

CAN HUMANITY EVOLVE IN TIME? (#16)

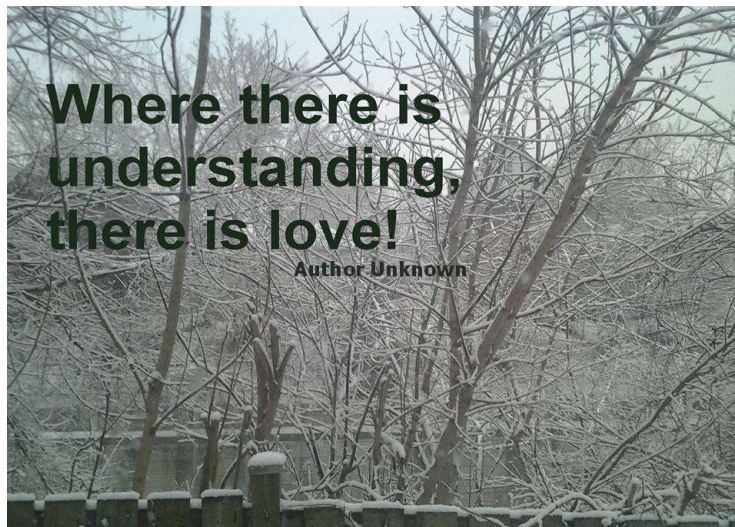
Climate change is biting us, drowning us and roasting us based on my observation that weather forecasters, today a thriving entertainment industry, can only describe the weather in the moment, as “somewhere but not here”, its general behavioural pattern and current human scientific understanding. With lesser technology, they used to do a better job in the accuracy department. My region, 50 miles from the U.S.A. border used to have four distinct seasons: usually a long cold winter with snow but not always, a spring that never seemed to warm up fast enough, a short hot summer though not always and often a very nice autumn. Over the last decade or so, we have had two seasons: One on the cold side that mixes fall, winter and spring more or less in alternating days. The other on the hot side, mixing spring, summer and fall with a similar erratic pattern. Schyzo Weather, I call it! Hence, these days, I need to go back to “ancient” times of using my instinct, a large purse with several changes of clothing, employing the layer approach to dressing plus observing the tell tale signs of watching the behaviour of my cats and reading the sky.

With what appears to be a race to our extinction, this century, as many scientific studies tell me, I am also hounded by people wanting and needing my money. “What is wrong with that?”, you ask. “What is right and wrong with that?”, I ask.

- What is wrong is people asking me for money when they live in an opulent palace, owning several mansions that they may spend a few nights in, once in a while. Hence my phrase "How many beds can one person sleep in at one time?"
- To add salt to our wounds, the manipulators want our money to help the "unfortunate" or "needy" (terms I do not like) but few dig PROPORTIONALLY into their own pockets. Some never dig into their own pockets. And some manage to enrich their own coffers in the process.
- What is also wrong is asking for money using deceit. Hence the concept of 419 scams that Nigeria made infamous, along with Ghana's Sakawa boys and tales of Russian princesses.

- Let us not forget our own more obvious “Western” crooks. Many businesses are pretty good at the art of scamming. And what about our governing bodies and marketing machines, the advertisers?
- And then there are the religious who are leading their flock to commit unspeakable acts, including mass murder, with promise of an after life I have no desire to go to. I am told we are all supposed to abide by a common tithe. Ten percent is a common figure bantered about. Yet is this “fair” when using basic human need as the criteria?

Now for the tough part: For humanity to truly solve its issues SELF HONESTY is necessary so that we look at the best and worst in us. Sadly DENIAL is easier and many of us are living lives of addiction in one form or other, with drugs being only one form. In a world of exponential change in technology, I often wonder if I am wasting good karma on machines behaving like people or people behaving like machines. I see none of this as helping us cope. I am on guard every day and do feel my brain changing but in my case, my brain is also on a healing journey developing new pathways as old ones die off and some are being repaired. Yet another interesting end of life journey. Once again, I ask can we find the flexibility, the open minds and hearts we need to slow down a little, just be in the moment and make life about smoothies, blending the best in each of us.





BEAUTIFUL, COMPLEX, PAINFUL FEELINGS (#17)

EMOTIONS are NOT logical. The best any of us can do in that arena is to acknowledge, understand, own and process them. If we use anger management when we are triggered into feeling frustration, fear or hurt as opposed to a knock out punch (aggressiveness), quietly seethe inside (passiveness) or worse act out a combination of both (passive-aggressiveness), we may actually learn to understand each other better improving our relationships, be they of a personal nature or in our political, institutional and business relations. To do that we also need a technique called assertiveness to replace the dated versions of passiveness, aggression and passive-aggression. SOMETIMES we get a different response in others as a result. Such difference is NOT coerced, persuaded or convinced and can lead to genuine, permanent, positive, internal change. For instance, if you put a gun to my head, I will likely say yes to anything you ask of me. Take the gun away, I likely will go back to doing as I wish or need to. However, keep the gun in place long enough, I may become a

person of habits that were forced on me. That is change of enslavement to the will of others, not good, positive change of choosing the freedom to be our own best self. A gun at my head is an extreme example but what of our more subtle ways of coercion, selling and persuasion, preying on our lowest common denominator and weaknesses? How “free” are we?



RECURSION, REPEAT, RECIPROCITY, RECONCILIATION (#18)

RECURSION: I hate loops. In computing, loops are caused by instructions lacking an escape clause and the program just goes around in circles until someone pulls the plug and kills the program. Then we have to spend a lot of time looking for the missing escape clause to put one in. In relationships, I hate worry as it behaves much the same as a loop in computing software. Worry just sits there churning and festering with no escape clause or until, in my case, my mind breaks down. In others, other body parts may be affected. Yet this “Be happy, don't worry” philosophy is not making overall life better either, or so it seems. Humanity appears to be at “war” with its own self. Recursion being a loop within in a loop, worry can, in theory, end. Then easily go into a negative spin cycle that feeds in on itself, spinning out of control. Current times feels very much like such a spin cycle that is both feeding in on itself yet blowing us up at the same time. Imploding may be a better word.

REPEAT, also known as the broken record. Is a repeat factor different from recursion? That depends on its usage. Repeating a sentence, an idea, an action, a behaviour can be a useful teaching and memory tool if the intent is to reach a goal and once the goal is reached, we move on to another goal. In other words, there is an escape clause with each phase.

RECIPROCITY: This is a real life story of mine on reciprocity, the best lunch I ever had. In 1986, I was on vacation in the West Indies. I had met a nice young gentleman who worked on the beach as a life guard. He stood out from the others on the beach as he was content with simple conversation. He wanted nothing from me except to talk. Our lives could not have been more different. He didn't have a chance to go to school as I did. He did finish Primary school while I had managed to etch out a B.A. degree, followed by a career at a university in Computing Services. He made maybe one tenth of my salary. He was of African descent and I, according to my looks, Caucasian. I was two decades older.

Two days before returning home, I invited him to lunch at a nice restaurant in town. He accepted and we had a lovely lunch, his first time ever in a restaurant where it's customary to leave a tip. The next day, there was a knock on my hotel door and it was my friend who I had taken to lunch the previous day. He said: “Yesterday, you treated me to lunch. Today it's my turn!”, as he handed me a brown paper bag. Inside the bag was a West Indian patty, a drink and a cucumber from his garden!

That was the best lunch I ever had, not so much for its content (which was actually pretty good) but for the lesson this young man taught me. In all human interaction, we need to give each other respect and support without a loss of dignity regardless of status! Unless there's reciprocity of some sort, no matter how wide the racial, economic, cultural, gender or whatever divide, the exchange is not appropriate, a lose lose! My next question then becomes: "How do we use reciprocity to get to reconciliation and healing?"



