

WE ARE AT CROSS ROADS! IF NOT NOW, NEVER! (#35)

Can we get through this current impasse unscathed? I do not think so but we can get through! There will be major hurdles ahead. Islands will drown but new ones will pop up and I am not referring to the artificially created ones with their air conditioned beaches to be sold as private resorts for those with an addiction to the acquisition of money to show off their supposed exceptionalism, a special kind of injury of spirit. Despite all the fear mongering, doom and gloom stories, we do have the resources and we do have the space! Over the years, we have also developed sufficient knowledge to use our technology for the betterment of all of humanity in balance with our non human kin. What is stopping us from achieving such a goal? Here is a thought: Can we each learn to live a life of daily balance in a coordinated fashion? Act locally but think globally so that we can all move forward towards a common goal: a world with an equitable resource distribution in a sustainable manner thereby making every place a nice place to live, all a little different but all nice, so that Mother Nature can calm down and not be so angry with us, so angry that she is about to take us out for growing like a cancer to our earthly home, the only planet we have in the foreseeable century.

In the age of the Internet and social media, the world may feel small these days, particularly for those who are part of the “first” world, in income level, since the haves can jet set around the globe in a day. Sadly, too many others will spend their entire life confined to a small land corner within a nation, or on an island, not having the means to travel. Worse, some of us have no state to belong to, no identity papers, refugees fleeing both human made and natural disasters or confined in prison, solitaire, hospitals or long term care facilities: some for their own protection, some to protect society from those who are abusive to others and some for challenging the status quo hoping to bring about a more equitable deal for the human group they associate with most. Some of the confined are abused and tortured in unspeakable ways, worse than the behaviour they were accused of, all too often on illicit charges. Others like me are confined for losing access to my own mind.

But our earth has not really shrunk much over the last 600 or so years, or even the last few million or billion of years, not yet anyway. We have only this one moment in time to step up to the plate and do the hard work of making earth a habitat for all of humanity in balance with our animal and vegetable friends on which our very existence depends.

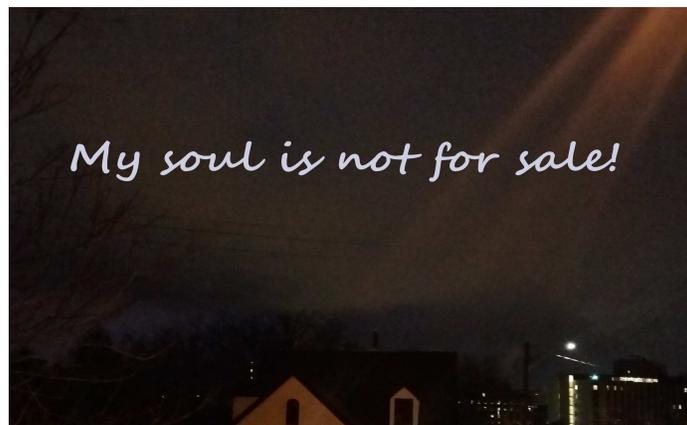
WHAT DOES JUSTICE HAVE TO DO WITH IT? (#36)

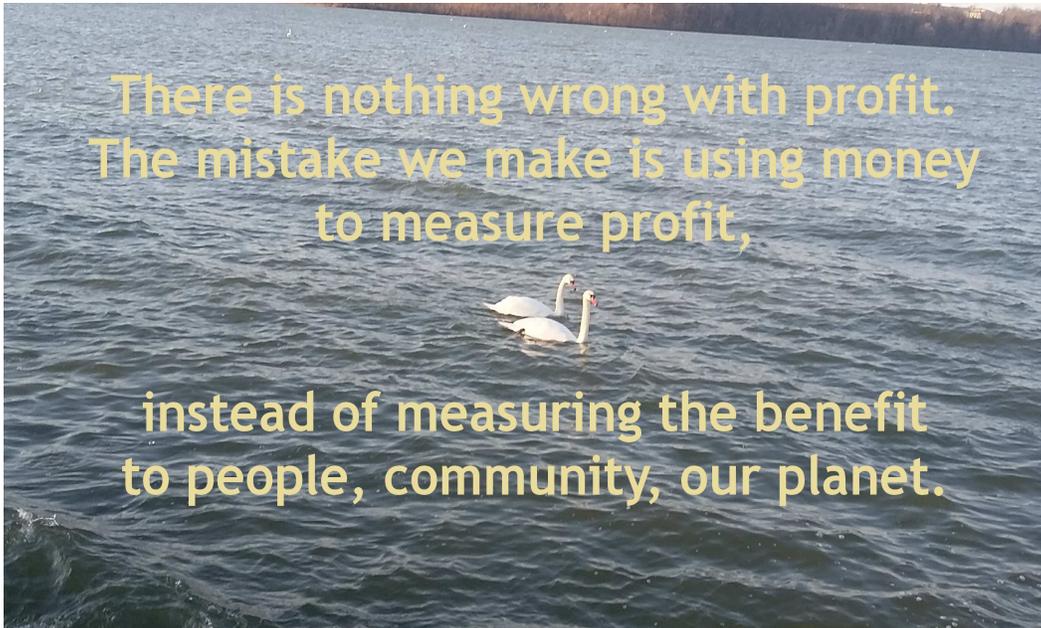
"At what point does punishment fit the crime?". Maybe we need to move away from the notion of "Punishment"? Once a person commits a crime, it cannot be undone and no amount of punishment can "fix" or make up for what has happened. Instead of thinking about punishment, what about looking towards helping the person not commit the "crime" again? Hence the term "Correctional Services"

Another angle to consider is that the definition of a "crime" is relative, dependent on culture and belief systems and changes as societies evolve.

There are people that are a danger to others and that danger needs to be dealt with. However, I do not believe in a "justice" system, since humanity has not yet figured out a common definition for the word nor do I really personally know what justice is. That said, I do believe we need a SELF DEFENCE system with the goal of helping the person "fix" themselves if possible or finding humane ways to isolate them from the rest of us so they cannot harm others when inner change is not possible.

Hence for me, what I seek when a person harms me (such as when I was raped in 1965) is: Tough Love and Consequences with the goal of helping the person NOT repeat the behaviour (correction) or have them live out their days in a humane way but not with the rest of us (self defence of a society). Maybe if we looked at our misdeeds in this way, we could actually evolve into a more equitable world where we deal with actual issues instead of imagined ones.





There is nothing wrong with profit.
The mistake we make is using money
to measure profit,

instead of measuring the benefit
to people, community, our planet.

LET'S MAKE SMOOTHIES! (#37)

Sometimes we need to take a step back and find our own self before we can be part of a larger group with habits, beliefs and customs that are not familiar. Bridge building between people who look at life from different perspectives is HARD, HARD, HARD work. It cannot be done from a position of weakness and discomfort nor can it be done from a position of a closed mind and a desire to hoard everything for one's self: the balance between what I personally need to be strong and what I am willing to forgo and share for the greater good of us ALL.

MY CREATOR MADE ME DIFFERENT (#38)

Yes! I believe in science and evolution. I also feel there is an intelligence to our universe's evolutionary journey of trial and error. I certainly did not make myself. I do, however, feel I inherited a rather unique set of genetics in that roll of the dice with something missing (or added) that is new. Just one tiny bit somewhere in my genome mapping is turned off or on. That would make me a genetic anomaly never to be seen again since I have no offspring.

Soon, I will no longer have to wake up on this side of the divide between life and death and this long, long journey of 76 plus years that feels like 800 will finally be done. I find it sad that the human tribe is unable to fully accept people like me. Others who wanted better for us all, have come before me. Others are still here risking their personal safety, comfort and lives to let us know the issues we humans need to face. Yet, humanity prefers to kill, torture, imprison or find some other way to punish these true heroes, most of whom whose names we do not know.

My creator made me different with a stunning naivety (as opposed to gullibility), missing a filter that others seem to have, with no ability to tell if someone is being truthful. Furthermore, I lacked a stop button to warn me when my body would start to produce chemicals akin to every mood and mind altering drug I have read about as my brain started to race at phenomenal speed to create hallucinations and blackouts (akin to a date rape drug), without realizing this was happening as these events would feel normal.

In mid life (1979) when I was about to self destruct, I began to teach myself self defence tools with the help of psycho therapy: five years of one on one, weekly sessions with a trained therapist, sessions paid for by Canada's public health care system, funding that today is no longer publicly available at even close to this level, in part explaining the current increase in street peddling and homelessness. Back then, I also participated in some group therapy. I picked up two crucial tools: anger management and assertiveness, tools I would never have thought of on my own, to start the long, long journey of inner healing using behavioural modification and cognitive feedback. All the while, I also had to learn early warning signs of impending mental breakdowns since psychosis would continue to set in on a regular basis.

Earlier in 1971, the third time I was hospitalized, I was put on a drug to stabilize my mood swings, thereby giving me a sense of safety not known the previous six years following my first and second "official" breakdowns (1965, 1968). Sadly, adding the mood stabilizer never really did so acting more as a placebo. My highs and lows continued.

