for all its citizens a primary goal. If so, that alone would ease the friction between groups we consider "minorities" who are often abused. Until then, I personally see national constitutions akin to useless pieces of "paper", built on a foundation of sand that is easily swept away by nature in a brief moment.