**OVERCOMING OUR INNERMOST FEARS TO BECOME AN
EMPOWERED PERSON, A PEACE BUILDER (#19)**

I am not scared of human beings though their behaviour can be frightening. Having a knife at my throat in August of 1965 was not fun! Being thrown around in my living room like a basketball and getting punched in the face just before Christmas 1971 was an experience I could have done without. Getting conned out of my money with the help of trusted "friends" was not a joke. Getting locked up in psychiatric wards, unable to speak (only grunt) was a rather unique experience being 100% defenceless similar to being on a date rape drug. I needed hospitalization for mania caused by psychotic high in 1965, 1968, 1971, 1979, 1980 and 2012. In 2014, I also landed in mental health, experiencing an explicit state of Post Traumatic Stress (PTS) that projected me back to world war 2. At the same time, I had electrolyte loss causing kidney failure and toxic build up in my blood also resulting in manic behaviour. Both my intake (digestion) and outtake (waste management) systems were seriously out of balance.

The fact that I have survived three quarters of a century, bumps, bruises and all, today standing tall and proud (most days), instead of the shrinking violet I used to be, NOT bitter, NOT jaded and do still truly love this entire species, is to me, THE miracle.

I am NOT referring to the shim sham miracles of snake oil salesmen, politicians and preachers. NOR am I referring to the "miracles" that defy logic and science, and I am certainly not referring to the miracles that keep us from doing the hard work of inner growth. The miracle I am referring to is the one of listening to that gut feeling that tells us something is wrong and we need to pay attention so that we can learn love and forgiveness in order to find inner healing and health, in body, mind and spirit. The challenge is huge! The trust and bridge building we need to do feels frightening. But "YES WE CAN".

With current global events, I have lost faith in our leaders and systems to bail us out, though there are some trying to do their best to help out. Instead, can we empower self and those around us thereby building strong local communities of empowered individuals, the basic building block of any society, by listening to your own inner voice and learn to trust it to guide your every step. Once a community is strong, will it not be easier to build ties with other communities that are of mutual benefit? The slogan: "acting locally, thinking globally" applies does it not?.

A BUMPY ROAD (#20)

I have a saying in my house that hangs on a wall:

WHERE THERE IS UNDERSTANDING, THERE IS LOVE!

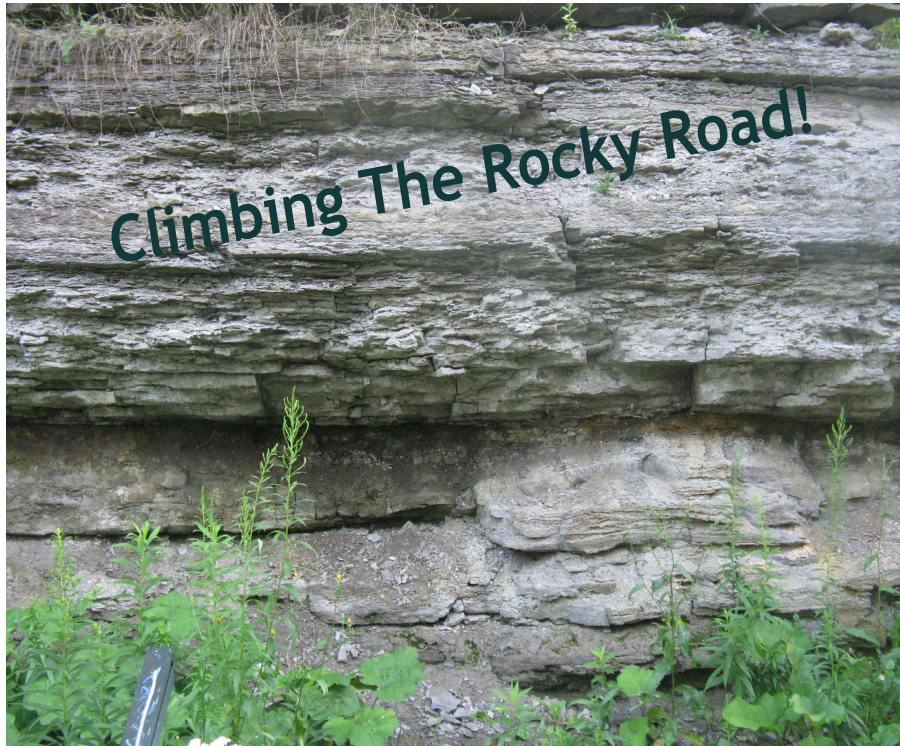
We are just on the cusp of understanding human behaviour and figuring out how to find healing from the damage passed onto us from our ancestors. Knowledge in the public domain of cause and effect, in terms of human behaviour, is only about 60 years in the making. Compared to our history of either 200,000 years, 60,000 years or 6,000 years (depending upon ones beliefs), 60 years is not a long time. Granted we are using this new found knowledge to feed the human marketing machine, but we are also using this knowledge to help some of us find inner healing. I am a prime example of that latter process.

- All too often the people we need to find are not family nor friends from our early stages in life as they may carry the same damage we carry ourselves. Stepping out of dysfunction requires courage since we can become comfortable living in conflict situations, as that is all we have ever known. “Better” can actually feel frightening. While we may hate the dysfunction, leaving it behind is hard work of self correction and self honesty with those around likely unable to take that step with you and will do their best to sabotage your healing journey.
- Then we have those who to feed their own dysfunction by preying on human weakness to actively stir the pot, getting us to do things out of sheer anger and frustration. Politicians come to mind as do snake oil sales people. Our very way of life is based on just that phenomena giving us what amounts to a system of global apartheid.
- Deciding to find courage and inner healing, try to focus on the positive in your own life and community, no matter how little of it you can find: a search for that “diamond in the rough”, so to speak. For example: The sparkles in the snow after a fresh fall when the moon or street lamps shine on it or the gentle motion of the branch of a coconut tree in a pleasant breeze at the end of a very hot day. By doing the hard work of silencing our own negative self talk, an on going process, I suspect, we will build better communities and we will dig ourselves out of this global quagmire we are sinking into.

The answers lie within self. Trust the gut, that inner voice that will help us overcome our base survival instincts (our “lizard” side) that are no longer necessary in today's world of plenty, base instincts that are actually killing us as a species. Let us learn to live, content with enough, not forever but long enough, well enough, AND become wiser in the ways of love and forgiveness.

The gut is the digestive system which has an intelligence to it, having the second highest number of neurons after our brain. Use it to guide the brain, a processing unit, to think and think critically. Then do something in your own locale to lift up yourself and thus your community keeping in mind the needs of all, well over seven billion of us and counting, soon to be nine billion.

This is not some mushy, feel good shim sham. This is science and wisdom that filtered through our past so that we can build that better tomorrow for us all. If something does not make sense, it does not. If something feels wrong, it is wrong.



IS WORLD PEACE POSSIBLE? (#21)

It is true that low income people have far less choice of where to buy and what to buy. I come from a very low income level myself, with both parents making less than minimum wage most of their adult lives. I am the daughter of a maid/cleaner and tailor/security guard. I have not forgotten my roots of poverty, where every nickel had to be turned over several times before deciding where to spend it and how money stressed our family wondering if we would have food or shelter another day.



I was born in the midst of the second world war, in Holland, that devastated my birth county and the hunger winter of 1944-1945 made matters worse. I would go to bed for the first few years of my life crying for a piece of toast and there was none to give me. Life was not easy for my parents during world war 2 though I heard, as of late, some of my fellow citizens managed to have a good time during that war. I am still wrapping my brain around that one!

Under Nazi occupation, the electricity had been turned off, water was down to a trickle (but at least we had water) and food, much of it rationed, was in short supply. Dad had joined his father in the tailoring business, not the most lucrative during and after the war. Mom, as most women in those days, stayed home to look after me, sort of. She had the job of scouring the country side, on her bicycle, to barter whatever we had: some soap, a piece of cloth, wedding rings, anything of value to a farmer (or a person of means) in exchange for some lettuce, a few potatoes or some beets, Sometimes Mom had to sleep over night in a farmer's field or barn. Sometimes, I would accompany her on these trips on the back of her bike.