In 1980, after examination consisting of ink blots, some multiple choice questions and a couple of interviews by a then prominent psychiatrist, rather than taking a second additional drug on a steady daily basis, I rejected that advice as it made no sense as far as I was concerned and the long term side effect would have been permanent body shakes. Instead, I would use a tranquilizer, the same one that brought me back to this reality in 1965 and 1968 to steady myself when the psychosis became extreme, about once every ten to eighteen months. These bouts would last for two to three weeks, a fascinating yet potentially dangerous experience all by itself. I never felt embarrassed by my condition though there were plenty of embarrassing moments. To cope at work, my managers were part of my support team. All I had to say was: "I need to stop what I am doing, go home and work with my meds as I am going off the rails.". They trusted me and I would head home, start my additional meds, the tranquilizer, until the mind racing began to decline and head back to work to make up lost time. Continuing as if all was normal to the outside world, I would continue increasing my dosage and at some point hit a plateau, stay there for a few days and then start to cut back until I felt it safe to stop taking the tranquilizer in order to prevent a deeper depression from setting in, deeper than the ones I normally plowed through on a regular basis. The whole experience of two to three weeks felt much like piloting a plane up, then sailing in the air and then landing back on earth. During these periods I also felt slightly out of phase with others and the world around me only to come back into phase when the period was over. Please note that I never stopped the mood stabilizer, took it faithfully every day as prescribed until much later, at age 66, when my kidney function began to decline, a side effect of that medication.



Using this technique of taking a tranquilizer only for a few weeks when needed, I managed to stay out of hospital for 32 years (from 1980 to 2012). Thereby, I gave my body the advantage of ingesting minimal external drugs else I doubt I would be as physically healthy, at age 76 plus, that today I am.

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF MY BIPOLAR (#39)

Being BiPolar is a frightening reality of mine that is chronic, requiring what I call acute life style management accepting my limitations. For example, though I feel Rasta, always looking for our common roots, taking in Ganja (marijuana as opposed to hemp) is dangerous for someone like me. Drinking alcoholic beverages is also an activity I avoid, discovering early on I did not like the stuff and never had a desire to get "drunk". I am not all that fond of cars either though I have used a taxi, a ride from friends and public transit from time to time. Mostly I walk a lot to get around. Interestingly, I never cared much for meat which is a more difficult protein for kidneys to clean up from than vegetarian sources. I may never have won a lottery but I was nevertheless a winner in that natural habits of mine, ones I did consistently on a daily basis over the years, helped offset the mild toxicity of almost four decades of taking a mood stabilizer. Today, I am able to discover what a healing brain feels like and up the ante in healthy living to stay on a planet that on so many levels I want to leave. But I know my time is not yet.

Now that I have chronic kidney disease, I look more and more towards a healthy diet to deal with that condition as well as all forms of exercise, stretching, various relaxation techniques and sleep to slow down the decline. This in turn is also helping me deal better with BiPolar. On the surface, both conditions may look like a negative but are they? Today, I see a positive side as I have far less physical pain, on average, than many people my age and can stay quite active.

My choices were and continue to be:

- a healthy life style,
- live inside the halls of mental hospitals (or worse) pumped full of drugs,
- die.

A healthy life style wins hands down.

Yet, there are days I wish I never found my inner healing. I can no longer sit long in the dysfunctional behaviour of others including ones I used to chum with. I too easily recognize dysfunctional behaviour since understanding human behaviour, including organizational behaviour, became part of my self defence tool kit. As I changed my own behaviour of self correction, others did not follow at the same pace and in essence, I began to outgrow my peers and my past. The result is a life of increasing solitude more so these days now that I am drug free (legal and

illegal) and need to be more careful in my interaction with others around me when what I see, overall, is taking us all down a negative path. The trauma of my past is too easily woken up and then I need to once again run for shelter and hug my inner child to calm her down.

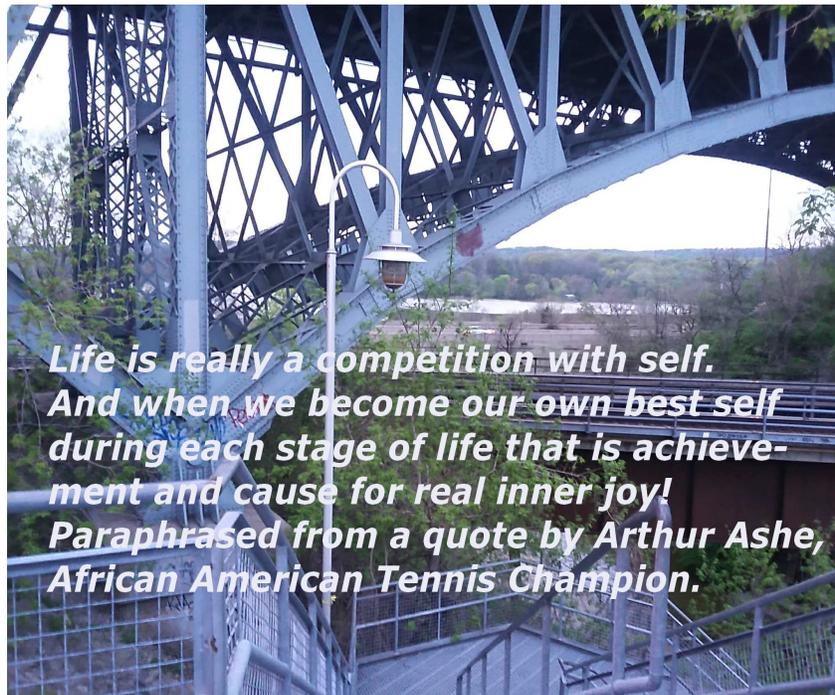
Over my three quarters of a century, I had little choice but to learn to embrace my journey of ups and downs and take life straight on the chin...no denial, no fooling myself too, too long, always looking for utopia and then bringing that hope to present day reality....brutal self honesty until the bitter end. Not exactly "fun" but with funny moments. Not exactly easy but with enough rest stops to recharge my batteries. Not exactly twenty four hour, seven day a week convenience either. But not exactly sitting in sack cloth and ashes. For the most part, I take full advantage of modern day life such as heat in my house when outside temperatures dip below the freezing point of water, a bed to sleep in, the safety of electrical lights. To keep my energy bills in check, however, I do conserve, making adjustments in lifestyle, so that my bills are staying at levels of twenty years ago despite rising prices. At times, when it is reasonable to do so, I turn off a modern day convenience, for a while. This serves as a reminder that to become a slave to technology is unwise and also to appreciate the technology when I stop that exercise in restraint. The added bonus is that I am more prepared for an emergency.

Better still my empathy circuits are fully intact, circuitry that allows me to feel fright when watching a horror movie or tear up inside when I see a tender moment in real life or in fiction. As of late, scientific experiments are emerging that indicate these mirror neurons may be harmed by all the pain killers many are taking. The verdict on this is not yet in but I did see this phenomena develop in my own mother as her life neared its natural end. Based on personal experience as I watch others, I do believe my maker gave me an extra set of these neurons. This too is a double edged blessing. That too translates into: "To whom much is given, much is expected.", since my skill set is both high and wide, allowing me to find a middle road, that of a survivor.

Being in and out of mental health wards, totalling a little over a year when I put all the bits together, has allowed me to see life at a very deep level few ever get a chance to see and cross paths with the most disturbed, broken people in human society, people I call our "broken sparrows" having no wings to fly with: the drunks, the addicted, those with sexual dysfunction, kleptomaniacs, many with

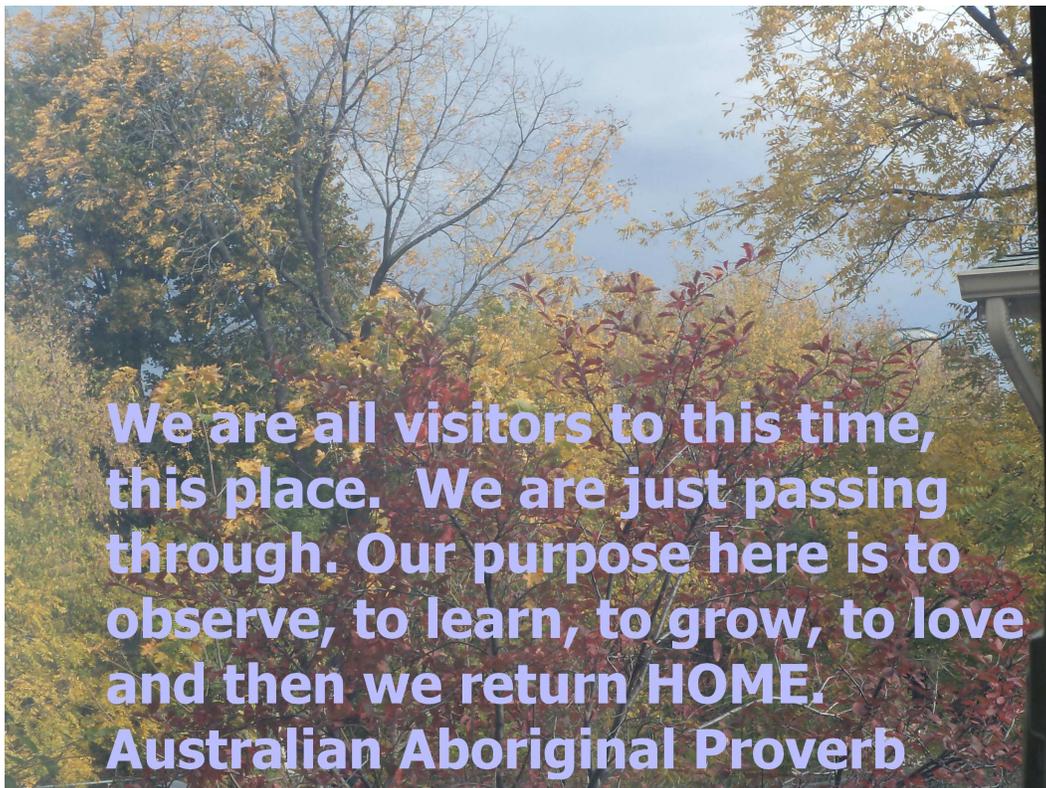
post traumatic stress, the depressed and the oppressed. While incarcerated in these wards, the most broken in humanity are my mates. I would never have had the opportunity to socialize with the “down and out”, otherwise. The end result: when I hear the public outcry against “the criminal” and “the mentally ill”, full of judgment, fear, anger, hate and revenge, I want to shout from the roof tops: **“You do not understand! Stop it!”** as being one (a criminal) is not so different than being the other (a mental patient). Both behaviours boil down to inside spiritual injury from our combined past from which no one has yet fully recovered, be we the perpetrators, or the victims and most likely some of each.