Dad couldn't help too much with these food hunts as he had to stay out of sight as able bodied Dutch men were supposed to be in the German work camps doing "great" things like making ammunition and bombs for the Nazi regime. In fact, Nazi soldiers would at times search houses at night looking for men. My Mom was clever! She would take a vacuum cleaner (Yes! They had been

invented back then), turn it on and plug it in the electrical socket. Since the electricity had been shut off, it made no sound but if the vacuum cleaner (silent without power) suddenly made noise, my Dad would go hide under the house in a crawl space as power to the vacuum cleaner meant the lights would work and the soldiers were coming to inspect the house.

My Dad did do two stints in the war camps...one at the start since he was with the Dutch air force and was captured within days of the German invasion. He escaped after a few months of water and moulded bread, else I would not be here today. He was recaptured towards the end while cutting down a small tree in a park for fire wood.

We emigrated to Canada in 1951 and then both Mom and Dad had to work, concurrently, at low paying, often below minimum wage jobs, to keep food on the table and a roof over our head, a place that for the first three years was a rat, mice, bed bug, cock roach and in the summer, a fly infested place, with multiple beer parlours on our block. The amount of DDT (a serious carcinogenic pesticide banned in many places) I was exposed to in those years (1951-1954) defies science in that, today, I am healthier than many of my senior peers and also many 20 to 40 years younger.

My early beginning not only left me with a degree of Post Traumatic Stress in my subconscious but also gave me a lot to think about with a quest to find solutions. I have discovered that being "right" is a hollow victory but for finding my own personal truth.

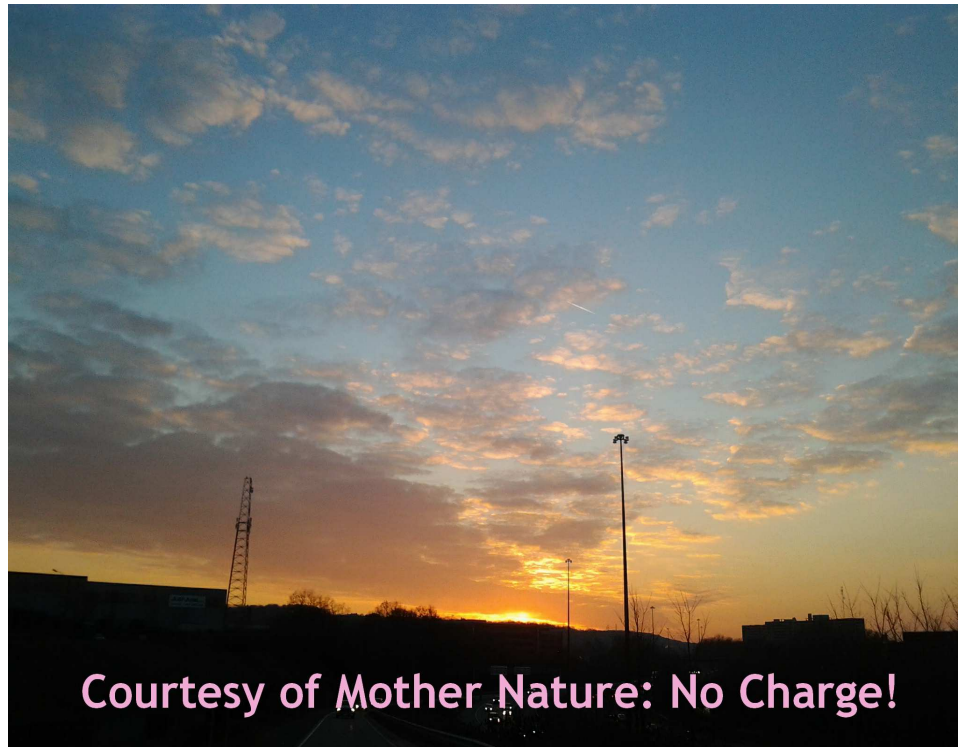




GIVING...IS IT POSSIBLE? (#22)

- A Gift is not a gift if it has strings attached! It's a manipulation!
- Giving out of pity is not a help! It degrades the spirit of both parties!
- Giving out of guilt is for giver's benefit, not the recipient's!
- Giving in response to a need with the intent to dismiss thinking about the reason(s) the need is there, perpetuates the need.

All other transactions between us are NEGOTIATIONS (most implicit and some explicit), not gifts. Let us make those transactions WIN WIN so that we can ALL be winners. Otherwise, eventually down the road, we ALL lose!



CAN WE ALL BECOME WINNERS? (#23)

That I have had to survive war, hunger, rape(s), abuse (some physical but mostly verbal) and field so many con jobs I lost count is matter of intense anger management, processing my own wounds and then crying buckets of cathartic tears as I would like so much better for humanity. But "better" I cannot give as one individual. That needs to be collective endeavour.

By nature, I am not fond of games, preferring puzzles. Playing the game of life, I hate. As I mature, my focus is becoming more and more on problem solving under the banner of win win negotiations. To me, this means finding solutions to 80% or better in terms of satisfying our needs, first the physical and then the esoteric. To grease the wheels of life, a little bit of want is alright but always last in priority and yet I falter even in my own philosophy of life.

Is it possible for us to focus on ensuring everyone has their basic needs met as our first priority in all that we do? How about our esoteric needs which only the individual can determine for his or her own self, needs that are invisible to the naked eye, needs such as acceptance and acknowledgement. Can we learn to suppress our wants that can never be satisfied to the bottom of a common priority list? Can we do all this for 99.999999% of humanity and make such a lifestyle a common goal?

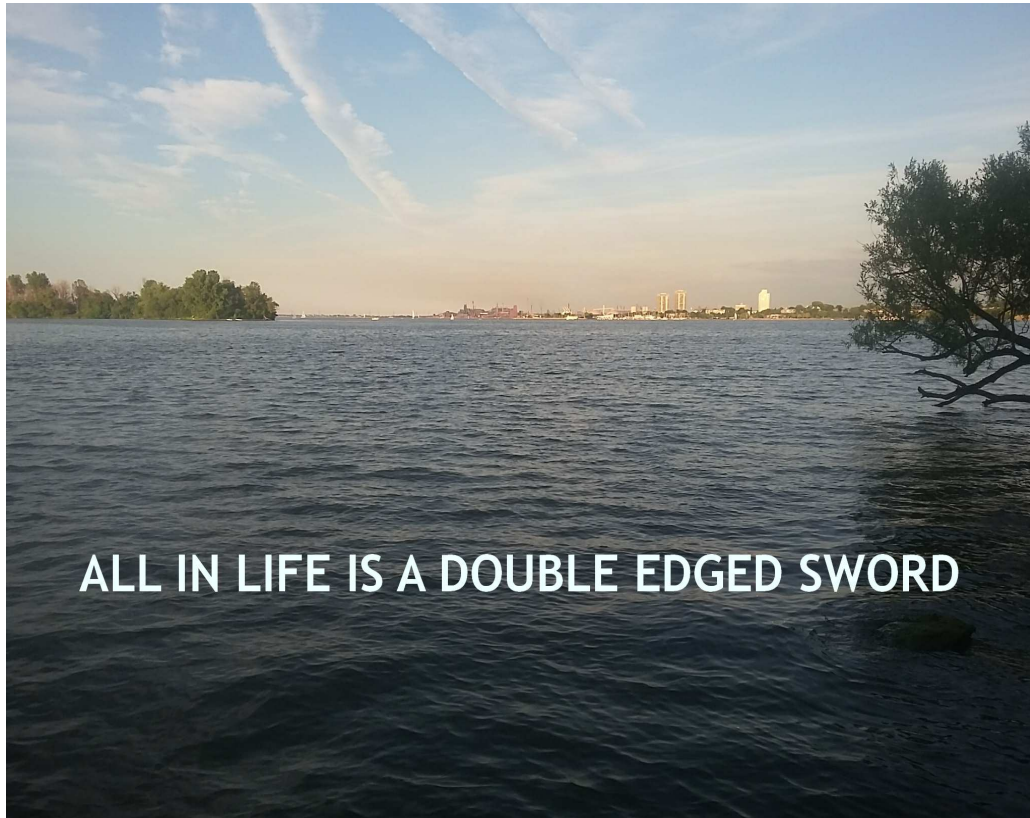
And then there is this battle of "right" fighting about almost everything including on whether or not there is an after life, a complete waste of time and resources as far as I am concerned. I do think about what may follow, rejecting the notion of both Heaven and Hell. I imagine we will quickly get bored with eternal bliss and start another ruckus just to feel something. Hell sounds like a horrid place that I want no one to go to. How about this theory? Is life on earth the filter to separate the grain from the chaff? Since both are necessary for life to continue, I think going HOME is a much better idea....a place where we can be comfortable within our own essence, a place where we create an environment to develop into our own best self and support others in the same journey, long enough and well enough, so that we grow in the positiveness of spirit, the only journey I feel can have no limit. All else does.

Under such an umbrella, can we stop the idea that we can build democracy with a "government" in power and an "opposition" to keep government in check, Instead, we could be blenders of good ideas. However, for such an idealized process to evolve, I suspect we will need thousands of years.

The wrinkle is we have about three to four years to lay a better foundation to solve our human issues as, on the one hand, we appear to be heading towards a collective nervous breakdown, based on the fact I feel the need to help my bank tellers do some deep breathing exercises and other zen techniques such as recommending Epsom salt baths. Mass suicide is on the horizon, based on the prediction that 97% of the world's scientist say so if we do not address Climate Change. Let us not despair! With enough hands and some exponential growth and awareness, "paddling" in the same direction, we can get through the current impasse. Our young can then carry us the rest of the way towards HOME.

I will now contradict myself regarding games. I will play games with children as that is their currency, a way to communicate with young minds and hearts. I will

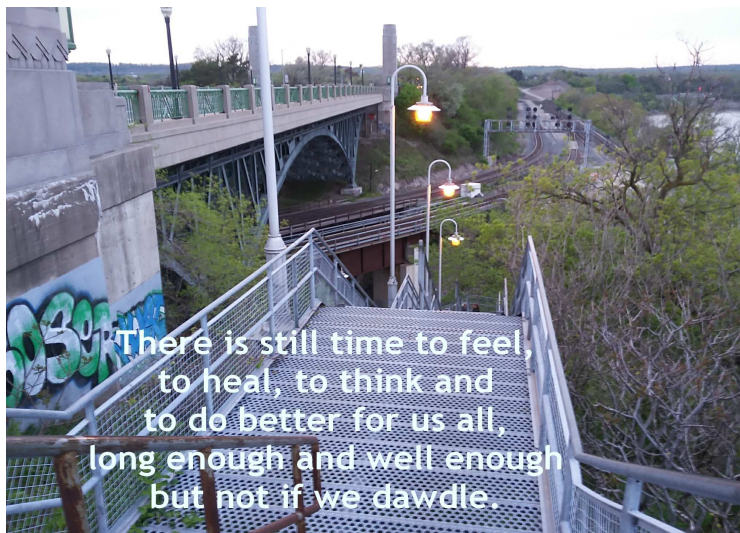
also play games with my own self to fight the evil within me all the while knowing I could lose access to my own mind, at any moment, without realizing this was happening to me. My many spiral towards likely death, mostly from psychosis and once from loss of kidney function felt normal and natural as it was happening.



A WHITE SPORTS CAR WITH RED BUCKET SEATS (#24)

The year was 1966. A male friend of one of my siblings asked me if I wanted to go out, sometime. Since he was a friend of one of my siblings, no alarm bells went off of so I said: "Sure." The day arrived. The fellow came to my workplace to meet me at closing time. After work, he and I walked over to where his car was parked. I got into the passenger side; he in the driver's. No alarm bells yet. It was broad daylight still, and he was after all "not a stranger". I was looking forward to a pleasant evening. We are sitting in the car and I am looking at a squirrel climbing up a tree. And we are still sitting. Hmmm. A bus goes by. And we are still sitting. Another bus goes by. Yep! We are still sitting. I watch some lazy clouds go by in the sky. You guessed it! We are still sitting. Finally, the fellow pipes up and says: "Well, what do you think?" I gave him one of my faces when I am completely perplexed. I say: "About what?" He said in an annoyed tone: "About the car?" "Oh!" I replied: "Does it move?" Apparently that is the wrong thing to say about a brand new white sports car with red bucket seats!

Needless to say the evening went seriously downhill from that point on. I did manage to obtain a glass of water and a carrot stick that evening (another story) but overall the event was a genuine waste of time. Thankfully, I never saw the fellow again since he was behaving like a typical societal jerk and the evening could have been a lot worse.



SEX, SIN AND WHY I WEEP FOR THE CHILDREN (#25)

Words! Their Complexity and their Shallowness! I have seen atheists behave no differently than the religious zealots. They tell me I am wrong. They tell me I must convert to their way of thinking. They say hateful things about people that think differently. They want me to support their secular causes (which translates into delving into my pocket book at some point). How is this different from the preachers who want me to buy them a jet? Or do worse?

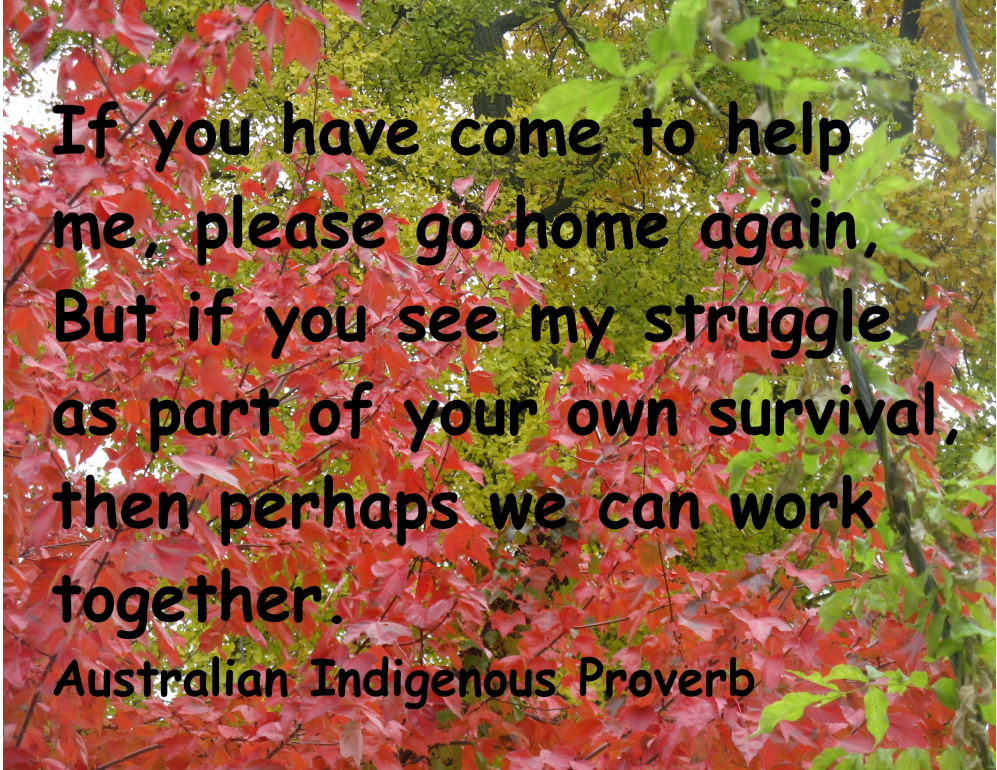
I know Atheists that are more Christian than some "Christians". I know Muslims that are more Atheist than some "Atheists". I know Christians that are more Jewish than some "Jews". And I know Jews who are more Muslim than some "Muslims". The little I know of "Eastern" religious thought, I, too, find double edged. My conclusion: It is not what comes out of one's mouth and it is not what rituals and traditions that a person performs that determines virtue but it is the content of our character and what we do with our words, rituals, and traditions.