Please note, I do not want those who do harm to others walking free but can we please come up with more humane solutions aimed at self correction. I also want us to stop facilitating the most dangerous of our spiritually injured: the sociopaths, the psychopaths, the ones with a narcissistic personality disorder, to positions of power in government and business. Today, we seem to almost worship these folks looking to them for solutions. How is that going to build a better world for all?



WHAT IS IN A NAME? (#40)

We can choose to fight over what word to use for whoever or whatever got us to this place in time and space. God, Jehovah, Jah, Allah, the Great Spirit, the good human. The name we give "God" is but a word, is it not? Or we can choose to do the hard work of facing ourselves to find healing from our broken past. LOVE is real and it is the only reason we have not yet destroyed each other and our habitat. Is it not time we became better caretakers of the earth and each other?



DUKING IT OUT WITH THE EVIL ONE! (#41)

Few of us would disagree on what our physical needs are: air, water, food and shelter (including clothing). These four allow us to survive. However, the person who lives inside me cannot thrive until I know everyone on earth has the resources to provide these basic needs for self and those around for which the person feels responsible.

But what of esoteric needs that are not visible? For example:

- Acceptance,
- Acknowledgement,
- Companionship,
- Alone Time,
- A Sense of Purpose,
- Self Esteem.

What about the daily needs that are in the middle, sort of visible but not as concrete as our basic physical needs:

- Sleep,
- Recreation,
- Work,
- Exercise (Aerobic, Weights and Resistance),
- Stretching,
- Time Outs.

All are a necessary part of a day with some variation for each of us depending on our makeup, living conditions and age but generally with less variation than we have come to believe. Sadly, the pace of modern day life does not contribute well to a healthy daily life style nor does this perceived need for speed, often referred to as a “rat race”, contribute well to a world with an equitable distribution of our resources, in a sustainable manner, so that we all have the ability to thrive, long enough and well enough.

Then there is our sexuality, sensuality, procreation and dealing with our own date with destiny (death) that we all too often expedite through suicide and murder, the latter being an issue for which we have built a slew of exception clauses. These are serious common ground issues where we seem unable to find

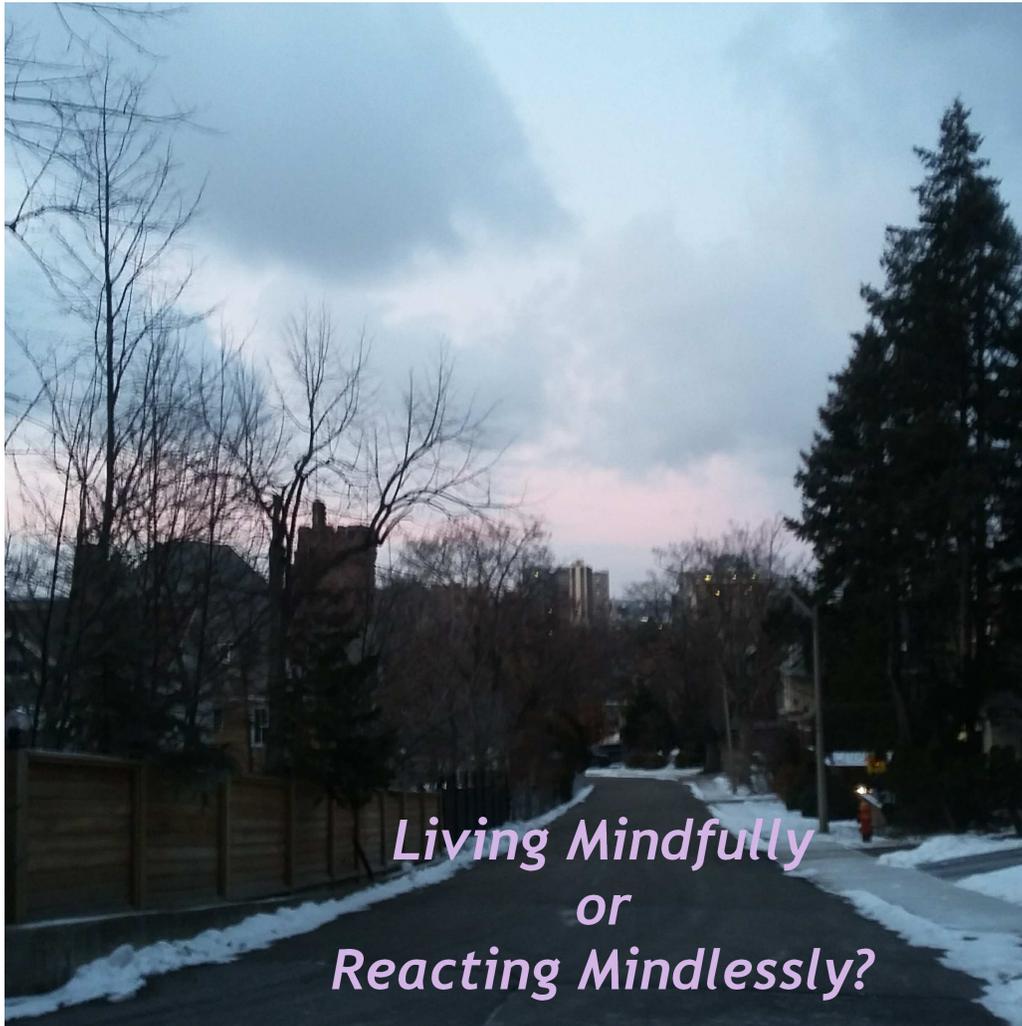
agreement but choose to “right fight” and duke it out, leading to yet more suicide and murders. All this makes no sense to me when the solution is a simple one. Stop “right fighting” (the need to always be right, regardless of reason, truth and facts), set our differences aside long enough to learn to work together and build that “better” world for all, based on fulfilling needs: basic, daily and esoteric with maybe a tiny bit extra to grease the wheels of life. Wants can never be satisfied and will drain us of all goodness and our earth's resources.

Worry not! Fate, Karma, The “God” of LOVE and the EVIL one of all that is not love, our BiPolar Universe if you prefer, can take better care of those who do wrong than any of us. That said, we do, however, need a good self defence system for the clear cut, non grey areas to protect us from the lost and the deranged. We need humane correctional and mental health institutions, each being really just the flip side and mirror image of one another. Is it not time for us to help us deal better with broken people so that some day we actually stop breaking each other?

I FEAR EVIL EVERYDAY, the evil that lives within me, that is! Satan and I duke it out daily so that the day comes, I hope, we can send that S.O.B. into kingdom come and seal the gateway. I will be one of the first to volunteer to stand guard on the loving side of the gateway and to ensure it can never hurt us again.

In our quest for inner peace and thus world peace, how we stand up to evil behaviour and punch that behaviour on its nose, in a figurative sense, becomes a vital issue. A few spiritual knee ups in the groin wouldn't hurt either. Why have we not yet done better in the peace department? Do we allow ourselves to get tripped up in the arena of needs that are not visible: the esoteric and the daily balancing we need to do for a healthy lifestyle? That others have more than I, does not particularly bother nor concern me. However, that many still have less than me concerns me a great deal. How do we fix that one? Is the solution as simple as building a society on what people need instead of want?