As for sex being a sin, I do not think so. Is sex problematic? Often! Had I known better when young, I would have made far fewer mistakes thinking a legal piece of paper could bring happiness. I would not have fallen for so many fish tales, falsehoods and rationalizations. I would have a lot more money in the bank! I would have led a quieter life with less heartache and tears but would I have learned as much? If sex is a sin, were we not then set up for failure from the get go? I DID NOT INVENT SEX! If I had, life would be very different and sex would have about the same appeal as doing the dishes. I have discovered that under certain circumstances the hormones running through our bodies can overpower anyone to such an extent that all logic, reason, self control and what have you, goes right out the window. In medical circles, we call this an obsessive compulsive disorder. I prefer my term: **a cosmic setup!**

All this does not excuse behaviours from the outrageously horrid to the seriously annoying, such as paedophilia, rape, sexual assault, marrying to gain immigration papers or winning me over with box of chocolates while lying to me at the same time. We humans, all too often, label sex as a sin so that we feel shame, guilt. We can point fingers of blame and claim moral superiority! We avoid talking about sex in an honest, open, intelligent, mature way. We form a double standard where the male is seen as a hero with each "conquest" while a women is put in a mental (and sometimes a physical) chastity belt. Yet today, many women have turned the tables and are now on prowl. We throw imaginary

stones (though in some cultures the stone are literal) at each other when we "slip up". In the 1960s when the "Western" sexual revolution came along, suddenly we could "do it", hanging up side down, drunk, stoned and whatever, swinging from the chandeliers with no regard for any consequences. Today we have "rent a womb" programs that allow "the haves" to take advantage of the "have nots", designer baby programs and anonymous sperm/egg donors. Let us not forget our ever loving "marketing machine" that uses sex to make money, particularly for the people who need the money the least.

No wonder humanity is, pardon the expression, "screwed up". I am not anyone's judge and I do not know any person's esoteric needs. Some of our off spring do cope well regardless of how they come to earth. Others pay a heavy price. That said, I weep most for the children who today face a very troublesome future as they do not ask to be born to help us adults clean up our mess!



**If you have come to help
me, please go home again,
But if you see my struggle
as part of your own survival,
then perhaps we can work
together.**

Australian Indigenous Proverb

FULLNESS AND NOTHINGNESS (#26)

When one reaches complete fulfillment with absolute peace, contentment and serenity, there is nothing more to want, there is nothing more to need, there is nothing more to fear, there is nothing more to cry over and there is nothing more to laugh over, nothing more to learn and nothing more to do, nothing to feel sad over, nothing to rejoice in. There is simply an absence of all that we experience and know, reaching that perfect stage of simply being and can let everything go and join the void of nothingness which is complete fullness. Another paradox of life! However, EMPTINESS is not the same as NOTHINGNESS! One has longing; the other doesn't!



THE HORIZONTAL VERSUS THE VERTICAL (#27)

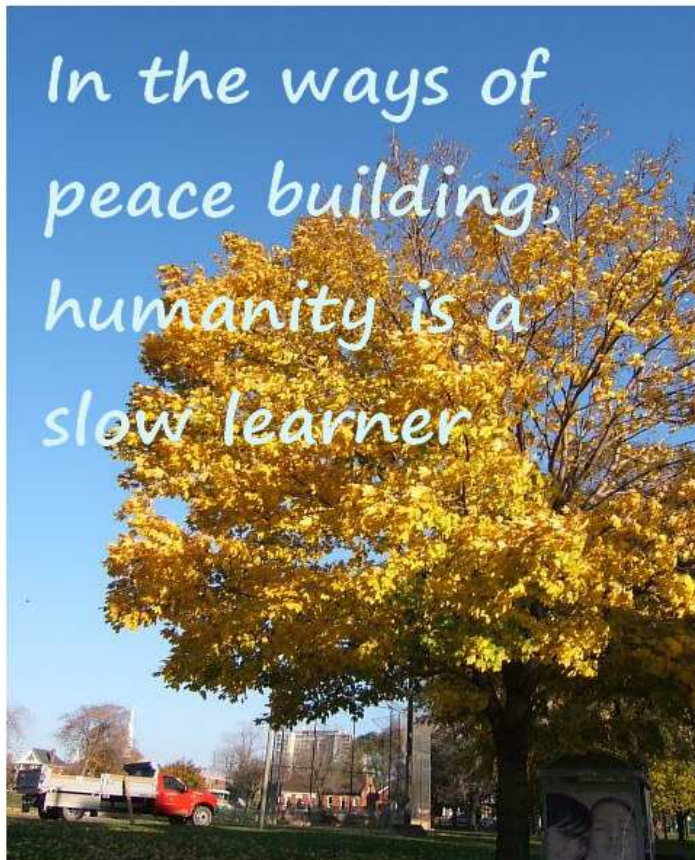
In the age of specialization, many are learning more and more focused on less and less. Eventually, each field of study will narrow to almost nothing. A few of us, are not inclined to be a specialists but are generalists, people who are needed to ensure the specialists work together towards a common goal. Wishing we had more generalists, I know I am one as I would not only get bored studying an ever shrinking field of vision but I would also feel I would be missing out on the bigger picture.

With a working mind on Einstein's level, artistic talent akin to a Picasso, with wild mood swings to boot, no supportive wife(s), in a body that does not represent me, I can definitely say, my three quarters of a century on earth has not been boring. "Fun"? No! "Colourful"? Yes! Hard work? Absolutely! Since BiPolar itself is invisible and inaudible, I had to consciously strive to present "normal" behaviour in whatever society I found myself in, continually reconciling extremes people can not see nor hear. Because this inner work to appear "normal" is invisible and inaudible, I never had the burden of people's pity. That is huge up side! The down side is I felt under 24 hour, 7 days a week surveillance, wondering if others would rush me to hospital because my behaviour was off from my normal pattern, something that can occur in under a day or take as long as a month without me knowing. That too has an up side as, today, I am well prepared to navigate modern times when we are all being data mined, watched by cameras the minute we step outside of our house and more and more inside as well.

Failing kidneys, a result from taking a mood stabilizer for almost four decades, is similar in nature. There will be no direct visible symptoms until I am about to croak. Though we do have medical tests that can determine the degree of kidney function, they are crude and are not available on demand except to those who can afford to pay. I look healthy and vibrant to the outside world making it difficult for conventional medical practitioners, in a rush, to take me seriously. Once my kidneys can no longer clean my blood, toxicity will build up poisoning my body and my brain will begin to shut down resulting first in mania, then a coma followed by death. My body will also likely begin to develop a strange odour. Towards the end, I can choose dialysis to extend my life and not reach into my personal finances, unless my Canadian health care system decides otherwise. A kidney transplant would be another option, but not for me. If a compatible one

were to be found, it belongs to a younger person with children. Not to an old lady with four cats. My life has already been full of challenges. I know I have done my best everyday. My conscience is clear. Hence I have nothing to fear from death as long as I do not rush the process.

Why not Dialysis? I may very well face that option soon. I am already weighing that decision carefully and frankly. I do not have a good answer other than I am doing my best to avoid further kidney decline. Canada's health care system is already cash strapped. Our world, in terms of health and well being, is way out of balance. Once again we have unnecessary famine in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. I cry my cathartic tears yet again. I still have about 35% kidney function remaining. Let us hope that is enough for me to finish my role here on earth with an open mind, a caring heart and the best guidance system in the core of my being (my gut) I could ask for as I knock evil behaviour on its nose every time it comes sniffing around trying to knock me out of the saddle (so to speak).



**THREE PANHANDLERS, A MEXICAN GRINGO*,
ENERGY THAT MATTERS (#28)**

From various studies I have read, 25% of people who have been diagnosed with BiPolar, successfully commit suicide, another 50% make at least one attempt. Despite a very compulsive desire to drive a sword through my middle for more than half a century, smoking cigarettes for four years from 1966 to 1971 and doing my fair share of binge eating is as close as I came to actually killing myself. I would call my actual attempts at killing me, a very passive aggressive attempt and in my mind, that makes me a miracle but not of the 'wow' kind. The price? Social Isolation.

Few can keep up with me in terms of internal changes I make to grow in spiritual health, have access to my own mind and survive. People find me useful, generous and helpful some to the point that some envy my many talents. I truly like to help others and do! I appreciate the many "thank yous" I get and the occasional merit pin though some feel more like a bribe to hang on to me than a genuine desire to partner with me in doing good. Spiritually Draining! Now the stories:

I know three panhandlers in my neighbourhood who I talk to and listen to their story....all three are men.....all three have been injured in spirit...I doubt they were princes when younger...all three are making their way back as life still lives within them. I can see it in their eyes. Sitting down with them on a stoop, or dancing with them in front of a coffee shop on a cold wintry night or hugging them on a deserted train station at 1AM, after listening to their story, can boost me positively boost in spirit more than anything else I do. Of concern, in contrast, a trip to my local health food store, bank or mall in broad day light, tends to do the opposite.

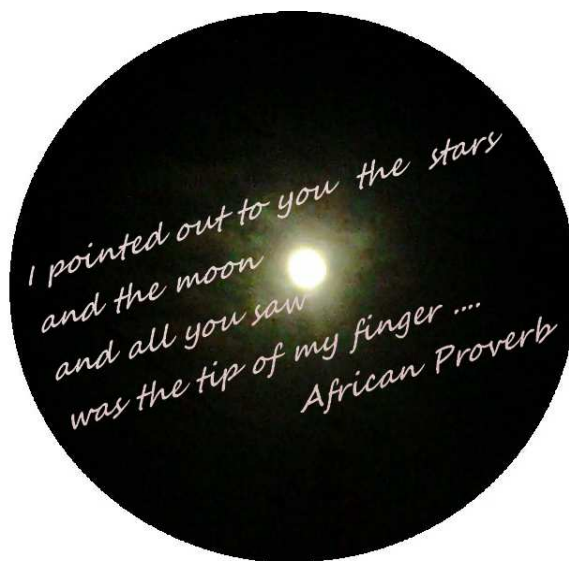
Damaging each other in spirit is not a new story. In the early 1970s, I was sent to a computing conference in Tuscon, Arizona, U.S.A. There is a small town in Mexico about two and half hour drive from Tuscon. It existed because tourists, like me, would drive down, shop and get a Mexican stamp in our passport to brag that we had been in Mexico, once home. The day after the conference closed, I joined a few conference delegates for a drive to this town. Once we crossed the border, I was greeted with a thriving market place of Artisan goods. Not quite my cup of tea, so I sat myself down on the edge of a sidewalk in a quiet corner of the market place. Within a minute or so, a gringo(*) came and sat beside me. We

chatted a bit though I knew no Spanish but a few words and he no English but a few words. After a while, I was getting hungry and reached in my bag for sustenance. The gringo pulled out a big knife. Yet I was not afraid. I found an apple in my purse and we shared it. This was a moment in time of togetherness that I will not forget as it warms my heart and gives me spiritual energy. Someone called from the conference delegation that we were leaving in 10 minutes. A good hour had passed sitting on the stoop with my Gringo(*) friend, not saying much but just enjoying our company and the quietness in a busy market place. I said my goodbyes, I quickly bought two nice gifts: one for my Dad (an onyx chess set) and one for my Mom (a brass wall hanging) and I returned back to Tucson. Two days later I flew home as I had to stay until the weekend to get the discount on my flight.

Life is process of feeding what we each need: first the physical just to stay breathing, then mental to keep our processing unit, the brain, in good repair but also in spirit to deal with our emotions and relationships. Each need be to recognized and fed in an appropriate manner. But how do we do this and what is appropriate? For myself, I need to keep my spiritual energy from depleting completely. I suspect when my spiritual energy reaches zero, I will no longer be living on earth. I will be dead and no more.

* Please NOTE!

I made a common mistake, when I first came up with this title. GRINGO is a term for a "white" foreigner. That makes me the gringo. There is a similar word that starts with "G", and is Yiddish for gentile, which I am. Yet somehow, these words are often used, in a derogatory way to describe a "common" person born in Mexico or anyone of the Jewish faith and/or genetic lineage. And then we have the "N" word that, today, we are still struggling with, making a "BLACK LIVES MATTER" movement, necessary.



WHERE THERE IS UNDERSTANDING, THERE IS LOVE (#29)

Sadly, life today is a lot like comparing apples and oranges so that we get snakes and ladders. Generally, under those circumstances, the snakes win and we tire ourselves,

- climbing over and on top one another,
- hurting ourselves when we fall down or hit another when we slide off,
- on our way up or down some mythical ladder of success

Thereby, we stay on our continuing negative vortex, spinning faster and faster until we run out of energy. Then the universe gets to decide what to do with us. We certainly will not make that final decision!

Today everywhere, we are under surveillance....in the bank, in the store, in our house, on the street, at the ATM, by drones, satellites and google eyes. Every keystroke, web link and image we share is being recorded, while the *Global Positioning System* (GPS) follows us. To save time, we allow ourselves to be micro chipped and volunteer our finger prints to the net to save a few seconds, not thinking about the long term social consequences nor the effect of the stress on our psychological and bodily health. Yet, people do not see me nor hear me well, making hiding in plain sight relatively easy. Sadly, here in North America, we are that disconnected from one another. I see and have seen this every day in my life that went from lonely, to alone and today solo, with solo being the much better deal.

*Only from the heart,
can you touch the Sky.
.... by Rumi*



***From
the trees
& the sky,
From the ground
beneath our feet,
Let us give each other &
the world a group hug!***

THE CAST WAS SET EARLY! (#30)

My mother knew me to be a truthful person, as I would blush when I told her a lie, so I had little choice but not to. She and I had a contentious relationship from day 1 as I would often not readily eat when we did have food. Once a spoonful of food did enter my mouth, I would spray the wall paper with it. When put down in my crib, I would stare for hours into the space above instead of sleep. I was an early talker and I drove both my parents crazy with questions as to *waarom* (why), including about the rockets overhead that Germany and England were shooting at each other. Some would fall short and hit our neighbourhood since Holland lay between the two warring nations. I have no recollection of any of this but I was told repeatedly, over my lifetime, by my mother, what a brat I was, a most difficult child and she would lose control and wack me across the head and my face.



My mother was 20 when I was born, already coping with her own disillusionment about life, from a broken home, playing second fiddle to a younger brother, a husband with the gift of gab but little follow through (a dreamer, not a doer), just coming out of the world's 1930s economic depression and Nazi occupation. The last thing any one needs under these circumstances is a colicky baby. Nevertheless, my Mom did her best knitting, sewing, crocheting pretty clothes for me out of whatever material she could find or reuse, keeping Dad and me alive. In war time, the underground economy, the "black" market, the illicit one that is not government approved, begins to thrive. Those who have get richer by using price gouging to sell "luxury" items such as a pound of sugar for hundred of dollars. Those who do not have begin to barter and sell off anything of value, all too often well below "market" value. We were lucky in that there was not a lot of looting on my block. My mother, the problem solver, convinced her in laws, with whom we were living, to rent out the window space at the front of the house to, not only display their custom tailoring business which was both my Grandfather's and father's trade, but to also let others display items they were willing to part with. My Mother took a commission on all items sold to supplement our rations. Today, I find this an all too familiar human behavioural pattern of what I can best describe as "power mongering".