**There is a battle of two wolves inside us. One is evil:
It is anger, jealousy, greed, resentment, lies, inferiority, ego.
The other is good: It is joy, peace, love, hope, humility,
kindness, empathy, truth. The one that wins is the one you feed.
Native American Indigenous (Cherokee) Proverb.**



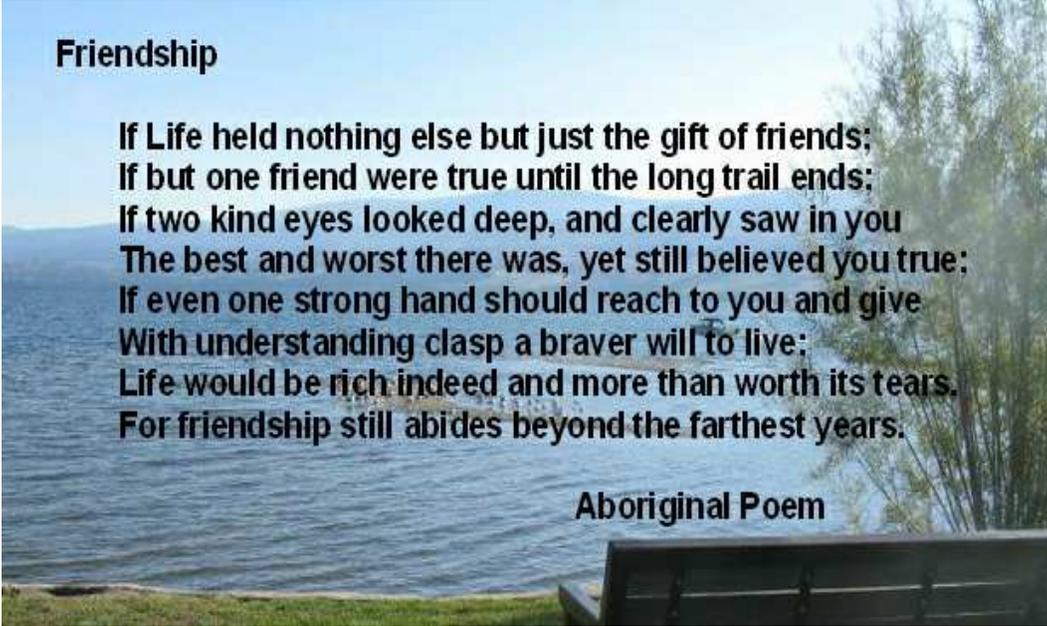
*Living Mindfully
or
Reacting Mindlessly?*

I SHALL NOT JUDGE & PLEASE DO NOT “SHOULD” ON ME! (#42)

Developing that inner discipline I need to keep my myriad of wants in check while focusing on my needs (basic, daily and esoteric as outlined in my previous note, “Duking It Out With The Evil One!”), I have found to be a difficult ongoing battle that is never easy but does get a little easier with practice, as I age. With some exceptions, instead of getting all bent out of shape that others have more than I, I find it easier to assume others are doing their best in life, be that true or not. In this way, I feel less angst when others do things I no longer feel a need to do. Else I may be consumed with jealousy, anger and seeing myself as a greater do “gooder” and therefore more virtuous, also a form of elitism. Each one of us needs to make our own determination as to what the esoteric needs are, while I concentrate on mine. For example:

- People in the public eye do have different life style needs than I who can go through life quite invisible. A person with a manual job has different needs than people with a desk job, the CEO or members of a Board of Directors. That does warrant some difference in compensation and hence the person may need a private sail boat as an esoteric need. But deserve one???? Only “God” and the person who owns the sail boat knows. What I do know is that I do NOT need one nor do I want one.

Having said all this, I also do not feel any need to feed another person's gluttony and addictions for more and more. Over time, I had to learn to recognize the symptoms of gluttony versus need, first within myself before I could better recognize those same symptoms in others. I am not obligated to say: “Yes!” to every sales pitch, be that for a product, a service or a “good” cause that manages to find me. The three assertiveness courses I took in mid life helped me tremendously to learn to say: “No!” to avoid jumping in that pit of too much, by the broken people who have not yet learned that life on earth has constraints and limits. Is life not the choice between learning to be a contented person with inner peace or dying a hungry, fearful death sapping the life of all around be that of the spiritual energy of others, our animal kin or Mother Earth itself?



Friendship

If Life held nothing else but just the gift of friends;
If but one friend were true until the long trail ends;
If two kind eyes looked deep, and clearly saw in you
The best and worst there was, yet still believed you true;
If even one strong hand should reach to you and give
With understanding clasp a braver will to live;
Life would be rich indeed and more than worth its tears.
For friendship still abides beyond the farthest years.

Aboriginal Poem

OWE! THAT HURTS! THE COMPLEXITY OF BEING HUMAN (#43)

Even though I choose not to mask my own pain, this does not mean I enjoy the feeling. If I did I would be a masochist. In order to be a balanced, whole person I need to address my own pain, find ways to deal with it by minimizing the pain as much as possible in the least damaging way. I do this not only for myself but also to not allow my pain to fester, explode and take it out on others. This is an on-going, learning process not easy at any age but as I grow older, I am improving as long as I listen to my internal compass. As in so many things in life, this process requires I identify the root cause, the source of the pain and that differs depending on whether the pain is spiritual, emotional, mental, physical or as is often the case, a combination of these factors.

To complicate matters further, the symptoms of one type of pain can show up as another. Furthermore, not all of the pain presents itself immediately. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, I would say is a good example. Another would be Trigger Points in the body causing, say, shoulder pain but the root cause is a muscle knot elsewhere in the body. Then we have joint mobility issues that result from the normal chaos of life that compound over time to cause arthritis or other health issues. Lactose acid build up resulting in sore muscles after too much strenuous activity that we did not adequately prepare the body for is another example of a delayed pain response. Just to make matters yet more complex, our brains have evolved so that the pain and pleasure centres, so science tells me, are relatively close together and we can get our "wires" (neuron pathways) crossed.

Based on my 1965 rape experience, at knife point, and how I responded to men, sex and sensuality thereafter, I agree with what science tells me. Any man with a similar complexion to my 1965 rapist of very blonde hair and very blue eyes who showed some flirtation in my direction would actually excite me with a very strong urge to abandon principle. Thankfully, I am pretty good with this "mind over matter" process, not perfectly mind you, but pretty good. I found ways to resist that temptation after about 5 to 20 minutes of telling myself to focus on business at hand to meet a work deadline and/or honouring the boundary of not "messing with a man" who has a significant other or others. I was not going to repeat my rape in any way shape or form, including at a subliminal level, and if necessary, I would have found and used my own chastity belt to ensure I behaved.

Another interesting phenomena developed. It was from that moment on that I went "black" and never went back but the reason has nothing to do with a

common stereotype that the “black” man is somehow innately better in the sex department than the “white” man. That bit of nonsense came out of the days of the Post Atlantic Slave Trade with the advent of “white” supremacy in the deep U.S.A. South and global colonization by Western Europe. From that fateful day in 1965, an event I considered to be clear cut rape, the men I worked with in my very predominant “white” society ceased to attract me physically while I did carve out good work buddy relationships with some “white” men, in the decades since.

Today, as society tries to define and deal a myriad of serious social issues such as rape, sex, sexual assault and sensuality, two questions continue to pop up in my mind:

- “What constitutes consent?” and
- “What is being an adult?”

WHAT CONSTITUTES CONSENT? There was a time I thought I knew. No longer! From entering a contract at a gym or with a mobile phone company, buying groceries at a store, a product on line, volunteering for a cause, to agreeing to enter into a relationship with another, I just walk around dumbfounded feeling as if I am just an opportunity waiting to happen to have both my wallet and soul emptied. Modern day life feels like a set up for failure every time I step over that threshold I call my front or side door of my house, my physical shelter from the human condition!

In earlier days (1965) when I was raped, I knew without a shadow of a doubt I was not responsible for the man's insane behaviour and I reported the incident within three days once it became clear to me what I had to do. I felt no shame! That I opened the door when I heard a knock is the only thing I could have done differently to prevent the incident on that day. I call that ownership in what happened and I self corrected by never opening a door again unless I know who is on the other side. Even then, opening my door to another be it a friend, a repair man or a family member, I feel fear in the pit of my stomach. That fear does not go away though I manage it better fifty-two years later.

Why am I more confused today? First of all, I make a huge distinction between sexual assault and rape, yet these terms have become virtually interchangeable in much of our public discourse. I see a huge difference between the boss' son cornering me behind the store counter to “cop a feel” when I need the job to pay

tuition and a man overpowering me (with or without a weapon) and dumping his sperm in my vagina. The first is annoying at best, the latter can result in an another human being. Neither behaviour is acceptable as are all forms in between such a showing me your crown jewels without my permission. Hauling out my meat grinder comes to mind.

What of a man who tells me grand fish stories that amount to pure lying to win me over? I am agreeing to a falsehood. Is that too not a form of rape? It is certainly a lousy way to get my consent and there are emotional consequences as a result. Worse: a baby may be on the way, a baby who may end up being used as a pawn in this game of life too many insist on playing.

If I am passed out for whatever reason, no one has any business taking advantage of the situation. Yet, how is a man I just met, to whom my behaviour will appear normal, to know if I am alright or in one of my natural blacked out states akin to being on a date rape drug when I am going into psychosis, unable to give consent? Most women (and men) who are assaulted need to be believed, yet too many are not, even today. To complicate matters further, a few do lie about such matters for a variety of unethical reasons. What happens to reason and consent when both (or all) parties are wasted to the point of blackouts? It is enough to make me want to check out of life all together considering sex is an activity that can at times behave like a compulsive obsessive disorder.