WILL WORLD WAR 3 BEGIN BECAUSE I LIKE ARUGULA? (#31)

Before we all lose our cool fighting over whether arugula tastes better than spinach, how to make our clothes whiter than white (or our teeth for that matter) or which "God" is the right one, can we please step back, take a few deep breaths and have a good look at ourselves. We are a species at war with our own selves and we have been for a very long time.

The trek out of Western Europe that started some 600 or so years ago, has evolved into our current system of national borders and immigration laws (visa wars) to segregate the "haves" from the "have nots", separating families and community ties in the process. The "rich" generally go where they want while us working stiffs stay home. If a person is fortunate, like me, it is not such a bad deal, living in the second largest country in the world, overall meagerly populated and with great variety in both natural beauty and cultures. Canada is also technologically advanced, with pretty decent safety nets, at least for now, though much of our native population is still being excluded.

Other people in our global village are confined to nation states with much higher population densities, many in conflict, with a lot of extreme poverty, including famine. Worse, some of us who live in the "richer" regions have a tendency to stir the pot of discontent, with one segment trying to help and another larger, more influential segment taking. The help we are able to give is a drop in the bucket of what is needed and for every dollar we spend on help, several more come back to us in what we take. Such inequity and way of doing business cannot have a happy ending.

What else did Western Europe give us? Ah yes! RACISM (the most severe tribalistic caste system ever!). We, often dubbed "the blancs", did so through mass genocide, colonization, and the Atlantic Slave Trade, not all of us of course but "the many" led by our own ruling classes. In essence, our world has adopted a way of life based on WHITE SUPREMACY from which we have not yet recovered nor properly addressed! Does this mean that the rest of the world, whose peoples have more pigment in the skin than I, a "paleface", were all living in some state of sublime bliss? I doubt it! They too had their issues but would those cultures have brought us to today's edge of extinction? We will never know.

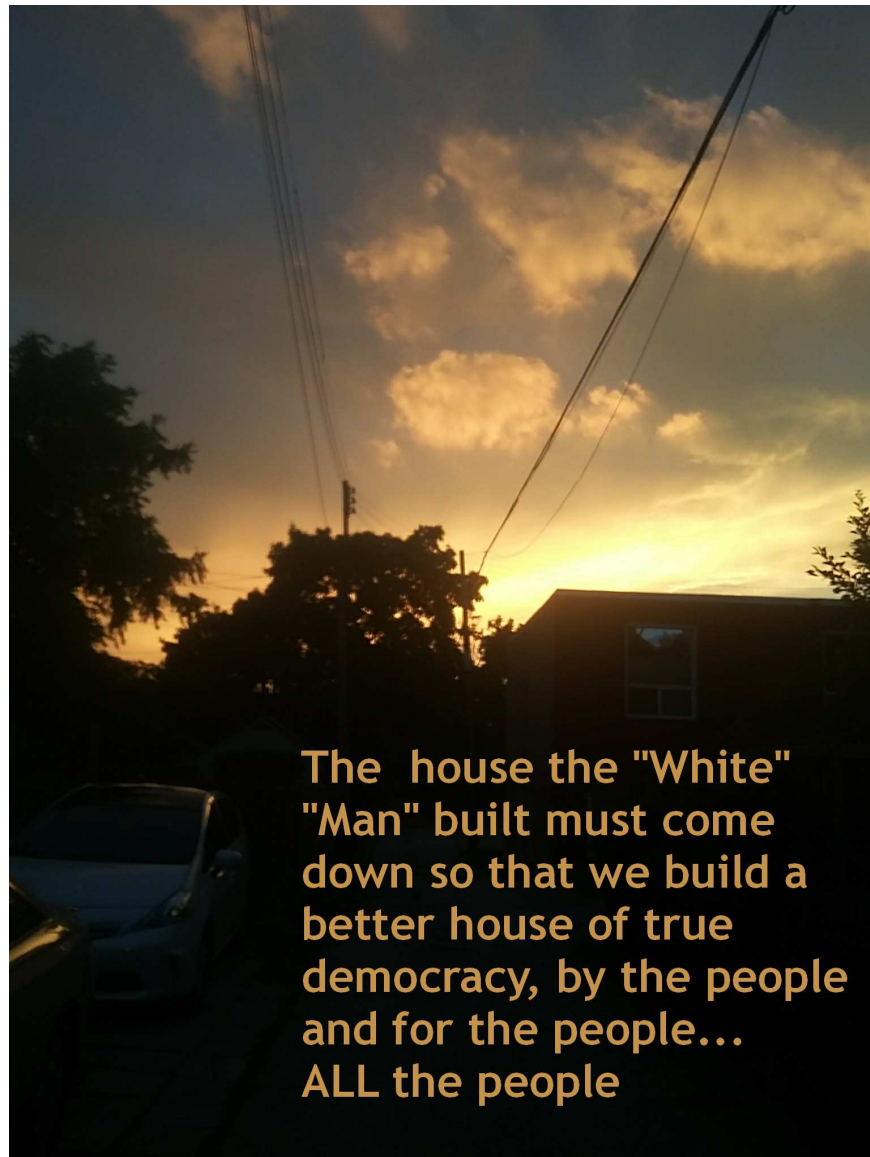
Having lived in Southern Ontario since 1951, racism may not be as blatant as is the case in the U.S.A. but it exists to this very day, less than in 1951 but still evident. Granted, having rotten tomatoes and racial slurs thrown at a body may be easier to cope with than dodging bullets and bombs but the constant daily reminder of being different can get weary and draining. Me? I no longer stand out the way I did when I first arrived. Coming from continental Europe when my city was more Victorian than British Queen Victoria herself, my mannerism and larger than average bone structure alone was cause for ridicule and bullying. Today, however, I blend in with the woodwork quite nicely. Yet what sticks in my belly are those early years that made me feel I did not fit.

To add to humanity's dilemma, we now have a digitized version of exchanges in all our transactions, with an economic system akin to playing the slots at a race track, enough fire power to destroy not only earth but destroy the entire solar system as we know it to be, with both greed, envy and fear feeding the beast of us behaving like cannibals sucking the very life out of each other (Wetico) and managing the earth in an unsustainable manner.

What to do? To hate another human would mean I hate myself also. In Christianity, I was taught to "Love the sinner [the person] but not the sin [behaviour]". Islam teaches me to be mindful, on a daily basis, to count my blessings and help others when their need is greater than my wants. Judaism teaches me the importance of respecting one another. Buddhism emphasizes the need to find balance between the "this" and "that" in all that I feel, think and do. Atheism reminds me to question and think critically. For me, this translates into learning AGAPE (unconditional love for one another, from the Greek word, agápē a Greco-Christian term referring to love, "the highest form of love, charity" and "the love of God for man and of man for God"), always examining the basic difference between LOVE and LIKE so that we do a better job of combating hateful behaviour, within our own selves and stand up to it in others. Some distinguish between "philia", brotherly love, as it embraces a universal, unconditional love that transcends and persists regardless of circumstance and agape . I do not.

Is true love not what we each need to do? The doing of the hard work of building bridges of understanding under an umbrella of empathy so that we blend the best of us into a mosaic that works together instead of cancelling our good efforts. Is that not a job of small steps: owning up, crying cathartic tears, apologizing for

past wrongs, making amends and then getting to forgiveness and reconciliation?
Maybe even a world group hug.



TODAY I HAVE DECIDED TO HATE HATE! (#32)

HATE!: To hate another whom I have never met because of the propaganda and biases I was told, be that by my own parents, my teachers, my religious leaders, my political leaders, my news/entertainment pundits and/or my peers is the height of human stupidity and human insanity, as far as I am concerned.

FEAR: I refuse to be afraid of an idea and I refuse to be afraid of a scarf. It is my job to face my own fears and keep them in perspective with reality around me not what others tell me to fear.

PERSPECTIVES: Is it possible to blend 7.6 billion view points (or there about) on life and become a harmonious mosaic, each one being our own best self? If not, what are our obstacles???

ARE WE ENTITLED TO LIFE? I say no! The universe makes those decisions unless we choose to hasten our own demise or that of another. Let us face our world of ever changing "facts". Since paying taxes by all is no longer guaranteed as it once was "touted" to be here in the "West", to wish another person dead is the one and only wish we will be granted for sure. Just wait long enough.

BIPOLAR IS A SPECTRUM: Once I found my inner healing, the "me, myself and I" are fine. When alone in isolation of world events, I have no mood swings, no issues to address other than boredom. In the grand scheme of things, life makes total sense to me and I long to go there. It is what is in between, I have trouble with as life here on earth, with humanity, makes no sense and feels wrong.

BE LIKE A BEE: Help pollinate this world with love by embracing empathy, understanding and responsibility. Also save the bees and our food supply at the same time.



DEAR “WHITE” PEOPLE, PLEASE! CAN WE TRY A LITTLE HARDER?
(#33)

Please stop asking me the reasons I hang around with so many “blacks”. This should not even be a question. Are we not all human? That I see colour in humanity is something I am very angry about. This notion came from people closest to me in lineage and I hate being so conscious about skin tone. All lives should matter equally but we are not even close to that goal. We need a long, deep, open, honest BLACK LIVES MATTERS discussion and “white” people, please get involved. As for BROWN LIVES, I was not aware they were not “white” until recently. The same goes for being Arab. So yes! We need that discussion as well. As for finding ways to support our First Nations, in the “new” world conquered by my fellow Caucasians, let us ensure they not only find inner healing, they need to play a leadership role in our affairs as the status quo continues to be a disgrace. Our Asian kin, be they from the far east or closer west, did not fare well either under the Euro empire building. Racism needs to die a permanent death, from the blatant to the very subtle but that can only come after a global truth and reconciliation process.

I ask, when you go abroad to help, please stop saying you are going to show the natives how to live. The natives already know. But we have robbed them of so many resources and given many such a serious dose of self hate in the process, I am no longer sure those we hurt can recover from their own menticide, which amounts to **group** Stockholm Syndrome for artificially created “racial” groupings of very diverse people that are the majority of about 75% of the human species.

When one of my “black” friends comes around to visit, I appreciate you being nice to him or her but please do not saddle them with T-shirts and hand me downs they do not need nor want, out of pity. Stop arguing with me when I say I like black nappy hair and think it to be beautiful so much so, I been known to save some in an envelope for fear one day we no longer have the “black” man and woman to grace the world stage with their intelligence and talent.

Sadly, my foray into “black” life was not an easy one and was almost fatal in that I had very poor knowledge of life itself, groomed well for the victim role regardless of culture, ripe for the pickings by any person who felt the need to take their damage out on me, smitten by the African and yet not at all familiar with their cultural nuances. I am not pleased with a lot of the behaviour I

encountered in the “black” community. Sadly, the preying on the vulnerable by those who have more clout, is not restricted to only the “black” community by “whites”. It exists in all communities and cultures. Power mongering respects no one and nothing.

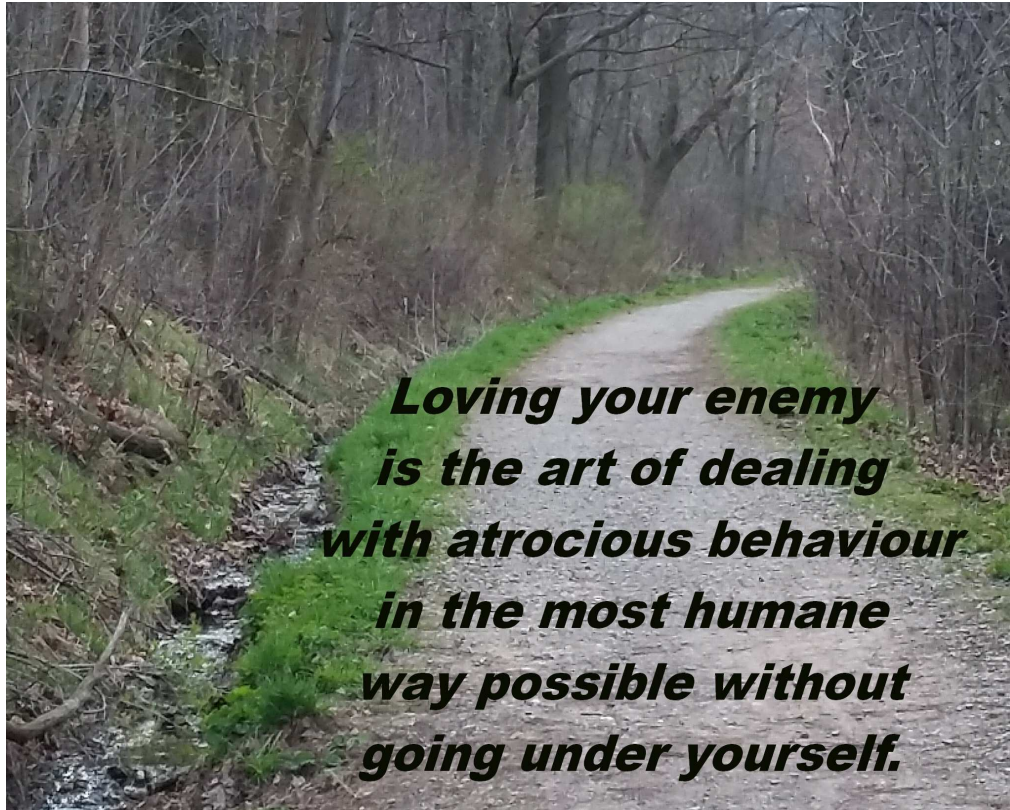
Yet, I was blessed that with a few people of colour I met along the way I was able to get past the racial divide to relate as human to human. Today, I have better self defence tools, tools I developed over the past three to four decades. That helps immensely! That said, realistically, one 76 plus year old lady still cannot fix this mess and yet I feel the weight of so many personal and organizational requests for help (mostly financial) that, in essence, I am beginning to feel more like a corporation than a person.

The good news is that as I learned improved life style management skills, today I am better able to help create an environment to ensure bootstraps are in place for one or two people, bootstraps that we “whites”, on a collective basis, took away. Is this not the process of EMPOWERMENT, where I find ways to stand and then give an assist to another so that we build empowered communities that racism and all our other bigotries damaged? Can we put dignity and respect in aid instead of it being, at best, a Trojan Horse or help that weakens the people we are supposedly helping (enabling)?









I NO LONGER ASK WHY? I ASK WHY NOT? (#34)

There is still time to do better, not for some but for ALL, long enough and well enough but we need to do a better job of defining:

- needs versus wants
- identity versus ego
- empowerment versus power
- nourishment versus addiction

Imagine a world where everyone can make a good living.

Imagine a world where we feel whole inside.

Imagine a world where love reigns.

Imagine a world based on trust.

Humanity is at cross roads. Let us choose better, one person, one step, one breath at a time to learn what true lasting joy is: A life in balance with small swings around the middle, inside our own self, dealing well with the inevitable ups and downs of life since we are all BiPolar, to varying degrees.

We can find a song we all like. We can have a long weekend when we all take a simultaneous time out to celebrate our journey together, at no charge, but for our own efforts with a pot luck picnic and appreciate the best space ship ever: Earth, our beautiful water planet.

Let us not destroy our earthly home to commit mass suicide. I think that is a really bad plan. I weep that we are not yet ready to embrace the joy of a life as a learning journey, not an easy one but a doable one, embracing the three stages in all our endeavours:

- the hello stage,
- the middle muddle stage and
- the goodbye stage,

A thread and a theme that runs throughout all our lives, in all that we undertake, is it not?.