My conclusion is that the matter of "giving consent" is never a simple matter and we need to stop saying so. We need to look deeper and more on a case by case basis. Sadly, modern day life does not allocate the funds nor the time to have that deeper look on an individual basis. Instead, we examine life from a statistical point of view (the overall, the average or where most people fit in). But when things go wrong for the individual, for that one person, what happened is always their norm, one hundred percent of the time, and statistics become meaningless.

WHAT IS AN ADULT? There is the standard definition of reaching the age of consent, an age we keep changing, to mark the end of childhood and the beginning of the rest of our lives with a relatively new "in between" stage, one of transition from child to adulthood. I say relatively new in the evolution of the human journey since life expectancy is being extended for a much larger majority courtesy of modern day technology and scientific discoveries, but not in an equal

manner across the human spectrum. When most died at 30 or 40, the teenage years do take on a different flavour than today when many of us do get to 60, 70 and beyond. I see difference even within my own life time since I was expected to marry by age 21 to prevent being called a spinster or old maid and endure the pity of my peers.

Today, twenty five, when science tells us the brain is finally fully developed, is being seen as the “new” twelve with behaviour to match all too often. Being a teenager or young adult (under 25) is often a rocky road and in my eyes, the most difficult stage of all, labelled still a “child” on the one hand and yet not a child at all, capable in body of full blown adulthood adjusting to hormones that set in at puberty but not yet able to see the longer term consequences. What I say in this observation is a generalization with exceptions as mature behaviour is relevant to many factors both genetically and the environment we grew up in. For those of us fortunate enough to be born into a caring community, to go from being cared for, totally dependent on those around to become a strong, outstanding, uplifting community member on whom others start to depend is not an easy journey, in and of itself. What of those who are deprived of such community support, born into war, famine, bigotry, poverty, racism?

What of all the conflicting messages we send our young? Through our media? From our leaders? I am personally appalled at what I see passing as entertainment and news where art does imitate life and life imitates art. From soap operas to hot topics on talk shows, to supposed reality shows, sports exhibitions, musical concerts to science fiction and detective stories, the older ones are setting a great example of confusion while we explore all sort of behaviour trying to normalize, if not glorify, sadism (those who enjoy inflicting pain on others), masochism, physical violence, drug abuse and power plays. At the same time, too many have become an arm chair critic, judge, jury and executioner, rendering the theory “innocent until proven guilty” mute.

We do not yet have enough of us looking for solutions and the ones that do so are bumping into each other, cancelling out such endeavours. No wonder there is so much confusion in this world which raises two questions in me: “What’s too much and what is too little?” and “How do we coordinate our efforts so that we can build that better world for us all?”

'Re-examine all you have been told. Dismiss what insults your Soul.' Walt Whitman



**What is Our
Path Forward or
Are We Doomed?**

SOME DAY, PLEASE IMPRESS ME! (#44)

HUMANITY MAY IMPRESS ME SOME DAY but not until we at least figure out why my knitting yarn tangles so easily all on its own or my costume jewellery for that matter. The same goes for my computer and audio cables, since I prefer hard wires over waves I cannot see. I fail to see any reason to spend yet more research dollars figuring out that when we drop bombs on people, shoot them or starve them, that we get a serious, negative backlash. I also fail to see the reasons we have not yet ended racism, genderism, and all sorts of other “isms” that pit one person against another. We know the answers. We simply do not want to do the necessary work based on developing mutual understanding and respect to what amounts to a global truth and reconciliation process to repair the damage we have done and continue to do to each other.

In a world of plenty and enough, I think we have lost our collective minds in pursuit of dreams that belong in our sleep. How about some goal setting such as NOT destroying earth so that we can better deal with our long list of social ills? Middle earth is attainable by invoking balance in all that we do with small swings around a fiscal zero and a sustainable way of life. When a single person feels they need more than a total income of \$250,000US annually, I would like them to see a therapist. Today, my annual income is about 18% of a quarter million dollars a year and I pay more than 30% in taxes and still find ways to give 30% away, being an earn as I go, pay as I go, give as I go kind of person. This whole notion that we can create wealth out of debt is just plain illogical, as far as I am concerned. That we create wealth out of speculation (private real estate ownership, for example), I find equally repulsive, leaning towards the “habitat for humanity” philosophy. Yet in order to live, I am forced to participate in this financial nonsense, setting up inner conflict I need to resolve daily.



*Living Mindfully,
One Step at a Time!*



FORGIVENESS & ANGER MANAGEMENT (#45)

If you run over me with a mack truck and I survive, I will not be happy! You can be assured I will forgive you from the get go, whether running me over was an accident or intentional. I will feel pain and hurt. Let me repeat! I will NOT be happy. In fact I will be enraged (angry)! I need time to process my anger while my body figures out how to heal if that is even possible or to simply adjust to my new situation.

If the deed was intentional, I will need more time to process my anger to be able to get to the forgiveness stage of letting go of my negative feelings than if it was an accident. If I see GENUINE remorse, that too will help cut down the time I need to "get over" and get to a calm state, inside myself. Help me adjust! Even better. Once I get to my own calmness (I call this living in the eye of my own hurricane), I can forget and we can be helpmates, unless your remorse is only temporary or a facade. In that case, the anger management becomes a life time process and the forgetting can come only in death.

Being BiPolar and today with failing kidneys (both conditions not visible), humanity cannot see what I deal with on the inside on a daily basis. However, the process is the same as if I had been run over by a mack truck which fortunately has not yet happened, though I have had many serious close calls to the point of having my hip grazed, using my left arm on the right side of a large industrial van's hood as a pivot point to jump out of the way. And yes! I was in a pedestrian cross walk, at a stop sign for vehicles, with the right of way.

Honing my internal compass, gut instinct if you prefer, started very early in life with a brain that is always asking "Why?":

- "Why war?",
- "Why Famine?",
- "Why Racism?",
- "Why, at age 11, did I prefer to do dishes at Mr. B.'s house but not in my family's?",
- "Why is there no lion in ancient eastern philosophy but there is a tiger?"
- "Why are women treated differently than men?"

In an age of data mining where everyone is under some sort of surveillance, why are we telling the whole world our personal business, opening ourselves to all sorts of identity theft, seemingly unaware we are doing so looking for esoteric needs such as the need for companionship, the need to be acknowledged, to express ourselves, in other words relationship building? Yet, no amount of digitizing while looking for solutions will get us out of this mess since no machine can deal directly with emotions. All we can do is use machines as tools to connect us and analyze the data that is being gathered to understand general behavioural patterns. But to what end? To help build a better world for us all or to market and posture to us to keep the status quo of shooting ourselves in our own feet going? And worse! The individual is getting lost in this process. I am a prime example of someone who is falling through the cracks having to abandon almost all professional advice on staying as healthy as possible in an aging body since I have outgrown much of both conventional (aka Western) and alternative (aka Traditional) medicine. I ran into too many mistakes even though I had a huge team of health care professionals around me whose care of me I was coordinating, mistakes that would have lead to a premature death. I have no choice but to listen to that voice that speaks to me from the sky, an instinct available to everyone. Sadly we have forgotten to sit still long enough to listen.

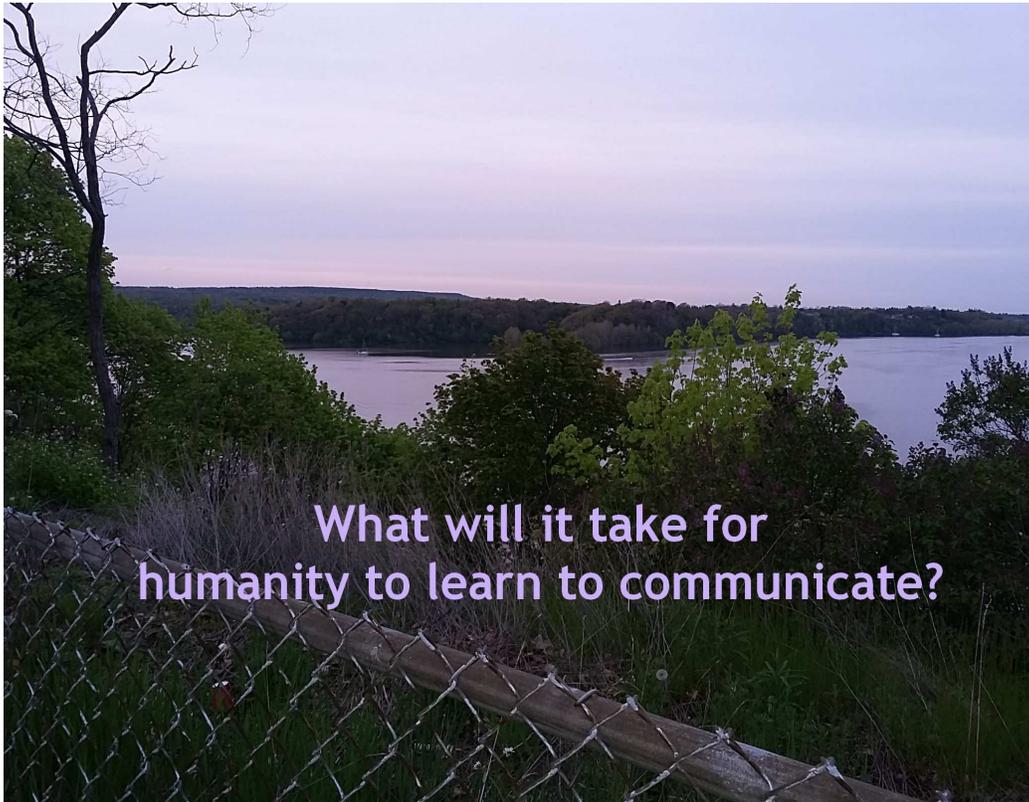


I AM THE ONLY COMMON DENOMINATOR IN MY OWN LIFE (#46)
Communicating Between the Genders

I had three legal horror stories and enough "not sanctioned by law relationships" that society calls marriage. To have a romantic relationship where I have to do 99% of the heavy lifting and the reward is a punch in the face, sex a duty and a means to avoid death and everyday I am told I am scum, is spousal abuse or as I call the condition "house slavery". I needed decades to crawl out from under that yoke. But on the side, I had a working life mostly with men in science and engineering when, overall, women were not wanted, back in the 1960s-70s. One man saw potential in me, my first boss, who in this role, became a surrogate dad, of sorts, the first 20 years of my career in computing.

It was on the job, I came to learn about men in a very different light. That too was NOT exactly a "fun" journey, including having a paper bag put on my head by engineering students in 1967. But by the end of my working days, I did learn a lot from men and how they did business. I also became an observer of how women did business as they began to climb the business ladder. I definitely preferred how men did business with an occasional female exception. Most women I have known will claim the opposite, which is one reason I believe my brain is wired more like that of a man than that of a woman. My feelings, however, are female. Then add the fact that I relate more to "black" culture (in a very general sense) than "white" (feeling like a fish out of water since 1951 in my very "white" dominated society), I would say I am a "kriss cross", and behave in an inverse mirror kind of way as I walk about on earth on a daily basis.

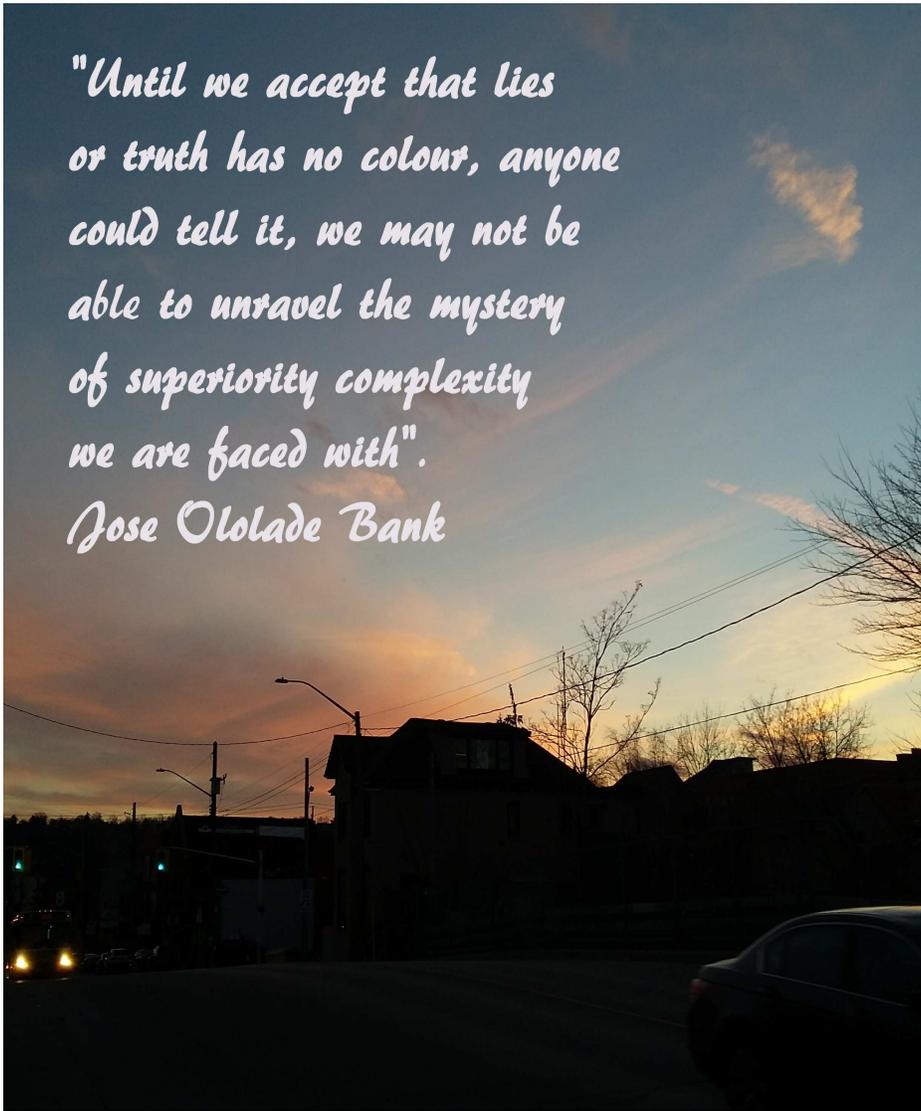
In the male department, please do not include the likes of the current U.S.A. governing bodies for whom the best I can give is AGAPE (see page 62, story #31) and keep hoping humanity finds the will to escort these people to mental health ("shrink" jail). What I am beginning to realize is that when we try to communicate, the same words do not have the same meaning to us as individuals, even when we use the same language which I find is especially true between man and woman. Add in all our cultural and belief nuances, that we have not already blown each other up, can be construed as a miracle of love in action since all too often we think we are communicating but really we are NOT since our terms of reference are not the same. And despite all our tools, including social media on some sort of cloud (the Internet which is not a cloud at all), there are days I think drums and smoke signals would work better.



What will it take for
humanity to learn to communicate?

*"Until we accept that lies
or truth has no colour, anyone
could tell it, we may not be
able to unravel the mystery
of superiority complexity
we are faced with".*

Jose Ololade Bank



A CANDLE LOSES NOTHING WHEN IT LIGHTS ANOTHER (#47)

In 2017, silence is NOT golden nor is resistance futile. I do find our world situation horrifically sad, however, that so many will have to die PREMATURELY and many more will be severely injured, because we are unable and/or unwilling to address our own bigotry, prejudices, and stereotypical reactions to those who are not of our culture and birthplace.

RACISM that “white” supremacy built needs to end. GENDERISM, which encompasses many of the goals of feminism but is much wider, too needs to end. What is stopping us from seeking an end to these two moral social wrongs that I rank as number one and two? Not everyone is racist regardless of heritage, skin tone, eye colour or hair texture. Not everyone is a genderist regardless of sexual orientation or whether the person has a “Y” (the male) chromosome or not. For those answers, we need to dig deeper and look at all our elitism, our stereotyping and typecasting of one another, our bigotries, our beliefs, our cultures, our social and workplace hierarchies.

I am known to be helpful and generous, a hard worker who can take on any position in a group and do a decent job, from being a group leader, to being a group “flunkie”, be that at work helping people with their issues with computing or in the non profit world supporting a wide range of human issues from helping the young, the ones in the middle, to the very old. I am also known to be an individual good friend though as of late I have tarnished my wings unable to keep up with Western social niceties.

In 2011, I set up a non profit to connect schools to the internet that could not afford to do so. I had a “dream” of all children, around the globe, chatting with each other, learning together. “Vision” maybe a better word or maybe an “Imagining”. I recognized well that I was “small potatoes”. Realistically, connecting one school under such a vision would have been a enough, hence our name “A Tiny Shift In Connecting Schools”. I know people are stressed and most lack both time and money. I was fully prepared to sell my house to connect that first and likely only school, somewhere in the world. By 2014, I was going broke, financially and drained both in energy and in morale, for lack of support. In that year, I made my (which I had hoped would be an “our”) non profit inactive.

I think that was the saddest, loneliest most revealing moment of my life to actually see how little people knew the whole me. It was then I realized, I too had been stereotyped and typecast. To add a little more salt to that personal wound, in my dealings with my own government and my lawyer who set up the non profit, at full price I might add, I ended up feeling like a criminal trying to “pull a fast one” instead of a human who wanted to do her little bit for humanity before leaving the planet. Perplexing, I would say.

Yet I did get support from a few from whom I expected none. Life is kind of “funny” that way and speaks to the fact that sometimes we do need a pair of fresh eyes and listening ears to be truly seen. We all too often forget to re-see and re-hear each other anew as we go through a life of constant change feeling as if life is spiralling out of control. Yes! Each one needs to seek his/her own personal truth. But then can we find a way to blend those truths, a necessary step, I feel, for world peace to come. Maybe that peace can be as simple as learning to light each others candles instead of burning them all out too soon, at the same time.



MEN HAVE RAPED MY BODY; WOMEN HAVE RAPED MY SOUL (#48)

When sex becomes a matter of coercion to prevent losing your life, having your teeth bashed in, landing a black eye or just avoiding yet another argument trying to explain being too tired and worn out to have sex are all horrible experiences I have had a taste of and wish on no one. I have walked in cultures where some women actually have been made to believe that if “their man” does not beat them once a week, the man does not love them. Now that is a special kind of evil, that defies description!

During one sex episode, I actually feel asleep and woke up to the fellow on top of me shaking me to ask: “Marianne, Are You Awake?” and I sleepily said: “No!” and fell right back to sleep. At least that night, I was a willing participant and we resumed “activity”, the next morning. On another occasion, just as the man was about to enter, I socked him on the jaw. He responded: “You really don't want to do this?” I agreed. The man dressed and went home. This was a real man. Today, I apologize to this man for I was young, did not know myself well and had not yet learned the art of assertiveness. I thank this man for showing me respect.

I lost count the number of times I wanted to cut a hole in the mattress and just go to the kitchen to prepare lunch for the next day or solve a sticky computer problem I was having at work. When a man tells me I am the only woman he wants to cheat on his wife with and I literally have to push him into a taxi after fighting him off, I am not flattered. Being told, I am built like a “red brick shit house” by the passenger beside me on a plane who was getting drunker and drunker was not a welcome piece of feedback. I spent the end of that flight hiding in the plane's washroom until I was forced to get back to my seat for landing.

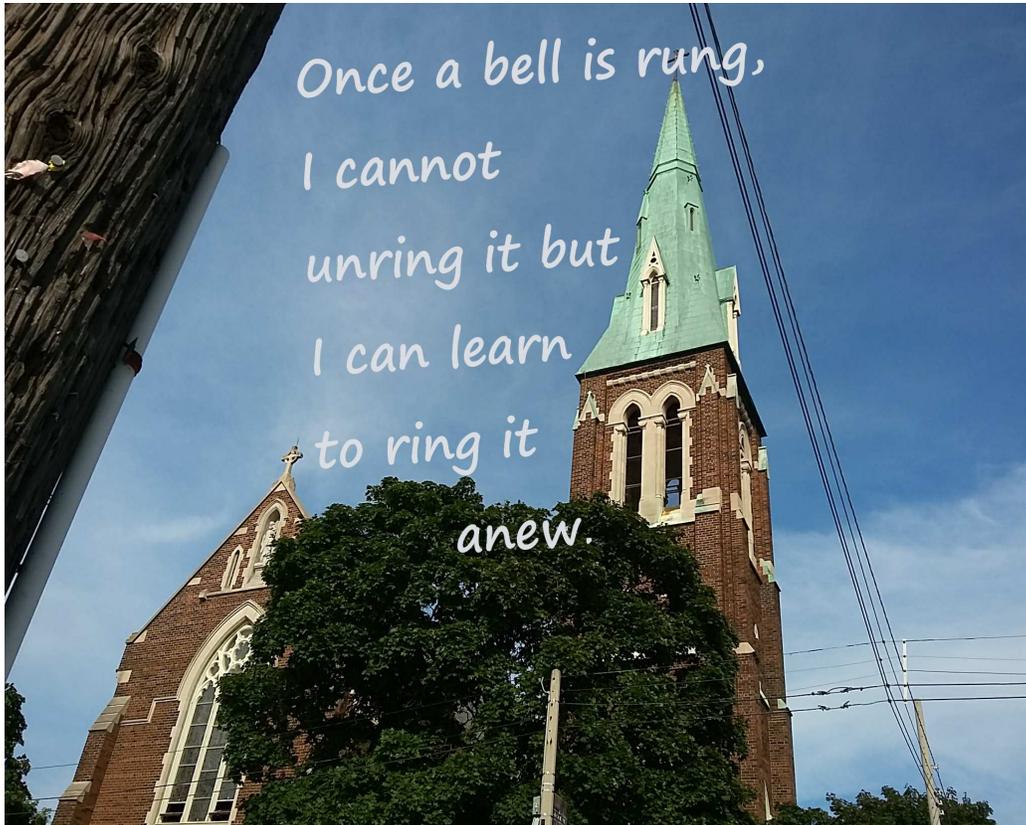
And yet I also used my body to attract attention, using it as bait, in the hopes someone would fall in love with me. That plan failed miserably. Dressing sexily brought propositions for sex. That I needed decades to figure that one out showed just how ill prepared I was to be part of this world. In fact, I would say by the time I was 17, going on 18, and entered university life, I could not have been prepared worse, knowing only the very basics about our plumbing and nothing about what a good relationship of any kind looked like.

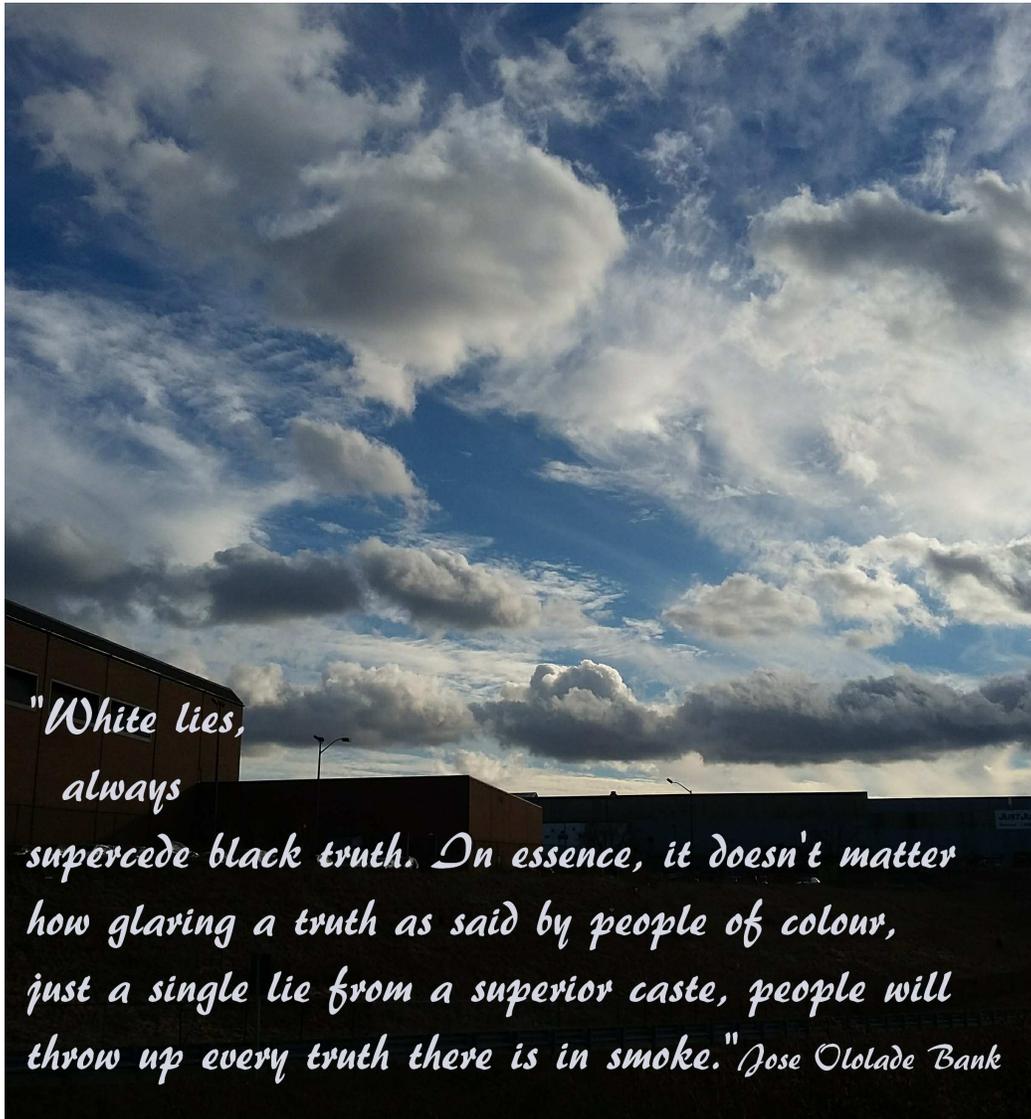
My “drum major” mother would help me dress as sexy as possible, comparing me to Marilyn Monroe whose mannerisms I had down to a “T”. Yet she also

warned me, over and over, that no man was to be trusted, ever! My dad, an emotional basket case, commanded to live in the basement, would come to my dining room and verbally unload his troubles (mostly with my mother) when I was busy studying to get that education my mother was terrified I would not get, else be a "house slave" like she felt she was. Inside me, lived a very young girl hungry for love and acceptance who could only shine in sciences, under performing considering my high IQ. All I ever wanted was an ordinary life of a husband, a couple of kids, a dog, a cat, and help people. Nothing big! Nothing spectacular. Just a very ordinary life and I would have been just fine. None of this happened. Instead, I ended up living a colourful life of looking for silver linings in negativity, also known as blessings in disguise.

Like mother like daughter, I fear. No matter how I tried on my own to not repeat the life of my parents, I somehow managed to recreate the same circumstance, with different actors and stages but in essence the same. Each time I was still a "house slave" in one form or another. That is where therapy came in, in mid life, and my journey of self correction started to take root. In that process, three to four decades later however, I have boxed myself in a place of no man's and no woman's land. I am too much of a man to be accepted as a woman and too much of a woman to be accepted as a man.

That men cannot fully accept me as one of them is kind of intuitive but that women cannot accept me as one of them hurts deeper. Having worked with men, engineers tending to be my favourite to work with. I have learned much. Ducking a punch is one lesson. Not allowing a man to abuse me sexually, physically, verbally or any other way is the bigger lesson. From observation, I have noted men tend to resolve their difference with a fist, weapons or a duel of some kind. At least that is out in the open. Women's fights, however, are not so easy to see. Cat fights, character assassination, the silent treatment, jealousies and disapproval if I try and show my individuality. Ask for support in fighting the status quo and I am on my own. Not all women do this but too many do. Women terrify me in ways no man can, but then I was raised to be a living doll to serve my mother's needs. Rape is never justified under any condition, but in my case, I have discovered physical rape by a man is easier to recover from than having my soul raped by a woman.





*"White lies,
always
supercede black truth. In essence, it doesn't matter
how glaring a truth as said by people of colour,
just a single lie from a superior caste, people will
throw up every truth there is in smoke." Jose Ololade Bank*

IF 'A' IS TRUE! THEN 'NOT A' IS ALSO TRUE! (#49)

If 'a' is true! then 'not a' is also true! Logic works well in mathematical modelling, scientific studies and writing computer software. In terms of human relations, however, I have found logic to be quite unhelpful. For example, if a dress is red, that tells me very little about what the dress or any other dress might look like. It does not tell me the shade of red, the size, the shape or the reason we are talking about a dress in the first place. Yet by bringing up the subject I have ignited some of your brain cells.

In human terms, "NOT A" can mean anything and virtually everything whether we understand the first part of the conditional clause or not. Right fighting is POINTLESS (the need to always win regardless of circumstance and logic), as far as I am concerned, if we want to find genuine lasting solutions to what ails humanity. Paying better attention to conditional clauses in our relationships, provided we know what they are, may actually help us negotiate some win win deals. Maybe if we stop "cherry" picking which side of a conditional clause we embrace, but embrace both sides fully with understanding empathy and honour, we still have a chance of building a world of peace and avoid our own extinction. MAYBE!

For example, let us examine the "Lord's Prayer", that Jesus of Nazareth helped make famous. There are many versions that are derived from both Matthew and Luke in the biblical gospels of the new testament. This is my version, a mixture of the old and the new:

"Give us our daily bread (food) and forgive us our trespasses (mistakes), as we forgive those who trespass against us".

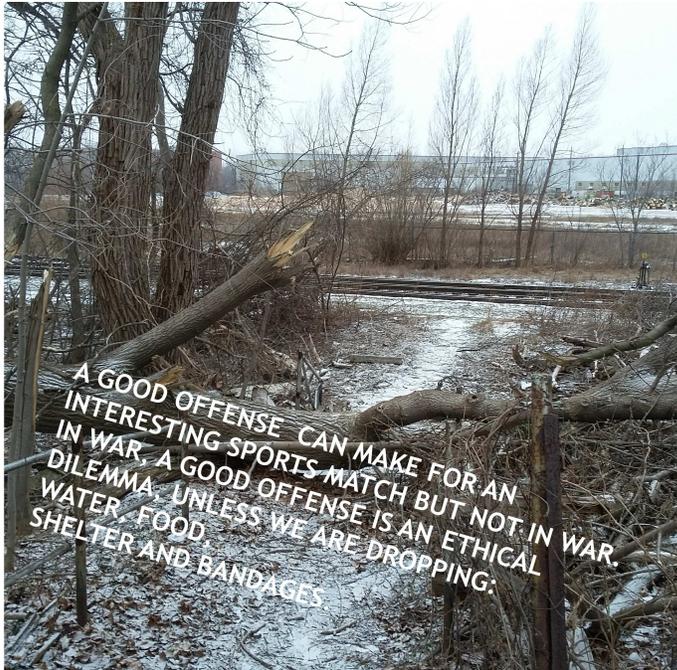
Please note I took out the period that many current versions have after the word bread since this makes more sense to me and fits with what humanity needs to learn if we are to survive this, the 21st century, regardless of what religion a person professes or none at all. In other words, we need to learn to share the bounty of the earth and that is possible only if and when we learn to be more forgiving spirits of each others faults and mistakes and quite possibly more importantly, our own. In other words, we need to find our own inner strength so that we become empowered beings who help others empower themselves to learn to become caring, kind, empathetic spirits who know only how to help one

another instead of all this power mongering and posturing we currently do. As Richard Inya of Nigeria often asks: "Are you man/woman of "God" or are you a "God" of man/woman?"

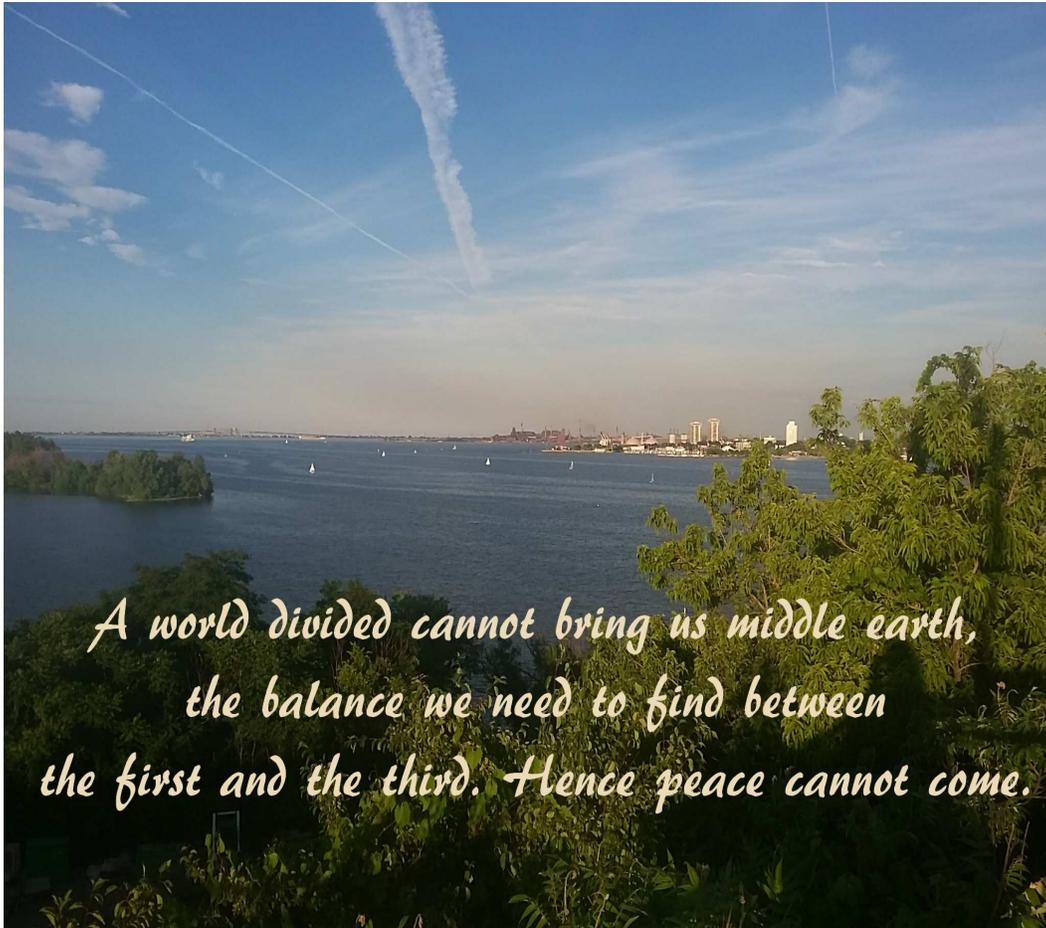
Here is another rule we banter about, called the "Golden" rule, one we find in all religious thought from "the far East" and "the closer West". I have known Atheists and Agnostics that also find ways to embrace this one.

"Love Thy Neighbour As Thy Self"

Is this conditional statement not the answer to what ails humanity? I will not say what I think of all my neighbours. Some I like and others not so much. However, I am still a good neighbour. When I learn of a death in the family, I do my best to comfort. When a neighbour's house is being robbed, I will call the police and take pictures of a robbery in progress. I will not join in and loot your place. If you need my help getting to the hospital, I will find a way despite not having a driver's license nor a car. As much as I hate private vehicles, I do share my driveway with my neighbours since parking is a nightmare in my "hood" in the hopes that someday we will learn what cooperation means. Or maybe we are still figuring out the difference between love and like, the person and the behaviour of the person, a friend and an enemy, to love the being but not the way we continue to hurt each other, needlessly. In



short: "What exactly is love?", a feeling that not any one of us can adequately describe but in the negative of "What is not love?"



*A world divided cannot bring us middle earth,
the balance we need to find between
the first and the third. Hence peace cannot come.*